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Articles

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‘Where Are You, My Beloved Iraq?’: Arab-Jewish Identity and Culture Between Demise and Biased Scholarship

Abstract We are currently witnessing the demise of Arab-Jewish identity and culture—a tradition that started more than 1,500 years ago is vanishing before our very own eyes. Until the twentieth century, the great majority of the Jews under the rule of Islam used Arabic as their language but after the establishment of the State of Israel, Arabic has been gradually disappearing as a language mastered by Jews. The Arabized Jews have been deliberately excluded from Arabism to the point that we can now assume an unspoken agreement between Zionism and Arab nationalism to carry out a total cleansing of Arab-Jewish identity and culture. The present article focuses on the changes in the concept of identity and belonging among the Arabized Jews, especially the Iraqi-Baghdadi intellectuals among them. As I previously argued, due to some processes that those Jews had experienced during the twentieth century and because of some global developments, they gradually developed a negative sensitivity toward the notion of stable identity, whatever identity. Instead of that, they started to assert, explicitly and implicitly, their particular singularities and to search for alternative forms of identification, mostly various kinds



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of inessential solidarity and belonging. The article refers as well to the scholarship on Arab-Jewish identity and culture that has frequently been moving into non-academic spaces, neglecting the necessary unbiased scholarly discourse.

Keywords Arab-Jewish culture, Arab identity, inessential solidarity, Iraqi Jews, Zionism, biased scholarship

1 Introduction

We are currently witnessing the demise of Arab-Jewish identity and culture. A tradition that started more than 1,500 years ago is vanishing before our very eyes. The main factor in the Muslim-Christian-Jewish Arab symbiosis up to the twentieth century, from the Jewish point of view, was that the great majority of the Jews under the rule of Islam adopted Arabic as their language. This symbiosis does not exist in our time because Arabic is gradually disappearing as a language spoken on a daily basis by Jews. The image of an hourglass is an apposite one: the grains of sand are quickly running out. Furthermore, in the field of literature there is not even one Jewish writer of record who was born after 1948 and who is still writing in Arabic. A Jew who is now fluent in Arabic must have either been born in an Arab country (and their numbers, of course, are rapidly decreasing) or have acquired the language as part of his training for service in the military or security services (and their numbers, needless to say, are always increasing). There are only few exceptions. The Israeli-Jewish canonical elite does not see the Arabic language and Arab culture as intellectual assets, and there is no better illustration of this point than the structure of the comparative literature departments at Israeli universities, where you can hardly find tenured scholars who have a knowledge of Arabic or who have taken the trouble to study its literature. In short, we all know that the chapter of Arab-Jewish symbiosis has reached its end, and that the hourglass will not be turned over anytime soon, if at all.

In the present article, I will deal with the aforementioned developments through the investigation of the changes in the concept of identity and belonging among the Arabized Jews,¹ concentrating on the Iraqi-Baghdadi intellectuals among them. It goes without saying that the study has been conducted with due awareness that bundling all the Arabized Jews together could be problematic and may lead to erroneous generalizations because of significant differences between socioeconomic classes and between various generations among the Arabized Jews. My main argument is that, due

¹ I will use here in general the term 'Arabized Jews' following Brann (2000: 435–454). On the question of terminology, see Behar (2009: 747–771).

to some processes that those Jews had experienced during the twentieth century and due to some global developments, they gradually developed a negative sensitivity toward the notion of a stable identity. Instead of that, they started to assert, explicitly and implicitly, their particular singularities and to search for alternative forms of identification, mostly various kinds of inessential solidarities and senses of belonging. From a sample of partial investigations, I have a solid basis for the hypothesis that the same developments have occurred, if in different rhythms and intensities, among other communities of Arabized Jews as well. The discussion will refer as well to the scholarship on Arab-Jewish identity and culture against the background of the gradually dwindling number of the scholars who have been expressing any interest in investigating this topic and, at the same time, have the necessary linguistic skills to do that. Moreover, the scholarship on Arab-Jewish culture has frequently been moving into non-academic spaces, neglecting the unbiased scholarly discourse. Before discussing the changes in the concept of identity and belonging among the Arabized Jews, it is necessary to present some points related to historical background of the Arabized Jews.

2 Historical background: We are Arabs before we are Jews

In the sixth century CE, when Arabic reached its full development with the appearance of poetry of high standing, Jewish communities were flourishing throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Jews, inasmuch as they were an integral part of Arab society, participated in the making of the local culture, and Jewish tribes had distinguished poets. The personal integrity of one such poet, al-Samaw'al ibn 'Ādiyā', became proverbial, and he has since been commemorated by the saying *awfā min al-Samaw'al* ('more loyal than al-Samaw'al'). The incident referred to was his refusal to yield weapons entrusted to him, even when a Bedouin chieftain laid siege to his castle and murdered his son.² Describing the noble qualities of his own Arab-Jewish tribe, al-Samaw'al composed a poem, the opening verse of which was:

إِذَا الْمَرْءُ لَمْ يَدْنَسْ مِنَ اللَّؤْمِ عَرَضُهُ فَكُلُّ رِدَاءٍ يَرْتَدِيهِ جَمِيلٌ

When a man's honor is not defiled by baseness,
Then every cloak he cloaks himself in is comely.³

² See al-Maydānī (1988: II, 441–442). On the poet and his loyalty, see also Meisami and Starkey (1998: II, 685–686).

³ For the poem, see Abū Tammām (n.d.: I, 36). See also the text, together with an English translation, in Arberry (1965: 30–33).

This poem, which even today is highly regarded in the Arabic literary tradition, testifies to the existence of a past in which no one would consider that being an Arab and at the same time a Jew was paradoxical. There were also female poets among the Jewish poets of the pre-Islamic period, such as Sāra al-Qurayziyya, whose elegy for 350 noblemen of her tribe killed in a battle in 492 CE is frequently cited in ancient Arab sources.⁴

When Islam in the seventh century CE became the dominant faith and defining legal and social framework in the Near East, Jews (together with Christians and in Persia Zoroastrians as well) were considered to be protégés (*Ahl al-Dhimma* [People of the Pact]) of the new community. Jews were not only well acquainted with the emerging Islamic literature, but were also deeply inspired by it, and gradually became thoroughly Arabized. As interference normally occurs when a target culture is either in a state of emergence, in a vacuum, or at a turning point in its history,⁵ the Jews had in turn the ability to influence the rising Islamic civilization. To borrow words said on the role of Christians in Muslim society, the seventh century was a peculiar juncture when the characteristic institutions of the dominant community were 'in the process of formation, radical modification, or destruction by forces which the marginal community [might] or [might] not have helped generate but which it [was] able to accelerate and focus'.⁶ The Jews were thus by no means passive agents for the new Muslim society. Judeo-Muslim symbiosis began at the very birth of Islam, in which process the Jews played an important role; the Qur'ān provides solid testimony for this process of mutual influence. Arabized Jews had an intimate knowledge of the holy book of Islam and its source texts,⁷ and they would play an active role in shaping medieval Arab-Muslim civilization by serving as an intermediate link between Hellenistic-Roman civilization and modern civilization. Medieval Arab-Muslim civilization was to be an admixture of cultural elements; it would invariably manifest pre-Islamic roots alongside the Islamic religion itself as well as a basis in Greek humanism and in various cultural elements of the ancient heritage of the Near East. Therefore, 'it is not mere coincidence that the flowering of Jewish culture in the Arab world should occur at the very time that

⁴ On Arab-Jewish poets in the pre-Islamic period, see al-Iṣbahānī (1964: XXIV, 97–128). On Sāra al-Qurayziyya, see al-Iṣbahānī (1964: XXII, 102–105), and Bitton (1999: 43–46).

⁵ Sebeok 1986: I, 462.

⁶ Haddad 1970: 3.

⁷ On knowledge of the Qur'ān among Jews, see Lazarus-Yafeh (1992: 143–160).

Islamic civilization was at its apogee’.⁸ Nor is it strange that Jews often preferred writing in Arabic over writing in Hebrew, even when dealing with the most sacred matters of Judaism, which had the effect of making their literature virtually unavailable to Europeans. Arabized Jews had no conscious motivation behind the widespread use of Arabic, as in view of their extensive adjustment under Islam, and the degree to which they identified themselves with its culture, ‘nothing is more natural than that they should use in their writings the language which served them in every other need’.⁹

The Jews of Mesopotamia, for example, who looked back to the Jewish Exile to Babylon, for centuries spoke Aramaic, the language they used to produce the Talmud. However, after the Arab conquest, especially under the Abbasid Caliphate,¹⁰ the then-thriving Jewish community underwent a rapid process of Arabization and integration into the surrounding Arab-Muslim society, the majority of them congregating in the new metropolis of Baghdad. Facilitating their integration was their high level of achievement and resulting prosperity in commerce, education, and culture. As with Mesopotamia, in all other lands conquered by the Arabs the Jews adopted Arabic as their language. From the ninth century, Judeo-Arabic literature flourished, that is, texts in Jewish dialects of vernacular Arabic that combined Hebrew and Aramaic lexical items with Arabic and that were generally written in Hebrew script.¹¹ Large portions of this literature were scientific, philosophical, and theological in nature. The works of, for example, Sa‘īd ibn Yūsuf al-Fayyūmī, known as Sa‘adia Gaon (882–942), were almost all written in Judeo-Arabic. He translated the Bible into Arabic, the language in which he also composed his commentary, the *Sharḥ*. Born in Egypt, after a stay in Palestine he left for Mesopotamia where in 928 CE he was appointed Head of the Babylonian Academy at Sūra, a position he held (with a six-year intermission) until his death. He applied his knowledge of Arabic poetry and

⁸ Stillman 1979: 61. For an overview of 1,400 years of the intertwined history of Judaism and Islam, see Stillman (2011: 10–20).

⁹ Halkin 1956: 220–221. On Arabic as a unifying element among the various religious and ethnic groups in the Muslim Empire and as a universal medium of intellectual expression among both Muslims and non-Muslims, see Chejne (1969: 13–16).

¹⁰ ‘Arabic had become the *lingua franca* of the caliphate. This wide use of this language also served to lower ethnic and cultural barriers. In fact, it had a unifying effect. Politically and ideologically, ‘Abbāsid society no longer focused on *Arab* culture. Instead, the emphasis was now on *Arabic* culture’ (Pietruschka 2005: 32).

¹¹ As the education at the time was religious, people generally used the script of their religious writings, even when writing in a language that they had not been educated in (Goitein 1967: I, 16).

poetics to Hebrew poetics in order to halt a decrease in Hebrew writing; he also used Arabic literary criticism for the purpose of increasing the value of Hebrew poetry in the eyes of his own Jewish generation. Also, one of the greatest scholars in Jewish history, the physician and philosopher Maimonides (Mūsā ibn Maymūn) (1135–1204), wrote most of his works in Judeo-Arabic; the most influential of these was *Dalālat al-Ḥā'irīn* (The Guide of the Perplexed).

From the mid-tenth to the mid-thirteenth centuries, Jewish culture in al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) had even more than elsewhere the closest of connections with Arab-Islamic culture through direct translation, imitation, adaptation, and borrowing. The atmosphere created allowed the elements of separate cultures to be actively exposed to one and other and also to fuse together. New hybrid literary forms, therefore, came into being where Arabic was the *lingua franca*. In 'A Father's Admonition' for his son, Yudah ibn Tibbon (1120–1190) wrote: 'Thou art well aware how our foremost men only attained to high distinction through their proficiency in Arabic writing'.¹² In the case of Hebrew secular poetry, Arabic poetic models were used that undoubtedly brought about the most perfect expression of Arab-Jewish symbiosis in al-Andalus. The form of most of the secular Hebrew poetry in al-Andalus was on the model of the *qaṣīda*, which uses one unchangeable rhyme throughout the poem and one quantitative meter dividing each verse into two hemistichs. Hebrew literature, grammar, and philosophy also reached a peak during this era. There is no other way of understanding the Jewish achievements and their imitating of the rhetorical embellishment of Arabic poetry and prose at the time, except in the light of their being informed with a knowledge of Arabic literature and Muslim philosophical thinking. There was in fact an elite class of Jewish courtiers and officials who were as polished in the Arabic language, literature, and culture as they were learned in the Hebrew and Jewish religious tradition. At least some of the members of that elite were even more assimilated to Arabic culture than Hebrew culture and more at home in literary standard Arabic (*fuṣṣḥā*) than in Hebrew, although one cannot, of course, reduce the difference between the Arabic poetry and Hebrew poetry of the time to purely one of language.

Moses ibn Ezra (1055–1138), whose poetry has been described as the one that 'most resembles that of an Arabic poet',¹³ wrote a number of prose works in Arabic, among them *Kitāb al-Muḥāḍara wa-l-Mudhākara* (Book of Conversation and Deliberation), which is 'the most important

¹² Abrahams 1926: I, 59.

¹³ Scheindlin 2000: 252.

medieval book about Hebrew poetry’.¹⁴ Jewish Hebrew poets also adopted strophic forms (*muwashshah*), with the last strophe (*kharja*) often written in vernacular Arabic. Some Jewish poets became famous in both Hebrew and Arabic, such as Ismā‘il ibn Naghrīla (Shmuel ha-Nagid) (993–1056), the Zirid vizier, who held office in Granada during the mid-eleventh century, and the poet and philosopher Ibn Gabirol (1021–1058). Being thoroughly Arabized, Jews used not only Hebrew but also Arabic for liturgical purposes, such as for hymns and religious ceremonies, particularly on the New Year, Passover, Pentecost, and the Ninth of Av.

There were also outside the mainstream of Jewish society in the Middle East communities that enjoyed reading or writing Arabic. The Karaites in Egypt wrote even the Hebrew Bible in Arabic characters, and present in Karaite manuscripts were vestiges of the works of Muslim Ṣūfī mystics that had been previously transposed into Hebrew characters.¹⁵ The Jews’ reading and writing of Arabic poetry was not restricted to al-Andalus: Yehuda al-Ḥarīzī (Yehuda Alharizi) (1165–1225), who translated the *maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī (1054–1122) into Hebrew under the title *Maḥberot Iti’el* (Iti’el’s Notebooks), wrote after leaving Christian Spain poems in Arabic for circulation throughout the Middle East. In the eighteenth *maqāma* in his book entitled *Taḥkemonī*, he alludes to the acknowledged primacy of Arabic poetry, stating that ‘the golden Poesy was the Arabs’ legacy’.¹⁶

Nevertheless, when it came to poetry, most of the Andalusian Jewish poets wrote in Hebrew, not Arabic, at least according to the available sources. There are various explanations given for this. Samuel Miklos Stern (1920–1969), for example, thinks that the chief reason for this was love for the Hebrew language as a holy language and the desire to clothe the expression of new ideals in Jewish poetry in the national language. This means that the Hebrew poets did not seek to address themselves to the larger Muslim public, because they considered it their function to be at the service of their own particular Jewish society.¹⁷ Joshua Blau (1919–2020) argues that being much less attracted by the ideal of ‘*arabiyya*, the veritable Arabic language, than their Muslim fellow citizens, the Jews generally attained only a limited mastery of classical Arabic. Consequently, they could venture to write Arabic when composing scientific and religious tracts, but their superficial knowledge did not suffice for writing

¹⁴ Scheindlin 2000: 259.

¹⁵ See Fenton (2002: 5–19).

¹⁶ Alharizi 2001: 175–189.

¹⁷ Stern 1963: 254.

poetry.¹⁸ According to Rina Drory (1947–2000), Arabic served for lucid, straightforward expression, while Hebrew served for festive and exalted writing, often at the expense of clarity and specificity: ‘Writing in Hebrew was designed to demonstrate the author’s command of the language and to produce a text that would arouse admiration for its beauty and elegance; writing in Arabic was intended to produce a clear and understandable text’.¹⁹

One should, however, distinguish between the use of the Arabic language for practical purposes, such as composing scientific texts or theological polemical tracts, and the use of language for ‘non-practical’ aesthetic purposes, that is, texts in which the author gives free rein to his artistic imagination and expresses his inner feelings and emotions. One would not expect a Jewish writer whose inner aesthetic preferences were rooted in the spiritual values of the Jewish culture alone to express his innermost feelings in Arabic. Also, in the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, Jews in al-Andalus became so integrated into Arab culture that many were able to achieve widespread recognition for their Arabic poetry. Information about Jewish poetry in Arabic has as a rule not come from Jewish traditional circles, which considered such activity to be harmful to Jewish cultural identity. Nor could it come from Muslim traditional circles unless it was about Jewish converts to Islam or on a creative level of achievement within Arab culture that Muslim sources were unable to ignore. That we know something at all about Jews who distinguished themselves in Arabic poetry without converting to Islam (some very few!) may only testify to the recognition of the high quality of their poetry. But we can assume that literary writing in Arabic was much more widespread than the available sources indicate. We cannot rule out that many poets who wrote in Arabic were forgotten or caused to be forgotten, since both Jewish or Muslim circles did not have any desire that they would be remembered unless they produced literary masterpieces that could not be forgotten.

It would be hard, however, to find in the works of the Arabized Jews a specifically *Jewish* contribution to Arab *Belles Lettres*—Jews were simply ‘members of the vast subject population of the Middle East which was assimilated to Arab ways of thinking and expression’.²⁰ The most outstanding of the assimilated Jewish poets known to us is Ibrāhīm ibn Sahl al-Ishbīlī al-Isrā’īlī (1208–1259), who only wrote in Arabic and became famous for his panegyrics and love poems. Regarding some of Ibn Sahl’s verses that were said to refer to his worldly love, Raymond P. Scheindlin

¹⁸ Blau 1981: 22–23.

¹⁹ Drory 2000: 198.

²⁰ Goitein 1955: 127.

(b. 1940) thinks that they could just as well be about his conversion to Islam:

تَسْلَيْتُ عَنْ مُوسَى بِحُبِّ مُحَمَّدٍ هَدَيْتُ وَلَوْ لَا اللَّهَ مَا كُنْتُ أَهْتَدِي
وَمَا عَنْ قَلِي قَدْ كَانَ ذَاكَ وَإِنَّا شَرِيعَةُ مُوسَى عَطَلَتْ بِحَمْدِ

I have found comfort for Moses in the love of Muḥammad,
This is right guidance from God; but without Him I would have strayed.
I did not change out of hatred, but simply
Because Moses's law has been replaced by Muḥammad's.²¹

Although there were no great female poets in Arab cultural circles in al-Andalus, literate Jewish women were not as rare as we tend to assume. In the twelfth century, Qasmūna, a cultured Jewish woman steeped in Arabic literature (it has been suggested that she be identified as the daughter of Shmuel ha-Nagid)²² composed Arabic poetry sufficiently lofty to be transmitted by some Arab sources. Examples of her poetry are the verses that she composed when she looked into a mirror one day and became aware that, though beautiful, she was not yet married:

أَرَى رَوْضَةً قَدْ حَانَ مِنْهَا قَطَافُهَا وَلَيْسَ يُرَى جَانٌ يَمُدُّ لَهَا يَدَا
فَوَا أَسْنِي بِمِضْيِ الشَّبَابِ مِضْيَعًا وَيَبْقَى الَّذِي مَا إِنْ أَسْتَمِيهِ مَفْرَدَا

I see a garden whose harvest time has come;
No harvester can be seen to extend a hand.
Alas! Youth passes and is wasted,
While one remains—I will not name him—who is alone.²³

In the Andalusian Jewish communities, the process of Arabization led to fundamental changes in the attitude of at least some elements to the issue of language. The Jews spoke Arabic for generations, and it is logical to suppose that they 'came to think in and view the world through the medium of that language'. To speak a language, as Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) argues, 'is to take on a world, a culture'.²⁴ And just as language structures reality through preexistent cognitive ingredients and thereby informs the

²¹ Al-Kutubī 1951: I, 42 (English translation: Scheindlin 1992b: 188–200).

²² Bellamy 1983: 423–424.

²³ See al-Suyūṭī (n.d.: 75).

²⁴ Fanon 1967: 38.

experience of its speakers, the literary culture of Jews in al-Andalus also represents, as R. Brann states, their instinctive, creative refraction of the language, forms, and substance of Arabo-Islamic learning in the forms of subcultural adaptation:

The Jews' Arabization fully integrated them into the pluralistic Andalusí scene. Arabic language and culture not only surrounded the Jews in the speech and writings of their Muslim (and Christian) neighbors so as to influence them as cultural others; but also and more pertinently, Arabic was the linguistic medium central to the Andalusí-Jewish experience. Indeed, it was the agency responsible for their intellectual and social integration, which along with their full participation in the political economy of al-Andalus and their inspired attachment to the country they called Sefarad marked them as Andalusis.²⁵

The factors that made possible the Jews' involvement in al-Andalus in Arab culture were also effective in modern times, even if to a much lesser degree in the twentieth century due to the national and political conflict in the Middle East.

In modern times, Jews were nowhere as open to participation in the wider Arab culture or as at home in literary standard Arabic as in the first half of the twentieth century in Iraq. In the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, the Jewish community had lived without interruption for two-and-a-half millennia, and traced their domicile in Iraq to the Babylonian Exile. The reasons and circumstances that paved the way for Iraqi Jews to be much more open than in other Arab countries to participation in the wider canonical culture of the local society are still not completely clear, but we know that since the early Islamic era Jews in the territories that would later be part of Iraq had been taking part in Arab cultural gatherings whose cultural atmosphere and openness may be described to have been multicultural.²⁶ With the advent of modern times, the Iraqi-Jewish community seemed on the whole to be isolated from the main trend of canonical Arab culture. The start of the involvement of Jews in the outer Arab society in Iraq was the outcome of the process of secularization of Jews that started in the second half of the nineteenth century. Much earlier than their Muslim or even Christian compatriots, the Iraqi Jews

²⁵ Brann 2000: 441–442. On the connection of Hebrew literature with Arab culture in al-Andalus, see also Scheindlin (1986; 1991; 1992b: 188–200).

²⁶ It was during the time of the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr (754–775), who founded the city of Baghdad and propagated an open and multicultural policy toward religious minorities.

were aware of the need to master European secular culture, especially its science, as the means to achieve modernization while defining their religious faith as a matter of personal belief. When they started down the road to secularization, there were attempts to develop a secular Hebrew literature. Under the aegis of secular education, Jews adhered less to a strict religious life to the point that in the twentieth century the intellectual elite was predominantly secular, or as Emile Marmorstein (1901–1983), Headmaster of the Shammāsh School for Boys in Baghdad in the 1930s, observed in 1953: ‘Baghdad between the two wars resembled the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe some 50 or 60 years ago but for the absence of zeal, both religious and irreligious’.²⁷ At the same time, the tendency toward Western culture and the adoption of secular values made Jews more open to the modern Arabic culture that was developing during the same period.

When in the wake of World War I the State of Iraq was created, the Jews were inspired by a cultural vision with the eloquent secularist dictum *al-dīnu li-llāhi wa-l-waṭānu li-l-jamī‘* (‘Religion is for God, the Fatherland is for everyone’)²⁸—it was employed as part of the Arabization vision of secular Jewish intellectuals who sought to remind people of the close symbiotic contact that Jews had with the wider Arab-Muslim culture. They rallied as a matter of course behind the efforts to make Iraq a modern nation-state for all its citizens—Sunni and Shi‘i Muslim Arabs, Kurds and Turcomans, Assyrian and Aramean Christians, Yazidis, and Jews alike.²⁹ The vision and hopes of European Zionists to establish a Jewish nation-state in Palestine, as promised in 1917 by the Balfour Declaration,³⁰ was for the Iraqi Jews at the time a far-off cloud, totally undesired.³¹ Their real national vision, at least the vision of the intellectual secular elite, was Iraqi and Arab. It was a vision that for the Jews had its roots in the nineteenth century with the start of the processes of Westernization and secularization, a time when cultural barriers between them and the wider local society

²⁷ Preface in Drower (1989: VI, 8–11).

²⁸ Shā‘ul 1980: 119, 223.

²⁹ Retrospectively and after the establishment of the State of Israel, it would be more convenient for Jewish-Iraqi immigrants, especially from the economic and intellectual elite, to justify their involvement in Iraq before 1948 by citing the Talmudic principle *dina de-malkhuta dina* (‘the law of the land is the law’) (Babylonian Talmud, *Nedarim* 28a).

³⁰ The letter sent on 2 November 1917, by British Foreign Minister Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild in which ‘his Majesty’s Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people’.

³¹ Elie Kedourie argued that even in the 1940s ‘the Zionist cause did not seem to me as a matter of any political wisdom. The expectancies which Zionism was creating were too high and unrealistic’ (*Davar ha-shavu‘*, 7 April 1988: 9).

had begun to crumble. As a result of these processes, in the 1930s most of the Jewish population lived in Baghdad, filling most of the civil service jobs under the British and the early monarchy. The Civil Administration of Mesopotamia, in its annual review for the year 1920, stated that the Jews of the City of Baghdad were 'a very important section of the community, outnumbering the Sunnis or Shias'.³² According to the Iraqi-Jewish scholar Elie Kedourie (1926–1992), Baghdad at the time 'could be said to be as much a Jewish city as an Islamic one'.³³ The Iraqi-Jewish journalist Nissim Rajwān (Rejwan) (1924–2017) thought that just as it has often been said that New York is a Jewish city, so 'one can safely say the same about Baghdad in the first half of the 20th century'.³⁴

From the early 1920s, the Jews had every reason to believe that the surrounding local society would not oppose their full integration. For example, presenting al-Samaw'al's aforementioned poem about the noble qualities of his Jewish tribe as the *Iliad* of the Arabs, the newspaper *Dijla* quoted the opening verse as a proof of the true Arabness of Jews in Iraq.³⁵ On 18 July 1921, one month before his coronation as King of Iraq, Amir Fayṣal (1883–1933), when addressing Jewish community leaders, said:

لا شيء في عرف الوطنية اسمه مسلم ومسيحي وإسرائيلي، بل هناك شيء يقال له العراق [...] إني أطلب من أبناء وطني العراقيين أن لا يكونوا إلا عراقيين لأننا نرجع إلى أرومة واحدة ودوحة واحدة هي دوحة جدنا سام وكلنا منسوبون إلى العنصر السامي ولا فرق في ذلك بين المسلم والمسيحي واليهودي [...] وليس لنا اليوم إلا واسطة القومية القوية التأثير.

In the vocabulary of patriotism, there is no such thing as Jew, a Muslim, or a Christian. There is simply one thing called Iraq [...] I ask all the Iraqi children of my homeland to be just Iraqis, because we all belong to one origin and one tree, the tree of our ancestor Shem, and all of us related to the Semitic root, which makes no distinction between Muslim, Christian or Jew [...] Today we have but one means [to our end]: influential patriotism.³⁶

³² Rejwan 1985: 210.

³³ Kedourie 1989: 21.

³⁴ *Midstream*, February–March 2001: 14.

³⁵ *Dijla* 8, 3 July 1921.

³⁶ The original text was first published in *al-ʿIrāq*, 19 July 1921. For the text of the speech, see Fayṣal ibn al-Ḥusayn fī khuṭabihī wa-aqwālīhī. Baghdād: Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥukūma (1945: 246–249). In an address Fayṣal had delivered before the Arab Club in Aleppo on 9 June 1919, he had already emphasized that 'there are no religions or sects, for we were Arab before Moses, Mohammed, Jesus, and Abraham. We Arabs are bound together in life, separated only by death. There is no division among us except when we are buried' (al-Ḥuṣrī 1965: 231 [English translation according to al-Ḥuṣrī 1966: 113]). In January 1919, Fayṣal signed with Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), who acted on behalf of the Zionist Organization, the Fayṣal-Weizmann Agreement (for the text of the agreement, see Antonius [1938: 437–439]). Although attempts have been made to marginalize Fayṣal's readiness

In a poem addressing the British High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel (1870–1963), the Iraqi poet Maʿrūf al-Ruṣāfī (1875–1945) wrote: ‘The two people are but close relatives; in their language is the proof.’³⁷ The poem was composed after al-Ruṣāfī had attended on 13 December 1920, in Jerusalem a lecture on the medieval Andalusian Arab civilization delivered by the Jewish scholar Professor Avraham Shalom Yehuda (1887–1951). The lecture, at the invitation of the Mayor Rāghib al-Nashāshībī (1881–1951) of Jerusalem, was given in literary standard Arabic.³⁸ Testifying before the League of Nations’ Mandate Commission, the High Commissioner for Iraq declared that he ‘had never found such tolerance of others’ races and religions as in Iraq’.³⁹

Following the escalation of the national conflict in Palestine, the distinctions made by early Arab nationalists between the Jewish religion and political Zionism began to blur, especially after 1936, with the advent of Nazi propaganda and when Iraqi support for the Palestinians was joined with pan-Arab foreign policy. On 1–2 June 1941, following the attempted *coup d’état* by the pro-Nazi Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī (1892–1965), they were victims of the *Farhūd*, when 149 of them were killed and Jewish property was looted.⁴⁰ Following the obfuscation of their role in Iraqi society by implying doubts about their loyalty, and as their life became increasingly intolerable, Jews, especially young men, were forced to choose new directions for their future. Whether as a committed way of struggle or as a kind of escapism, the shift in their thinking pushed them into joining the Zionist movement or the Communist underground. While the first struggled for the establishment of an independent Jewish state, the latter fought against the corrupt, dictatorial regime and for equal rights for all minorities. In the early 1950s, most of the Jewish-Iraqi poets, writers, and intellectuals left Iraq among the mass immigration to Israel; a much smaller number decided to seek their future in the West—only a few chose to stay in Iraq.

Before referring to the changes in the concept of identity and belonging among the Arabized Jews, especially the Iraqi-Baghdadi intellectuals

at the time to accept the Zionist programs, even considering the agreement as a failed attempt ‘to secure by fair or unfair means an Arab endorsement of the Balfour Declaration’ (for example, Tibawi [1972: 315–323]), no one, to my knowledge, has gone so far as to doubt Fayṣal’s good will and sincere intentions.

³⁷ See al-Ruṣāfī (1986: II, 327–331).

³⁸ Al-Ruṣāfī spent several years in Jerusalem (1918–1921) after he had accepted a job at the local Teachers’ Training College.

³⁹ Luks 1977: 32.

⁴⁰ On the *Farhūd* see Snir (2005 [index]); and Yehuda (2017: 249–281) (providing the names of the 141 Jews killed in Baghdad and the eight Jews killed in other cities).

among them, it is necessary to present some points related to the general issue of the fragmentation of the concept of identity in the previous century.

3 Arabized Jews between interpellation and exclusion⁴¹

In the last section of his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)' (1971),⁴² the French Marxist philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser (1918–1990) coined the term 'interpellation', theorizing the constitutive process by which individuals acknowledge and respond to ideologies, thereby recognizing themselves as subjects. Stating that (a) 'there is no practice except by and in an ideology' and (b) 'there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects', Althusser comes to his central thesis that 'ideology interpellates individuals as subjects'.⁴³ To be interpellated is to identify with a particular idea or identity; it is the process by which you recognize yourself to belong to a particular identity. The process of identification creates identity, and we recognize ourselves when we are hailed—you identify me, and I become that 'me' that you have identified. I know that it is me who is being called, as I unconsciously accept the subject position and my subjectivity is thus created or modified—it is as if I had always-already been there. By 'subjectivity', I mean the inner life processes and affective states as they have been expressed in words, images, institutions, and behaviors through which people actually represent themselves to themselves and to one another. This understanding is accompanied by the awareness that subjects are themselves unfinished and unfinishable, as well as by the recognition that, because individuals are members of cross-cutting and often conflicting associations, subjectivity characterization shifts widely between multiple perspectives and no single analytic framework can fully account for the inner lives of people and their intersubjective relations.⁴⁴ When we recognize that we are being spoken to, we not only engage more deeply with the hailing, we also accept the social role being offered to us: young, white, female, gay, athletic, liberal, etc. And in the context of our present study we have Arab, Jew, Muslim, Israeli, Zionist, as well as Mizrahi, Levantine, Oriental, Sephardi, Black, etc. Speaking about terminology, it should be noted

⁴¹ This section first appeared in Snir (2021: 123–154), but is included here in shortened version for the sake of the clarity of the analysis.

⁴² Althusser 1971: 121–173.

⁴³ Althusser 1971: 160.

⁴⁴ Based on Biehl et al. (2007: 1–23 [introduction]). For tracing the history of some of the philosophical insights that have shaped current understandings of subjectivity, see Rorty (2007: 34–51).

that while the term 'Mizrahi' had been invented by the systems of power, it has also been used as a subversive catchword by radical militant Middle Eastern and North African Jewish intellectuals and activists to express resistance to the conception of Israel as a Zionist and Western country.⁴⁵ For the purpose of my investigation into the identities of Arabized Jews, I have broadened the scope of interpellation to encompass all human interactions.

Throughout the last three or four decades, scholars have pointed out the veritable discursive explosion around the concept of identity: the critique of the self-sustaining subject at the center of post-Cartesian Western metaphysics has been comprehensively advanced in philosophy; the question of subjectivity and its unconscious processes of formation has been developed within the discourse of a psychoanalytically influenced feminism and cultural criticism; the endlessly performative self has been advanced in celebratory variants of postmodernism; within the anti-essentialist critique of ethnic, racial, and national conceptions of cultural identity and the 'politics of location', some adventurous theoretical conceptions have been sketched in their most grounded forms. What, then, 'is the need', asks the Jamaican-born cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1932–2014) in 1996, 'for a further debate about 'identity'? Who needs it?'⁴⁶ In 2009, however, the Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (1925–2017) still referred to the same 'discursive explosion' around the concept of identity that has even 'triggered an avalanche'.⁴⁷

In the labyrinths of these theoretical and sometimes bewildering discussions about identity, one can notice that most deliberations have been conducted around two models: the first assumes that there is an essential content to any identity that is defined by a common origin or a common structure of experience. The second one, which stands at the center of the present study, emphasizes the impossibility of fully separate distinct identities. Any identity depends upon its difference from some other identity—'identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative', writes Hall, 'it has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself'.⁴⁸ Identity is thus always a temporary and unstable effect of relations that define identities by marking differences, which means that the multiplicity

⁴⁵ According to Ella Shohat, one of the first of these radical thinkers, the aim is 'to re-link [our]selves with the history and culture of the Arab and Muslim world, after the brutal rupture experienced since the foundation of Israel' (1992: 121–143 [the quotation is from 141, n. 4]). See also Levy (2009: 127–172).

⁴⁶ Hall 1996: 1.

⁴⁷ Bauman 2009: 1.

⁴⁸ Hall 1991: 21.

of identities and differences and the emphasis on connections or articulations between the fragments of or differences in identities are inevitable. While the identity of someone cannot be explored or challenged without a simultaneous investigation of another, this is rarely the case in practice and most investigations in cultural studies deal with the construction of subaltern, marginalized, or dominated identities, and rarely are the two ever studied together, as mutually constitutive, as the theory would seem to dictate. All identities are thus only 'points of temporary attachment to the subject position which discursive practices construct for us'.⁴⁹ Because we are always in the process of being exposed to new interpellating machines and processes, reacting always consciously *and* unconsciously to them with our own complicated and unique singular subjectivities, there is no escape from elusiveness and fluidity. Bauman describes contemporary society as a place in which everything is elusive, and where the disorientation and insecurity caused by living in society cannot be solved by parading past certainties and established systems.⁵⁰ In other words, identities deal with the past only on the exterior level, simply because they cannot be but present- and future-oriented projects: they are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than in the process being: it is not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as 'what we might become', 'how we have been represented', and 'how that bears on how we might represent ourselves'.⁵¹

In the modern history of the Iraqi Jews, we may notice some processes that led already around the middle of twentieth century to the creation of embryonic forms of such singular subjectivities that some decades later would be celebrated globally among intellectual and academic circles in the West. The following analysis is based on an investigation of the subjectivities and singularities of more than 100 Iraqi-Jewish intellectuals, writers, and artists.⁵² I have a solid basis for the hypothesis that the same developments have occurred among other communities of Arabized Jews as well. Because the Iraqi Jews have been the topic of my studies during the last three decades, I will concentrate here on them. Also, I will try to trace the exclusionary operations that the Iraqi Jews experienced during the last century. 'Once it is understood that subjects are formed through exclusionary operations', says the feminist theorist Joan Wallach Scott (b. 1941), 'it becomes necessary to trace the operations of that con-

⁴⁹ Hall 1996: 5–6.

⁵⁰ Bauman 2004; 2007.

⁵¹ Hall 1996: 4.

⁵² On these subjectivities, see my publications on the Iraqi Jews published during the last two decades, especially Snir (2005; 2015; 2019a).

struction and erasure'.⁵³ The Iraqi Jews as a whole experienced during the twentieth century at least four major processes of collective interpellation, two of them were at the same time intense exclusionary operations and erasure as well:

1. Hailing the Iraqi Jews as Arabs
2. Hailing the Iraqi Jews as 'Zionist' (= first exclusion)
3. Hailing the Iraqi Jews as 'Arabs' (= second exclusion)
4. Hailing the Iraqi Jews as one side in a binary monolithic category

The quotation marks around 'Zionist' and 'Arabs' in the second and third processes (the first and the second operations of exclusion) mean that, in each case, the hailing ascribed to them a specific identity while at the same time ignoring whether the subjectivities of the interpellated people were at all ready to positively respond to such a hailing. I have focused my investigations on the ways in which Iraqi Jews articulated their cultural preferences, defined their identities, and expressed their identification and belonging before and after their immigration to Israel. In other words, I am interested more in their subjectivities and less in the identities ascribed to them.

The first process was hailing the Iraqi Jews as Arabs. From the late nineteenth century and even after the 1917 Balfour Declaration, the Jews living in Arab societies had been hailed, in one way or another, as Arabs; they were considered part of the Arab collective, if only from the linguistic respect—they spoke Arabic. In the conclusion to his four-volume *Ta'rikh al-Ṣiḥāfa al-'Arabiyya* (History of the Arab Press), the pioneer scholar of Arabic journalism Philip de Ṭarrāzī (1865–1956) wrote in 1933 about Islam, Christianity, and Judaism as 'the leading religions to which the Arabic writers of the world belong'.⁵⁴ The Balfour Declaration was considered by many Arabized Jews as encapsulating the vision and hopes of only European Ashkenazi Jews. For most of the Iraqi Jews, the idea of establishing a Jewish nation-state in Palestine was at the time a far-off cloud, totally undesired. Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson (1884–1940), the Acting Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia (1918–1920), wrote in 1936 that he discussed the Declaration with several members of the Jewish community and they remarked that Palestine was a poor country and that Jerusalem was a bad town to live in. Compared with Palestine, Mesopotamia was a paradise. 'This is the Garden of Eden', said one of the Jews, 'it is from this country that Adam was driven forth—give us a good government and

⁵³ Nicholson 1995: 12.

⁵⁴ Ṭarrāzī 1933: IV, 486–487.

we will make this country flourish—for us Mesopotamia is a home, a national home to which the Jews of Bombay and Persia and Turkey will be glad to come. Here shall be liberty and with it opportunity! In Palestine there may be liberty, but there will be no opportunity'.⁵⁵

The real national vision of most of the Iraqi Jews at the time, certainly of the intellectual secular elite, was Iraqi and Arab. It was a vision that had its roots in the nineteenth century with the start of the process of secularization and when cultural barriers between the Jews and the wider local society had begun to crumble. The connection between interpellation, rhetoric, and identity was expressed, for example, by Emir Fayṣal (1883–1933) in his speech on 18 July 1921, one month before his coronation as King of Iraq, before the Jewish community leaders, in which he emphasized that 'there is no such thing as Jew, a Muslim, or a Christian. There is simply one thing called Iraq'. He asked 'all the Iraqi children of my homeland to be just Iraqis, because we all belong to one origin and one tree, the tree of our ancestor Shem, and all of us are related to the Semitic root, which makes no distinction between Muslim, Christian or Jew'.⁵⁶ Fayṣal's aim was to create 'an independent strong Arab state, which will be a cornerstone for Arab unity'—the Jewish citizens were an integral part of that vision. Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī (1880–1968), Director General of Education in Iraq (1923–1927) and Arab nationalism's first true ideologue, argued that 'every person who is related to the Arab lands and speaks Arabic is an Arab'.⁵⁷ The Iraqi constitution of 21 March 1925 (al-Qānūn al-Asāsī al-ʿIrāqī) stated that 'there is no difference between the Iraqi people in rights before the law, even if they belong to different nationalities, religions and languages'.⁵⁸

It is thus not surprising to find the intellectual secular elite of the Jews in Iraq rallying behind the efforts to make it a state for all its citizens—Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Even in the late 1930s, Iraqi-Jewish educator 'Ezra Ḥaddād (1900–1972) declared that 'we are Arabs before we are Jews' (*naḥnu 'Arab qabla an nakūna yahūda*).⁵⁹ On 30 July 1938, his compatriot, the poet Anwar Shā'ul (1904–1984), emphasized the Arabism

⁵⁵ Wilson 1936: I, 305–306. Wilson writes afterwards: 'Vain words, no doubt, but they concealed perhaps the seeds of economic truth'. This comment, however, was presumably added in retrospect in the light of the escalation in the national conflict in the Middle East and the increasing tension between the Jews and the Iraqi authorities.

⁵⁶ The original text was first published in *al-ʿIrāq*, 19 July 1921. See also above.

⁵⁷ See al-Ḥuṣrī 1965 [1955]: 12.

⁵⁸ For the text of the constitution, see al-Ḥusnī (1974: I, 319–334 [quotation is on 319]).

⁵⁹ Rejwan 1985: 219.

of the Iraqi Jews and their rejection of Zionism.⁶⁰ Another Iraqi-Jewish writer, Ya'qūb Balbūl (1920–2003), indicated that 'a Jewish youth in the Arab countries expects nothing from Zionism other than colonialism and domination'.⁶¹ The English historian of Lebanese origin Albert H. Hourani (1915–1993) wrote in 1947 that 'the Iraqi Jews, like the Oriental Jews, are for the most part not Zionists by conviction; some of them indeed profess to Arab nationalism and are hostile to Zionism'.⁶² In his survey of Jewish communities in the Muslim countries of the Middle East, published in 1950, German Marxian scholar and sociologist Siegfried Landshut (1897–1968) wrote that, except for a natural interest in developments in Palestine, there has never in Iraq been any feeling of solidarity with the political aspirations of Zionism.⁶³ Considering themselves an integral part of Arab-Muslim culture and the Iraqi nation, Iraqi Jews were full of confidence that Iraq was their only homeland and that the Jewish community in Iraq would endure, as Iraqi-Jewish writer Shālom Darwish (1913–1997) was to put it, 'to the days of the Messiah'.⁶⁴

The second process was hailing the Iraqi Jews as 'Zionist'. The German sociologist Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966) makes a distinction between two kinds of communities: on the one hand, there are 'communities of life and fate', whose members 'live together in an indissoluble attachment rather than being welded together solely by ideas or various principles'. Instances of this kind are the family and the nation: they envelop any person born into them just the way he is, from his birth through his death and even beyond his death. These communities, whose origins and purposes are irrational, devote themselves to an 'endless multiplicity of objectives, though they never find their definitive significance in any of them'. On the other hand, there are those communities whose accord is based on an idea with which they arise and perish. Their unity 'is not an imminent part of organic, growing life, but is fully encompassed by a specific concept that will come to life through them'.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Darwaza 1993: III, 545.

⁶¹ *Al-Akhbār*, 21 July 1938; cited in Ma'rūf (1976: II, 70), and Rejwan (1985: 219). It was argued that notices published by well-known Jews in the Iraqi press during the 1930s declaring that they were loyal to their motherland and that they had no connections with Zionist activities were initiated by the authorities against the background of the anti-Jewish atmosphere created following the disturbances in Palestine (Kedourie 1989: 28–29). The same, of course, might be said about the testimonies included in *Iraqi Jews Speak for Themselves*. Baghdad: Dar al-Jumhuriyah Press (1969).

⁶² Hourani 1947: 104.

⁶³ Landshut 1950: 45.

⁶⁴ Darwish 1980: 83.

⁶⁵ Kracauer 1995: 144.

For the Jews, Iraqi society was certainly of the first kind: it was a community of life and fate whose members had been living together by means of an indissoluble attachment. Suddenly, however, that community was denied to them and they were excluded as the 'Others'—they were not considered anymore *true* Iraqis and *real* Arabs. It was the Balfour Declaration that started a process that interpellated the Iraqi Jews into Zionism while at the same time interpellating the Arab Muslims and Christians as a unified Arab community calling upon themselves to operate exclusionary operations against Jews. Because of the escalation of the Arab-Jewish conflict over Palestine during the late 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, the Iraqi-Arab identity of the Jews, which had been firmly consolidated during the 1920s and 1930s, underwent a speedy fragmentation in a way that left them no alternative but to emigrate. Among the immigrants to Israel we can hardly find even one, no matter what his political point or view, who did not lament that exclusion. Here, it should be noted that the controversy over whether the Arabized Jews lived before the Balfour Declaration in perfect harmony with Muslims and Christians or whether this is only a myth current among left-wing intellectuals is irrelevant. At any event, unlike popular conceptions, the well-known myth of a 'Golden Age' and harmonious Muslim-Jewish relations prior to the rise of Zionism as well as the 'neo-lachrymose' counter-myth, which views Jewish history under Arab Islam as a story of intolerance, persecution, and an unending nightmare of oppression and humiliation are both highly exaggerated, and no serious professional scholar of Jewish history under Islam holds to either of them.⁶⁶

After the immigration of the Iraqi Jews to Israel, their subjectivities, and certainly those of their offspring, were gradually 'enriched' by new components of identity, the most outstanding of which were the Zionist, the Israeli, and the Hebrew layers of identity. No Arabized Jew who immigrated to Israel could resist the strong interpellating processes administered by the state, even not those in whose subjectivities the Arab component was dominant. The new Zionist-Israeli rhetoric of identity overwhelmingly swept up all of them. The Zionist and Israeli processes of interpellation lead us to both the third and fourth processes of interpellation that the Iraqi Jews have experienced. These processes were somehow temporally overlapping, though I refer to them here as two dif-

⁶⁶ On this issue and the question about whether the Arabized Jews suffered discrimination as a minority within Muslim society or enjoyed a perfect symbiotic relationship, see the debate in *Tikkun*: Cohen (1991: 55–60); Stillman (1991: 60–64). Joel Beinin rejects both approaches and opts instead for a Marxist interpretation of the political events and the question of identity (see especially Beinin [1998: 1–28]).

ferent processes. The third process was the hailing of them as a population in need of 'education' due to their *Arabness* (= primitiveness), and, at the same time, the fourth process was the hailing of them, together with all other communities of Arabized Jews in Israel, as a monolithic population.

The third process was the hailing of the Iraqi Jews as 'Arabs'. This process of interpellation is thus the second exclusion of the Iraqi Jews, and this time it was in Israel. After their exclusion in Iraq, and after the Iraqi authorities deprived them of claiming property rights left at home, they realized that they were excluded again, and now precisely because of their Arabness, by none other than their coreligionists, the Ashkenazim, who had been involved in the construction of the Israeli state and Hebrew society from an earlier stage. Before their immigration, they had found themselves excluded because of their *Jewish* identity, and now, in Israel, they found themselves excluded because of their *Arab* identity. Both exclusions were based on a kind of unspoken agreement and a substantial identification of interests between both national movements, Zionism and Arab nationalism, for they saw *Jewishness* as equated with *Zionism* and later even with *Israelines* to the point that the three identities came to be considered by both movements as virtually synonymous. In order to be part of the new Israeli-Jewish-Zionist collective, the immigrants were encouraged to change their Arab names, to stop using Arabic in public spaces, to train themselves to adopt Israeli-Hebrew culture, to remodel their family patterns, and to 'refine' their lifestyles. In retrospect, many of the Arabized Jews would consider this process as a 'cultural ethnic cleansing'.⁶⁷ They were Jews, and they immigrated to the state of the Jews, but they discovered that Israeli society was not for them a community in which they could live together with the others, in Kracauer's terms, in 'an indissoluble attachment'. For most of them, certainly after their very immigration, the bond with the other Jewish majority members was only a bond of religion.

But there was another process, simultaneous and overlapping, to that process: the second exclusion was accompanied by labeling the immigrants as one side in an evaluative binary. The fourth process was hailing the Iraqi Jews as 'Arabs'. For the purpose of my argumentation, there is no difference if the monolithic category is Sephardim, *Edot Mizrah*, Mizrahim, Easterners, Orientals, Levantines, or any derogatory name like Blacks, Franks, or the journalist Arye Gelblum's (1921–1993) description of one community of Arabized Jews as 'people whose primitivism is at a peak, whose level of knowledge is one of virtually absolute ignorance,

⁶⁷ For example, Rabeeya (2000: 27).

and worse, who have little talent for understanding anything intellectual'.⁶⁸ Now, it is widely recognized that any such monolithic category is inadequate, but this insight of the inadequateness of the monolithic hailing had been always a matter of fact among all communities of Arabized Jews, certainly among the Iraqis. In their reflections on the study of Middle Eastern Jewries within the context of Israeli society, the Israeli scholars Harvey E. Goldberg (b. 1939) and Chen Bram (b. 1962) showed how 'analysis based on explicit and implicit binary models skews the understanding of some historical developments'. Furthermore, 'critical approaches have provided useful insights into how hegemonic structures have excluded Jews defined as 'Eastern,' but have been less successful in documentation and grasping developments reflecting the distinctiveness and creative categories and assumptions of those groups themselves'.⁶⁹ From my investigations into the identities of the Arabized Jews from Iraq—and I do not have any reason to believe that something fundamentally different happened with Arabized Jews emigrating from other places—it is clear that Goldberg and Bram were too cautious in their critical comments about the binary-oriented analytical methods and critical approaches of other scholars.

Such monolithic categories were never adopted by Arabized Jews in the way they were meant to interpellate and hail them by the systems of power. From the point of view of the Iraqi Jews, this process of interpellation has been the weakest among all four processes. But it has served the aims of the state and of the dominant and hegemonic systems and structures, precisely as any exclusionary operations serve the aims of any state or any system of power. The influence of such a process was very significant, but by no means did it go in the direction that the interpellating systems desired, particularly because it coincided with the above-mentioned global processes that created the tendency to escape into inessential subjectivities and to prefer singularities, and also because it did not take into account the double exclusion of the previous two processes. Unfortunately, for political and ideological reasons, scholars have preferred mostly so far to emphasize only one side of that double exclusion—either that exercised in the Arab countries before the Jews' immigration, or that exercised in Israel after their immigration. Measured in their combined effect, the significance of both exclusionary operations cannot be underestimated. Most of the Iraqi Jews realized that what was very convenient for the state might be convenient for them as well as long as they can behave as singularities. What is the dif-

⁶⁸ *Haaretz*, 22 April 1949.

⁶⁹ Goldberg and Bram 2007: 227–256 (quotations are on 242 and 247, respectively).

ference if I am personally hailed as Mizrahi, Sephardic, Easterner, ‘*Edot Mizrah*’, Iraqi, Frank, Black, or any other identity ascribed to me (and in person I have faced *all* those very labels), if I insist in my personal life to behave according to my own singularity without affirming, in my own subjectivity, any stable identity?

4 Language and identity

The global developments were not fully effective during the middle of the twentieth century, but the contemporary political, social, and cultural circumstances had prepared the Iraqi Jews to gradually develop a negative sensitivity toward the notion of a stable identity. If it were only the first exclusion, it would have been sufficient for them to be aware that belonging and identity were not set in stone, and that they were not secured by a lifelong guarantee. But what were they to expect after being excluded again in their very promised homeland, a land ‘promised’ by both those who pulled them—the Zionists—as well as by those who pushed them—the Iraqi authorities and the Arab national activists? Was there any chance for them to think that belonging and identity were set in stone? Following that very double exclusion, and after adapting and adjusting to the new Israeli society, they found themselves, separately and not collectively, preferring to assert their own singularities and, at the same time, to reject any essential identity. To paraphrase a declaration by writer Sami Michael (b. 1926), each chose to build his own unique ‘state’ consisting of only one citizen—himself.⁷⁰ During less than half a century, the Iraqi Jews had witnessed a rapid process by which their Iraqi-Arab-Jewish identity was firmly consolidated (1920s–1940s), which was only to be followed by another process that resulted in its speedy fragmentation (1950–1951). Many hoped that their uprooting from Iraq might be a blessing in disguise, dreaming that their immigration to the new Jewish land would guarantee for them a full integration into a unified new Israeli-Jewish identity without renouncing their Arabness. Instead of that, they were left excluded from both old and new identities.

⁷⁰ In the documentary film *Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs—The Iraqi Connection* (produced by Dschoint Ventschr, Zurich, 2002), Michael says: ‘When I first arrived here in Israel, I decided to found a state called [the State of] Sami Michael. [There has been] an ongoing fight between [the State of] Israel and [the State of] Myself. Of course, both the state and myself wanted to be [victorious]. But today I can say that I have won’ (this is the written translation of his Arabic original text, which appears in the subtitles of the film with necessary modifications. The exact wording of the original Arabic spoken text was slightly different). On the film, made by the Iraqi Shiite exile filmmaker Samir Jamāl al-Dīn (b. 1955), see Tsoffar (2006: 133–143), and Snir (2015: 140, 147, 174).

It was thus the absurdity of both aforementioned exclusionary operations that paved the way to the rejection of the notion of fixed identity, simply because each of these operations was aiming at the heart of a *major* component of their Iraqi-Jewish identity: in Iraq during the late 1940s, precisely when the Jews felt themselves *more Arab and Iraqi than Jewish*, they were excluded as the Other in a way that left them no alternative but to immigrate to the state of the Jews. In Israel, precisely when they should have felt themselves *more Jewish than Arab and Iraqi*, they were excluded as the Other because they were Iraqis and Arabs. But, now, unlike the first exclusion, there was no another abode that would serve as a new promised haven. The political circumstances in the Middle East, which were the direct cause of that double exclusion, accelerated among many of the immigrants a tendency, which at the time was globally and universally still in its infancy, to reject in principle the notion of stable and fixed identities, to assert their particular singularities, and to search for alternative forms of identification, mostly various kinds of inessential solidarities and sense of belonging. The local, regional, and global developments, sometimes simultaneous and overlapping, served as a fertile ground for the formation among many of them of such a form of subjectivity that responded to the natural human need for identification and belonging and that, at the same time, was flexible enough to provide them with some shield against additional frustrations and disappointments. Turning to their own singularity was their preferred option but not by default. It was a conscious choice that fit the local, global, and, in most cases, personal circumstances of the Iraqi Jews.

We can see the same process even with the Iraqi-Jewish intellectuals who preferred to immigrate to the West, the prominent among them was the Iraqi-Jewish author Naïm Kattan (1928–2021) whose literary and intellectual experience has been another testimony to demise of Arab-Jewish culture and identity. Kattan was the only Iraqi-Jewish author who achieved an international literary reputation, even more than the Iraqi-Jewish authors in Israel who continued to write in Arabic or shifted to writing in Hebrew. His quasi-autobiographical novel *Adieu, Babylone* (1975)⁷¹ that attempted to recapture and reinvent salient moments of

⁷¹ The novel was first published in French (Kattan 1975) and appeared in 1976 in an English translation (Kattan 1980 [1976]). Asked why *Farewell, Babylone* and not *Farewell, Baghdad* as a title for the novel, Kattan said that ‘it was not *Farewell, Baghdad* because Baghdad continues, Iraq continues. But Babylon has ended’ (Dahab 2009: 71). In 2005, a new English edition was published, this time with an added subtitle, *Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad* (Kattan 2005). Later, Kattan added two additional volumes, which presented a sort of ‘transcontinental trilogy’: the second volume of the trilogy, *Les Fruits arrachés* (Kattan 1977), was translated in 1979 under the title *Paris Interlude* (Kattan 1979),

the unnamed narrator's life includes, for example, a dramatization of the aforementioned *Farhūd* pogrom carried out against Jews in June 1941. Kattan was then only 13 but even these bloody events did by no means change his own Iraqi patriotism and preferences of Iraqi nationalism and Arab culture: 'We were united to our Muslim and Christian brothers. At last we were going to forget our distinguishing marks, tear down fences. We would reject any grounds for discord, refuse to assign malicious intentions to our companions'.⁷² Referring to his activities at the time, Kattan saw himself as a faithful son of the new Iraqi nation: 'I wrote in Arabic and considered myself as among the creators of the literature in my homeland'.⁷³ However, after traveling to Paris and then his settling down in Montreal, he stopped writing in Arabic, shifted to French and integrating into the Canadian society, he became one of the most prominent Jewish-Francophone writers: Kattan may be compared only to the North-African Jewish authors like the Egyptian-French writer and poet Edmond Jabès (1912–1991), the French-Tunisian writer Albert Memmi (1920–2020), and the Algerian-French writer and translator Albert Bensoussan (b. 1935).

Kattan's shift to writing in French, which was so decisive that three of his books were translated into Arabic without any involvement on his behalf,⁷⁴ was accompanied by what, in retrospect, seems to be a personal process of consciously developing a more complicated enriched identity under the impact of the new temporal and spatial circumstances in his new exile in which he was living and active in. After his immigration from

while the third volume, *La Fiancée promise* (Kattan 1983) has yet to be translated into English. The second volume of the trilogy sees the protagonist narrator, Meir—he is never named in the first volume—in Paris, studying at the Sorbonne, while the third volume is about protagonist's 1954 immigration to Canada, where he settles and works in Ottawa and in Montréal (on the trilogy, see Dahab [2009: 70–78]).

⁷² Kattan 1980: 149.

⁷³ Qaṭṭān 1970: 166–167; 1997: 150.

⁷⁴ Two of Kattan's novels were translated into Arabic by the Tunisian poet Ādam Faṭḥī (b. 1957) (Qaṭṭān 1999 [unfortunately Michel Tournier's preface was omitted from the Arabic version]; and Qaṭṭān 2006 (The original is Kattan 1991)—the Arabic versions of both novels are accurate and most readable, moreover, the reader does not feel that the original novels had been written in French and not in Arabic. The fact that the author is known as a Jewish writer and that his name does not leave any doubt as for his religious affiliation have made the circulation and reading of both novels very limited, as happened with all Arabic fiction written during the twentieth century by Jews. Also, all critics who have written about the novels by no means referred to their poetic traits and were satisfied in general with only the discussion of these aspects related to Kattan as Jewish author who immigrated from Iraq. If the novels had been published by Iraqi Muslim or Christian author, they would have been probably regarded among the canonical Arabic novels of the twentieth century.

Baghdad, Kattan frequently emphasized the need of any human being to change frequently fixed spaces and to prefer fluidity of identities such as in his statement: 'I do not accept the fixity of safe places or the comfort of certitudes'.⁷⁵ Furthermore, unlike his tendency while in Baghdad to distant himself from Jewish religion and to stress his Iraqi patriotism and Arab cultural preferences, the French-Canadian cultural and spatial identity paradoxically strengthened the Jewish cultural layers of Kattan's own identity mainly because of the attitude towards him and the expectations of the intellectual French-Canadian-Quebecer community he had gladly joined. One can hardly think of Kattan as an exile in Montreal, certainly not from the point of view of his own feeling, as it was illustrated in his writing and sayings. The Jewish writer of Egyptian origin André Aciman (b. 1951) defines exile not as someone who just has lost his home but 'someone who can't find another, who can't think of another. [...] Some people bring exile with them the way they bring it upon themselves wherever they go'.⁷⁶ Unlike Aciman, Kattan found another home, another language and tried *not* to bring his exile to his new physical, social, intellectual, cultural, and literary space. To sum up, Kattan's shifting to writing in French was accompanied by a process of enriching his own personal identity: from being a secular Jew with a solid fixed Arab-Iraqi identity in Baghdad, he gradually adopted since he arrived in Montreal a Canadian-Quebecer-Jewish French-Arab-Iraqi fluid subjectivity.

Comparing Kattan with the aforementioned Iraqi-Jewish-Israeli writer Sammy Michael (b. 1926), who immigrated to Israel and shifted to writing in Hebrew, Stephanie Tara Schwartz writes that Kattan's *Adieu, Babylone* and Michael's *Ḥasūt* [*Refuge*] (1977)⁷⁷ elaborate the difficulties of Arabized Jews fitting into the idea of Jews as a homogeneous group:

These works demonstrate the tension of being dispersed from two homelands and the impossibility of ever resolving the conflict between two relationships without breaking down the 'stable' boundaries of territory in land, identity, and thought. In both works the writer is proffered as a character that navigates across chaos without permanently settling in any territory. Only in loneliness does the character realize the constructedness of territories of identity that prohibits the possibility of a permanent refuge in an imagined homeland. The acknowledgment of this loneliness, of one's unsettledness in the chaos of all possibilities, and of ideas in the madness

⁷⁵ Kattan 1971 (1970): 181; 1972: 188 (English translation); Qaṭṭān 1997: 165 (Arabic translation). Cf. Dahab (2009: 87).

⁷⁶ Aciman 1999: 22.

⁷⁷ Michael 1977.

of conversation is necessary to enable thinking beyond the confinement of exclusionary territories such as ‘Arab’ versus ‘Jew’.⁷⁸

Michael’s fluidity was expressed in many of his literary works as well as in his various activities, declarations, and statements from the time he had immigrated to Israel. One of the most prominent of his declarations was the one he made in the aforementioned documentary film *Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs—The Iraqi Connection* (2002):

When I first arrived here in Israel, I decided to found a state called ‘Sammy Michael’. [There has been] an ongoing fight between [the State of] Israel and [the state of] myself. Of course, both the state and myself wanted to be [victorious]. But today I can say that I have won.⁷⁹

It seems that Kattan also established another *state* called ‘Naïm Kattan’, just as we may refer to many other ‘states’ founded by various other Iraqi-Jewish intellectuals during the second half of the previous century.

I believe that the aforementioned analysis of the subjectivities of the Iraqi Jews is applicable as well, in one way or another, to other immigrants from Arab countries. There are of course significant differences between the Iraqi Jews and other Arabized immigrants, especially with regard to their attitude toward the Arabic language and Arab culture. But I found that the tendency toward inessential solidarities had *nothing* to do with the Iraqi Jews’ well-known Arab cultural preference: it mainly had to do with the two processes of exclusion, which most—if not all—the Arabized Jews had undergone. Already in the 1950s, three decades before the global/local dialectics could be clearly noticed in Israel as well, most of the intellectuals among the Arabized immigrants felt the same dialectics but threefold: global/regional/local—and these dialectics involved their very existence: as members of the Israeli-Hebrew society, they spoke *Hebrew*, but they were also part of the *Arabic*-speaking Middle East, and, at the same time, they could not escape contemporary *global* developments. Whoever lived this double exclusion could not have adhered to any notion of a stable identity, and, if he wished to survive socially and culturally, he must have thought about the need to be flexible and adapt himself to the changing circumstances, emphasizing his own singularity in which each of the major layers of collective identities, such as Arabness,

⁷⁸ See Schwartz (2010: 92–100).

⁷⁹ This is the written translation of his original Arabic text, which appears in the subtitles of the film, with necessary modifications. The exact wording of the original Arabic spoken text was slightly different.

Jewishness, Hebrewness, Israeliness, Zionism, and Communism, played different roles, in addition various more specific components like gender, profession, hobby, and local environment.

As for the new generation of neo-Arab-Jewish intellectuals, those radical Mizrahi leftist scholars such as Yehouda Shenhav-Shahrabani (b. 1952), Ella Shohat (b. 1959), and Sami Shalom Chetrit (b. 1960) and their followers, it seems that all of them adopted Arab-Jewish or Mizrahi identity as part of their identity politics in Israel, which is not, albeit not exclusively, isolated from what has appeared to be the case during the last decades as switching with the changing winds of fashion. Following the English historian Edward Hallet Carr's (1892–1982) constructive suggestion that one ought to 'to study the historian before you begin to study the facts',⁸⁰ I have studied the 'identities' of the three of the above scholars in the same way I have studied the subjectivities of the Iraqi-Jewish writers and intellectuals during the last century.⁸¹ It is paradoxical that my investigations have led me to one solid conclusion: all of them have been recycling their identities according to changing circumstances, preferring, in one way or another, to adhere, each in their own way, to various inessential solidarities as well. All of them are moving toward what the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (b. 1942) has described as the 'coming community', which is a community of human beings devoid of any stable or fixed identity attached to them. In other words, they are not viewed, and do not see themselves, as belonging to a particular group by virtue of some essential feature of theirs. They do not have any identity in the usual sense of the term: Shenhav-Shahrabani, Shohat, and Chetrit do not think of themselves as having a core essence that is the *sine qua non* of their existence. More than that, even if they speak in favor of Arabism and Arabic, they are excellent examples of how the Arabic language has been gradually disappearing as a language spoken on a daily basis and mastered by Jews.

Proficiency in Arabic can mainly be traced now to two cases: Jews who emigrated from Arab lands having already mastered the language (and their number, of course, is rapidly decreasing), or those who make a living from their knowledge of Arabic whether in the Israeli governmental, educational, or security services (and their number, of course, is always increasing). The Jewish or Israeli canonical elite, among them these very Mizrahi intellectuals, do not see the Arabic language and Arab culture as an intellectual asset, as can be seen from their attitude toward them by their daily life and professional practice. What is more interesting is

⁸⁰ Carr 1965: 32.

⁸¹ See the list of them in Snir (2015: 231–234).

their reluctance to master Arabic or to touch upon Arabic *Belles Lettres*, especially those literary works that were written by Jews. Even those who speak for the importance of reviving the hybrid Arab-Jewish option, their cultural identity is more a political or imported academic tool than an ethnic or cultural one. Although cultural and political identities are not necessarily dichotomous—in fact, they overlap, interact with, and dynamically compose one other—it is paradoxical that the way the radical Mizrahi intellectuals refer to the historical Arab-Jewish identity implies conceiving the notion of identity as essential; at the same time, they play down the fluidity of the subjectivities of Arab-Jewish immigrants.

One of the few exceptions that prove the rule is the aforementioned Yehouda Shenhav-Shahrabani, who in recent years has gradually learned Arabic and started to translate Arabic literature into Hebrew and has even established the *Maktūb* project for translating works of Arabic literature and culture and for making them accessible to Israeli readers. The project, an initiative of translators and scholars of Arabic, both Jews and Palestinians, grew out of the translators' forum that was established at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute in 2015. The project offers 'a hybrid model in which Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Arabs translate together through dialogue and speech, with linguistic flexibility and a multiplicity of versions intended to connect, instead of dividing the linguistic space and breaking the linear and delayed connection between source and translation'.⁸² However, the fact that this project published many books in Hebrew translation but nobody has presented yet any critical and serious assessment of its conception and literary products, despite its fundamental shortcomings and the level of some of the translations, is another testimony to the demise of Arab-Jewish identity culture.⁸³

5 Biased scholarship discourse

Arabic literature produced by Jews is another victim of the conflict that has been and continues to be played out in Palestine, especially following the disappearance of the distinction between 'Jew' and 'Zionist' in Arab

⁸² Shenhav-Shahrabani and Mendel 2019: 13.

⁸³ On the *Maktūb* project, see also the various contributions in *Journal of Levantine Studies* 9 (2), 2019, entitled 'Translation and the Colonial Encounter Maktoob مکتاب', and edited by Yehouda Shenhav-Sharabani and Yonatan Mendel. For a limited critical approach to the project, and not only because the writer does not have any knowledge of Arabic or Arabic literature, see Benni Ziffer's (b. 1953) essay in *Haaretz*, 2 June 2021. Accessed 24 November 2021. <http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/study/.premium-REVIEW-1.9864452>. On Ziffer's tendentious agenda toward Arab culture, see Snir (2019a: 128–129).

nationalist discourse and the attitude of the hegemonic Zionist narrative toward Arab culture. Since the early 1950s, the literature of twentieth-century Arabized Jews produced in Arabic has gradually been relegated entirely to the margins of Arabic literature. Political, national, and cultural reasons are behind that process and behind the paucity of scholarly attention paid to this literature over the years. Now, unfortunately, only rarely can we hear Muslim and Christian authors and intellectuals regret the fact that the Jewish voice in Arab literature has been lost.⁸⁴ Moreover, most of them hardly know that such a voice ever existed. From the scholarly point of view, it is important to emphasize the following:

First, there were Jews that identified themselves as Arab, but no Jewish group has ever declared itself to be an Arab-Jewish community. We can only find retrospective allusions to Jewish communities who lived in Arab societies as such. It goes without saying that no Arab-Jewish community currently exists.

Second, all current references to any historical Arab-Jewish identity do not aim to celebrate the past but only to express present and future ideological and political desires and aspirations.

Third, Arab-Jewish identity has been paradoxically reinvented precisely when those who could have been mostly interpellated as Arabized Jews were in the process of escaping such a recruitment. More than that, the interpellating machine is now being administrated by people who pretend to be such, but never had the potentiality of such an identity.

Fourth, most of the individuals who, during the last decades, have been identifying themselves as Arabized Jews have been only using such an identity as a war cry against Zionism.

⁸⁴ The Lebanese writer and critic Ilyās Khūrī (Elias Khoury) (b. 1948) considers the 'Jewish-Arab voice' a central voice in Arab culture; therefore, its loss has been a severe blow to that culture (interview with Anton Shammās in *Yediot Ahronoth*, 15 March [2002: 60]). Cf. the Arabic version of the interview is in *Mashārīf* (Haifa) 17 (Summer 2002: 237–238). It is ironic that, about six years earlier, Khūrī himself threatened to walk out of the hall during a conference on Arabic literature in Carthage (Tunis) when the Israeli writer Sami Michael, himself an Arabized Jew, was prepared to come up on the stage to give his lecture. Michael's anger was expressed in his essay 'Shylock in Carthage', *The Jewish Quarterly* (Winter 1994–1995: 71–72). Under the title 'The Experience of Oriental Jews in Israel: Have We Lost for Ever the Jews of Iraq?' the Jordanian writer Ibrāhīm Gharāyibā (b. 1962) laments the failure of the Arabs to have the Arabized Jews, especially the Iraqis, as an integral part of Arab society and culture (*al-Ḥayāt* [25 July 2002: 25]. The article appeared in English translation in *The Scribe*, the journal of Babylonian Jewry published by the Jewish Exilarch's Foundation in London, 72 [September 1999: 25]. However, the translation omits some sentences in which the writer argues that the above failure has only served Israeli and Zionist aggression against the Arabs).

Fifth, the radical Mizrahi intellectuals have succeeded to provoke 'real' Arabized Jews, mostly Iraqis (e.g., Nissim Rejwan [1924–2017], Sami Michael [b. 1926], Shimon Ballas [1930–2019], Shmuel Moreh [1932–2017], and Sasson Somekh [1933–2019]), to 'reclaim' their Arab-Jewish identity and to use it as a war cry against those very radical intellectuals themselves. The Arab-Jewish 'veterans' rightly feel that, now when Arab-Jewish identity has become something to be proud of in certain circles, if there is any credit to be given for having such an identity, *they* deserve it more than anyone else.

Sixth, Muslim and Christian Arab intellectuals in general have not been paying any attention to the emergence of the new 'fashion' of Arab-Jewish identity in Israel. If they have done so, it has mostly been for political reasons and as a tool against Israel and Zionism.

From among the many authors of Arab-Jewish literature who have been active since the 1920s, only a few are still alive as the last witnesses of the Muslim-Christian-Jewish Arab symbiosis, and their direct testimonies are now irreplaceable. That is why each literary text can also be considered—at least now when many of us have known and still know some of the Arab-Jewish poets, writers, and intellectuals—as a document, even if literary and fictive, signaling the last stage of Arab-Jewish culture born more than 1,500 years ago in the deserts of pre-Islamic Arabia. The authors, the narrators, and the implied authors of the stories, and the few readers who still remain as well are the last witnesses of the binational savage flood—the unspoken 'agreement' between the two national movements, Zionism and Arab nationalism, to perform a total cleansing of Arab-Jewish culture. The national and political struggle over a small piece of territory has not hindered the two national movements from seeing eye-to-eye in this respect, although I was very much aware of the difference between them: one was inspired by European colonialism, and the other was an anticolonial venture. This flood is currently sweeping away Arab-Jewish culture toward its speedy anticipated cleansing:

هذا ما رأيناه في صباح الفيضان
نحن الشهود على الضفاف.

This is what we saw, the morning of the flood
We, the witnesses on the banks.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Borrowed from the poem 'Shuhūd 'alā al-dīfā' ('Witnesses on the Banks') by the Iraqi poet Sarkūn Būluṣ (1944–2007) (Boulus 1997: 6–9).

As for the scholarship on Arab-Jewish identity and culture, it seems that its fate would be by no means any different. From my scholarly experience during the last 35 years, the number of scholars who have been expressing any interest in investigating this topic and, at the same time, have the necessary skills to do that (including the mastery of Arabic and Hebrew) has been gradually dwindling. Moreover, the scholarship on Arab-Jewish culture has frequently been moving into non-academic spaces, neglecting unbiased scholarly discourse. It is not rare to see now scholars sometimes turning to emotions in order to support perceptions that are scientifically unsubstantiated, creating a discourse directed by ideologically, politically, and socially unrelated motives. Scholars who are still insisting that Jewish-Arab identity is still blooming and that the relevant culture is flourishing among Jews do not act as impartial academics and researchers but adopt post-truth populist strategies.

One example is the controversy surrounding Arab-Jewish identity and culture that has emerged among a research group known as 'Jewish Life in Modern Islamic Contexts', which convened during the 2018–2019 academic year at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Summarizing my experience as a member of this research group, I published a short essay in *Haaretz* entitled 'Arab-Jewish Identity: For a Long Time, There Has Been No Such Thing'.⁸⁶ Four of the fellows of the group, Yoram Meital, Orit Bashkin, Nancy Berg, and Yuval Evri, responded to my article in an essay⁸⁷ that basically uses fallacious straw-man arguments, attributing to me distorted weaker arguments and misrepresenting my positions, only to 'successfully' defeat them. I published a detailed response to their essay in which I referred in detail to their fallacious straw-man arguments,⁸⁸ but, surprisingly (or not), the four scholars responded with another article full (again!) of new fallacious straw-man arguments but this time much more sophisticated in their misleading methods.⁸⁹ Examining *all* the publications of the four scholars, it is beyond any doubt that the response had been written by Bashkin alone, with only minor contributions by the other three—she is the only one whose studies illustrate her ability to produce such a detailed analytical and knowledgeable response on the topic. In order to expose all the false arguments included in the response itself, an article of several dozens of pages is needed, but perhaps it is appropriate to quote here Norman A. Stillman's comment on Bashkin's basic approach

⁸⁶ Snir 2019b.

⁸⁷ *Haaretz*, 25 May 2019.

⁸⁸ See Snir (2020: 317–352).

⁸⁹ *Jama'a: Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (2020): 353–378.

as a cultural studies scholar who interprets texts but does not fully take into account the actual events, people, and politics associated with them:

Bashkin from the very outset acknowledges her intellectual debt to contrarians such Sami Zubaida, Ella Shohat, and Gilbert Achcar, and the ghost of Edward Said often lurks in the background unnamed. Previous historical work on the Jews of the Islamic world is reduced to an oversimplified caricature: ‘a model of harmonious coexistence’ or ‘a tale of perpetual persecution’, and ‘alongside these ideas, an orientalist [sic] interpretation’.⁹⁰ More seriously, there is an element of naïve wishful thinking which constantly views positive examples of Jewish acculturation and patriotism, on the one hand, and the openness of some Arab liberal intellectuals and politicians, on the other, as proving that the dark forces of radical Arab nationalism were not really as powerful as they appeared in retrospect.⁹¹

Another example is the responses to the exhibition ‘Juifs d’Orient, une Histoire Plurimillénaire’ (‘Jews from Islamic Lands, a Multi-Millennial History’) held at the Institut du Monde Arabe (Arab World Institute) in Paris.⁹² In an open letter entitled ‘Culture Is the Salt of the Earth and We Shall Not Allow It to Be Used for Normalizing Oppression’ and signed by more than 260 Arab intellectuals, writers, and artists, most of them Palestinian,⁹³ they called the Arab World Institute to retract the signals it has sent through the exhibition, ‘which indicate a trend toward normalization—an attempt to impose Israel as if it were a normal state in the Arab region’. The Arab World Institute, according to the open letter, betrays its intellectual mission by adopting this normalization approach that is ‘one of the worst forms of coercive and immoral political abuse of art as a tool to legitimize colonialism and oppression’. It is also

a betrayal of intellectual and moral honesty because *it deliberately conflates Arab Jews and the Jews of the ‘Orient’ on the one hand, and Israel as a colonial and apartheid regime on the other*. Israel, in coordination with the global Zionist movement, has not only ethnically cleansed most of the indigenous

⁹⁰ Bashkin 2012: 9.

⁹¹ Stillman 2014: 149–151.

⁹² The exhibition was held between 24 November 2021 and 13 March 2022; see <http://www.imarabe.org/en/expositions/juifs-d-orient>. Accessed 21 January 2022.

⁹³ Among the signatories the aforementioned Ella Shohat and Ammiel Alcalay (b. 1956), both of them scholars of Arab-Jewish culture and activists of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement working ‘to end international support for Israel’s oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel to comply with international law’ (<http://usacbi.org/endorsers/>). Accessed 21 January 2022).

Palestinian people, colonizing their land and parts of their Arab heritage and culture, it has also appropriated the Jewish component in Arab culture and attempted to Zionize it and Israelize it, as a prelude to extracting it from its authentic roots and using it to serve its colonial project in the region. *The culture of Arab Jews is an integral part of Arab culture, and the process of severing it from its roots is an attempt to destroy part of Arab memory and history.* The continuation of this normalization approach would cause the Institute to lose not only the intellectuals and artists whose creative cultural output it has hosted for decades, but also the Arab public in general.⁹⁴

The exhibition and the open letter of the Arab intellectuals, writers, and artists did not stir any interest among the Arabized Jews or their offspring in Israel or outside it. Also, the fact that the open letter was published in Arabic, French, and English but *not in Hebrew* is proof that the signatories to the open letter had by no means any interest in communicating with the communities of Arabized Jews and their offspring, which can only be approached now in Hebrew and through Israeli media. Moreover, the open letter, despite its poor scholarly foundations, has not aroused any responses or reactions even from the scholarly community of Arab-Jewish culture or Arab culture in general with the exception of a Hebrew essay by Moshe Behar of the University of Manchester and Zvi Ben-Dor Benite from New York University more than a month after the publication of the letter and in a marginal platform: *Haokets: Critical Platform on Socioeconomic, Political, Media, Cultural and Other Issues in Israel and Beyond*.⁹⁵ Although the scholarly foundations of the open letter are very weak to the point that the persons who prepared it seem to have not read the updated studies on the topic, let alone investigated it themselves, Behar and Ben-Dor Benite in their response by no means challenged its scholarly foundations but were satisfied to protest only against the *political agenda* of the open letter:

התנועה הציונית האירופית הועידה למזרחים/ות תפקיד היסטורי אחד: להיות קורבנות של הערבים. המסמך על התערוכה בפריז מועיד לנו תפקיד היסטורי דומה: להיות קורבנות של הציונות. ואולם סך כל ההתפתחויות שיכולנו לתאר כאן בקצרה בלבד מחייב אותנו להצהיר ברורות: יהודי ערב של המאה ה-21 מסרבים להיות יהודים על פי התנאים שהועידה להם הציונות האשכנזית ומסרבים להיות ערבים על פי קווי המתאר שמועידה להם הקבוצה המרשימה של חותמי מסמך הפאן-ערבי, יהיה זה במודע או במובלע.

⁹⁴ See <http://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfo5DR7RGXkbLw0182jwaW-N8Qu40lK-cx46uR9euvWVnddX-Q/viewform>. 6 December 2021. Accessed 21 January 2022 (my emphasis).

⁹⁵ *Haokets*, 10 January 2022.

The European Zionist movement conferred on the Mizrahim one historical role: to be victims of the Arabs. The document on the exhibition in Paris gives us a similar historical role: to be victims of Zionism. However, the total developments we could describe here only briefly require us to state clearly: The Arab Jews of the twenty-first century refuse to be Jews according to the conditions imposed on them by Ashkenazi Zionism and refuse to be Arabs according to the outline indicated, consciously or implicitly, by the impressive group of signers on the Pan-Arab document.

Nothing in their response refers to the poor scholarship the open letter was based on, although, as indicated above, Muslim and Christian Arab intellectuals in general do not pay any attention to the cultural aspect of Arab-Jewish identity unless it may be used as a tool against Israel and Zionism. The response of Behar and Ben-Dor Benite illustrates that they are also interested only in politics or identity politics but not at all in culture, literature, and art.

In one way or another, the scholarship on Arabic literature relevant to the issues discussed in the present article has been moving into non-academic spaces without at least even trying to stick to unbiased academic discourse, which unfortunately sometimes is turned into mere preaching directed by unrelated ideological, political, social, or even opportunistic motives. Nevertheless, one fact can by no means be denied: the vision embedded in the aforementioned dictum ‘Religion is for God, the Fatherland is for everyone’ was the product of a very limited period, a very confined space, and a very singular history. It lived to the age of a sturdy human being, by this rare combination of time, space, and history, before disappearing and being forgotten, at least for the foreseeable future.

6 Conclusion: ‘An alienated history’

The aforementioned documentary film *Forget Baghdad: Jews and Arabs—The Iraqi Connection* (2002) epitomizes the demise not only of Arab-Jewish identity and culture but also of its scholarship, certainly among the Jews. The film revolves around the life of five Iraqi Arabized Jews: Mūsa Ḥūrī (1924–2010), Sami Michael (b. 1926), Shimon Ballas (1930–2019), Samīr Naqqāsh (1938–2004), and Ella Shohat (b. 1959). Although it is common to describe the Iraqi Jews in Israel as a unique ‘Mizrahi’ collective well integrated into Israeli-Jewish society and one that is inseparable from the Israeli middle class, in fact as what has been described as a great ‘success story’,⁹⁶ one can easily notice that, except for their common ethnic origins,

⁹⁶ See Meir-Glitzenstein (2015: 107–121).

the five aforementioned authors and intellectuals hardly have anything essential in common. The differences between the common layers of identity that all of them share, such as Iraqiness and Arabness, are more significant than the differences between the layers of identity such as Israeliness and Hebrewness, that they share with their non-Arabized Israeli-Jewish counterparts. For example, what Naqqāsh considered as true basic Arab cultural characteristics is totally different from what is seen by Shohat as being true basic Arab characteristics—in fact, she does not master Arabic at all and cannot read in the original his literary texts! On the other hand, if we compare most of Sami Michael's Hebrew novels with most contemporary Hebrew novels by any leftist writer of his generation, it would probably be hard to find essential differences between their literary, cultural, and ideological narratives.

The corpus of Arab *Belles Lettres* written by Jews during the twentieth century has hardly become wider during the last two decades. Furthermore, even the Judeo-Arabic tradition (Judeo-Arabic dialects written in Hebrew) waned with the decline of Jewish communities in Arab-controlled lands. Jews do not now write Arabic literature, and if they do so at all their works are not published—no one is interested in such writing anymore. For the last 35 years, I have been closely investigating the whole corpus of Arab-Jewish poems, stories, novels, plays, and memoirs written since the 1920s—until the last decades. I was able to also discuss my arguments with Arab-Jewish authors who had highly contributed to the scholarship on the topic, such as the aforementioned late authors Nissim Rijwān, Shimon Ballas, Shmuel Moreh, and Sasson Somekh. Now, you can hardly find a scholar of Arab-Jewish culture whose scholarship is based on direct knowledge and experience of this culture. Most of the scholars publishing in the field adopt post-truth populist strategies and are more interested in identity politics than in Arab-Jewish culture and identity.

The tragedy of the demise of Arab-Jewish culture has been determined and constrained by broader political, ideological, social, and cultural realities. The writings of the last Arab-Jewish authors and the studies of the relevant scholars encourage their readers to rethink the recent Arab-Jewish cultural past, and perhaps the entire history of Arab-Jewish culture since the rise of Islam. Here, the Nigerian Chinua Achebe's (1930–2013) novel *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) may provide us with an insightful understanding of the last stage of Arab-Jewish identity and culture before its total demise. Pondering the fate of the two protagonists, the narrator wonders:

Were they not in fact *trailed travellers* whose journeys from start to finish had been *carefully programmed* in advance by *an alienated history*? If so, how many

more doomed voyagers were already in transition just sitting out, faces fresh with illusions of duty-free travel and happy landings ahead of them?⁹⁷

As these protagonists are supposed to be 'trailed travellers' whose journeys 'had been carefully programmed' by 'an alienated history', we may rethink the past of Arab-Jewish culture by pondering the tragedy of its demise, as illustrated by the figures of its 'last Mohicans' among the Arab-Jewish authors⁹⁸ as it were: were they not in fact 'trailed travellers' whose journeys from start to finish had been carefully programmed in advance by 'an alienated history'?

For me, retrospectively, after more than three decades of investigating Arab-Jewish culture and identity in the context of the general Arab culture, the answer is definitely 'yes'. But, unlike the assumption in Achebe's novel, there are by no means 'more doomed voyagers' already in transition along the Arab-Jewish cultural path, certainly not voyagers 'with illusions of duty-free travel and happy landings ahead of them'. When the Iraqi-Jewish journalist and social activist Nirān al-Baṣṣūn (Niran Bassoon) (b. 1957) refers to the literary activities of her Iraqi-Jewish parents—Salīm al-Baṣṣūn (1927–1995) and Maryam al-Mullā (al-Baṣṣūn) (1927–2013)—she does not have any 'illusions of duty-free travel and happy landings ahead of them'. Her mother's verses that she recently published on her Facebook page do not leave any doubt that their dear homeland has been lost and that Arab-Jewish culture is dying out before our eyes:

وين أنت يا عراقي الحبيب، لوين رحلت؟
وين دجلة إلي من ميه الصافي شربت؟
وين الجزيرة إلي على رملها كعدت؟
كصكصوا أوصالك وأنت سكنت
تشرّدوا أحبابك بالغرب وأنت طحت
ودّسوا الأوباش تراك وأنت رضخت
دوّرت عليك بكلّ بلاد الرّحت
وسألت عنك كلّ من شفت
ما حدا دلاني وين أنت صرت
حيّك بكلّ ميعشعش كد ما عشت
وراح أبقى مخلصه إلّك حتّى لو مت!

Where are you, my beloved Iraq, where did you go?
Where is the Tigris, from which pure water I drank?

⁹⁷ Achebe 1987: 220 (my emphasis).

⁹⁸ On 15 of these authors, see Snir (2019a).

Where is the al-Jazra⁹⁹ on which sand I used to sit?
 Your limbs have been dismembered and you fell silent
 Your beloved ones have been displaced in the West while you were over-
 thrown
 The bastards desecrated your soil, and you bowed
 I looked for you in all the countries I visited
 I asked whoever I saw about you
 No one guided me to where you are
 Your love will be nested in my heart as long as I live
 I will remain loyal to you even if I die!¹⁰⁰

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⁹⁹ A small island on the Tigris in Baghdad used as a place for recreation.

¹⁰⁰ See Nirán Bassoon. <http://www.facebook.com/nb1957/posts/832473224116010>. 18 October 2021. Accessed 6 November 2021.

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From ‘flaying’, ‘Ascension’ and ‘red garden-beet’ to ‘wolves’ and ‘sweet dishes’: The Stunning Semantic Variety in the Arabic Root SLQ as a Touchstone for Arabic Etymologists

Abstract The following article can serve as yet another report from the workshop of an Etymological Dictionary of Arabic (*EtymArab*).¹ Work on a ‘zero version’ of such a dictionary has seen (slow but) steady progress since several years now. Taking the root √SLQ as an example, this contribution gives an idea about the high potential of such a project, but also shows its clear actual limits. The enormous spectrum of semantic values covered by √SLQ—one may distinguish more than thirty meanings that, at first sight, do not seem related to each other—provides a fine illustration of the complex composition of the modern as well as the classical lexicon. The current state of affairs in Arabic etymology allows us, to a certain degree, to ‘sort out things’ and bring some order into this confusing complexity. In many cases, however, research also remains ‘hanging in the air’.

Keywords loanwords, reflexes of protSem *š- causative, root extension, figurative use, semantic expansion

¹ For earlier such ‘reports’, cf., among others, Guth (2015–2018).



1 The semantic spectrum of √SLQ

1.1 In Modern Standard Arabic (according to Wehr and Cowan [1976])

The vb. I *salaqa*, *u* (*salq*), comes with a number of values that we are treating separately here, for systematic reasons (see below):

- [¹SLQ] ¹*salaqa* ‘to lacerate the skin (*h* of s.o.; with a whip)’;
- [²SLQ] ²*salaqa* ‘to remove with boiling water (s.th.)’;
- [³SLQ] ³*salaqa* ‘to boil, cook in boiling water’; unquestionably here belong also the PP *maslūq* ‘cooked, boiled (meat, egg, vegetable)’ and the nominalized PP.f *maslūqat* (pl. *masāliq*) ‘bouillon, broth’;
- [⁴SLQ] ⁴*salaqa* ‘to scald (plants; said of excessive heat)’;
- [⁵SLQ] ⁵*salaqa* ‘to hurt (s.o., *bi-lisānihi*, with one’s tongue, i.e., give s.o. a tongue-lashing)’, together with *salāqat*, n.f., ‘vicious tongue, violent language’.

Alongside with these values we find also quite a few that—at first sight at least—do not seem to be related to the preceding ones:

- [⁶SLQ] *al-sullāq*, n., ‘Ascension of Christ’; obviously related to this item are the vb. V ¹*tasallaqa* ‘to ascend, mount, climb, scale (s.th.); to climb up (plant)’ as well as its vn. *tasalluq* ‘climbing; ascent’ and the PA *mutasalliḡ*, lexicalized in Wehr/Cowan only in the combination *al-nabātāt al-mutasalliḡat* ‘climbing plants, creepers’.
- [⁷SLQ] EgAr *salq*, MSA ¹*silq*, n., ‘a variety of chard, the leaves of which are prepared as a salad or vegetable dish’.

Like *salaqa*, also the n.f. *salīqat* (pl. *salāḡiq*) comes with more than one value:

- [⁸SLQ] ¹*salīqat* ‘dish made of grain cooked with sugar, cinnamon and fennel (SyrAr)’;
- [⁹SLQ] ²*salīqat* ‘inborn disposition, instinct’.

Finally, unrelated to any of the above we find also:

- [¹⁰SLQ] *salaqūn* and *salāqūn*, n., ‘red lead, minium’, and
- [¹¹SLQ] ¹*salūqī*, var. *salaqī*, n., ‘saluki, greyhound, hunting dog’.

1.2 Widening the perspective: pre-MSA values, now obsolete

A quick glance into Badawi and Abdel Haleem's *Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (2008), which for each Qur'anic root gives the spectrum of (genuine, non-borrowed) values attached to it in Classical Arabic, suffices to understand that most of the above meanings found in MSA can be traced back to earlier times; there is, however, at least one that has become obsolete:

[†]to throw on the back, [¹SLQb]to flay with a whip; [²SLQ]to insult; [⁴SLQ]to scald; [¹SLQa]to lacerate the skin; [³SLQ]boiling, cooking lightly by boiling; [⁹SLQ]intrinsic nature.²

Interestingly enough, the authors group the extinct value †'to throw on the back' as forming a unit with 'to flay with a whip', while Wehr and Cowan grouped the latter together with 'to lacerate the skin'³—a first indication of two obviously different etymological assumptions informing the presentation (resp. omission) of lexicographical data. Another hint at choices evidently motivated by (unexplained) etymological hypotheses is the fact that values ⁶SLQ–⁸SLQ and ¹⁰SLQ–¹¹SLQ are missing from Badawi and Abdel Haleem's list; the authors seem to regard these as foreign, not genuine.

As we shall see below, there is a great deal of truth to their views and decisions (though some may be doubted). Before we go into this discussion, however, let us first follow the track of values that have been 'lost' in MSA, i.e., become obsolete or extinct, but may provide useful—if perhaps complicating and confusing—additional information as to the semantic history of SLQ items.

Data mining from standard dictionaries of Classical Arabic, such as Hava (1899, for quick reference), Freytag (1838), Kazimirski (1860), Lane (1863–1893), and Wahrmund (²1887) provides indeed ample evidence of the fact that †'to throw on the back' is not the only value that was lost in the course of time, and probably particularly during the period of modernization and reform that Arabic went through all over the 'long nineteenth century'. Here comes what a consultation of these sources yields.⁴

For some of the modern values, interesting complementary material can be found:

² Badawi and Abdel Haleem 2008: 449. In square brackets the corresponding value number from our above list.

³ This is why I used ¹SLQa and ¹SLQb for what in Wehr and Cowan (1976) is simply one value [¹SLQ].

⁴ Where no source is indicated, values are given as in Hava (1899) (after cross-checking with Lane etc.). For values not mentioned in Hava (1899), references are provided in parentheses.

ad [5SLQ]: cf. also †*sallāq*, †*mislaq*, †*mislāq* ‘eloquent (speaker); sharp’;

ad [8SLQ]: cf. also (Wahrmund 1887) †*salīq* ‘geschälte Gerste u. Speise daraus’ (peeled barley and dish made from it).

Values not covered by Wehr and Cowan (1976) any longer and therefore considered obsolete in MSA include:

†[12SLQ] ‘to prostrate s.o. on the back of his neck, throw s.o. down; to push, repel’: †*6salaqa*, *u (salq)*, and †*salqā* (vn. *silqāʔ*).

†[13SLQ] ‘to pierce (with a spear)’: †*7salaqa*, *u (salq)*.

†[14SLQ] ‘to leave prints (on the soil: foot)’: †*8salaqa*, *u (salq)*; cf. also †*salāʔiqʔ* (pl., from sg. †*3salīqai*) ‘marks made by the feet of men and by the hoofs of horses or the like on the road (and to these the marks made by the [plaited thongs called] *ʔansāf* upon the belly of the camel are likened)’; also probably belonging here: DaʔAr *slq*, *u*, ‘to cultivate, plough, till’, *sāliq* (pl. *sawāliq*) ‘sillon (où se trouve déjà la semence du *ʔaṣām*)’, *silāqai* ‘cultivation, tillage’ (Landberg 1942).

†[15SLQ] ‘to oil, grease (a leathern water-skin, etc.), smear (a camel all over with tar)’: †*9salaqa*, *u (salq)*.

†[16SLQ] ‘(al-*ḡuwāliqʔ*) to insert one of the two loops of the sack called *ḡuwāliq* into the other’; ‘(al-*ḡūd fī l-ḡurwai*) to insert the stick into the loop [of the *ḡuwāliq*]’: †*10salaqa*, *u (salq)*.

†[17SLQ] ‘to call out, cry out, shout vehemently (esp. after the death of a person or at a calamity); to slap and scratch one’s face (mourning woman)’: †*11salaqa*, *u (salq)*; cf. also †*1silqai* (pl. *sulqān*, *silqān*, *silq*) and *sāliqai* (pl. *sawāliqʔ*) ‘weeping loudly (woman), slapping her face; long-tongued and vehemently clamorous, foul, evil, lewd’.

†[18SLQ] ‘to run’: †*12salaqa*, *u (salq)*; cf. also †*saylaq* ‘quick, swift (she-camel)’.

†[19SLQ] ‘to collect herbs’: *sallaqa*, vb. II.

†[20SLQ] ‘to be(come) restless, agitated, in a state of commotion, fret (from grief, anxiety, pain)’: †*2tasallaqa* (vb. V).

†[21SLQ] ‘red garden-beet’: †*2silq* (pl. *sulqān*).

†[22SLQ] ‘wolf’: †*3silq* (pl. *sulqān*, *silqān*); f. †*3silqai* ‘she-wolf’.

†[23SLQ] ‘female lizard; female locust when she has laid her eggs’: †*2silqai*.

†[24SLQ] ‘water-course, channel in which water flows, between two tracts of elevated, or elevated and rugged, ground’: †*4silqai*.

†[25SLQ] ‘even plain, smooth, even tract, of good soil, depressed, even plain in which are no trees; low tract, or portion, of land that produces herbage, meadow’: †*salaq* (pl. *ʔaslāq*, *sulqān*).

†[26SLQ] ‘pimples, pustules that come forth upon the root / on the tip of the tongue (Lane 1872); Lösung des Zahnfleischs (Wahrmund 1887); lip-pitude of the eyelids (Hava 1899) | 1 Tumeur qui se forme sur les bords

des paupières et fait tomber les cils; 2 déchaussement des dents, maladie des gencives, qui fait que les dents n'étant plus retenues par les gencives tombent; 3 tubercule à la racine de la langue; 4 enflure': [†]*sulāq*. – Cf. also [†]*al-ʔasāliq* 'what is next to the *lahawāt* [pl. used as sg., meaning the 'uvula'] of the mouth, internally, or the upper parts of the interior of the mouth, those to which the tongue rises' (BK); also vb. I, pass., [†]*suliqat il-ʔafwāh*... 'the mouths broke out with pimples, or small pustules'; and [†]*ʔnsalaqa*, vb. VII, '[...]; to be(come) affected with what is termed *sulāq*'.

[†][²⁷SLQ] 'what falls off from trees (leaves, etc.):' ^{†2}*salīq*.

[†][²⁸SLQ] 'honey which the bees build up along the length of their hive, or habitation': ^{†3}*salīq*.

[†][²⁹SLQ] 'pot herbs | Kücherkräuter': ^{†4}*salīq*.

[†][³⁰SLQ] 'side of a road': ^{†5}*salīq*.

[†][³¹SLQ] '(a sort of) coat of mail': ^{†2}*salūqī*.

[†][³²SLQ] 'sitting-place of the *rubbān* [or captain] of a ship, sitting-place of a pilot': [†]*salūqiyyā*.

[†][³³SLQ] 'natte de folioles de palmier': DaʔAr *salqaṭ* (pl. *salaq*), ʔAdan and Ḥaḍramawt Ar *silqaṭ* (pl. *silaq*) (Landberg 1942).

[†][³⁴SLQ] 'ruines': DaʔAr *mislāq* (Landberg 1942).

[†][³⁵SLQ] 'solecism, incorrect language': (*kalām*) [†]*salīqī* (Lane 1872).

2 Analysis/Discussion

How get out of this 'mess'? Earlier experience with similar cases has shown that the stunning semantic diversity in such highly polysemantic roots typically is due to a merger of foreign and intrinsic elements, combined with overlappings with and/or influence of phonologically close lexemes, changes like metatheses, as well as the old age of the genuine elements, an age that allows original values to diversify. Earlier research made on a root or some of its items can then help to form a first idea of the situation.

This is the case here, too. Scattered over a number of dictionaries of Semitic languages and both older and quite recent studies we find fragments of information that allow us to sketch a rather complex map.

Let us start the discussion with the SLQ lexemes for which a foreign origin has been suggested—first those of non-Semitic provenance, then the inner-Semitic borrowings.

2.1 Words of non-Semitic origin

[¹⁰SLQ] *salaqūn*, var. *salāqūn*, ‘red lead, minium’. An indicator of the word’s foreign origin is the fact that it is found in several variants: in addition to the two mentioned in Wehr and Cowan directly *sub radice* SLQ there are also *salīqūn* or *sariqūn* as well as, in EgAr, *salaqōn* and *zalaqōn* (Badawi and Hinds 1986, s.vv.). Given the obvious variability of R₁ (s/z) and R₂ (l/r), a relation to Ar *zarqūn* ‘bright red’ does not seem unlikely. Badawi and Hinds think the EgAr words may be from Tu *sülüğēn/süleğēn* ‘minium’, but the reverse is probably the case, i.e., the Tu words are from Ar (or both from Pers *zargūn* ‘gold-coloured’). In contrast, Nişanyan (s.v. Tu *süleğēn*, 1 July 2017) does not exclude an origin in Grk συρικόν *syrikón*, which would suggest an interpretation of minium as ‘the Syrian (mineral), the (red) substance from Syria’, an idea that could be corroborated by the Ru Ukr name for minium, сурик *súrik*. But Nişanyan adds himself that such an etymology is rather uncertain (the mineral is first mentioned in Tu sources in the anonymous *Câmiṣü’l-Fürs*, 1501, as *sülegen*). – For the time being, we are unable to decide which of the proposed etymologies of *sala/āqūn*—Pers, Tu, Grk?—may be correct; personally, I tend to favour the Pers origin because the Tu word can be suspected to be itself a loanword, and a Grk origin is unlikely because ‘minium’ in Grk usually is rendered by κιννάβαρι *kinnābari*, itself of oriental origin (cf. Pers *zingāfr*, *zenğefreh* ‘cinnabar, minium’).

Unlike *salaqūn*, for which Pers, Tu or Grk etymologies have been proposed, the items ¹*salūqī*, ^{†2}*salūqī*, and [†]*salūqiyyaī* [¹¹SLQ, ^{†31}SLQ, ^{†32}SLQ, respectively], which, morphologically, all are *nisba* formations, obviously refer to, and are taken from, names of locations rendered by the Arabs as ‘*Salūq*’.

[¹¹SLQ] ¹*salūqī*, var. *salaqī*, ‘saluki, greyhound, hunting dog’. The term for a specific kind of ‘Oriental’ greyhound or hunting dog, which was loaned also into English (*saluki*, *sloughi*),⁵ is attributed by ClassAr lexicographers to a town they generally locate in Yemen (not far from Taʿizz). But there are also other places (in modern Armenia, Turkey, Iraq, Iran) that may be identified with this *Salūq* or *Salūqi(y)aī*, e.g., Silifke or towns close to Antioch or Baghdad; ultimately, there may be a connection with ‘Seleucia’ and the Seleucid Empire (312 BC–65 AD).⁶

⁵ According to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sloughi>, *Saluki* is used (in English) for the *Persian Greyhound*, while the *Sloughi*, the *Arabian Greyhound*, is a different breed.

⁶ The discussion seems to be summarized rather reliably in the English Wikipedia entry ‘*Saluki*’. Accessed February 2022. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saluki>.

†^[31SLQ] †²*salūqī* '(a sort of) coat of mail'. Like ¹*salūqī*, this ²*salūqī* may originally be *'the one/thing from *Salūq*', i.e., from a town of uncertain location (see preceding paragraphs). – Cf., however, the Hbr Hiph'îl (Sem *Š-stem) *hislîq* 'to hide (arms) in a cache' and modHbr *s'îlîq* 'arms cache', which Klein (1987) regards as belonging to Hbr √SLQ 'to go up, ascend' (cf. Ar ¹*tasallaqa* 'to ascend, mount, climb', i.e., value [6SLQ]; see discussion below in section 'Inner-Semitic borrowings'), without however elaborating on the exact nature of such an assumed relation.

†^[32SLQ] †*salūqiyyā* 'sitting-place of the *rubbān* [or captain] of a ship, sitting-place of a pilot'. Like ¹*salūqī* and ²*salūqī*, †*salūqiyyā* is obviously either a nisba from **salūq* or refers to one of the two *salūqīs*. But details remain obscure: Was this sitting-place associated, for some reason, with the town of 'Salūq', or with the saluki-type of dog, or with a coat of mail? Or is there yet another etymology?

†^[35SLQ] (*kalām*) †*salīqī* 'natural, or untaught, speech; speech whereof the desinential syntax is not much attended to, but which is chaste and eloquent respect of what has been heard, though often tripping, or stumbling, in respect of grammar; speech which the dweller in the desert utters according to his nature and his proper dialect, though his other speech be nobler and better'; †*salīqiyyā* 'dialect in which the speaker thereof proceeds loosely, or freely, according to his nature, without paying much attention to desinential syntax, and without avoiding incorrectness'.⁷ According to Olivieri (2020), the origin of this term is Grk σολοικισμός *soloi-kismós* 'incorrectness in the use of language, solecism', so called, allegedly, after the people of Soli, Cilicia (modern-day South Turkey), whose language the ancient Athenians considered as grammatically incorrect. Olivieri further assumes that the Arabs followed (Stoic) Grk tradition when they calqued the term *ḥiṣrāb* (*'to make Arabic') on the model of Grk *hellēnismós* ('to use correct "Hellenic" language'), as the positive normative counter-concept of *salīqī*, resp. *soloikismós*.

†^[23SLQ] †²*silqat* 'female lizard; female locust, when she has laid her eggs'. This value can perhaps be connected to Eg *šrk.t* '(the scorpion-goddess) Serket'⁸ (Selkis), 'scorpion'.⁹ If this etymology is valid, the Ar word

⁷ *salāʔiq* is also attested in the positive sense of being able to speak perfectly, without any formal training, like a true Bedouin, cf. Larcher (2005). This shows that the 'natural' speech of the Bedouin came to be interpreted ambiguously: 'raw' and uneducated on the one hand, and beautiful and eloquent on account of this very same naturalness, on the other.

⁸ Gardiner 1957: 478; full name in the Pyramid texts *Šrkt-ḥtw* 'she-who-relieves-the-windpipe', cf. also Erman (1921: 166).

⁹ TLA lemma-no. 139870, based on Erman and Grapow (1930: IV, 204.1–3). Cf. Borg 2021: 191.

would have retained from ancient Egyptian the *female* character of the denoted animal as well as the idea of *relieving* something—the Egyptian word is based on Eg *śrk* ‘to relieve, admit breath to (*ḥtyt* windpipe)’, while at least one of the meanings found in ClassAr dictionaries for ²*silqaṭ* specifies the ‘female locust’ as one that ‘has laid her eggs’ (which she does by ‘relieving’ them through a kind of ‘pipe’!).¹⁰ – With the notion of ‘relieving, letting go, getting rid of’, this value comes close to other SLQ values, discussed below, all of which share the basic idea of *‘scraping, scratching, lacerating (and, hence, leaving marks, on s.th., or leaving it bare/barren)’.

2.2 Inner-Semitic borrowings

[⁶SLQ] ¹*tasallaqa* ‘to ascend, mount, climb, scale’. The common opinion is that Ar ¹*tasallaqa* is denominative from *sullāq* ‘Ascension (of Christ)’, itself with all likelihood¹¹ loaned into Ar from Aram *sūlqā* ‘id.’, *slaq* ‘to ascend’ (so already Fraenkel 1886: 277). – There is also Hbr **sālaq* ‘to ascend’, but this is very rare (a *hapax* in the Bible, only 1sg.impf.) and probably itself borrowed from Aram (so BDB 2010, Kogan 2015 and others), a fact that would appear to make protAram **slk* ‘to go up, come up’ (> BiblAram **slēq*, Palm *slq*, Syr *sleq*) as an isolated item within Semitic.¹² Furthermore, the BiblHbr *hapax* shows a ‘highly peculiar morphological behavior, viz. the unexpected assimilation *-sl- > -ss- [*ʔässaq* (‘if I ascend’) instead of **ʔäslaq*’ (Kogan 2015: 386, #15). According to Kogan (*ibid.*), this behaviour probably betrays the secondary origin of -l- so that the initial *sl-* in protAram **slk* can be suspected to be the result of a splitting of an original

¹⁰ A variant with initial *š*-(*šilqaṭ*) documented, among others, by Hava (1899), is said to mean ‘lizard’s eggs’.

¹¹ As Kogan (2015: 386) remarks, the isolated position of Ar *tasallaqa* ‘to ascend, mount, climb, scale’ (as also of ClassAr **salaqa* ‘do.’) within Ar ‘makes one wonder about a possible Aramaic origin’ of these items.

¹² Dolgopolsky (2012: #300) obviously does not treat the Hbr and Ar vb.s as loans from Aram but regards them as genuine cognates, which allows him to reconstruct a (C)Sem *√SLK ‘to ascend, climb’. In his view, the latter is ancestor not only of Ar *tasallaqa* ‘id.’, but also of [¹⁸SLQ] **salaqa* ‘to run’ and perhaps—deglossalization?—even *salaka* ‘to travel, go along’, to which the author then juxtaposes IndEur (NaIE) **slenk* (~ **sleng*) ‘to creep, crawl, trudge, amble’ (which gave, among others, AngSax *slincan* ‘to creep’ > nEngl ‘to slink’, oHGe *slango*, nHGe *Schlange* ‘snake’; oHGe *zuo-slingan* ‘to slide away’, mHGe *slingen* ‘to crawl along’, etc.), all ultimately from a hypothetical Nostr **c’oLK*^v (~ **c’oLk*^v) ‘to advance with effort (to creep, crawl, climb etc.)’. Personally, I am reluctant to accept the author’s hypotheses; in my opinion, they are based on too many unlikely correspondences and sound shifts.

lateral *ś into the combination *s-l* at an early stage.¹³ If this hypothesis is valid, the Aram forms (as well as the Hbr and Ar ones that are borrowed from Aram) can perhaps be seen together with Akk *šaḫu* 'to grow high, rise, ascend' and Ar √ŠQY 'to grow', *šāqīn* 'high, inaccessible', etc. (a view put forward already by Haupt 1910: 712-3).¹⁴

[⁷SLQ] EgAr *salq*, also *salqāyaī* (Badawi/Hinds 1986), ClassAr ¹*silq*. The word for 'a variety of chard' seems to be identical with [†][²¹SLQ] ^{†2}*silq* 'red garden-beet', as both are varieties of the same plant, *beta vulgaris*. According to Fraenkel, ^{†2}*silq* (pl. *sulqān*) for 'red garden-beet' is from Aram Syr *silqā* 'id.', itself of unknown origin. Some have argued that it might be a borrowing from Grk *sikelós* 'Sicilian',¹⁵ and the remark, made in the Arabic Wikipedia entry on ¹*silq* 'chard', that the plant, popular all over the Mediterranean, originally came from Sicily,¹⁶ makes it tempting indeed to assume a relation to this island. However, such an etymology is not unproblematic—not because it assumes a metathesis **q-l* > *l-q* (which would be a rather common phenomenon) but because it fails to explain the transformation of the Grk relational adj. *sikelós* into a Sem *faʕl/fiʕl* pattern.¹⁷ The specifications *silq al-barr* 'Rumex, sour-dock' and *silq al-mā*? 'Potamogeton, pond-weed' (Lane, Hava) do not provide additional insight. Nevertheless, the foreign origin of [⁷SLQ] 'chard' / [†][²¹SLQ] 'red garden-beet' is hardly questionable, as the words cannot reasonably be connected to any of the other SLQ values. The closest (to 'chard', as a type of 'leaves') might be [†][²⁷SLQ] ^{†2}*salīq* 'what falls off from trees (leaves, etc.)', [†][²⁹SLQ] ^{†4}*salīq* 'pot herbs' and [†][¹⁹SLQ] [†]*sallaqa* 'to collect herbs'; but while all the latter may belong together (see below), none of them displays semantic features that would be sufficient to establish a convincing etymological link to 'chard' (and even less to 'red garden-beet'). – However, while we probably can exclude a relation with the latter, shouldn't

¹³ According to Kogan (2015: 386), a 'fine illustration of such a split is provided by JBA *šarsālā* "hammock" < protSem **šarś*, extensively discussed in [R.] Steiner [*The Case for Fricative-Laterals in Proto-Semitic*, New Haven] 1977: 130–136'.

¹⁴ Yet another view is put forward in BDB (2010) where the authors interpret values [⁶SLQ] 'to ascend' and [⁴SLQ] 'to scald, burn' as interdependent, associating Hbr **šālaq* 'to kindle, burn', (*Š-stem) *hiššiq* ~ *hiššīq* 'to make a fire, burn' with Aram *slaq* 'to ascend', (*Š-stem) 'to cause to go up (in flame), offer sacrifice'.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Fraenkel (1886: 143), as also Dozy (1881, s.v.), where the author remarks that already 'Théopraste dit que la variété blanche de la Beta vulgaris s'appelle *sicilienne*'.

¹⁶ See <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/سلق>. Accessed 1 May 2022.

¹⁷ Some scholars even seem to assume a *direct* borrowing from Grk into Ar. But this would pose the additional problem that *silq* shows initial /s/ while the Ar name for Sicilia, *šiqilliy(y)ai*, usually has emphatic /š/. This problem does not arise with the Aram hypothesis; here, *silq* (with /s/) is from Aram, while *šiqilliy(y)ai* (with /š/) is from Grk (with Grk *s* > Ar *š* under the influence of following *q*).

one consider Pers *šalġam* ‘turnip, rape’ as a possible source—at least for ^{†2}*silq* in the meaning of [†][²¹SLQ] ‘red garden-beet’? It is right that Pers *šalġam* also has a more direct (or perh. via Tu *šalgam*?) reflex in Ar *salġam* ‘turnip’, EgAr ‘rape’, but it could well be the origin of Aram Syr *silqā* and only from there have passed into Ar. One and the same Pers word, *šalġam*, may thus have been borrowed into Ar twice: once via Aram, and once via Tu (or directly from Pers). This may have been caused by independent local factors, or because the garden-beets had temporarily become unpopular and been forgotten, for whatever reason. – Ultimately, we may thus even have to distinguish the two items that, at first sight, looked identical (and, botanically, also *are* more or less the same), i.e., ‘chard’ and ‘red garden-beet’; one of them may have a background in the Mediterranean (Sicily), the other in Iran. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient evidence to corroborate or exclude any of these speculations.

2.3 Major semantic complexes derived from Semitic roots

While many values in √SLQ have, as we saw above, their origin outside Semitic and some are very likely borrowings from Aram (or via Aram from non-Sem languages), the largest group can be traced back to ‘genuinely’ Sem roots.¹⁸ Within this complex we may differentiate four subgroups. One of these has preserved a Sem root (*√ŠLK) almost unchanged, while the others may be the result of metathesis (*QLS > SLQ) or of influence from phonologically similar roots (√SLH ‘to skin, flay’ < Sem *√SLH ‘skin, hide’; [†]√SLQ ‘to shout, shriek; to writhe about’), or reflect an old Sem *š causative. Let us start the discussion with the non-*√ŠLK items. Among these, the last-mentioned is probably the most interesting.

With an imperfect in *u* (*yasluq*^u) and a vn. *salq*, the vb. ^{†6}*salaqa* [†][¹²SLQ] looks as if it were not different from the other *salaqa*-s listed at the beginning of this article. But the meaning ‘to prostrate s.o. on the back of his neck, throw s.o. down; to push, repell’ can hardly be connected to any of these. Strangely enough, Lane (1872) and Badawi and AbdelHaleem (2008) mention this meaning as the first value of *salaqa*, as though it were the primary one. However, unlike many lexemes with primary values, this one does not seem to have cognates in Sem or outside. A clue to its

¹⁸ If (as discussed above) [⁶SLQ] ¹*tasallaqa* ‘to ascend, mount, climb, scale’ is denom. from *sullāq* ‘Ascension’ and the latter is from Aram *sūlqā* ‘do.’, *slaq* ‘to ascend’, and if the underlying protAram **slk* ‘to go up, come up’ goes back, as suggested by Kogan (2015: 386, #15), via dissociation, to protSem **šk* (> Akk *šaku* ‘to grow high, rise, ascend’, Ar *šāqīn* ‘high, inaccessible’), then also this item could, of course, be counted among the ones based on ‘genuinely’ Sem roots.

etymology may be the fact that the vb. appears with this meaning also in the variant [†]*salqà* (vn. *silqā*¹⁹), which can hardly be analysed as belonging to a quadrilateral √*SLQY or as a strange *FasLà form from √SLQ. Much more likely is the assumption that we are dealing with the reflex of an archaic *š-stem, a causative from √LQY, giving more or less the same meaning as the common vb. IV, *ʔalqà* (vn. *ʔilqā*?) 'to throw', from *laqiya* 'to find'. Cf. also the corresponding intr. vb.s, as rare and unusual as [†]*salqà* itself: ClassAr [†]*ʔislanqà* (traditionally interpreted as formed along an *ʔFʔanLà* pattern) 'to lie, or sleep, prostrate on one's back', with the var. *ʔistalqà*, which latter can be analysed as a *t*-stem of both [†]*salqà* and *ʔalqà* (< **šalqà*). In conclusion, we may assume that [†]*salaqa* is a variant of [†]*salqà*, probably from **ša-lqà*, archaic *š-stem of *laqiya* 'to find'. The meaning 'to prostrate, throw down' is thus originally a causative *'to make to be found (lying on earth)'. With this, [†]*salaqa* can serve as a further example of 'traces of a non-weakened causative prefix *s-*²⁰ in Ar, i.e., reflexes of Sem *š- stems, the best-known of which is probably *sabaqa* 'to precede, do previously', from **sa-bqà*, same as *ʔa-bqà* 'to cause to stay (behind)', caus. of *baqiya* 'to stay, remain'.²¹

In [⁵SLQ] ⁵*salaqa* 'to hurt (s.o., *bi-lisānih* with one's tongue), insult' (esp. Qurʔān 33:19), we possibly have the result of a metathesis: Zammit (2002) and Leslau (2006) tend to regard this item (and its Gz 'sister', *tasālaqa* 'to joke, scoff at, deride, mock, ridicule, make fun of s.o./one another')²² as cognate, via metathesis, to NWSem *QLS (> Ug *qlš* 'verhöhn-en', Hbr *qilles* 'to jeer at', Aram *qallāsā* 'shouting, derision'). However, while the semantic parallels may be rather convincing in this view, the assumed twisting *QLS > SLQ is not very probable (though not inconceivable), especially in the light of the fact that there are 'easier' solutions to the question of this item's etymology. One of these would regard ⁵*salaqa*

¹⁹ Cf. also *salqā* 'a certain mode of compressing, on the back' (Lane 1872).

²⁰ Edzard 2011.

²¹ Mentioned already in Lipiński (1997: 389 [§41.10]). The author rightly adds that 'the preformative š-/s- is not productive' in Arabic (nor in Aramaic which, like Arabic, shows some traces, too). It cannot be inherited directly from Proto-Semitic (because the protSem caus. *š- became *h-*, then *ʔ-* in Arabic), so how can we explain the phenomenon? Two explanations are possible: either they are due to some inner-Semitic borrowing (as may be the case in Aramaic, for which Lipiński assumes 'Assyro-Babylonian influence', *ibid.*; but which language could it be in the case of Arabic?), or it could be a back-formation based on *ʔistalqà*, i.e., a form X where Sem *š- is retained regularly in combination with the self-referential *-t*- infix. If that is the case, the language may have (mis-)interpreted *ʔistalqà* as a form VIII **ʔis-t-alqà* (instead of form X, *ʔi-st-alqà*), then produced *salqà* as a corresponding form I (not IV), then 'corrected' the strange *salqà* into a more regular-looking *salaqa*.

²² Leslau (2006) remarks that Margoliouth (1939: 61) would even derive the Qurʔanic ⁵*salaqa* from this Gz (ta)*sālaqa*.

‘to hurt, insult’ as a variant (with metaphorical meaning) of †*šalaqa* (with emphatic *š-*) ‘to attack (a tribe); to smite s.o. (sun); to strike’. This theory can find some support from the existence of a few SLQ~ŠLQ parallels, such as †*mīslāq*~†*mišlāq* and †*mīslāq*~*mišlāq* ‘eloquent (speaker); sharp (tongue)’ (Lane 1872; Hava 1899). Phonologically, though, a dissimilation *ŠLQ>SLQ is less likely than a partly assimilation (velarization) **s*>š (under the influence of following *q*), so that †*šalaqa* is more likely to be secondary than ⁵*salaqa*. And even if we assume the variant with *š* to be primary, this †*šalaqa* would still remain without cognates in Sem. – Yet another (and more plausible?) explanation is given by ClassAr lexicographers. They would interpret ⁵*salaqa* ‘to insult’ as figurative use of †[¹³SLQ] †¹⁷*salaqa* ‘to pierce (with a spear)’ (see below). But why go as far as that and not simply assume it to be figurative use of [¹SLQ] ¹*salaqa* ‘to lacerate the skin (with a whip)’ (> ‘to hurt’ > ‘to insult’)?

For the discussion of most of the remaining values that are likely to be traceable to Sem ancestors, the three values given first in the above list are the most relevant. Among these, we have two ‘extremes’—[¹SLQ] ¹*salaqa* ‘to lacerate the skin (with a whip)’ and [³SLQ] ³*salaqa* ‘to boil, cook in boiling water’—and one that could represent a ‘middle value’, a semantic bridge between the two: [²SLQ] ²*salaqa* ‘to remove (s.th., e.g., hair, skin, etc.) with boiling water’. Unfortunately, a widening of the perspective into Semitic does not bring much light to the question whether we are dealing with two distinct values or whether one of them—and if so which—may be dependent on the other. With opening the Sem ‘box’, the problem is only taken to the next-earlier stage.

To start with [³SLQ] ³*salaqa* ‘to boil, cook in boiling water’, this item has rather obvious cognates in Akk *salāku*, JudAram (> postBiblHbr) *šlq*, Syr *šlq*, all ‘id.’; with some likelihood one should also include DaṭAr *salaq* ‘griller de façon que la viande ne soit ni crue ni à point, mais entre les deux; donner au pain une caisson légère’ (Landberg 1942), and probably also Tña *šālākā* ‘to be burned; to simmer’ (Kogan 2011). The etymon of the fairly widely attested vb. is reconstructed by Kogan (2011) (as ‘prot-Sem’) and Dolgopolsky (2012) (as ‘CSem’) **šlq* ‘to boil, cook’.²³ If the

²³ According to Dolgopolsky (2012: #2053), this CSem **šlq* ‘to cook, broil, boil’ is akin to (and an extension in *-*q* from?) WSem **čly* (*-*clay-*) ‘to roast’ which gave Ar *salā* ‘to roast, broil, fry’, *šaliya* ‘to burn, be exposed to the blaze of s.th.’, BiblHbr *čālā* (√*čly*), JudPalAram, JEA *čālā* (√*člw*|*y*) ‘to roast (meat)’, SamAram √*šly* ‘to roast’, and also has cognates in Berb (Kab *asli* ‘cuire rapidement’) and ECush (Brj *sal-* ‘to cook by boiling, bake’, Kmb *šol-*, Hd *sar* ‘id.; to fry, roast’; Sa *sōl-* ‘braten, rösten auf dem brennenden Feuer’, *sōlā* ‘Fleisch auf heißen Steinen gebraten; Feuerbrand’, Af *sola* ‘campfire for roasting meat’, Som *sol-* ‘to grill, toast, roast’; Som *šil-* ‘to fry’, Or *sil-awu* ‘affumigarsi, arruginirsi, ossidar-si’, ultimately from a hypothetical Nostratic **šil*?*L*^v ‘to roast, fry, cook’.

DatAr and Tña evidence are to be taken into account, the original value may have oscillated between *'to boil, cook' and *'to roast', an aspect that could give some more substance to Dolgopolsky's hypothesis of a relation to the basic notion of 'roasting' (see preceding footnote).

However, in spite of the fairly reliable deeper Sem dimension and, thus, a rather old age of value [³SLQ] 'to boil, cook in boiling water', ³*salaqa* does not seem to have generated more than a very few semantic extensions. The above-mentioned [²SLQ] ²*salaqa* 'to remove (hair, etc.) with boiling water' may be one of them (but it could also be from ¹*salaqa* 'to peel, skin, loosen flesh from the bones', see below). Another one is probably [⁴SLQ] ⁴*salaqa* 'to scald (plants; said of excessive heat)'; this value is with all likelihood a special use of [³SLQ], perh. in its earlier/alternative meaning of *'to roast, burn' (see above, with fn. 23). Either from [³SLQ] 'to boil, cook in boiling water' or from [²SLQ] 'to remove (hair, etc.) with boiling water' is [⁸SLQ] (SyrAr) ¹*salīqāt* 'dish made of grain cooked with sugar, cinnamon and fennel', as the preparation of this dish involves both cooking/boiling and peeling. Morphologically, the word (as well as its m. variant, registered in Wahrmund (1887) as ^{†1}*salīq* 'geschälte Gerste u. Speise daraus') is a quasi-PP, i.e., originally probably *'boiled food (herbs, leguminous plants, and the like); what is cooked with hot water (and then peeled)'. However, the more specific usage is attested already in ClassAr; e.g., in addition to the general meaning, Lane (1872) also mentions 'millet bruised and dressed by being cooked with milk; a preparation of dried curd with which are mixed certain plants'.

As for [¹SLQ] ¹*salaqa* 'to lacerate the skin (with a whip)', the picture is rather confusing, esp. in the light of the absence of undisputable Sem cognates. Several suggestions have to be discussed.

The first has already been mentioned: One could think of a development along the line *'[³SLQ] > [²SLQ] > [¹SLQ]', i.e., *'to boil, cook in boiling water > to cook/boil in order to remove skin, hair, husk, etc. > to peel > to scrape off, lacerate the skin', perhaps under the influence of *salāḥa* 'to skin, flay, etc.' (see below). Given the absence of immediately obvious Sem cognates meaning 'to lacerate, skin, etc.', such a semantic development is not inconceivable. However, an argument against the validity of such a hypothesis could be the existence of quite a few items that seem to be dependent on the notion of 'scraping, peeling' rather than on that of 'boiling, cooking';²⁴ the high degree of diversification would point to a relatively

²⁴ Such as [⁹SLQ] *salīqāt* 'inborn disposition, instinct', [†][¹⁴SLQ] ^{†8}*salaqa* 'to leave (foot\ hoof) prints (on the soil)', [†][²⁵SLQ] [†]*salaq* 'even, plain, smooth, even tract of good soil, depressed land, meadow', [†][²⁷SLQ] ^{†2}*salīq* 'what falls off from trees (leaves, etc.)'—see below.

old age, an aspect that could make a secondary origin of ‘scraping, peeling, lacerating’ appear quite unlikely (though not impossible).

Another suggestion was made by Leslau (2006). He would see Ar ¹*salaqa* ‘to peel off (flesh) from (the bone)’ as cognate to Akk *šālāqu* ‘to cut open, split, cut’ and Gz *šalaqa*~*salaqa* ‘to grind fine, crush, peel, husk’ (as well as evidence from other EthSem languages²⁵). If ¹*salaqa* indeed belonged here, one might reconstruct protSem **ŠLḲ* ‘to cut, crush, peel off’, which, however, would be homonymous with the above-mentioned (and quite reliably reconstructed) protSem **ŠLḲ* ‘to boil, cook’—rather unlikely, esp. so in light of the semantic distance between ‘cutting, splitting’ and ‘scraping, peeling’. Therefore, it would probably make more sense to see the Akk and EthSem items together with Ar *šalaqa* (*u, šalq*) ‘to split lengthwise’ (< protSem **ŠLQ?*) rather than with ¹*salaqa* ‘to lacerate, flay, etc.’.

A third view is presented by Ehret (1989: #21). In this theory, ¹*salaqa* has the basic meaning ‘to loosen the flesh from the bones’ and is analyzed as the result of an extension in **-ḳ* from a biconsonantal ‘pre-protSem’ **√SL*²⁶ ‘to draw out or off’ (> Ar *salla* ‘to draw out slowly’),²⁷ adding a notion of intensity (with regard to the action’s effect). According to the author, there are many more such extensions:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| + ‘concisive’ <i>*-ʔ</i> | → <i>salaʔa</i> (<i>salʔ</i>) ‘to purify butter, press sesame oil’ |
| + ‘finitive fortative’ <i>*-b</i> | → <i>salaba</i> (<i>salb</i>) ‘to take from with violence, rob, plunder, steal’ |

²⁵ Tña *sālāqā*, Amh *sällāqā*, Gur *sālāqā* ‘to grind fine’, Amh *šālāqqāqā* ‘husk, shell, hull’, etc.

²⁶ Perhaps better **√SL/ŠL*—see the following two footnotes.

²⁷ Perhaps akin to Ar *salil* ‘male foetus, embryo; descendant, scion, son’, *sulālaʾ* ‘progeny, offspring; family; race’, as well as items showing final **-Y*, which go back to protSem **ša/ily(-at)-* / **sa/ily(-at)-* ‘afterbirth, fetal membrane’ (Militarev and Kogan 2000 #246; Fronzaroli 1964: 246 and 262-263, had **šily(-at)-* ‘placenta’, **šalil* ‘embrione’). If such a relation is valid, the ‘placenta, afterbirth’ may be interpreted as *‘(s.th.) drawn out slowly’*, and the corresponding vb. (Orel and Stolbova 1994 #2274: protSem **šul* < AfrAs **sol* ‘to pull’) could be assigned the more general basic meaning of *‘to (make) pass gently through a narrow opening’* (as in fact posited by Gabal [2012] for the Ar root nucleus **SL-*). The n. is widely attested throughout Sem [Akk *silitu*, *šelitu*, *šalitu* ‘afterbirth; womb (poet.)’, Hbr *šilyā* ‘afterbirth’, postBiblHbr *šālil* ‘embryo’, JudAram *šilyātā*, *šilyā*; *silyātā*, *silātā* ‘afterbirth’, *šillulā* ‘embryo, birth’, Syr *šalitā* ‘secundina; membrana foetum tegens’, Mnd *šulita*, Ar *sala* ‘membrane enveloping the foetus’, Gz *sayl* ‘foetus, embryo’ (metathesis **-ly* > *-yl*!), Te *səlāt* ‘placenta, afterbirth’, Tña *šälāt* ‘placenta o seconda delle bestie’, *šäl* ‘feto ancora nel ventre della madre’, Amh *šäl* ‘foetus, embryo, conception’, etc.], where some of the Akk and JudAram forms show unexpected *s-* instead of regular *š-* (Militarev and Kogan 2005: *ibid.*), so that the reconstructed protSem forms oscillate between initial **š-* and **s-*. Accordingly, Ehret’s reconstruction of an underlying biconsonantal nuclear root **√SL* should perhaps be modified into **√SL/ŠL*.

+ 'durative' *-t	→ <i>salata</i> (salt) 'to draw one thing from another'
+ 'iterative' *-h	→ <i>salaha</i> (salh) 'to drop excrement'
+ 'extendative fortative' *-h	→ <i>salaha</i> (salh) 'to skin, flay, throw off the slough; to undress'
+ 'sunderative' *-f	→ <i>salifa</i> (salaʔ) 'to split, cleave'
+ 'iterative' *-p	→ <i>salafa</i> (salf) 'to harrow, level, plane, make even, prepare for sowing (land)'

The semantic proximity among these values is indeed striking and gives strong support to Ehret's argumentation.²⁸

In conclusion we may perhaps say that Leslau's idea (from *'to cut, split') as well as a derivation from 'to boil, cook' probably should be discarded while a development along the lines sketched by Ehret seems to be very well conceivable. If the true origin should be 'cooking, boiling', the semantics may have been influenced by *salaha* (salh) 'to skin, flay, throw off'.

How ever that may be, [¹SLQ] ¹*salaqa* 'to loosen the flesh from the bones; (hence also) to lacerate the skin (with a whip)' appears to have generated a number of new values. In these, several aspects inherent in, or accompanying, this type of action, such as 'scratching, scraping off, carving', 'making plain, bare, clean', 'hurting' and others, including the above-mentioned 'peeling, removing skin/husk', are foregrounded.

We have already mentioned [⁵SLQ] ⁵*salaqa* 'to hurt (with words), insult' and the possibility that this item is neither from Gz *tasālaqa* (as assumed by Margoliouth [1939]), nor (with metathesis) from NWSem *QLS (Zammit's and Leslau's suggestion), nor a dissimilating variant of [†]*salaqa* (with velarized š-), but simply the result of a semantic development from ¹*salaqa* 'to lacerate the skin (with a whip)' > 'to hurt' > 'to insult'. ClassAr lexicographers often make ⁵*salaqa* 'to hurt, insult' dependent on [†][¹³SLQ] ^{†7}*salaqa* 'to pierce (with a spear)', but this may itself be specialized use of ¹*salaqa*, though perhaps under the influence of (or even by contamination with) [†]*salaqa* (š-!) 'to attack (a tribe); to smite s.o. (sun); to strike s.o. (bi-with a stick)'.

²⁸ One should perhaps add here items showing initial š- rather than s-, such as *šalaha* (a, šalh) 'to take off (*ṭiyābahū* one's clothes), undress; to shed the cloth (-h), renounce the ministry, apostatize (monk, priest)' (Wehr and Cowan 1976); [†](pre-MSA, according to Hava [1899], also:) 'to change feathers (bird)'; [†](LevAr) 'to throw off, reject s.th.', as well as [†]*šalaha* (a, u, šalh) 'to split s.th.' (Hava 1899). These may be Aramaisms, but if not, the regular reconstruction of the corresponding protSem roots should start with Ṣ̌-, not S-, which would provide another good reason for complementing Ehret's √*SL with an alternative √*ŠL (see the preceding two footnotes).

[⁹SLQ] ²*salīqat* ‘inborn disposition, instinct’ may at first sight seem to be completely unrelated to any of the other SLQ items.²⁹ Yet, taking into account morphology and the fact that ²*salīqat* is a quasi-PP, formed on the *Faṣīl-āt* pattern, it is not difficult to imagine that ‘instinct, inner nature, essence’ is properly *‘what remains, or becomes visible, after “skinning”, “peeling or scraping off” the outer layers of s.th.’, thus a semantic modification of an original [¹SLQ] ‘to loosen the flesh from the bones, scrape/peel off the skin/husk’ or from [²SLQ] ‘to remove (hair, etc.) with boiling water / through boiling in water’ (the semantic ‘bridge’ between [¹SLQ] and [³SLQ] ‘to boil, cook in boiling water’—see above).

In a similar vein, also the pl. n. †[¹⁴SLQ] †*salāʔiq* (from a less common sg. †³*salīqat*) ‘marks made by the feet of men and by the hoofs of horses or the like on the road, or marks made by thongs upon the belly of a camel etc.’ and the corresponding vb. †⁸*salaqa* ‘to leave prints (on the soil, or road; said of human feet, or animals’ hoofs), leave marks upon the belly of a camel etc. (thongs, etc.)’, are with all likelihood developments from [¹SLQ]—a transfer of meaning from the human body on which flaying leaves its marks to the body of a camel, or a road, etc.³⁰ To the same complex of *‘scratching, scraping, etc.’ belong quite certainly also DatAr *salaq*, *u*, ‘to sow; cultivate, plough, till’, *sāliq* (pl. *sawāliq*) ‘furrow (where the seed of the food is already found)’, and *silāqat* ‘cultivation, tillage’ (Landberg 1942), as all these can easily be derived from the notion of *‘to make furrows in the soil, “scratch, lacerate” the ground’.

Perhaps also †[²⁴SLQ] †⁴*silqat* ‘water-course, channel in which water flows, between two tracts of elevated, or elevated and rugged, ground’ and †[²⁵SLQ] †*salaq* ‘even, plain, smooth, even tract of good soil, depressed land, meadow’ are related to the above complex: †⁴*silqat* ‘water-course, channel, etc.’ could well be, originally, a *‘furrow carved in the earth/soil (by the running water)’, and †*salaq* may be a *‘tract of land from which most vegetation on the surface has been “scraped off”, “lacerated” region’. However, both these etymologies cannot be taken for granted. For *silqat*, one may also think of a relation with †[¹⁸SLQ] †¹²*salaqa* ‘to run’, †*saylaq* ‘quick, swift (she-camel)’ (see below), in which case the ‘water course, channel, etc.’ would be *‘the running one, the quick, swift one’.

²⁹ Is modHbr *salqāh* ‘natural (music)’ (Klein 1987) related, or even a cognate?

³⁰ Cf. the fact that one detailed explanation of the meaning of ¹*salaqa* connects it directly to ‘leaving traces’: ‘to peel off (flesh from the bone), remove its hair or fur (with hot water, leaving the traces thereof remaining [!])’—Lane (1872: IV, 1410). The old n. †*salq* ‘mark/scar (of a gall), sore, on the back of a camel, when it has healed, and the place thereof has become white; mark made by the [plaited thong called] *nisf* upon the side of the camel, or upon its belly, from which the fur becomes worn off’ (*ibid.*) matches very well here, too.

And [†]*salaq* 'even plain, low tract that produces herbage, meadow' (Lane 1872) is perhaps not from SLQ but a variant of, or contaminated by, (a more original?) [†]*salaq* (with initial š-) 'id.', itself of obscure etymology. For the latter, compare also [†]*ṣaliq* 'even, smooth' and the n.f. (nominalized adj.?) [†]*ṣaliqat* (pl. *ṣalāʔiq*^u) 'thin bread; slice of roasted meat' (Hava 1899), both displaying a notion of plainness and evenness that is similar to that of [†]*salaq*~*ṣalaq*.

Another lexeme that should perhaps be connected to the complex of *'scraping, scratching, lacerating, etc.' is [†][³⁰SLQ] ^{†5}*ṣaliq* 'side of a road'. In the absence of reliable attestations for this item,³¹ any statement will, of course, remain highly speculative; but if we are allowed to speculate a little bit we may assume that, originally, with 'side of the road' may have been meant the *'bare slopes' or the *'furrows' along a road. In a similar vein, the DaʔAr item [†][³⁴SLQ] *miṣlāq* 'ruins', listed by Landberg (1942), is perhaps actually simply *'barren land(scape), "lacerated" place'.

The quasi-PP *ṣaliq(at)* which comes with a broad variety of meanings, some of which already discussed above,³² is registered in the dictionaries with yet another value that may equally well be related to *'scraping, scratching, lacerating (and, hence, leaving marks on s.th., or leaving it bare/barren)', namely [†][²⁷SLQ] ^{†2}*ṣaliq* 'what falls off from trees (leaves, etc.)'. It is not unlikely that this value developed from a basic *'what has been "scratched off" (from a tree, and left it bare, like lacerated skin)'. In contrast, *Tāğ al-ṣarūs* explains it as dependent not on [¹SLQ] 'scraping, scratching, lacerating' but on [⁴SLQ] 'burning, scalding (said of excessive heat, or cold)'—which I think is equally convincing. – Perhaps also [³³SLQ] DaʔAr *salqaṭ* 'natte de folioles de palmier' (Landberg 1942) belongs here (< *'palm leaves having fallen down and left the tree bare?'). – [†][²⁹SLQ] ^{†4}*ṣaliq* 'pot herbs' may be pertinent, too, unless it is akin to the loanword [⁷SLQ] ¹*silq*, EgAr *salq* 'variety of chard' (see above), or simply a quasi-PP meaning *'what is going to be cooked in hot water' (from ³*salaqa* 'to boil, cook in boiling water'). – The vb. II [†][¹⁹SLQ] [†]*sallaqa* in the sense of 'to

³¹ It features in the ClassAr dictionaries I consulted, but a search in DHDA yielded no result. That means that a modern revision of the ClassAr lexicon either does not confirm the existence of the value at all, or only for the period covered by the project so far (up to the end of the 3rd century AH—as of May 2022).

³² See above [⁸SLQ] ^{†1}*ṣaliq* 'peeled barley and dish made from it', SyrAr ¹*ṣaliqat* 'dish made of grain cooked with sugar, cinnamon and fennel'; [⁹SLQ] ²*ṣaliqat* 'inborn disposition, instinct'; [†][¹⁴SLQ] [†]*ṣalāʔiq*^u (sg. ^{†3}*ṣaliqat*) 'marks made by the feet/horns etc. on the road, marks made by thongs upon the belly of a camel etc.'; [†][³⁰SLQ] ^{†5}*ṣaliq* 'side of a road'.

collect herbs' is probably denominative, either from $\dagger[{}^{27}\text{SLQ}]$ $\dagger^2\text{salīq}$ 'what falls off from trees (leaves, etc.)' or from $\dagger[{}^{29}\text{SLQ}]$ $\dagger^4\text{salīq}$ 'pot herbs'.³³

Another word related to the idea of *'falling out/off and leaving "bare"' seems to be $\dagger[{}^{26}\text{SLQ}]$ $\dagger\text{sulāq}$ 'tumor/swelling/pustule on the edges of the eyelids or on the gum, causing eyelashes or teeth to fall out'.³⁴ Like in the preceding item, the focus here is less on 'scraping, scratching, peeling, etc.' but on the effect of such an activity, i.e., the bareness resulting from the act of *salq*.

Given the high degree of variation among the items expressing an essential 'bareness, barrenness, evenness, plainness'—a variation that needs time to evolve and thus points to a very old age of this basic notion—and given that the above-mentioned $\dagger[{}^{25}\text{SLQ}]$ $\dagger\text{salaq}$ 'even, plain, smooth, even tract of good soil, depressed land, meadow' is perhaps the only genuine Ar noun in the root that, apart from the vb. I, shows a basic structure, without morphematic additions,³⁵ one may even be tempted to posit *this* notion as the one that should be assigned etymological primacy within the complex of related items, including ${}^1\text{salaqa}$ 'to loosen the flesh from the bones, to skin, peel, lacerate, scratch, scrape off, etc.'. But such an assumption would, of course, have to compete with Ehret's (rather convincing) idea of deriving ${}^1\text{salaqa}$ via extension in **k* from an earlier bi-consonantal *SL 'to draw out or off', as well with the oscillation between *salaq* and *ṣalaq*.

³³ Orel and Stolbova (1994: #380) think they found 'cognates' of Ar *slq* 'to gather' in Eg *s:k* (*-l > -s) 'do.' and CCh *caḳal* (metathesis) 'to gather, collect'; therefore, they venture to posit a Sem **s^vl^vk* 'to gather' and even reconstruct an AfrAs vb. **calak* 'to gather'. Highly speculative—the basis for such a reconstruction is too weak.

³⁴ The most comprehensive description of this items is probably the one in BK (1860): '1 tumeur qui se forme sur les bords des paupières et fait tomber les cils [tumor that forms on the edges of the eyelids and causes the eyelashes to fall out; (Hava 1899:) lippitude of the eyelids]; 2 déchaussement des dents, maladie des gencives, qui fait que les dents n'étant plus retenues par les gencives tombent [loosening of teeth, gum disease, which causes teeth no longer held by the gums to fall out; (Wahrmund 1887:) Lösung des Zahnfleisches]; 3 tubercule à la racine de la langue [tubercle at the root of the tongue; (Lane 1872, Hava 1899:) pimples, pustules that come forth upon the root \ on the tip of the tongue]; 4 enflure [swelling; cf. also $\dagger\text{al-?asāliq}$ "what is next to the *lahawāt* (pl. used as sg., meaning the 'uvula') of the mouth, internally, or the upper parts of the interior of the mouth, those to which the tongue rises' (Lane 1872)].

³⁵ Other such words would only be ${}^1\text{silq}$ 'a variety of chard' and ${}^2\text{silq}$ 'red garden-beet' ($[{}^7\text{SLQ}]$ and $\dagger[{}^{21}\text{SLQ}]$), which, as we saw above, are very likely non-Ar borrowings; ${}^2\text{silqa}$ 'female lizard; female locust when she has laid her eggs' $\dagger[{}^{23}\text{SLQ}]$, of obscure origin, but probably a borrowing, too; and ${}^3\text{silq}$ 'wolf' $\dagger[{}^{22}\text{SLQ}]$...

2.4 Less prominent values of probably Semitic/Arabic origin

There remain a few items that seem to be of Semitic or at least genuine Arabic origin but can hardly be connected to the above main values (though perhaps to some other, non-SLQ roots).

†^[17SLQ] †¹¹**salaqa** 'to call out, cry out, shout vehemently (esp. after the death of a person or at a calamity); to slap and scratch one's face (mourning woman)'. ClassAr lexicographers often interpret the meaning 'to slap...' as secondary, dependent on 'to call out...'; yet it might be just the other way round, so that also the corresponding nouns, †¹*silqaṭ* (pl. *sulqān*, *silqān*, *silq*) and *sāliqaṭ* (pl. *sawāliq*¹⁰) for 'weeping loudly (woman), slapping her face' would in the first place have denoted *(woman) *scratching* (her face)', given that mourning is accompanied, in many parts of the world, and so also in the Middle East and North Africa, by a ritualistic scratching of the face, typically performed by professional female mourners. There could thus be a connection of [17SLQ] 'to call out, cry' to [1SLQ] 'to lacerate (the skin, etc.)' and, more specifically, the derived †^[14SLQ] 'to make marks/leave prints on the road/soil/belly/body', DaṭAr 'furrow' etc. With the additional notion of 'long-tongued and vehemently clamorous, foul, evil, lewd', †*silqaṭ* comes close also to [5SLQ] 'to hurt (with one's tongue), insult'. While the latter, too, may depend on [1SLQ] 'to lacerate (the skin, etc.)', it may also be influenced by †*salaq* (pl. *ʔaṣlāq*) 'shriek of distress' (> denom. †*taṣallaqa* 'to scream in child-birth') and †*salaqa* (i, *ṣalq*) 'to call out, cry out, shout vehemently; to raise one's voice on the occasion of a calamity, and of a death' (Lane 1872).

†^[20SLQ] †²**tasallaqa** 'to be(come) restless, agitated, in a state of commotion, fret (from grief, anxiety, pain)' is perhaps due to confusion with †*taṣallaqa* (with -ṣ-) 'id.', unless the reverse is the case. The latter is probably denominative from †*salaq* 'shriek of distress', mentioned in the preceding paragraph and without proper etymology either.

†^[22SLQ]: The terms †³**silq** (pl. *sulqān*, *silqān*) for 'wolf' and †³**silqaṭ** for 'she-wolf' look as if they were very basic words. However, the common Sem term for 'wolf' is protSem **ḏiʔb* (> Ar *ḏiʔb*), so that †³*silq*, f. †³*silqaṭ*, can be suspected to be figurative use of some other SLQ item, pointing to a characteristic feature of the animal. From among the value spectrum covered by √SLQ, two values could be promising candidates: a 'wolf' may either be *'the mangy one', from [1SLQ] 'to lacerate the skin' (see also †*salq* 'mark/scar, sore, on the back of a camel, when it has healed; mark left on the skin by a thong making the fur looking worn off', cf. [14SLQ]), or *'the howling one', akin to †^[17SLQ] 'to call out, cry out, shout vehemently'. The latter seems to be more likely, as ClassAr has the proverbial expression *ʔaṣlaṭ¹¹ min silqaṭ* 'more clamorous than a she-wolf' where

‘shouting, howling’ is regarded as a characteristic, ‘proverbial’ feature; moreover, some ClassAr lexicographers would regard *silqaṭ* in the sense of ‘clamorous (woman), shouting vehemently, long-tongued, foul, evil, lewd’ as dependent on ‘she-wolf’ (Lane 1872: ‘she-wolf... hence [!], a woman...’).³⁶ – However, if none of these assumptions should be valid, a foreign origin of ^{†3}*silq* is not unlikely, given that there are no Sem cognates and no immediately evident relation to other SLQ values. If foreign and non-Sem, what could it be? The only option that comes to my mind would be Grk λύκος *lýkos* ‘wolf’. Like most of the other etymologies, this option, too, is unprovable; but if one does not exclude a metathesis **skl* > *slq* in the case of [⁷SLQ] EgAr *salq*, MSA ¹*silq* ‘(variety of) chard’, allegedly from Grk *sikelós* ‘Sicilian’ (see above), well, then one could also dare to suggest **Grk lýkos* > Ar *silq*, with a metathesis **lks/lks* > *slq*...

2.5 Of obscure etymology

[†][¹⁵SLQ] ^{†9}*salaqa* ‘to oil, grease (a leathern water-skin, etc.), to smear (a camel all over with tar)’. Unless akin to, or dependent on, [†][²⁵SLQ] [†]*salaq* ‘even plain, smooth, even tract, of good soil’ (which does not seem very likely), the item could be a misreading for [†]*salafa* (*u, salaf*) ‘to grease (a skin)’. – Or should one consider Hbr ²*šālaq* ‘to make smooth, trim’ (Klein 1987) as a cognate? According to Klein, the item is of uncertain origin, perhaps a *šiphfel* formation from *hālaq* ‘to be smooth’.

[†][¹⁶SLQ] ^{†10}*salaqa* ‘(*al-ḡuwāliq*^a) to insert one of the two loops of the sack called *ḡuwāliq* into the other’; ‘(*al-ṣūd fī l-ṣurwaṭ*) to insert the stick into the loop [of the *ḡuwāliq*]’. Etymology obscure.

[†][¹⁸SLQ] ^{†12}*salaqa* ‘to run’, [†]*saylaq* ‘quick, swift (she-camel)’. Barth (1902) had no doubt that the value had to be seen together with [⁶SLQ] *tasallaqa* ‘to climb’, interpreting *saylaq* as, properly, **‘the climbing one’* (‘stark laufende [eigentl. “steigende Kamelin”]’). But this is little convincing, although the *FayṣaL* pattern certainly expresses intensity.

[†][²⁸SLQ] ^{†3}*salīq* ‘honey which the bees build up along the length of their hive, or habitation’. Etymology obscure. – Any relation with [†][¹⁴SLQ] ^{†8}*salaqa* ‘to leave prints ([†]*salāṭiq*^u, sg. ^{†3}*salīqaṭ*) (on the soil/road; said of feet, hoofs, etc.), leave marks upon the belly of a camel etc. (thongs, etc.)’, DaṭAr *sāliq* ‘furrow (where the seed of the food is already found)’, *salaq* ‘to sow; cultivate, plough, till’?

³⁶ Unfortunately, Ullmann’s seminal study *Das Gespräch mit dem Wolf* has no data that would help bring light to the ^{†3}*silq* question.

3 Conclusion

As the above discussion hopefully was able to show, earlier etymological research provides many approaches, inspiring ideas and individual suggestions that can help a modern etymologist bring some light even into Arabic roots that show as broad and diverse a spectrum of semantic values as that assembled under the 'roof' of $\sqrt{\text{SLQ}}$. At the same time, it is evident that there are clear limits to what can be said with some plausibility, limits beyond which we enter the realm of unfounded and hardly tenable speculation.

An attempt to come with a short summary of our findings should perhaps start with the items that still are in use in MSA (according to Wehr and Cowan 1976). Already here, we meet a coexistence of oldest Semitic layers, several semantic developments from these (direct derivatives as well as figurative use), and borrowings, both inner-Semitic and others:

¹*salaqa* 'to lacerate the skin (with a whip)': According to Ehret (1989), the vb. with the primary value 'to loosen the flesh from the bones' is the result of an extension in $*-k$ from a 'pre-protSem' $*\sqrt{\text{SL}}/[\check{\text{S}}\text{L}]$ (Orel and Stolbova 1994: protSem $*\check{\text{šul-}}$ < AfrAs $*\text{sol}$) 'to draw out or off', preserved in Ar *salla* 'to draw out slowly' and with all likelihood related to items such as *salil* 'male foetus, embryo; descendant, scion, son', *sulālāt* 'progeny, offspring; family; race', as well as Ar *sala*ⁿ 'membrane enveloping the foetus' etc., reflecting protSem $*\check{\text{ša}}/\text{ily}(-\text{at})-$ / $*\text{sa}/\text{ily}(-\text{at})-$ 'afterbirth, fetal membrane, placenta' < $^{**}(\text{s.th.})$ drawn out slowly', prob. from a more general $^{**}\text{to (make) pass gently through a narrow opening}$ (Gabal 2012). The value 'to lacerate (the skin)' may have developed under the influence of another extension of protSem $*\sqrt{\text{SL}}/[\check{\text{S}}\text{L}]$, namely *salaḥa* 'to skin, flay' < protSem $*\check{\text{S}}\text{LH}$ 'skin, hide'.

Fig.: ⁵*salaqa* 'to hurt (*bi-lisānihi* with one's tongue)', *salāqaṭ* 'vicious tongue, violent language' [interpreted by others as a borrowing, with metathesis, from NWSem $*\text{QLS}$ 'to deride, jeer at, shout at', by yet others as a variant, with fig. meaning, of ṣalaqa (ṣ!) 'to attack (a tribe); to smite s.o. (sun); to strike']

Deriv.: ²*salīqaṭ* 'inborn disposition, instinct': prob. a quasi-PP of ¹*salaqa* in the sense of 'to strip', thus orig. $^{**}\text{'what remains after stripping off the outer layers, inner kernel, nucleus'}$

²*salaqa* 'to remove with boiling water': seems to be the result of a merger of ¹*salaqa* 'to remove (the skin)' and ³*salaqa* 'to boil, cook in boiling water'

Deriv.: ¹*salīqat* ‘dish made of [peeled] grain cooked with sugar, cinnamon and fennel (SyrAr)’

³*salaqa* ‘to boil, cook in boiling water’: from protSem/CSem *šlḳ ‘to boil, cook; (?to roast)’

Deriv.: *maslūq* ‘cooked, boiled’, *maslūqat* ‘bouillon, broth’

Fig.: ⁴*salaqa* ‘to scald (plants; said of excessive heat)’

al-*sullāq* ‘Ascension of Christ’: from Aram *sūlqā* ‘id.’, *slaq* ‘to ascend’ (prot-Aram *slḳ), accord. to Kogan (2015) perh. result of a splitting *š- > s-l, thus possibly related to Akk *šaḳu* ‘to grow high, rise, ascend’, Ar *šāqi* ‘high, inaccessible’, etc.

Deriv.: ¹*tasallaqa* ‘to ascend, mount, climb, scale (s.th.); to climb up (plant)’; *tasalluq* ‘climbing; ascent’; *mutasalliq* in al-*nabātāt al-mu-tasalliqat* ‘climbing plants, creepers’.

EgAr *salq*, MSA ¹*silq* ‘a variety of chard’: perh. same as ^{†2}*silq* ‘red garden-beet’ (botanically, both are *beta vulgaris*); accord. to Fraenkel (1886), the latter is from Aram Syr *silqā* ‘id.’ (from Grk *sikelós* ‘Sicilian?’); but perh. also Pers *šalgām* ‘turnip, rape’ played a role.

salaqūn~*salāqūn* ‘red lead, minium’: prob. (via Tu?) from Pers *zargūn* ‘gold-coloured’; others: from Grk *syrikón*, thus *‘the Syrian (mineral), the (red) substance from Syria’

¹*salūqī*~*salaqī* ‘saluki, greyhound, hunting dog’: from a town named *Salūq*, ultimately prob. Grk Seleukia.

Among the lexemes that have become obsolete in MSA the most interesting, from an etymological perspective, is probably ^{†6}*salaqa* ‘to prostrate s.o. on the back of his neck, throw s.o. down; to push, repel’: this item may reflect an old Sem caus. in *š- from √LQY ‘to find’, preserved in the variant [†]*salqā*, which is perh. a back-formation based on *istalqā* ‘to throw o.s. on the ground, lie down, prostrate’.

As for the remaining values, some are clearly borrowings, some perhaps phonetic variants of roots with initial š, and some of completely obscure origin; the majority, however, seems to consist of developments from ‘to loosen the flesh from the bones [Ehret] > to lacerate the skin’. In contrast, the item with the clearest etymology, ³*salaqa* ‘to boil, cook in boiling water’ (< Sem *šlḳ ‘id.’), seems to have remained rather unproductive: apart from *salīqat* ‘dish made from cooked grain’ (see above) it has, apparently, not generated many new meanings, perh. only ^{†4}*salīq* ‘pot herbs’, which perh. is from *‘what is (going to be) cooked in hot water’.

Unlike ³*salaqa* ‘to boil, cook’, ¹*salaqa* ‘to loosen the flesh from the bones; (hence also) to lacerate the skin (with a whip)’ (see above, MSA values) appears to have produced a variety of new values, all of which build on partial aspects of the basic notion:

- *to scratch, carve, leave traces/prints, make furrows in the soil:*

†*salāʔiq* (sg. †*salīqat*) 'foot/hoof prints; marks made by thongs upon the belly of a camel etc.', †*salaqa* 'to leave (foot/hoof) prints (on the soil, or road, etc.), leave marks upon the belly of a camel etc. (thongs, etc.)' DatAr *salaq* 'to sow; cultivate, plough, till', *sāliq* (pl. *sawāliq*) 'furrow (where the seed of the food is already found)', and *silāqat* 'cultivation, tillage' Perh. also †*silqat* 'water-course, channel in which water flows, between two tracts of elevated, or elevated and rugged, ground' (? *'furrow carved in the earth/soil by the running water'), and †*salīq* 'side of a road' (? *'furrows' along a road)

- *to scratch one's face (mourner) > to cry, shout, howl:*

†¹¹*salaqa* 'to call out, cry out, shout vehemently (esp. after the death of a person or at a calamity); to slap and scratch one's face (mourning woman)'; hence †*silqat* and *sāliqat* 'weeping loudly (woman), slapping her face' (cf., however, †*šalaq* (š-!) 'shriek of distress', †*šalaqa* 'to call out, cry out, shout vehemently; to raise one's voice on the occasion of a calamity, and of a death')

†³*silq* 'wolf', †*silqat* 'she-wolf': (unless lw., ? < Grk *lýkos* 'wolf') perh. *'the howling one'

- *to lay bare, bareness, barrenness; to make clean, smooth, even, plain:*

†*salaq* 'even, plain, smooth, even tract of good soil, depressed land, meadow': < *'tract of land from which most vegetation on the surface has been "scraped off", "lacerated" region'? But perh. simply a var. of †*šalaq* (š-!) 'id.'

†²*sāliq* 'what falls off from trees (leaves, etc.)': perh. *'what has been "scratched off" (from a tree, and left it bare, like lacerated skin)'; (hence?, denom.) †*sallaqa* 'to collect herbs'; perh. also DatAr *salqat* 'natte de folioles de palmier': < *'palm leaves having fallen down and left the tree bare'?

†*sulāq* 'tumor/swelling/pustule on the edges of the eyelids or on the gum, causing eyelashes or teeth to fall out'

²*salīqat* 'inborn disposition, instinct': prob. *'what remains, or becomes visible, after "skinning", "peeling or scraping off" the outer layers of s.th.' DatAr *mislāq* 'ruins': perh. *'barren land(scape), "lacerated" place'

- *to insult, hurt:*

⁵*salaqa* 'to hurt (with words), insult': see above (MSA values)

^{†7}**salaqa** ‘to pierce (with a spear)’: may be specialized use of ¹**salaqa**, though perhaps under the influence of (or even by contamination with) [†]**salaqa** (š-!) ‘to attack (a tribe); to smite s.o. (sun); to strike s.o. (bi- with a stick)’.

Among the *borrowings* we find (in addition to *sullāq* ‘Ascension’, *salq* / ¹*silq* ‘variety of chard’, *salaqūn*~*salāqūn* ‘red lead, minium’, and ¹*salūqī*~*salaqī* ‘greyhound, hunting dog’, which are still in use in MSA):

^{†2}**salūqī** ‘(a sort of) coat of mail’, [†]**salūqiyyaṭ** ‘sitting-place of the captain/pilot’: both prob. from city name *Salūq* < Grk Seleukia

^{†2}**silqaṭ** ‘female lizard; female locust, when she has laid her eggs’: perh. related to (or from?) Eg *śrk.t* ‘goddess Serket (Selkis), scorpion’, based on Eg *śrk* ‘to relieve, admit breath to’.

(*kalām*) [†]**salīqī** ‘incorrectness in the use of language, solecism’ (counter-concept of *ʔifrāb*): from Grk *soloikismós* ‘id. (conter-concept of *hellēnismós*)’.

The result of *phonological confusion* with *ṢLQ* may be:

^{†2}**tasallaqa** ‘to be(come) restless, agitated, in a state of commotion, fret’: perh. var. of [†]**taṣallaqa** ‘id.’

[†]**salaq** ‘even, plain, smooth, even tract of good soil, depressed land, meadow’: see above, but perh. simply a var. of [†]**salaq** ‘id.’

The values for which I was unable to find convincing hints in earlier research on which to build own suggestions are:

^{†9}**salaqa** ‘to oil, grease (a leathern water-skin, etc.), smear (a camel all over with tar)’

^{†10}**salaqa** ‘(*al-ḡuwāliq*^a) to insert one of the two loops of the sack called *ḡuwāliq* into the other’; ‘(*al-ṯūd fi l-ṯurwaṭ*) to insert the stick into the loop [of the *ḡuwāliq*]’

^{†12}**salaqa** ‘to run’, [†]**saylaq** ‘quick, swift (she-camel)’

^{†3}**salīq** ‘honey which the bees build up along the length of their hive, or habitation’

Abbreviations

* reconstructed, hypothetical form/value

†	obsolete, no longer in use in MSA (as in Wehr/Cowan)
√	root
~	variant

#	item no. ...	Lev	Levantine
adj.	adjective	lw.	loanword
AfrAs	Afroasia n, ~tic	m	middle...
Akk	Akkadian	Mhr	Mehri
Amh	Amharic	mod	modern...
AngSax	Anglo-Saxon	MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
Ar	Arab, ~ic, ~ian	n	new...
Aram	Aramaic	n.	noun
BDB	Brown, Driver, and Briggs (2010)	N	north(ern)
Berb	Berber	NaIE	Natural Indo-European
Bibl	Biblical	Nostr	Nostratic
BK	Kazimirski (1860)	o	old...
C	Central	PA	active participle
Can	Canaanite	Pal	Palestinian
CDG	Leslau (2006)	Pers	Persian
Chad	Chadic	PP	passive participle
ClassAr	Classical Arabic	prot	proto...
Copt	Copt	R ₁ , R ₂ , ...	1st, 2nd radical (root consonant)
DaʿAr	Daʿini Arabic	S	south(ern)
deriv.	derivative (use)	Sab	Sabaic
DHDA	<i>Muṣṣam ad-Dawḥa at-tāriḥi li-l-luḡa al-ṣarabīya / The Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic</i>	SAr	South Arabian
E	east(ern)	SED	Militarev and Kogan (2000; 2005)
Eg	Egyptian	Sem	Semitic
Engl	English	Soq	Soqotri
f.	feminine	Syr	Syriac
fig.	figurative (use)	Te	Tigre
Fr	French	TLA	<i>Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae</i>
Ge	German	Tña	Tigrīña
Grk	Greek	Tu	Turkish
Gur	Gurage	Ug	Ugaritic
Gz	Gəʕəz	vb.	verb
H	High	vn.	verbal noun, <i>maṣḍar</i>
Hbr	Hebrew	W	west(ern)
IndEur	Indo-European	Yem	Yemini(tic)
Jib	Jibbāli		
Jud	Jewish, Judeo-		
l	late...		
L	Low...		
Lat	Latin		

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iglēt w-šib‘ēt ‘I ate to satiety’: Southern Iraqi Marshland Episodes in Hebrew and Arabic Letters¹

Abstract This article analyzes an unusual document in the Arabic dialect of the marshlands of southern Iraq. Written by a Jewish Iraqi poet, who arrived in Israel from the city of ‘Amāra in the late 1940s, this document consists of two monologues, each repeated twice: first in Hebrew letters and then again in Arabic script. While the writer evidently spoke a *qeltu* dialect as his mother tongue, the monologues demonstrate the *gilit* dialect of the southern Iraqi marshes, and include several idiosyncrasies of that region. The document thus provides linguistic evidence from a dialect area so far documented only partially and insufficiently. We have been able to identify significant differences between the Arabic and Hebrew versions, which led us to view the former as a more reliable attestation of the linguistic reality of the Iraqi marshlands, and the latter as a version produced

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at a later stage. The writer's intention was apparently to demonstrate the close inter-communal relations between the Jews of southern Iraq and the Marsh Arabs, yet his attempt to reproduce a text in the marshland's dialect reveals a more complex picture: While the marshland *gilit* dialect was known to the *qeltu* speakers of the area, the shift between the varieties remained challenging, as is often the case in co-territorial communal dialects.

Keywords Iraq, Marshland, Arabic dialects, contact dialectology, *qeltu*, *gilit*

1 Background

1.1 The Iraqi Marsh Arabs

‘arab al’ahwār, also known as *mi‘dān*, are the native inhabitants of the southern Iraqi marshlands. Most of them are Shiite, who largely maintain a traditional semi-nomadic way of life, alongside old customs of various minority groups who have sought refuge in the marshes throughout history. Some have settled in villages, in houses built of reeds on the shores of the marshes or on artificial platforms on the water surface. They engage in buffalo breeding, fishing, waterfowl hunting, and rice and millet cultivation (UNEP 2001: 15–16). Among the marsh dwellers themselves, the term *mi‘dān* is used more specifically to denote the buffalo breeders who live on the reed islands (Ingham 2000: 125).

The marsh Arabs were almost completely isolated from the outside world until the outbreak of the First World War (UNEP 2001: 17). At the beginning of the 20th century, as the influence of the central government in Iraq expanded and trade throughout the country increased, contact between the *mi‘dān* and the inhabitants of cities and villages outside the marshes became more frequent. Migration of individuals from the marshes to the outskirts of the growing cities (Baghdad, ‘Amāra, etc.) probably also contributed to the increasing contact between the *Mi‘dān* and other Iraqis. In the 1970s, marshland society began to see some economical, educational, and medical development, yet it mostly remained an impoverished group within Iraqi society (UNEP 2001: 17). During the 1980s, when the marshes became a combat zone between Iraq and Iran, the Shiite *mi‘dān* were suspected by the Iraqi Sunni regime of harboring Iranian invaders, and the area was bombed. Over the next few decades, the Iraqi regime violently suppressed a revolt initiated by the *mi‘dān*, and subsequently implemented a massive drainage program that caused 90% of the original area of the marshes to disappear (Adriansen 2004). As a result, in the early 1990s the marshland population, which previously numbered about 500,000 people, decreased significantly. Af-

ter the area was partially reflooded, many of the original inhabitants reportedly returned to the marshlands, but there is no clear data on the number of people living there today, or on their spoken language (Walker 2021).

1.2 The Arabic dialects of the Iraqi marshlands

The Arabic dialects spoken in the southern Iraqi marshlands are grouped with the south Mesopotamian *gilit* dialects. They differ in several aspects from the central Mesopotamian area, centered around Baghdad, and share certain linguistic traits with the Muslim dialects of Baṣra and 'Amāra (Ingham 1973: 546). Importantly, the dialects of southern Iraq form a continuum with those spoken in Khuzestan in western Iran, and which have been studied quite extensively (see references to Ingham, Gazsi and Leitner), unlike Southern Iraqi Arabic.

The southern Mesopotamian linguistic domain, including the Iraqi marshland and Khuzestan, comprises three distinct dialectal groups, classified according to social and geographical criteria (Ingham 2011): the **urban**, or *ḥaḍar*, including the dialects of Baṣra in Iraq and Khorramshahr in Iran; the **Bedouin**, or *'arab*, including the villages and nomad communities between the rivers; and the **marshland**, spreading from around Hōr al-Ḥuwayzah on the Iraq-Iran border, east of 'Amāra, to the area of Hōr al-Ḥammār west of Baṣra.² The present article revolves around the third group, namely, the *mi'dān*. It analyzes a document written in the marshland dialect, which—according to recent reports—is disappearing due to the displacement of many of its speakers (Walker 2021). Features of *mi'dān* Arabic that correspond to the other two groups are also discussed.

Importantly, the document examined was produced by a Jew originating from the city of 'Amāra, who—like all other Jewish Iraqis—spoke a *qeltu* dialect as his mother tongue. The implications of this complex picture are discussed in §2.1. and §3 below.

² In a recent article, Leitner (2021) questions the validity of Ingham's distinctions, in light of considerable demographic and social changes that have taken place in southern Iraq in the past decades. It is therefore important to note that the texts discussed here were probably composed independently of those changes, thus reflecting the linguistic reality in southern Iraq of the 1940s and 1950s, or at least their author's perception in relation to that reality.

1.3 The sociolinguistic scene in and around ‘Amāra

The city of ‘Amāra (locally pronounced *‘imāra*) was founded in the 1860s as an Ottoman military outpost on the shores of the Tigris River, south of Baghdad and about 50 kilometers from the Iranian border. It was locally known as *الأوردي*, after the Turkish *ordu* ‘military’, a term which is rendered into the texts below as *الوردي* *ilWirdi*. Consequently, along with the old population who had lived in the marshland for centuries, towards the end of the 19th century the area became home to other religious and ethnic groups.

In the 1870s the newly established town of ‘Amāra absorbed emigrants from the old Jewish communities of Baghdad and Baṣra who were escaping outbreaks of the plague that were spreading through the large cities, or were looking to settle closer to the pilgrimage site of the tomb of Ezra (Arabic *al‘Uzayr*). The Jews of ‘Amāra maintained an active communal life with two synagogues and a number of public institutions until they immigrated to Israel in the 1950s, when the Iraqi government permitted their departure (Dvori 1999: 15, 17).

In contrast to the urban Shiite population, the attitude of the marshlanders towards the Jews was reportedly less harsh. Al-Baaj, a scholar from ‘Amāra who dedicated a monograph to the Jews of the city (Al-Baaj 2018), depicts close and daily interactions between the Jews of ‘Amāra and the Marsh Arabs that operated on various levels: The Arabs used to deposit their money and valuable assets with the Jewish tradesmen, as their homes on the water were unstable and frequently caught fire or were damaged in some other way. The Jews are reported to have kept an orderly record of the money, and also rewarded those who deposited their money with them. In addition, the Jews made clothes that were sold to the Marsh Arabs, and purchased various consumer products, such as milk, chicken and eggs from them. There is also evidence that Jews were employed inside the marsh villages (Dvori 1999: 162). Most probably, it was these close connections between the Jews and the Marsh Arabs that explains the Jewish poet’s familiarity with the unique dialect of the marshland.

However, despite the positive relations between the two communities, we suspect that the Jews of ‘Amāra shared to some extent the condescending attitude of urban Muslims towards the Marsh Arabs. The latter were perceived by the city dwellers as simpleminded, naive people, who could be deceived easily (Dvori 1999: 32–33; Al-Baaj 2021, personal communication). There are also reports that speakers of the marsh dialect are ridiculed for their accent (Walker 2021). This attitude towards the marshlanders may account for the presentation of the ‘Bedouin’ character in the texts discussed below.

2 The document

2.1 The writer—a Jew from 'Amāra

The document under consideration was produced by the late Ezra Mourad, an Israeli teacher and poet of Iraqi origin.³ Mourad was born in 1933 to a Jewish family in 'Amāra. In common with all other Jews in Iraq, Mourad spoke a dialect of the *qeltu* type as his mother tongue. In the following, we give a short extract from an interview we conducted with him in April 2019, where prominent features of his native *qeltu* dialect are apparent, among which are the realization of **qāf* as *q* and of **r* as *ḡ*; the MPL imperfect ending *-ōn*; and the 3MSG pronominal suffix *-nu* following vowel-final bases:

1. *dxalna ila lmadrasa, madrasat əl'Alyans mal-yhūd. wēḥəd kbīg w-wēḥəd zḡayyḡ kəlləm fadd kitta^{hb}, kān yə'əlmōn. ba'dēn dxalna – ana dxaltu lə-ttānawiyya, t'allamtu ma' l'aslām. əddārāsa kənət bə-lluḡa l'arabiyya.*

We started going to school, the Jewish school of Alliance. Older boys, younger boys—they all were in one class, they studied [together]. Then we went—I went to high school, I studied with the Muslims. Classes were held in Arabic.

2. *Ġāzi haya^{hb} sibandi ya'ni. fad yōm, raḡa' mn-əlmadrassa qabl əlwaqt əlli lāzəm yəḡḡa' bīnu. abūy sáyyalu, qal-lu: Ġāzi, lēš ḡit hēkəd? ba'd sā'a, sā'a w-nəšš lāzəm ...? qal-lu: bābā, ləmdarrəs əssā'a mālu waqfət w-mā ya'ḡəf aš əlwaqt, ya'ni w-ṭəlla'na mn-əlmadrassa.*

Ġāzi [i.e., the narrator's brother] was mischievous, you know. One day he came back from school earlier than he was supposed to. My father asked him, he said to him: 'Ġāzi, why did you come like this? There is still an hour, or an hour and a half [until school ends]'. He said: 'Dad, the teacher's watch had stopped, and he did not know the time, so he let us go from school'.

³ Mourad passed away in August 2020 and did not know of our intention to publish his materials. We thank his daughter Sigalit for approving the publication of the materials and for providing us with valuable background information.

3. *bə-l'əṭla šsayfiyya*,⁴ *bə-ššēf – əḥna mā kənnā 'ašširim^{Hb}*, *ləwlād lāzəm yǧuḥōn, yəštaǧlōn, ybi'ōn dvarim^{Hb}*. *bass t'anū l-Ġāzi, axūyi, t'anū, abūyi t'anū səmsəmiyyi, qal-lu: ǧūḥ bi' ḥatta ysīg 'əndak flūs təštaǧi bīnu dfātəǧ, təštaǧi bīnu ktabāt lə-lmadrasa.*

During the summer vacation, in the summer—we were not rich, [so] children had to go, to work, to sell things. [My father] gave Ġāzi, he gave him sesame sweetmeat and told him: 'Go sell it so you will have money to buy notebooks or books for school'.

Apart from the *qəltu* variety that Mourad spoke as his mother tongue, he was also familiar with two varieties of *gilit*-type dialects, namely the urban Muslim dialect of 'Amāra, and the so-called 'Bedouin' variety of the marshlands surrounding the town. As he himself told us, during his childhood in 'Amāra he had a close relationship with marsh Arabs and he therefore knew their dialect well. At the age of 16, assisted by a marsh lander friend, Mourad crossed the border to Iran through the marshes and began his journey to Israel.

2.2 Genre and message

The text examined below was included in Mourad's collection of Iraqi folk songs and narratives, entitled فوگ النخل *fōg innaxal* 'Above the Palms' (2003).⁵ The booklet was published in Hebrew, thus exposing Israeli readership to the beauty and diversity of Iraqi Arabic. Side by side with the pieces in the *qəltu* Jewish Baghdadi, Mourad offers us texts in 'the Iraqi Bedouin dialect', a term he apparently used to denote Muslim *gilit* dialects as a whole. Here, one finds texts in Muslim Baghdadi, alongside a piece in the dialect of the marshlands. The choice to include samples of the various dialects within one collection seems to have had a specific purpose. Mourad was clearly aware of the considerable linguistic differences within Iraqi Arabic, and in our conversation with him he recounted how he could distinguish between a Muslim and a Jew according to their answer to a simple question like 'Who is at the door?'. Mourad plausibly chose the texts with the intention of presenting his Israeli readers with the heritage

⁴ While the quality of the nominal feminine ending in *gilit* varieties is invariably *a*, in Jewish Baghdadi the ending is raised whenever the preceding syllable contains a front high vowel or *y* (Blanc 1964: 68 ff.; Jastrow 2011). In the case at hand, the suffix *a* in *šsayfiyya*—as opposed to *səmsəmiyyi* in the following sentence—may be accounted for as a literary form. However, it should be noted that some Jews in the southern Iraqi communities exhibited no raising of the feminine ending (Ido Danieli 2022, personal communication).

⁵ The expression *fōg innaxal* is used in the Gulf states in the sense of 'fantastic, wonderful' (Holes 2001: 515).

of his homeland, along with its cultural and linguistic diversity. In this way, he has also opened a window on the intercultural and interlingual relations between Muslims and Jews in southern Iraq.

The piece in the marshland dialect—while entitled *דו שיה בִּדְוִי du siah bed-wi* 'A Bedouin dialogue'—actually consists of the monologues of two *mi'ēdi* men: Ḥamza and 'Abd arRazzāg, each telling an amusing anecdote from his first visit to a big city ('Amāra and Baghdad, respectively). The episodes focus on the narrators' reaction to their encounter with the city's appearance and way of life. In both stories the *mi'ēdi* gets into trouble due to his lack of familiarity with the urban environment: Ḥamza goes into a restaurant and realizes that he is expected to pay for the food he was served, and 'Abd arRazzāg receives an aggressive response from a woman, whom he had reprimanded for her immodest appearance. The stories depict the *mi'ēdi* as a country bumpkin, socially awkward, unsophisticated, and having difficulties deciphering the codes of city life. As mentioned, this depiction of the marsh Arabs is consistent with the view of them as having a socially inferior status (Walker 2021). Folk stories of this kind seem to have been popular among local urban society (Al-Baaj 2021, personal communication).

Interestingly, the language and style of the texts share quite a few characteristics with a series of weekly radio sketches, that were broadcast on Israeli radio during the 1960s. The broadcaster, who for many years identified himself as *ابن الرافدين Ibn ar-Rāfidayn*, was actually called Salmān Dabbi, a Jew born in 1917 in Baghdad. Parts of his radio sketches were published in the 1990s in a booklet entitled *هائي هي القصة تفضلوا اسمعوها Hāy hiyya l-quṣṣa, tfaḍḍalu sma'ūha* 'Here is the story, you are welcome to listen'. It was later translated into Hebrew by Mourad, who published the sketches in 2020 under the title *והרי הספור לפניכם, אָנָּה הַסְכִּיתוּ וְשִׁמְעוּ Va-hare has-sippur lifnexem, anna haskitu ve-šim'u* 'Here is the story before you, pay attention and listen'. The orthography of the dialectal Arabic words, along with the use of Persian letters, resembles the one we find in the texts of the document under consideration. However, while the radio sketches were in Muslim Baghdadi, the document in Mourad's booklet reflects the dialect of the Iraqi marshlands.

2.3 Monologues in the marshland dialect

Each of the two monologues under discussion is given in three versions: a transcript in vocalized Hebrew letters; a vocalized Arabic handwritten transcript; and a Hebrew translation. Notably, in defining the language of his two speakers as 'Bedouin' the author did not refer to the nomads living in the area between the two rivers (see §1.2 above), but rather to the rural *gilit* variety that is spoken by the Marsh Arabs.

Since the dialect is not usually written, and in the absence of clear writing conventions, inaccuracies in the transition from the spoken word to the written one may be expected. Nevertheless, the linguistic profile of the Arabic transcript largely conforms with the available data on the dialects of the Iraqi marshlands and Khuzestan. We propose to consider these transcripts as reliable attestation of the marshland dialect. At the same time, the Hebrew vocalization is not fully in line with the Arabic one, and a few forms exhibit more than one realization. As further discussed below, our assumption is that the Arabic version was produced first, and the Hebrew version followed, possibly even many years later. The order of formation becomes evident through a list of inconsistencies between the two versions. For instance, Mourad has plausibly misread the handwritten Arabic script in the case of *خَشَيْتُ* *xaššēt* ‘I entered’, which was copied to Hebrew *מָשִׁית* *mšit* ‘I walked’ (text A).

Below is a photocopy of the Hebrew and Arabic texts, as published in Mourad’s collection, followed by our transcript and English translation. The transcript proposed is principally based on the Arabic version in the booklet, which also makes use of two Persian signs: *چ* stands for the affricate **k* → *č* (for the conditioning of its occurrence see §3.1 below), and *گ* is used for **q* → *g*. Notably, the sign *گ* is also used in the form *iglēt* ‘I ate’ (root *ʾkl*), where the voiced realization of */k/* is in all likelihood phonetically motivated. The Hebrew transcript *אִקְלֵת* *iklēt*, on the other hand, reflects the etymological root. Different from the common practice in Judeo-Arabic writings, Hebrew *א* stands in this text for **q*, which is realized in the dialect under consideration as *g*.

While editing the text we also consulted a recording we had made during our meeting with Mourad in April 2019 as he spontaneously opened the booklet and read the texts aloud. Importantly, on that occasion Mourad did not actually *read* from the written version, but rather paraphrased it, occasionally deviating from the original wording. He made an evident effort to conform to the dialect he was imitating, and adjusted his pronunciation accordingly. For instance, he clearly pronounced **gīm* as *ž*, as opposed to his native *g* (see extract in §2.1 above). Finally, we also asked two native speakers of Iraqi *gilit* dialects to read the two texts aloud for us, in order to further confirm our interpretation.⁶

⁶ Admittedly, however, in the absence of an authentic recording of the original speaker certain points inevitably remained ambiguous. In the cases where there were differences between the Hebrew and Arabic versions, the transcript follows the latter and the former is given in brackets and marked with ‘H’.

פרד מרה רחית לאלורדי. נאנא אלעדנד, עיב שאיף אלורדי, מד אדהר מד. טבית ללסוג הנ
 צ"נה סוג מעין אמא מטבג בלצ'יר, ולבזאזה ביה כנאם כנאם.
 קשית ושפת נאחד וגלי: תפציל נא זלמה, תפציל! אמשית נרה וגענת בלמוציף נא
 אלמעאזים, ומא ערפת האדיי לויענטה.
 אכלת ושבעת ושקבת ותגהנית ולפית לי שנות תתן. ולענד, נאחד טויל עריץ, אפאדה אבו
 ערצין, צ"נה אפאד מלאח. וגף נמי ונאל: נאללה לעב אינד! כ'מסה נתמאנין פלס! גלת: נלד, אנה
 הנאני מוש הנאני לאצין שעלנא! דויל מעאזים!
 אלזלמה גלי: נלד אנת אטרש! חמסה נתמאנין! גלת לה: נאללה! מא ענדי עיר תלת
 שאמא חג אלתתן, ומנין אגיב לך כ'מסה נתמאנין!
 אלזלמה צאח. אגיו לי סת זלים, טבאבד חמה וצ'פאפירחם. טאד' מא טאד'. צ'רבוני
 ושילתחא.
 נללה שגילד! האי צ"אנת אכלה אבצ'תלה, ועליכם אסלאם!

فَرِدَ مَرَّةً رَحِيثَ الْوَرْدِي. وَأَنَا الْإِدُودُكَ عَيْبَ شَايَ الْوَرْدِي مَزَّ الْكَهْرَمَز. طَبَيْتَ لِلْوَكَ طَوَّ هُنَّ سَوَكْ لَمْعِي
 أَنَا مَطْبَغُ الْبَصَر. وَالْبَزَاذَ يَهْ كَوَامْ كَوَامْ. خَشَّيْتُ دُشْفِي وَأَمَدَ يَكْجِي: تَفْضَلْ يَا زَلْمَه
 تَفْضَلْ! ائْمَشَيْتَ وَارَهْ وَكَعْدَتِ الْفَضِيْفُ وَيَا الْحَاذِمِ وَمَا حَمَرِفَتِ هَذِي لَوْ غَنَطَه.
 أَكَلَيْتَ دُشْفِيْعَتِ دُشْفِيْعَتِ وَأَتَكَّ كَوَيْتِ وَأَدَشَّيْتُ دُشْفِيْعَتِ بِسُوءِي تَيْنَ دُشْفِيْعَتِ وَارَهْ
 صُلُوْبِلْ عَرِيْفَتِ بُوْعَرِيْفَتِ مِيْنَا أَمَادَ مَلَدِي وَكُنْ يَبِي وَكَالَه: لَعَبْ أَيَاكْ! خَشَّيْتُ دُشْفِيْعَتِ وَشَايَنِي! عَمَّ
 وَشَايَنِي يَلَسْ. ائْمَشَيْتَ وَلَكْ أَنَا قَهْأَيَ مُوْسَ عُنَايَ لَدِيْنِ أَشْغَلِيْهْ ذَوَا حَاذِمِ. ائْمَلْ لَهْ كُلِّي دَاكْ
 إِنْسِي أَطْرُسْ؟ عَمَّ وَشَايَنِي! ائْمَشَيْتَ لَهْ: وَاللَّهِ مَا عُنْدِي غَيْرَ لَمِيْثَ عَانَتِ مَلِكِ الْبَتَرِ وَفِيْنِ أَيَّيْ
 لَكْ خَشَّيْتُ وَشَايَنِي؟ الزَّلْمَهْ صَالَه. أَمُو سَتَ زِلْمَ طَبَايِيْزَ حَمَّا زِيْمَا جِيْرَمَ طَاظَ مَرِيْعِي دُشْفِيْعَتِ
 وَاللَّهِ سَكَلَكْ مَايَ حَانَتْ. أَمَلَهْ ائْمَشَيْتَ دُشْفِيْعَتِ وَعَلَيْكُمْ السَّلَامُ.

Figure 1. Text A: Ḥamza the Bedouin (Mourad 2003: 26–28).

Transcript and translation of text A

1. *farid marra riḥit li-lwirdi. w-ana l-‘iduwwak, ‘ēb šāyf ilwirdi, madd id-dahar madd. ṭabbēt li-ssūg huwwa čānna sūg iM‘ēn (H Me‘ēn) amma mṭabbag bi-ššaxar. w-libzāza bī kwām kwām. xaššēt (H mšīt) w-šifit wāḥid ygil-li: tfaḍḍal yā zilma (H zalama), tfaḍḍal! imšēt warā w-g‘adit (H g‘idēt) bi-lmuḍīf wayya lmi‘āzīm (H l-m‘āzīm) w-mā ‘rifit (H ‘irifit) hādī lūganta.*

I once went to ilWirdi,⁷ and I—so should it happen to your enemies—have never seen ilWirdi before. I got to the market that was like the market of Umm ‘ēn,⁸ but paved in stones, and the fabric sellers in it are many. I walked and saw someone who told me: ‘Welcome, sir, welcome’. I followed him and sat with the guests in the *muḍif*,⁹ and didn’t know it was a restaurant.¹⁰

2. *iglēt* (*H* *iklēt*) *w-šib‘ēt w-širbēt w-tgahawēt w-’adaššēt* (*H* Ø) *w-laffēt-li šwayya* (*H* *šwayyet*) *titin. w-la-‘annak* (*H* *w-la-‘anak*), *wāhid tiwīl ‘irīḍ*, (*H* *ifāda*) *bu-‘arḍēn* (*H* *Abu ‘irḍēn*), *čanna iffād mallāh. wīgaf* (*H* *wugaf*) *yammi w-gāl: la‘‘ib ‘idak!* (*H* *yallah la‘‘ib ‘idak!*) *xamsa w-ṭamānīn! xamsa w-ṭamānīn fils.*

I ate until I became sated, and I drank, I drank coffee, I crushed and rolled some tobacco for smoking. And, there was someone, tall and broad, his chest was twice as broad, as the chest of a sailor. He stood in front of me and said: ‘Go ahead, reach out [and pay the money]!’¹¹ Eighty-five, eighty-five fils!’

3. *gilit* (*H* *gillit*): *wilak* (*H* *willak*), *ana hnāy? mūš hnāy? lāčīn aš-‘aliyya* (*H* *š-‘alayya?*)? *ḍūl mi‘āzīm* (*H* *m-‘āzīm*)! *izzilma gal-li: wilak inta aṭraš?* *xamsa w-ṭmānīn! gilit-lah: walla! mā-‘indi ġēr ṭalit* (*H* *ṭlat*) *‘ānāt ḥagg attitin, w-mnēn aḏība-lak* (*H* *aḏīb*) *xamsa w-ṭmānīn?*

I said: ‘Hey, am I here, or not here? What does it have to do with me? I am their guest!’ The man said to me: ‘Come-on, what are you, deaf? Eighty-five!’ I said to him: ‘By God, I do not have [any money] except three ‘ānāt¹² [to pay] for the tobacco, [so] where would I get those [fils] for you?’. ‘Come on, eighty-five [fils]!’.

4. *izzilma šāḥ. aḏaw* (*H* *aḡū-li*) *sitt zilim ṭibābīx* (*H* *ṭabābīx*) *humma w-čifāčīrhūm* (*H* *w-čifāčīrhūm*). *ṭāx ma ṭāx. ḍirībūni* (*H* *ḍirībūni*) *w-šīlitha. walla š-agil-lak? hāy čānat akla ibčātla, w-‘alēkum issalām!*

⁷ The city of ‘Amāra is known locally as *ilWirdi*, after the Turkish word *ordu* ‘army’. See §2.1 above.

⁸ *أم عين* Umm ‘ēn is the former name of *المجر الكبير* al-Maḡar al-kabīr, a rural area south of ‘Amāra. The town of *أم عين* Umm ‘ēn houses a central market which is frequently visited by the marsh dwellers (Al-Baaj 2021, personal communication).

⁹ The *muḍif* is a central place in the Mi‘ēdi village, built of reeds and used for gatherings and receiving visitors (Ingham 2000: 125). For the spelling of *ḍ* with Arabic *ض* see §3.1 below.

¹⁰ Turkish *lokanta* ‘restaurant’.

¹¹ Lit. ‘Move your hand!’. Our translation follows the explanation offered by Ibn ar-Rāfi-dayn (1990: 23).

¹² ‘āna is a coin that is worth four *fils* (cf. Maamouri 2013: 412, defining it as a ‘five fils coin’).

The man called out. Six men, cooks, [they beat me] *tāx tāx* with their ladles, they beat me, and I escaped from [the scene]. Oh my, what can I tell you? That was quite a beating, may peace be upon you.

נאני, פרד מרה, רחית מן אלורדי לבגדאד. נאנא אלעדנד, עיב שאיף אבגדאד, מד
אלדהר מד. טבית לחרתה, נאשופן ביהא אלמנתכארת. עיע מא עיע, וחנה בעז אלאכירה. בוינה,
כון אנתא זלמה, לתלף בשתד עלא אבטד, ותעבר אלחרתה ברקאץ, כון מן ושופד אלמנתכאר,
איסויד לא שני ולא נתישה!
משית ושפת וחנה סודא טוילה, צ"נהא נכילה מחרונה, וביתהא לעליצ"את, ביהא חמירה
ומכחילה, משופה ומשיט. גתלהא: נא מרה! ולץ", נין טארת עבאיתץ"י: נאלת לי: ואנת שעלד!
וולד, רוח טבב כישמד אבטיו מרתד ומו פטיאו אפאס. מא תגלי שגול אלהל מרה! ועליכם
אסלאם.

وَأَنِّي فَرِيدٌ مَّرَّةً رَحِيْتُ مِنَ الْوُرْدِيِّ الْبَغْدَادِ . وَأَنَّهُ الْيَهُودِيُّكَ سَابَغٌ ، اِبْنُ دَارٍ مَذَّاءٌ كَرَفُورٌ .
طَبَّيْتُ ، الْخَرْتَةَ دَرَسْتُ مِنْ سَبِيلِ الْإِسْطَارَاتِ بَعِيدٍ مَلْبَعٍ وَغَرَمَ بَعْرَ الدَّفْعِ . بَوَيْهَ كُونِ ، اِنْتِ زِلْمُهُ
لِتَلْفِيفِ شَتَاكَ عَلَى أَبْطَاكَ مُتَغَيَّرِ الْخَرْتَةِ بِرِكَاضِ كُونِ مِنْ إِسْوَفَكَ الْمُنْتِكَارِ بِإِسْوَفِكَ لَدُنْكَ وَلَا
رَأَيْتَهُ . مَشَيْتُ وَسُفَيْتُ وَقَدَّ سَوَّهَ طَوِيلُهُ جَنْبَ خَلِّهِ مَحْرُوكُهُ دَبِيضًا أَعْلَى لِبَاسِهِ بِسَرِّ خَمِيرِهِ
وَبِجِلْمِهِ مَسُوقَهُ وَنَسِيلِهِ . لَكُلِّلْنَا يَا مَرْءَ دَلِيلٍ وَبَيْنَ طَارَتْ عِبَائِي تَجْ ؟ فَالْتَلِي وَأَنْتَ شَتْلِيلُ
وَأَنَّكَ رَوَى طَبَّيْتُ شَتْلِيلُكَ أَتَطِيرُ مَرَاتِكَ وَمَا تَحْلِيهِ بِطَيَّارِ الْنَاسِ .
مَا تَطْلِي شَحْوَانَ الْهَرَمِ مَوْعٍ وَعَلَيْكُمْ السَّلَامُ .

Figure 2. Text B: 'Abd arRazzāg the Bedouin (Mourad 2003: 26–28).

Transcript and translation of text B

5. *w-āni farid marra riḥit mn (H min) ilWirdi la-Bḡadād (H l-Baḡdād), w-ana l-īduwwak, 'ēb šāyif 'Bḡadād madd iddahar madd. ṭabbēt li-lḥartā, w-ašūfan biha lmuntikārāt: 'ē' mā 'ē', wiḥda b-'azz il'ixra. būya! kūn inta zilma, li-tliḥf bištak 'ala abṭak w-ti'bir ilḥartā bi-rkād. kūn min 'yšūfak ilmuntikār 'ysawwik lā šwayy w-la intēša!*

And I went one time from 'Amāra to Baghdad and I—so should it happen to your enemies—have never seen Baghdad before. I turned in the road and saw the cars there [making the sounds of] 'ē', 'ē', one close to the other. Oh my! If you are a [true] man, you would wrap your cloth under

your armpit, and cross the road running. If the car meets you, it will leave you in pieces.

6. *mšēt w-šifit wiḥda sōda ṭiwīla* (*H ṭawīla*), *čannha naxla maḥrūga w-b-idha a'liliča* (*H l'ēlēčāt*), *biha ḥmīra* (*H ḥamīra*) *w-mikḥila, mšūfa w-mšēt. gīlt-īlha* (*H gītilha*): *yā mara! wilič, wēn ṭārat 'abāytič? gālat-li: w-inta š-'alēk? wilak* (*H wulak*) *rūḥ ṭabbib xašmak 'b-ṭiz martak w-mā txallī* (*H w-mō*) *bi-ṭyāz in-nās. mā tgīl-li, š-agūl 'lħalmara? w-'alēkum issalām!*

I went and saw some woman, black and tall, as if she were a burned palm tree, with a bag in her hand, and in it there were a lipstick, a case of blue eyeshadow, a mirror and a comb. I said to her: 'Hey woman! Where did your cloak fly to?' She said to me: 'And you, what is it with you? Well, go stick your nose in your wife's butt and not in [other] people's butt'. So tell me, what could I say to that woman? May peace be upon you.

3 The language of the texts

The linguistic features that emerge from the texts are by and large in line with what is already known about the marshland dialect. Below we provide an overview of the dialect and address some of its unique features as they are revealed in the two monologues. We also account for certain cases of inconsistency between the Arabic and Hebrew versions.

3.1 Phonological features

As with many other *gilit* dialects, the marshland dialect exhibits three short vowels, namely *a*, *u* and *i* (Jastrow 2011). These vowels are represented in the Arabic text using the Arabic vowels signs of *fatha*, *ḍamma* and *kasra* respectively. Raising of *a* → *i* in an open syllable, typical of many eastern Bedouin dialects, is reflected in the Arabic text in *ṭibābīx* 'cooks' and in *mi'āzīm* 'guests', yet the Hebrew version gives *ṭabābīx* and *m'āzīm* respectively. An auxiliary vowel inserted between words is marked as a *hamza* under the Arabic letter *ʾ*, e.g., شَائِفِ ابْغَدَادِ *šāyf 'Bḡadād* 'I have seen Baghdad'. In the Hebrew version the three short vowels are marked by the vowel signs of *pataḥ*, *qibbuṣ*, and *hireq*, and the auxiliary vowel between words is rendered as *ʾ* or *ʿ*, e.g., וְאֵנִי אֶלְעִדְנָךְ *w-ana 'l-'aduwwak* 'and I, so should it happen to your enemies', שָׂאִיף אֶבְגַּדָּאד *šāyif 'Bḡadād* 'I have seen Baghdad'.

The old diphthongs *ay*, *aw* are contracted to *ē*, *ō* respectively (Ingham 2000: 130; Jastrow 2011), and along with the three old long vowels the two new monophthongs feature a set of five long vowels, namely *ā*, *ū*, *ī*, *ē*, *ō*. The Arabic text generally renders a long vowel with a mater lectio-

nis, yet while ¹ stands for *ā* alone, e.g., *واراه* *warāh* 'after him', the letter *و* may indicate either *ū* or *ō*, e.g., *سوك* *sūg* 'market' vs. *سوده* *sōda* 'black.FSG'. *و* may also stand for *aw*, as in the case of *أجو* *ažaw* 'they came'. Similarly, the letter *ي* stands for both *ī* and *ē*, e.g., *أجيب* *ažīb* 'I bring' vs. *طَبَّيْتُ* *ṭabbēt* 'I entered'. While Ingham (2000: 128) notes that the contraction of **ay* → *ī* is a characteristic of the marshland dialect, this pronunciation cannot be established on account of the Arabic script. On the other hand, the Hebrew version clearly marks **ay* → *ē* using the Hebrew vocalization mark of *šēre*, e.g., *טַבֵּיִת* *ṭabbēt* 'I entered', which stands in opposition to, e.g., *אָזִיב* *ažīb* 'I will bring', where the Hebrew *hireq* was used. In the same manner, the vocalization of *سوك* *sūg* 'market' is distinguished in the Hebrew version from that of *סוּדָא* *sōda* 'black.FSG'.

The interdentalals are most plausibly preserved in the marshland dialect (Ingham 2000: 130). The Arabic script clearly indicates the interdental realization of **tā* and *dāl*, e.g., *تَلِيْتُ* *talīt* and *هَذِي* *hāḏi* 'this.F'. However, while the reflexes of **dād* and *dā* have merged in the dialect to yield the interdental *ḏ*, the Arabic text renders **ḏ* as *ض*, e.g., *تَفَضَّلْ* *ṭfaḏḏal* 'welcome' and *المُضَيِّفُ* *ilmuḏiḏif* 'guest hall'.

As typical of Najdi Arabic and its offshoots in southern Iraq, the old *k* shifts to *č* in contiguity with front high vowels, and is regularly affricated in the 2FSG pronominal suffix. In the dialect discussed, affrication of *k* → *č* may also occur in the vicinity of *a/ā* (Johnstone 1978: 218). In the Arabic transcript under consideration, the affricate is marked using the Persian letter *چ*, e.g., *چَنَّهُ* *čannah* 'as if he', *چَانَتْ* *čānat* 'she was', and *عَبَايَتِيچ* *abāytič* 'your.FSG cloak'. The Hebrew script renders it as *צ* (different from Modern Hebrew, which marks the same sound with *צ*), and thus *צָנָה* *čannah*, *צָנָת* *čānat*, and *עֲבֹאֲיִתִי צ* *abāytič*. Notably, in the form *רכאז* *rkāḏ* 'running' it is *ض* is that is rendered with Hebrew *צ*. Instances of **qāf* affricated to *ğ* do not occur, or are not marked in the texts.

Ingham (2000: 128) reports that the typical realization of **jīm* in the marshlands is *ž*. This realization stands in opposition to other south Mesopotamian dialects, which exhibit *y*, and to the realization of *ğ* that characterizes both *qaltu* and *gilit* dialects in central Iraq. In the texts under consideration, the reflex of **jīm* is marked with Arabic *ج* and Hebrew *י*, e.g., *أجيب* *ažīb* 'I will bring'. Since Mourad himself pronounced it as *ž* while paraphrasing the text to us (as opposed to his native *ğ*, see §2.3 above), we transcribed it as *ž*. Notably, the form *יָמִי* *yammi* 'by my side' (plausibly from **ğanb*, see Kaye 1975: 334), also occurs.

3.2 Morphological features

3.2.1 Syllabication

The texts contain two examples of resyllabification processes typical of Bedouin Arabic dialects in general, and of Iraqi *gilit* dialects in particular. Notably, in both cases the texts offer two versions of the same lexeme, each characterizing a distinct *gilit* variety.

The old pattern CaCaCa(C) yields two distinguishable patterns in the Iraqi *gilit* dialects. In both, the vowel of the first two syllables is raised to *i/u*, but each then elides one of the two resultant high vowels. Thus, urban *gilit* loses the second vowel, yielding forms like **samaka* → **simiča* → *simča* ‘fish’; whereas rural *gilit* (similar to Najdi Arabic) loses the high vowel in the first syllable, yielding **samaka* → **simiča* → *smiča* (Jastrow 2011). The Hebrew version of the texts gives both *zalama* and *zilma* ‘man’, the latter complying with the first type of resyllabification, i.e., that of urban *gilit* (Ingham 2000: 128). The form *zalama*, occurring only once in the Hebrew text and followed by זלמה *zilma* in the next sentence, seems unexpected in the present context and may have unintentionally ‘slipped’ into this version.

Another resyllabified pattern apparently reflected in the texts is the so-called *gahawa* syndrome, where *a* is inserted after a back spirant (X) in the sequence (C)aXC, yielding (C)aXaC. In some varieties of the region discussed—predominantly in Šāwi dialects—it subsequently surfaces as (C)XaC (de Jong 2011), although in Iraqi *gilit* its productivity seems to be declining (Leitner 2021: 6). The Arabic version at hand reflects the reshuffling of CaXC to CXaC in the form بَغْدَاد *Bġadād*, in which a *fatha* is clearly marked above the ġ. This form has indeed been reported as characteristic of rural varieties in this area (Ingham 1973: 544). The Hebrew version gives בַּגְדָּאד *Baġdād*, apparently reflecting Mourad’s more natural pronunciation, side by side with בִּגְדָּאד *Bġadād*. On the tape, however, Mourad uttered it twice as *Baġadād*, a mixed form which may be taken to indicate his discomfort in pronouncing this ever-present form in the Marsh dialect.

3.2.2 The 1SG perfect

The formation of the 1SG perfect is a hallmark of the marshland dialect, featuring an infix *ē* in the sound verb, analogous to the 3rd-weak and geminate verbal patterns. This unique feature is illustrated in the texts by *iglēt* ‘I ate’,¹³ *šib‘ēt* ‘I became sated’, and *širbēt* ‘I drank’. The general-

¹³ For the voiced realization of *k* in this word see §2.3. above.

ized *ē*-pattern reportedly alternates with the more conventional *-it* ending (Ingham 1973: 544; Mahdi 1985: 91, 94), and the text above indeed exhibits *irifit* 'I knew' and *šifit* 'I saw' as well. Various sources indicate that the *ē*-suffix also occurs in the 2MSG (Mahdi 1985; Jastrow 2011; Ingham 2011), yet such forms do not appear in the document at hand. A comparable *ē*-infix has been reported as characteristic of the sedentary dialect of Khuzestan, and it has even been proposed to view it as influenced by the marshland varieties (Ingham 1973: 544). Generalization of the 3rd-weak ending to the 1SG perfect has been documented on the south coast of Iran (Leitner et al. 2021: 246–247), and in the dialects of the old coastal population of the Persian Gulf (Johnstone 1967: 92; Holes 2012; Holes 2018: 136–137). Intriguingly, it is also characteristic of the dialect of Aden in the southernmost corner of the Arabian Peninsula (Shachmon 2022: 228).

3.2.3 The 1SG imperfect

For the 1SG imperfect, the text offers the form *ašūfan* 'I see', with an idiosyncratic *-an* suffix that has also been documented in the Arabic dialects of Khuzestan (Gazsi 2006–2007: 47; Ingham 2011; Leitner 2019: 173). The suffix mainly occurs with hollow and geminated verbs, but is also documented with sound verbs before object clitics, e.g., *akəṭban-na* 'I write it.MSG' (Ingham 1973: 548; Ingham 2011). The form plausibly reflects the agglutination of a following 1SG independent pronoun, similar to the agglutination of the 2MSG independent pronoun in some north Yemeni and south Saudi dialects (Ingham 2000: 127, fn.4; Shachmon 2015).

3.3 Syntax and Lexicon

3.3.1 Verbal negation

The particle *ʿēb* is used as a negation marker, probably as a result of a semantic generalization of the original sense of 'shame' (Ingham 2000: 128). The construction with *ʿēb*, exemplified in the two monologues by *ʿēb šāyif* 'I have not seen', seems to be unique to the Marsh area, and Ingham reports that it is 'often misinterpreted by those not familiar with the dialect' (Ingham 2000: 128; Hassan 2016: 304). While the examples given in the literature demonstrate the use of *ʿēb* with the imperfect, e.g., *ʿēb nidri* 'we do not know' or *ʿēb yīl'an barra* '[the buffalos] do not go out' (Ingham 2000: 128), the example in the text at hand evidences the use of the particle with the participle, denoting the perfective. As with other *gilit* dialects, the active participle is used to express the resultative aspect

(Jastrow 2011), and therefore *šāyif* denotes ‘have seen’. Thus, different from its use in Levantine Arabic, the active participle of verbs denoting senses and perceptions may also express the resultative.

3.3.2 Interrogative particles

The texts consist of a few instances of *(a)š-* which is prefixed to verbs or particles, e.g., *š-agil-lak* ‘what would I tell you.MSG’, *(a)š-‘aliyya* ‘what does it have to do with me?’, and *š-‘alēk* ‘what is it with you.MSG?’. This bound morpheme, corresponding to the Iraqi free form *šinu*, was also documented in Khuzestani dialects (Ingham 2011; Leitner 2020: 129).

4 Conclusion

In this article we examined two short monologues written in the Arabic dialect of the Iraqi marshlands. The linguistic features that emerge from these texts are similar to those described in the research literature for this region, as well as for the sedentary dialects of Khuzestan, including idiosyncrasies such as: the generalization of the 3rd-weak endings to the 1SG perfect of the sound verb; the agglutinated 1SG imperfect; and the use of the negative particle *‘ēb*. Added to the short extract published by Ingham (2000), these texts deepen our familiarity with an area hitherto studied only fragmentarily, and with a dialect that is reportedly on the verge of vanishing.

While the Arabic version is coherent and systematic, and its features consistent with what is known about the dialects of that region, the Hebrew version exhibits several inconsistencies, as well as forms not expected in the dialect examined. We therefore assume that the Arabic version was written first, and constitutes a more reliable attestation of the Marshland dialect. Most likely, the writer produced the Hebrew version based on the Arabic one. Although he knew the Marsh Arab dialect from his life as a teenager in ‘Amāra, it was by no means his mother tongue, and he therefore either erred in transliterating the handwritten Arabic script, or unintentionally used forms typical of his own native dialect.

Beyond the linguistic data, the document under consideration may also contribute to our understanding of the sociolinguistic scene in southern Iraq during the first half of the 20th century. The texts were included in a booklet aimed at preserving the heritage of Iraqi Jews, and at demonstrating the linguistic reality in which they had lived. Thus, the mere choice to include monologues in the marshland dialect discloses the multilayered mutual relations between the Jews of ‘Amāra and the Marsh

Arabs. The Jews, whose communal language was of the *qeltu* type, lived among speakers of different *gilit* varieties, were in immediate and daily contact with them, and—at least in their perception—also had a good command of their dialects. However, as is usually the case with co-territorial communal dialects, the shift between the varieties remained challenging, and the attempt to switch from one's own dialect to that of the other inevitably yielded an incoherent result.

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Negev Bedouin *daḥīyah* Songs: Celebrating Brotherhood Above War and Love

Abstract While much attention has been paid to several dialectal Arabic narrative and poetic genres, Negev Arabic (NA) *daḥīyah* songs (NA *diḥḥiyyih*, also known as *daḥḥa*) have received little scholarly attention. I report here eight traditional Negev Bedouin *daḥīyah* songs, one neo-*daḥīyah*, and one *haḡin* (NA *hiḡnih*)—recorded during personal meetings with informants from 2017 to 2019—in transcription and translation with some stylistic and linguistic comments. Background information is provided on the characteristics of this vernacular genre—its performance, contents, and scope—and its evolution. *Daḥīyah* has profoundly changed in content, language, and form in the transition from traditional Negev Bedouin society—before the establishment of the State of Israel—to the present. Originally a form of martial collective chant and dance mainly performed at wedding celebrations, the *daḥīyah* has gained popularity in neighboring sedentary Palestinian communities, where it has become an expression of identity, resistance, and revolt on various festive occasions. Today, several closely interconnected *daḥīyah* types coexist in the Negev, from songs that adhere to traditional models in terms of composition and performance to neo-*daḥīyah*.

Keywords Negev Arabic, Bedouin Arabic, *daḥīyah*, Bedouin folk songs, Palestinian folk songs, neo-*daḥīyah*



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1 Introduction: The Arab Negev and Negev Arabic¹

The word *negeb* was used in Biblical Hebrew to designate both the region located to the south of the area of influence of the ancient Israelite powers and the southern direction (Cerqueglini and Henkin 2016). The pre-desert/desert region called the Negev (Arabic *an-Naqab*)² is the southernmost area of the State of Israel and covers more than half of its land area. The Negev stretches twelve thousand square kilometers from the Egyptian-Israeli border in the southwest and the Gaza Strip in the west to the Arava valley in the east. Its northern line runs approximately between Gaza and Ein Gedi and its southern boundary is in Eilat, on the Gulf of Aqaba.

The spaces of the Negev are still inhabited by various Bedouin tribes and lineages, grouped in five main confederations: ‘Azāzmih, Tarābīn, Ṣullām, Gdērāt, and Tiyāha (al-‘Atāmīn 2011; Shawarbah 2012). Tribal genealogical accounts claim different geographical origins for the different tribes (Cerqueglini 2015). From a linguistic point of view, different origins are reflected in some tribe-specific linguistic traits still identifiable in the varieties spoken by the elders but progressively fading away from the language of the young. Despite these significant, yet minor, differences, the language spoken by the Bedouin groups living in the Negev can be identified *grosso modo* as a variety of Bedouin Ḥiḡāzi (Palva 1991; de Jong 2000), first described by Blanc (1970), who labeled it ‘Negev Bedouin Arabic’. The label ‘Negev Arabic’ used here was proposed by Henkin (2010) and adopted by Shawarbah (2012). The various Negev Arabic tribal dialects have been and continue to be subjected to the sustained effect of a centripetal force that leads them progressively towards ever-stronger koineization—and to leveling on the models of Palestinian sedentary varieties—as Henkin (2010) aptly describes.

However, not all Negev Arabic tribal and family varieties are influenced to the same extent by external patterns, contact with other varieties and languages, and education. Even today, the lifestyles of the

¹ I sincerely thank the two anonymous readers who have significantly contributed to improving this article.

² Non-English proper names of people, tribes, political groups, and places are rendered in transcription, with the exception of those that have a common, accepted, version in the Latin alphabet, e.g., Khaled, Cheb Mami, Mama Hosni. Transcriptions follow the norms of pronunciation of different Arabic dialectal and standard varieties. The term *daḥiyah* has been ‘normalized’ in this transcription because its pronunciation varies greatly within the Negev (*dihḥiyyih/dihḥiyih/dihḥiyyih/deḥiyeh*) and outside it (*deḥiye/daḥiye/daḥiya*) in different social and generational groups.

Bedouin groups of the Negev vary greatly. Some reside in recognized villages around Beer-Sheva, while others live in villages that lack infrastructure in the desert diaspora (*bzuráh*, from the Modern Hebrew term *pzurah* ‘dispersion’, which indicates the scattered presence of Bedouin groups across the Negev). Some are open to formal education and even to marriage with other Arab groups. Others resolutely resist contact with the outside world. Much depends on the decisions made by each group and even by individual families regarding social and educational policies and conduct.

It should be recalled at this point that the events of the last twenty years have led large sectors of the Arab society of the Negev—and outside it—to withdraw inward and become closed to the outside world. This process is often accompanied by religious extremism with connotations of political resistance to Western models. Increasing numbers of women wear completely black dresses and veils and cover their faces, often even with a full *burqa*.³ According to accounts provided by elderly informants, these customs were foreign to the local traditional Bedouin culture and may be considered, at least in part, the result of a worsening of the confrontation with the outside world.³ Talking about the events of the last twenty years, especially in the region that this article addresses, I am referring—in addition to the events of the Arab Spring—to the Second Intifāḍah or Intifāḍat al-Aqṣā, the ongoing conflict between Gaza and Israel that began in 2005, the storm of riots against building speculation in the Israeli Arab neighborhoods ignited by events that took place in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Šēx Ġarrāḥ in May 2021, and the Third Intifāḍah or ‘Knife Intifāḍah’, which began in 2015 and is, tragically, ongoing.

In the sociopolitical climate of the troubled last two decades, customs have changed among the Negev Bedouin (Nasasra et al. 2015) and even their traditional, folkloric literary genres—handed down orally and/or improvised—have been transformed, as happened in the case of the *daḥīyah* chants. From personal conversations held with authoritative voices in the panorama of contemporary Negev Bedouin *daḥīyah*,⁴ I learned

³ Certainly, in the Negev the veil is also an important symbol of honor, as in all Bedouin cultures (Abu-Lughod 1986), but Negev Bedouin women traditionally wore a white veil that barely rested on the head.

⁴ As studies devoted to *daḥīyah* in the Southern Levant are scarce, this article is largely based on data from a dedicated fieldwork campaign and the writer’s direct observations. Opinions of the interviewees are reported for their social and anthropological value in the field of local folk music. Therefore, I am deeply indebted to A.-Y. Abū-Bnayyah (‘Azāz-mih), M. Tarābin aṣ-Šāni, S. Abū-‘Aziz (Tarābin aṣ-Šāni), A. Zaydna (Tarābin), and the other informants who wished to remain fully anonymous for sharing not only lyrics, but also more general information on the local musical traditions.

that today two kinds of *daḥiyah* coexist and, to a certain extent, are intertwined: traditional and contemporary *daḥiyah*. The musical instruments are different, the language has been updated, and the themes and even the occasions of the performance have been diversified. Political themes more or less directly and openly related to the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict have entered contemporary Negev *daḥiyah*, probably following the example of non-Bedouin Palestinian Arab society.

2 Negev *daḥiyah* texts: Linguistic variation

In this section, I report eight traditional Negev Bedouin *daḥiyah*, one neo-*daḥiyah*, and one *haḡin* (NA *hiḡnih*) songs recorded during personal meetings with informants from 2017 to 2019 in transcription and translation with some stylistic and linguistic comments. I want to begin this discussion with some linguistic observations related to dialectal differences that are well highlighted in texts or verses that have similar contents and prosodic structures.

Daḥiyah texts often highlight dialectal and sociolectal differences attributable to different tribal and rural dialects and sociolects, for example, the vocalization of the definite article and the morphological pattern of the following word in Text 2.1, verse 8: *ad-diḥḥiyyih* vs. those in Text 2.8, verse 4: *id-daḥiyah* ‘the *daḥiyah*’.

The Negev linguistic geography is varied and includes several traditional tribal varieties (Shawarbah 2012), Bedouinized rural dialects, and intermediate forms (Henkin 2010). Furthermore, progressive modern koineization has introduced words and forms from the sedentary Arabic dialects spoken in Israel and the Palestinian Authority. This linguistic, social and generational puzzle is reflected in the texts of the *daḥiyah* chants, which are executed today in the whole Negev and beyond, and therefore often performed in intertribal contexts and at mixed events, i.e., in the presence of non-Bedouin singers and audiences. Dialectal and sociolectal differences are found in both traditional and neo-*daḥiyah* texts.

Regarding the traditional texts presented here, internal variations stem from several main factors according to which they can be classified: (a) inter-tribal dialectal differences, (b) Bedouin vs. rural dialectal models, and (c) cross-generational variations.

- a. All cases in which diphthongs produce different outcomes belong to the first category. One example of this phenomenon is the height of the long vowel obtained from the contraction of the diphthong *-ay-* in Text 2.1, verse 11 and Text 2.8, verse 7: *Bēd* vs. Text 2.4,

verse 3: *ʿBīd* ‘Ubayd’, the diminutive form of the personal name *ʿĀbid*⁵. A striking case of such cross-dialectal alternation is found in the name of one of the Negev Bedouin confederations, pronounced both *Gdērāt* and *Gdīrāt* (from the pattern **Qudayrāt*), following the tribal affiliation of the speaker. Regarding the differences in the contraction of the diphthongs, Palva (2008: 405) states that in the dialects of the eastern Northwest Arabian Arabic branch (i.e., east of Wādī al-ʿArabah and southern Sinai), the reflexes of **aw* and **ay* are the well-established monophthongs *ō* and *ē*, usually after back and after emphatic consonants as well. In most dialects of western Northwest Arabian Arabic (Negev and northern Sinai), **aw* and **ay* have been partially monophthongized, but the new monophthongs fluctuate with long phonemes: *ō* ~ *ū*, *ē* ~ *ī* (Shawarbah 2012: 77).⁶ Unfortunately, systematic research on tribal dialectal differences in the Negev and their consequent classification are not available at present, with the only remarkable exception of some comparisons provided by Shawarbah (2007; 2012). According to the provenance of the songs presented here, the form *ʿBēd* is used by *ʿAzāzmih* singers (Texts 2.1 and 2.8), while the form *ʿBīd* appears in the lyrics recorded among the *Tarābīn* (Text 2.4). It should be noted, however, that today the alternative use of (**aw* >) *ō* ~ *ū* and (**ay* >) *ē* ~ *ī* appears as a common, cross-dialectal feature.

Numerous cases of alternative vocalizations of the same words are also part of the koineized landscape of today’s Negev, in which their tribal origins are difficult to trace:

- *ḥumāmit* (Text 2.1, verse 11) vs. *ḥamāmit* (Text 2.4, verse 3) ‘dove (of)’,
- *gulbī* (Text 2.1, verse 11) vs. *galbī* (Text 2.4, verse 3) ‘my heart’,
- *simiʿ* (Text 2.1, verse 1) vs. *samiʿ* (Text 2.2, verse 1) ‘rumor’,
- *muṣṭ* (Text 2.1, verse 5) vs. *maṣṭ* (Text 2.8, verse 1) ‘breeze’.

⁵ In general, the form *fuʿayl* is rather considered the diminutive form of the *faʿal* pattern, while *fuʿayil* is the diminutive form associated to the *fāʿil* pattern (Shawarbah 2012: 150–151).

⁶ To clarify the question, according to Palva (2008: 405), the diphthongs *ay* and *aw* are preserved in the more conservative Bedouin dialects of Najd primarily in back environments. In the Bedouin dialectal peripheries such as the Negev and Sinai they monophthongize to *ē* ~ *ī* and *ō* ~ *ū* respectively, mainly in front environments, but even in back environments in many cases.

Another interesting point is the different transcriptions *-īy/-īyy-*, which reflect different pronunciations. Even though the first alternative, *-īy-*, is less typical for Negev Arabic, both forms, once dialectal allomorphs, are used today as almost free variants. For example, in the texts presented here, *dihhiyyih* alternates with *dahiyih* in many occurrences (Text 2.1, verse 8 vs. Text 2.8, verse 4); *maḡwiyyih* ‘obscure’ (Text 2.7, verse 6) with *-īyy-* is used in the same metrical/syntactic type of verse as *mahawīyih* ‘lost’ (Text 2.9, verse 1 and 2) with *-īy-*. Apropos this last pair of words, the use of the vowel *-a-* in the second syllable *-ha-* in *mahawīyih* is probably due to ‘*gahāwah* syndrome’,⁷ yet interestingly this phenomenon is not manifested in the analogous phonetic context in *maḡwiyyih*.

- b. The most productive area of grammatical alternations found in the texts here is the one that results from the intertwining of local Bedouin and rural dialects. It should be recalled that in pre-modern Negev Bedouin society, some families absorbed female members from the rural Palestinian world from both the coast and the hinterland. Furthermore, the Negev has historically been home to peasant groups whose members worked the Bedouins’ lands. Their dialects show a rural basis with strong Bedouin influences (Henkin 2010). Furthermore, for decades, the Bedouin dialects of the Negev have been subject to the assimilating force of the rural and urban dialects of Palestine: classes are often given by non-Bedouin staff members⁸ who inevitably spread non-Bedouin linguistic features to the younger generations, and local Arab media use educated sedentary dialectal patterns in addition to Standard Arabic.

Among the numerous Bedouin vs. sedentary alternative forms, the following features are found:

- definite article *al-* (Bedouin) vs. *il-* (sedentary),
- final *imālah* feminine singular nouns *-ih* (Bedouin; Text 2.1, verse 4: *Širī‘ih*) vs. *-ah* (sedentary; Text 2.2, verse 6: *Širī‘ah*),

⁷ ‘*Gahāwah* syndrome’ is a feature typical of Bedouin dialects in which a short vowel *a* follows a morpheme-internal back spirant (X) whenever this X is preceded by *a* (De Jong 2011), as in the word *gahāwah* meaning ‘coffee’, from *gahwah*. This type of vowel insertion was dubbed ‘*gahāwah*-syndrome’ by Blanc (1970: 125–127).

⁸ Teachers often come from the central and northern Arabic-speaking regions of Israel, i.e., the Muṭallaṭ and the Galilee.

- the vocalization of the imperfective prefix *yu-* (Bedouin; Text 2.1, verse 8: *yultaff*) vs. *yi-* (sedentary; Text 2.8, verse 4: *yiltaff*),
 - the form of the suffixed first singular pronoun after the preposition: *-li* (sedentary; Text 2.1 verse 11) vs. *-lay* (Bedouin; Text 2.8 verse 7).
- c. Given that the texts reported are performed in the contemporary era with a language already different from what the original must have been—according to what the poets themselves admit—some words remain in active use, but their meanings change in different generations. The semantic ambiguity generated by this phenomenon has an undeniable poetic force in some passages. So, for example, the verb in Text 2.1, verse 10: *nitgalla*‘ means for the elders ‘we will go away’, while among younger generations ‘we will get lost’ (physically and emotionally) is by far the most common interpretation.⁹ The word *rukayyib* in Text 2.6, verse 2 also has a different interpretation: it is a diminutive form possibly meaning ‘small knight’, or ‘small traveler/visitor’ or indicating a type of bird.

Some final notes must be added regarding specific features of poetic language. In the Negev dialectal tradition, as in others, nunation and preservation of the nominal declension are apparent in poetic compositions. An example is found in Text 2.1, verse 1: *harġin* ‘[of a] slander’. Another interesting feature is the addition of a (sometimes non-grammatical) *-i* vowel in a word’s final position for metrical reasons. Examples of this feature are found Text 2.1, verse 2: *‘Arāġibi* instead of *‘Arāġib*¹⁰ and in Text 2.1, verse 6: *maġnūni* instead of *maġnūn*. Nunation and final prosodic *-i*, both in non-syntactic fossilized form (*-i*, *-in*) are both well-known features of Nabaṭi poetry, a masculine Bedouin poetic genre (Henkin 2010; Holes and Abu Athera 2011).

Finally, I must specify that my translations tend to be as literal as possible and that the texts reported here have been to some minimal extent ‘normalized’ to make them comprehensible. These lyrics, due to the rapid rhythm and improvisational nature of the performance, showed elliptical syntax and *ad sensum* grammatical agreement in various passages, while the pronunciation of some syllables was non-grammatically shortened or lengthened in accordance with metrics and rhythm.

⁹ I sincerely thank Hiba ‘Ammāš and Salām ‘Eydeh, who belong to different generations and dialectal areas, for having generously provided and discussed with me their different translations and interpretations of the texts reported here.

¹⁰ In this case, it could be justified as the grammatical form of a retained genitive.

2.1 ‘Let the hand twist: Hand is core to our *daḥiyah*’

This text was recorded among the ‘Azāzmih tribe. In these lyrics, the *daḥiyah* genre is explicitly mentioned and celebrated alongside unity and agreement among tribal men (see Texts 2.3 and 2.8). Originally, percussion was obtained by clapping the hands or using domestic tools. The addition of electronic percussion was initiated by the singer Ašraf Abū-Layl in 2016 and led to the entry of many non-Bedouin artists from the *hidāyah* tradition, such as ‘Iṣām ‘Umur, Rif‘at Asadī, and Šādī al-Bīrūnī, into *daḥiyah*. In this chant, social, political, and love motifs intertwine and flow into each other continuously.

1. <i>yā ‘ēnī lli biddami‘</i> Oh my eye who is crying tears	<i>min harḡin smi‘ti simi‘</i> as you heard a rumor of slander
2. <i>w-ḡanamki w-aṣīr li-ḡanamki</i> your (f.) goats, for your (f.) goats	<i>ḡīb mizzalli ‘a-l-‘Arāḡib(i)</i> I will be a wolf lurking in ‘Arāḡib
3. <i>w-yōmin takkēna l-ḡizān</i> one day we moved across the mountain	<i>w-al-miliḡ yabri l-ḡizlān</i> and salt cures all deers
4. <i>wiḡna ‘urbān aš-Širi‘ih</i> we are the Arabs of Širi‘ah	<i>alli mā byuṣḡug binbi‘ih</i> the one who is not loyal, we will sell him
5. <i>w-ṣubḡ w-al-muṣṡ mnaddi</i> one morning while the breeze is moist	<i>l-āxiḡ Ṣēri wa‘addi</i> I shall take my beloved and come by
6. <i>yā yumma māni maḡnūn(i)</i> my dear mother: I am not insane!	<i>w-al-ḡinn min alli laḡḡūni</i> The demon of madness is from those who caught me
7. <i>war-rāḡil min dūn rḡālih</i> a man without his folk	<i>tākil ‘ašāha l-wāwiyyih</i> wolves will eat (him) for dinner
8. <i>a‘ṡūni l-kaff xallih yultaff¹¹</i> give me the hand and let it twist	<i>w-al-kaff ‘mār ad-diḡḡiyyih</i> hand is core to (our) <i>daḥiyah</i>
9. <i>yā rbū‘i yā šāša lbi</i> oh my people! You are my headband	<i>ḡālāti min dūnkuw ziriyah</i> my condition ¹² without you is miserable
10. <i>‘a-allah ya‘ṡūni iyāha</i> by God, may they give me her,	<i>nitgalla‘ anā wiyāha</i> we will escape, she and me ¹³
11. <i>yā ‘ammī ‘Bēd iftill-li ga‘d</i> oh Uncle ‘Ubayd, solve my problem!	<i>ḡumāmit gulbi tuwwā‘ah</i> The dove of my heart is obedient.

¹¹ It is not clear what the verb *yultaff* means here. To explain to me what action this verb refers to in this context, a young female informant took my hand and began to rotate her wrist in and out, so that our hands rotated together. Maybe it is a way of marking the rhythm. However, the same verb is also used in association with the drum, in Text 2.8, verse 4. The exact interpretation of this action requires further study.

¹² Plural in Arabic.

¹³ Lit. ‘I with her’.

2.2 ‘We are the Arabs of Širī‘ah’

This text was recorded among members of the ‘Azāzmih tribe. The celebration of collective identity starts in this song from distant memories of the village of al-‘Arāgīb. Al-‘Arāgīb refers to a hilly area between Beer-Sheva and Rahaṭ. Two large families, al-‘Ugbī and at-Tūrī (Tayāha), lived there until 1948, when the inhabitants were expelled to Ḍahirīyah, in the southern West Bank. One year later, some families were allowed to return. In 1951, the Israeli government ordered the residents to leave their homes for six months, but after this period they were not yet allowed to return. Thus, most members of at-Tūrī family resettled near Rahaṭ, while the al-‘Ugbī family was resettled near Ḥūrah. In the nineteen seventies, both families began filing claims for land ownership. In 1998, some fifty Bedouin families decided to return to al-‘Arāgīb. Since then, the confrontation between the residents and the State of Israel has escalated. By January 2021, al-‘Arāgīb had witnessed over 182 demolitions that targeted shacks, tents, mobile homes, and water tanks.

1. <i>yā ‘ēni hillī b-id-dami‘</i> Oh my eye, start crying (many) tears	<i>min harḡin smī‘ti sami‘</i> since you heard rumors of slander
2. <i>w-aṣūr li-ḡanamki</i> I will become for your goats	<i>ḡīb(i) miḡḡalli ‘a-l-‘Arāgīb(i)</i> a wolf lurking in al-‘Arāgīb
3. <i>w-aṣūr li-ḡanamki</i> I will become for your goats	<i>ḡīb(i) miḡḡalli ‘a-l-‘Arāgīb(i)</i> a wolf lurking in al-‘Arāgīb
4. <i>w-yōmin takkēna al-ḡizān</i> when we crossed the mountains	<i>w-al-milḥ yabri l-ḡizlān</i> salt cures all deers
5. <i>w-yōmin takkēna al-ḡizān</i> when we crossed the mountains	<i>w-al-milḥ yabri l-ḡizlān</i> salt cures all deers
6. <i>w-aḥna ‘urbān aš-Širī‘ah</i> we are the Arab of Širī‘ah	<i>allī mā byuṣluṭ binbī‘ah</i> the one who has no power, we will sell him
7. <i>yā raḡḡi kīf widdi asawwi</i> my Lord, what should I do?	<i>yā dmū‘i ḡudrān al-ḡawwi</i> oh my tears, for the betrayal that is inside (me)!

2.3 ‘Let’s do *daḥīyah* until the morning star rises’

This text was recorded among the ‘Azāzmih tribe in Sḡīb as-Salām (Segev Shalom). This short composition is a poetic celebration of *daḥīyah* itself and is strongly correlated with ironic mockery of both old men marrying—while young men are rejected, probably by the brides’ families—

and young men going around exhausted by their sexual desire, as if in a literally ‘frying’ state of heat. The issue of elderly men investing family resources to organize their own weddings to the detriment of their sons is very sensitive in Negev society, especially among the ‘Azāzmih, most of whose sectors consist of remote, conservative groups among which polygamy is still widely practiced. This situation still represents one of the reasons for serious family conflicts.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>allī nte ḥāy yā šāyib</i>
whoever you are [living], old man! | <i>lā yā zahat ad-diḥḥiyyih</i>
May <i>daḥiyah</i> live and flourish! |
| 2. <i>‘īyyētu w-axaḏtu šāyib</i>
you got tired and took the elderly | <i>w-šubb kan gā‘id fi-ziggah</i>
while a young boy was sitting in the corner |
| 3. <i>law dāḥi yā m‘arrid dāḥi</i>
please, <i>daḥiyah</i> singer, keep singing | <i>lu tiṭla‘ an-niḡmih aš-šubbāḥih</i>
until the morning star rises |
| 4. <i>amma l‘izub mašṭum giḏub:</i>
the single men, their going is mad: | <i>byigzdiru f-al-gilyālīh</i>
they walk around in the intense heat. |

2.4 ‘I found next to me a beautiful, tall girl’

This text was recorded among the Tarābīn tribe. At the center of this composition is the inner conflict between the desire for a woman who is too beautiful and the attachment to the male brotherhood and its collective identity. The poem is resolved with a request to the maternal uncle to restore order in the chaos of such conflicting desires. Probably the uncle will grant his daughter in marriage and thus appease the young man and at the same time strengthen his belonging to the tribal clan.

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|--|--|
| 1. <i>laggēt ḥaddī bānah,</i>
I found next to me a beautiful tall girl | <i>lagger w ḥālna</i>
and they found out our situation |
| 2. <i>maddī bānah zayha,</i>
I don’t want a girl like her | <i>w-ilnā, maddī bānah zayha</i>
and for us, I don’t want a girl like her |
| 3. <i>yā ‘ammī ‘Bīd iftilik-lay</i>
oh Uncle ‘Ubayd, bring me luck! | <i>ḥamāmit galbī ṭayyārah</i>
The dove of my heart flew away |
| 4. <i>ḥamāmit galbī ṭayyārah,</i>
my heart’s dove flew away, | <i>w-rbū‘ih¹⁴ šābit rāsī</i>
and an intense cold hits my head |
| 5. <i>ḥālātī dūnkuw ziriyah,</i>
my condition without you is meaningless, | <i>ḥālātī dūnkuw ziriyah</i>
my condition without you is meaningless. |

¹⁴ The word *rbū‘ih*, translated by the informant as ‘intense cold’, may be related to *al-arba‘īniyyih* ‘the forty days denoting the cold period of winter, which lasts until late February’ (Shawarbah 2012: 420).

2.5 ‘You are in a foreign land, and I am in my homeland’

This text was recorded among members of the Tarābīn aṣ-Ṣānī^c tribe. According to the explanations I received from the informants, it belongs to the *haḡīn* (NA *hiḡnih*) genre. Compared to *daḥiyah*, the contents of *haḡīn* are more intimate and sentimental, and the rhythm of the percussion is slower. In these lyrics, the poet is mourning the absence of his mother. Apparently, her absence is due to some geographical distance. However, strangely enough, the mother appears to be in a foreign land, as the last verse indicates. In fact, in the Bedouin culture, *al-ḡurbah* ‘the land of the West’, or ‘the land of the exile’, also refers to the afterlife (Cerqueglini and Henkin 2016). Therefore, perhaps, in this poem, distance is to be understood as synonymous with extreme separation.

1. <i>yā ‘ēnī yā allī bkēti</i> Oh my eye, (oh) who cried	<i>bkāki w-eš ‘āyid minnih?</i> your cry, what (can ever) come back because of it?
2. <i>bkāki mā yirudd al-ḡāyib</i> your cry won’t bring back the absent	<i>w-allī zāra-lnā ḡannih¹⁵</i> or the one who visited Paradise
3. <i>ruddī ‘alayya yumma</i> respond to me, oh mother	<i>w-anā ‘alēki anādī</i> when I call on you
4. <i>w-inti fi-blēd al-ḡurbah</i> while you are in a foreign land	<i>w-anā fi-ḡay blādī</i> and I am in my country.

2.6 ‘Zamzam well is watched over by a sleepless guardian’

This text, recorded among members of the Tarābīn tribe, elaborates on some of the themes seen in the previous composition (Text 2.5) but this time in the form of a *daḥiyah* song. The well of Zamzam, a spring near Mecca, is mentioned. Then the poem suddenly becomes an appeal to the mother of the singer, who lives far away in her homeland, while the son is in exile. In this case, the distance between the two may refer to actual geographic separation.

1. <i>bēr Zumzum ‘alēh</i> Zamzam well, on it	<i>ḡāris mā yinām</i> there is a sleepless guardian
2. <i>w-ar-rukayyib ‘alēh</i> and a small knight is on it	<i>miṭl ruf^c al-ḡumām</i> beautifully thin as a dove

¹⁵ Lit. ‘who visited to us Paradise’. The dative ‘to us’ here is an expression of the singer’s emotional participation and pain.

3. *ruddi* ‘alay yā yumma
respond to me (my) mother

w-anā ‘alēki banādī
when I call on you

4. *w-anā fi-blād al-ğurbah*
while I am in a foreign land

w-inti fi-ḥay blādī
and you are in the homeland.

2.7 ‘The violin’s voice brought back my years’

This poem, recorded among members of the ‘Azāzmih tribe, is also about the village of al-‘Arāğīb, evoked as an obscure place (verse 6). The area of al-‘Arāğīb includes two cisterns (*al-Biḥērēn*, lit. ‘the two small lakes/cisterns’).

The elegiac voice of the violin awakens nostalgia for the abandoned place, lost in time. Nostalgia and homesickness are evoked by the images of domesticated animals that escaped far from their homes. The head, suddenly unveiled, symbolizes a sudden revelation: the image of the beautiful woman at the pool triggers familiar memories of loved ones, appearing to the eye of the composer like a hallucination.

1. *ḥiss al-kamān kard* ‘a-’aḡiyāl
The violin’s voice brought back the generations

*w-it‘addā byūt al-ahalēn(i)*¹⁶
and passed among the homes of the two families

2. *ḥiss al-kamān kard* ‘a-’aḡiyāl
the violin’s voice brought back the generations

w-snūnī ruddha ‘a-l-Biḥērēn(i)
and brought back my years to the Two Cisterns

3. *ṭērī saraḥ w-ab‘ad al-mesraḥ*
my bird flew, went away from its place

āḥ yā ḥalālātī yā ṭērī
oh my livestock! Oh my bird!

4. *šawwaḥtna*¹⁷ *w-ab‘ad al-mišwaḥ*,
you went freely far away from the farm

kuṭrāt ‘ala-‘ēnī *w-‘ala ḡērī*
too much on my eye and on other’s

5. *yā yumṡā rāsī radd al-ḡāb*
oh dear mother, my head uncovered

w-šuft az-zīnīh ‘a-l-mayyih
and I saw the beautiful one on the water (pool)

6. ‘ēnī *tiṭxāyal samār ibyaḡ*
and my eye imagines black and white

šarg al-‘Arāğīb(i) al-maḡwiyyih
east of the dark al-‘Arāğīb.

¹⁶ The -a- vowel in the second syllable of the word *ahalēn* may be considered as a manifestation of the ‘*gahāwah* syndrome’.

¹⁷ This verb means ‘to wave the hand, the head scarf’ (Shawarbah 2012: 434), probably in the meaning of ‘greeting (goodbye)’. A play on words is apparent in this verse, between *šawwaḥtna* ‘you greeted us (goodbye)/you left us’ and *mišwaḥ* ‘farm’.

2.8 ‘Give us the drum, let it twist: The drum is core to our *daḥīyah*’

This poem, collected from the ‘Azāzmih, contains a variation of the motif of hand clapping seen in Text 2.1. In this case, the percussion representing the rhythmic core of the *daḥīyah* is said to be the drum. The celebration of male tribal brotherhood is juxtaposed with the love theme and the request to obtain the hand of a girl, either by intercession or through the direct intervention of Uncle ‘Ubayd. The state of mind in which love has led the poet is represented by the image of the heart in love, hearing the sounds of crickets in the wadis.

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|---|---|
| 1. <i>w-aṣ-ṣubḥ w-al-maṣṭ mnaddi</i>
And the morning, when the breeze is moist | <i>l-āxiḍ ‘išīri w-a‘addi</i>
I will take my people and come by |
| 2. <i>yā yuṣṣma māni maḡnūn(i)</i>
oh dear mother, I’m not insane! | <i>w-al-ḡinn min alli laḡḡūni</i>
And the demon of madness is from those
who caught me! |
| 3. <i>w-ar-rāḡil min dūn rḡālih</i>
when the man is without his tribe | <i>tākil ‘ašāha al-wāwīyah</i>
wolves will eat him for dinner |
| 4. <i>a‘tūna ad-daff xallih yiltaff</i>
give us the drum, let it twist | <i>w-ad-daff ‘mār id-daḥīyah</i>
the drum is core to (our) <i>daḥīyah</i> |
| 5. <i>yā rbū‘i yā š-šāš al-biyaṣ</i>
oh my people with white turbans ¹⁸ ! | <i>ḡālī min dūnkuw zirīyah</i>
My condition without you is meaningless |
| 6. <i>‘aḷa aḷḷah yi‘tūni iyāha</i>
I wish to God that they would give
her to me | <i>nitgalla‘ anā wiyāha</i>
so she and I could leave |
| 7. <i>yā ‘ammī ‘Bīd iftill-lay ga‘d</i>
oh Uncle ‘Ubayd, solve my problem! | <i>ḡamāmit galbī tawwā‘ah</i>
The dove of my heart is submissive |
| 8. <i>yā ‘ēni hilli b-id-dami‘</i>
my eye cries many tears | <i>min harḡin smi‘ti sami‘</i>
since you heard a rumor of slander |
| 9. <i>ḡalbi yā sab‘ al-widyān</i>
my heart, oh seven valleys | <i>kull wādī tasma‘ širšārah</i>
in each valley you hear the voice of
a cricket |
| 10. <i>ḡalbi yā sab‘ al-widyān(i)</i>
my heart, oh seven valleys | <i>kull wādī tasma‘ širšārah</i>
in each valley you hear the voice of
a cricket |
| 11. <i>yōm innī šuftha ‘iriftha</i>
when I saw her I knew her | <i>l-aḡmiki yā lli mā ‘arīfha</i>
I shall protect you. Oh, who doesn’t
know her! |

¹⁸ Singular in Arabic, ‘turban’. Shawarbah (2012: 434) reports *šāš* pl. -*āt* ‘white head shawl (for woman)’. Young informants today interpret the word as the basic word for ‘turban’.

2.9 ‘My eye dreams of black tents east of al-‘Arāgīb, which is gone’

This poem, collected from the ‘Azāzmih, is probably the most poignant of those dedicated to al-‘Arāgīb in this series. The first verse has the same structure, yet different wording than the one in Text 2.7, verse 6: ‘*ēnī titxāyal samār ibyaz*’ ‘my eye is imagining black and white’. Here the poet imagines black tents, i.e., the Bedouin camp, as if it is still standing. Furthermore, while at the end of the verse in Text 2.7, verse 6 *maḡwīyyih* ‘obscure’ is used, here the word *mahawīyih* ‘lost’ appears. Al-‘Amādīb is remembered, alongside the assonant al-‘Arāgīb, as another historical landmark, as is al-Ġihānīn, mentioned toward the end. The song is full of references and symbolic elements, not all clear to a foreign audience, and hardly explicable today even within the Negev. The song refers to the arrival of a dark army with a black partridge among it (actually ‘blue’, *sīnih*) and a long march to the limits of the unsustainable. Then memory turns to two ‘joys’ or ‘festive occasions’ (*yād*), described as ‘brilliant in their veils’. This positive image shifts the scene to the love motif and to that which apparently would seem a fantasy of a life together. Then again, a distant or lost or destroyed place, al-Ġihānīn, is evoked by the sound of a violin, and, finally, a dream of love is revealed as being cursed and unfulfilled.

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|--|---|
| 1. <i>w-‘ēnī titxāyal samār(i) byūt</i>
My eye is imagining black tents | <i>šarg al-‘Arāgīb(i) al-mahawīyih</i>
east of al-‘Arāgīb, which is gone |
| 2. <i>w-‘ēnī titixāyal samār(i) byūt</i>
my eye is imagining black tents | <i>šarg al-‘Amādīb(i) al-mahawīyih</i>
east of al-‘Amādīb, which is gone |
| 3. <i>w-ḡibtha-lī¹⁹ ‘askar sōdā</i>
you brought a black military camp | <i>ma‘ha ad-drāḡ as-sīnih min bēnha</i>
with the black partridge among them |
| 4. <i>w-ad-darb(i) ṭalat w-anā ‘aṣṣān</i>
the road became too long and I’m thirsty | <i>w-aḡḡbar b-al-maṣṣā byiṭawwil</i>
and I’m enduring the long walk |
| 5. <i>yā ‘yādī yā mšarrīdīn iṭnēn</i>
oh my two fugitive joys | <i>yā mzahharīn il-manādīl(i)</i>
oh you (pl.) shining in your veils! |
| 6. <i>w-anā min ḥubbak lā‘ib az-zēn</i>
and I, because of your love, am playing
beautifully. | <i>w-irkab ‘ēnak ‘ala ‘ēnī</i>
(And) get [keep] your eye on [with] my
eye |
| 7. <i>w-yā ḥisin, yaḷḷah w-anā wiyaḥ</i>
How good, let’s go, he and me, | <i>w-‘a-qbayyil nizra‘ basātīn</i>
we will very soon plant orchards |
| 8. <i>w-nazra‘ la-Mḥammad ṭalāt wardāt</i>
and let’s plant for Muhammad three
flowers | <i>w-asḡḥin min mayyit al-‘ēn(i)</i>
and I will water them with spring water |

¹⁹ Lit. ‘and you brought her to me’. The order of the object and dative morphemes is unusual. In general, the basic form for ‘you brought her to me’ is *ḡibt-lay (i)yāha*, lit. ‘you brought to me her’ (Shawarbah 2012: 195).

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| 9. <i>w-ḥiss al-kamān karbarağ yā ‘yāl</i>
and the violin's voice is loud, children! | <i>w-yit‘addā byūt iğ-Ğihānīn(i)</i>
and is passing among the homes of al-Ği-
hānīn |
| 10. <i>w-ḥiss al-kamān karbarağ yā ‘yāl</i>
and the violin's voice is loud, children! | <i>w-snīnī yirudd ‘al-Biḥērēn(i)</i>
and brings my years back to the Two Cis-
terns |
| 11. <i>w-al-bāriḥa fi-manām al-lēl</i>
and yesterday in the night's dream | <i>ğānī walīfiy w-anā ġētah</i>
my beloved came to me and I went to him |
| 12. <i>allāh yixawnak yā ḥilm al-lēl</i>
God damn you, oh night's dream! | <i>mā ġānī wallāh walā ġētah</i>
He didn't come to me and I didn't go to him. |

2.10 ‘And I will go up in the airplane’

This last piece, recorded among the ‘Azāzmih, is a neo-*daḥiyah* song that I want to add here to provide a taste of the difference between traditional Negev *daḥiyah* lyrics performed by modern singers and the neo-*daḥiyah* style. The passage below is not politically committed, nor does it talk about the passions of the heart, love, or nostalgia. It is a very popular piece that has been circulating for some time in the Negev and beyond. Its metric, stylistic, and lexical characteristics are different from those observed so far in the traditional texts.

The occasion of the composition of this song is the celebration of traveling by plane. The humorous note of unscrewing the bolts of the plane, however, reveals the attempt to exorcise the fear of the challenges associated with traveling toward a distant destination, from the fear of flying itself to trepidation around encountering diversity.

1. *w-aṭṭla‘ ‘a-ṭ-ṭayyāra fōg w-aḥallil barāğīḥa w-aḥallil barāğīḥa*
And I will go up in the airplane and pull out its screws and pull out its screws
2. *w-iš-šabāb aškāl alwān yā salām yā rā‘īḥa w yā salām yā rā‘īḥa*
and young people are of different shapes and colors, how beautiful is its sponsor²⁰,
how beautiful is its sponsor
3. *w-aṭṭla‘ ‘a-ṭ-ṭayyāra fōg w-aḥallil barāğīḥa w-aḥallil barāğīḥa*
And I will go up in the airplane and pull out its screws and pull out its screws
4. *w-iš-šabāb aškāl alwān yā salām yā rā‘īḥa w-yā salām yā rā‘īḥa*
and young people are of different shapes and colors, how beautiful is its sponsor,
how beautiful is its sponsor.

²⁰ The sponsor of the plane.

3 Chasing the wind back to the sources: On the origin and etymology of *daḥīyah*

The origins of this Bedouin poetic and musical genre probably date back to the pre-history of Arabic. Although a solid nucleus that consists of some recurring poetic themes and structures exists, the Bedouin *daḥīyah* exists in the dimension of oral performance and transmission, entrusted to the traditional techniques of improvisation. I am unaware of any published collections of *daḥīyah* texts from the past or contemporary times, from the Negev or beyond it. Some notions regarding the origin of the genre, however, come from oral traditions and direct anthropological observations. In her study on Gulf Bedouin societies, Al-Noaimi (2021) defines the *daḥḥa* and the *ʿarḍa* as male collective dances that accompany the poetic performance of individual poems in meter in front of a male audience around the motifs of raiding and warfare (Sowayan 1985).

In her essay on female singing traditions in Iraq, Hassan (2010) reports that in Lower Iraq, local Bedouins still perform dances in which young girls with uncovered hair dance before a row of men to encourage them. She also states, following al-Kamālī (1975), that in some ancient types of Mesopotamian Bedouin *daḥḥa*, members of both sexes danced together; a young man asked a girl to dance with him while she, in return, asked for a poem to be addressed to her. The dance between the two took the form of a sword fight in which the young man could kiss the girl, while she had the right to wound him with her sword. Of the people I spoke to, none remember any specific *daḥīyah* tradition in which a woman and a man dance together, either in the Negev or in the regions immediately adjacent to it (Sinai, Jordan).

Regarding the description of a typical traditional Negev *daḥīyah* performance, Shawarbah (2012: 377) reports that ‘the *daḥḥa* or *dihhiyyih* is a type of Bedouin dance performed by Bedouin men at wedding ceremonies. It consists of an evening entertainment during which a group of men sing, improvise Bedouin poems, and clap their hands monotonously in a line while usually one woman, called *ḥāšiy* (lit. young she-camel), dances in front of them’.

Today, the fully covered female figure dancing in front of the men’s line is said to be not a girl, but a man in disguise, since it is not considered appropriate for a girl to dance in front of men. This ‘modern’ *ḥāšiy* is the subject of jokes. Indeed, at the weddings I have attended in the Negev in the last twenty years, the separation of the sexes is very strict. The *daḥīyah* is performed in the place where the nuptial *šigg* (‘men’s tent’) is erected for the occasion, in an open space in front of the tent itself. There should

be no other women here except the dancer, yet the fact that a woman dances alone in the presence of men is today considered so dishonorable as to be strictly avoided. Therefore, the dancer is a man in disguise. Needless to say, according to custom, the *daḥīyah* is strictly out of bounds for women. However, it is said that during weddings, Negev women perform a form of song and dance that mimics the style of the *daḥīyah*, as well as of the *badʿ*,²¹ parallel to that of men and in secret. In terms of poetic style, *daḥīyah* is improvisational, constructed based on short verses intertwined with rhymes and/or assonances.

Regarding the roots and cultural meanings of *daḥīyah*, a possible interpretation of the etymology of the term supports the origin of this practice in the male world of tribal military brotherhoods. The word *daḥīyah*, indeed, may be etymologically related to *diḥyah* ‘chief of a group of soldiers’ (Lane 1863–1874: 3, 857), of military unity of the kind that might have been represented by the men from the same large family (Kressel 1996). This origin could be supported by the martial, violent, and impetuous characters of some sub-genres and themes of *daḥīyah*, in both its traditional and modern forms. The execution of *daḥīyah* performances at weddings, therefore, in addition to celebrating the youth, beauty, and love of the newlyweds, seems to have mainly served the function of supporting the groom in a male rite of passage towards sexual and social maturity and his entry into tribal male society, intended as a combat unit, a military ‘brotherhood’ in the literal sense. At the same time, the other members of the group had the opportunity to confirm and strengthen mutual bonds and celebrate their familiar, collective warrior identity.

According to local anthropological sources (Ziyādnah 2011), rather than symbolizing love and passion, the female presence of the *ḥāšīy* dancer roused the warrior virtue of the male tribe members for the benefit of the protection and prosperity of the entire tribal group. Traditional Negev wisdom seems to recognize that marriage and love do not always belong to the same sphere. A collective celebration of a wedding is a social fact, while the expression of one’s passions is entrusted to other private poetic forms, lyric and elegiac. It should also be remembered that Bedouin marriage in the Negev today is still practiced in a regime of strict endogamy, in which the woman is chosen, generally by the groom’s mother, preferably from among the paternal first cousins (Kressel 1999; Sacchi 2009).

²¹ *Badʿ* is the name of a poetic form considered by some of my Negev informants almost synonymous with *daḥīyah*, while it is considered by others as the initial section of *daḥīyah* compositions. In Bedouin traditions other than those of the Negev, however, *badʿ* is distinguished from *daḥīyah* by its exclusively vocal performance, i.e., by the absence of dance, and by the schema of a poetic duel, according to which it can develop.

Thus, Negev men who danced *daḥīyah* in the past and who dance *daḥīyah* today at the same wedding have a very high probability of being close relatives. The entire system of traditional values expressed by this genre can be summarized by saying that brotherhood is celebrated in *daḥīyah* above love and even above war. ‘Brotherhood’ in the Bedouin society means both familiar ties and ‘alliance’/‘protection’. Loyalty is the highest value. The culture-specific meaning of ‘brotherhood’ as alliance/protection seems to have characterized the core of Bedouin customary laws and social practices since ancestral times (Borg 2019).

In Texts 2.1 and 2.8, the collective dance and entertainment offered by the *daḥīyah* performance celebrate the value of harmony among all members of the group. The theme of tribal identity and pride of belonging is expressed in Text 2.1 in verse 4: *wīḥna ‘urbān aš-Širī‘ih allī mā byuṣḍug binbī‘ih* ‘we are the Arabs of Širī‘ah the one who is not loyal, we will sell him’. The same theme, with a slight variation in the verb of the second hemistich, is also found in Text 2.2, verse 6: *w-aḥna ‘urbān aš-Širī‘ah allī mā byuṣluṭ binbī‘ah* ‘we the Arab of the Širī‘ah, the one who has no power, we will sell him’. The tribal group also offers each member protection from a very dangerous fate of loneliness and defeat, as stated in Text 2.1, verse 7: *war-rāḡil min dūn rḡālih tākil ‘ašāha al-wāwiyyih* ‘a man without his folk, wolves will eat (him) for dinner’.²² The singer often reminds the audience that his condition without them is miserable, as in Text 2.1, verse 9: *yā rbū‘ī yā šāša lbī ḥālātī min dūnkuw zirīyah* ‘oh my people! You are my headband, my condition without you is miserable’, in Text 2.4, verse 5, and in Text 2.8, verse 5: *yā rbū‘ī yā š-šāš al-biyaz ḥālī min dūnkuw zirīyah* ‘oh my people with white turbans! My condition without you is meaningless’. Similarly, in some cases, the theme of tribal identity and history replaces the theme of love. Thus, the motif of the secret and romantic departure imagined by lovers in the early morning (Text 2.1, verse 5) becomes an imaginary, collective return of the tribe (Text 2.8, verse 1).

Again, with respect to the etymology of the word *daḥīyah*, the root d.ḥ.y/w, from which the word derives, seems to be connected to Biblical Hebrew *dāḥā* ‘to push, thrust’ (Brown et al. 1975: 190) and, following Borg (2021: 157), to Late Egyptian *ḥdy* ‘umspannen, fliegen, ausbreiten (von Himmel)’ (Erman and Grapow 1926–1961: 3, 205; Calice 1936: 75). The ‘sky-spreading’ action found in Late Egyptian semantically echoes the Biblical Hebrew נִתְּחָה שָׁמַיִם כִּי־רִיכָה *transcription* ‘(God) spreads out the heavens like a curtain’ (Psalm 104: 2) and etymologically fits the Quranic meaning of *daḥāha* ‘(God) stretched/unfolded it (the earth)’ in Sura 79, *an-Nāzi‘āt*, verse 30: وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا *transcription* lit. ‘and the earth, after

²² The same motif also appears in Text 2.8, verse 4.

that, He spread it out', or 'as for the earth, He spread it out as well'. The meaning of 'to spread' is the one reported with the greatest number of *ḥadīṭ* and poetic examples in *Lisān al-ʿArab* (vol. 3) and Lane's dictionary (1863–1874: 3, 757) for both d.h.w and d.h.y.

Classical Arabic *daḥā* is attested as 'poussant violemment en portant à quelqu'un un coup par derrière' (Kazimirski 1860: 1, 676). In Murtaḍā az-Zabīdī's *Tāğ al-ʿarūs min ḡawāḥir al-qāmūs* the root appears as the verb 'to roll' in the sentence *تَدَحَّتْ الإِبِلُ فِي الْأَرْضِ tadahḥat al-ibl fī l-arḍ* 'the camels roll on the soil'. Interestingly, the root d.h.y is largely employed in the realm of industrial design in Modern Standard Arabic, in meanings of both 'rolling' and 'stretching'. Both meanings appear in the noun given to two industrial machines called *midḥātun*, one intended as 'roller for precise and even spread of ink on the print page' and the other as 'plank used to spread and smooth the sown land'.²³ The expression *daḥī al-aḡīn* is used in online demonstrations of the operation of industrial bakery machines with the meaning of 'rolling the dough',²⁴ yet, at least in Levantine dialects, the verb *laff* is used in this context, while *daḥa* is not.

In the Arabic vernacular space, the following meanings are attested: Daḡīna *daḥā* 'étendre' (Landberg 1920–1942: 1, 715); Aleppo *daḥa* 'faire disparaître; dissuader qqn de qqc' (Barthélemy 1953–1969: 166); Marāzīg *dḥe* 'écarter, enlever de sa place pour s'y mettre' (Boris 1958: 166); Morocco *dḥa* 'pousser pour faire entrer, introduire, fourrer, enfoncer' (Prémare IV 230); al-Andalus *daḥani* 'he pushed me' (Corriente 1997: 174).

To date, I have not found definitive statements concerning the origin of the word *daḥiyah* in Western scholarship. The impetuous and encouraging character of the dance and song seems to go well with the meaning 'pushing' which is found for the root d.h.y in the vernacular Arabic facies. In addition to the metaphorical meaning of 'pushing' as 'inciting', and in a more physical sense, while dancing in a row, the participants literally push each other sideways with their shoulders and upper bodies, which remain in constant contact.

Yet, consulting Arabic sources on local customs, the etymological concerns seem to be easily dissolved. The word *daḥiyah*, pronounced in the Negev *dihḥiyih*, is claimed to derive from the verb *daḥḥā/ yidaḥḥi* 'to clap the hands' palms, to applaud', which is exactly the characteristic, repeated movement executed by those who participate in a *daḥiyah* performance, unlike what happens in the *badʿ* and other poetic types (al-Faraṅḡī 2009;

²³ From *al-Maʿnā: Arabic-Arabic Online Dictionary*. Accessed 25 August 2022. <http://www.almaany.com/ar/dict/ar-ar/دحية/>.

²⁴ *Ālat taqtīʿ wa-daḥī al-aḡīn*. Accessed 25 August 2022. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71cs0ldzQ7w>.

Ziyādnah 2011). The verb *daḥḥā/ yidaḥḥī* appears in the dictionary *al-Mu‘ḡam al-wasīṭ* (Anīs 2004: 42), where it is defined as ‘to slap, to hit by the palm of the outstretched hand’. As shown in Text 2.1, verse 8, the clapping of the hands is considered a fundamental and characteristic element of the *daḥīyah* style, a type of basic percussion, alternating with drums—which are mentioned in Text 2.8, verse 4—and just as important as they are.

4 Traditional Negev *daḥīyah*: ‘Tribal encyclopedia’, improvisation, and ‘mnemonics’

Asking Negev Bedouins about the best and most famous *daḥīyah* singers always leads to debate. People from recognized villages, such as ‘Ararah and Rahaṭ, prefer Ayman al-A‘sam, representative of progressive and innovative tastes, while the most conservative Bedouin groups in the desert diaspora would contend that Fū‘ād Abū-Bnayyah and Yūsif aṣ-Ṣarāy‘ah are the ones who brought the original *daḥīyah* back to life, including old words and traditional practices.

In any case, different tastes depend greatly on the cultural background of the different groups. The ‘Azāzmih, especially the Bīr Haddāḡ population, and the Tarābīn, whom I had the chance to meet in the *bzurāḥ*, are poorly acquainted with Arab and non-Arab foreign culture and people and prefer the traditional style. Elderly members of other groups, however, such as the Gdērāt, the Abū-Grēnāt, the Ḥullām of Tel Sheva, and most of the groups that reside in the recognized villages in general, accept neo-*daḥīyah* ‘as a matter of fact’, and as a way in which an old genre can survive in modern times.

The traditional *daḥīyah* texts reported in this article were collected by singers from different tribes. Nonetheless, despite their heterogeneous tribal origins, these texts share a common heritage of rhymes and syntactic and melodic structures and represent a ‘tribal encyclopedia’ of the entire Negev today.²⁵

According to the singers, just as the historical and political events of different tribes have become the common heritage of all Negev *daḥīyah*—as in the case of the collective mourning over al-‘Arāḡīb, originally a Tiyāḥa village—words, rhymes, and verse patterns circulate today throughout the Negev and beyond. The repertoire of rhymes, words, and verse patterns of the traditional *daḥīyah* was vast and different for each tribe. Thus, the ex-

²⁵ The term ‘tribal encyclopedia’ was coined by Havelock in reference to the Homeric poems (1963) to define a repository of cultural memory preserved and perpetuated by an entire populace (Dunn Neeley 1998). I use this expression here in this sense in an attempt to convey a sense of the contemporary, ‘intertribal’ nature of the traditional *daḥīyah*.

amples of traditional lyrics revealed to me represent a residue of traditional *daḥiyah*, rather eroded by time from both lexical and poetic perspectives. The most evident problem in the preservation and revitalization of the traditional *daḥiyah* is the loss of the traditional lexical repository. As mentioned above, one of the main reasons for the birth of the modern *daḥiyah* was the need to make lyrics comprehensible to generations who do not know how to interpret the traditional songs. The lexical impoverishment and fossilization of the traditional *daḥiyah* heritage are clear in the texts, as the careful conservation of the final parts of the verses to minimize the alteration of the inherited rhyming system demonstrates. Altering the rhyming system would involve inserting different words and rearranging entire verses.

Linguistic and stylistic erosion make the traditional *daḥiyah* lyrics sung today thematically and linguistically similar to each other: Variations are mainly due today to personal choices or the pressure of oral performance and improvisation, rather than related to different tribal traditions.

4.1 Poetic Alternation

The oral, improvisational, character of the traditional *daḥiyah* performance leads to the creation of alternative versions of the same verses, very similar and assonant. Compare, for example, Text 2.1, verse 1: *yā ‘ēnī lli biddami‘ min harḡin smi‘ti simi‘* ‘oh my eye who is crying tears as you heard a rumor of because of the rumors of slander’ and Text 2.2, verse 1: *yā ‘ēnī hilli bi-d-dami‘ min harḡin smi‘ti sami‘* ‘oh my eye, start crying (many)tears since you heard rumors of slander’.

In this pair of verses, the alternation is produced by *lli biddami‘* ‘who is crying (‘eye’, f.)’ and *hilli bi-d-dami‘* ‘burst (f.) into tears!’ It may be said that these verses are alternative versions of a single model not only because of their linguistic similarity in terms of sounds and motifs, but also because of the ‘strategic’ positions that they occupy in all compositions, either at the beginning of a composition (*incipit*), as in both cases just mentioned, or at the beginning of a new thematic section in multi-thematic performances (‘bridging verses’, as in Text 2.8, verse 8).

Other examples of alternative versions of the same type are:

- Text 2.1, verse 8. *a‘ṭūnī l-kaff xallīh yultaff w-al-kaff ‘mār ad-diḥḥiyyih* ‘give (pl.) me (the palm of) the hand and let it twist, hand is core to (our) *daḥiyah*’, to be compared to Text 2.8, verse 4 *a‘ṭūna ad-daff xallīh yiltaff w-ad-daff ‘mār id-daḥiyah* ‘give us the drum, let it twist, the drum is core to *daḥiyah*’. In this pair of verses, the alternation is produced by the words *kaff* ‘hand’ and *daff* ‘drum’, both used for percussion in this musical style.

- Text 2.1, verse 5 *w-ṣubḥ w-al-muṣṭ mnaddī l-āxiḍ* ‘šēri wa‘addi ‘one morning while the breeze is moist, I shall take my beloved and come by’, to be compared to Text 2.8, verse 1 *w-aṣ-ṣubḥ w-al-maṣṭ mnaddī l-āxiḍ* ‘išīri w-a‘addi ‘and the morning, when the breeze is moist, I will take my people and come by’. In this pair of verses, the alternation is produced by the words ‘šēri ‘my beloved one’ and ‘išīri ‘my people (my paternal lineage)’.²⁶

Another aspect of alternation between the verses is seen in the construction of the temporal reference. In Text 2.1, verse 5 *w-ṣubḥ* means ‘[and] one morning’, expressing a wish to be realized on some undefined future occasion, a collective hope projected toward the future. In Text 2.8, verse 1 *w-aṣ-ṣubḥ* ‘[and] the morning’ refers to the part of the day in which the ‘hero’ (the singer) sets out on his private, sentimental undertaking. Thus, Text 2.1, verse 5 is more suitable for a sentimental context, while Text 2.8, verse 1 seems suitable for songs with political ones. Indeed, in improvised oral performances, verse alternations of this type may be related to the occasion and motif of the performance.

Furthermore, the existence of a repertoire of verses with alternative versions is a necessary constituent of ‘mnemonics’, memorization methods used by poets in traditional oral contexts (Parry 1971). These methods make improvised performance possible through the provision of a reservoir of verses and their variations immediately available to memory during spontaneous singing.

Constraining the number of syllables and the rhyming/assonance system aids memory, on the one hand, and, on the other, forces the composers to seek poetic solutions for different contexts. It is important to have sets of words that provide the same rhyme so that they can be used alternately when the message of the verse must be changed. One example of this rhyme/assonance alternation is observable in Text 2.1, verse 11:

yā ‘ammī ‘Bēd iftill-lī ga‘d
oh Uncle ‘Ubayd, solve my problem!

ḥumāmit gulbī tuwwā‘ah
The dove of my heart is obedient

compared to Text 2.4, verse 3:

yā ‘ammī ‘Bīd iftilik-lay
oh Uncle ‘Ubayd, bring me luck!

ḥamāmit galbī ṭayyārah
The dove of my heart flew away

in which *tuwwā‘ah* ‘obedient’ and *ṭayyārah* ‘flew away’ (lit. ‘is flying [away]’) represent two alternative words in the final position in a pair

²⁶ The presence of a semantic alternation here was clarified by the singers, as the *ē/i* opposition cannot be considered phonological in today’s Negev koine.

of verses that follow the same model, i.e., the appeal to Uncle ‘Ubayd to intercede for the man so that a girl will be granted to him. In this pair of verses, the first hemistich also has two alternative versions: *iftill-lī ga‘d* ‘solve my problem’ (lit. ‘untie for me the situation’, Text 2.1, verse 11) and *iftilik-lay* ‘bring me luck’ (Text 2.4, verse 3). As for these verbal forms, they represent two alternative choices made due to personal, stylistic, and rhyme preferences. After consultations with the informants, in the first case the verb *iftill* has been interpreted as an imperative, in the eighth form, from a root f.l.l., which conveys the meaning of ‘to set free’, both in the sense of ‘untying (hair)’ and in the sense of ‘solving’. Shawarbah (2012: 383) reports *fall* ‘to escape’, *fililih* pl. *falāyil* ‘long and unkempt hair’. The other word, *iftilik*, is the imperative in the eighth form, from the root f.l.k., ‘to have/to bring good luck’ (Shawarbah 2012: 383 reports *falāk* ‘luck’). The formation of both verbs in the eighth form may not have a strictly grammatical or semantic reason, but may simply be due to the need of similar forms in the same metric and prosodic position.²⁷

4.2 Celebrating *daḥiyah*

A final point to note is that in three texts reported here—2.1, 2.3, and 2.8—the genre of the performance is explained and celebrated within the lyrics.

In Text 2.1, verses 7–9, the exhortation to collective *daḥiyah* exorcizes the fear of being abandoned by the group of tribal men, a cause for concern often mentioned in these texts:

7. *war-rāḡil min dūn rḡālih tākil ‘ašāha l-wāwiyyih*
8. *a‘ṭūnī l-kaff xallih yultaff w-al-kaff ‘mār ad-dihhiyyih*
9. *yā rbū‘i yā šāša lbī ḥālātī min dūnkuw ziriyyah*

‘A man without his folk, wolves will eat (him) for dinner.

Give me the hand and let it twist the hand is core to *daḥiyah*.

Oh my people! You are my headband. My condition without you is miserable’.

In Text 2.3, verses 1 and 3 are dedicated to the celebration of *daḥiyah*. In verse one, the ‘old man’,²⁸ is invited to take part in the *daḥiyah*, to make

²⁷ Notably, young informants consulted about the meaning of these verbal forms did not interpret them as derived from f.l.l. or f.l.k., as these roots are not familiar to them. They rather suggested that both verbal forms may derive from l.f.f. ‘to turn’, interpretable as ‘to reverse (the situation)’, becoming f.l.l. through metathesis. Nevertheless, morpho-syntactic explanations made me lean towards the option of the two distinct roots proposed here.

²⁸ According to some of the informants, this should probably read as ‘honorable man’ and translated as ‘oh my guest’. Nonetheless, the use of this word is significant, as the

it flourish. In the third verse, the *daḥīyah* singer is invited to sing with increasing intensity (*mʿarrid*)²⁹ all night long, until the morning star rises:

1. *allī nte ḥāy yā šāyib lā yā zahat*³⁰ *ad-diḥīyyih*
(...)

3. *law dāḥī yā mʿarrid dāḥī lu tiṭlaʿ an-niḡmih aš-šubbāḥih*
'Whoever you are [living], old man! May *daḥīyah* live and flourish!
(...)

Please, *daḥīyah* singer, keep singing until the morning star rises!

In Text 2.8, verses 3–5 show the same intertwining of motifs as Text 2.1, verses 7–9, with some lexical variations. The exhortation to collectively perform the *daḥīyah*, mentioned alongside its traditional attribute (*mār* 'foundation, core') of drum percussion, is framed between two verses that celebrate the unity of the male group and warn of the state of loneliness as the worst existential condition, celebrating brotherhood and tribal ties above any other value:

3. *w-ar-rāḡil min dūn rḡālih tākil ʿašāha al-wāwīyah*
4. *aʿtūna ad-daff xallih yiltaff w-ad-daff mār id-daḥīyah*
5. *yā rbūʿi yā š-šāš al-biyāz ḥālī min dūnkuw zirīyah*
'When the man is without his tribe wolves will eat (him) for dinner.
Give us the drum, let it twist, the drum is core to (our) *daḥīyah*.
Oh my people with white turbans! My condition without you is meaningless'.

5 *Smiʿt šōt al-bārūd* re-mastered: *Daḥīyah*'s recent evolution within and outside the Negev

It seems that in today's Negev the execution of *daḥīyah* still allows the group members to collectively identify with the extended family (*ʿēlih* or, rather, *ʿašīrih*) and to strengthen family ties. However, *daḥīyah* performance is a festive, entertaining, exciting, and engaging occasion, even for those who are only joining the celebration of the bachelor party.

As these texts demonstrate, the sense of collective identity and unity today in the Negev goes beyond traditional tribal boundaries. The fate that has united the Bedouins of the Negev in recent decades has forged

opposition between old and young age seems to be the leitmotif of the composition, probably hinting at a specific case in which an old man took a certain woman as his wife instead of a young man who had been waiting for her.

²⁹ According to some of the informants, this participle, mainly used to define someone gaining strength after being weak or sick, is used here to invite the singer to infuse increasing strength into the singing.

³⁰ An optative perfect form.

a communion of experiences and hopes. Thus, the ‘Azāzmih and Tarābīn aṣ-Šāni‘ informants interviewed in this research identify in their *daḥīyah* songs with the Arabs of Širī‘ah, although Širī‘ah seems to have been home to Gdērāt and Ma‘āniyīn groups (Cerqueglini 2022). These ‘Azāzmih and Tarābīn aṣ-Šāni‘ informants mourn over the ruins of al-‘Arāgīb, which was a Tiyaḥa village. Together with motifs and themes, the oral encyclopedia of verses and rhymes traditionally belonging to each tribe has probably also become a common legacy of the Negev. In sum, the old tribal conflicts appear to be forgotten in a new Negev Bedouin political koine that has been created by recent history and seems to reach beyond the Negev borders.

Indeed, since 2021, the Palestinian public has been involved in a discussion of the spread of *daḥīyah* outside its traditional Bedouin contexts in the non-Bedouin Palestinian popular sphere, where it has recently acquired a reputation as a means of inciting violence and the use of weapons among young people and has been compared to the Western ‘death metal’ and ‘black metal’ musical streams, generally thought to inspire violent and nihilistic beliefs.³¹ For this reason, some Palestinian intellectuals have launched a campaign to renounce its performance on festive occasions, based on the fact that, after all, *daḥīyah*, as part of Bedouin heritage, is not part of sedentary Palestinian folklore, while *zaḡal* and *ḥidāyah* are perceived by the sedentary community today as the original local genres traditionally used to express positive values and patriotism.³²

The *daḥīyah* genre is, undoubtedly, of Bedouin origin (Urkevich 2015). I could appreciate the Negev Bedouin *daḥīyah* because it is still performed by men during wedding celebrations. I watched the dances from afar and unseen, as the Bedouin young women sometimes do. Yet we should not allow the wedding context to which the traditional Negev Bedouin *daḥīyah* is confined today to mislead us regarding the themes of *daḥīyah* compositions, which are not centered on marriage and love, as already said. The repetitive, hypnotic rhythm of *daḥīyah*’s music and movements is certainly a celebration of male physical power, originally and above all to be understood in terms of strength in warfare.

With its aggressive, exciting, enthralling masculine character, the *daḥīyah* inspires collective values and is extremely amusing and enter-

³¹ Some Palestinians seem particularly concerned about negative values and violent talk spread through *ad-daḥīyah al-‘aṣrīyah* ‘the trendy *daḥīyah*’ when this pretends to take on the tones of the ancient *daḥīyat as-silāḥ* ‘the sword *daḥīyah*’, but ends up fomenting anger and aggression among young people, who sing phrases such as ‘hit him and break his brain’, from lyrics by the popular Wum‘īn al-A‘sam (‘Inbatāwī 2020).

³² ‘Inbatāwī (2020).

taining on social occasions. It has spread from the Bedouin lands and is performed and enjoyed in non-Bedouin Arab societies—in particular in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. The introduction of the electronic piano backing track, which took place on a large scale starting in 2013, contributed enormously to the diffusion of *daḥīyah* among young people. These musical developments in the *daḥīyah* performance are reminiscent of the birth of the techno-popular genre in Egypt in the aftermath of the Arab Spring in conjunction with the attempts of the inhabitants of the poor neighborhoods to change the models of popular celebrations.

The electric piano has now replaced the original Bedouin instruments—*rbāb*, *simsimiyah*, and *ḡurn al-gahāwah*³³—in the Negev and outside of it. Rhythm has become more important than words and it has become easy to adapt texts to the modern tastes of the new, wider public, as is evident in the compositions of Mūsā al-Ḥāfiẓ and Abū-Bassām Jalmāwī. The predominance of rhythm rather than lyrics has facilitated the spread of *daḥīyah* outside the Negev, on the one hand, and led to the rejuvenation of the poetic language in the Negev itself, on the other, as in the lyrics composed by Qāsim an-Naḡḡār, a famous and particularly appreciated neo-*daḥīyah* Negev performer and composer. Indeed, as the artists I interviewed explained, the lexicon of the traditional texts of the *daḥīyah*, handed down orally, is obscure and incomprehensible to the majority of young Bedouins. Finally, the addition of electronic percussion initiated by Aṣraf Abū-Layl in 2016 led to the entry of many non-Bedouin artists from the *ḥidāyah* tradition, such as ‘Iṣām ‘Umur, Rif‘at Asadī, and Ṣādī al-Bīrūnī,³⁴ into *daḥīyah*. The inauguration, or rather the ‘baptism of fire’, of the neo-*daḥīyah* genre took place on the occasion of the performance of the first *daḥīyah* by Mūsā al-Ḥāfiẓ, a Palestinian singer from the tradition of *zaḡal* and *ḥidāyah*. The title of the song, performed in 2014, was *smi‘t šōt al-bārūd* ‘I heard the voice of gunpowder’. This title is particularly significant because the voice of gunpowder evokes both war contexts and the customary rifle bursts fired at sunset to warn over long distances of the start of a Bedouin wedding party and the distribution of food.

Many of the Palestinian singers who entered the *daḥīyah* genre have participated together with Negev Bedouin *daḥīyah* artists, such as Sālim

³³ The last two were originally domestic tools used for grinding sesame and coffee, respectively, as can be understood from their names. Since these tools produce percussion, they have entered the field of music.

³⁴ This last singer has recently become renowned among Palestinian youth for having cursed Saudi Arabia, which is considering establishing peaceful relationships with Israel, during a *zaḡal* poetic competition circulated on Twitter.

Wumʿin al-Aʿsam from Tel Sheva, in animating weddings. These joint occasions have provided the ground for a sustained exchange of ideas and ideals, musical and poetical traditions, forms, and tastes between Negev and sedentary Palestine, which eventually led to the birth of the neo-*daḥīyah*. Somehow, the revisiting of the *daḥīyah* genre, albeit in new forms, by young Negev Bedouin artists recalls the rediscovery by young Algerian artists such as Khaled, Cheb Mami, and Mama Hosni in the nineteen nineties of *rāʾī* music, which until then had been confined to the Algerian provinces of Oran and Tlemcen.

The original *daḥīyah*, with its emphasis on war and comradeship, seems to have taken on a tone that incites armed conflict once it infiltrated the Palestinian popular music mainstream. ‘The people of the north (the sedentary Palestinians) have injected their blood into *daḥīyah*’, a young Negev singer I met in Rahaṭ expressively explained.³⁵ Indeed, this new type of warlike *daḥīyah* has also developed in the Negev. In particular, this martial neo-*daḥīyah* type has rapidly spread in circles of young Bedouins who support the ideals and the activities of the fight against the State of Israel. An example of the newly politicized *daḥīyah* is the song by Yūsif aṣ-Ṣarāyʿah titled ‘*a-l-ḥaṭṭ aṣ-ṣahrāwī* ‘On the Desert Line’, in which the singer takes inspiration from the traditional motif of the desert battles, but turns it against the Israeli military recruitment of Bedouin youth, saying: *rāḥat blādak w-blādī w-al-ḥukm f-īd al-yahūdī, bidūnak f-al-ḡeš taṭawwiʿ ‘aṣān taṣīl al-bārūdī* ‘your country and mine have gone, and the rule is in the hands of the Jew, without you the army volunteers to raise gunpowder’.

Another *daḥīyah* song, composed by Sālīm Wumʿin al-Aʿsam during the conflict between Israel and Gaza in May 2021 and titled *Abū-ʿUbaydah muʿaḍḍibhum* ‘Abū-ʿUbaydah is tormenting them’, aroused much wider security concerns, especially on the Israeli side. The piece was a tribute to ‘Abū-ʿUbaydah, a leader and spokesperson of the Palestinian resistance, particularly active during the events of 2021. It seems, according to Palestinian sources, that the composer has been interrogated by the Israeli intelligence services and faced imprisonment for three months because of the contents of this *daḥīyah* song, especially for having disseminated it on Youtube and TikTok, where singers from Nablus and other Palestinian cities posted songs in response to and in support of Sālīm Wumʿin al-Aʿsam’s *daḥīyah* for ‘Abū-ʿUbaydah, calling the leader ‘Honorable brother and protector’.³⁶

³⁵ I wish to thank A. Z. from Rahaṭ, born in 1990, for his cooperation and for his colorful artistic talent.

³⁶ ‘Bi-l-fidiyū: Bi-sabab daḥīya’ (2021).

According to the traditional Bedouin singers I encountered in the Negev, all in their fifties, this new *daḥīyah*, which strays far from traditional taste and tones, is despised by the elderly, who perceive it as a profanation of the customary taste and values. Nonetheless, not everyone agrees that the modern *daḥīyah* should simply be condemned, because many contemporary Bedouin and non-Bedouin authors continue to practice it outside the forms of the military style (*daḥīyat aṣ-ṣilāḥ* ‘the *daḥīyah* of the sword’) and within its customary themes and tones, following what they claim is the very nature of the genre. According to this view, the *daḥīyah* originally arose from the *haḡīn* genre, whose original themes were conversations with natural elements and animals, and which later developed into *haḡīn ṣaḥrawī* ‘desert *haḡīn*’ and *haḡīn ḡazālī* ‘gazelle *haḡīn*’ whose central motifs are love, separation, and the self-alienation experienced by the Bedouin in modernity, rather than war and violence. Among the contemporary young singers who perform *daḥīyah b-haḡīn*, lit. ‘*daḥīyah* in the *haḡīn* style’, Amīr Abū-‘Ābūd, was mentioned to me by the singers with whom I spoke.³⁷

A comparison of the final verses of the *daḥīyah* Text 2.6 and the *haḡīn* Text 2.5 in this paper reveals that in the traditional Negev Bedouin oral culture, both *daḥīyah* and *haḡīn* draw on the same sources of poetic formulas and rhyming, thus merging spontaneously in similar content by sharing formulaic verses commonly used by composers in improvisation as bridges between different themes, as sequence closures, or as ‘rest areas’ in which to catch the breath and organize new verses.³⁸ Moreover, the same poetic verses, such as ‘the dove of my heart flew away’ (2.4), ‘oh my eye, start crying (many) tears’ (2.2), and ‘oh my eye, (oh) who cried’ (2.5), are also parts of the elegiac songs of mourning that elderly women still sing today when the pain of loss is strongest, usually on the first day of mourning, spontaneously passing from crying to lamenting, and then to singing. It happens so fluidly that crying seems to find meaning and consolation in the rhythm of the song, which reconciles tragedy with life.

In reality, as Texts 2.1, 2.2, 2.7, and 2.9 demonstrate, politics does enter even the Negev *daḥīyah* texts considered traditional and recited by elderly singers. Yet, it does so in a lyrical and elegiac disguise. Thus, the poetic scene in 2.7 describes the sound of a violin that stirs childhood memories, bringing the listener back to the ruins of the village of al-‘Arāḡīb, between

³⁷ For a taste of the *daḥīyah b-haḡīn*, here is the link to the YouTube video of the song *Tal‘ab bi-galbī w-ana aṭī‘ak* ‘Play with my heart, I obey you’ by Amīr Abū-‘Ābūd. Accessed 25 August 2022. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lg2nIenJwMk>.

³⁸ These traditional oral composition techniques were observed by Milman Parry among the Slavic bards. He used them for the first time to study the Homeric versification system. Formulaic techniques of the organization of lyrics for oral performance can be considered a common heritage of traditional improvisation (Parry 1971).

Beer-Sheva and Raḥaṭ, and its two ‘small lakes’ (two small cisterns). Al-‘Arāgīb is notorious for having been demolished by the Israeli authorities and rebuilt by its Tiyaḥa dwellers (mostly al-‘Ugbī and Ṭawārah families) more than one hundred times (Amara 2013). The sad events of ‘Arāgīb have become emblematic of the ongoing territorial disputes between the Israeli State and the Negev Bedouin tribes (Nasasra 2017; Nasasra et al. 2015). In Text 2.1, Širī‘ah is mentioned. This place, situated along the wadi of the same name, close to the border between Israel and Gaza, is often mentioned in tribal accounts as belonging, in the pre-State era, to various Negev clans, mainly Gdērāt and Ma‘āniyīn, which spent spring and summer in the irrigated fields of Širī‘ah planting vegetable seeds and harvesting crops (Cerqueglini 2022). When Beer-Sheva and the surrounding territories came under Israeli control in 1948, several Bedouin groups took refuge in Širī‘ah and were later moved to Tel ‘Arād.

It appears, thus, that both the surviving traditional musical *daḥīyah* genre and its modern evolution play an increasingly strong role in shaping the identity of the Arab population between Israel and Palestine, and that music, more generally, is playing an increasingly significant role in the experience of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict among Bedouin and non-Bedouin Arabs. The poetic elaboration of political events, even in harsh tones, is part of the local popular tradition (Shachmon 2013). In addition, music has the extraordinary power to arouse emotions beyond words and circulates today with great intensity in the media. On May 4, 2019, Hamas initiated a rocket launch against the cities of southern Israel, declaring that the attack was due to the protest against the international Eurovision song contest that took place that year in Tel Aviv, after the victory of Neta, an Israeli singer, in the previous year. Simultaneously, a digital movement in support of the Palestinian cause pledged to cause the Israeli event to fail, admonishing social media audiences to boycott it. In the last several decades, musical performances have become powerful tools in influencing and orienting the public and in consensus building on many issues. Due to its vastness and complexity, a more extensive treatment of the neo-*daḥīyah* genre, both in the Negev and in the Palestinian Authority, will be addressed in a separate study.

6 Conclusion

In this article, I have presented and commented on some *daḥīyah* texts performed following traditional models and a neo-*daḥīyah* text. I have provided the general lines of the description and evolution of this vernacular genre in the southern Levant, from its original Bedouin milieu to its recent spread into rural and urban Palestinian Arab society. I hope that

this study has contributed to the promotion of the research on the *daḥīyah* genre in the Negev and the southern Levant in general. Indeed, many of its aspects remain to be investigated while it is still possible to interview the representatives and heirs of the traditional genre. Much more material and information could be collected on both the traditional genre and its evolution as well as the vitality of traditional performances and their link to the contemporary neo-*daḥīyah* phenomenon.

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***Dānish*—the First Women’s Journal in Iran: A Contribution to the Study of the Discourse of the Early Iranian Women’s Movement**

Abstract In this article, I explore the content of Iran’s first women’s newspaper, *Dānish* (‘Knowledge’), published in Tehran in 1910–1911. Using the method of close reading, I address the question of the model of womanhood that was presented in the pages of the weekly. In this regard, I examine selected articles that appeared in the surviving issues of *Dānish*, distinguishing three dominant thematic areas: the education of girls and women; marital relationships; child rearing, hygiene, and health care. By putting the journal’s discourse in the context of the discussion on ‘women’s issues’ that was ongoing in the press during the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911), I reflect on the relationship between the agenda of the early Iranian women’s movement and the discourse of constitutionalist nationalism.

Keywords *Dānish*, Iran, press, women, feminism, nationalism, education, marriage, child rearing, hygiene

1 Introduction

Dānish (‘Knowledge’) was the first women’s journal in Iran’s history. The first issue appeared on 10 Ramadan 1328 (15 September 1910) on the initiative of Iran’s first woman optician, Duktur Kaḥḥāl (Dr. Kaḥḥāl), also



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referred to as Khānum-i Duktur Kaḥḥāl (Mrs. Dr. Kaḥḥāl).¹ Dr. Kaḥḥāl remained the head of *Dānish* until the end of its existence, that is up to 27 Rajab 1329 (23 July 1911), when the last, thirtieth issue of the weekly was released.² Issues two to four mentioned the name of ‘A. [?] Ṣafvat as the editor-in-chief. According to the information provided in the journal, its headquarters were located in Tehran on ‘Alā al-Dawlih street (now part of Firdawsī street).

Unfortunately, not much is known about Dr. Kaḥḥāl, although recent years have brought a major breakthrough in our knowledge about her life. Until recently, most sources stated that her first name was Ma’sūmih or Sumayih (‘Āmilī Rizāyī 1389: 202; Bāghdār Dilgushā 1400a: 254). However, according to information provided by director and screenwriter Khusraw Sīnāyī (1941–2020), who claimed to be Dr. Kaḥḥāl’s grandson, her real name was ‘Iffat Sayyāḥ Sipānlū (Ibrāhīmzādih 2021). As she herself disclosed in the first issue of *Dānish*, she was the daughter of Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥakīm Bāshī Jadīd al-Islām Hamadānī³ (*Dānish* 1: 2). Allegedly, after acquiring basic medical knowledge from her father, she attended a school for girls run by American missionaries from whom she obtained a license to practice as a physician. Afterwards, she opened her office in Jalilābād Street. Some claim that she was married to Dr. Ḥussayn Kaḥḥāl, editor-in-chief of the *Istiqlāl-i Īrān* (*Iran’s Independence*) newspaper (quoted in Hendelman-Baavur 2019: 14), but other sources argue against it (Iskandarī-nizhād 1399: 119). ‘Iffat Sayyāḥ Sipānlū/Dr. Kaḥḥāl died in 1344AP (1965/1966) at the age of 84 (Ibrāhīmzādih 2021).

The emergence of *Dānish*, which marked the beginning of the women’s press in Iran, would not have been possible without the profound political changes that occurred in the late Qajar era, and finally led to the establishment of the first parliament and the adoption of the first constitution in 1906. According to Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, ‘that “knowledge” became this journal’s mission spoke to the new status women had gained in the public sphere following the constitutional revolution’ (Kashani-Sabet 2011: 126–127). However, a masthead included at the top of the first page of each issue of the journal indicated that the knowledge it propagat-

¹ *Kaḥḥāl* means ‘optician’ in Persian.

² All preserved issues of *Dānish* were published in: *Shukūfih bih inẓimām-i Dānish*. 1377. Tīhrān: Kitābkhānih-yi Millī-yi Jumhūrī-yi Islāmī-yi Īrān. A digitized version of the book is available on the University of Bonn website: <http://digitale-sammlungen.ulb.uni-bonn.de/ulbbnioa/periodical/titleinfo/4147786>. Accessed 26 April 2022. In this article, I make reference to this publication but the pagination given is that of the journal.

³ *Jadīd al-Islām* indicates that he was a convert. The title *ḥakīm bāshī* translates as ‘chief medic’.

ed was, to quote Kashani-Sabet again, a 'domestically-focused knowledge' (Kashani-Sabet 2011: 127):

Journal devoted to the moral/ethical issues, housekeeping, child rearing, and marital relationships [*shawhardārī*]. For the benefit of girls and women, completely avoiding the politics of the country [*politik va siyāsāt-i mamlikatī*].⁴

As Janet Afary has pointed out, the final note about disavowing any interest in politics '[p]robably (...) was a compromise with the authorities who had allowed the journal to function' (Afary 1996: 200).⁵ However, the fact that the articles in *Dānish* shied away from politics does not mean that the journal's content cannot be analyzed against the political backdrop, or, more specifically, as part of the progressive narrative of Iranian nationalism at the turn of the 20th century, with its emphasis on progress and modernity, including the modernity of women. In considering the relationship between nationalism and feminism in the colonized areas of the 'Rest' in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Kumari Jayawardena noted that for the reformist nationalists

education and freedom of movement for women, and monogamy, were (...) seen as marks of modernity, development and civilization. Reformers tried to embody these factors in their political platforms and activities, striving to make their own wives and daughters embodiments of the new ideal. (Jayawardena 2016: 12)

Also in Iran, progressives linked the lack of education for women, and polygamy, with backwardness and ignorance. On a symbolic level, the figure of the woman—usually perceived as a carrier of cultural values, be it 'traditional' or 'modern'—intertwined with the discourse of nationalism, and became associated in national(ist) imagery with the concepts of homeland (*vaṭan*) and nation (*millat*), both crucial to a new patriotic rhetoric that emerged in the late 19th century. According to Mohamad

⁴ The masthead of the second women's newspaper in Iran's history, *Shukūfih* ('Blossom'; 1913–1916), was remarkably similar. It additionally mentioned literature and the education of girls (although not as one of the topics to be discussed in the journal's pages): 'Journal about the moral issues, literature, children's health, housekeeping, and motherhood. A way of raising girls [*dūshizigān*] and moral purification of women, intended for schools for girls'.

⁵ Also, in a letter of commitment submitted to Anjuman-i Ma'ārif (The Association for Education) to obtain a permit to publish the newspaper, Dr. Kaḥḥāl stated that 'politics shall not be discussed' (Karīmīyān 2017: 65).

Tavakoli-Targhi, although '[v]aṭan' veneration and Shah adoration were the nodal points of a patriotic nationalist discourse that imagined the Shah as the father of *vaṭan*' (Tavakoli-Targhi 2002: 222), understood as a 'home headed by the crowned father' (Tavakoli-Targhi 2002: 218), in the counter-official 'matriotic' discourse *vaṭan* was compared to the sick, suffering mother who needed care and protection from her patriotic children: men and women of the nation (Tavakoli-Targhi 2002: 218, 225–228). Women of the nation (*zanhā-yi millat*) was an ambiguous term that could also be understood as 'wives of the nation,' since the Persian word *zan* means both 'woman' and 'wife'. As it was pointed out by Afsaneh Najmabadi:

The linguistic ambiguity [of the term *zanhā-yi millat*] is compounded by a double political one. First, *millat* itself was a fluid notion at the time, meaning *mardum*, 'the people', but moving closer in meaning to 'the nation'. Second, the newly crafted national community was often conceived of as a brotherhood of male citizens, *baradaran-i vatani*. As women began to claim a political space and project themselves as sisters of the land (*khvahan-i vatani*) the masculinity of *millat* was challenged to include women as citizens. (Najmabadi 2005: 208)

Women began to occupy an important place in the patriotic narrative of the constitutional period (1905–1911), even if, as observed by Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, 'the ideals of Iranian constitutionalism' in general were 'focused on man' (Kashani-Sabet 2011: 32). According to Najmabadi, the 'women's cause' became one of the crucial elements of the nationalist discourse because '[i]f the backwardness of the nation was a cause for national shame, the condition of women was a particularly egregious public display of that backwardness' (Najmabadi 2005: 153).

It was also during the constitutional era when women founded their first associations, participated in demonstrations and protests, and even fought in male disguise alongside resistance forces. At that time, next to the advocacy for monogamous marriage and women's right to divorce, the main area of activity of the newly emerging Iranian women's movement was the promotion of girls' education and the establishment of schools for girls.⁶ Their objective was, most obviously, to educate, but at the same time they aimed at teaching good moral conduct and skills considered necessary for devoted wives and mothers of patriotic citizens. The women's press was to serve a similar purpose. In addition to disseminating 'dry

⁶ It should be noted that the Education Act passed by the Majlis in 1906 made education up to the sixth grade compulsory and free for all, boys and girls (Matthee 2003: 124). However, this law was not enforced due to lack of financial measures.

knowledge' about child rearing, hygiene, and housekeeping, the mission of *Dānish* was to champion moral virtues considered essential for a 'new woman'.

2 The education of girls and women

The origins of the Iranian women's movement can be traced back to the end of the 19th century. It was then that two women authors wrote their pamphlets in response to a misogynist guidebook on good conduct of wives entitled *Ta'dīb al-Nisvān* or *Ta'dīb al-Nisā* ('The Education of Women' or 'Disciplining Women'), written by Khānlar Mīrzā Iḥtishām al-Dawlih (d. 1861), grandson of the second Qajar king Fath'ali Shāh (r. 1797–1834). The printed edition of *Ta'dīb al-Nisvān* from 1886/1887 must have echoed widely among the educated women in Tehran, as it was quickly answered by two satirical treatises: anonymous *Ta'dīb al-Rijāl* ('The Education of Men' or 'Disciplining Men') from 1886/1887, and *Ma'āyib al-Rijāl* ('The Vices of Men') written by Bībī Khānum Astarābādī (1858/1859–1921) in 1894. These earliest known writings by Iranian women that protest against the misogyny and violence to which higher-class wives were subjected by their husbands are proof of an important change in the understanding of the functions of marriage, and the roles of women and men in its framework, that started to occur in the late Qajar era.

Bībī Khānum Astarābādī was among the crucial figures for the development of the modern education of girls in Iran. She was the founder of one of the first new-type schools for girls, Dabistān-i Dūshīzigān (The School for Young Ladies), established in Bībī's house in Tehran in 1907. A notice about the opening of the school, published in the newspaper *Majlis* from 9 Šafar 1325/28 March 1907, detailed the curriculum, including 'Writing, History of Iran, Reading, Cookery book, Law, Religion, Geography, Arithmetic'. Furthermore, '(...) a room has been set aside for teaching in manual arts, such as knitting, gold embroidery, silk embroidery, sewing, etc.' (Javadi and Floor 2010: XXIII).

The number of girls' schools grew rapidly and in 1910 there were about 50 of them in the capital (Jayawardena 2016: 63). It should be noted that before establishing these schools upper-class women could receive basic education at home, but, as Hamideh Sedghi observed, 'they could not use it for public service' (Sedghi 2007: 52). There were also traditional clergy-run schools, called *maktab* or *maktab-khānih*, that offered very basic education and were attended by girls too.⁷ However, as Sedghi noted,

⁷ *Madāris* (plural of *madrasah*) was the term applied to the new-type schools, to distinguish them from *makātib* (pl. of *maktab*).

under this system, the clergy taught classes, but most teachers were ‘nearly illiterate’. Teachers offered some lessons from the *Qoran* in Arabic but girls rarely learned to read or write in Persian (Sedghi 2007: 52–53).

Furthermore, in the eyes of some Shi’i clerics and conservative men, the education of girls was perceived as dangerous. According to Haideh Moghissi, ‘[w]omen’s literacy was such a social stigma that literate women had to hide their education’ (Moghissi 1994: 27). To quote Sedghi again:

It was widely believed that educated women would threaten the morality of the society, for once women learned the art of writing, ‘they would write love letters’ and generally undermine the existing social order. Although most women were unschooled, their education, even minimal, represented a challenge to many men who were anxious not to lose their privilege over women’s mind and body. (Sedghi 2007: 53)

It comes as no surprise, then, that the students of the first-ever school for girls, Nāmūs (Honor), founded by Tūbā Āzmūdiḥ shortly before Dabistān-i Dūshizigān, fell victim to assaults (Sedghi 2007: 53). Also Bibī Khānum’s school became the subject of attacks from some conservative clergymen (Javadi and Floor 2010: XXII).⁸

It was in such an atmosphere that Dr. Kaḥḥāl resorted to religious arguments in the editorial of the first issue of *Dānish* to prove that the right to learn should not be gender-based: ‘[Women] must become learned [‘ālim] because it was said: (...) “The search for knowledge [‘ilm va dānish] is desirable [vājib] for every man and woman”. [It was also said:] (...) “Seek knowledge even in China”’.⁹ As she argued, the Creator of ‘reason and wisdom’ (*‘aql va dānish*) charged women-mothers with the duty of raising children. Since children (‘especially girls who in the future will become mothers themselves’) imitate the morals (*akhlāq*) of their mothers, the poor moral attitude of mothers leads to the development of a poor moral attitude in their children. ‘So what must be done for mothers to fulfill well this duty [of raising children]?’ asked Dr. Kaḥḥāl. The answer was education, because it would make (future) mothers learned (‘ālim) (*Dānish* 1: 2).

⁸ Under the pressure of the clergy, Bibī Khānum was forced to close the school. However, after having spoken with the minister of education, Mukhbīr al-Salṭāniḥ, she reopened it, for some time limiting the instruction to the youngest students between the ages of four and six (Javadi and Floor 2010: XXII).

⁹ I omitted the Arabic quotations provided in the original text.

The reasoning of Dr. Kaḥḥāl was not grounded on the premise that the education of girls and women ought to be recognized as a human right that does not require additional justifications. Although the quote from the Quran she provided could be interpreted as a claim for the egalitarian nature of the right to acquire knowledge regardless of the intended purpose of that knowledge, she explicitly argued for the education of girls and women *because it would make them better mothers*. Such a view prevailed in the progressive press of the constitutional era. Quoting the newspaper *Āmūzīgār* ('Instructor') from 1911, Kashani-Sabet noted that '[w]hile the acquisition of knowledge was in itself a noble aspiration, for women 'what matters after receiving an elementary education is the learning of ethics and living (*'ilm-i akhlaq va zindigani*)'' (Kashani-Sabet 2005: 32). This purpose was to be served, firstly, by the modern schools (*madāris*). As Dr. Kaḥḥāl observed, '[i]t is known that children acquire knowledge at schools', which, 'thank God', have been 'to some extent' established in the capital 'for the sake of these children and their mothers' (*Dānish* 1: 2). For those lucky enough to already be educated, newspapers constituted a reliable source of knowledge, because '[w]hoever in their free time studies them with concentration, becomes wise in all fields' (*Dānish* 3: 8). Therefore, illiterate women were urged to 'immediately learn to read and write, and acquire knowledge, for an illiterate woman will not become a lady of reason' (*Dānish* 3: 8). In that endeavor, they could be helped by their educated husbands:

It is recommended for those women who are illiterate that their husbands read this newspaper to them every week, lest they be deprived of its benefits. Perhaps it will encourage them to learn to read (*Dānish* 1: 2).

In addition to disseminating gendered knowledge about childrearing, hygiene, health, and housekeeping among the 'honorable womenfolk of the homeland and dear mothers, wise and learned [*khānumhā-yi muḥtaramāt-i vaṭan va mādarhā-yi 'azīz-i ṣāhib-i 'aql va fatin*]' (*Dānish* 1: 2), the journal promoted gendered moral values. The emphasis on the moral aspect of the education of girls frequently recurred in women's writings from the constitutional era. For example, 'Iṣmat Mustawfī, who used the *nom de plume* Ṭāyirih, wrote in one of her letters published in the newspaper *Īrān-i Naw* ('New Iran')¹⁰ in 1909–1910 that the most important thing in life was to learn morality (*akhlāq*), without which the acquisition of knowledge (*taḥṣīl-i 'ulūm*) was meaningless (Bāghdār Dilgushā 1400b: 128).

¹⁰ On *Īrān-i Naw*, which had a radical pro-democratic character, see for example: Bāghdār Dilgushā 1400b.

A letter by an anonymous woman, printed in the newspaper *Ḥabl al-Matīn* ('Strong Cord') from 23 Rajab 1325/1 September 1907, criticized traditional schools and praised the modern schools for girls for using new books (*kutub-i tāzih*) that not only teach husband-keeping, planning expenses, cooking, and taking care of the health and hygiene of children, but also instill good morals (*akhlāq-i ḥasanīh*) in girls ('Āmilī Rizāyī 1389: 264). Ṭāyirih, among others, praised patriotic women for establishing schools for girls (Bāghdār Dilgushā 1400b: 120), and the schools themselves for teaching moral virtues (Bāghdār Dilgushā 1400b: 126) which she considered to be the sources of humanity, namely: honesty/piety (*diyānat*), kindness (*muḥabbat*), and good manners (*adab*) (Bāghdār Dilgushā 1400b: 123). The matter of building a solid moral stance among girls was also discussed in an article included in the fourteenth issue of *Dānish* that contained advice for 'nursemaids who want pretty girls'. Apart from recommending that the nursemaids look after the girls' hygiene (*ḥifẓ al-ṣaḥḥih*), cleanliness, and decent appearance 'with all attention and expertise', it advised them develop in children 'a moral attitude [*akhlāq*] by cultivating honesty/piety [*diyānat*], good manners [*tarbiyat*], and purity [*kamāl-i taṣfiyah*]' (*Dānish* 14: 3).

Moralistic content was at times directed towards men as well. A short text entitled *Akhṭār bih mardān va javānān* ('A Note to Men and Youths'), included in the second issue of *Dānish*, warned men against committing immoral behavior towards women. As it remarked, such indecent comportment, which was becoming more and more prevalent among Iranian men, had even been reproached by foreigners (*bigānigān*). The article appealed to manliness/manhood/masculinity (*mardānigī*), which should be the source of honorable conduct and, in the case of indecency on the part of women, ought to command men to 'cover [their] face[s] with the blush of shame', resist temptation, and abstain from immoral activities (*Dānish* 2: 2). Foreigners (that is, Europeans), here viewed as a source of embarrassing moral judgment, might also have been treated as an inspiration for the ethical conduct: in the first issue's editorial, Dr. Kaḥḥāl noted that the excerpts from European novels that would be printed in the pages of *Dānish* were intended not only to provide entertainment (*tafriḥ va tafannun*), but first of all to teach *akhlāq-i ḥasanīh*—good morals (*Dānish* 1: 2).

3 Marital relationships

The sixth issue of *Dānish*, mainly devoted to housekeeping, included an article titled *Zandāri* ('Wife-keeping') that was intended for husbands and gave advice on how to treat wives. The anonymous author argued that neatness, order and tranquility at home depended on wives, towards

whom husbands should behave kindly, trying to resolve any possible conflicts in a gentle way. While husbands were supposed to look after their wives' well-being, because it determined the stability of the household, the duties of the wives were strictly related to the home and the family sphere and consisted of raising children, taking care of the house, and pleasing their husbands. 'A poor wife' (*zan-i bīchārih*) was pictured as one whose happiness and sense of accomplishment depended on making her husband happy. Arguing that it was the passivity and weakness of women that provided a reason to treat them delicately, the writer quoted imam 'Alī: 'A woman is delicate like a flower, not active and courageous' (*Dānish* 6: 8).

A similar idea about wives' obligations towards their husbands was shared in the article *Rasm-i shawhardāri* ('The Way of Husband-keeping'), printed in the first issue of the journal. The author, referred to as 'the honorable lady' (*khānum-i muhtaramih*), claimed that the main concern of a good wife should be to provide comfort (*rāḥatī*) to her husband by giving him meals on time, heating the stove in winter, and keeping the house tidy. Thanks to these efforts, he will want to return home after the whole day spent at work. Furthermore, it was argued that wives should hide any potential discontent, in order not to spoil the mood of their tired husbands: 'God forbid the poor man [*mard-i bīchārih*] will be in a bad mood for another reason, and you, instead of lifting his spirit, will make him even more upset when he gets back home' (*Dānish* 1: 6). Similar advice, although addressed to unmarried girls, was included in the article *Khiṭāb bih dūshizigān* ('To the Young Ladies'), whose author stated that 'joviality [*khush-khalqī*] makes many friends and chases away pain', and advised: 'Be always cheerful and smiling [*khush-rū*], for such a disposition takes away the power of the blows and hardships [of life]' (*Dānish* 1: 4). Ironically, the journal's advice recalled that given by Iḥtishām al-Dawlih in his misogynist treatise when he wrote, for example, that '[a] wife should never sulk, however much hardship she has to endure; she has to see the positive side and be patient' (Javadi and Floor 2010: 21).

However, although the gender roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives were considered natural and unquestionable, the ideal of marriage promoted in the journal was founded on mutual respect and kindness/affection/love (*muḥabbat*). For example, in the article *Rasm-i zandāri* ('The Way of Wife-keeping'), it was argued that wives, too, can become upset and nervous due to their responsibilities of housekeeping and child rearing: serious, tiring, and often frustrating activities. Husbands were advised to tell their wives what happened to them during the day and to bring them news from the outside world. It was also noted that any disagreements should be resolved through a polite exchange of opinions, and that a husband, while

he is the head of the family (*malik-i riqāb va šāhib-i ikhtiyār-e khānih*), should respect his wife and not interfere in her affairs, as long as she is ‘competent and learned [*kārdān-i dānishmand*]’ (*Dānish* 3: 8).

In the pages of *Dānish*, as well as other newspapers of that time, the issues of women’s education and marital relationships were described as interconnected. Education was intended to make women ‘competent and learned’ so that they would perform well as wives and mothers. Being ‘competent and learned’, in turn, gave women the right to demand respect from their husbands. The ‘modernity’ of women, whose sign was their education, had to be fulfilled within the family sphere. In a certain sense, then, a ‘modern woman’ was no different from a ‘traditional woman,’ who was similarly defined by her familial relationships with men: father, husband, brother(s), or son(s). What distinguished the ‘traditional’ woman from the ‘modern’ one—that is, the ‘modern’ wife and mother—was that the latter was educated and lived in a monogamous marriage. The intertwining of the issue of women’s education with the newly postulated ideal of marriage, whose basis was monogamy, was summarized by Najmabadi, who referred to Ṭāyirih’s criticism of polygamy:

Men had to accept monogamy; to encourage men to remain faithful to one good woman, women had to be good, that is, educated. Only when men learn to value monogamy and women become worthy companions would men and women become partners for life. (Najmabadi 2005: 203)

Ṭāyirih urged men to monogamy referring, among other things, to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. On the other hand, she blamed women and their ignorance for men’s tendency to marry more than one wife: ‘It is unfortunate that due to the enormity of immorality, ignorance, and lack of education, we, the womankind, have forced men to [take more] wives’ (Bāghdār Dilgushā 1400b: 127). *Dānish* also criticized arranged marriages: in an article describing the wedding customs in various countries, it was noted that in Russia, ‘as in France and Iran’, parents arranged the marriages of their children, while in England (and in Turkey that had followed the example of Europe), it was the future spouses themselves who made the decision to marry (*Dānish* 14: 4–6).

4 Healthcare, hygiene, and child rearing

Given that Dr. Kaḥḥāl was an ophthalmologist and her father a medic, it may seem unsurprising that *Dānish* often featured topics related to medicine, healthcare, and hygiene. The same topics were also discussed in *Shukūfih*, whose editor-in-chief, Maryam ‘Amīd Simnānī (Muzayyin

al-Saltānih; 1881/1882–1919), came from a comparable background: she was the daughter of Mīr Siyyid Rāzī Simnānī known as Ra'īs al-Aṭebbā' (Head of the Medics), the physician to the Shah Nāṣir al-Dīn. However, there was more behind the frequent coverage of hygienic issues in the pages of these two journals than the similar familial and educational background of their founders and editors-in-chief. Beginning in the late 1800s, the hygienic narrative became part of Iran's patriotic discourse, and '[m]any of the same thinkers who promoted hygiene also placed emphasis on patriotism as a hallmark of modernity' (Kashani-Sabet 2011: 27). The success of the constitutionalists was followed by an increased interest in hygiene and healthcare, and important steps were taken to improve living conditions and raise awareness of disease prevention among the Iranian population. In 1906, *Ḥifẓ al-Ṣiḥḥat*, a newspaper dedicated to hygiene and healthcare, began to appear. A year later, the Society of Physicians as well as a Society for Cleanliness (Anjuman-i Niẓāfat), whose aim was to 'oversee sanitation of public baths in the capital', were established in Tehran (Kashani-Sabet 2011: 29).

The fourteenth issue of *Dānish* included an announcement regarding the opening of a medical practice by an American woman doctor 'who from morning to night treats all types of diseases of women and men alike'. The notice was accompanied by a comment that the presence of the doctor was 'valuable to every Iranian woman not only because of [her] ability to treat illnesses, but also to deliver babies'. Much of the commentary focused on the positive change that would be brought about by the presence of a qualified midwife in Tehran. Previously, as we read, people had relied on the services of 'unlearned women' (*zanān-i bī-ilm*) who 'with their hands full of microbes infected these unfortunates [that is, women in labor] with thousands of diseases'. Due to their 'ignorance', they were powerless in the event of complications in childbirth. The article quoted 'one of the doctors' stating that many postpartum women had been infected with contagious diseases by midwives and died. Finally, the presence of an American doctor was called a 'great grace' for which God was thanked (*Dānish* 14: 2).

It was not only midwives who were described as embodying ignorance, one manifestation of which was a life-threatening lack of hygiene. In a two-episode article *Dāyih az mādar mihrabāntar nimishavad* ('The Wet-nurse Does Not Get Kinder Than the Mother'), wet-nurses and nursemaids were presented as such, too. The very first sentence of that tellingly entitled article warned readers against giving their 'only child [*farzand-i yigānih*]' to a wet-nurse to be fed with a 'stranger's milk [*shīr-i bigānih*]' (*Dānish* 3: 2). Playing with the similarity of the words *yigānih* and *bigānih*, the anonymous author dramatically stated that 'a foreign woman's milk

makes the only child a stranger!’ (*Dānish* 3: 4). Addressing her ‘dear sisters’, the writer argued that even she-wolves feed their cubs and then teach them to hunt, whereas a ‘kind mother [*mādar-i mihrabān*]’ prefers to surrender her child to a wet-nurse who is ‘uneducated and pitiless [*bī-par-varish va bī-raḥm*]’ (*Dānish* 5: 3).

The article presented a number of arguments that surrendering children to wet-nurses and nursemaids led to many ‘harms to the [child’s] body and mind’. Quotations from the Qur’an and the Hadith emphasized the importance of the bond between mother and child (*Dānish* 2: 3). It was also stated that ‘for a child there is no food more suitable than their mother’s milk’, that mother’s milk is the work of God, and that God made women’s bodies a ‘storage’ for it (*Dānish* 3: 3). It was claimed that the greater the share of the mother in the child’s upbringing, the stronger the bond between them. Otherwise, the child will become attached to their wet-nurse and milk-siblings. As it was argued, being raised by wet-nurses and nursemaids, children were not only deprived of ‘moral and bodily health’ but also of familial love. Why then, it was asked, do mothers deprive their children of their own milk ‘on a selfish whim’ and give them to strangers ‘about whose morals, conduct and health [they] have absolutely no idea?’ (*Dānish* 3: 4).

The writer argued that ‘[mother’s] milk affects everything in man and animal’ and ‘impure milk’ (*shīr-i nāpāk*) fouls the nature of a newborn. Therefore, ‘the milk of a woman of evil nature makes the child evil; and diseased milk places the disease in the child’s body’. In turn, the milk of an impudent and audacious woman would make the newborns she feeds such (*Dānish* 3: 3). This claim was supported by several pieces of anecdotal evidence: about the Sassanian king Bahram Gur who was given to an Arab wet-nurse and because of that drank camel milk and rode camels for the rest of his life (*Dānish* 3: 3); a girl who got strabismus because she was fed by a cross-eyed wet-nurse (*Dānish* 3: 3–4); or a noble-born woman who would wet herself at night until old age because her wet-nurse suffered from the same issue (*Dānish* 3: 4).

While this article did not reach into the political vernacular, it was part of a broader, patriotic narrative that included not only the figure of the mother, but also the motif of mother’s milk. Najmabadi quotes a letter published in *Īrān-i Naw* (15 September 1909), in which the issue of education and the theme of breast milk intertwined:

A letter from the daughters of Shams al-Ma‘ali informed the readers of the establishment of two schools for ‘daughters of vatan so that in future every household will be headed by a knowledgeable woman who well knows home-management, education of children, sewing, cooking and hygiene

and from her breast the milk of love of homeland [*shir-i ḥubb-i vatan*] will be fed to her newborns such that they will be prepared to offer their services and sacrifice [their lives]'. (Najmabadi 2005: 126)

The assumption that dangerous diseases were spread by women of the popular class, among whom there was no knowledge of microbes whatsoever, can be read between the lines of the article about midwives discussed above. In the article about wet-nurses, it was explicitly stated that a wet-nurse, who often visits her low-born friends and relatives, infects children with various diseases while touching them with her hands full of microbes, that 'the houses of common people [*avāsiṭ al-nās*] are full of' (*Dānish* 5: 2). How come, wonders the writer, the high-born mothers let their own children be fed 'poisoned milk' (*shir-i zahrālūd*), if they would not eat the food touched by a wet-nurse (*Dānish* 3: 3)?

It was claimed in the article that the low social status of wet-nurses carried moral hazards to the development of children, too. For example, the inappropriate vocabulary used by wet-nurses and nursemaids would lead to the children becoming 'without dignity and honor [*bī-sharaf va bī-ghayrat*]' (*Dānish* 5: 2). It was also claimed that wet-nurses and nursemaids would sometimes resort to putting children to sleep using drugs (*Dānish* 3: 4) or *araq* (*Dānish* 5: 2). The cunning nursemaid, when she saw that the child had become attached to her and that their mother was no longer producing milk, would use tricks and deceptions: although she herself would beat the child when they cried, she would lie to the mother that the bruises on the child's body were the result of playing with other children. In addition, she would become capricious, insolent, talkative, and smug. The author warned the readers: 'Beware of nursemaids! A nursemaid is a weird thing' (*Dānish* 5: 3).

However, the journal's narrative on wet-nurses/nursemaids was not uniform, as can be seen in the article *Dastūr al-ʿamal-e dāyigān* ('Instructions for Nursemaids') where it was claimed that it was the responsibility of nursemaids to ensure the proper physical, moral and psychological development of children: 'Any impairment in health in adulthood depends entirely on the [improper] upbringing by the nursemaid'. Later, the focus was specifically on girls. It was argued that all mental and moral defects in girls are due to the fact that from birth to the age of seventeen they were not properly supervised by wet-nurses and nursemaids who did not take care of their health and hygiene. The role of nursemaids and mothers was to develop good habits in girls and to teach them how to distinguish between right and wrong. On the day of judgment, nursemaids and mothers will answer before God, as to whether and how they fulfilled their duty (*Dānish* 14: 2).

Although the journal's intended readership was middle- and upper-class urban women,¹¹ *Dānīsh* transcended social class and gender. The journal's prejudiced stance on wet-nurses and nursemaids, and its negative image of 'unlearned women', were clearly class-biased. Indirectly, however, *Dānīsh* tried to reach out to those 'unlearned women' from the popular classes: as one might guess, their literate mistresses were to familiarize them with its content to help them perform their duties in a better (that is, more 'modern') way. Wet-nurses and nursemaids, on the one hand pictured as the epitome of 'ignorance' and 'backwardness', could be therefore shaped and educated by their progressive breadwinners. The same, as we recall, was also the case with illiterate wives, to whom the newspaper was supposed to be read by their educated husbands. This first Iranian women's newspaper thus also functioned in the space between textuality and orality.

5 Conclusions

In the words of Suhaylā Turābī Fārsānī, *Dānīsh* aimed at the 'empowerment of women within a traditional framework' (Turābī Fārsānī 1397: 82). The scholar observes that:

Dānīsh presents the relationship between man and woman within this traditional, normative framework [that is, it sees the role of women as wives and mothers—PB] and seeks only to help women fulfill their traditional roles and responsibilities by adding elements from the discourse of modernity [*guftimān-i mudīrīn*], that is, scientism [*‘ilm-garāyī*] and rationality [*‘aql-garāyī*], and master these modern tools; it seeks [thus] to optimize the traditional woman. (Turābī Fārsānī 1397: 83; emphasis added)

Also, the failure of *Dānīsh* to address important social issues leads scholars to consider it a moderate or even a conservative periodical.¹² Maryam ‘Āmilī Rizāyī observes that the journal tended to be criticized for its indifferent attitude toward important social issues, as well as for advertising foreign products at a time when the fight against foreign goods flooding the Iranian market was an important element of patriotic activism (‘Āmilī Rizāyī 1389: 204, after: Khusraw Panāh 230–231) and domestic produc-

¹¹ Which may be seen as quite obvious given the extremely low literacy rate at the time: in 1900, it was estimated between 1 and 5 percent for the entire population of Iran (Amirahmadi 2012: 120).

¹² Bāghdār Dilgushā refers to it as 'moderate' (Bāghdār Dilgushā 1400a: 260), and Nāzli Iskandarī-nizhād as 'entirely moderate', contrasting it with the radical *Īrān-i Naw* (Iskandarī-nizhād 1399: 119).

tion was supported by women's associations, such as Anjuman-i Himmat-i Khavāṭīn ('Āmili Rizāyī 1389: 154).

The journal's agenda can be seen as part of a maternalist discourse, to use the term proposed by Kashani-Sabet, who defines maternalism as 'an ideology that promoted motherhood, child care, and maternal well-being not only within the structures of family but also in consideration of nationalist concerns' (Kashani-Sabet 2011: 4). On the other hand, *Dānish* encouraged women to work (*Dānish* 6: 3),¹³ and the articles on marriage printed in its pages (similarly to those included in *Shukūfih*) advocated for unions based on a 'reciprocal partnership between women and men' (Kashani-Sabet 2011: 62).

This earliest women's periodical in Iran's history can be considered as the nucleus of a more radical feminist discourse that developed later. Speaking of the early Iranian women's press, it was only the *Zabān-i zanān* ('Women's Voice', 1919–1921), founded by Ṣadiqih Dawlatābādī (1882–1961) in Isfahan, that began to challenge patriarchal sociocultural norms and came up with more radical content (Turābī Fārsānī 1397: 92–96).

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¹³ As it seems that incentive was aimed at urban women from the upper middle and upper classes, as many women from the popular class worked, whether in the villages or among nomadic communities and urban areas.

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Between Art, Politics, and Satire: History in Iranian Television Series

Abstract This article looks at Iranian television series and how their creators dealt with historical themes, especially those related to the Qajar dynasty and the Iranian Constitutional Movement. The study is focused on the works of three selected Iranian filmmakers—Ali Hatami, Mohammad Reza Varzi, and Mehran Modiri. Its main objective is to identify the dominant approach to history they have applied in their works. By analyzing their television activities, the paper discusses debates that accompanied serials broadcast, their reception among the critics, and seeks to reflect on the place and role historical productions play in the cultural, social, or political context in modern Iran.

Keywords Iran, Qajar dynasty, Constitutional Movement, television series, cinematography in Iran

1 Introduction

The development of serials as a genre has been conditioned by the growing importance and popularity of television. The first television station in Iran was established in 1958 as a commercial venture of a Baha'i, Habibollah Sabet, managed by Vance Hallack of the American NBC (Shahidi 2007: 95). The initiative was fully supported by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was pleased with the establishment of the first commercial station in the Middle East. Initially, the station's output was filled mainly with foreign works, or



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local productions, although the latter were heavily influenced by American formats (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994: 62). As noted by Hamid Naficy, the commercial station launched by Sabet 'was a thoroughly Americanized operation, from hardware to staffing and from programming concept to individual programs' (2011: 65). After a few years, state institutions took over private television and established National Iranian Television (*Televiziun-e melli-ye irān*), which officially started operating in March 1967 under the management of Reza Qotbi, a cousin of Farah Diba, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's wife (Milani 2008: 165–166).

At first, however, radio and newspapers continued to be more popular as television coverage was limited, and '[t]elevision receivers were owned only by a small and upwardly mobile class' (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994: 63). With the passing of time, television became more popular, and while in the 1960s its reach covered just over 2 million people, a few years later it had grown significantly and reached over half of all households (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994: 66). In the pre-Revolutionary period, beyond usual news, television aired state-managed broadcasts that were designed to reinforce the narrative of the ruling dynasty, charted the progress of modernization, and also served to convey political content by broadcasting Iranian secret police, SAVAK-made materials (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994: 69).

Television was also employed for entertainment, although, as already mentioned, much of the content presented to Iranian viewers was either imported from the West or created in imitation of it. This often meant that viewers were exposed to cheap western-style productions (Chelkowski 2008: 799), and that much of the population experienced 'strong feelings of impropriety' (Tehrani 1980: 16).

With time, domestic production began to be produced, more in line with the mentality and interests of a large part of the population. Native leisure programs enjoyed great popularity; theatre shows and *ta'zieh* performances were broadcast as a response to the needs of those viewers who enjoyed more traditional forms of entertainment. The same was applied to Iranian-made films and serials. For example, the television series recounting the adventures of Samad, a naive but likable Iranian peasant played by a renowned Parviz Sayyad (Chelkowski 2008: 808), was very popular in this period.

The first domestic-made television series *Sanduqche-ye ashrafi*, directed by Parviz Kardan, was produced and broadcast in 1966 on Channel 1 of the newly launched NIT. Although in the following years only a few series were made annually, by the mid-70s the number of such productions had tripled. It was also at that time that the greatest pre-Revolutionary television works were produced, of which the best known and most appreciated

is probably the illustrious 18-episode series *Dāi Jān Nāpole'on*, made by Naser Taqvai, based on the same title novel written by Iraj Pezeshkzad.¹

The Islamic Revolution has brought about huge changes in the media sector. The name of the main state-run station was changed to Voice and Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran (*Sedā va simā-ye jomhuri-ye eslāmi-ye irān*). The institution began to function according to the rules laid down in the new constitution; however, its aims remained the same—informative, entertaining and propagandistic. The latter objective has been more efficiently implemented by the authorities of the newly born Republic than during the Pahlavi regime, whose narrative on modernization was often equated with westernization, which had many opponents. (Sreberny-Mohammadi, Mohammadi 2007: 50; Delap 2007: 13, 14).

This theme, among others, was exploited by Ruhollah Khomeini and became an important factor in building opposition toward the Pahlavi regime. It was not an antipathy toward television or cinema as such, but rather its corrupting content and westernized character, that was criticized by the religious opposition (Atwood 2016: 2). Soon after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, 'Khomeini and his followers successfully seized control of the former regime's mass media thereby securing an invaluable tool for the propagation of their own philosophy' (Delap 2007: 15). It was under the Islamic Republic that television began to develop dynamically, which was also due to both the increasing availability of television, and the conviction of the Islamic Republic authorities of its broadcasting power as a tool of state propaganda. In the post-Revolutionary period, television continued to be used also as a tool for the construction of Iranian national identity (Abbasian 2021: 39–41).

Over time, more than a dozen channels (including thematic ones) have become part of Iranian national broadcaster. The first television series screened after 1979 was Ahmad Najibzadeh's production *Shāh dozd*, shown on Channel 1. Although this few-episode series was kept in an atmosphere of ongoing political change, as time went by, *Sedā va simā* began to produce and broadcast more Iranian-made serials of different genres—social dramas, religious stories, comedies, sitcoms, and finally historical productions as well. The works were aired throughout the year and more recently on the occasion of state holidays, during *Nou Ruz*, and the holy month of Moharram, when people had more free time to sit in front of their television sets. By the end of the 1980s, the production of domestic serials had risen to more than a dozen a year. In 1399 [2020/2021], in which production was affected by the pandemic, annual series production reached 25 titles (Fars 1399 [2021]).

¹ Iraj Pezeshkzad, *Dāi Jān Nāpole'on* [*My Uncle Napoleon*], 1349 [1970/1971].

An indispensable element of television productions was censorship.² Shortly after the establishment of the Islamic Republic more or less specific rules for film activity were defined by the newly established Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. While cinema often gave filmmakers more room for maneuver, television, as directly subordinate to the institutions of power maintained rigid standards of what could and could not be shown on screen. Apart from questions of a moral nature, determined by Muslim morality, the main point of interest for the censors was whether the series violate the ideals of the Revolution and undermine the legitimacy of current policies.

For the portrayal of the Constitutional Movement, however, the position developed at the very beginning of the Revolution remained crucial, preferring to treat the period not from the perspective of the positive values of Iranian parliamentarism but focusing on the reasons for its failure. While portraying the tyranny of Qajar rulers and the involvement of the Shi'i clergy in Constitutional Movement was in the interests of the new regime, the defeat of the movement, the dissolution of Parliament, and the eventual seizure of power by Reza Khan over the following two decades became problematic. The main narrative imposed largely by Ruhollah Khomeini focused on drawing attention to the mistakes and pathologies committed. In one of his speeches, Khomeini referred to the marginalization of the role of the clergy, attempts to counter the establishment of clerical oversight in Parliament, or the spreading of lies about them as reasons for the weakening and ultimate defeat of the movement. He also blamed the growing press and public organizations, as well as the activities of Western-educated intellectuals (*roushanfekrān-e qarbzadeh*) such as Taqizadeh and Malkum Khan, who spoke out against religious ideas (Sufi Niaraki 1386 [2008]).

2 Iranian History on the Small Screen

Iranian history has been one of the frequent themes undertaken by filmmakers and television series makers since the popularization of this genre, although the most intensive development of historical productions took place after the Revolution. As mentioned above, the choice of top-

² A certain threat to the developing state-run television, which has been subject to censorship, were satellite dishes that enabled Iranians to receive not only foreign stations, but above all Persian-language broadcasts from Europe and the United States. Despite a 1994 ban on satellite dishes, many families in Iran have retained access to out-of-state broadcasters over the years. With the spread of the Internet, the prevalence of satellite dishes has declined, and has been replaced by social media. For more see Alikhah (2018).

ics, particularly historical, was frequently dictated by propaganda needs and shaped by the current objectives of the Islamic Republic. During the last 40 years, Iranian television stations have aired a number of productions depicting the history of Shi'i Islam (e.g., *Emām Ali*, *Mokhtār-nāme*, and *Salmān Fārsi*), Iranian past ages (e.g., *Sarbedarān*), and the lives of Iranian culture key figures (e.g., *Abu Ali Sinā*, *Nardebān-e āsemān*, and *Sheykh Bahāi*). Themes related to the period of the Pahlavi rule have also been very popular (e.g., *Kolāh-e pahlavi*, *Dar cheshm-e bād*, *Shab-e dahom*, *Mo'amā-ye shāh*, or very recent *Khātun*). The same applies to the period of Qajar reign and the Constitutional Movement, which were particularly appreciated by some of the filmmakers. The most famous historical productions set during the Qajar dynasty include the following: Homa-yun Shahnavaz's series devoted to Rais Ali Delvari, anticolonial fighter, broadcast in 1353 [1974/1975], under the title *Delirān-e tangestān*; Said Nikpur's production *Amir*, aired in 1363 [1984/1985]; *Kuchak Jangali*, a television series that portrays the life story of an Iranian revolutionary leader Mirza Kuchak Khan, directed and produced by Behruz Afkhami in 1366 [1987/1988]; *Hezār dastān* written and directed by Ali Hatami and screened in 1367 [1987/1988]; and *Pahlavānān nemimirand* by Hasan Fathi, presented to the Iranian audience in 1376 [1997/1998]. Many of those series were set in an atmosphere of romantic melodrama; some dealt with more serious political issues. Most were well received by the Iranian audience, who seemed to appreciate attempts to portray historical events and capture the atmosphere of past centuries (Ebrahimnezhad 1399 [2020]).

It is not possible to examine or even simply provide an overview of the vast body of historical works set in the Qajar realities in one article, even if we narrow the time frame to the post-Revolutionary period of Iranian television activity. The objective of this study has been, therefore, limited to the examination of three approaches to historical themes that Iranian filmmakers have adopted over the past years. For this reason, the current article focuses solely on selected filmmakers and their works. The choice made is intended to depict the diversity most clearly in a way in which the subject matter in question, that is, Qajar rule and the Constitutional Movement, has been treated and illustrated on a small screen. However, the subject of the study is not a substantive assessment of the historical accuracy of the events shown in the series, nor an analysis of their content, although some information in this regard will be offered to illustrate the nature of the works and the discussions that accompanied them. Considering television productions, this study looks at their character, examines directors' own statements, the discussions that accompanied the broadcast of their television works

and the reception of their series among the critics, in order to reflect on the place and role these productions played in the cultural, social, and political context.

3 Ali Hatami. The Painter

No discussion on the presence of historical motifs of the Qajar dynasty and the development of the Constitutional Movement in Iranian cinematography and among historical television series can be held without mentioning the work of Ali Hatami (d. 1996), a prominent Iranian filmmaker, screenwriter, and costume designer. Hatami's enormous commitment to incorporating past plots into his work deserves particular attention. His uniqueness as a filmmaker was, among other things, because he was an artist of two epochs. Hatami began his cinematographic work years before the Revolution and continued after the establishment of the Islamic Republic. In 1970, after graduating from the Iranian College of Dramatic Arts, he made his first movie under the title *Hasan Kachal*, which was also the first musical film made in Iran. Over the years, Hatami has written and directed several feature films and three television series. He died in the mid-90s, in his early 50s, while working on a film about Gholam Reza Takhti, a famous Iranian wrestler (Akrami 2012).

However, it was the Qajar period that fascinated Hatami the most, as this was, in his opinion, the key moment in the history of modern Iran, when the transition from tradition to modernity initiated a series of changes in Iranian identity. In 1971, the director made the biographical film *Sattār Khān*, telling the life story of an Iranian hero of the Constitutional Movement. Many critics and historians still regard this film as the best work on the Constitutional Revolution (Hamshahri online 1386 [2007]). After the Islamic Revolution, in 1984 Hatami directed another production set in the realities of Qajar Iran—the film *Kamālolmolk* about the life of a prominent Iranian royal court painter.

Nevertheless, Hatami has also explored historical themes in television productions. Before the Revolution, in 1974, he directed a television series entitled *Soltān Sāhebqarān*, centered on the reign of Shah Naseroddin. Four years later, in 1978, he began working on the next historical series, which lasted until 1987, that is, for another 9 years. Iranian television broadcast the production under the title *Hezār dastān*.

In many aspects, the *Hezār dastān* series was a unique production. Not only did it feature the best cinema of the time—Ezatollah Entezami (d. 2018) and Jamshid Moshayekhi (d. 2019)—but for the purposes of the production, Hatami engaged architects and craftsmen to build a film town that became the setting for the action. *Ghazāli Cinema Town* (*Shahrak-e*

sinamāi-ye ghazāli),³ located near Tehran, is still used today as a backdrop for many historical scenes.⁴ According to many cinema and television personalities at that time, this was a unique project in which Hatami was totally involved. One of his colleagues, Manuchehr Azari, recalls the care with which Hatami reproduced *Lālezār* street to its finest details (Bahardi 1397 [2018]).

The series was shot on a grand scale and with attention to detail, although Hatami did not avoid criticism over factual inaccuracies or his approach to Qajar reign. Several historians and public figures have reproached him of treating facts and historical realities too loosely. The subject of criticism aimed at the director was, above all, the image of the Qajar dynasty that he depicted in his productions. Some, as recalled by a scholar, Ramin Sadegh Khanjani, considered Hatami's vision too sweetened (2012: 22). Others, as mentioned by a film critic Arash Khoshkhu (especially those with leftist views), considered the director's work not only old-fashioned but also reactionary (Moradi 1399 [2020]).

However, his perhaps overly romantic and poetic approach to this period of Iranian past attracted viewers and contributed to the popularity of his productions. Also, due to the lyrical nature of the stories portrayed by Hatami, the director was called the 'Hafez of Iranian cinema' (Tehran Times 2020). According to Jamsheed Akrami, Hatami's work gave insight 'testimony to the passion and keen perception with which he created a romanticized vision of fading times, unmistakably tinged with soulful nostalgia' (2012).

The filmmaker did not see himself as a historian. His dream, he once said in an interview, was 'to write down the history of Iran, not the clichéd history, but the history of the Iranian people' (Dalfak 1394 [2015]). Hatami maintained that what interest him was the human dimension of the people behind the historical events (Akrami 2012). This approach also had its critics. It has been alleged that Hatami mixes the place of the hero and the anti-hero. The argument in support of this claim was *Sattār Khān* film, which raised voices accusing Hatami of distorting 'the golden pages of the history of Iranian constitutionalism' (Javan online 1399 [2020]). The objections were related, among others, to the fact that Hatami did not build classical, one-dimensional heroes, but focused on showing their human traits, processes, and phenomena that accompanied their actions

³ In 2017, renamed to Iran Cinema and Television Town (*Shahrak-e sinamā va televiziun-e irān*) by its owner, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting.

⁴ Photographs of the *Ghazāli* Cinema Town by Sobhan Farajvan, Teheran Picture Agency. 2017. Accessed 3 January 2022. <http://www.tehranpicture.ir/en/album/2176/Ghazali-Cinema-Town>.

and decisions, including those that seemingly did not fit into the vision of a national hero. Sattar Khan was to be shown in the film as naive and Haydar Khan, an active member of the Constitutional Movement and later founder of the Communist Party, as shallow (Ruzname-ye Farhikhtegan 1397 [2018]). The director responded to various accusations made against him by critics methodologically. He emphasized that film production as a performing art (*kār-e namāyeshi*) is governed by its own rules. In one of the interviews, he stated that, in his opinion, a film should demonstrate ‘certain indications, states and peculiarities of a given period for a specific purpose’ (Nozari 2016).

Hatami pursued this approach to history with his own technique, a combination of cinema and the art of painting. As a filmmaker, he stepped between people, but as a painter, he portrayed their states, and he did this on the periphery of historical events (Dalfak 1394 [2015]). Khosrou Dehqan wrote that Hatami’s greatest achievement was precisely this ability to illustrate and visualize what Iranians read about in history books (Hamshahri online 1386 [2007]). This overly romanticized vision of the Qajar dynasty, criticized by some, appealed to others. Interestingly, the poeticism of Hatami’s productions, according to Khoshkhu, was precisely related to the way the frames were created, which resembled paintings. This gave rise to a sense of lyricism (Moradi 1399 [2020]).

Despite accusations against Ali Hatami of idealizing the Qajars or misrepresenting the facts, in many of his productions, including television series, the director has reflected on the situation of the country and the causes and effects of the development of the Constitutional Movement. He highlighted the contributions of rulers to culture and the arts but also depicted their despotism and the social climate at that time. He was particularly interested in the processes that took place in history and focused on the attempts to modernize the country, and the socio-cultural dimension of this project. Jamshid Akrami wrote that ‘[h]is films, intricately woven reconstructions of Iranian cultural identity, shed light on the turn-of-the-century ethos behind Iran’s unpaved road to modernization’ (2012).

Hatami himself believed that the clash between the past and modernity that initiated changes in the identity of Iranians occurred only on a very superficial level (Khanjani 2012: 21). This, in turn, led him to depict, as expressed by Ramin Sadegh Khanjani, ‘the confusion of values and cultures afflicting his own society over the course of its transition to a modern society’ (2012: 12–13).

Despite his high profile as a filmmaker and the affection of viewers, Hatami faced not only some criticism from the historians, but his works has not always been well received by the authorities. The film *Sattār Khān* was taken off the screens after only four days of screening. The suspension

of the film's screening was demanded by some members of Parliament, who considered that it presented a distorted view of history and was maintained in an anti-constitutional atmosphere (Davudi 1398 [2019]).

4 Mohammad Reza Varzi. The Ideologue

In the mid-90s, another interesting, if rather controversial figure appeared on the Iranian historical television production scene—Mohammad Reza Varzi. Now, the just over 50-year old film director, screenwriter, and television producer is the author of seven historical series filmed between 1996 and 2019. The history of Qajar Iran and the Constitutional Movement, along with Pahlavi rule, is one of the main topics addressed by Mohammad Varzi in his television works. Well-known historical series directed by Varzi include: *Emārāt-e farangi*, produced in 1387 [2008/2009], *Sālhā-ye mashruteh*, made one year later, in 1388 [2009/2010], *Tabriz dar meh*, screened in 1389 [2010/2011], and *Sattār Khān*, filmed most recently in 1397 [2018/2019].

The television productions of Mohammad Reza Varzi have usually been made with the financial support of state cultural institutions and the state-run *Sedā va simā* and have been broadcast on the screens of the national television channels. However, curiously enough, so far none of them has received a fully positive reception from the film community and film critics. Nevertheless, the director appears to be a relatively distinct filmmaker in terms of his approach to history and the role that he believes historical productions should play. With tireless effort, despite setbacks over the years, he has pursued a firmly established mission.

Among the most popular historical series directed by Varzi and set during the nascent Constitutional Movement is *Sālhā-ye mashruteh*. The project, which was produced in 2009, takes the viewer through 70 years of Iranian history under the rule of several successive rulers of the Qajar dynasty. Despite the huge amount of money allocated for the production, the series failed to capture the interest of viewers and to attract positive reviews from critics and was repeatedly panned even in pro-regime media (Isna 1388 [2010]). Many cultural figures and intellectuals stressed the lack of historical preparation of the director and the flaws in the script. However, the lack of attention to factual accuracy, shallow characters, and ultimately the distortion and flattening of the variety of approaches to the Constitutional Movement was not the only element raised by critics. University lecturer and historian Musa Najafi pointed out that a major weakness of the series was its dialogue. The historical characters in Varzi's vision, Najafi wrote, use a completely contemporary language. These were phrases such as *tahājom-e farhangi*, which means 'cultural

invasion', which have become commonplace in public discourse only in recent years (Tabnak 1388 [2010]). Its use may indicate an intention to link past events with the present and to evoke a particular ideological message. One of the accusations levelled against Varzi was the creation of an on-screen vision of historical events, seen through the prism of the current political situation. Writer and history researcher Reza Mokhtari Esfahani believes that unlike other filmmakers, who offered stories based on historical events, Varzi tries to analyze history and offers viewers a misunderstanding of the facts (Isna 1388 [2010]). The vision of history that Varzi presents to Iranians, in his opinion, is a vision built on personal beliefs and, to some extent, contemporary realities, rather than reliable research and historical knowledge, which does not serve a society that has little historical knowledge. Shaping the historical narrative according to a certain personal vision or ideological objectives rather than facts was also pointed out to Varzi on the release of the series *Mo'āma-ye shāh*, made a few years later. The plot of this series of several dozen episodes, which aired between 2015 and 2017, focuses on the political and socio-economic aspects of Pahlavi rule and the nascent Revolution. The production of the series, despite considerable financial resources, was discontinued, and the broadcast of some episodes was met with a widespread wave of criticism. After the media failure of the series, several actors admitted that they regretted their involvement in the project. The reason was said to be the numerous factual errors found in the series (Tasnim 1395 [2016]).

Iranian intellectual Sadeq Zibakalam was one of those who expressed harsh disapproval of the production, accusing Iranian television of trying to present a particular vision of history. Such measures, he underlined,

turn the production of historical series into political projects created for a specific purpose. They do not show history in a true way [...] but want to evoke a particular point of view. (Nasim 1395 [2016])

Varzi's historical productions were defended by people in power, such as Ali Akbar Velayati, who considered the director's series a good step in retelling the recent history of the pre-Revolutionary period (Nasim 1395 [2016]). The director himself, likewise, in his response to the critics, stressed that his historical productions are indeed not meant to be mere entertainment but are an attempt to narrate those events of modern Iran, which are underrepresented in Iranian cinema in a form accessible to a wider public. The director has also repeatedly suggested how important it is for him to continually raise public awareness of Iran's troubled past (Tasnim 1399 [2020]).

Varzi perceives his productions as a response to the image of Iran created by the West, which, as he puts it, 'never wanted to show the truth, but instead shaped public opinion in a direction that serves their interests' (Tasnim 1399 [2020]). It is hard to deny that the director has a point here, given such productions as *Argo* and *300*. Varzi seems convinced that Iranians need to start telling their story before the Americans or the British do. In one of the interviews, he asked 'do we really have to wait for Hollywood to make a film about the life of Imam Khomeini?' (Andishe-ye Mo'aser 1400 [2021]).

In this sense, the director's activity should also be perceived as part of a narrative acknowledging the need to fight against the soft war waged by the West, which has been announced for some time by Iranian governmental circles via audiovisual tools, television, and cinema. Ali Asgari, the Head of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), argued in one of his interviews that, although Iranians live today in times of peace, the soft war is waged with the greatest force, precisely in the sphere of the entertainment industry (Irna 1400 [2021]).

The fight against soft war also has another dimension. Guardians of the Islamic Republic have long been aware that rejuvenating Iranian society is beginning to forget the stories of the Revolution and the ideas that led to it, not to mention earlier times, such as the Qajar dynasty and the ideas of the Constitutional Movement, with particular emphasis on the problem of interference by foreign powers in Iran's internal politics and sovereignty. A large part of the current population of Iran is represented by generations born after 1979, for whom the ideas, which the government of the Republic constantly strives to preserve and maintain, are particularly alien and distant. Therefore, it is important, as one of Varzi's colleagues and creators of the series *Mo'amā-ye shāh* said that these new generations of Iranians become familiar with the events of the period that led to the Islamic Revolution (Jahed 2015). Varzi himself admitted in one of his interviews that

I wanted to make the fourth generation aware of this, whether they look at it in a negative or positive way. That was the main goal of the series. (Parsine 1394 [2015])

A few years later, the director also stressed,

we remind ourselves of the events that have hurt us and initiated problems in historical times, in order to know what plan we should put on the agenda of managing the country today. (Tasnim 1399 [2020])

The narrative adopted by Mohammad Reza Varzi seems to match the policy adopted some time ago in the circles of cultural producers close to

the institutions of power. Narges Bajoghli, who has studied new forms of media activity conducted by pro-regime culture institutions in recent times, points out that many organizations associated with the governmental circles are well aware that, in order to prevent a deepening crisis of legitimacy of the regime (especially since the events of 2009), it is necessary to undertake large-scale cultural activity, which, while still serving the purpose of preserving and reminding of the ideals and values that underpinned the Islamic Republic, will also keep an entertainment function and reach younger and younger generations with greater ease (2019: 7). The change in the cultural narrative of television and cinema aimed at young viewers was also mentioned by a journalist Babak Mina from BBC Persian, who drew attention to the shift from what he called 'the ideological asceticism' of the 1980s, realized, for example, in the desire to remove morally unacceptable elements from film and television productions and the creation of heroes in accordance with the ideals of the Revolution, towards an 'ideology of pleasure', which would be the result of the alliance between power and entertainment (1395 [2016]). This shift has led to the situation in which Iran 'is developing a new kind of politics, located not at the barricades but in culture and ordinary life' (Milani 2015).

Although, when it comes to historical productions, this policy might seem more relevant in the context of Pahlavi rule, references to the history of the Constitutional Movement and the reign of the Qajar dynasty seen through the eyes of the Islamic Republic also seem to fit into this narrative.

Regardless of whether Mohammad Reza Varzi's television series are produced with the support or inspiration of the authorities or are the outcome of his own personal mission, they should be perceived as part of a political and cultural project aimed at creating a vision of the past that is consistent with the direction of the Islamic Republic's policy. Varzi, as he repeatedly argued himself, uses history as a tool to express other truths (Alipur Tehrani 1398 [2019]). That is perhaps why the director focuses on showing various examples of the interference of Western empires in Iran's internal affairs and the role of Shi'i scholars in the Constitutional Movement. Despite a wave of criticism, the director manages to find funding for his projects and continues his work, claiming that those who narrate history are always accused of distorting it (Tehrani 1398 [2019]: 5).

5 Mehran Modiri. The Juggler

A radically different approach to historical themes has been presented over the years by the successful film and television director, producer, and satirist Mehran Modiri (b. 1967). According to scholar Cyrus Ali Zargar,

[h]is pioneering efforts in producing Iranian television comedies with interesting plots and effective jokes has changed the face of Iranian television; today, in part thanks to Modiri, comedic television programs in Iran are extremely popular, and their ability to influence perceptions is taken seriously. In fact, in interviews, actors and directors refer to him as a pioneer in satire (*tanz*), and he is generally acknowledged as the master of Iranian comedic directing. (Zargar 2014: 83)

Modiri is not one of those filmmakers who openly fights against censorship in the media or produces works that directly contest the realities of the Islamic Republic, although as stated by Zargar, in his works, Modiri often criticizes shortcomings within Iranian society and government (2014: 97). It would also be inaccurate to simply classify Modiri as a pro-regime artist, although the fact that many of his productions, programs, and television series have been broadcast by state-run television stations and the numerous awards he has received for them in Iran testify to his strong position in the television industry.

In recent years, Modiri has grown into a leading commentator on the social condition of Iranians, a critic of the vices and behavior of contemporary society and its elites. Modiri's television projects fit the genre of social satire, and this is precisely what makes them often controversial and publicly debatable. The director often places this criticism in historical realities. The broadcast of the highly successful and popular 2005 satirical series *Shabhā-ye barāreh*, set in a fictional village in the 1930s, whose inhabitants not only spoke a specific dialect but also had their own bizarre customs and rituals, was interrupted after accusations of being insulative of the villagers' lifestyle surfaced.

A series not so much strictly historical as shot in Qajar-like realities is *Qahve-ye talkh*, produced in 2009. When, during the production process, one of the Iranian state television stations withdrew from the contract and refused to broadcast the series, Modiri shifted distribution to the private sector. Every week, Iranian bazaars, shops, and stalls were flooded with DVDs of the next three episodes of the series. The success of this project contributed in the long run to the fact that more and more filmmakers started to bypass the official path of distribution and distributed their products in an alternative way.⁵

Qahve-ye talkh is set in Iran in the first half of the 19th century, at the time of the power struggle between the descendants of the Zands and the Qajars.

⁵ With time, there has been an increase in the use of fast-growing home television networks, such as *Filimo* and *Namāvā*, two largest Internet platforms offering films and series in VOD service (video on demand).

The main protagonist, Nima, a history scholar discouraged by his professional life, goes back to 1822, after drinking a bitter coffee served to him at the Niyavaran Palace. That is when his adventures at the court of 19th century Iran begin. The series' producers did not have an educational goal in mind. As they argued, their intention was not to reconstruct historical events or figures, or to serve as a substitute for history teachers, but to create a story about the atmosphere of the indefinite past and to show the timelessness of certain behaviors and human attitudes (Barseqian 1390 [2011]).

The series is a satirical production that focuses on the distorted mirror of the mentality, oppression, ignorance, pervasive superstition, persecutory manias, phobias, and incompetence of the Iranian elite. Through the use of dress (although some historians believe they correspond to a later period) and stylized language, the series is obviously a kind of caricature of the rule of the Qajar dynasty, although an important role in the story is also played by a historian from the future, who becomes Shah Jahangir's personal advisor. Knowing the outcome of the ruler's behavior, Nima experiences frustration in seeing the state of Iran's elite at the time (Barseqian 1390 [2011]). Zargar claims that '[t]he historian's attempts to advise and change the course of Iranian history turn out to be exercises in absurd futility' (2014: 94–95).

By pushing the boundaries of what can be joked about, Modiri creates an area for social criticism and self-irony. The comedic framing of serious topics contributes to expanding the space for social and political commentary, the rules of which are relatively rigid in other spaces. Modiri's narrative turns out to be, however, a bitter one. The serial's message is that Iran 'while rich in culture and worthy of improvement, must recognize the limits imposed upon it by its own history' (Zargar 2014: 95). Placing some of his satirical series in the historical space enables Modiri to smuggle in references to the contemporary political and social situation. While in *Shabhā-ye barāreh*, the director takes society as his subject, in *Qahve-ye talkh*, he shows the rulers in a distorted mirror. Although none of the jokes in the series directly hit the current political authorities, there were voices suggesting references to specific figures or more contemporary events during its broadcast, especially since the series was set in the unspecified past, which could suggest the universal character of the attitudes presented in the series, that is tyranny, injustice, violence, separation of power circles from society, etc.

While Modiri's filmmaking work clearly has artistic merit, what is most distinctive about this director is his desire to look at historical reality through the lens of humor, derision, and mockery. This fact, in addition to being in some way associated with pro-regime producers and therefore belonging to the insider (*khodi*) circle of filmmakers, provides him with relative freedom of action.

6 Conclusions

The selection of three television series directors, featured in this article, who in their works incorporated historical themes related to the reign of the Qajar dynasty and the Constitutional Movement, is obviously a result of a subjective approach which cannot be treated as an attempt to introduce the phenomenon of Iranian historical television productions in a comprehensive manner.⁶ What I hope to have demonstrated in this study is the diversity of approaches, indeed of philosophies behind each of the directors in question, but also of the ways in which they pursued their objectives and the public perception of their efforts. These approaches obviously cannot be treated as separate as they overlap each other. Each work carries a certain amount of artistic expression, and the Iranian context also makes them somewhat of a political commentary on historical and even contemporary reality. However, it is difficult not to notice that, while Ali Hatami had been guided mostly by artistic goals, Mohammad Reza Varzi has concentrated on political or ideological ones, Mehran Modiri employs history to construct a social satire narrative.

The approaches adopted by the directors can also be understood within the framework of historical circumstances. In Ali Hatami's time, television series production was still overshadowed by intensely developing cinema, Mohammad Reza Varzi's works come at a time when state cultural producers were looking to implement a new cultural policy more adopted to changing propagandic needs. The same is true of Mehran Modiri, whose potency as a social critique is conditioned, among other things, by the power that comedy and satirical works provide in a space of artistic activity that is not entirely free of censorship and state control.

⁶ There is no doubt that on the Iranian television production scene, those making efforts to depict history have been and still are numerous. A figure that has not been given any consideration above, although it deserves at least a mention, is Hasan Fathi. A filmmaker sometimes compared to Ali Hatami, who has been active in the television field since 1993. Fathi is the author of a few popular historical television series, of which the best known is probably the production *Shahrzād*, aired between 2014 and 2017. However, it is the action of Fathi's earlier series, *Pahlavānān nemimīrand*, produced in 1996, which was set in the reality of Qajar Tehran. Fathi's specialty are historical dramas with romantic plots. The beginning of 2022 was supposed to bring lovers of this type of production another work by the director (*Jeyrān*), but its broadcast was halted due to copyright allegations by the producers of another historical series (*Ahu-ye man Mārāl*). Series previews seem to promise viewers a new original perspective, as the action of the production revolves around the beloved wife of the Qajar Shah Naseroddin—Jeyrān 'gazelle', who had been known for her love of hunting, horse riding, and behavior that was less usual for harem women in those days.

What can be also observed is that the rule of the distant Qajar dynasty and the Constitutional Movement, which although may seemingly be uninteresting to a young viewer and bears no relation to the challenges that Iranian society faces today, regardless of the high costs of its production, continues to be a frequent theme of television series. This testifies both to a certain level of attractiveness of old stories for contemporary viewers, but also to the awareness of the media promoters who finance these productions, and of the propaganda possibilities which this form of communication might provide. The reason for this may be that times of the Qajar dynasty and Constitutional Revolution can still be used to illustrate many phenomena. Hatami in his productions, although aware of the weaknesses of the Qajar era, expressed a certain nostalgia for times gone by, Vaziri uses them to justify his political ideas, and Modiri employs them to express social and even political criticism. This however makes these historical topics socially and politically sensitive. Many productions concerning the Qajar reign still fall victim to censorship.⁷ Despite some risks associated with the choice of historical theme, in recent months alone, the Iranian media have been reporting on the broadcasting of few new historical serials: *Jeyrān* by Hasan Fathi, *Ahu-ye man Mārāl* by Mehrdad Ghafarzadeh, and *Gildokht* by Majid Esmailieh, all three set in Qajar Iran.

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⁷ Not long ago, the series *Qeble-ye ālam* directed by Hamed Mohammadi and screened on a private home video platform *Filimo* fell victim to the policy of censorship. The production of this satirical series, set during the reign of Shah Naseroddin, was interrupted after eight episodes due to the irrevocable and incomprehensible censorship of the state institutions (Filimo shot 1400 [2022]). This comedy production, even after censorship, was characterized by bold jokes, described by critics as almost vulgar, dialogues, and gestures referring to the erotic life of the court inhabitants. Despite the fact that the producer of the series was Manuchehr Mohammadi, a man closely associated with the ruling camp media production institutions, the work has been subject to censorship. It is hard to say what the authorities really did not like in a series, be it the overly sharp jokes or the references to the intimate relations of the members of the court. In either case, the creators of the series decided to end the production after a few episodes had aired.

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Some Notes on the Early Minutes of the Iranian Parliament

Abstract While the debates of the first term of Iranian Parliament—the National Consultative Assembly, or Majles (1906-1908)—have long been an important source for historians and other scholars, no serious effort has ever been undertaken to try and properly understand this historical source. As a result, a number of misconceptions exist about the debates of the early parliament and what survives as their minutes. The present paper aims to dispel some of these misconceptions by focusing on two issues: 1) whether—and to what extent—what survived to our day (by the virtue of being published in the Majles newspaper) should be considered the official minutes of the parliament; 2) what were some of the characteristics of the later edition of the minutes published as the supplement to the Official Gazette of Iran. This is achieved by the careful analysis of a number of sources, mainly the debates themselves, legal documents, periodicals and memoirs.

Keywords Iran, constitutionalism, minutes, debates, parliament

1 Introduction

The full, verbatim record of the debates of the first term of the Majles that is, Iranian parliament (1906–1908)—would for obvious reasons constitute an important historical source for the political, social etc. history of Iran, as well as the study of the development of the legal language.



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Unfortunately, such a record does not exist. While it is often argued¹ that the complete minutes or debates of the body, at that time known mainly as the National Consultative Assembly² were lost following the royalist attack on the parliament, I do not believe it necessarily had to be the case, as will be soon explained. Regardless, however, of the erstwhile existence of such a complete record, what is generally consulted by the researchers are the more or less abridged minutes of the Assembly, published in the newspaper *Majles*,³ and four decades later republished as the supplement to the Official Gazette (*Ruznameh-ye Rasmi*) of Iran.

These minutes, although used extensively by the scholars, have never themselves been an object of a meticulous study, which would examine the way in which they were prepared, language used, political bias of the editors of the journal etc. In one of the most extensive and multi-faced studies of the Constitutional Revolution (Chehabi and Martin 2010), not a single paper was dedicated to the subject, although there had been papers on related topics, such as the history of the press and the creation of the public sphere;⁴ none of these subjects, however, could be understood without the proper appreciation of the parliamentary debates as published in the official press of the period. One cannot but to notice—as Ian Harris did for the scholars using the early British parliamentary reports—that these scholars treat their source as a ‘defective Hansard’ (Harris 2007: 258–259) instead of a historical source in its own right, which has to be carefully analyzed. In fact, apart from the brief analyses of sources in the historical works,⁵ and the studies of the press of the period (Zaker Hoseyni 1395 [2016–2017]), to this date the only published study even briefly addressing the subjects laid above has been Naser Soltani’s critical analysis of a rather recent re-reedition (reedition of the supplements reedition) of the Minutes (Soltani 1388 [2009]; republished in 1390 [2011]).

This, paired with shortcomings of the reedition of the Minutes in the Official Gazette’s supplement—which has generally been the text consid-

¹ For example, in the appendix to the *Ruznameh-ye Rasmi* (Official Gazette) of Iran, where the minutes of the parliaments have been republished. More on that below.

² In that pioneering period numerous names were used interchangeably, with the consistent used of the official names being adopted later. Hence, I used mostly the term *Majles*. When put in italics, the term *Majles* is going to refer to the newspaper under that title (see below).

³ More on this newspaper can be found in Sadr-e Hashemi (1364 [1985–1986]: 4, 183–188), and on its publisher in Afrasiyabi (1388).

⁴ Most importantly Nabavi (2010), which holds some relevance to the study of the way in which the parliamentary debates were disseminated among the people, as it discusses the readership of the press.

⁵ Especially Adamiyat (n.d.: 16–17) and to a lesser extent Kasravi (2537 [1978–1979]: 273).

ered by the scholars⁶—has led even scholars of renown to make largely inaccurate observations regarding the source. This was done in spite of their having access to both the original source and the later reedition in the Official Gazette. Yet, as they did not have a proper study at their disposal, they did not know the origin or the exact nature and character of the sources they used. One of the best examples here may be Mangol Bayat in her seminal *Iran's First Revolution*. Firstly, in the bibliography she gives an inaccurate date of the creation of the source, i.e. 1909;⁷ in fact, to my knowledge, no such edition or copy of the Minutes exists. She also lists a newspaper titled *Mozakerat-e Majles* which, actually, did not exist (Mangol Bayat 1991: 297). Furthermore, in one note she observes that the lack of mention of the details of a certain discussion was due to the Minute's editors' decision to omit any religious debates in the public account of the debates (Mangol Bayat 1991, 283–84 note 34). While there might have been such a policy, the account she referenced—found in the supplement of the Official Gazette—does not confirm this, as it was not a part of the official account, especially as published in the newspaper *Majles*. Instead, it was a report from the newspaper *Habl al-Matin*, published in Calcutta (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 21 Zulqa'edeh 1324: 17),⁸ which the editor of the supplement of the Official Gazette copied—without mentioning his source—and edited, mostly stylistically. Thus, Bayat based her view of the lack of inclusion of certain details in the official narrative of the parliament on the lack of inclusion of these details in an emigree newspaper report on a parliamentary setting. Thus, without the understanding of the true nature and origin of the Official Gazette's reedition, it is virtually impossible to comment on the parliamentary reporting in the period. Interestingly, a mistake slightly similar to the first and minor one made by Bayat can be also found in Adamiyat's historical writings, generally considered very diligent and based on the original and official sources:⁹ he gives the date 1320 (1941–1942) instead of the spring of 1325 (1946) as the date of the publication of the Minutes as the supplement to the Gazette. In this case, however, it was probably just a simple misreading (Adamiyat n.d.: 405). Also Janet Afary in her well-known study confused the supplement's reedition with the original document from the period,

⁶ Especially since it has been made available online: <http://www.ical.ir/ical/fa/Content/cat/5187/دوره%20اول%20مجلس%20ملی>. Accessed 27 April 2022.

⁷ While it is possible that she is referring to the debates of the later term of the parliament, this is highly unlikely. Had it been the case it would have been specified in the text and the bibliography.

⁸ Later, the 'local' editions of this newspaper were also published in Tehran and Rasht.

⁹ Adamiyat even went as far as to criticize the general lack of attention paid to the official documents and sources in Iranian historiography (Adamiyat 1346 [1967]).

dating it for 1906–1907 (Afary 1996: 404). It has to be pointed out that it would not have been hard for any of these authors to access either *Majles*, or *Habl al-Matin (Calcutta)*, as they were among the most available newspapers of the period.

Given that even renowned scholars fall into such pitfalls, it is thus necessary to conduct a proper study of the minutes. The paper at hand obviously cannot remedy all misconceptions, nor can it shed light on all the necessary issues. Instead, it focuses on two subjects: 1) the way the minutes were prepared (in the section which could be called ‘the minutes and their sources’); 2) some of the characteristics, mostly shortcomings, of the minutes as published in the supplement to the Official Gazette of Iran, which is to this day the most widely used version (especially since they have been made available online). It would be also tempting to include the overview of the subjects discussed in the parliament which made their way to the minutes; unfortunately, it would not be possible to do the subject justice in the scope of a single article unless one limited oneself to presenting a list of such topics. This, on the other hand, would be redundant, as the general ‘oeuvre’ of the first term of *Majles* has already been discussed elsewhere.¹⁰ Similarly, the analysis of the legal language used in the parliament is a subject in need of study, but again, this would require a separate article to do the matter justice. The present paper, however, sets the stage for such a study by reassessing the sources which may be of use.

I have also decided to focus on the earliest stages of the workings of the parliament, focusing mostly on the period preceding the ratification of the Constitution (14 Zulqa‘edeh 1324 [30 December 1906]). I have made this choice for two reasons. Firstly, it is the period crucial for the development of the first part of the Iranian constitution of 1906 (i.e., the constitution itself, not the 1907 Supplementary Fundamental Law), which dealt with the place the parliament shall occupy in the new political system of Iran. Secondly, as part of that period was covered in *Majles* and another part was not, scholars looking for the contents of the debates from the period must look further than one main source, such as *Majles* (see below). Furthermore, part of this period is not covered in the basic historiographical work from the period, Nazem al-Eslam Kermani’s *Tarikh-e Bidari-ye Iraniyan*, which omits the entire month of Shawwal (November–December 1906).

In doing the above, this paper tries to shed the misconceptions surrounding the earliest parliamentary history of Iran, and thus is but a first

¹⁰ Adamiyat (1985; n.d.); Mangol Bayat (1991); Afary (1996); Haqqdar (2016), among others.

step on the path to analyze the workings of the Majles, its debates and the language used in them. It may also serve as a guide to academics who wish to study the history of Iranian parliamentarism and who are trying to understand the relationship between some of the sources available. Moreover, the paper has to delve into the analysis of the Internal Bylaws (with regards to the preparation of the minutes) of the first Iranian parliament, which have been neglected by the existing scholarship.

2 The minutes and their sources

First Iranian Majles convened on 17 Sha‘ban 1324 (6 October 1906). In due time, a newspaper *Majles* was established to publish—apart from news etc.—the debates of the parliament; this was, in fact, stated as its chief objective. The newspaper, however, was first published on 8 Shawwal (25 November) of the same year and covered the debates only from 5 Shawwal (22 November) onward. This means that over a month of the proceedings was lost—and this included the period when a number of important laws were passed, such as the Majles’ Internal Bylaws, and—as it would seem—a number of crucial debates took place. Interestingly, this period, and even the events preceding it, are partially covered in the supplement to the Official Gazette (Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 5–13), in which the minutes of the first Majles were republished. The editor of the supplement wrote about his publication:

[...] parliament, by allocating sufficient credit, obliged the office of the Official Gazette to prepare the printing and publication of the transcripts (*surat-e mashruh-e mozakerat*) of the parliament from the first term to the beginning of the sixth, which has not been published. The office of the Gazette also from that very moment focused on collecting documents and evidence, so that the preliminary work might be completed and the objective reached. Yet, up until now, Khordad 1, 1325 [22 May 1946], with utmost sadness [I have to confess that] this important issue has been neglected and delayed, and there has been no success in this regard. And the reason for this was that the debates of the first term were destroyed in the bombardment of the Majles, and unlike the later terms, the official transcript was not present in the Majles archives. And had we wished to omit this term and begin printing with the second term, this series of publications would have been incomplete and unsuccessful because the debates of the first term had a great value from the point of view of shedding light on the important aspects of the history of constitutionalism (*mashrutiyat*). Fortunately, the abridged, but complete [sic!] proceedings of the debates of this term, from Shawwal 5 onward, were published in the newspaper *Majles*, which

was at the time published under the management of His Excellency Seyyed Mohammad Sadeq Tabataba'i, the erstwhile Speaker of the Majles. Yet, as from Sha'ban 17, which was the day of the inauguration of the Majles, to Shawwal 5, no trace of the proceedings of the debates was available in this newspaper, the office of the Gazette decided—so that in any case this collection [of the debates] would not be incomplete—to add to this collection, where possible, the proceedings of the debates and official speeches from the day of the issue of the edict (*farman*) of *Mashrutiyyat*.¹¹ In any case these preliminary [activities] became the reason why the printing of the series of the debates of the parliament were delayed by two months ... (Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 1)

As we can see, the editor made a number of claims: 1) that the original and full debates had been lost following the fall of Majles; 2) that *Majles* published only abridged reports (this is clearly linked with the first point); 3) the office of the Gazette prepared an account for the period for which there was no account in the newspaper. The sources used for this account were not listed, but one could infer from the text that they were the result of the office's *collecting documents and evidence*, mentioned earlier in the quote. This statement, however, is far from precise, and seems to suggest that the sources used were mostly official notes and records. Yet, as it will become clear soon, the claims made by the editor were not entirely founded.

As for the original and full transcripts of the debates being lost, there is actually little evidence that they had ever existed. This is not to say that no official notes had been taken. However, there is no reason to believe that the official and final text of the minutes was anything other than what we can find in *Majles*. There are quite a few arguments to support this position, with the crucial document being the Internal Bylaws,¹² a detailed analysis of which is necessary to fully understand the issue.

The term *tondnevisan* (lit. quick writers, meaning shorthand-writers or stenographers) appears in them quite a few times, which suggests that some note-taking took place on the official level; as the term is not, however, explained, there is little to go by here. The minutes themselves are, however, given more space. According to Article 12 'taking care of the

¹¹ There is no place here to discuss the exact legal terminology; term *farman* generally means 'order' (especially royal or imperial order or edict), and *Mashrutiyyat* was the term used for the constitutional or parliamentary type of government. The use of term *farman-e Mashrutiyyat* for the document in question has for some time, however, been an object of scrutiny (Soltani 1390 [2011]: 349).

¹² Discussion of the various editions of the Bylaws can be found below.

minutes of the parliament which are written by the Secretaries in each sitting¹³ is the duty of the Speaker, the same applies to the appointing and limiting the letters/writings of the stenographers that are to be distributed and published in the newspapers'. This suggests that the minutes were prepared by the secretaries under the supervision of the Speaker. Also, the speaker could tell the stenographers to prepare separate notes or letters for the newspapers—the plural for here being of note, as it did not single out *Majles*, which had not been published at the time. At the same time, we know from the newspaper itself that there were no people capable of stenography available (*Majles* 11 Moharram 1325: 1), which suggests that no 'scientific' or methodological stenography took place.

Then, when describing the duties of the parliamentary Secretaries, the bylaws state that 'writing the minutes of a meeting for each sitting, printing the discussions of sittings to be distributed among the MPs and taking care of the writings of the stenographers and comparing them with the minutes written by the journalists are the duties of the Secretaries of the parliament' (Article 18) and that 'the Secretaries read the general points of the previous sitting so that the MPs would know what was said before [on the subject they are going to discuss]' (Article 19). There is also a separate mention of the minutes being distributed as part of the process of amending the laws in their subsequent readings: 'After amendments to a bill [have been], the minutes are read. They are distributed to the MPs after the second reading minutes' (Article 69). Importantly, their office is also separate from the keeper of the chancellery (*daftardar*), who keeps the writings and the documents of the parliament (Article 26).

This shows us a number of things, provided that the bylaws were executed. Firstly, there would be a large number of printed minutes of every sitting—which would make it virtually impossible for them to be all lost after the *Majles*' bombardment, as someone would have taken at least one copy home at some point. Also, we can see that the secretary was reviewing and comparing the writings of the journalists-reporters and the stenographers; this would mean that the record published in the newspaper was validated by the parliament's officials. Also, the above articles show us that what was prepared by the stenographers was not a finished official document, but a 'raw material' from which a proper document was prepared.

¹³ In general, the term *ejlasiyeh* would be used for a session and *jalaseh* for a sitting. When the Bylaws were written and passed such a distinction was not yet that clear, and while the term *jalaseh* was used as would later become customary, the terms *majles* (sic!) and *ejlas* was also seemingly used in this meaning.

As for the minutes of the parliamentary commissions—which are not the subject of this particular paper but deserve mention as a comparative material—these commissions each had their own secretaries, and it was they who prepared their minutes (Article 26). Still, they were not published, nor were they to be distributed among the MPs, unlike the general minutes; thus, naturally, they existed in a much smaller number of copies. Yet we are still aware of some their proceedings from other sources (Adamiyat n.d.: 16), which seems to suggest that the general minutes would still at least partially survive.

All this points to the minutes published in *Majles* as being the official, final version of the minutes, based of course on the earlier drafts. This is further validated by two passages from the memoirs of the MPs, Hasan Taqizadeh. In one instance, he stated that ‘[Sa’d al-Dowleh]¹⁴ was speaking in a calculated manner, so that the stenographers may write his whole speeches’ (Taqizadeh 1390 [2011–2012]: 59) and in the second, that

[Sani‘ al-Dowleh, the Speaker of the parliament] said [to me] ‘Mister,¹⁵ these MPs as they are, talk and the stenographers are unable to write precisely. They also complain. Sa’d al-Dowleh is the worst as he shows his [ulterior] motive’. He told me to listen and remember: ‘These stenographers should bring their notes and you should say where the mistakes are. Then they should bring them to be printed’. Stenographers brought [the notes] and read [them]. It lasted one week. Then I said that that I am kept away from work and on the other hand, because I am not from Tehran, they have their affections and feuds, they are not impartial, they object. I proposed Vakil al-Ro‘aya Hamadani. He was accepted. (Taqizadeh 1390 [2011–2012]: 64)

While we can see here that the regulations of the Bylaws were taken a bit lightly (as we find no mention of the Secretaries being involved in reviewing the minutes), it may also stem from Taqizadeh’s writing his account after many years and hence misremembering or omitting less important passages. What is, however, clear is that Sa’d al-Dowleh was angered by the way in which his speeches were misrepresented, and hence demanded the clear review of the notes made by the stenographers instead of their being simply printed as they were. This would mean that what was published in the newspaper was exactly what would constitute the official version of the minutes as prepared by the parliament. This is further corroborated by Sa’d al-Dowleh’s protests against the supposed misrepresentation of his words, which can be found in the minutes published

¹⁴ One of the most active MPs in the early parliament.

¹⁵ *Aqa*, see below.

in newspaper, and in the apologies and corrigendum sections of the said newspaper (*Majles* 25 Shawwal 1324: 1–2; *Majles* 11 Moharram 1325: 1–2; *Majles* 8 Zulqa‘edeh 1324: 3; *Majles* 23 Shawwal 1324: 1). Then this is corroborated even further by *Majles* mentioning that one MP was delegated to review the contents of the minutes prepared for publication;¹⁶ apparently, this person quickly resigned and was replaced by another MP, who also resigned after a brief period. It may seem, however, that there was a difference between the reporters of *Majles* and the parliamentary stenographers, as it also reported that the reports prepared for publication both in *Majles* and in other newspapers were being compared with each other and with the notes taken by the parliamentary stenographers (*tond-nevisan-e makhsus-e Majles*) with the help of one of the MPs; the *Majles*’ reporters supposedly being most professional (our understanding here is obviously lopsided, as the information here comes from *Majles*). While these arrangements did not last long, as they were very time-consuming and required a lot of effort on from all the parties involved, in some cases they were still followed (*Majles* 8 Moharram 1325: 4; *Majles* 11 Moharram 1325: 1–2).

The idea that there existing a separate, full and official account of the debates seems to be an extrapolation of later parliamentary practice. In the *Majles*’ second term, according to its bylaws, (*Majmu‘eh-ye Mosavvat-e Advar-e Avval va Dovvom-e Qanun Gozari-ye Majles-e Showra-ye Melli* 1318 [1939]: 346–386) two accounts of its proceedings would be prepared: a complete transcript (*surat-e mashruh-e mozakerat*), and shorter, ‘standard’ minutes (*surat-e mozakerat*) (Article 135 §2 and Article 149), with the latter being public (as evidenced by, e.g., their being a medium of announcing some the penalties of the MPs, as per Articles 120, 122 §2, 124, 125) and read at the beginning of a following sitting (Article 103). The phrase *mashruh-e mozakerat* is, however, missing from the Bylaws of the first term. Where it can be seen, is in the introduction to the supplement of the Official Gazette, that has been already cited above, where it is described as being following the fall of the parliament. Yet it seems that it might not have been lost, as it possibly never existed as an official and complete document, as evidenced by its not being referred to in the contemporary laws and regulations.

There is, however, one document that could be considered as evidence against the reasoning laid above: a seemingly verbatim account of a meeting held on 27 Ramadan 1324 (14 November 1906).¹⁷ There is, however, a number of issues through which the said document, instead of disproving

¹⁶ Originally this was supposed to be one of the stenographers.

¹⁷ Published in Kuestaninezhad (1388 [2009–2010]: 205–220).

the thesis that what was published in the newspaper was the official account, actually supports it.

Firstly, according to the already-discussed bylaws, the official minutes of the sittings were to be printed. The document in question, however, is supposedly kept in the manuscripts section of the Library, Museum and the Document Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly,¹⁸ suggesting that it is a manuscript. This, in turn, would mean that it is at best a draft, which would serve for a full report, more probably, however, some kind of a report, but not made in the official capacity of the parliament. This is further corroborated by the lack of mention of any seals, signatures or other methods of authentication in the text.

Secondly, the document itself contains the discussion of what would become *Majles*. When discussing the subject of a foreign loan, one of the MPs, Mirza Mahmud (probably Mirza Mahmud Tajer Esfahani) said that the parliament needs a newspaper. The Speaker, Saniʿ al-Dowleh, rejected this idea; the parliament should not edit its own newspaper, as it is up to the journalists to write it. Mirza Mahmud argued that a license for such a newspaper was still necessary. Saʿd al-Dowleh added that the government should also give the newspaper permission to freely write about the issues. Saniʿ al-Dowleh was still unconvinced. In his opinion the journalists should simply come to the parliament and write down the speeches; also, the MPs should speak in turn, so that their speeches are intelligible (Kuhstaninezhad 1388 [2009–2010]: 209).

This particular exchange—in general, of little value to the proceedings of that day—contains two important pieces of information. Firstly, although the royal decree (*dastkhatt*)¹⁹ establishing *Majles* was issued in Shaʿban 1324 (*Majles* 8 Shawwal 1324: 1), in late Ramadan (which was the next lunar month) it was still unclear what the relationship would be between the parliament and the newspaper—after all, the *dastkhatt* itself not only did not specify this subject, not even making a single reference to the publication of the *Majles*’ minutes. Also, by raising the point about freedom, Saʿd al-Dowleh asked for something that had already been given in the *dastkhatt*, just as the license itself had already been given. In addition, while from the discussions held in the late Ramadan it is clear that the parliamentary reporting should occur in the newspaper, it is evident that the Speaker did not want to give the newspaper any official authority.

¹⁸ This is all the information provided by its editor, which makes the proper identification and even search for the text virtually impossible.

¹⁹ Originally meaning *autograph*, the term would be also generally applied to the royal documents that contained even a single phrase written by the royal hand.

However, his objection to the preparation of the minutes or reports by the officials of the parliament or the MPs (although such things were already required by the Bylaws) seems to suggest that he considered press reporting sufficient for the job. This seems to suggest that when *Majles* was in any way publishing the minutes with a stamp of officiality, he would be opposed to the preparation of another set of minutes; after all, for him at least, reporting was a job for journalists, not for the parliament.

Hence, we can more or less confidently say that what was published in *Majles* was the official and final (although often brief) version of the minutes of the first term of the Iranian parliament. In this case, however, what are the reports published at the beginning of the supplement to the Official Gazette, which have for years been a standard reference for the study of the debates?

3 Some of the Official Gazette's shortcomings

As already hinted at above, in stark contrast to collecting rare and inaccessible documents—as one could imagine after reading the introduction to the Gazette's supplement—the editors of the collection of parliamentary debates did a far less meticulous job. It would be expected of them, obviously, to make some changes in the material they published—leave out sections that did not contribute to the debates and include only what was relevant for the historical and legal discussions of the day, all the while giving proper references to the documents they used. Unfortunately, this had not been the case. Their work was often sloppy, to the point where their publication, while still giving a more or less clear picture of the debates, loses a great deal of credibility with regards to specific subjects—especially the study of the language of politics.

We get the first hint at this sloppiness, when we compare the Internal Bylaws as published in the Official Gazette's supplement with the text found in other sources. Supplement published Articles 1–32, when in fact the Bylaws had 90 Articles (*Majmu'eh-ye Mosavvat-e Advar-e Avval va Dovvom-e Qanun Gozari-ye Majles-e Showra-ye Melli* 1318 [1939]: 53–63; Kermani 1377 [1998–1999]: 46–56; *Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 20 Zulhejeh 1324: 6–12).²⁰ The reason for the omission of most of the Bylaws in the Gazette's supplement is obvious after even the most cursory research. The Bylaws were published in the *Majles* newspaper, in three separate numbers: in No. 20, Articles 1–32 were published, in No. 22 Articles 33–59,

²⁰ There are some discrepancies in numbering the Articles, as *Tarikh-e Bidari-ye Iraniyan* omits Article 88 and both *Tarikh-e Bidari-ye Iraniyan* and *Habl al-Matin* do not assign the number to Article 90.

and in No. 35 Articles 60–64 (*Majles* 14 Zulqa‘edeh 1324: 3–4; *Majles* 17 Zulqa‘edeh 1324: 3–4; *Majles* 15 Zulhejjeh 1324: 4); it would seem that the rest of the Bylaws was not published in *Majles*. The editors of the Gazette’s supplement republished the Articles found in No. 20 (where there was no mention at the end that the subject would be continued in later issues) and thought that it was the complete text of the regulation in question. This alone would be enough to warrant great caution when referring to the Official Gazette’s reedition.

When we turn to the debates themselves the situation seems more complex. In case of the debates from the newspaper *Majles*, the editors of the Gazette made mostly minor changes (mostly omitting titles they found redundant, honorific plural etc.). A good example here may be the removal of the honorific *Aqa*²¹ or *Jenab* in the supplement, or the change of a preposition to a more standard one (cf. *Majles* 12 Shawwal 1324: 2; Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 13), or dropping the title *Hojjat al-Eslam* that had been used before the name of Seyyed Mohammad Tabataba’i (cf. *Majles* 8 Shawwal 1324: 6; Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 13). Honorific plural would also often be changed to singular forms in the supplement’s reedition (cf. *Majles* 8 Shawwal 1324; Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 13). Sometimes, however, the differences went much further and included even changing of the name of the MP who was speaking, such as changing Hajji Sheikh ‘Ali to Hajji Sheikh Mohammad ‘Ali, who was obviously a different representative; likewise, changing Hajji Seyyed Baqer to Hajji Seyyed Mohammad Baqer—again, a different person. The latter is the most confusing, as there was no MP known as Seyyed Mohammad Baqer in the first term of *Majles* (*Majles* 8 Shawwal 1324: 6; Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 13).²² Apart from these few obvious mistakes, the minor nature of most of the changes

²¹ The honorific *Aqa* was often treated almost as a part of one’s name, which sometimes led to its repetition, when it was first used as an honorific, and secondly as a part of one’s name or titles (an example of this may be found below).

²² For the lists of the MPs—slightly varying between the sources—see: *Mokhtasar-e Tarikh-e Majles-e Melli-ye Iran* (1337 [1919]: 22–50); Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi (1325 [1946]: 4–5); Even the supplement’s list does not include the supposed Hajji Seyyed Mohammad Baqer. *Habl al-Matin* and *Tarikh-e Bidari-ye Iraniyan* also offer the names of the first ‘batch’ of the elected MPs, namely the MPs of Tehran (Kermani 1384 [2005–2006]: 541–544; *Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 24 Ramadan 1324: 5–7). According to the yet-unsigned Constitution (Article 6) and the already implemented electoral law (Article 19), the MPs of the capital were enough for the parliament to begin its work (*Majmu‘eh-ye Mosavvat-e Advar-e Avval va Dovvom-e Qanun Gozari-ye Majles-e Showra-ye Melli* 1318 [1939]: 4, 37; Kermani 1384 [2005–2006]: 517; *Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 3 Ramadan 1324: 18); English translation of the relevant legislation is to be found in Browne (1910: 359–363).

means that in the absence of the original newspaper could be acceptable source, unless one ventures to research the political and official language.

Apart from occasional mistakes, the biggest issue with the reedition may be that the telegrams and letters, which had been read in the parliament, were sometimes removed from the account found in the supplement (*Majles* 8 Shawwal 1324: 6; Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 13). Also, the fact that the Gazette did not publish most of the other sections of the *Majles*, it can also make some issues harder to understand.

The real problem with the reedition, however, lies in the earliest debates—unrecorded in the newspaper *Majles*. There we can see that the editors of the Gazette did not look too far for the records. In fact, almost the entirety of these proceedings and other events related to the parliamentary history of Iran from 14 Jumada II through 3 Shawwal 1324 (7 June–20 November 1906) is taken from the reports published by one of the most popular newspapers of the period, *Habl al-Matin* of Calcutta²³ which had been prepared by *Habl al-Matin*'s editor—Mo'ayyed al-Eslam's—brother, with some stylistic changes and omissions. The issues of the newspaper that were used are as follows:

1. No. 13 (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 10 Ramadan 1324: 17–20), covering (apart from some earlier telegrams) the period of 14 Jumada II–28 Jumada II 1324; Gazette did copy only the sittings up to 27 Jumada II.
2. No. 15 (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 24 Ramadan 1324: 1–8) covering the period of 25 Rajab–18 Sha'ban 1324 (14 September–7 October 1906); the Gazette more or less copied the contents starting with page 2.
3. No. 21 (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 21 Zulqa'edeh 1324: 17–21), covering the period of 24 Sha'ban–20 Ramadan 1324 (13 October–7 November 1906).
4. No. 22, (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 28 Zulqa'edeh 1324–29 Zulqa'edeh 1324: 14–18)²⁴ covering the period of 22–27 Ramadan 1324 (9–14 November 1906).
5. No. 23, (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 6 Zulhejjeh 1324: 9–14) covering the period of 29 Ramadan–15 Shawwal 1324 (11 November–2 December 1906), although the supplement of the Gazette

²³ The reason for the popularity of the said newspaper was that by being published abroad it was free from the government censorship, while at the same time it enjoyed a broad readership in Iran, largely thanks to its involvement with the Iranian politics (Sadr-e Hashemi 1363 [1984–1985]: 2, 200–208).

²⁴ There are different dates given on various pages of the newspaper.

used only reports of the sittings not included in the newspaper *Majles*; thus the report of the sitting held on 3 Shawwal (20 November) is the last one the Gazette lifted from *Habl al-Matin*.

The moment the reports of minutes from the newspaper *Majles* become available, *Habl al-Matin* is entirely dropped as a source, as its reports were generally far less detailed, although sometimes included MPs meetings taking place outside of the parliament, such as the meeting on the National Bank that was held on 6 Shawwal 1324 (22 November 1906) in the house of Mo'in al-Tojjar Bushehri (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 6 Zulhejjeh 1324: 10–11).

Some of the changes made in the supplement were clearly supposed to simplify the text, hence, on some occasions, dates were added where in *Habl al-Matin* only the day of the week had been given (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 21 Zulqa'edeh 1324: 18; Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 9). There are, however, also some omissions in the text, especially of speeches and exchanges, probably deemed unimportant by the supplement's editors. For example, the discussion of the reform of the new schools was removed from the report of 29 Ramadan, especially as it did not take place in the parliament (cf. *Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 6 Zulhejjeh 1324: 9; Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 12). Nonetheless, it contained worthwhile historical observations (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 21 Zulqa'edeh 1324: 17). Similarly, whenever a speech had been published only partially in *Habl al-Matin*, as suggested by phrases such as, for example, *va va va...* ('and and and...', meaning 'and so on'), these phrases were skipped in the Gazette, falsely suggesting that it published the entirety of the speech (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 21 Zulqa'edeh 1324: 19; Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 10). This may lead a reader to have a distorted image of the length and character of the parliamentary speeches, and—again—distorts the image of the period and the parliamentary procedures.

More visibly, any passages pointing to the authorship of the original reports and containing the contemporary political analysis were also cut (cf. *Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 21 Zulqa'edeh 1324: 19–20 with Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 10; *Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 6 Zulhejjeh 1324: 9 with Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 12). Less strikingly, information available elsewhere in the supplement was cut from the republished reports, as in the case of the names of the MPs of Tehran (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 24 Ramadan 1324; Seyyed Mohammad

Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 4–5).²⁵ Another example may be the Shah's speech on the occasion of the inauguration of the parliament: it was let out of the Gazette's account (cf. *Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 24 Ramadan 1324: 7–8 with Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 9) as the facsimile of the speech's manuscript can be found at the beginning of the volume (Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 3).

Another matter removed in the Gazette's supplement was the description of the social activities surrounding the parliamentary work, such as smoking and drinking *sharbat* or tea, which can be found throughout *Habl al-Matin's* reports.²⁶ This lack of context, while understandable given the goals the editors set for themselves, greatly diminishes our understanding of the circumstances in which the MPs worked, and as such of the exact functioning of the parliament; it also means that the reedition is lacking as a source for social history and anthropology of Iran in the early 20th century.

Given what was cut, it is sometimes quite curious what has been left. For example, in the already mentioned discussion cited by Mangol Bayat, the editor kept the Turkic term *kornesh* (meaning 'bow, curtsy')—a term rarely (as to my knowledge) used in Iranian Persian, quite common, however, in Indian Persian. Had the editor's goal been to make the text easier to understand for the Iranian reader of the time when the supplement was published, and to leave only the parts relevant for the political and historical discussions of the time, that term would surely have to be cut. It seems, however, that even this part of the editor's activity fell victim to his sloppiness.

All these prove that while the unscholarly lack of reference to the original source was the original sin of the Official Gazette's reedition, by itself it did not cancel out its relevance as the work containing the text of the debates. The treatment the debates received, however, while still allowing for the reedition to be used as a source of the general knowledge on the contents of the debates, makes it entirely useless for the study of political language and parliamentary procedure, as well as the social life surrounding the political activities. Far worse, in some instances, such as concealing the non-official provenance of the sources used and presenting only parts of a speech as its entirety, the editors' approach could be considered doctoring or even falsifying the historical sources. Even worse, it

²⁵ Obviously, the information given in the Gazette slightly differs from what is to be found in *Habl al-Matin*, as it also includes the MPs elected at a later date, provincial MPs etc.

²⁶ For example, cf. *Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* (6 Zulhejjeh 1324: 10) and Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi (1325 [1946]: 13).

has been decades since the original sources have been not much harder to reach than the supplement, making the overreliance on it much harder to explain.

Yet, while the Gazette's supplement sometimes lacked some of the details to be found in the original *Habl al-Matin*'s reports (as it has been just pointed out), there are, however, two instances in which the accounts found in it contain information not to be found in the newspaper from Calcutta. One is on 29 Sha'ban, where the original contains only the mention that the bylaws were long and detailed, while the Gazette spliced in the report the already-mentioned incomplete text of the Bylaws (cf. *Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 21 Zulqa'edah 1324: 18; Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 9). More importantly, however, in case of the report of the debates held on 27 Ramadan 1324 both accounts are almost identical (apart from the already mentioned stylistic changes etc.), until they reach a quarrel between a few MPs. Then, it would seem, the editors of the supplement switched to using a different source, which they unfortunately failed to name. As the details are much different than in the seemingly verbatim account we do possess (mentioned above), we can safely assume that it was not the source used. The relevant (different) section of the text in *Habl al-Matin* reads as follows:

His excellency Hajj Mohammad Esma'il Tajer Tabrizi known as Maghazeh turned to Sadr al-'*Olama*, who was the founder of the Company, i.e. was speaking for the domestic merchants, and said:

'Aqa Sadr al-'*Olama*, if the opinion of Aqa²⁷ is to tell us to accept this job then we will not accept [it]. When it is decided that we want to perform a service to a nation and give up [our personal] profit, the result will be that they will present us as without any credit.²⁸ We will never accept it'.

Suddenly one of the [Majles] members became angry: 'Yes, you want to swindle the Nation and the Government!'

Hajj 'Ali Aqa Tajer Shalforush said:

'If you have an argument to support these words then prove it'. He suddenly raised his voice, saying 'I have pretenses of honor,²⁹ [if] you wish to degrade³⁰ me, what right do you have to talk so coarsely to me?'

²⁷ Honorific of Turkic origin. Nowadays, it is mostly used in the meaning 'Mister'; at the time, it was used both in this meaning, and—more specifically—to refer to the religious scholars; in the context of the first term of Majles this would most often mean Seyyed Mohammad Tabataba'i and 'Abdollah Behbahani.

²⁸ *Bi-e'tebar*.

²⁹ *Man da'iyeh-ye sharaf daram*.

³⁰ *Zaye'*.

One of the Aqas³¹ who had graced us with his presence turned to His Excellency 'Ali Aqa Tajer Shalforush with utmost anger [and said,] 'Get out of the Majles, get up, guys³², make him leave the Majles'. A seyyed³³ came forward to make Hajji [Shalforush] leave, [but] Hajji himself stood up and went outside. Right after Hajj 'Ali left, all the merchants stood up and left the Majles. Again, by the order of the Aqas, a group of honorable MPs and sons of religious scholars³⁴ went and escorted back Hajj 'Ali and the rest of the merchants back in. They sat down for two minutes. Hajj Mo'in al-Tojjar wanted to deliver a speech. His Excellency Sani' al-Dowleh the Speaker of the Majles stood up and the [parliamentary] sitting turned to chaos. Then Aqa and Hajj 'Ali Tajer Shalforush [who had been] angry [at each other] were reconciled by Aqa Seyyed 'Abdollah [Behbahani] and the sitting ended. (*Habl Al-Matin (Calcutta)* 28 Zulqa'edeh 1324–29 Zulqa'edeh 1324: 17–18)

While in the Gazette's supplement it is as follows:

Hajj Mohammad Esma'il Tajer Tabrizi, known as Maghazeh, turned to Sadr al-'Olama, who was the founder of the Company, i.e. was speaking for the [members] of the Company who were from among the domestic merchants, and said, 'Aqa Sadr al-'Olama, if the opinion of Aqa is to tell us to accept this job then we will not accept [it]. When it is decided that we want to do a service to the nation and give up [our personal] profit, the result will be that they will present us as without any credit. We will never accept it'. At this moment Sheikh Hoseyn Saqatforush got angry and stated 'Yes, you want to swindle the nation and the government'.

Hajj 'Ali Aqa Shalforush insulted him. At this moment Sheykh Hoseyn Saqatforush got angry and stated in a loud voice 'I have pretenses of honor, you want to degrade me, what right do you have to talk coarsely to me'. Aqa Seyyed Mohammad Sadeq Tabataba'i³⁵ said 'Here [it] is Majles, everyone has equal rights. It is not the bazaar for you to insult and act high-handedly³⁶ towards a *saqatforush*³⁷ [just] because you are a merchant'. Hajj 'Ali however became even more aggressive. Tabataba'i became angry and stated 'Here [it] is the Majles and there is no place [here] for insults and high-handedness' and then turned to Aqa Seyyed Mahmud, known as

³¹ Here probably Tabataba'i and Behbahani.

³² *Bacheh-ha*.

³³ Person tracing their paternal lineage back to the prophet Muhammad.

³⁴ Aqazadegan, i.e. sons of Aqas; here: probably sons of Behbahani and/or Tabataba'i.

³⁵ Editor of the *Majles* newspaper and a son of Seyyed Mohammad Tabataba'i.

³⁶ *Tahakkom*.

³⁷ Small-time shopkeeper, dealing mostly in items such as tea, sugar etc.

Nazem³⁸, and said 'The persons who are obstructing the freedom to speak must be removed from the Majles'. Seyyed [Mahmud] came forward to remove Hajji [Shalforush]. Hajji stood up himself and went out, and right after Hajji 'Ali [Shalforush] left, all the representatives of the merchants left. The representatives [who had stayed] immediately delegated a group of MPs to escort Hajji 'Ali [Shalforush] and the rest of the representatives³⁹ [who had left] back to the Majles. This [delegated] group went and escorted the [representatives of the] merchants and sat down for two minutes. Hajji Mo'in al-Tojjar [Bushehri] wanted to deliver a speech, Sani' al-Dowleh the Speaker left Majles and Majles became disorderly. At this moment Aqa Seyyed 'Abdollah reconciled both sides of the argument. (Seyyed Mohammad Hashemi 1325 [1946]: 12)

As we can see, the beginning and conclusion of both accounts are almost identical. Then, in the middle of it—when there is a reaction to Maghazeh's words—we begin to see new information inserted by the Gazette's editors into the report from *Habl al-Matin*. This new information is mostly: 1) names of the people taking part in the quarrel; 2) specific words uttered, which differ between the two accounts. Hence, it is clear that the editor of the Gazette also used another source which I cannot yet identify. As one can see below, it could not have been, however, the supposedly verbatim report, years later published by Kuhestaninezhad. The date of publication is not an issue; after all, the editor could have access to the manuscript. The reason why he did not utilize this source is becomes clear after looking at the more-or-less relevant section of the supposedly verbatim report:⁴⁰

Hajji Mohammad Esma'il: This request that you are making; nobody will agree to form a company based on these arrangements [this is followed by an exchange about the price of bread etc., which does not have a parallel in the sources mentioned earlier]

Sani' al-Dowleh, Hajji Seyyed Nasrollah, Aqa Seyyed Mohammad Taqi: There is the Company. The Aqas⁴¹ say that it is.

Hajji Mohammad Esma'il [Maghazeh]: We are no [more than] a few people. Hajji Mo'in [al-Tojjar], Hajji 'Ali Aqa, Amin al-Tojjar, are you [the members]? They said no.

³⁸ I.e. orderly; term often used for people keeping order in places or institutions.

³⁹ *Namayandegan*.

⁴⁰ As this text differs from the other two sources, and is not as easily available, it had to be quoted *in extenso*.

⁴¹ Here probably meaning 'gentlemen'.

Aqa Sheikh Hoseyn [Saqatforush]: Now that you are not, we will pull the wheat from the warehouses and break [the locks of the warehouses].⁴² One should enforce the verdict of speculation.

Mashhadi Baqer: This is not enough for bread!

Aqa Sheikh Hoseyn [Saqatforush]: This condition laid down by Aqa Mirza Mahmud will destroy the company.

Mashhadi Baqer: Gentlemen, we are crying for bread.

Aqa Mirza Mahmud:⁴³ They asked for 250.000 tuman and wanted to swindle the government. They will not accept it.

Hajji Mohammad Esma'il: What are these inappropriate [words]? There are still busybodies in the Majles!

Aqa Mirza Mahmud: to Hajji Mohammad Esma'il: What right do you have to say these words. I represent 250 people by speaking here.

Hajji 'Ali Tajer [Shalforush]: What is this bullshit?⁴⁴ Whatever he wants to say [he may say], there is no difference between anyone [in the parliament].

Aqa-ye Aqa Mir Seyyed Mohammad [Tabataba'i]: What are these words that you say? Stand up [and leave] the Majles you old man!

What is the meaning of these discussions in the Majles?

Hajji 'Ali Tajer stood up and left the Majles. Hajji Mohammad Esma'il and other merchants all stood up, said goodbye and left.

Aqa Molla Hassan Vares came to Aqa-ye Aqa Seyyed 'Abdollah [Behbahani] and said: This is not good, I implore [you] to send Aqa-ye Hajji Seyyed Nasrollah and [your] son to go and escort them [back]. Aqa [Behbahani] ordered, 'Go'.

Hajji Seyyed Nasrollah [and] Aqa Mirza Seyyed Ahmad son of Aqa [Seyyed Behbahani] went and through a thousand efforts and pains brought back the merchants. The people of Majles offered the [necessary] courtesies.

Aqa-ye Aqa Seyyed 'Abdollah called Hajji 'Ali: Hajji, excuse me, come here. Hajji 'Ali said: I am not ok.

[Mo'in al-Tojjar] Bushehri came and sat down next to the gentlemen of the clergy. He said: [as for] this subject of bread, at first did the Prime Minister not tell us, 'We want this matter from you' because there was a public good in this matter; they wanted [it] and came. Then some of the statesmen did not consider this appropriate. Then the subject of the Majles came up, and they were invited for the night.⁴⁵ They said what to do, I said 'if someone

⁴² Conjecture added in the Persian edition of the text.

⁴³ There were a few MPs by that name; here it was probably Aqa Mirza Mahmud Tajer Esfahani.

⁴⁴ *In gohha chist keh mikhori.*

⁴⁵ This section of the text is unclear. It is followed by the mention in the footnote: 'the approval (spelled *ta'id* instead of the correct *ta'id*) of the words of Bushehri to the Aqas'.

wants the government to incur less of a loss this is preferable, if does not happen so, then we were present because of the obedience towards the Islamic Scholars'. Now why do you insult us without any [reason]?⁴⁶ The merchants had no motive or goal other than frugality.

Aqa Mir Seyyed Mohammad [Tabataba'i]: He made a [serious] mistake. Aqa Mirza Mahmud was a busybody.

[Mo'in al-Tojjar Bushehri]: This is not permanent, they will organize the Company much later,⁴⁷ why do they insult? You, a few Islamic Scholars and the Prime Minister insisted. The people who opposed it obstructed it. The people have been made to wait idly for three months. Tomorrow, the snow will come. Bread will be two riyals⁴⁸ per *man*.⁴⁹ Why do they say insulting phrases in the Majles?

Hajji Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri: What does [this] raising one's voice in the Majles mean?

Hajji Seyyed Mohammad: Aqa-ye Sadr al-'*Olama*, did you not invite [them]? Sadr al-'*Olama*: Why [not]; I invited the gentlemen. Aqa Mirza Mahmud does not know, moreover, we insisted a lot.

Aqa Seyyed Mohammad Taqi: To a degree one should observe the limits [of their position?]

[The sitting concluded]. (Kuhestaninezhad 1388 [2009–2010]: 218–220)

As we can see, in the part that followed Maghazeh's remark, there are quite a few differences, which show that this report offers a different account of the events than what is found in the Gazette's supplement. Firstly, there is quite a lengthy discussion between Maghazeh's suggestion that nobody would accept the arrangements suggested and the suggestion that the merchants want to swindle the nation. There is also a lack of the mention of the reason why the traders cannot accept unfavorable conditions, which appears in *Habl al-Matin* and in the Gazette's supplement (casting doubt on whether the account is truly a verbatim one). Thirdly, apart from the obviously lengthier and more detailed account of the supposedly verbatim report, it also ascribes certain comments to different people. Thus, according to Gazette's supplement, it was Saqatforush who suggested that the Merchants want to swindle the nation and the state; yet according to the supposedly verbatim account, it was Aqa Mirza Mahmud who said that. Then, while

If one decides that there was no spelling mistake in the note, it would be read as *ta'ayyod* and mean 'hexing' instead of 'approval'.

⁴⁶ Conjecture added by the editor of the Persian text.

⁴⁷ *Sar-e kharman*, 'after the harvest has been collected'.

⁴⁸ Riyal as an unofficial unit was used under the Qajars, although rather sporadically.

⁴⁹ Ca. 3 kg.

in *Habl al-Matin* and the Gazette it was Hajji ‘Ali Shalforush who reacted to this comment, here the earlier part of the quarrel is between Maghazeh and Mirza Mahmud, and it is in reaction to the comments of Maghazeh—not Shalforush—that Mirza Mahmud—not Saqatforush—mentions that he represents 250 people—not that he has claims of honor. There is also no explicit mention of degrading. It is only after these comments that Shalforush insults the opponent—again, Mirza Mahmud, not Saqatforush. Then, it is Seyyed Mohammad Tabataba’i who reacts—which seems much more plausible than the involvement of his son and editor of *Majles*, Mohammad Sadeq Tabataba’i. Also, the exact words are quite different, and there is no mention of insulting someone for being a small-time salesman from the position of being a wealthy merchant. There is also no sign of someone being sent to throw the merchants out. Also, we can see that it is Vares—a guild MP—who comes up with the idea of escorting the merchants back in. Then again there are some differences with the account of how the merchants came back, there is no mention of the Speaker leaving during Bushehri’s speech etc.—the similarities are limited to the role played by Behbahani in reconciling the quarreling parties. It would seem, however, that he was not entirely successful. We can also see Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri speaking, who was missing from the other accounts. Hence, as we can see, this document could not have been the source for the Gazette, as it contradicts it even more than it contradicts the shorter text from *Habl al-Matin*. Sadly, all three accounts suggest a slightly different social dynamic surrounding the parliamentary debates, especially when it came to the relationship between the clergy and the merchants and the guilds. Still, they all agree on there being some tensions between the upper- and lower-class MPs—making it sufficient for having a general outlook of the debates. Yet these differences mean that using only one of these sources would not suffice for a detailed analysis of, for example, political language or even the exact details of the conflict between the MPs. Moreover, the differences of the discussion may seem minor only if one does not look carefully: most strikingly, the supposed detailed account suggests the involvement of different people, which would certainly matter for—among other things—a biographer of the MPs, or even someone trying to assess the political savviness and gravitas of various MPs in the first *Majles*.

4 Conclusion

As it has been established above, the Minutes of the first term of Iranian parliament as published by *Majles* most probably were—with all their shortcomings—the official record of the debates of that legislative body. While it is clear that apart from the newspaper reporters, the parliament

employed—or tried to employ—some stenographers of its own, it would seem that what they prepared was not the final, official record of the meeting. Instead, it was but a stage of the preparation of such a record, which was then prepared with the cooperation of one of the MPs—secretary according to the Bylaws, but probably not in the actual parliamentary practice—and the reporters. The idea of the existence of the official, full transcript of the debates seems to be an extrapolation of the later parliamentary practice to the earliest days of Iranian parliamentarism.

Moreover, we can see that the supplement to the Gazette, often treated as the official and correct record of the debates, as far as one was available, is anything but. Far from being a reliable and diligent publication, it is an often haphazardly prepared and disorderly collection of excerpts from various sources, unnamed in the publication. Then, even a brief look at the debates it republished from the newspaper *Majles* and from *Habl al-Matin* shows that even there are some minor changes—again, mostly stylistic and in the honorifics used, although there are also some obvious mistakes, even in the names of the MPs speaking. These issues underline the importance of considering original sources whenever possible, not only their later summaries, and make the Gazette an unreliable source for the study of the legal and political language of the first Iranian parliament. These issues become even more apparent when one takes into account the fact that while there exists a rather detailed analysis of Iranian constitutionalism in the Islamic Republic (Schirazi 1997), when it comes to the details of the earlier constitutional and political debates, even a century of scholarship has not managed to bring us out of the dark.⁵⁰ As the present study shows, some views that were taken for granted, be it the erstwhile existence of the complete, verbatim and official record of the debates, or the faithfulness of the reedition of the debates in the Official Gazette, have to be reevaluated. Only then will we be able to try and recreate as complete a picture of the beginnings of Iranian parliamentarism as possible, which is a prerequisite for any satisfying analysis of its development. Thus, it is a must to go back to even the most fundamental sources for the study of Iranian Constitutional Revolution and to reevaluate them. This should not, however, be misunderstood as a typical call to go back to the archives and look for new sources. On the contrary, it is the call to carefully analyze sources which are already easily available, but which were used without any critical look.

This should not be seen as a return to the over-focus on the central power and authority, after the field of study has in recent decades began

⁵⁰ The current state of research on the constitutional debates can be summarized by a few paragraphs found in Amanat et al.

to focus more on the provinces, and the issues such as the nationalism and secularism in that period (Martin 2013).⁵¹ In fact, the new look on the sources in question will benefit these subjects as well, as all of them were in some way addressed in the parliament. As the issue of leadership of certain members of the Shiite clergy has in recent years enjoyed renewed interest,⁵² the precise language and titles used with regards to them also plays a large role. Moreover, the proper grasp of the way in which language was used in parliamentary discourse, of the social activities surrounding the parliament, the involvement of the public in the workings of the parliament—all of which can be found in the accounts of *Majles* and *Habl al-Matin*—are among the key elements necessary to study the early-twentieth-century history of Iran. This is especially relevant as the changes in these very spheres—in the official language, honorifics, social behavior etc.—are among the elements which defined much of the late Qajar and Pahlavi modernity. Thus, reevaluating sources on the parliamentary debates has been one of the key problems in the said field—problems made more serious by the general unawareness of their existence.

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⁵¹ Naturally, these works also do not completely abandon the subject of the central authority, as evidenced in Martin (2013: 109–121). Interestingly, Martin also uses the reedition of the debates, more specifically its disk edition (Martin 2013: 254).

⁵² As evidenced by Farzaneh (2015).

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A Few Comments on Selected Articles of the 1964 Constitution of Afghanistan

Abstract The article gathers comments on selected articles to be found in the 1964 Constitution of Afghanistan—the third in Afghanistan’s history but at the same time the first in many respects, not only because of its modern, by the standards of the time, nature, as it was supposed to change the nature of the monarchy from an absolute into a constitutional/parliamentary one. The text is divided into four parts: (0) Introduction, where the aims of the analysis and reasons for writing the text have been presented; (1) Historical perspective of the Afghanistan’s constitutional movement; (2) In-depth comments on: (i) Royal Promulgation, (ii) The Preamble, and (iii) nineteen articles; as well as (3) Conclusions.

Keywords article, constitution, democracy, monarchy, power, reform

L’«occidentalisation» de ce texte constitue son caractère essentiel. Contrairement à la Constitution de 1931, qui était un amalgame de principes islamiques et de coutumes afghanes, avec quelques emprunts à des constitutions étrangères, la Constitution de 1964 est fondée sur le principe de la séparation des pouvoirs, et sa référence la plus constante est la Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen. Elle comprend 128 articles : c’est dire qu’elle entre dans le détail du fonctionnement institutionnel. Par rapport au texte de 1931, sa clarté, son ordre, la progression des différents chapitres et articles, sont remarquables. (Centlivres et al. 1984: 138)



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The ability of a constitution to effect political change has limits. The 1964 Constitution of Afghanistan, for example, is and was widely regarded as a well drafted and progressive document, but it did not produce a democracy. A constitution, however, has several important functions. It will be looked to as a clear symbol of the country's direction, both by its citizens and the international community. It can also provide important safeguards against the government going off track, while laying the groundwork for increased democracy, rule of law, and good governance at a later time when the country stabilizes and those developments become increasingly possible. (Benard and Hachigian 2003: 1)

1 Introduction

In this paper I have gathered comments on a few selected articles that make up the 1964 Constitution of Afghanistan (Dari *qānun-e asāsi-ye afgānestān*/Pashto *də afgānistān asāsi qānun*).¹ The aim I am setting myself here is to discuss in depth those more crucial articles of the 1964 Constitution that redefined (or, better, tried to redefine) the Afghan political reality (and stage) between 1964 and 1973, marked as a decade of parliamentary democracy (Dari *demokrāsi-ye nau*/Pashto *nəway dimukrāsi*). For practical reasons my selection of articles is partly arbitrary.

The 1964 Constitution, the third basic act after the 1923 and the 1931 ones (Amanollāh Xān's *Nezāmnāme-ye asāsi-ye daulat-e aliye-ye Afgānestān* and Mohammad-Nāder Šāh's *Osul-e asāsi-ye daulat-e aliye-ye Afgānestān* respectively), was an outcome of local processes taking place on various levels of the cultural-political as well as socio-economic life after World War II. As Arjomand (2006: 952) highlights in his *Constitutional Developments in Afghanistan: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, the internal evolution melded liberal constitutionalism and Islamic modernism to succeed in finding the finest (in his opinion) formula for the reconciliation of both socio-political approaches.² His conclusions should be complemented with Olesen's (1995: 206) comments to be found in her *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan* as she emphasises that the authors of the 1964

¹ The text is partially based on a paper 'Komentarze do Konstytucji Królestwa Afganistanu z 1964 roku' ('Comments on the 1964 Constitution of the Kingdom of Afghanistan') delivered during the Cracow-Warsaw seminar *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1905–1911: Contexts, Narratives, Implications* (2–3 December 2021).

² For intellectual movements in Afghanistan see e.g.: Dupree (1980: 417–558); Poullada (1973); Qobār (1390 [2011/2012]: II, 557–573, 667–669); Rištyā (1355 [1976/1977]).

Constitution tried to conform the state and its legal basis to the changing socio-economic structure of the Afghan society. The reason for that was, *inter alia*, the appearance of a new urban middle class educated in the public, state-sponsored school that started demanding complicity in governing.³ Meanwhile, Pasarlay (2016: 32) emphasises that the hitherto traditional *élites*, following the 1931 Constitution based on the ideological paradigm according to which the state power is based on both tribal and classic Islamic pillars, found it difficult to develop such legal solutions that would allow for the inclusion of emergent self-aware leftist, conservative, or nationalist groups into the mainstream of all-Afghan politics. In anticipation of the conclusions presented at the end of this article, I have to explain that a number of reforms planned within the framework of the 1964 Constitution never came to fruition.⁴

The 1964 Constitution, representing the basic legal act, has been hitherto analysed through the prism of history and its political significance, e.g.: Chishti (1998), Kaškaki (1365 [1986/1987]), Mobārez (1375 [1996/1997]). Simultaneously, functioning as a legal text, it is also of a performative nature. Besides, each constitution not only describes the existing reality, but, by changing the basic legal provisions, it also changes (or, at least, can/may/tries (to) change⁵) the socio-political dimension of the reality within which it operates. This is why while reading the 1964 Constitution, it is worth following Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) and his deliberations regarding performative utterances. Such a dual, legal-and-linguistic perspective allows for a better assessment of the content and functionality of individual articles. Especially since the language used to craft a constitution, like the language of any legal act, should be marked by clarity and comprehensibility. It indicates not only the clarity of the argument, but also the avoidance of any ideological declarations that would undermine the meaning of its provisions. As Ginsburg and Huq (2014: 122) rightly observe: '[p]oorly drafted, ambiguous, or merely incomplete constitutional texts may perversely generate new sources of conflict'.

Why is it worth taking a look at the 1964 Constitution again almost sixty years after its adoption? There are at least four reasons.

³ For a new middle class in Afghanistan see e.g.: Vogelsang (2008: 288–290).

⁴ For some conclusions see: Chapter 3.

⁵ I deliberately write 'can/may/tries (to)' because, as Ginsburg and Huq (2014: 120) note: '[e]ven though constitutions are inextricably embedded in their distinctive economic and geopolitical contexts and some basic design questions have an implacably normative cast, the drafters of new constitutions still need some realistically attainable goals'.

Firstly, in the 1980s, i.e. during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to support the communist regimes of, originally, Babrak Kārmal (1979–1986) and, later, Mohammad Nağibollāh (1986–1992), one of the opposition leaders, Ahmad Gaylāni, the head of the Mahāz-e Melli-ye Eslāmi-ye Afgānestān (NIFA National Islamic Front of Afghanistan), canvassed for returning to the principles of the parliamentary democracy embodied in the 1964 Constitution as a way to reconstruct the socio-political life in the state (Olsen 1995: 286).⁶

Secondly, in December 2001 Afghan leaders participating in the International Conference on Afghanistan hosted by Hotel Petersburg in Bonn, Germany, agreed to base the post-Taliban system of government on this particular basic law (Larson 2011: 9; Their 2003: 1). As one can find in Part II. *Legal framework and judicial system* of the *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions* (so-called: Bonn Agreement) produced at that time, in the interim, i.e. before a new constitution will be enacted, the 1964 one subsists: '[t]o the extent that its provisions are not inconsistent with those contained in this agreement [Bonn Agreement—MMPK], and [...] with the exception of those provisions relating to the monarchy and to the executive and legislative bodies provided in the Constitution [the 1964 Constitution—MMPK]; and [...] existing laws and regulations, to the extent that they are not inconsistent with this agreement or with international legal obligations to which Afghanistan is a party, or with those applicable provisions contained in the Constitution of 1964, provided that the Interim Authority shall have the power to repeal or amend those laws and regulations' (*Agreement* 2001).

Thirdly, in September 2021, some news agencies reported that the Taliban authorities announced shortly after regaining power, following twenty years of armed struggle, their intention to temporarily reinstate its provisions as long as they do not contradict Shariah principles (Gul 2021; Kamil 2021; Patel 2021). So far, the initial announcements have probably not been covered by the actual actions of the Taliban authorities. The perfunctory statement made by the Taliban authorities remains rather as an empty gesture towards the international community for when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan in the second half of the 1990s, they did not bother with the idea of writing a new (their own) constitution. Moreover, the 1964 Constitution, already at the time of its enactment, was perceived by a number of conservative and religious leaders as contrary to the principles of Islam (Olesen 1995: 242).

⁶ For a detailed description of Ahmad Gaylāni and the NIFA see e.g.: Adamec (1991: 84, 152, 175–176).

Fourthly, the 1964 Constitution, one of seven (*plus* one temporary) in force in Afghanistan over the last one hundred years, opens an intertextual discourse with the rest.⁷ It maintains previous legal arrangements or provides them with future documents. It redefines previous legal arrangements or forces subsequent documents to reshape them. It covers issues previously overlooked or marks them as of a redundant nature. This intertextual discourse also concerns the very conditions in which several constitutions were crafted. For, as Haress (2019) observes: '[w]ith the exception of the constitution of 1964, all previous Afghan constitutions [i.e., the pre-2004 ones—MMPK] were drafted as a result of regime change, and were used to consolidate the power of the new ruler'. However, the purpose of this article is not to discuss this intertextual discourse in detail, therefore only individual threads have been marked.

To complete the introduction, I need to add that my comments should be viewed as a personal voice partially supplementing the conclusions made during the Democracy and Islam in the New Constitution of Afghanistan meeting organized on in January 2003 by RAND, i.e. at the time when work on a new document (adopted one year later, in 2004) regulating the nature of the Afghan state after the fall of the Taliban regime (1996–2001) was underway. On the other hand, some comments have been prepared as sidenotes to Pasarlay's inspiring PhD dissertation *Making the 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan: A History and Analysis Through the Lens of Coordination and Deferral Theory* (2016). As far as the RAND panellists tried to: '[...] to identify ways in which the constitution of Afghanistan could help put the country on the path to a strong, stable democracy characterized by good governance and rule of law, in which Islam, human rights, and Afghanistan's international obligations were respected' (Bernard, Hachigian 2003: iii). Pasarlay (2016: 11–12) accurately notes that all those who have so far undertaken research on the constitutional history of Afghanistan: '[t]hey have not framed Afghan constitutions as devices designed to coordinate politics in the unruly lands that fall within the borders of Afghanistan, nor have they systematically explored the ways in which Afghanistan's constitutions have (or have not) employed constitutional deferral to increase the odds of long-term coordination'. His research, as well as that made by other scholars, show that the constitutional history of Afghanistan is a history of mostly unsuccessful coordination devices and failures caused by the reluctance of authors writing respective

⁷ The constitutions were enacted in: (i) 1923 by Amanollāh Šāh, (ii) 1931 by Mohammad-Nāder Šāh, (iii) 1964 by Mohammad-Zāher Šāh, (iv) 1977 by Mohammad-Da'ud Xān, (v) 1987 and (vi) 1990 by Mohammad Nağibollāh, and (vii) 2004 by Hāmed Karzay, while the temporary one in 1980 by Babrak Kārmal.

texts to cope sometime with some issues of fundamental importance to the further development of the state.

All quotations, except for the *Promulgation*, have been taken from the text of the 1964 Constitution published in *Rasmi Ğarida* №12 with the date the 11th of Mizān, 1343 (3rd of October, 1964). The *Promulgation* is not featured in the *Rasmi Ğarida* but in a booklet *Də Afġānistān asāsi qānun: Qānun-e asāsi-ye Afġānestān (The Constitution of Afghanistan)* with the date the 9th of Mizān, 1343 (1st of October, 1964). With the exception of the *Promulgation* and the *Preamble*, all articles can also be found in the monograph entitled *Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afġānestān (The Constitutions of Afghanistan)* published in 1386 (2007/2008) by the Ministry of Justice, where all seven *plus* one temporal Afghan basic laws have been gathered.

2 Historical perspective

The constitutional history of Afghanistan has become a subject of numerous studies, e.g.: Ahramovič (1967); Centlivres et al. (1984: 131–140); Kakar (1992); Modrzejewska-Leśniewska (2010: 245–276); Olesen (1995); Pasarlay (2016); Vogelsang (2008: 278–280, 284–286, 294–295); Sierakowska-Dyndo (1987; 1989; 2002: 93–114).⁸ For that reason, I limit myself to a very brief introduction here.

It is crucial to remember that the 1964 Constitution did not emerge of inexistence creating a new Afghan order (and political stage) out of anything. It was the fruit (rather than the by-product) of long lasting efforts aimed at consolidating and modernising the country and made by some intellectuals as well as politicians who in one way or another appealed to postulates put forward by, *inter alia*, Mahmud Tarzi (1865–1933).⁹

As Wilber (1965: 216), the first one who made some brief comments on the 1964 Constitution, notices, the document was more: ‘liberal, enlightened, forward-looking, comprehensive and definitive than its predecessor’. In fact, the first, 1923 Constitution was of a basic nature as it did not cover a number of issues that are usually discussed in this type of documents.¹⁰ The second one, passed in 1931, bore clear traces of inspiration from the Iranian constitution, with visible emphasis on Islam and on

⁸ For a detailed list of publication printed prior 2002 see: Pasarlay (2016: 9–12).

⁹ For a detailed treatment of Tarzi’s life and work see e.g.: Schinasi (1971).

¹⁰ For the text of the 1923 Constitution see: *Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afġānestān* (1386 [2007/2008]: 3–33). For its English translation see: Yunas (2001: 1–15).

the priority of sharia (Wilber 1965: 215).¹¹ The ideological *ergo* legal base of both previous constitutions was an absolute monarchy that remained beyond any social or governmental control even if it was supported by advisory bodies. The difference between the 1964 Constitution and its two predecessors was thus quantitative (it was definitely longer) and, above all, qualitative (it was definitely much better compiled). It was supposed to reshape the nature of the Afghan, Bārakzāy monarchy, replacing its absolute origin with a constitutional/parliamentary version.

There were many reasons for such a shift. The post-World War II period was a time when a number of economic, political as well as social and cultural changes were occurring worldwide, also in Afghanistan. Particularly crucial was the decade of the Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān's premiership (1953–1963), marked by such episodes as, *inter alia*, economic development,¹² growth of Pashtun nationalism,¹³ expansion of the national armed forces,¹⁴ or *raf^c-e heḡāb*, i.e. abolition of the obligation for women to cover their faces in a public place.¹⁵ As Sierakowska-Dyndo (2002: 87) notices, Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān's aim was to create an economically and militarily strong nation state with a stable central power represented by the Kabul-based government.¹⁶ The decade of his premiership became hence the time when centralisation of power took place—the state, on the one hand, strengthened its position in those spheres of public life over which it had already exercised its oversight, and, on the other one, took control of those spheres that were traditionally beyond its reach (Olesen 1995: 199).¹⁷ Additionally, the slow but constant expansion of the secular education system or the laborious implementation of infrastructural and industrial projects financed by the Americans as well as the Soviets,

¹¹ For the text of the 1931 Constitution see: *Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afḡānestān* (1386 [2007/2008]: 34–78). For its English translation see: Yunas (2001: 17–32). As far as I know, no text on such inspirations/similarities has been published yet.

¹² For a detailed treatment of economic development see e.g.: Dupree (1980: 499–558); Kāzem (1389 [2019/2020]: I, 243–276)

¹³ For a detailed treatment of Pashtun nationalism see e.g.: Human (2002). For a detailed treatment of the Pashtunistan Issue as well as the Afghanistan-Pakistan relations during Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān's premiership see e.g.: Kāzem (1389 [2019/2020]: I, 121–150).

¹⁴ For a detailed treatment of expansion of the armed forces see e.g.: Kāzem (1398 [2019/2020]: I, 201–216).

¹⁵ For a detailed treatment of *raf^c-e heḡāb* see e.g.: Kāzem (1398 [2019/2020]: I, 317–336). First-hand report see e.g.: Srzednicki (1963: 341–343).

¹⁶ For a detailed treatment of Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān's premiership see e.g.: Dupree (1980: 499–558); Kāzem (1398 [2019/2020]: I, 111–400); Sierakowska-Dyndo (2002: 79–114).

¹⁷ For an understanding of the term 'centralisation' see: Chapter 2.3.8.

both processes controlled by the Kabul-based administrative apparatus, eventuated in, *inter alia*, the creation of a new social stratum—the urban educated middle class represented mostly by a broad category of civil servants.¹⁸ This new social stratum obviously strove for active participation in governing and claimed the right to have a real influence on crucial matters related to the state. In this way, next to the traditional *élites*—the ruling house as well as tribal and religious leaders, who constituted the pillars of the contemporary political system symbolised by the 1931 Constitution, another one appeared (Olesen 1995: 199).

Mohammad-Dāʿud Xān became aware of such changes and noticed the mismatch between the current political system and the on-going transformation of social and economic reality. In his letter sent on the 9th of Saratān, 1341 (30th of June, 1962), to Mohammad-Zāher Šāh he explicitly underlined the need to make the contemporary political system to be of a more inclusive nature (Kāzem 1398 [2019/2020]: I, 359). He even proposed to the monarch holding a referendum on the future system of government, but due to the low level of public awareness he considered it unlikely to be organised at that time. In his next letter dated on the 24th of Ġaddi, 1341 (11th of January, 1963), he once again wrote about the (urgent) need to remodel the political system and proposed to adopt a new constitution that would replace the absolute monarchy with its more inclusive constitutional/parliamentary version (Kāzem 1398 [2019/2020]: I, 362). He argued that since emergent *élites* demanded in-depth modifications, the current political system had no chance of surviving in the long run. When Mohammad-Dāʿud Xān addressed Mohammad-Zāher Šāh with a proposition of structural modification, the monarch faced a dilemma—should he support his cousin’s programme, or, should he rather undertake the task of carrying out the expected reforms himself. Fearing that leaving this issue in Mohammad-Dāʿud Xān’s hands would weaken his position, he decided to deal with it himself.

It is ironic that a statesman who initiated reforms leading to the modernisation of Afghan politics was legally excluded from official life for nine years pursuant to Article №24 of the 1964 Constitution.¹⁹ The rea-

¹⁸ Article №22 of the 1931 Constitution clearly stated that the institution responsible for organising the education system in the state was the government: ‘*omum-e makāteb-e afgānestān dar zir-e nezārat-o taftiś-e hokumat mibāšand [...] (schools in Afghanistan are under the supervision and inspection of the government [...])*’ (*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afgānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 44; Yunas 2001: 20), specifying that the curricula in force must not contradict the principles of Islam. Free and compulsory education, in turn, was referred to in Article №34 of the 1964 Constitution (*Rasmi Ġarida* 1343 [1964]: 8–9; Wilber 1965: 221).

¹⁹ For Article №24 see: Chapter 2.3.5.

sons for the later failures of the democratic/parliamentary experiment symbolised by the 1964 Constitution should be looked for here—the document, theoretically, created a broad spectrum of possibilities providing a wider public discussion that should channel eventual tensions and political conflicts through institutions rather than through violence, but, *de facto*, the conditions modelled (and controlled) by Mohammad-Zāher Šāh himself significantly limited free exchange of views, ultimately leading to the abolition of the monarchy in 1973. It is so because imposition of restrictions on Mohammad-Dāʿud Xān remained one of the main targets of the authors of the new regulations. By providing Mohammad-Zāher Šāh with semi-presidential power, the authors elevated the position of the monarch who could be no longer considered as a passive spectator of the political stage directed previously by the former prime ministers—his two uncles: Mohammad-Hāšem Xān (1929–1946)²⁰ and Šāh-Mahmud Xān (1946–1953),²¹ as well as by his cousin (and brother-in-law)—Mohammad-Dāʿud Xān (1953–1963).

The democratic/parliamentary reforms had two major symbols. The former one was a new constitution itself which tried to westernise the Afghan political system, taking as its basic paradigm the truistic statement that power came from the people. I refer to it as truistic on purpose, but it is worth remembering that, in accordance with the provisions of the earlier, 1931 Constitution, the clergy and tribal structures remain the source of royal power (Olesen 1995: 65). The latter one were the first parliamentary elections carried out between the 26th of August and the 17th Sombole, 1343 (8th of September, 1965).²²

To start reforms, on the Mohammad-Zāher Šāh's order between March 1963 and March 1964 the Constitution Committee in cooperation with some European experts such as the French constitutionalist Louis Fougère prepared some propositions of new regulations.²³ When completed, it was sent to the Constitutional Advisory Commission for discussion and presented as a draft—*Mosavvade-ye qānun-e asāsi-ye ġadid-e Afġānestān*

²⁰ For a detailed description of Mohammad-Hāšem Xān see e.g.: Adamec (1991: 164).

²¹ For a detailed description of Šāh-Mahmud Xān see e.g.: Adamec (1991: 92).

²² For a detailed treatment of the 1965 parliamentary elections see e.g.: Dupree (1980: 588–590). Next to the new constitution and the parliamentary elections one can also mention outburst of both, press as well as students' political activity (Dupree 1980: 590–597, 600–619, 619–623).

²³ The French model was not chosen by accident. French experts had already collaborated on writing of the Egyptian (1953), Iraqi (1958) and Kuwaiti (1962) constitutions. Louis Fougère (1915–1992) was a lecturer at the Université de Montpellier that closely cooperated with the Kabul University in the field of law and had previously advised the committee preparing the constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco.

(1343 [1964])—to the Loya Ğarga (Loya Jirga) that gathered on the 9th of September, 1964, in Kabul (Dupree 1980: 565–569). The date was not chosen accidentally, as that day was the anniversary of the proclamation of the 1931 Constitution. Thus, a semantic link emerged between the two gatherings of the Loya Ğarga as well as between the two, old and new, documents. The former gave way to the latter, closing thus a certain epoch and opening a new one, the symbol of which was a new legal act. Interestingly, the 1964 Loya Ğarga, the first one to record its proceedings in writing, debated for eleven days, changing some of the articles (Dupree 1980: 568, 573–574). The final version of the new constitution was officially signed by Mohammad-Zāher Šāh on the 1st of October, 1964 (Dupree 1980: 586).

The 1964 Constitution, drafted on the 1958 French model (Olesen 1995: 207), introduced a number of modern legal regulations, initiating the reconstruction of local political stage and ways of thinking about its practice, clearly separating the three spheres of power: a legislature, an executive, and a judiciary one. Furthermore, its Article №43 guaranteed, for the first time in the history of Afghanistan, women's suffrage rights; Articles №78–84 gave legal force to the traditional Loya Ğarga, the General Assembly, previously convened sporadically, and since then functioning as an integral part of state structures; Article №103 introduced the office of the attorney general to investigate crimes (Dari/Pashto *modda'i-yo-l-omum*); Article №105 created the Supreme Court (Dari/Pashto *stōra mohakima*). The 1964 Constitution, considered by many scholars as one of the best in the Islamic world, laid the foundations for, *inter alia*, social justice, personal freedom, protection of private property, freedom of speech and religion, the right to education and healthcare (Sierakowska-Dyndo 2002: 98). Above all, however, it ushered a decade of parliamentary democracy, when students frequently organised demonstrations, the masses became politically mobilised and the press flourished (Dupree 1980: 587–623). Not all tasks envisaged by the reforms were successfully completed, e.g. Mohammad-Zāher Šāh refused to sign a law that would allow to establish political parties, but several were formed, *inter alia*, communist and Islamic ones (Vogelsang 2008: 295–299).

Historically, the decade of constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy came to an abrupt end when, in the summer of 1973, Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān overthrew Mohammad-Zāher Šāh, who at that time sojourned in Italy, in a military *coup d'état* and suspended the 1964 Constitution (Vogelsang 2008: 299–300). Practically, the monarch's lack of determination to continue reforms effectively prevented the post-1964 reality from becoming more democratic and more open to everyone interested in active participation in the political life of the state. The fate

of the 1964 Constitution was thus determined by Mohammad-Zāher Šāh and sealed by Mohammad-Dāʿud Xān's own constitution signed in 1977 that promoted, in its Article №40, a one-party regime under the banner of presidential Hezb-e Enqelāb-e Melli (NRP National Revolutionary Party): *'barā-ye en'ekās-e xāstehā-ye eġtemā'i va tarbiyat-e siyāsi-ye mardom-e afgānestān tā zamān-i ke in ārezu bar āvarde gardad va be rošd-e tabi'i-ye xod beresad sistem-e yekhezbi dar kešvar be rahbari-ye hezb-e enqelāb-e melli ke bāni va pišāhang-e enqelāb-e mardomi va moteraqqi-ye 26-e saratān-e sāl-e 1352 mardom-e afgānestān ast bar qarār xāhad bud* (For the reflection of social demands and for the political education of the people of Afghanistan, until such time as this aspiration is realised and attains its natural maturity, the one party system led by the Hezb-e Enqelāb-e Melli [NRP National Revolution Party—MMPK], which is the founder and vanguard of the popular and progressive revolution of the 26th of Saratān, of the year 1352 [17th of July, 1973—MMPK], of the people of Afghanistan, will prevail in the country)' (*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afgānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 176–177; *The Constitution of the Republican State of Afghanistan: English Translation Part III* 1977: 1).²⁴ Accordingly, as proved by Ginsburg and Huq (2014: 118), the fate of each Afghan constitution is entwined with that of its author(s).

One thing needs to be clarified here, as the prime minister Mohammad-Dāʿud Xān complained that the monarch exercised too much power under the 1931 Constitution. He highly insisted on moving Afghanistan to a constitutional monarchy/parliamentary democracy, but, as the president he literally crafted a constitution that vested him unrestrained powers (Pasarlay 2022)—an absolute monarchy was hence replaced by an authoritarian republic.

3 Comments

The 1964 Constitution, approved by the Loya Ğarga in September 1964 and signed by Mohammad-Zāher Šāh in October of the same year, comprised: (i) the Royal Promulgation; (ii) the Preamble; (iii) eleven chapters on the state, the monarch, the fundamental rights and obligations of

²⁴ For the text of the 1977 Constitution see: *Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afgānestān* (1386 [2007/2008]: 157–228). For its English translation see: *The Constitution of the Republican State of Afghanistan: English Translation Part I–XII* printed in *The Kabul Times* (15: 282–293) between the 14th and 25th of Hut, 1355 (5th–16th of March, 1977), reprinted in *The Constitution of the Republic of Afghanistan: The English Language Version of the Constitution as it Appeared in the Kabul Times from March 5, 1977 to March 16, 1977* (in *Afghanistan Council of the Asia Society Occasional Paper* 7: 2–11, 1977), or in Yunas (2001: 67–95). For the detailed description of the NRP see: Adamec (1991: 176).

citizens, the parliament, the Loya Ğarga, the government, the judiciary, administration, the state of emergency, amendments as well as transitional provisions; and (iv) one hundred twenty eight articles. For comparison, the 1923 Constitution consisted of nine chapters *plus* two sets of amendments and seventy three articles, while the 1931 one had sixteen chapters and one hundred ten articles.

3.1 Royal Promulgation

The main body of the 1964 Constitution was preluded by a concise royal promulgation dated the 9th of Mizān, 1343 (1st of October, 1964), and written in both official languages of the Kingdom of Afghanistan, i.e. Dari and Pashto. Apparently, there was no such declaration in neither the 1923 Constitution nor the 1931 one, so the enactment of the law can be interpreted as a new beginning of communication between the state and citizens. The content of the promulgation reads as follows:

mā almotevakkol ala-allāh mohammad-zāher-šāh pādešāh-e afgānestān mosavvade-ye qānun-e ġadid-e afgānestān-rā ke az taraf-e loya ġarga-i ke az heždahom tā bist-o-haštom-e mäh-e sombole-ye sāl-e 1343 h.š. dar šahr-e kābol en'eqād yāft, tasvib gardide be nām-e xodāvand-e bozorg touših mikonam va sar az emruz ān-rā be heys-e qānun-e asāsi-ye afgānestān dar tamām-e neqāt-e doulat nāfez e'lām mikonam. sar az emruz qānun-e asāsi-rā ke az taraf-e loya ġarga-ye sāl-e 1309 h.š. tasvib gardide va tā konun dar kešvar nāfez bud bā tamām-e zamāyem-e ān molqā e'lām mikonam/mohammad-zāher-šāh/dā afgānistān pādšāh. (Də Afgānistān asāsi qānun: Qānun-e asāsi-ye Afgānestān 1343 [1964]: 2)

We, Mohammad Zahir Shah, the King of Afghanistan, in the name of Almighty God, do herewith sign the new Constitution of Afghanistan approved by the Loya Jirgah [Loya Ğarga—MMPK] in its session in Kabul beginning on the eighteenth and ending on the twenty-eighth of Sumbulah [sambole—MMPK], 1343 [09th–19th September, 1964—MMPK]. We promulgate this new Constitution today throughout the entire State. From today we declare the Abrogation of the Constitution approved by the Loya Jirgah of 1309 [1931—MMPK] prior to this day in force in the country and all amendments thereto/Mohammad-Zāher Šāh/The King of Afghanistan. (Wilber 1965: 217)

As can be seen, Mohammad-Zāher Šāh, following the principle of using *pluralis maiestatis* in form of the *mā* 'we' personal pronoun, typical for the Persian court tradition, announced the enactment of a new set of basic

legal regulations.²⁵ The addressees of his words put in the Promulgation, however, was not a random crowd, but those who had been referred to in the body of the 1964 Constitution as: ‘nation (*mellat*)’, ‘people (*mardom*)’, or, alternatively, ‘Afghans (*afgānān*)’, i.e. all the citizens of the Kingdom of Afghanistan. In doing so, the king defined himself as the executor of the will of the subjects embodied by the Loya Ğarga, i.e. all-Afghan General Assembly that during a series of meetings had adopted the final version of the 1964 Constitution to which he penned the analysed Promulgation. He seemingly described his political role as purely administrative but, *de facto*, it was him who was the depositary of the prerogatives which made it possible for him to do so—the privilege guaranteed by Article №9: ‘[...] *pādšāh dārā-ye hoquq-o vazā’ef-e āti mibāšad*: [...] *touših-e qavānin va e’lām-e enfāz-e ān* (The King has the following rights and duties: (...) signs laws and proclaims their enforcement)’ (*Rasmi Ğarida* 1343 [1964]: 2–3; Wilber 1965: 218).

Such a power was visually represented by his signature—in line with Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), writing: *touših mikonam* ‘I sign’, as well as: *e’lām mikonam* ‘I declare’, Mohammad-Zāher Šāh not only stated that from this point forward the 1931 Constitution of Mohammad-Nāder Šāh (1929–1933), i.e. of his father, officially ceased to be important but a new one would take its place throughout the country.

Mohammad-Zāher Šāh’s right to enactment of the law also resulted from (or, rather, was entrenched by) Article №6 on the king representing the sovereignty: ‘*dar afgānestān pādšāh hākemiyat-e malli-rā tamsil mikonad* (In Afghanistan the King personifies the sovereignty)’ (*Rasmi Ğarida* 1343 [1964]: 2; Wilber 1965: 217) as well as from (entrenched by) Article №7 on the king upholding, *inter alia*, the constitution and its legal solutions: ‘*pādšāh hāmi-ye asāsāt-e dīn-e moqaddas-e eslām, hāfez-e esteqlāl va tamāmiyat-e sāhe, negahbān-e qānun-e asāsi va markaz-e vahdat-e melli-ye afgānestān mibāšad* (The King is the protector of the basic principles of the sacred religion of Islam, the guardian of Afghanistan’s independence and territorial integrity, the custodian of its Constitution and the centre of its national unity)’ (*Rasmi Ğarida* 1343 [1964]: 2; Wilber 1965: 217). The king remained thus the source of law, although, as characterised in Article №1 (more below), his prerogatives, placed within the confines of a constitutional monarchy, were limited by those of the representatives elected by the citizens in parliamentary elections.

At the same time, Mohammad-Zāher Šāh sanctioned his signature as consistent with Islam, and the 1964 Constitution itself as consistent with

²⁵ This is not surprising, as any law of crucial importance can be announced by a head of state in this way.

its basic principles, by using the expression: *be nām-e xodāvand-e bozorg* (in the name of Almighty God), when speaking about singing the new law, as well as such terms as: *almotevakkol* (trusting in God) and *alā-al-lah* (putting confidence in God), when speaking about himself. Such utterances involuntarily direct our thoughts towards Abdorrahmān Xān's title *ziyā-l-mellat-wa-ddin* (the light of community and religion), his son, Habibollāh Xān's, *seraḡo-l-mellat-wa-ddin* (the lantern of the nation and religion) as well as the Iranian Safavids' one *zellollāh* (the shadow of God) but, it cannot be argued that the king claimed the right to also exercise the function of the leader of a religious community (Dari *ommat*) even if, according to Article №8, the king must be a Muslim: '*pādšāh bāyad az taba'e-ye afgānestān, mosalmān va peyrou-e mazhab-e hanafi bāšad* (The king shall be an Afghan national, a Muslim and a follower of the Hanafi do)' (*Rasmi Ğarida* 1343 [1964]: 2; Wilber 1965: 217), and, according to Article №11, his name must be called during the Friday prayer: '*dar xotbehā nām-e pādšāh zekr migardad* (The name of the king is mentioned in khutbas)' (*Rasmi Ğarida* 1343 [1964]: 3; Wilber 1965: 217). The 1964 Constitution remained in line with the pillars of Islam, which was defined in Article №2 as Afghan and sacred: '*din-e afgānestān din-e moqaddas-e eslām ast [...]* (Islam is the sacred religion of Afghanistan [...])' (*Rasmi Ğarida* 1343 [1964]: 2; Wilber 1965: 217) but the religion itself, contrary to the 1931 Constitution, was not the main core of the law. I return to this problem later in the text, but it is worth adding here that the recognition of Islam as a model and moral standard did not mean recognising it as the right in itself, as clearly stated in Article №64 (more below).

One point needs clarification. The 1964 Constitution was co-inspired by Mohammad-Zāher Šāh and with his consent, although he did not participate directly in the work of the seven-member Constitution Committee, which prepared an extensive draft over the course of several months. The draft, accepted by Mohammad-Zāher Šāh and his cabinet, was then handed over to a thirty-two-member Constitutional Advisory Commission which assessed it and, if necessary, corrected it. Only after the completion of their work, the relevant project was sent to the chosen Loya Ğarga representatives, who focused on each of the articles, introducing final changes to the presented document.²⁶ As can be seen, the indirect source of the new constitution is the king himself, as no article that would be inconsistent or contrary to his will would be included in the version presented to the Loya Ğarga, which was composed on Mohammad-Zāher Šāh's order and to which he appointed thirty four members.

²⁶ For a detailed treatment of work and discussion taken by the Loya Ğarga see e.g.: Dupree (1980: 567–587).

3.2 The Preamble

The preamble, an optional introductory statement, reveals the legal document's purposes. It is no different in the case of the 1964 Constitution as in its Preamble various motives for writing the new basic law, i.e. general references to humanity and to God, as well as to sources of the constitutional authority could be easily traced. All these references placed the document within both a local, i.e. Afghan, and an international legal-and-cultural context.²⁷ The content of the Preamble reads as follows:

*besmellāho-r-rahmano-r-rahim/be nām-e xodāvand-e tavānā va dādgar/
be manzur-e tanzim-e hayāt-e melli-ye afgānestān motābeq be moqtaziyāt-e
zamān-e asr va bar asās-e vāqe'iyāt-e tārixi va farhang-e melli; be manzur-e
ta'min-e edālat va mosāwāt; be manzur-e tatbiq-e demokrāsi-ye siyāsi-eqtesādi
va eḡtemā'i; be manzur-e tanzim-e šo'un va arkān-e doulāt barā-ye ta'min-e āzā-
di va refāh-e afrād va hefz-e nazm-e omumi; be manzur-e enkešāf-e motevāzen-e
tamām-e omur-e hayāti-ye afgānestān. va dar nahāyat: be manzur-e taškil-e
yek ḡāme'-e-ye moraffah va moteraqqi bar asās-e ta'āvon-e eḡtemā'i va hefz-e
kerāmat-e ensāni; mā mardom-e afgānestān bā dark-e tahavvolāt-e tārixi ke
dar zendegāni-ye mā be heys-e yek mellat va yek ḡoz'-e ḡāme'-e-ye bašari be vo-
qu' peyvaste, dar hāl-i ke arzešhā-ye fouq-rā haqq-e hame-ye ḡavāme'-e bašari
midānim, be qiyādat-e a'lāhazrat-e mohammad-zāher-šāh pādešāh va pišvā-ye
zendegāni-ye melli-ye afgānestān in qanun-e asāsi-rā barā-ye xod va nashlā-ye
āyande vaz' kardim. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 1)*

In the name of God, the almighty and the just/To reorganize the national life of Afghanistan according to the requirements of the time and on the basis of the realities of national history and culture; to achieve justice and equality; to establish political, economic and social democracy; to organize the functions of the State and its branches to ensure liberty and welfare of the individual and the maintenance of the general order; to achieve a balanced development of all phases of life in Afghanistan; and to form, ultimately, a prosperous and progressive society based on social co-operation and preservation of human dignity; we, the People of Afghanistan, conscious of the historical changes which have occurred in our life as a nation and as a part of human society, while considering the above-mentioned values to be the right of all human societies, have, under the leadership of His Majesty Mohammed Zahir Shah [Mohammad-Zāher Šāh—MMPK], the

²⁷ Modrzejewska-Leśniewska (2010: 247) cites the Preamble in her monograph *Afganistan*, noticing its importance, but, unfortunately, does not analyse its content.

King of Afghanistan and the leader of its national life, framed this Constitution for ourselves and the generations to come. (Wilber 1965: 217)

As one can see, the 1964 Constitution stated that it was enacted to introduce (or, better, strengthen) democracy at different levels of the economic or social life. I have written above: ‘the 1964 Constitution stated that it [...]’, on purpose because its text, as most of other legal documents, used present indicative, or possibly present subjunctive, not so much to describe reality as to model it—by naming various phenomena, the document tries to change their ontological status, firstly, on the legal level, and, secondly, on the level of everyday administrative practice.

Furthermore, the 1964 Constitution was supposed to improve the functioning of the state by strengthening its freedom (including, freedom of press) and by ensuring sustainable development that supported creation of a society based on collective cooperation. Various references dedicated to these, and other, crucial issues can be found throughout the whole one-hundred-twenty-eight-article document. Some of them appeared in both earlier constitutions, of 1923 and 1931, which additionally created a network of intertextual relationships between these three legal documents. Moreover, it made the 1964 Constitution their indirect continuator, even if a number of the current legal solutions were in contradiction with the existing ones.

It is worth explaining that some basic ideas for the preparation of the new constitution appeared as early as the late 1950s, during Mohammad-Dā’ud Xān’s premiership. It was him who in a series of letters penned in the early 1960s and addressed to Mohammad-Zāher Šāh clearly postulated the re-construction of the Afghan political system by introduction of the real (and effective) separation of three powers: legislative, executive and judiciary, existing so far more in the realm of wishful thinking than administrative practice (Kāzem 1398 [2019/2020]: I, 376–378). In fact, both previous constitutions, of 1923 and 1931, were prepared without any public participation and entrusted the monarch with almost all of the power, stipulating a little room for popular participation. The new one was supposed to be a completely new opening, and an expression of this new opening was represented not only by its content, but also by the way it was prepared—hence, *inter alia*, the presence of a few French constitutionalists, or the actual discussions concerning various legal arrangements carried out by the Loya Ğarga.

Some plans for systemic politic reforms had been raised by Mohammad-Dā’ud Xān at the beginning on 1960s for a long time and discussed with cabinet members, but they revealed a deep discrepancy between the ideas of the prime minister and the intentions of the king as well as the educated urban middle class (Sierakowska-Dyndo 2002: 91). While Mo-

hammad-Dā'ud Xān opted, apparently, for a strong constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy as well as the legalisation of one party (eventually, two), by referring to the United Arab Republic (1958–1961) under Gamal Abdel Naser, the king and the middle class feared that such a one-party model would only strengthen his position, making him *de facto* the most important persona in the country. For Mohammad-Zāher Šāh this would mean depriving him as well as the royal family of its active participation in making the most crucial decisions in the country, and in the longer term weakening the role of the monarch to such a degree that it would eventually cause the change of the system from monarchist to republican. For the intellectual *élite*, Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān was an ambivalent figure. On the one hand, he boldly introduced a number of cultural, economic or social reforms. On the other one, they believed that in the case of Afghanistan, the desired political model should use tools developed within the framework of local jirgas. In other words, they sought to incorporate traditional councils into the political system of a constitutional monarchy at the local and supra-local levels (Magnus 1974: 54–55). If the king and the educated urban middle class were looking for any pattern to follow, it was primarily India, not the United Arab Republic (Magnus 1974: 55).

Returning to the topic, the source of power, according to the Preamble, is the Afghan society, self-defining itself as a nation led by a king, in this case Mohammad-Zāher Šāh. Contrary to the Promulgation, where the *mā* 'we' personal pronoun represented the king, here: '*mā mardom-e afġānestān [...] in qanun-e asāsi-rā barā-ye xod va naslhā-ye āyande vaz' kardim* (We, the People of Afghanistan [...] framed this Constitution for ourselves and the generations to come)' (*Rasmi Ġarida* 1343 [1964]: 1; Wilber 1965: 217), it did not define the person of the king but the community represented in the form of the Afghan society. It is therefore a retreat from the divine sources of royal power, not a return to the earlier ideas about the jirga rooted in it.

3.3 Articles

Below, nineteen of selected articles from the 1964 Constitution have been collected and discussed.

3.3.1 Article №1

The content of Article №1 reads as follows:

afġānestān doulat-e pādšāhi-ye mašrute, mostaqel, vāhed va ġeyr-e taġziye ast. hākemiyat-e melli dar afġānestān be mellat ta'alloq dārad. mellat-e afġānestān ebārat ast az tamām-e afrād-i ke tābe'iyat-e doulat-e afġānestān-rā motābeq be

ahkām-e qānun dārā bāšand. bar har fard az afrād-e mazkur kalame-ye afgān etlāq mišavad. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 2)

Afghanistan is a Constitutional Monarchy; an independent, unitary and indivisible state. Sovereignty in Afghanistan belongs to the nation. The Afghan nation is composed of all those individuals who possess the citizenship of the State of Afghanistan in accordance with the provisions of the law. The word Afghan shall apply to each such individual. (Wilber 1965: 217)

This article, opening the 1964 Constitution as well as its Chapter I: *Daulat/ Daulat (The State)*, explicitly defined the nature of the Afghan state as independent (Dari *mostaqel*/Pashto *xpəlwāk*), unitary (Dari *vāhed*/Pashto *yawmuṭay*) and indivisible (Dari *qeyr-e tağziya*/Pashto *nabeledunkay*). It repeated thus the previous legal assumptions to be found in the 1923 and 1931 documents. According to Article №1 of the 1923 Constitution, the Afghan state was an internally and internationally independent entity where the royal authority extended over its whole territory: '*doulat-e afgānestān edāre-ye omur-e dāxele va xāreḡe-ye xod-rā be esteqlāl-nāme hā'ez bude. hame-ye mahallāt va qat'āt-e mamlekat be zir-e amr-o edāre-ye saniye-ye molukāne be surat-e yek voḡud-e vāhed taškil miyābad [...]*' (Afghanistan is completely free and independent in the administration of its domestic and foreign affairs. All parts and areas of the country are under authority of His Majesty, the King and are to be treated as a single unit [...])' (*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afgānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 3; Yunas 2001: 1). The analogous utterances were repeated in the 1931 Constitution as Article №2 (*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afgānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 35–36; Yunas 2001: 17).

The reference to independence was of a twofold dimension. Obviously, it was a simple statement of a political fact but, simultaneously, it referred to the not so remote history when the international independence of the Afghan state had got partially restricted and transferred to the British Government of India (Raj) under the Treaty of Gandamak (1879) by Mohammad-Ya'qub Xān, Emir of Afghanistan (1879), and Sir Louis Cavagnari, a representative of the Government, ratified by Lord Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton, Viceroy of India, and finally lifted by the Treaty of Rawalpindi (1919) which brought the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919) to an end.²⁸ The very first sentence to be found in the 1964 Constitution was therefore an intertextual reverse of two passages of the 1879 agreement: 'His Highness the Amir of Afghanistan and its dependencies agrees to conduct his relations with Foreign States in accordance with the advice and

²⁸ For a detailed treatment of the Second Anglo-Afghan War as well as the Treaty of Gandamak see e.g.: Gregorian (1969: 114–117).

wishes of the British Government. His Highness the Amir will enter into no engagements with Foreign States, and will not take up arms against any Foreign State, except with the concurrence of the British Government' (*The Treaty of Gandamak* 1879: 2).

What distinguished the 1964 Constitution from the two previous ones was the unequivocal definition of the character of the Afghan monarchy in Article №1 as a constitutional one (Dari *doulāt-e pādšāhi-ye mašrute*/Pashto *mašruta bāčā'i daulat*), i.e. based on a codified set of legal norms, applicable to all, including the monarch, whose legislative power was limited by cooperation with the representation of the people; such a legal basis also explained the second sentence of the same article, referring to sovereignty and its holders—the nation (Dari *mellat*/Pashto *millat*). The appearance of the phrase defining the character of the monarchy should be interpreted in terms of the reconstruction of the political system or at least in terms of attempts to reform it in great depth. It also might be read as a visible signal of the willingness of the Afghan officials and politicians to abandon the current model of the absolute monarchy with the decision-making centre located within the royal family and originating from Abdorrahmān Xān's unification efforts between 1880 and 1901.²⁹

Article №1 unambiguously defined the meaning of the term 'Afghan nation (Dari *mellat-e afğānestān/dā afğānistān millat*)' as a group of people sharing the same citizenship (Dari/Pashto *tābe'iyat*) of Afghanistan. The lexeme *mellat/millat* appeared in its modern meaning 'nation', not in the traditional sense of 'a group of people who are united by a common religion'—this remained an expression of the transformations in the way of thinking about relations between the state and the citizen that had been taking place in Afghanistan since the end of the 19th century.³⁰ A modern-like definition of the nation was also found in the first two constitutions, according to the provisions of which the only criterion of belonging was the place of residence. Ethical issues, especially religious ones, played no role here as in Article №8 of the 1923 Constitution one can read: '*hame-ye afrād-i ke dar mamlekat-e afğānestān mibāšand belātafriq-e dini va mazhabī taba'e-ye afğānestān gofte mišavand [...] (All persons residing in the Kingdom of Afghanistan, without respect to religious or sectarian differences, are considered to be subjects of Afghanistan [...])*'

²⁹ For a detailed treatment of Abdorrahmān Xān's unification efforts see e.g.: Kakar (1979: 3–72).

³⁰ Tarzi played a significant role in creating a local intellectual horizon that would allow for the development of his own set of concepts describing modern intellectual currents. It is to him that we owe the transplantation of a number of ideological solutions to Afghanistan, which were the beginning of later systemic changes.

(*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afġānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 7; Yunas 2001: 2); the same statement figured in Article №9 of the 1931 one (*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afġānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 40; Yunas 2001: 19).

Finally, Article №1 implemented the ethnonym ‘Afghan (*afġān*)’ as a term denoting every citizen of the country who had full political rights. Theoretically, the term should not have taken into account the citizen’s ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious or professional affiliation, nevertheless during the Loya Ģerga’s assembly it aroused great resistance on the part of non-Pashtun delegates.³¹ Despite the work of a separate committee, no alternative solution was presented (Dupree 1980: 578). As a side note, it is worth mentioning an anecdote quoted by Janata (1990: 60): ‘Once, during a fieldwork in Afghanistan [...] I was instructed by a nationalist *mamur* (bureaucrat) when I used the term “Afgan” referring to the user of the Pashto language. “I heard” all the citizens of this country are Afghans’. What is the significance of the bureaucrat’s words? Not only a universalising statement that every inhabitant of Afghanistan is ‘Afghan’, but also the emphasis that every inhabitant of Afghanistan is ‘Afghan’—in the original version appears the exoethnonym ‘Afghan (Dari *afġān*)’, used by the people outside of Pashtun as a synonym for the endoethnonym ‘Pashtun (Pashto *paštun*)’. This innocent, seemingly linguistic trick carries a considerable ideological charge, as it clearly proves that one of the pillars of Afghan national unity is precisely the Pashtun element. This can and has generated considerable resistance from the non-Pashtun people, revealing the heterogeneity and internal incoherence of the Afghan society. The term appeared in a few other places of the 1964 Constitution, *inter alia*, in Article №27: ‘*hiĉ afġān be ellat-e ettehām be yek ġorm be doulat-e xāreġi seporde nemišavad* (No Afghan accused of a crime can be extradited to a foreign state)’ (*Rasmi Ģarida* 1343 [1964]: 7; Wilber 1965: 220), affirming the equality of all before the law, regardless of ethnic or linguistic differences.³²

3.3.2 Article №2

Article №2 concerned the place and role of Islam within the newly re-considered Afghan political system. Additionally, it confirmed the right of religious minorities to practice their faith, present in earlier documents.

³¹ For a detailed treatment of the term ‘Afghan’ see e.g.: Green (2017a: 5–7); Green, Arbabzadah (2013: 4).

³² It is interesting that the issue of ethnonym, and therefore ethnicity, returned, like a boomerang, during the preparation of the 2004 Constitution: ‘Afghanistan began as a Pushtun empire ruled by tribal dynasts from Kandahar, and even today the ethnic question in its plainest form asks whether the state is to be the instrument of a mostly Pushtun elite, or a mechanism through which all citizens may equally take part in self-government’ (Rubin 2004: 10–11).

Afghanistan was (and still is) a relatively homogeneous country in terms of religion. In the 1960s, when the 1964 Constitution was written, a small percentage of the population were the Hindus and Jews. They were guaranteed religious freedom, although possible restrictions resulting from the need to maintain public order were clearly indicated. The content of Article №2 reads as follows:

din-e afgānestn din-e moqaddas-e eslām ast. ša'āyer-e dini az taraf-e doulat motābeq be ahkām-e mazhab-e hanafi egrā' migardad. ān afrād-e mellat ke peyrou-e din-e eslām nistand dar egrā'-ye marāsem-e mazhabi-ye xod dar dāxel-e hodud-i ke qavānin-e marbut be ādāb-o āsāyeš-e āmme ta'yin mikonad, āzād mibāšand. (Rasmi Ğarida 1343 [1964]: 2)

Islam is the sacred religion of Afghanistan. Religious rites performed by the State shall be according to the provisions of the Hanafi doctrine. Non-Muslim citizens shall be free to perform their rituals within the him determined by laws for public decency and public peace. (Wilber 1965: 217)

This article partially duplicated the legal arrangements to be found especially in the 1931 Constitution on relations between the secular and religious foundations of the state law. For, as one can conclude reading Article №5 of the 1931 Constitution, the monarch's exercise of power takes place in accordance with the provisions of religious law: '[...] zāt-e homāyuni dar heyn-e ġolus bar taxt-e soltanat-e mostaqele-ye afgāniye belmovāġehi-ye omum va kalā va ašrāf-e ahāli-ye afgānestān ta'ahhod namude-and ke motābeq-e avāmer-e mofti-ye bahā-ye šar'-e šarif-e nabavi (s) va mazhab-e hanafi (rh) va osul-e asāsi-ye mamlekat egrā'-ye u amr-e hokumat-e šāhāne-ye xod-rā farmude [...]' ([...] His Majesty had expressed resolve, in presence of the people, representatives and noble citizens of Afghanistan, that he would rule the country according to tenets of the Shariat of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H), the sacred Hanafite creed and the constitution of the State [...])' (*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afgānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 37; Yunas 2001: 18). Furthermore, references to the religious and secular law appearing in the 1931 Constitution clearly grade their value because religious regulations were mentioned first, and only then secular ones followed, e.g.: Article №19: 'šekanġe va digar onvā'-e zaġr tamāman mouquf ast va xāreġ-e ahkām-e šar'-e šarif va osulnāme-hā-ye doulat barā-ye hičkas moġāzāt dāde nemišavad (Persecution and torture of any kind is prohibited. No body may be punished without trial under the Shariat and State laws)' (*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afgānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 43; Yunas 2001: 20), or Article №65: 'mavād-i ke dar maġles-e šurā-ye melli tasvib mišavad bāyad bā ahkām-e din-e mobin-e eslāmi va siyāsāt-e mamlekat moxālefāt nadāšte bāšad

(The matters approved by the National Assembly should not clash with the holy religion of Islam and the policy of the state)' (*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afġānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 61; Yunas 2001: 26).

The 1964 Constitution should be thus considered as a new step on the way to the separation of the state from the religion. This can be clearly seen in the example of two articles—Article №69: '*be estesnā-ye hālāt-i ke barā-ye ān tarzo-l-amal-e xāssi dar in qānun-e asāsi tasrih gardide, qānun ebārat ast az mosavvabe-ye movāfeq-e har do ġerge ke be touših-e pādšāh reside bāšad. dar sāhe-i ke čenin mosavvabe voġud nabāšad ebārat ast az ah-kām-e feqh-e hanafi-ye šari'at-e eslām* (Excepting the conditions for which specific provisions have been made in this Constitution, a law is a resolution passed by both houses [of the parliament—MMPK], and signed by the king. In the area where no such law exists, the provisions of the Hanafi jurisprudence of the shariaat of Islam shall be considered as law)' (*Rasmi Ģarida* 1343 [1964]: 14; Wilber 1965: 223), and Article №102:

mohākem dar qazāyā-ye moured-e residegi-ye xod ahkām-e in qānun-e asāsi va qavānin-e doulat-rā tatbiq mikonand. har gāh barā-ye qaziye-i az qazāyā-ye moured-e residegi dar qānun-e asāsi va qavānin-e doulat hokm-i mouġud nabāšad mohākem be peyrou-i az asāsāt-e kolli-ye feqh-e hanafi-ye šari'at-e eslām dar dāxel-e hodud-i ke in qānun-e asāsi vaz' namude dar čenin ahvāl hokm-i sāder mikonand ke dar nazar-ešān edālat-rā be behtarin surat-e momken ta'min namāyad. (*Rasmi Ģarida* 1343 [1964]: 19)

The courts in the cases under their consideration shall apply the provisions of this Constitution and the laws of the State. Whenever no provision exists in the Constitution or the laws for a case under consideration, the courts shall, by following the basic principles of the Hanafi jurisprudence of the Shariaat of Islam and within the limitations set forth in this Constitution, render a decision that in their opinion secures justice in the best possible way. (Wilber 1965: 226)

As can be deduced from both provisions, the religious law only supplemented the legal arrangements to be found in the new constitution and was not their sole basis.

Even if a number of legal arrangements to be found in the 1964 Constitution were consistent with legal ones developed on the basis of the religious law, the fact that they were treated as an element of secular law shows clear tendencies to separate the two legal spheres. Such an approach should be perceived as a retreat from Abdorrahmān Xān's intentions to centralise the Afghan stare around religion subject to strict control by

the central authorities, represented by the emir himself.³³ In his case this meant, *inter alia*, the Islamization of Kafiristan (1895–1896), the pacification of the Shi'a Hazaras (1892–1893), the fullest possible subordination of the top-down control of the traditional decentralised education system based on Koranic schools by establishing a network of training centres for the clergymen, and finally monopolising the judiciary system under the sharia law through the appropriation of the right to nominate judges.³⁴ These and other moves led to the strengthening of the position of Islam and, at the same time, closer integration of it with the state administrative apparatus (and, therefore, better control). As Olesen (1995: 65) notes, Abdorrahmān Xān developed Islam to legitimise his own absolute monarchy. Such an ideological solution later helped Mahmud Tarzi to use religion to link the absolute monarchy with the emerging concept of a nation-state. While Abdorrahmān Xān dealt primarily with the juristic aspects of Islam, Mahmud Tarzi referred mainly to its pillars and ethical considerations. Since it was by the grace and will of God, the Afghans converted to Islam. Afghanistan was a country that they received from God, and therefore love for the homeland was directly ordained. Although all Muslims belong to the community of believers, it is made up of many political collectives, from homelands whose citizens are nations. Thus, pan-Islamism and nationalism did not contradict each other. If the homeland is identified with Being, then the nation is its body and bones, and the king is its soul. Therefore, it was the religious duty of every Muslim to serve not only his homeland and nation, but also his government and monarch.³⁵

Reports made during the successive sessions of the Loya Ğarğa show the surprise of some delegates, mainly the clergy, who demanded explanations as to why the Hanafi jurisprudence, and therefore religious *per se*, occupies a secondary position in relation to the secular law (Dupree 1980: 578–583). It should be clarified here that the provision of Article №64 was a nod towards conservative, traditionalist and clerical circles: '[...] *hič qānun nemitavānad monāqez-e asāsāt-e dīn-e moqaddas-e eslām va digar arzešhā-ye mondareğ-e in qānun-e asāsi bāšad* [...]' (There shall be no law repugnant to the basic principles of the sacred religion of Islam and the other values embodied in this constitution [...])' (*Rasmi Ğarida* 1343 [1964]: 13; Wilber 1965: 223). Nevertheless, it does not change the fact that the authors of the 1964 Constitution treated various references to Islam quite instrumentally. The atmosphere in which the deliberations of

³³ See Chapter №2.3.8.

³⁴ For a detailed treatment of Abdorrahmān Xān's reign see e.g.: Kakar (1979).

³⁵ For a detailed treatment of Mahmud Tarzi's set of beliefs see e.g.: Gregorian (1967); Sims-Williams (1980).

the Loya Ğerga were held was also not without significance, as the clergy still remembered the unfavourable attitude of former Prime Minister Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān, hence they often made long, intricate statements, sometimes surprisingly objective. However, the most heated discussions concerned issues related to the judiciary, which faced the serious problem of determining its nature—religious or secular. This process began much earlier, because even during the reign of Mohammad-Nāder Šāh, the decision-making centre was shifted—previously, *qāzi* (religious judge) issued a verdict, guided by the principles of the Hanafi school. In the 1930s, government officials began to play an increasingly important role. A peculiar situation then occurred in which the *qāzi* issued a specific verdict, but it was subject to possible changes by the state administration, including the governor or his subordinates, in accordance with the provisions of the secular law.

3.3.3 Articles №3 and 35

It remains a well-known fact that Afghan society has been a mosaic of different ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups. No wonder that one of the most crucial challenges faced by the 20th century Afghan intellectuals was the sincere acceptance of its complex nature and the resulting difficulties in building a common Afghan identity. The 1964 Constitution *via* its Article №3 recognised such issues as evidenced by the plural form of the noun 'language, tongue (Dari *zabān*/Pashto *žəba*)', i.e. 'languages, tongues (Dari *zabānhā*/Pashto *žəbi*)'. Even if only two languages were ensured a special status as the official languages of the Kingdom of Afghanistan—Dari and Pashto—the mere fact that attention was drawn to the multilingualism of the citizens is commendable. The content of Article №3 reads as follows: '*az ĝomle-ye zabānhā-ye afgānestān pašto va dari zabānhā-ye rasmi mibāšad* (From amongst the languages of Afghanistan, Pushtu [Pashto—MMPK] and Dari shall be the official languages)' (*Rasmi Ğarida* 1343 [1964]: 9; Wilber 1965: 217).

Article №35 introduced, meanwhile, a new semantic category, i.e. the national language, different from the official one, as it would, according to the authors of the 1964 Constitution, serve a fuller internal integration of an exceptionally diverse society. Such a legal category did not appear in the 1923 and 1931 Constitutions. The content of Article №35 is as follows: '*doulat mouzef ast perogrām-e mo'asser-i barā-ye enkešāf va taqviye-ye zabān-e melli-ye pašto vaz'* *va tatbiq konad* (It is the duty of the State to prepare and implement an effective programme for the development and strengthening of the national language, Pushtu [Pashto—MMPK])' (*Rasmi*

Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 12; Wilber 1965: 221). Two languages recognised as official were, as already mentioned, Dari and Pashto.

The former one, Dari, i.e. the Afghan variety of Persian, has had the status of the language of high culture, a supra-ethnic ethnolect with an established history and a long tradition as the language of the court or state administration. Particularly noteworthy is the term ‘Dari (Dari/Pashto *dari*)’ itself, referring to the classic variant of Persian (10th–14th c.), reintroduced top-down by the Afghan authorities in two customs—to emphasise the reference to the Persian literary tradition represented by classical poets, *inter alia*, Ferdousi (10th/11th c.), Hāfez (14th c.) or Sa‘di (13th c.), as well as to differentiate the Afghan variant of Persian from the Iranian or Tajik ones.³⁶

The latter was Pashto—the language of the dominant ethnic group from which both ruling dynasties: Dorrāni (1747–1823) and Barakzāy (1823–1929, 1929–1973), originated. It was this language that, in the intention of the authors of the 1964 Constitution, was to become a plane that would unite the multi-element Afghan society.³⁷ One of the greatest supporters of Pashto identified with Afghan nationalism was Mohammad-Dā’ud Xān. His ardent support would have made him the heir of the members of the Wiš Zalmiyān Party and their programme which emphasised the promotion and development of the Pashto language, if not for the fact that, although being a Pashtun by origin, he represented that part of the Pashtun *élite* that grew up in the culture of Persian literature and communicated more fluently in this language.³⁸ In order to preserve the national identity and promote the national language, all Afghan citizens, especially students, officials and military officers, were required to speak and write Pashto. The importance attached to the promotion of the Pashto language resulted from the conviction present in the discourse of nationalism that language, as the very embodiment of the national character and its genesis, is the main determinant of a national identity. For many Pashtun nationalists, the language itself was perhaps a symbolic link between the past and the present.

There is no doubt that language was the most crucial symbol of diversity in a country where Islam was shared by the vast majority of people. This concept of Pashto as the most crucial factor of ethnic nationalist

³⁶ For a detailed description of Persian as *lingua franca* see e.g.: Green (2019).

³⁷ Importantly, it was not the first attempt to raise the status of the Pashto language. Already in the second half of the 19th century, Šer-Ali Xān (1863–1866, 1868–1879) tried to break the monopoly of the Persian language.

³⁸ For a detailed description of Wiš Zalmiyān Party’s programme see e.g.: *Wiš Zalmiyān* (1326 [1947]). For a detailed discussion of the competition between the Persian- vs. Pashto-speaking elites see e.g. Parvanta (2001); Rzehak (2012a; 2012b).

discourse began to be promoted by the government before World War II. Already in 1936, by the royal decree, Pashto was approved as the national language and the language of instruction throughout the country at the expense of Persian/Dari. The aim was to promote Pashto as the only national language with a long history and excellent literature, and to prove that Pashto culture represents a national identity. However, the imposition of Pashto became a source of split, differentiation, suspicion and antagonism between different social groups. In fact, as Caron (Green 2017b: 79) noted, fostering Pashto studies at the centre: '[r]edirected the energies of talented intellectuals into a competitive arena divided between the Persian and Pashto language communities'.³⁹

3.3.4 Articles №16–19, 21 and 23

Articles №16–19, 21 and 23, which make up Chapter II: *Pādšāh/Bācā* (*The King*), regulate the functions of the monarch in the redrawn system of the constitutional monarchy. They thus define him as the leader of the society as well as a leader with influence on the functioning of the local political scene. Article №16 provides information on the branch of the royal family within which the succession takes place: '*pādšāhi-ye afgānestān dar xānevāde-ye alāhazrat-e mohammad-nāder-šāh šahid bar hasb-e ahkām-e in qānun-e asāsi enteqāl minamāyad* (The succession to the Throne of Afghanistan shall continue in the House of His Majesty Mohammed Nadir Shah [Mohammad-Nāder Šāh—MMPK], the Martyr, in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution)' (*Rasmi Ġarida* 1343 [1964]: 4; Wilber 1965: 218).

This passage is interesting insofar as no analogous (or similar) information is to be found in neither the 1923 Constitution nor the 1931 Constitution. In the latter case, i.e. the 1931 Constitution, Article №5 only mentions the entrustment of power in the hands of Mohammad-Nāder Šāh in recognition of his role in the war for the full independence of Afghanistan from British rule (1919). In the same Article №5 also appears the following phrase: '*[...] banā aleyeh-e mellat-e nağibe-ye afgānestān mote'ahhed mišavad ke soltanat-e afgānestān be xāndān-e in pādšāh-e taraqixāh-e mamlakat be entexāb-e alāhazrat-e pādšāhi va ahāli-ye mellat-e afgānestān enteqāl mikonad* ([...] accordingly, the exalted and noble nation of Afghanistan pledges to succession of the State of Afghanistan within the family of this

³⁹ In this context, the provisions of the last, 2004 constitution are rather surprising. It granted a number of minority languages the status of auxiliary one in those regions which are inhabited by these minorities. On the other hand, it was not decided to give the status of an official language to Uzbek and Turkmen (Rubin 2004: 16–17).

progressive king of the state [Mohammad-Nāder Šāh—MMPK] through selection, to be made by His Majesty and the people of Afghanistan)' (*Qa-vānin-e asāsi-ye Afġānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 37–38; Yunis 2001: 18). What is striking is the guarantee of power given by the Afghan people, who are rising to the role of active political players here.

A clear definition from which branch the future rulers of the Afghan monarchy would be chosen did not only serve to standardise the question of succession *per se*. It was also intended to prevent the disputes that so frequently arose throughout the 19th century, when the right to the throne was claimed by relatives of the deceased ruler, mostly consanguine brothers or rival sets of cousins.⁴⁰

Equally significant was Article №17 which settled the question of the possible abdication of the king:

har gāh pādšāh erāde-ye este'fā' benamāyad be maġles-e morakkab az ra'is-e wolesi ġerga, ra'is-e mašrāno ġerga, sadr-e a'zam, qāziyo-l-qozāt va vazir-e darbār-e pādšāhi ettelā' dāde ba'd dar xalāl-e moddat-e haft ruz loya ġerga-rā dā'er mikonad va este'fā-ye xod-rā šaxsan yā tavassot-e vazir-e darbār be ġerge-ye mazkur eblāq minamāyad. dar surat-i ke loya ġerga tasdiq namāyad ke este'fā' az erāde-ye pādšāh-e naš'at namude az tārix-e tasdiq-e ān este'fā-ye pādšāh nāfez šomorde mišavad. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 4)

Should the King resolve to abdicate, he shall inform a Council consisting of the President of the Wolesi Jirgah [Wolesi Ġerga—MMPK] (House of the People), the President of the Meshrano Jirgah [Mešrāno Ġerga—MMPK] (House of the Elders), the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice and the Minister of the Royal Court and, thereafter, convene a meeting of the Loya Jirgah (Great Council) within a period of seven days and announce therein his abdication in person or through the Minister of Court. If the Loya Jirgah (Great Council) attests that the abdication has stemmed from the will of the King, the abdication shall be considered effective from the date of the attestation. (Wilber 1965: 218)

As well as Article №18 which drew the line of intergenerational transmission of the prerogatives of royal power:

dar mouqe'-e este'fā' yā vafāt-e pādšāh—pādšāhi be pesar-e bozorg-aš enteġāl miyābad. dar surat-i ke pesar-e bozorg-e pādšāh vāġed-e šarāyet-e pādšāhi ke

⁴⁰ The only, in fact, exception to the rule was the case of Mohammad-Nāder Šāh (1929–1933), who ascended the throne after Amānollāh Šāh (1919–1929), although his ties with the ruling family were rather distant—he came from the Peshawar sardar lineage.

dar in qānun-e asāsi zekr gardide nabāšad pādšāhi be pesar-e dovvom-e u va hamčēnān elā āxar enteqāl mikonad. (Rasmi Ğarida 1343 [1964]: 4)

On the King's abdication or death, the Throne shall pass on to his eldest son. If the eldest son of the King lacks the qualifications set forth in this Constitution, the Throne shall pass on to his second son and so on. (Wilber 1965: 218)

It is worth pausing here for a moment to consider the question of a possible abdication of the king, as such a possibility is not present in the provisions that make up the two earlier constitutions, i.e. those of 1923 and 1931. Abdication practically does not exist in the Afghan legal tradition, although it can be rarely observed in that country's history.⁴¹

In the 19th and 20th centuries, therefore, abdications could be counted on the fingers of one hand—Mohammad-Ya'qub Xān abdicated in 1878 in favour of his brother Mohammad-Ayub Xān and moved to Shimla, the then British Raj; Amānollāh Šāh, when he could not cope with the rebellion of Habibollāh Kalakāni *vel* Bačče-ye Saqā' in 1929, abdicated in favour of his brother Ināyatollāh Xān and moved finally to Rome, Italy; Mohammad-Zāher Šāh, facing a military *coup d'état* that removed him from power while he was abroad, abdicated in favour of his cousin Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān in 1973, complying with the 1964 Constitution, and remained in Rome, Italy; Babrak Kārmal stepped down as the General Secretary of the Hezb-e Demokrātik-e Xalq-e Afġānestān (PDPA People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) in 1986 in favour of Mohammad Naġibollāh and moved to Moscow, the then USSR, although his resignation was forced by external factors, i.e. the Soviet authorities trying to reach a successful outcome of the conflict in Afghanistan.

The introduction of the practice of abdication into the Afghan legal system can therefore be regarded as a novelty. In the local tradition, a political leader does not resign from his functions. This is due to certain socio-cultural norms, which did not (and still do not) provide for such a legal solution that a political leader, regardless of the level at which they operate—local, regional, national—could/should/would voluntarily resign from their function. Resignation appears here as an overt expression of weakness and incompetence, and consequently takes the form of a black mark, irremovable blemish, which traces the personality of such

⁴¹ What I have in mind here is a tradition that stems from various processes shaping political norms and the resulting daily administrative practices, consisting of both indigenous Pashtun solutions and those typical of Persian-speaking civilisation (including the Indian one), or the Arab-Muslim civilisation more broadly.

a ruler with a deep stigma. In practice, abdication creates a political vacuum which needs to be filled immediately, but by disrupting the intergenerational exchange of power, it raises the question of the paths by which this exchange would take place. Would power then pass to the son, or should it go to the next brother? To resign is to retreat into political limbo. The best example of this is Amānollāh Šāh, who after announcing his abdication lost the support of numerous local leaders and was eventually replaced by one of his distant relatives, Mohammad-Nāder Šāh (1929). The second example is Mohammad-Zāher Šāh, who after the abdication in 1973 never played a significant political role, neither in the 1980s, i.e. during the Soviet intervention, nor in the 1990s, i.e. during the civil war, nor after 2001, when he was rather a symbol of the (remote *ergo* mythologised) past rather than an active moderator of changes of the time.

Article №19 reverted to the detailed instructions for the intergenerational transfer of power:

har gāh pādšāh vafāt konad yā este'fā' namāyad va pesar-i nadāšte bāšad ke vāğed-e šarāyet-e pādšāhi bāšad, pādšāhi be bozorgtarin barādar-e pādšāh enteqāl minamāyad. dar surat-i ke bozorgtarin barādar-e pādšāh vāğed-e šarāyet-e pādšāhi nabāšad pādšāhi be barādar-i ke az nazar-e senn miyān-e barādarān belāfāsele ba'd az u vāqe' bāšad va hamčēnān elā āxar enteqāl miyābad. dar surat-i ke pādšāh barādar-i nadāšte bāšad ke vāğed-e šarāyet-e pādšāhi bāšad, ġānešin-e pādšāh az ġomle-ye bāzmāndegān-e pesari-ye alāhazrat-e mohammad-nāder-šāh šahid entexāb migardad. dar in hālat entexāb-e pādšāh tavasot-e mağles-i morakkab az loya ġarga, hokumat-o a'zā-ye stōra mahkama surat migirad. in mağles dar surat-e vafāt dar xalāl-e moddat-e pānzdah ruz az tārix-e vafāt va dar surat-e este'fā' dar xalāl-e moddat-e haft ruz az tārix-e nafāz-e ān az taraf-e sadr-e a'zam dā'er mišavad. tasmim-e in mağles be aksariyat-e ārā-ye a'zā-ye hāzer ettexāz migardad va ba'd az movāfeqat-e šaxs-i ke be heys-e pādšāh entexāb šode nāfēz šomorde mišavad. az tārix-e vafāt-e pādšāh bā enfāz-e este'fā-ye u tā entexāb-e ġānešin-e pādšāh, vazir-e darbār nā'eb-e pādšāh šenāxte mišavad. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 4)

Whenever the King abdicates or dies without a son possessing the qualifications to become the King, the Throne shall pass on to the oldest of the King's brothers. In case the oldest of the King's brothers lacks the qualifications needed, the Throne shall pass on to the second brother in line and so on. If the King does not have a brother possessing the qualifications required for the King, his successor shall be elected from amongst the male-lineal descendants of His Majesty Mohammed Nadir Shah, the Martyr. In this case the King shall be elected by an Electoral College consisting of the Loya Jirgah (Great Council), the Government, and the Justices of the Supreme

Court. This Electoral College shall be summoned by the Prime Minister, in the case of the death of the King within fifteen days from the date of the demise and in the case of abdication within seven days from the date when the King's abdication becomes effective. The decision of this Electoral College shall be by a majority of votes of the members present and shall be considered effective upon the consent of the person chosen as the King. The Minister of Court shall act as regent from the time of the death of the King or the validation of his abdication until the election of his successor. (Wilber 1965: 218–219)

The specific provisions governing succession stood in striking contrast to the general provisions contained in both the previous constitutions of 1923 and 1931. The setting out of seemingly elaborate, but in fact transparent rules for the smooth transfer of power to a successor, taking into account the various possible complications, is another argument in assessing the significance of the 1964 Constitution as a thoroughly modern document. At the same time, the inclusion of external bodies—those not from the ruling house (for its definition, see Article №24) in the decision-making process demonstrates a deep understanding of the need to streamline the rules for the selection of a successor. Moreover, it makes the entire society, which participates in the process through its representatives, indirectly co-responsible for it. The whole thing gave the succession all the hallmarks of a legal intergenerational transfer of power, with the maximum exclusion of disputes over the right to the crown, which were frequent in 19th century history of Afghanistan. Transparent definition of the principles of transfer therefore minimised the risk of possible claims by persons belonging to the ruling family, but not necessarily to the king's closest circle, as well as eliminated the risk of potential interference from third countries pursuing their own political and economic interests, often contrary to the interests of the Afghan state.⁴² In this way, the authors have indirectly referred to Article №1 of the same constitution, which defines the nature of the Afghan state as an internationally independent and autonomous political entity.

The last two articles commented on in this subsection, i.e. №21 and №23, also contain a legal novelty:

⁴² I am primarily referring to the First (1839–1842) and the Second (1878–1880) Anglo-Afghan War, when the British authorities placed (favourable) rulers on the throne—Šāh Šoḡā' Dorrāni (1839–1842) and Abdorrahmān Xān respectively. In the latter case, the Governor-General, Lord Lytton, after some negotiation concerning the withdrawal of the British troops agreed to recognise Abdorrahmān Xān as the emir of Afghanistan.

har gāh pādšāh vafāt konad va ġānešin-e u senn-e bist-rā takmil nakarde bāšad tā mouqe^c-i ke senn-e mazkur-rā takmil mikonad malake niyābat-e pādšāhi-rā be ohde migirad. dar surat-i ke malake voġud nadāšte bāšad maġles-i ke dar māde-ye nuzdahom zekr gardid šaxs-i-rā az ġomle-ye bāzmāndegān-e pesari-ye alāhazrat-e mohammad-nāder-šāh šahid be heys-e nā'eb-e pādšāh entexāb mikonad. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 5)

In case the King dies before his successor has completed twenty years of life, the Queen shall act as Regent until his successor reaches the stipulated age. In case the Queen be not living, the Electoral College provided under Article 19 of this Constitution, shall elect someone from amongst the male-lineal descendants of His Majesty Mohammed Nadir Shah, the Martyr, to act as Regent. (Wilber 1965: 219)

nā'eb va wakil-e pādšāh bāyad vāġed-e šarāyet mondareġ-e mādde-ye haštom bāšad. nā'eb-e pādšāh omur-e pādšāhi-rā bar tebq-e ahkām-e in qānun-e asāsi eġrā mikonad. dar surat-i ke malake niyābat-e pādšāh-rā be ohde dāšte bāšad az salāhiyat-e mondareġ-e faqare-ye dovvom-e mādde-ye nohom be mašvare-ye hokumat estefāde mikonad. nā'eb-e pādšāh nemitavānad dar moddat-e tasaddi-ye in ohde be mošāġel-e digar ešteġāl varzad. šaxs-i ke bar hasb-e ahkām-e moured-e bist-o yekom va bist-o dovvom-e in qānun-e asāsi be seffat-e nā'eb-e pādšāh ta'yin migardad hičgāh be heys-e pādšāh-e afgānestān entexāb nemišavad. dar doure-ye niyābat-e pādšāhi mavādd-e marbut be ġānešin-e fasl-e pādšāh-e in qānun-e asāsi ta'dil mišavad. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 5)

The Regent of the King must possess the qualifications specified in Article 8. The Regent shall perform the royal functions in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. In the case of the Queen acting as Regent, the exercise of the authority described in section two of Article 9. shall take place with the advice of the Government. The Regent, during the tenure of his office, cannot engage in any other profession. The person elected as Regent by virtue of Articles 21 and 22 of this Constitution shall never be elected as the King of Afghanistan. During the period of Regency, the provisions relating to succession under the Title 'King' of this Constitution shall not be amended. (Wilber 1965: 219)

Until then, no such function as queen-regent was envisaged, as no function at all was provided for the wife of the head of state, the king, other than, possibly, representative.⁴³ Furthermore, under the provisions of the

⁴³ While Mohammad-Zāher Šāh appeared on stamps from 1939, the Queen Māh-Parvar Begom appeared only in 1968 to commemorate the Mother's Day as well as in 1969 due

1964 Constitution, in the absence of a male descendant, no provision is made for female members of the ruling family to inherit. Article №21 has never been put into practice, so it is impossible to determine how it would actually be implemented, but it is a clear step towards the recognition of the political role of women. The significance of Article №21 and the trust placed in the queen is toned down, however, by Article №23, which explicitly limits her duties as a regent by establishing control by the government. Indeed, this provision does not appear in the case of a male regent.

3.3.5 Article №24

Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān believed that the constitution should clearly define the rights (and responsibilities) of the royal family in the political life. At the same time, it should clarify the criteria for belonging to such a family, as the number of its members and their relatives had grown so much that it was impossible to recognise the boundaries of that belonging. Few felt a sense of responsibility for this, while many demanded privileges. In the Commission, the issue of the future participation of the royal family in the political life of the country caused the most disagreement and controversy—it is estimated that in the period preceding the systemic reforms the composition of the government was dominated in $\frac{3}{4}$ by members of the royal family (Sierakowska-Dyndo 2002: 97). After long discussions, a compromise was reached, according to which the monarch retained his dominant position, while the closest members of the royal family were excluded from holding a number of public functions (Modrzejewska-Leśniewska 2010: 246–247).

Article №24 should therefore be regarded as the key legal solution contained in the new Constitution. For the first time the term a 'ruling house (Dari *xānevāde-ye pādšāhi*/Pashto *bāčā'i koranay*)' was not only clearly defined, but also the rights, duties and limitations resulting from belonging to this house were outlined. The 1931 Constitution circumscribed the ruling house in Article №5 as: '[...] *xāndān ebārat ast az oulād-e zokur-e kabir va barādar* ([...] adult male descendants and brothers)' (*Qavānin-e asāsi-ye Afġānestān* 1386 [2007/2008]: 38; Yunis 2001: 18). The 1964 Constitution, meanwhile, extended this concept to include female members. At the same time, however, it distinctly narrowed the circle of persons. The content of Article №24 reads as follows:

pesar va doxtar va barādar va xāhar-e pādšāh va azvāġ-o zouġā va abnā' va banāt-ešān va amm va abnā-ye amm-e pādšāh xānevāde-ye pādšāhi-rā taškil

midehand. dar tašrifāt-e rasmi-ye doulat xānevāde-ye pādšāhi ba'd az pādšāh va malake axz-e mouqe' minamāyad. masāref-e xānevāde-ye pādšāhi dar budḡe-ye masāref-e pādšāhi ta'yin mišavad. alqāb-e moxtass be xānevāde-ye pādšāhi mibāšad va motābeq be ahkām-e qanun ta'yin migardad. a'zā-ye xānevāde-ye pādšāhi dar ahzāb-e siyāsi šomuliyat nemivarzand va vazāyef-e āti-rā ehrsāz nemikonand: 1. sedārat-e ozmā va vezārat; 2. ozviyat-e šurā; 3. ozviyat-e stāra mahkema. a'zā-ye xānevāde-ye pādšāhi heysiyat-e xod-rā be seffat-e ozv-e xānevāde-ye pādšāhi mādāmo-l-hayāt hefz mikonand. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 5–6)

The Royal House is composed of the sons, the daughters, the brothers and the sisters of the King and their husbands, wives, sons and daughters; and the paternal uncles and the sons of the paternal uncles of the King. In the official protocol of the State, the Royal House comes after the King and the Queen. The expenditure of the Royal House shall be fixed in the budget of the Royal Expenses. Titles of nobility are exclusively confined to the Royal House and shall be assigned in accordance with the provisions of the law. Members of the Royal House shall not participate in political parties, and shall not hold the following offices: 1. Prime Minister or Minister; 2. Member of the Shura [Šurā—MMPK] (Parliament); 3. Justice of the Supreme Court. Members of the Royal House shall maintain the status as members of the Royal House as long as they live. (Wilber 1965: 219)

The ruling house thus consists of the king's sons, daughters, brothers and sisters, their husbands, wives, sons and daughters, as well as the king's uncles and their sons—so as it can be seen, further degrees of kinship are not included. There were two reasons for such a detailed definition of belonging to a ruling house. It dismissed possible claims of further relatives and descendants, eager to enjoy the privileges attributed to the reigning family. At the same time, Article №24 referred to the exclusion of the said persons from political life: '*a'zā-ye xānevāde-ye pādšāhi dar ahzāb-e siyāsi šomuliyat nemivarzand va vazāyef-e āti-rā ehrsāz nemikonand: 1. sedārat-e ozmā-vo vezārat; 2. ozviyat-e šurā; 3. ozviyat-e stāra mahkame* (Members of the Royal House shall not participate in political parties, and shall not hold the following offices: (i) Prime Minister or Minister; (ii) Member of the Shura (Parliament); (iii) Justice of the Supreme Court)' (*Rasmi Ġarida* 1343 [1964]: 5; Wilber 1965: 219). It remains an open secret that this provision closed, *de facto*, the way for Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān to engage in political activity and, if not closed, then made it considerably more difficult for him to do so openly.

Finally, the same Article №24 defined that a member of the ruling house remained a member for life, i.e. anyone who entered the ruling house,

even if they became a widower, widow or divorcée, did not lose the status once granted: ‘*a‘zā-ye xānevāde-ye pādšāhi heysiyat-e xod-rā be seffat-e ozv-e xānevāde-ye pādšāhi mādām-ol-hayāt hefz mikonand* (Members of the Royal House shall maintain their status as members of the Royal House as long as they live)’ (*Rasmi Ğarida* 1343 [1964]: 6; Wilber 1965: 219).

Advocates of such a solution argued that excluding members of the royal family from political life, thereby transferring power to the *élites* outside the family, absolved the monarchy of responsibility for policy and its implementation and reduced attacks on the royal house. It also gives the king more room for manoeuvre, as in the event of growing public dissatisfaction caused by the activities of the executive bodies, the middle link, namely the government, can be replaced without harming the dynasty, and the adopted policy direction can be preserved by appointing a new prime minister (Sierakowska-Dyndo 2002: 97).

I have mentioned above, referring to Modrzejewska-Leśniewska (2010: 246–247), that after some long discussions, a compromise was reached, according to which the monarch retained his dominant position, while the closest members of the royal family were excluded from holding a number of public functions. As said, it remains an open secret that such a legal solution was, *de facto*, aimed at the person of the former prime minister, Mohammad-Dā‘ud Xān, and his appetite for power. The non-substantive rationale behind some 1964 provisions is evidenced by the evolution of Article №24 As Seyyed Qāsem Reštyā (2005: 68), one of the authors of the 1964 Constitution, explains in his memoirs *Xāterāt-e siyāsi-ye Seyyed Qāsem Reštyā* (published also in English as *Afghanistan: The Making of the 1964 Constitution: Memoirs of Sayed Qassem Rishtya*, 2005), Mohammad-Dā‘ud Xān suggested the relevant article to be removed from the draft, but his proposal was rejected. Then, he asked to participate in the Loya Ğarga which was going to formulate the final text of the new constitution. His application was also rejected. Undaunted, he considered to start a political party. Consequently, Article №24 was supplemented with a clause preventing members of the royal family from founding political parties. In this situation, he even began to consider relinquishing his affiliation with the ruling house. The authors of the 1964 Constitution did not make him wait long for the answer—Article №24 was supplemented with a provision stating that one remain a member of the royal family for life.

3.3.6 Articles №31–32

Two articles, namely №31 and №32, should be considered as milestones on the way to full democratisation of political life in Afghanistan by breaking the state monopoly in the realm of access to information and public

activities. Both articles are included in Part III: *Hoquq-o vazāyef-e asāsi-ye mardom/De xalko asāsi haqquna au wazife* (*The Basic Rights and Duties of the People*).

Article №31 guaranteed every citizen, enjoying, of course, full rights, freedom of expression regardless of the form chosen. This opportunity was limited only by the norms determined by particular legal solutions. Hence, the statement could not harm Islam or the monarchy as such, incite to disobedience or reveal details threatening public security:

āzādi-ye fekr va bayān az ta'arroz-e masun ast. har afgān haqq dārad fekr-e xod-rā be vasile-ye goftār, nevešte, tasvīr yā emsāl-e ān motābeq be ahkām-e qānun ezhār konad. har afgān haqq dārad motābeq be ahkām-e qānun be tab' va našr-e matāleb bedun-e erā'e-ye qabli-ye ān be maqāmāt-e doulati bepardāzad. eḡāze-vo emtyāz-e tāsis-e tāsis-e matābe'e omumi va našr-e matbu'āt tanhā be atbā' va doulat-e afgānestān motābeq be ahkām-e qānun dāde mišavad. ta'sis-e va tadvir-e dastgāh-e āmme-ye ferestande-ye rādyo va televizyun moxtass be doulat ast. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 7–8)

Freedom of thought and expression is inviolable. Every Afghan has the right to express his thoughts in speech, in writing, in pictures and by other means, in accordance with the provisions of the law. Every Afghan has the right to print and publish ideas in accordance with the provisions of the law, without submission in advance to the authorities of the State. The permission to establish and own public printing houses and to issue publications is granted only to the citizens and the State of Afghanistan, in accordance with the provisions of the law. The establishment and operation of public radio transmission and telecasting is the exclusive right of the State. (Wilber 1965: 220)

The tangible result of this article was the remarkable development of journalism, both professional and amateur. New periodicals started appearing on the local press market almost overnight—some disappeared after a few issues, others stayed on much longer. They represented various political options on the Afghan scene at the time, mainly left-wing circles, but also conservative or nationalistic ones. They also varied in quality. The abundance and vitality of the press market at the time is surprising given the small readership, inhabiting primarily major urban centres (Modrzejewska-Leśniewska 2010: 250–252).

The same Article №31 also guaranteed the state monopoly on radio and television. Although Radio Afghanistan Dari *rādyo afgānestān*/Pashto *rādyo afgānistān*; today's Voice of Sharia [dari *Sedā-ye šari'at*/Pashto *dā šari'at ḡaž*]) had already been operating since the 1920s, television did

not appear until the end of 1978, i.e. after the military *coup d'état* that brought the PDPA to power. Leaving radio, and implicitly television, in state hands was a guarantee of the development of these media. At the same time, given the low literacy rate of the population, it guaranteed the state a real influence on shaping public opinion; whether this was effective remains a matter for debate.

While Article №31 guaranteed freedom of expression, Article №32 allowed citizens to organise public assemblies and, above all, to establish associations and political parties:

atbā'-e afġānestān haqq dārand barā-ye ta'min-e maqād-e ġāyez va solhāmiz bedun-e haml-e salāh motābeq be ahkām-e qanun bedun-e eġāze-ye qabli-ye doulāt eġtemā' namāyad. atbā'-e afġānestān haqq dārand be manzur-e ta'min-e maqāsed-e mādi yā ma'navi motābeq be ahkām-e qanun ġam'iyathā ta'sis namāyand. atbā'-e afġānestān haqq dārand motābeq be ahkām-e qānun ahzāb-e siyāsi taškīl dehand mašrut bar in ke: 1. hadaf va fa'āliyat-e hezb va mafkurehā-yi ke taškīlāt-e ahzāb ru-ye ān benā' šode monāqez-e arzešhā-ye mondareġ-e in qānun-e asāsi nabāšad; 2. taškīlāt va manābe'-e māli-ye hezb alani bāšad. hezb-i ke motābeq be ahkām-e qānun taškīl miyābad bedun-e mouġebāt-e qānuni va hokm-e stōra mohakeme monhal nemišavad. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 8)

Afghan citizens have the right to assemble unarmed, without prior permission of the State, for the achievement of legitimate and peaceful purposes, in accordance with the provisions of the law. Afghan citizens have the right to establish, in accordance with the provisions of the law, associations for the realisation of material or spiritual purposes. Afghan citizens have the right to form political parties, in accordance with the terms of the law, provided that: 1. The aims and activities of the party and the ideas on which the organization of the party is based are not opposed to the values embodied in the Constitution; 2. The organization and financial resources of the party are open. A party formed in accordance with the provisions of the law cannot be dissolved without due process of the law and the order of the Supreme Court. (Wilber 1965: 220)

As Sierakowska-Dyndo (2002: 98–99) highlights, the preparation and approval of a new constitution was a condition for calling new parliamentary elections. In Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān's idea, parliamentary elections were to precede the formation of political parties. He believed that an appropriate act on political parties should already have been prepared during the drafting of the constitution. Similarly, a number of delegates to the Loya Ġerga considered it a necessary part of the systemic reforms to allow the establishment of political parties to take part in the announced

parliamentary elections. However, the members of the Constitution Committee argued that parties should form peacefully, during the term of the first elected parliament, and that the act on political parties itself should be subject to wide consultations. Mohammad-Dā'ud Xān's ideas were therefore not realised, and parliamentary elections were held without prior legalisation of political parties. The electoral rules were based on equal representation of the individual districts, which led, for example, to the limitation of the representation of the largest urban centre, Kabul.

Although Mohammad-Zāher Šāh was obliged to do so, he never decided to sign the executive acts formulated in 1966 allowing the association of citizens into political parties. His decision was influenced by the opinions formed in his environment, for example, it was believed that political parties would be formed according to ethnicity, thus deepening the already strong national divisions (Modrzejewska-Leśniewska 2010: 256–257). These, therefore, if they were created, were of an informal nature. Abandoning this crucial element of the systemic reforms, particularly those related to free political activity, should therefore be seen as an attempt to hinder, or even halt, the changes initiated by the 1964 Constitution and the first parliament elected under a reformed electoral law. The lack of a royal signature did not completely stop the democratisation processes, although it hindered them to a great extent, contributing to the weakening of the dynamics of these processes and their partial failure.

3.3.7 Articles №41, 43, 45, 57 and 63

According to Article №41, every adult, and therefore with full electoral rights, Afghan citizen can participate in the political life of the state *via* his/her representative to the parliament (Dari/Pashto *šurā*):

šurā-ye afgānestān mazhur-e erāde-ye mardom-e ān ast va az qātebe-ye mellat namāyandegi mikonad. mardom-e afgānestān be tavassot-e šurā dar hayāt-e siyāsi-ye mamlekat sahm migirand [...]. (Rasmi Ğarida 1343 [1964]: 9–10)

The Shura (Parliament) in Afghanistan manifests the will of the people and represents the whole of the nation. The people of Afghanistan participate through the Shura (Parliament) in the political life of the country [...]. (Wilber 1965: 221)

The deputies who serve as representatives are, in accordance with Article №43, elected to the lower house of parliament, the Wolesi Ğarga (House of the People) in free, universal, secret and direct elections for a period of four years:

a'zā-ye wolesi ġerga tavassot-e entexābāt-e āzād—omumi—serri va mostaqim motābeq be ahkām-e qānun az taraf-e mardom-e afgānestān entexāb mišavad. afgānestān be in manzur be houzehā-ye entexābi taqsim migardad. te'dād va sāhe-ye houzehā tavassot-e qānun ta'yin mišavad. az har houze yek nafar wakil entexāb migardad. dāvtalab-i ke dar houze-ye xod motābeq be ahkām-e qānun ra'y-e bištar hāsel mikonad wakil šenāxe mišavad. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 10)

Members of the Wolesi Jirgah (House of the People) shall be elected by the people of Afghanistan in a free, universal, secret and direct election, in accordance with the provisions of the law. For this purpose Afghanistan shall be divided into electoral constituencies, the number and limits of which are fixed by the law. Each constituency shall return one member. The candidate who obtains the largest number of votes cast in his constituency, in accordance with the provisions of the law, shall be recognized as the representative of that constituency. (Wilber 1965: 221)

As for the members of the upper house, the Mešrāno Ģerga (House of the Elders), they are, according to Article №45, nominated—one-third of the members were royally appointed, one-third indirectly elected and one-third directly elected by the people of the province:

a'zā-ye mešrāno ġerga be tartib-e zeyl ta'yin va entexāb mišavad: 1. yek sols-e a'zā' az ġomle-ye afrād-e xabir va bātaġrobe barā-ye moddat-e panġ sāl az taraf-e pādšāh ta'yin mišavad; 2. do sols-e digar-e a'zā' bar hesb-e āti entexe āb mišavand: (alef) har ġerge-ye velāyat yek nafar az ġomle-ye a'zā-ye xod-rā barā-ye moddat-e se sāl be ozviyat-e mešrāno ġerga entexāb mikonad; (be) sākenin-e har velāyat yek nafar-rā az tariq-e entexābāt-e āzād-e omumi-ye sere ri-ye mostaqim barā-ye moddate-e čahār sāl be ozviyat-e mešrāno ġerga entexāb mikonad. (Rasmi Ġarida 1343 [1964]: 10)

Members of the Meshrano Jirgah (House of the Elders) shall be nominated and elected as follows: 1. One-third of the members shall be appointed by the King for a period of five years from amongst well-informed and experienced persons. 2. The remaining two-thirds of the members shall be elected as follows: a. Each Provincial Council shall elect one of its members to the Meshrano Jirgah (House of the Elders) for a period of three years. b. The residents of each province shall elect one person for a period of four years by a free, universal, secret and direct election. (Wilber 1965: 222)

The fact that parliamentarians and senators act as representatives of the public is clearly emphasised by Article №57, which stipulates that ses-

sions are open to the public and may be listened to by any citizen, with the exception of closed sittings:

mobāhese-ye ġalasāt-e har do ġarga alani mibāšad. magar in ke ra'is-e hokumat—ra'is-e ġarga yā aqalan dah nafar az a'zā' serri budan-e ān-rā darxāst namāyand va ġarga in darxāst-rā bepazirad. ġarga mitavānad bā aksariyat-e do sols-e a'zā' mobāhese-i-rā ke be tour-e serri surat gerefte dobāre alani besāzad. ġaryān-e mobāhese-ye har do ġarga sabt migardad. hičkas nemitavānad onfan be maqar-e šurā dāxel šavad. motexallefin motābeq be ahkām-e qānun moġāzāt mišavad. (*Rasmi Ģarida* 1343 [1964]: 12)

Debates in both Houses are open except when the Government, the President of the House or at least ten members request a secret session, and the House grants its approval. The House can, with a two-thirds majority of the members, convert secret proceedings into open debate. The proceedings of both Houses of Shura (Parliament) are recorded. Nobody may enter the meeting place of the Shura (Parliament) by force. Violators shall be punished according to the law. (Wilber 1965: 222)

However, Article №63 remained crucial:

šurā mitavānad be amr-e pādšāh monhall šavad. enhelāl-e šurā dar hālat-e mondareġ-e mādde-ye yeksad-o-bist-o-yekom hatmi ast. enhelāl-e šurā šāmel-e a'zā-ye ġeyr-e entexābi-ye māšrāno ġarga niz mibāšad. (*Rasmi Ģarida* 1343 [1964]: 13)

The Shura (Parliament) may be dissolved by order of the King. The dissolution of the Shura (Parliament) is imperative under the conditions described in Article 121. The dissolution of the Shura (Parliament) encompasses the non-elected members of the Meshrano Jirgah (House of the Elders). (Wilber 1965: 223)

Indeed, this article guaranteed the monarch a clear influence on state policy, thanks to the prerogatives enabling him the dissolution of parliament. It cannot be said that the parliamentarians and the senators were dependent on his whims. It can be stated, however, that of all the ruling house, it was the monarch who enjoyed such wide-ranging rights that in the newly constructed system of constitutional/parliamentary monarchy he still played a major role, and not only served a representative function.

The fact that the turnout for the 1965 parliamentary elections was barely 15–20% is enough to prove that this understanding of the role of parliament was a novelty in Afghanistan at the time. Researchers like Modrzejewska-

-Leśniewska (2010: 261) explain this low turnout by, *inter alia*, Afghans' reluctance to vote in secret. Collaterally, illiterate people did not register as voters, and peasants and nomads were avoiding contact with state apparatus. An additional obstacle to the practical implementation of the assumptions presented in Articles №41, 43, 45 and 57 was the inability of candidates to run within political parties. This meant that each of them had to finance their election campaign independently. As a result, traditional leaders, local notables, village elders, religious leaders, wealthy merchants, teachers and civil servants, many of whom treated party activities as an opportunity to make up for the costs incurred and to take care of their own needs or those of the group they represented, entered the parliament.

3.3.8 Article №108

One of the most crucial tasks faced by the Kabul-based *élites* and administration apparatus was to break the strong (o)position of parallel structures of power remaining beyond their direct control inasmuch as self-organising at the local level in the form of a dense, non-hierarchical mesh networking of relationships between the leader (e.g.: a landowner [Dari *arbāb*] and the community, or a tribal leader [Dari *xān*]) and the tribe, or between the leaders (Dari *riš-sefid*/Pashto *spin-žar*/Uzbek *aqsaqal*) organised in councils (Dari *šurā*/Pashto *ğarga*). Although Afghanistan emerged, *de jure*, as a state in 1747, the first, *de facto*, successful attempts to transform it into a coherent administrative and political organism were undertaken only at the end of the 19th century by Abdorrahmān Xān (Dupree 1980: 17).⁴⁴ The solutions proposed in Article №108 of the 1964 Constitution are therefore an extension of the previous actions:

edāre-ye afgānestān bar asl-e markaziyat-e motābeq be ahkām-e in fasl ostovār ast. edāre-ye markazi be mouğeb-e qānun be yek edde-ye vāhedhā-ye edāri mon-qasem migardad ke dar ra's-e har kodām-e ān yek nafar vazir qarār dārad. vāhed-e edāre-ye mahalli velāyat ast. te'dād, sāhe-ye eğrā va taškīlāt-e velāyat tavassot-e qānun tanzīm migardad. (Rasmi Ğarida 1343 [1964]: 21)

The administration of Afghanistan is based upon the principle of centralization, in accordance with the provisions of this Title. The Central Administration shall be divided into a number of administrative units each headed by a Minister, as provided in the law. The unit of local administration is the province. The number, area, subdivisions and organization of the provinces shall be fixed by law. (Wilber 1965: 227)

⁴⁴ See Chapter 2.3.2.

The expression ‘principle of centralisation (Dari *asl-e markaziyat*/Pashto *dā markaziyat asās*)’ was a novelty in the Afghan political jargon, since it justified the monopoly of the *élites* and authorities staying in Kabul to exercise power over culturally, ethnically, economically as well as geographically diverse regions of the state. This expression should be thus understood as incorporation of the above-mentioned independent structures self-organising at the local level into the hierarchical star network administrative apparatus. By successfully controlling the leaders who operate at the local level, the administrative apparatus, i.e. the government *via* its representative (e.g.: bureaucrats like governors), could take over a number of tasks that were traditionally under the local leaders’ responsibility and simultaneously transfer a number of missions determined this time by its Kabul-based centre, e.g. effective implementation of Article №38 (on tax liability) or Article №39 (about military service). At the same time, it would make it possible to remove (un)formal intermediaries currently mediating between the government and the citizen.

One of the basic tools to achieve such control was to divide the state into administrative units (not necessarily respecting geographical, historical or ethnic divisions). Such several-level structure would allow for closer supervision over individual regions, especially as the long-standing practice was to appoint people from outside the provinces as governors (Rubin 2004: 15)—it was one of the methods of breaking local dependency networks. Article №109 clearly stated that the provinces take part in projects planned and implemented by the state, i.e. the central government. Whereas Article №110 spoke of the fullest possible inclusion of councils established in individual provinces into the administrative structures of the state. Finally, Article №112 talked about centralism, explaining that the salaries of officials at the provincial level should be regulated by law.

Although the 1958 French Constitution attested in its Article №1: [1]a France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale. (...) Son organisation est décentralisée’ (*Constitution* 1958: 1), it seems that through the person of the adviser, Louis Fougère, the theoretical foundations for the idea of centralisation were provided by the French administrative practices.

4 Conclusions

The 1964 Constitution, although third in Afghanistan’s history, appears to be the first in many respects, not only due to its modern, by the standards of the time, nature. Apparently, for the first time the public atmosphere controlled by the state apparatus was supposed to help people to better understand that it was a document of vital importance. As Pasarlay

(2022) rightly points out this atmosphere affected also Western researchers—Arjomand (2005: 943, 952) believes that the 1964 Constitution connects: ‘liberal constitutionalism and Islamic modernism’; Dupree (1980: 565) calls it: ‘the finest in the Muslim world’; Reštyā (Rishtya 2005: 42) considers it as a document that: ‘set a progressive orientation for the future’; Wilber (1965: 215, 216) recognises it as: ‘liberal, enlightened, forward-looking, comprehensive and definitive’. A meaningful symbol of the political and ideological environment generated around the 1964 Constitution was a postage stamp, printed by Afghan Post (Dari/Pashto *da afgānistān post*), commemorating the monarch signing its text.⁴⁵



Figure 1. From the left: Mohammad Nur-Ahmad E'temādi (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Šamsoddin Mağruh (Minister of Justice), Mohammad Anas (Minister of Education), Mohammad Yusof (Prime Minister), Šer Olumi (Marshal of the Court), Abdollāh Xān Yaktā-Yaftali (Minister Planning), Mohammad-Nāser Kešāvarz (Minister of Agriculture), Mohammad Haydar (Minister of Communications), Abdozzahir (Minister of Health), Seyyed Qāsem Reštyā (Minister of Press and Information). Seated: Mohammad-Zāher Šāh. Interestingly, the photographer did not instruct the monarch to wear his glasses instead of having them on his forehead (Uyehara, Horst (1995: 303–304)⁴⁶. Source: Author's collection.

⁴⁵ The symbolism of the stamp was so visible that it later appeared as a graphic on the cover of Kaškaki's monograph or Reštyā's memoirs.

⁴⁶ Value: Afghani 1.50 (In 1964 Af. 1 was worth ca \$ 0.016). Colour: bright green and black. Quantity: 100.000. Perforation: 12.65 x 13.25. Size: 43.5 x 36.0. Sheet count: 25 (5x5)? (Uyehara and Horst 1995: 303).

It is a truistic statement, yet no law is adopted for its own sake, but it is used as an instrument to achieve social goods. Careful reading of the 1964 Constitution shows that this basic legal document granted various rights as well as imposed numerous duties on the Afghan citizen. They were granted individual rights, *inter alia*, freedom of speech, thought, expression and assembly, right to free movement, right of work and privacy of the home, right of medical treatment education. They were in return expected to pay taxes, to serve in the military, to obey the law and, finally, to respect the monarch. Furthermore, the 1964 Constitution saw Islam as conforming to the law rather than establishing it. This meant that as a document it transferred the right to speak for/regarding Islam from a single group of religious scholars and judges educated in religious law to the whole of society and their representatives elected in general elections.

As Modrzejewska-Leśniewska (2010: 248) writes, the practical, everyday implementation of the assumptions made by the authors of the 1964 Constitution was neither easy nor effective. Mostly because the monarch's involvement in governing was not entirely successful. Mohammad-Zāher Šāh was not fully convinced of the direction the state policy should take. On the one hand, he saw the need for systematic reform that would facilitate modernisation (*ergo* centralisation) of the country. On the other one, he was against such changes that could/would lead to the weakening of his position as the ruler. This is also where the reasons why this democratic/parliamentary experiment failed in the end. For when looking closely at the political map drawn up by individual constitutional articles and their practical implementation, it is impossible to get rid of the impression that it was based on the persistent thought of eliminating all opponents of the monarch's power from political life. Excluding Mohammad-Da'ud Xān, as well as impeding leftist, Islamic or nationalistic circles to unrestrainedly participate in the political life, in a sense determined a future fate of the 1964 Constitution when in 1973 the former prime minister, helped by some PDPA members, seized power, abolishing the monarchy and establishing a republic in its place (Pasarlay 2016: 98–100; 2022). In this sense, Mohammad-Da'ud Xān's act was a late response to the model that had been already present in the post-colonial Islamic world in the 1940s and 1950s as a state of a nationalist, republican and secular nature (Benard and Hachigian 2003: 15).

Although the 1964 Constitution was intended to transform an absolute monarchy into a constitutional/parliamentary one, it did so quite superficially. It generated legitimacy to the state *per se*, limited to some degree the agency costs of government as well as facilitated the production of public goods but it did not channel political conflict through formal institutions leading to an increase in tension (Ginsburg, Huq 2014: 120).

Nevertheless, the democratic experiment symbolised by the 1964 Constitution, even if assessed critically today: '[i]t produced paralyzing political gridlock and mounting frustration within ruling elites' (Ginsburg, Huq 2014: 119), '[o]ver a mere ten years, the country had three elections and four governments, none of which succeeded in implementing needed reforms' (Rubin 2004: 8), was, undoubtedly, a major stage in the modernisation of Afghanistan *sensu largo*. Both politically, intellectually and socially. For if it activated various environments, it was not only with allowed solutions but also with (un)intentionally imposed restrictions.

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Reviews

**Smith, Mark. *Between Temple and Tomb: The Demotic Ritual Text of Bodl. MS. Egypt. A. 3 (P)*, SSR 30.
Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019. S. 7–205, Pl. 1–14.
ISBN 978-3-447-11331-1**

Die hiesige Rezension dient zur Besprechung der Edition der demotischen Teile des Bodl. MS. Egypt. A. 3 (P), dessen Inhalt zu den rituellen Texten gehört. Die einzelnen Partien des Buches richten sich nach folgendem Schema:

In 1 werden die Koordinaten abgesteckt. Die Handschrift wurde 1890 von der Bodleian Library erworben (15). Die maximale Länge des Papyrus beträgt 208cm, während die maximale Höhe bei 29cm liegt (18). Die Vorderseite der Handschrift ist mit rituellen Texten beschrieben, während die Rückseite Quittungen und Abrechnungen enthält (19). Die Vorderseite trug zunächst ebenfalls dokumentarische Texte, die später für die rituellen Texte getilgt wurden (19). Die rituellen Texte nehmen 11 Kolumnen ein (20). Das 23. Regierungsjahr des Augustus in der Einleitungszeile der ersten Kolumne auf der Vorderseite legt die Datierung der rituellen Texte in oder kurz nach dem Jahr 6 v. Chr. nahe (23). Die Gottesbezeichnung „3br“ kommt zum ersten Mal als eigenständiges Theonym vor (22). Die Frage der Provenienz lässt sich wahrscheinlich zugunsten von Achmim klären (24–26). Der Textaufbau setzt sich wie folgt zusammen: Ritual „Sokar aus seinem Schrein zu holen“ (Kol. 1–7) – Rezitation beim Opfer für Osiris (ersten 9 Zeilen von Kol. 8) – Sprüche für den Verstorbenen (Z. 9–11 von Kol. 8) – Text



zum Totenkult und Tempelkult des Osiris (Z. 11 von Kol. 8) – Anrufung an Osiris (Z. 1–6 von Kol. 10) – Kombination von Pyramidentext 32 und 25 (Z. 7–19 von Kol. 10) – Totenbuchspruch 171 (komplette letzte Kol.) (26–35). Das Ritual „Sokar aus seinem Schrein zu holen“ ist im Gegensatz zu den übrigen demotischen Texten hieratisch geschrieben (41). Die Texte mit Osiris und dem Verstorbenen als Nutznießer wurden wohl aus einer Tempelbibliothek kopiert (46). Die Sprachform der beiden Pyramidentexte ist Altägyptisch, während die meisten anderen Texte auf Mittelägyptisch abgefasst sind (47). Das Ritual „Sokar aus seinem Schrein zu holen“ wirft wie viele hieratische religiöse Texte der griechisch-römischen Zeit die Genetivpartikel durcheinander (49). Die Pyramidentexte 32 und 25 zeigen einige Archaismen, zu denen die „ $\text{śdm.n} = f$ “-Form von „ii“ „kommen“ ohne Suffixpronomen der 1. Pers. Sing., das Umstands- $\text{śdm} = f$ und das passivische „ $\text{śdm} = f$ “ zählen (54). Die beiden Pyramidentexte stellen die einzigen bekannten Beispiele für die Wiedergabe des Altägyptischen durch demotische Schrift dar (56). Die gelegentlich behauptete Verwendung von unetymologischen Schreibungen zwecks Erleichterung der richtigen Aussprache lässt sich wohl nicht immer aufrechterhalten (64).

In 2 werden die Texte in Transkription und Übersetzung verfügbar gemacht.

In 3 wird der Kommentar offeriert. Die entsprechenden Details werden hinreichend ausführlich erörtert.

In 4 sorgt die Bibliografie (1060–1084) für den ersten formalen Abschluss des Buches.

In 5 wird das Wörterverzeichnis (173–205) angehängt. Die Wörter werden in Umschrift, Original und Bedeutung aufgelistet.

Der Tafelteil (1–14) wartet mit der photographischen und zeichnerischen Wiedergabe der Kolumnen in der gegenwärtigen Montage und digitalen Rekonstruktion auf.

Die anschließenden Bemerkungen gehen auf kleinere Einzelheiten ein:

73 – die Übersetzung von „iw n = k ḥpi“ ist wohl in „Hapi will come for you“ zu ändern.

137 – das „Hausdeterminativ“ nach „ipt“ „Vogel“ könnte von „ip.t“ „verschießbarer Teil eines Gebäudes“ (WB I, 67, 12) oder „ip.t“ „Frauenhaus“ (WB I, 67, 13 – 68, 6) übernommen sein.

153 – das Hausdeterminativ nach „w^b“ „rein“ könnte auch durch „wb3“ „offener Vorhof des Tempels“ (WB I, 291, 10–14) kontaminiert sein, zum Verhältnis von „w^b“ und „wb3“ in der späten Zeit vgl. Osing (1976: 111).

154 – die Schreibung „śr“ für „śiṛ“ „aufsteigen lassen“ kommt bereits früher vor, vgl. Assmann (1969: 218 n. 144).

Der Rezensent behält sich folgendes Urteil vor: Das Buch erweckt einen insgesamt guten Eindruck. Die Übersetzungen sind durch große Genauigkeit charakterisiert. Die inhaltlichen Facetten werden gebührend berücksichtigt. Die Lektüre kann daher mit vollem Recht empfohlen werden.

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Hsieh, Julia. *Ancient Egyptian Letters to the Dead: The Realm of the Dead through the Voice of the Living*. Harvard Egyptological Studies 15. Leiden und Boston: Brill, 2022. S. VII–XV, 1–415. ISBN 978-90-04-47231-0

Die Publikation ist aus der Doktorarbeit der Autorin entstanden. Das Thema besteht aus den altägyptischen Briefen an Tote, die von lebenden an verstorbene Familienmitglieder adressiert wurden. Die Studie zielt u. a. auf neue Erkenntnisse über Sender und Empfänger der Schreiben ab. Der Inhalt zeigt folgendes Format:

In der Einleitung wird der Gegenstand umrissen. Die Briefe an die Toten setzen sich aus 23 Exemplaren zusammen (2). Das Alter der Dokumente reicht vom späten Alten Reich bis in die Spätzeit (2). Die wissenschaftliche Beschäftigung mit den Briefen geht bis ins Jahr 1928 zurück (2). Die Briefe hängen vielleicht mit einer Art Ahnenkult zusammen (5). Der Höhepunkt der Briefe kann zwischen Altem und Mittlerem Reich datiert werden (9).

In Kapitel 1 wird über mündliche Überlieferung und Intertextualität gehandelt. Die Wiederholung bestimmter Phrasen in den Briefen an Tote deutet auf deren mündliche Überlieferung hin (16). Die angebliche Verbindung zwischen „i·n·w“ „Gruß“ und „i·ni“ „Pavian“ (16) ist skeptisch zu betrachten. In den Briefen kommen u. a. Alliterationen und Assonanzen vor (21). Die Interpretation des Wortes „wf3“ „unterstützen u. ä.“ im Chicago Jar Stand als Hinweis auf Elitesprache (35) geht zu weit.

In Kapitel 2 wird nach der Abfassung und Lagerung der Briefe gefragt. Die Interpretation der Fundorte der Qau und Qubbet el-Hawa-Schalen in oder bei Gräbern als Hinweis auf die Bedeutung „hier“ des Wortes „3“ (43) leuchtet nicht richtig ein. Der Schreibuntergrund wird bei fast der Hälfte der Briefe von Tongefäßen gebildet (47).

In Kapitel 3 werden die Charakteristika des „3h“ diskutiert. Die Empfänger der Briefe an die Toten werden als „3h“ „Verklärter“ oder „3h ikr“



„vorzüglicher Verklärer“ bezeichnet (61). Der Erwerb von Wissen über die Unterwelt ermöglicht dem Verstorbenen die Interaktion mit höheren Mächten (63). Der Inhalt der Briefe dient als Indiz für das reziproke Verhältnis zwischen den Lebenden und deren verstorbenen Verwandten (63). Das juristische Vokabular der Briefe weist auf die Rolle des „3ḥ“ als jenseitiger Anwalt für den Sender hin (80).

In Kapitel 4 wird die Literarizität im Jenseits thematisiert. Die angebliche Literarizität des „3ḥ“ beim Eintritt in die Unterwelt (97) ist zu naiv gedacht. Der symbolische Akt wird zu wenig berücksichtigt.

In Kapitel 5 werden die Briefe transkribiert, übersetzt und kommentiert. Die Hintergrundinformationen schließen Angaben zu Herkunft, Aufbewahrungsort, Alter, Material und Maße ein. In der Übersetzung „They have destroyed your house“ (113) stimmt die dritte Person Plural nicht mit dem ergänzten Suffixpronomen „=y“ überein. Die Schreibung „ḥb“ für „iḥb“ „vereinen“ ist keineswegs so exzeptionell, wie die Autorin zu denken scheint (189). Die Übersetzung „illness of my flesh“ (222) ist in „illness of my limbs“ zu ändern. Der Vergleich zwischen dem Verb „ṭṭi“ „ungeduldig sein“ und dem Verb „dndn“ „reisen“ (305) ist völlig irrelevant. Das Wort „ṭṭi“ steht außerdem entgegen der Behauptung der Autorin nicht im Stativ (305), sondern wird als Partizip gebraucht.

In den Schlussbetrachtungen werden einige Punkte hervorgehoben. Die Briefe lehnen sich an religiöses Gedankengut der Sargtexte an (311).

In einem Anhang werden verwandte Briefe hinzugefügt (317–344).

Das Buch wird durch Glossar (347–370), Bibliographie (371–410) und Index (411–415) beendet.

Das Fazit fällt gemischt aus. Die Übersetzungen machen einen guten Eindruck. Die Leistung gehört aber nicht der Autorin allein, da bereits fremde Vorarbeiten zur Verfügung standen. Das selbst gesteckte Ziel bei der Verbesserung der Kenntnisse über die Menschen hinter den Briefen wurde nur halb erreicht. Die Autorin hält sich z. T. mit Trivialitäten auf, z. B. bei *r-gs* (45–46), Mutter und Wachtel (74–80) und Vögeln als Hieroglyphen (76). Die Wahl der Paralleltexte wirkt nicht immer glücklich.

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