

# The *Baladiyyāt Aḥmad ilFār*

## A note on a modern Egyptian manuscript text

by Jacob M. Landau\* and Manfred Woidich\*\*

Habent sua fata libelli, as the Romans used to say, is in fact applicable to all ages and places. This maxim seems to be particularly relevant to the vicissitudes of the manuscripts of the Arabic *Kaṣf isSitār 'an Baladiyyāt Aḥmad ilFār*, a collection of five popular plays from Cairo, the text of which was found by the two authors of the present article. It is the subject of a critical edition and German translation, prepared by them and due to appear in 1993 as a volume in the *Bibliotheca Islamica* series of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft. The present article, a by-product of the above volume, comprises some materials which could not be included in detail there, but which may be of some interest, nonetheless, to those engaged in the study of modern Arabic manuscripts.

A brief exposé of the manuscripts is necessary in order to better understand the essentials of this article<sup>1</sup>. There are two manuscripts. Both comprise the same plays but with quite different wording. One is in the Leiden University Library<sup>2</sup>, the other is now in the private collection of Manfred Woidich<sup>3</sup>. Both manuscripts date from 1909-1910 and comprise five popular plays in the colloquial Arabic of Egypt (chiefly of Cairo) at that time. These plays were performed by a popular actor at the time, Aḥmad ilFār, and his troupe, chiefly at festivities (such as weddings) in private homes. They are more representative of what might be termed 'low farce' or 'sketch' than of theatrical comedy. The street scenes, often copied from daily life; the dialogues, frequently impudent and obscene; and the tricks and thrashings, characteristic of slapstick, place these shows in the direct tradition of shadow plays, puppet shows and mime sketches, savoured by Egyptian (and other) audiences before Westernized modernization influenced their tastes<sup>4</sup>.

The Leiden manuscript (hereafter referred to as manuscript L) consists of 124 folios, or 248 pages (of which nine are blank). The paper, which is of de-luxe quality, contains a watermark GOUVERNEMENT EGYPTIEN, with crescent and star. The size of the paper is 255 x 185 mm, that of the text area 170 x 90 mm. There are 17 lines of text to the page. The text is written in a Middle-Eastern hand in black ink, with the use of red

ink for the names of the persons and the stage instructions. The composition of the quires, for each play separately is as follows: 1: V(11), IV(18), 3V(48), 2(50); 2: V(60), II(64); 3: 2V(84), 4(88); 4: 2V(108); 5: V(118), III(124). Catchwords are usually written on the verso pages. For each play, each quire except the first has a quire-mark as well, consisting of a *k* (for *kurrāsa*, quire) with number, plus usually an abbreviated title of the play in question. The manuscript was copied by the same copyist of MS Leiden Or. 14.520 (which contains the *Dīwān* of Ibn Sūdūn (died 864/1464, cf. *GAL* II, 18)): Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ṣayyād al-Marṣafī (Leiden Or. 14.520, f. 181a). The copying of the 4th and 5th plays was completed on 28 and 23 December 1909, respectively (colophons on ff. 108a and 124b), whereas the three other plays have no separate colophon. The volume is elegantly bound in a half-leather binding in European style, made in Cairo by Richard Preller, according to the sticker on the inside end-cover. The former owner of the manuscript is Dr. Curt Prüfer, who was Oriental Secretary to the German Diplomatic Agency for Egypt. He used this manuscript for his article 'Drama, Arabic' in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 4 (1911), pp. 872-8, and especially the passages on Aḥmad ilFār on pp. 872-3. Three of the plays in this volume are mentioned by Prüfer by name. Prüfer's association with the Leiden manuscript was established by J.J. Witkam in his catalogue of the Arabic manuscripts of Leiden University Library, on the basis of the codicological data available in MS Leiden Or. 14.520. The reader is referred to Witkam's Leiden catalogue for more detailed information, especially concerning the possible involvement in commissioning the Leiden manuscript by yet another German scholar, Friedrich Kern.

The Woidich manuscript, which was found in Kurt Munzel's estate (hereafter referred to as manuscript M), comprises the same five plays, albeit in a different order, and is much shorter. It consists of only 96 pages, (of which eight are blank). Manuscript M is also written on fine paper, similar in quality to that of manuscript L, but it is not bound. The paper contains a watermark: the recurrent image of a perched eagle.

Fig. 1. *Kaşf isSitār 'an Baladiyyāt Aḥmad ilFār*. Title-page. MS Leiden, Or. 14.521, f. 1a.

The paper measures 260 × 190 mm, the text area 185 × 100 mm. There are 19 lines of text to the page. The text is written in a Middle-Eastern hand (not identical with that of the copyist of manuscript L) in black ink, with the occasional use of red ink for headings and stage instructions. The composition of the quires, for each play separately, is as follows: 1: V(20), II(28); 2: V(48), I(52); 3: III(64); 4: V(84); 5: III(96). Catchwords are written on the verso pages. There are no quire-marks whatsoever. The page lay-out is such that the copyist has used abbreviations of usually one letter to indicate the *dramatis personae*, written in a column at the right hand side of the text.

The high quality of the paper in both manuscripts, the expensive binding of L, and — above everything else — the explanation of certain words in the margins, lead one to the conclusion that these can hardly be texts used by the actors, but rather the somewhat elaborate work of scribes who had written these plays for foreigners. They are, after all, the only ones who really need the explanations for a proper understanding of the text. The fact that we have two different versions seems to indicate that they were not copied from the actors' own texts, but that they were, more probably, written down during the actual performances which, as we know, changed in contents and wording from one show to the next.

As far as manuscript M is concerned, we do not know how it came into Munzel's possession. It is likely that this occurred during his residence in Egypt during the 1930's. It is practically impossible for Munzel to have commissioned a scribe to attend the performance of the plays, since by then ilFār was dead and his

troupe had dispersed. One can only surmise that he acquired the manuscript in Egypt. In any case, he considered it sufficiently important to start transcribing and translating it (into German).

A crucial question which we wish to discuss here, however, is the obvious variation between the two versions and its significance. Manuscript L contains substantial additions which, when compared with M, almost all clearly differ in style and content from the general character of the rest of the text in L, and of that in manuscript M as well. We shall deal here with these differences, categorize them according to their style and content, indicate their origins, and, finally, propose how and why these interpolations were inserted.

While all five plays are more condensed in manuscript M, it is in particular in two plays in manuscript L that interpolations of a basically different character are noticeable. These are the plays entitled *Riwāyit Ibn ilBalad* (to be discussed presently) and *Riwāyit iṣṢa'īdi* (ff. 69a-70a, 77a-81a). The first of the two, in particular, comprises several extraneous materials which do not fit in with the main plot of Act I. Indeed, this is the only five-act play in either manuscript (which otherwise comprise one-act plays), and is, therefore unsuitable for a one-night performance which, as manuscript M informs us, was the regular procedure of ilFār and his troupe. More importantly, most of the interpolated passages in the two above-mentioned plays in manuscript L are moralizing. This is at variance with the humorously bantering tone and frequently pornographic wording employed throughout, which was a trademark of ilFār, who preferred to entertain a not too sophisticated audience rather than to educate it. On the level of style and language, too, basic differences are in evidence. While dialogue, expressed in short phrases, is used throughout, the interpolated passages employ long-winding monologues which are better suited to stating an argument about a religious issue or presenting social criticism. In some instances, however, the monologues were abbreviated or broken up between two *dramatis personae* in order to make the presentation more appropriate for ilFār's audience.

After some effort it could be established that the main source of these additions was no other than 'Abdallāh al-Nadīm (1845-1896), the well-known Egyptian nationalist<sup>5</sup>. He had been writing patriotic tracts during Aḥmad 'Urābī's revolt in 1882 and his periodical, *al-Ustād*, published in 1892<sup>6</sup> in literary and colloquial Arabic, was available for anyone wishing to plagiarize it. The copying was done in an intelligent way, with certain alterations, which are largely due to the fact that al-Nadīm was writing for a different readership than the public for which these plays were intended. The scribe who took over the text from al-Nadīm knew this very well and slightly adapted the text accordingly. These changes included dropping al-Nadīm's name and that of his periodical *al-Ustād*

رويته ابن بلاد  
 ابن الله استغفر الله العظيم اذ ابلى على حتى  
 ما جنيته وانا قاصر طفل جنين احمد  
 واشكره من قبل بحيب فن خالق الروح في  
 اجته لها موطن والنفس من نار وانا  
 جسمي من طين يعطي العطايات ويمن  
 بالعطا والى شريكه مين  
 العزيز سلام عليكم سلام عليكم يا جدع السلام  
 عليكم يا اخينا السلام عليكم  
 ابن بلاد ابوه ردا على الراجل الراجل قلبه  
 اتفلق والله اذا كان يقول مكننتش  
 رويت عليه اللبس يا عشتنا عقل ذي  
 عقل العيال  
 العزيز انا بقولك انت سلام عليكم  
 ابن بلاد طب يا اخينا اللذي يرد السلام يبقا جس  
 ملة ايه

Fig. 2. *Kašf isSītār 'an Baladiyyāt Aḥmad ilFār*. Beginning of the first play, *Riwāyit Ibn ilBalad*. MS Leiden, Or. 14.521, f. 1b.

العصا

ابن البلطاب روهى وادحنا نستناكى هنا  
 (البت تروح على بيت لعندك بن ابلد)  
 منيف اصباغ الحير يا سنى لطيفه  
 صيف اصباغ الحير والسمااره عليكى يا ختى  
 منيف انتى يا ختى بالك كم يوم ما حد سافك هيتا  
 بسلامتها بنويه ما هي بعافيه  
 لطيف سألت عليكى العافيه يحتى انسا الله ما سؤفى  
 وحش بتبوس ايديك وما ساء الله عليها  
 خلصت التفصيل والنباته وبتستغل  
 دلوات علمك نسج  
 ربنا يخليها لك يحتى ان سا الله ما سؤفى  
 وحش ان سا الله ربنا ما يميتنى ولا يفيتنى  
 لما سؤفها مترينه بعربى يفرح قلبها واولادها  
 تجرى حوالها  
 لطيف تلى يحتى وربنا يخليك بسلامتهم اولادك  
 بس يحتى الانسان بيرى البنت اليوم  
 وهو خايف والبنى يحتى انا قلبى تلى

Fig. 3. *Kašf isSītār 'an Baladīyyāt Aḥmad ilFār*. Beginning of the second act of the first play, *Riwāyit Ibn ilBalad*, with a conversation between Ḥanīfa and Laṭīfa. MS Leiden, Or. 14.521, f. 17a.

❖ ١٣٢ ❖

بأنه قل لي ايش فيها \* والمسئله دي انها \* في خاطري لا تنفيها  
(الركب اللي ما فيها) \* عيوب في الصنعه تفرق \* لكن اذا ما كان فيها  
(اشيا تكون لله تفرق)

### حنيفه ولطيفه

ح . إصباح الخبر يا سني لطيفه . ل . إصباح الخبر والسعادة عليك  
يختي . انت يختي بالك كم يوم ما حد شافك هياً بسلامتها نبويه ما هي بعافيه  
ع . سألت عليك العافيه يختي ان شاء الله ما تشوفي وحش بيبوس إيدك  
وتسلم عليك وماشا الله عليها خلصت التفصيل والنباته وبشتغل دلوات  
علمنج . ح . ربنا يخليها لك يختي ان شاء الله ما تشوفي وحش . ان شا الله  
ربنا ما يميني ولا يميني لما أشوفها منهنه بعريس يفرح قلبها واولادها  
تجري حوالها . ل . تسلي يختي وربنا يخليك بسلامته حسن وبسلامتها  
نبيهه لما يملو عليك الدار ذويه ويهنيك يختي . بس يختي الانسان يبري  
البنات اليوم وهو خايف والنبي يختي انا قلبي تلمي يرجف وخاينه تقع في  
واحد زي المدهول ابوها يهدلها ويفوتها ويدور طول الليل من الحماره دي  
للحششه دي ويسيبها لا تلاقي لقمه تاكلها ولا هدمه تلبسها ودي بنت صغار  
وعاوزه تبسج وبدها واحد ابن اصل يعرف قيمة عرضه بصرف عليها وآخر  
النهار يروح بيته ويقعد امير في مندرته لما يخلص من سهرته وبأ احبابه يقفل  
باب داره وينام متهي . ح . اسكتي يختي متفكر نيش بالرجاله ودواهم  
أحسن المسغم جوزي موريني القلب ومضياً منافسي وحياتك باستي ام

Fig. 4. *Al-Ustād*, edited by 'Abdallāh al-Nadīm. Year 1, no. 6 (Tuesday 27 september 1892), p. 132. The textual source of the conversation between Ḥanīfa and Laṭīfa, in *Riwāyit iṣṣa'ādī* (see previous illustration) as found in the Leiden manuscript Or. 14.521, f. 17a.

داهيه يا ما عملوا فينا  
 صحيح اننا بقينا احرار والحرية طيبه ولكن  
 ما تد عيش على اسيارنا احنا جينا من  
 بلاد نازي البهايم وهما اللي علمونا الكلام  
 والحديث وعلمونا النضافه والاكل  
 والشرب و عد لوالساننا بعد ما كان الواحد  
 يتكلم كلام كانوا بطالين اهم فيهم وفيهم  
 انا كنت عند ستي زى بنتها وكان سيدي  
 اذا جده يضربني تتخافق وبيه وتخبيني منه  
 وكان ايدي بايده في الاكل والشرب يعني  
 ما كانتى ناقص الواحده الا الحاجه دكيتيه  
 لكن يا اختي ما تفكرين لما كان الواحد  
 منا كل يوم عند سيده والجلاب يورونا  
 العذاب اشكال والوان  
 يعني يا خويه كنا كل يوم عند سيده ولحنا  
 دلوقت ما احنا كل يوم عند سعد الواحده  
 ولا الواحد منا يخدم عند اجواه وعند

Fig. 5. *Kašf is-Sitār 'an Baladiyyāt Aḥmad il-Fār*. Discussion  
 between Sa'īda and Baḳīt in *Riḳāyit Ibn il-Balad*. MS Leiden, Or.  
 14.521, f. 31a.

❁ ٩١ ❁

اننا بقينا احرار والحريه طيبه ولكن ما تدعيش على اسيدانا احنا جيئنا  
من بلادنا زي البهائم وهماً اللي علمونا الكلام والحديث وعلمونا النضافه  
والاكل والشرب والليس وعدلوا لساننا بعد ما كان الواحد يتكلم كلام  
ما حدش يعرفه . كثر خيرهم وشكر الله فضلهم . ويعني ياسيدي هما  
كلهم كانوا بطالين اهم فيهم وفيهم . انا كنت عند ستي زي بنتها وكان  
سيدي اذا جه يضربني تتخافق وبأه وتخبيني منه وكان ايدي بايديها  
في الاكل والشرب . يعني ما كانشي ناقص الواحده الا الحاجه ذكيبه  
س . لكن يا اختي ما تفتكرش لما كان الواحد منا كل يوم عند سيد  
والجلابه يورونا العذاب اشكال والوان . ب . يعني ياخويه كنا كل يوم  
عند سيدواحد دلوقت ما احنا كل يوم عند سيد الواحده ولا الواحد منا يتخدم  
عند دا جمعه وعند الثاني شهر وداير من بيت البك لبيت الشيخ لبيت  
الافندي لبيت الخواجا يعني الانسان داير ملطمه وكان بيرضى بالامور  
الي ما يصحش الكلام فيها وداكلو من القلب . س . بقي على كده  
كنت تحبي الرق ولا تحبش الحريه . ب . انا موش احب الرق بس  
انا باقيس حالتنا وبهدلتنا دلوقت على الحاله الي كنا فيها بالاتي فرق  
بعيد . واما الرق انا سمعت من سيدي الثاني وهو اعلم طيب كان  
سألني وقال بلادكم مسلمين ولا ايه قلت لو مسلمين قال بقي ما يجوزشي  
اقتراش الواحد منكم الا بعقد فان الاسترقاق باطل وسمته يتكلم وبأه  
واحد عالم كلام كثير في الجلابه وخطفهم اولاد المسلمين ويهمم ولكن  
راح من بالي دلوقت فانا اعرف ان الحريه طيبه ولكن مسئله عفتنا وتركنا

❁ ٩٠ ❁

❁ الجاه ❁

من يوم صدور العدد الاول والتفاريظ متوارده وقد اعذرنا  
لاصحابها فلم يقبلوا وابوا الا نشر تفاريظهم فمع عدم الرغبة منا ننشر القصير  
منها برمه ونقتصر على بعض طويل العبارة ونلحق ذلك بباب الادبيات  
فمن ذلك تفريظ من فاضل اسكندري نسال الله ان يجعل له بالفرج  
وحسن الخلاص . وهو

بشائر النجح في مصر قد انتشرت وطالع السعد بالاستاذ عزها  
صحيفة نشرت بين الوري حكما فكر الندم خطيب الشرق ابرزها  
فالصدق الفها والحق حالها والفضل ارج استاذ الندم زها

١٢ ١٣٥ ١١٦٢ سنة ١٣١٠ م

والبقية تنشر على التوالي ان شاء الله تعالى

❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

سعيد وبخينه

س . ازيك يا بخينه انت خدامه فين اليوم . ب . ما فيش .  
س . ما فيش خدم خالص . ب . ما فيش . س . ورايحه تعمي ايه  
دلوقت . ب . انا عارفه ياخويه ياريتنا فضلنا عند اسيدانا كنا قاصدين  
مبسوطين ناكل ونشرب وننكسي اربعه وعشرين قيراط . س . ولكن  
يا اختي كنا عبيد مذلولين وكانوا اسيدانا يضربونا ويعذبونا واما دلوقت  
بقينا احرار وزينا زي اسيدانا جاتهم داهيه يا ما عملوا فينا . ب . صحیح

Fig. 6. *Al-Ustād*, edited by 'Abdallāh al-Nadīm. Year 1, no. 4 (Tuesday 13 september 1892), pp. 90-91. The textual source of the conversation between Sa'ida and Baḳīt, in *Riwāyit iṣ-Ṣa'ādī* (see previous illustration) as found in the Leiden manuscript Or. 14.521, f. 31a. Note that only the gender of the names of the two speakers has been switched.

wherever mentioned, and at times even substituting ilFār's name for al-Nadīm's or that of his journal. Moreover, in addition to breaking up some of the monologues, as we have already indicated, some humorous expressions were occasionally added in order to keep the interest of the spectators, and some phrases of al-Nadīm were altered so as to give them a greater impact.

The interpolation of foreign materials — chiefly from al-Nadīm — is so obviously out-of-place in ilFār's plays (even when tied in with some humorous remarks), that we have decided to leave them out in our edition of *Riwāyit Ibn ilBalad*, thereby skipping Acts II-V. The more reason, then, to return to them here and now. While it is not our intention to list here all the passages copied, with some changes, from al-Nadīm<sup>7</sup>, a few examples are in order. Several appended reproductions from manuscript L and from al-Nadīm's *al-Ustād* may serve as a visual demonstration of our argument.

The most evident borrowings of L from *al-Ustād* of

1892 are as follows (our references are to the 1985 reprint):

MS L	<i>al-Ustād</i>
17b-25b	132-140
31a-34a	90-93
38b-43a	395-399
44a-48a	149-154
69a-70a	147-148
77a-82a	444-449

A few more specific examples will illustrate in more detail how these borrowings and interpolations were carried out.

First, several of the poetic passages (possibly used as songs) were borrowed from al-Nadīm, e.g. the *qaṣīda* in manuscript L, ff. 67b-68a, starting with *قصدت واحد ما لو تاني رب العباد الي يخلق* is copied from *al-Ustād*, 64, 4ff. The *zajal* verses in L 76a, beginning with *انعم بقرشك يا جندي*, are taken from *al-Ustād*, 986, 1-2. The *madīh* in L 82a-83a, starting with:

وان كنت تطعم في ادبي اسمعك حسن الاشعار  
 دعتنا من الادب المشهور وادخل بنا باب الدهكه  
 ندخل على اسيدنا بسرور ونعتم الخير والبركه  
 هيا احتكم في البحر وشوف في الفار ولا تفك  
 دلوقت تسمع يا متخوف احنا ادب وحياة دقتك  
 نقل عميلك يا منصان يا ابو الشفيقه العسليه  
 يا صاحب المجلس الزنان ودي الامور الجليليه  
 ماذا تريد من دي الوطمان قل لي واسعف  
 احنا اننا من حمر الحان قصدي ارسف  
 وان كنت نسمع يا بلخير بيتي الوصال الدواليه  
 المجلس العالي محمود فيه الاماره والاخبار  
 واليوم دا يوم مشهور خلعت عليه حلة احسان  
 البيه والباشا موجود خطوا ازهر  
 اما صاحب الفرح للسمور فنهارة ازهر  
 فانه في الناس معدود من ضمن ارباب العرفان  
 مجلس عليه حسن مهابه كانه مجلس سلطان  
 والحاضرين اهل مجابه وينقدوا قول الانسان

اعواز احط ايدك في ابدى وتنفق على  
 للشئ في طريقه من اللى يقول عليها  
 بقى الكلام ده موثس ليه ولدك بس احنا  
 ويا انا ناس لجبين كيتزنا ورهم ونشوف  
 اياك ربنا يهديهم ونفضها من الجرمه  
 وقلة الحيا  
 معلوم يا اخي  
 طيب يا لله بينا  
 على فين  
 بدور على الناس رول  
 هو بالذوير يا حمار  
 امال ايه  
 لا بالكلام والناس تسمع  
 طيب قول يا سدا حد  
 احمد اول كلامي حمد الله ثم الصلاة على الهادي  
 ماذا تريد يا عبد الله قدام اميرنا واسياده  
 انا اريد احمد ربي بعد الصلاة على المختار

Fig. 7. *Kašf is-Sitār ‘an Baladiyyāt Aḥmad ilFār, Riwāyit is-Ša‘īdī*. Poetical conversation between Aḥmad and Ḥanafī. Title-page. MS Leiden, Or. 14.521, ff. 81b-82a.

of Egyptians and foreigners is closely patterned, again, on *al-Ustād*, 444-449.

of Egyptians and foreigners is closely patterned, again, on *al-Ustād*, 444-449. Although skillful attempts were made to collate such additions and others into the plays by connecting them somehow to the main plot and by changing somewhat the style and wording, the general result seems less than successful. There remains an unexplainable incompatibility between the moralizing, educational and socio-critical interpolations and the humorous and obscene elements. The former may have been appreciated by ilFār's audiences, although one may surmise that they failed to captivate their full interest. The interpolations altered the relations among the various characters in each play. While women in ilFār's plays are usually easy-going, active, often taking the initiative, the interpolations present them as submissive to their husbands, generally accepting their own sorry situation and remaining highly respectful of

of Egyptians and foreigners is closely patterned, again, on *al-Ustād*, 444-449.

Although skillful attempts were made to collate such additions and others into the plays by connecting them somehow to the main plot and by changing somewhat the style and wording, the general result seems less than successful. There remains an unexplainable incompatibility between the moralizing, educational and socio-critical interpolations and the humorous and obscene elements. The former may have been appreciated by ilFār's audiences, although one may surmise that they failed to captivate their full interest. The interpolations altered the relations among the various characters in each play. While women in ilFār's plays are usually easy-going, active, often taking the initiative, the interpolations present them as submissive to their husbands, generally accepting their own sorry situation and remaining highly respectful of

❁ ٩٨٧ ❁

فقال

دعنا من الادب المشهور وادخل بنا باب الدعك  
ندخل على أميادنا بسرور وننعم الخير والبركه

فقلت

هياً احتكم في البحر وشوف فن النديم ولا فك  
دلوقت نسمع يا متخوف احسن ادب وحياء دقتك

فقال هات مدح في الحضرة على قد

تعمل عابلك يا منعان يا ابو الشغيفه العسايه  
يا صاحب الحبل الزنان ودي الامور الحلييه  
ماذا تريد من دي الرومان قل لي واسعف  
احسن انا من خمر الحان قصدي ارشف  
وان كنت نسمع يا ابو الخير بقي الوصال الدواليه

فقلت

المجلس العالي محمود فيه الامارا والاعيان  
واليوم دا يوم مشهود خلعت عليه حلة احسان  
شاهين باشا فيه موجود حظو ازهر  
اما المدير هذا المسعود جمفر مظهر  
فانه في الناس معدود من ضمن ارباب العرفان

دور

مجلس عليه حسن مبابه كانه مجلس سلطان

❁ ٩٨٦ ❁

انم بقرشك يا جندي والآن اكستا آمال يا فندي  
الا ا وحياتك عندي بقي لي شهرين طول جيعان

فقلت على سبيل المزح معه

اما الفلوس أنا مديشي وانت تقول لي مامشي  
يطالع علي حشيشي اقوم المص لك لودان

ثم اخذنا تبادل الكلام نحو ساعة حتى غابا عند ما فرغ محفوظها فلما  
قمنا وتوجهنا منزل المرحوم شاهين باشا وكنا نازلين عنده جميعاً اخبره السيد  
علي ابو النصر بما كان مني مع الادبيين فلما اصبحنا استدعي شاهين باشا شيخ  
الأدبية وطلب منه ان يستحضر امهر الادبية عنده ووعده انهم ان غلبوني  
يعطهم الف قرش وان غلبتهم يضرب كل واحد منهم ششرين كرابجاً فرضي  
بذلك واستحضر الشيخ داود والحاج اسماعيل الشهيرين بعمل الرجل وانشاده  
ارتجالاً في اي غرض واستحضر معها ستة من اشهر الحفظة المتدربين على  
الارتجال ايضاً وعقد الباشا لذلك مجلساً امام بيته بطنطا واجلسني بينه وبين  
المرحوم جعفر باشا مظهر وقد وقف الناس أوفاً والعساكر تدفعهم عنا ثم ابتداءً  
الشيخ فقال

اول كلامي حمد الله ثم الصلاة على المهادي  
ما ذا تريد يا عبد الله قدام اميرنا واسيادي

فقلت

انا اريد احمد ربي بعد الصلاة على المختار  
وان كنت تطمع في ادبي اسمعك حسن الاشعار

Fig. 8. *Al-Ustād*, edited by 'Abdallāh al-Nadīm. Year 1, no. 41 (Tuesday 6 June 1893), pp. 986-7. The textual source of the poetical conversation between Aḥmad and Hanafī, in *Riwāyit iṣṢaṭāṭī* (see previous illustration) as found in the Leiden manuscript Or. 14.521, ff. 81b-82a.

anything traditional. Moreover, while Europeans are frequently made fun of in the general manner of popular shows, the interpolations introduce them as virtuous, industrious, thrifty and cooperative people, worthy of admiration and imitation. Lastly, while the sheikh in *Riwāyit iṭṬuru'i* is rather unprincipled and lecherous (fitting the popular image of some derwish sheikhs), the one in *Riwāyit Ibn ilBalad*, borrowed from al-Nadīm, is respectable and extremely conservative in his recommendations of strict religious behaviour: all this, again, without any serious attempt to reconcile over these discrepancies in the presentation of character.

An intriguing question remains. Who introduced these interpolations in manuscript L, none of which appear in manuscript M, and why? The obvious answer to the question of identity is that it was either ilFār himself, or the scribe who wrote down the text probably during the performance, and then edited it.

A strong case could be made either way. Some of the changes introduced and the connecting of the passages borrowed from *al-Ustād* and interpolated into the already extant text, indicate the experienced hand of ilFār himself. But the fact that ilFār himself did not have much use for a five-act play (as he could not perform it in one single evening) and that the interpolations might well have adversely affected the plot and characteristics of the play (at least, of *Riwāyit Ibn ilBalad*, considering his audiences), militate against this assumption.

An argument in favour of a scribe having enlarged the text is that an astute scribe would naturally prefer to insert his additions into a few places, for convenience's sake, whereas the author would have used them throughout in a more balanced manner in order to improve the overall quality of his works. A scribe could also gain money and prestige by providing a longer and more sophisticated text to his client, in this

في روض الخمر كام  
 عدل اثنين ورض  
 انت معاك كام فلوس  
 كثير  
 معجم كام وياك  
 معايشر حاجه  
 عدل انت دلوقت معاك فلوس ولا لا  
 امال دانا احط ايدى في جيبى اطلع  
 اتين بيديكو بعض  
 طيب رض الاتنين ورض كام  
 واحد وربع  
 بقا انت عاوز واحد وربع  
 عدل ابوه  
 لما المهم من جمعنا السعيد واسمع  
 الريس ايه ياسلمه يا عمام سبحكم  
 بالحيز والسعاده وصلاة الصبح افضل  
 تمت الرواية في يوم الاربع  
 ٢٤ ديسمبر ١٩٠٩  
 هـ ذي الحجة  
 حبيب



Fig. 9. *Kašf isSītār 'an Baladiyyāt Aḥmad ilFār. Riwāyit inNaggār*. End of the play, with colophon dated 23 December 1909. MS Leiden, Or. 14.521, f. 124b.

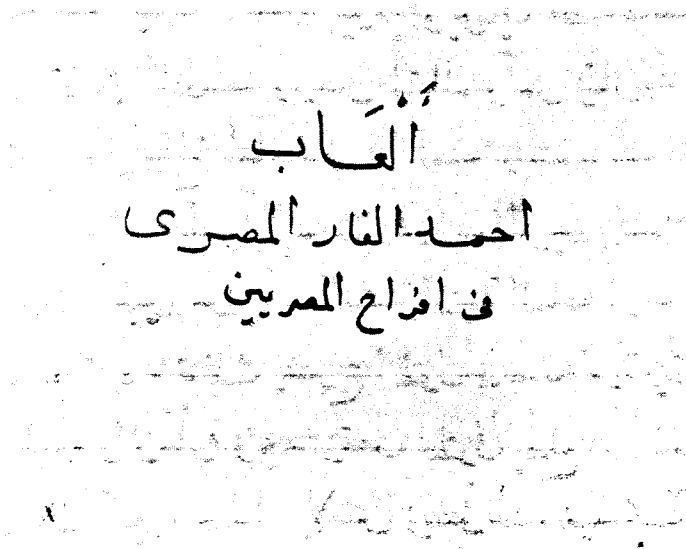


Fig. 10. *Al'āb Aḥmad ilFār ilMaṣri fi Afrāḥ ilMaṣriyyīn*.  
Title-page. MS private collection Woidich, p. 1.

case Curt Prüfer, the Arabist of the German Embassy in 1909, who commissioned manuscript L. The combination of quality and quantity has been frequently translated into money, in Egypt as elsewhere.

There is, moreover, one other indirect proof which seems to point towards the scribe. Much later, in 1944, Enno Littmann published a study entitled 'Ein Gespräch befreiter Sklaven in Cairo'<sup>8</sup>. This is based on an Arabic manuscript which is almost identical to both ilFār's *Riwāyit Ibn ilBalad*, 31a-34a, and to al-Nadīm's *al-Uṣṭād*, 90-93. Internal evidence, too detailed to be presented here, leads us to conclude that both ilFār's text and that of Littmann were based on al-Nadīm, without being influenced by one another. Littmann obtained his text in 1911 — that is, about two years after our copy of manuscript L was written down — from a scribe, Maḥmūd Ṣidqī, an official at the Khedival Library in Cairo. Since we now know of at least one scribe who had no scruples in copying al-Nadīm's printed work, 'improving' his text slightly and selling it to Littmann as something else, that is, as an original

Arabic manuscript, it would not surprise us if another scribe had padded ilFār's plays in the same manner, two years previously, and sold his product to Prüfer. Or one may even hypothesize that the same Maḥmūd Ṣidqī (who, by the way, had access in the Khedival Library to the high-quality government paper on which both manuscript L and M are written) succeeded in cheating Prüfer in 1909 and in repeating this feat, two years later, by selling extracts from al-Nadīm's work as an original manuscript to Enno Littmann. *Caveat emptor*.

#### NOTES

\* Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel.

\*\* University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed description and analysis, the reader is referred to the introduction in the above volume entitled *Arabisches Volkstheater in Kairo im Jahre 1909: Aḥmad ilFār und seine Schwänke*. Bibliotheca Islamica 38 (Beirut/Stuttgart 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Listed as Cod. Or. 14.521. About its re-discovery by Landau, see his article 'Popular Arab Plays' in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 17 (1986), 120-125. For a more detailed description of the Leiden manuscript, see J.J. Witkam, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden*, fascicule 6 (forthcoming). The present authors were fortunate to be allowed to consult Witkam's unpublished description of the manuscript.

<sup>3</sup> Woidich discovered it among the papers of the late Kurt Munzel. A microfilm is deposited in the Library of the University of Leiden (registered there as film A 1682).

<sup>4</sup> Though shadow plays were still performed, from time to time, at least until the 1940s.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. al-Ziriklī, *Al-A'lām*, Bayrūt<sup>4</sup> 1979, vol. 4, pp. 137-8.

<sup>6</sup> The entire periodical was reprinted in Cairo in 1985.

<sup>7</sup> For a more complete list, see our *Arabisches Volkstheater in Kairo*, introduction, pp. 33f.

<sup>8</sup> In *Studien zur Auslandskunde. Vorderasien*, Berlin, vol. I, fasc. 2, pp. 105-112.

عم احمد الفار المصري  
 رجل يحضروه المصريين للأفراح عند زواج أولادهم  
 ولكن الذين يستحضرون ذلك الرجل هم أهل الطبقة  
 الدينيه قبل ليلة الدخلة بيوم أو يومين مجته طائفة  
 رجال الطبل البلدى ورجل لبتال وآخر زمار وشاعلى  
 يسك المشعل والبع أمامه عند اللعب وتبتدى هذه  
 الحفله بدق الطبل البلدى واصحاب العريس يرقصون  
 على صوت الطبل من بعد العشاء لغاية الساعة اربعة  
 عزف مساء بعد ذلك يخرج الخول فى صنفه مرأة ويرقص  
 على الطبله والزماره وبعد رقص الخول يطلع احد الفار  
 متعمم بعمه كبيره جدا ولايس زعبوط معيده  
 وبيده عكاز كبير ويسمع الحاضرين محاوراته المضحكة  
 حتى آخر الليل تقريبا وله من الحكايات خمسة يشتغل  
 فى الليله الواحده حكاية واحدة فقط تستغرق كل الليل.

### حكاية الطرقي

وظيفة اللاعبين

احد الفار طرقت رجل جوز المره مره مرأة الرجل مره اخرى  
 مرأة احد الفار القديمه .

مدح

ط