Li'b al-manār, an Egyptian shadow play: some comments on orthography, morphology and syntax

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Études présentées à Jacques Grand’Henry à l’occasion de son 70e anniversaire

éditées par

Johannes DEN HEIJER, Paolo LA SPISA et Laurence TUERLINCKX
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LI'B AL-MANAR, AN EGYPTIAN SHADOW PLAY.
SOME COMMENTS ON ORTHOGRAPHY,
MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

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1. Introduction

In 1907, while in Egypt, the German Orientalist Paul Kahle (1875-1964) acquired a manuscript dating from the year 1119/1707. He obtained it from Darwīs al-Qaššāš, son of the shadow player Ḥasan al-Qaššāš (d. around 1900), who had found it in the Egyptian Delta. The manuscript contains a number of texts, which include a shadow play (ḥayāl al-ṣill) entitled Li'b al-manār (“The play of the lighthouse”). In 1930, Kahle published this particular piece with an introduction, a German translation and a modern version of the play in transcription. The play tells the story of a battle between Christian invaders and Muslim soldiers, with the action taking place in and around the famous lighthouse of Alexandria, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Although the manuscript itself dates from the beginning of the 18th century, Kahle argues convincingly that the poetry within it can be traced back to the 1500s, basing his conclusion on the information he obtained about the poets who wrote...
the play⁴, namely, Dāʿūd al-ʿĀṭṭār al-Manāwī⁵, his teacher Saʿūd, and ʿAlī al-Nahlā, who was the master of the guild of shadow players (ṣayḥ al-ṭariqa).

The events described in the play took place much further back in time than the 16th century; according to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, the lighthouse of Alexandria collapsed in the first half of the 1300s⁶. Kahle argues that since the play describes the lighthouse in detail, it is likely that it dates from the time when this wonder still existed. This is not, however, irrefutable evidence. Although the play does contain some accurate descriptions of the lighthouse (see Outline of the story below), this does not mean that its author(s) had seen the structure themselves. There are plenty of Arab eyewitness accounts describing the lighthouse in detail⁷, and these might have come to the attention of the poets. However, some of the shadow figures used in the performance of the play have Mamluk arms. These can be dated back to the 13th or 14th century and do, thus, provide us with convincing evidence of the piece’s age⁸.

Shadow figures were made out of leather and sometimes had movable parts. A light source located behind them projected shadows onto a screen, to the rear of which the public was seated. A 19th century shadow play figure of the lighthouse of Alexandria can be seen on p. 351⁹.

The last attack on Alexandria by Christians took place in 1365 during the crusade led by Peter I of Lusignan, King of Cyprus and Jerusalem¹⁰.

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⁴ See Kahle, Leuchtturm, p. 3-8* (* refers to pages in the German introduction of the book; † refers to the German translation of the play; numbers without a following symbol refer to the Arabic text).
⁵ His name implies that he came from the village of al-Manawat, a few miles south of Cairo.
⁶ He saw the lighthouse when he visited Alexandria in 1326. It was already in a dilapidated condition by then due to earthquakes. When he visited Alexandria again in 1349, the lighthouse had collapsed. See D. Behrens-Abouseif, “The Islamic History of the Light-house of Alexandria”, in Muqarnas, 23 (2006), p. 8 (= Behrens-Abouseif, “Islamic History of the Lighthouse”).
⁷ The earliest Arabic description is by Masʿūdī (d. 956), while the most detailed and accurate description, including measurements, is provided by al-Balawi (1132-1207) in his encyclopaedic Kitāb alif baʿ. For details, see Behrens-Abouseif, “Islamic History of the Lighthouse”, p. 1-14.
⁸ See Kahle, Leuchtturm, p. 10-11*. Pictures of these figures can be found in the introduction to the book.
⁹ See Figure 1: Shadow figure of the Lighthouse of Alexandria, dated 1289/1871-2. The figure is reproduced from P. Kahle, “Islamische Schattenspielfiguren aus Egypten. II. Teil”, in Der Islam, 2 (1911), p. 181.
However, by that time the lighthouse had already collapsed. The Christian attacks described in the play do not seem to refer to one specific historical event. The shadow play refers to a messenger sent by the Catalans (p. 22), and in the victory song on p. 48-49, an entire troop of defeated nationalities is mentioned: Catalans (الکیلان), Franks (ینو’الاصفر), Genoese (جنوی), soldiers from Rhodos (رودس) and Cyprus (قبرص), the Knights Hospitaller (الاشباتار), the Knights Templar (ديريّه), and even the Spanish king (الفنش).

Shadow plays were written to be performed in front of an audience comprised of people from all walks of life, including those who were not necessarily educated. Accordingly, the language is Middle Arabic rather than Classical Arabic, with a heavy component of the purely colloquial. It is full of interesting samples of Egyptian Arabic. Kahle (1930) does make some remarks on the language in footnotes to the translation of the text, but no systematic study of the dialectal and Middle Arabic features has been conducted until now. In this article, I will therefore first provide an outline of the story, as well as two samples of text. I will then describe the orthographical, morphological and syntactic features found in the piece.

2. Outline of the story

The two main characters in the story are al-Rijim (nicknamed “Cat Father”) and al-Hāziq (nicknamed “His Cats”), both of whom commonly appear in Egyptian shadow theatre. The minor characters are the soldiers protecting the lighthouse and the Christian invaders.

Only fragments of the story have been written down, and these are mainly poems which served as an interlude between action scenes. These poems, which were recited, were often followed by a song (billiq) which was sung by the performers. The action scenes, however, were in prose and improvised. Since parts of the manuscript are missing as well, the story is far from complete.


11 See Kahle, Leuchtturm, p. 66† for the explanation of these terms.
12 The “Cat Father”, a trainer of cats and mice, also appears in the shadow play entitled ‘Aǧib wa-‘Gharib by Ibn Dāniyāl (d. 1310). See Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl, Three Shadow Plays by Muhammad Ibn Dāniyāl, edited by the late Paul Kahle, with a critical apparatus by Derek Hopwood, prepared for publication by Derek Hopwood and Mustafa Badawi, Cambridge, 1992, p. 77-78 of the Arabic text.
13 See Kahle, Leuchtturm, p. 12*.
The play starts with a few introductory verses, after which there is a description of the lighthouse. It is described as follows: two steep slopes built on pillars lead to the entrance of the lighthouse. The door and windows are brown and decorated with gold. The lighthouse is topped with a dome. It contains an armour room for storing shields and swords, helmets and armour. On top of the building are an observer and an archer, a trumpeter and a catapult shooter. There are cannons as well, along with troops waiting to defend their city\textsuperscript{14}.

There is a long discussion between Al-Hāzīq and al-Riḥīm, in which the former urges his colleague to climb the tower to investigate what the enemy is doing. Al-Riḥīm, being a coward, invents all kinds of excuses not to do as asked.

In the next scene, a North-African trader arrives and warns the Alexandrians of the approach of the Christians. Immediately, the troops are called upon to prepare themselves to defend their town. Then, a messenger arrives with the communication that the Christians intend to invade Egypt. There is a comical confusion of tongues between the Christian messenger and the Muslims. The Christian says: بطيفه كم جبوا قولّه. Al-Riḥīm, who volunteers as interpreter, translates this with في نسانيس جبوا “bring monkeys in lanterns”. Then, al-Hāzīq says: “Ask him, how many troops have you brought?” Al-Riḥīm asks the Christian: كم وانيس جبوا “how many pancakes did you bring?” This play on words continues for some time\textsuperscript{15}.

One of the Christians tries to lure al-Riḥīm to his ship with promises of beautiful clothes, riches, and even the chance to make his daughter, Būma (owl), his wife. Al-Riḥīm continues to refuse the offers until he hears of the wonderful food on board the ship, and then agrees to visit.

In the next scene, one of the Muslim soldiers, Hīrdān, has been taken prisoner. Al-Hāzīq and al-Riḥīm argue about who should go to see the Christians to bail him out. Eventually, al-Riḥīm starts negotiations with the Christian al-Ḡāhid about the release of Hīrdān, but they fail to reach an agreement.

The play ends with a song in which the Egyptians praise God for their victory. Many of their enemies have been killed, while others have been taken prisoner.

\textsuperscript{14} Except for the doors and windows that are decorated with gold, all of the other elements in the description are confirmed by eyewitness accounts. See the various accounts in Behrens – Abouseif, “Islamic History of the Lighthouse”.

\textsuperscript{15} See Kahle, Leuchtturm, p. 26-27.
3. Two sample paragraphs of the text

Set out below are two extracts from the text which will give the reader an impression of the language used in the play. The first is a poem in which al-Hāziq tells how a North-African trader warned the Egyptians of the approach of the Christians and then calls upon the Egyptian troops to fight. The second sample is a short fragment from one of the pieces of prose.

Fragment 1¹⁶

A piece by Al-Hāziq, summoning Maymūn

1. “This is the North African who has come, o friend, from the most remote country, to advise the nation of Muḥammad, the Lord of the offspring of ’Adnān¹⁸.”
2. He has brought advice and revealed to us what was hidden about those cursed dogs and the gang of tyrants.

¹⁶ KAHLE, Leuchtturm, p. 20-21.
¹⁷ لأجل
¹⁸ ’Adnān is considered to be the ancestor of the Northern Arabs. See W. CASKEL, art. “’Adnān”, in EI², vol. I, p. 210a.
3. He informed us that all of them are making preparations to fight and have made their equipment ready, o company of friends.
4. They came with troops in warships and galleys, intending to harm the people of the Faith.
5. They are countless armies and all of them are men who are used to fighting battles for ages.
6. But the God of the Creation will humiliate these reprehensible people and He will throw them into eternal damnation, the One, the Judge.
7. Soon he will put the infidels to shame and conquer the reprehensible enemies, and they will not take control, o Lord, o Judge.
8. They will return broken and scattered over the seas, and we will take the goods they brought with them as spoils, o Lord, o Merciful.
9. The people of the Law will rejoice over the conquest and the clear victory, and they will return victorious with joyful hearts.
10. But my desire, intention and wish, o lords, is to bring together all the soldiers and all the knights.
11. And to stir them up to the battle and to tell them: “Get ready for the war against the Christians and those who follow the religion of the crosses!”
12. But my wish is that Maymûn will come and blow the trumpet, and we will make the religion victorious and gain our wages and pardon.
13. And I conclude my words and prose with praise for ™a, the bringer of good news, the best of the creatures, Muhammad, the Lord of the offspring of ’Adnân.”

Fragment 2

 يقول الصانع: يا باوا القطط السطل من الفضة والعلاقه من الذهب إحتکت في مقدم دايم وراء في البحر إفتغت عليه أروح باوا الصاغ بيع وارت ذهبه وعشوته وإعبر خان الخليجي خد لك قميص ضييف وفقيطيه بيضه وعطبيه بيضه وقاووق إعبر إسعاد إعبر إسعاد إعبر إسعاد إعبر إسعاد.

 يقول الحارق: سمعت يا باوا القطط ما قال لك داصان الزهره يقول لك: السطل من الفضة والعلاقه من الذهب (........)

Al-Šâni’ says: “Abû al-Qitaţ, the bucket is made of silver and the chain is made of gold. It rubbed against the bow of that ship, was cut and fell into the sea. Dive after it, get it, and go with it to the goldsmiths to sell

19 Tâhâ is one of the names of Muhammad.
it. Get its gold and its piasters, go to Khan al-Khalili and get yourself a clean shirt, a white robe, a white turban and a dervish hat. Go and good luck, go and good luck, go and good luck!"

Al-Ḥāziq says: “Abū al-Qiṭat, did you hear what this al-Ṣāni’, the flower, said to you? He is telling you: the bucket is made of silver and the chain is made of gold (….)”

4. Linguistic Analysis

4.1. Orthography

The text contains many orthographical features that are well-known from other Middle Arabic texts:

- qāf instead of hamza: أمهر “most skillful” (with lengthening of the a to fit the rhyme of the poem) and قمر “brown” (both on p. 3). This is evidence for the fact that the *q was pronounced as /ʕ/ and that there was some confusion as to which glottal stop corresponded with hamza in Classical Arabic, and which with qāf.

- The hamza is often absent: رئيس “master” (1), ياهل “o people” (7), لجل “because of” (الأجل) (7), روايح “smells” (24), القمر “brown” (both on p. 3).

- Alif otiosum: an alif is added after any final wāw, even if it is part of the root, or the suffix of the 3rd person sg.: أبو القلط “Abū al-Qiṭat” (throughout the text), العدو “the enemy” (2), لوا “it has” (3), رئوا “his hand” (4), ما رأينوا “what you have seen” (11), رئوا “his opinion” (39).

- The dots on the tā’ marbūta are frequently missing (except in status constructus): جزيرة “a stupid detour” (25).

- The writing of tā’ instead of tā’ marbūta occurs regularly: قاعت سلاح “an armour room” (7), فلوس “a bit of money” (39).

21 For the discussion on the pronunciation of *q in Egypt, which is closely related to the pronunciation of *g, see M. WOUDICH – L. ZACK, “The g/g-question in Egyptian Arabic revisited”, in E. AL-WER – R.E. DE JONG (ed.), Arabic Dialectology: In Honour of Clive Holes on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday. Leiden, 2009, p. 41-60.

22 The numbers between brackets refer to the page upon which the feature is found in KAHLE’s edition.
The final ā is sometimes shortened and written with hāʾ: مضمه “it passed” (7), الرضه “the approval” (7), الأوره “mankind” (27), هنه “here” (40).

There is assimilation of t to the following consonant: يَصْوَّره “he scales it” (with secondary emphasis) (2), إضّايقت “I got into trouble” (25).

Secondary emphasis: all of the words derived from the root SWR are written ∑WR due to the vicinity of the ®, e.g.: يَصْوَّره “he scales it” (2), اصوار “walls” (13).

Scriptio plena: دالك “that” (1), لاكن “but” (12), انتي “you” (e.g. 31).

There are many examples of alif mamdida instead of alif maqsūra: رما “he shot” (2), ترا “you see” (7), انجلا “it is revealed” (29), اعدا “to be hostile” (31).

4.2. Morphology

4.2.1. The demonstratives

4.2.1.1. Attributive use

There is great variety in the attributively used demonstratives. As well as purely Classical Arabic forms, there are also some Middle Arabic forms, with all kinds of variations: هذالكلام “this speech” (p. 1) (note the merger of the two alifs), دالك البلاد “that country” (1) (with scriptio plena of the alif, d instead of د and no agreement in gender between demonstrative and noun), هذى القصبة “this matter” (19).

Other forms are purely dialectal. As has been observed in other works on the historical sources of Egyptian Arabic, the usual place for the demonstrative was before, not after, the noun23. This is unlike Egyptian Arabic today, where the demonstrative is placed after the noun, e.g. ilbēt da, except in some exclamations such as yādi lḥēba “what a nuisance!”24 The attributive demonstrative in Li'b al-manār always consists of the letter د directly followed by the article, regardless of whether the following word is masculine, feminine or human plural. A few examples


are: “this harbour” (1), “these two towers” (4), “this lighthouse” (2), “these notables” (5), “this hall” (7), “those cursed dogs” (20), “now” (34). It is unclear if this should be read as da-l- or di-l-, since no vowel signs are provided.

It is, however, known from other works from the 15th and 17th centuries that preposed دى was found much more frequently than دا, even before masculine nouns.

There is also a case of postponed دول: “and those infidels” (30).

4.2.1.2. Independent use

The forms دا and دى can all be used independently. Some examples of the independent use of دا are: دا يجي بسيفه ودا يجي بسيفه ودا يجي بسيفه “This one comes with his sword, and this one comes with his spear, and this one comes with his bow” (24), دا أكمل، راهن الدفع، يا أهل الأمان “because this one, o men, they founded it in Alexandria” (7), كل دا من أجل نصر المؤمنين “all this is for the victory of the believers” (8), دا أصل أهل المهاجرين “what is this speech of madmen?” (6).

Examples of the independent use of دى include: دى وجه خومه “that is a stupid detour” (26). The second example shows that the feminine form دى agrees with a masculine suffix. It is therefore probable that دى functioned as a neutral form. The same phenomenon is found in the case of the feminine form ًانه which in modern Egyptian Arabic, which can be used in combination with masculine and feminine words (see 4.2.6 below).

دول, the plural demonstrative, is also used independently: دول “Do you have something of those, Abū al-Qātā?” (24). Other variants are utilised as well, e.g. دول مراكب البحر المالح “these are the boats of the Salty Sea” (23), دول “these are evil” (45), دول “those are cursed” (45). This plural form of the demonstrative


26 As opposed to the River Nile, which is also called bahr.
dōla is still found in Egypt today. Another variety found in the play is دوليك: أبطال دوليك “those are heroes” (24).

4.2.2. The demonstrative particle

The form أدى is used as a demonstrative particle: "here is the day of the booty” (15), "these are the story and the question” (42). This particle is also found in the 17th century text Daf’ al-isr’ an kalām ahl Miṣr and in the 15th century work Nuzhat al-nufūs. It is still found in Cairo today as "ādi.

4.2.3. The relative pronouns

The Classical Arabic relative pronoun الذي can be used after feminine nouns, e.g. دالقاعة الذي فيها أَصْف “this hall which I describe” (7). The relative pronoun ما is used frequently as well.

Another form of the relative pronoun which is used regularly is ادّي: مضه ادّي خلف ثانى باب “another door behind the last one” (lit. “the one that passed”) (7), ودّي عاليسأر أَحْسَن “and the one which is on the left is better” (9), ودّي حسبه صار "and what I expected, happened” (13), إِدّى غابة "whoever acts hostilely against you doesn’t know me!” (16), دالمغشّي إِدّى قدّى "this North African who has come” (20). There are many other examples throughout the text. What is surprising is the complete absence of بلاد, the relative pronoun used in Egypt these days.

To my knowledge, no other instances of ادّي have been found in historical sources of the Egyptian dialects. It likewise does not exist in modern Egyptian Arabic. ادّي and بلاد have a common origin: they are both contractions of *الاّدَيَّ. An intermediate form, ادلي, is found in a

28 Variants of the demonstrative with –k are still found today in Egypt, e.g. dawwak, dihiyyak, dōlak, etc. See M. HINDS – E. BADAWI, A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic, Arabic-English, Beirut, 1986, p. 273a. The variants are numerous. However, I did not come across a form دولك.
29 See ZACK, Egyptian Arabic, p. 103.
30 See VROLIJK, Bringing a laugh, p. 151-152.
31 بلاد was already in use in the 15th century. See VROLIJK, Bringing a laugh, p. 153.
letter written by a Moroccan Jew dating from the first half of the 16th century. In Northwest Africa, *iddi* used to be the common relative pronoun, while in Andalusia, the short relative pronoun forms, *alli, addi* and *iddi*, were used along with *alla*; *di* was used in Northern Tunisia until at least the beginning of the 20th century. In Morocco, *(i)ddi* was in use alongside *(i)lli* in the urban dialects until recently. According to Heath, *lli* has now replaced *ddi* in all Muslim dialects in Morocco, while *ddi* and *di* are still extant in the Jewish dialects. It is possible that *iddi* and *illi* existed alongside each other in Egypt, like in the Maghreb, with *illi* eventually prevailing.

4.2.4. The personal pronouns

The personal pronouns correspond to those found in modern Egyptian Arabic. The personal pronoun 2nd p. sg. is frequently written as *انتَى* (e.g. 11) and *انتَى* (e.g. 11). Also: *إِحنا* “we” (14), *انتوا* “you (pl.)” (26), *همْا* “they” (26), and *هوا* “he” (27). *وانا* is frequently written as وَنَا (e.g. 16).

4.2.5. The genitive exponent

The genitive exponent is *تبعا* “your soldiers” (18) and *تبعا* “your money” (47). There are two possible explanations of this form. The first is that it is the equivalent of *taba*’ in modern Egyptian Arabic, which is interchangeable with *bita*’ and is not declined for gender or number. This does not, however, explain the *alif*. The other explanation is that it is a metathesis of *bita*’, under the influence of *taba*’.

4.2.6. The interrogatives

The interrogatives are the same as in modern Cairo Arabic, except that *چ* and *لَه* still ended in *س*:


39 WÖIDICH, Das Kairenisch-Arabische, p. 233.

40 These forms with *س* existed in Cairo until the nineteenth century and can still be found today in rural areas. See ZACK, Egyptian Arabic, p. 105.
what: different spellings are found: أُشَ (13), أُشُ (13). The shortened form أُشَ has been attested in other texts from this period and suggests that the diphthong ay had become ئَي by this time, which was then shortened to ئ٤١. Note also the word order in the following sentence: “your people are coming to do what?” (24). In modern Cairo Arabic, the only possible word order would be اليَ رُمِلُو ئ٤ (since the interrogative particle is the object and therefore needs to follow the verb).

whatever: واَشَمَا رُمِلُو ئ٤ فُوَيْلَ: واَشَمَا (14).

who: هُوَ أَنَا مِنْ لَمْ تَظْلَعُ: مَيْنِ (10).

why: لَيْشَ مَا تَعْمُ مَعْلَهِ: لَيْشَ (25).

which: بِأَنْهَيْ قِبَلِه: أَنْهَيْ (19). anhi is still used in Cairo today and has a masculine counterpart anhu, although both can be used in combination with masculine and feminine nouns٤٢.

where: أَنْهَيْ مِنْ إِنْتَ: أَنْهَيْ (26).

how: إِزْزَى رَجَالُ مَيْنَ: إِزْزَى (28) and كيف مَا أَعْلَى مَعَامَلكِ: كيف (28).

The latter could be a classicism, but since it is still used in Middle and Upper Egypt٤٣, it is also possible that إِزْزَى and كيف existed side by side in that period.

4.2.7. The prepositions

The following phenomena are noteworthy with regard to the prepositions as used in the text:

– ب١: the i is lengthened to i when a suffix follows: بيِمُه “with them” (4). When followed by the suffix of the 3rd p. sg. it becomes بِيْ بِه “with it” (4)٤٤. In modern Cairo Arabic, this is normally بَيْ، but بَه can also be heard٤٥; بَه is also found in the eastern Delta and Middle Egypt٤٦.

٤١ See ZACK, Egyptian Arabic, p. 94.
٤٢ See WOIIDICH, Das Kairenisch-Arabische, p. 51.
٤٤ The orthography وا for أ٤ occurs very frequently in this text, e.g. حسنوا “its beauty” (4). See 4.1. Orthography.
٤٥ WOIIDICH, Das Kairenisch-Arabische, p. 138.
٤٦ See BEHNSTEDT – WOIIDICH, Dialektatlas, maps 378 and 379.
there are some forms with $\bar{a}$, like in modern Cairo Arabic: معاهم (19). There are, however, also forms without the long $\bar{a}$, such as معوا (10). It is unclear whether these are classicisms, or whether these long and short forms existed alongside each other in the dialect. The same has been noted by Davies.

- من: with a doubling of the $n$ when a suffix follows: ملك “from you” (11), منهم “of them” (25).
- ل: لوا: ل “I tell them” (21), قوله “tell him!” (26). The verb جاء can be used without a preposition: جاءا “he came to us as a messenger of good news” (21) I came to you as a messenger” (43). In modern Cairo Arabic, this is possible as well, but the verb can also be combined with ل, e.g. جاءني or جاءلي “he came to me”.
- على: can be abbreviated to ع when followed by the article: عاليسار “on the left” (9).

4.2.8. Particles in combination with suffixes

The particles و “by…” (introducing an oath) and بِسَ “enough” can follow suffixes: واك “by you!” (29), بِسَك “enough now!” (45). This is not possible in modern Cairo Arabic. However, بِسَك can be compared with the use of كيفا with a suffix today: كيفاك “enough now!”

4.2.9. The verbs

4.2.9.1. أراح and راح

Both the forms راح مكسور “it is gone, broken” (3), أراح خيرك “your good name went away” (13), أراح منك, أراح أخيك “your brother has left you in anger” (35). أراح is found as well in al-Magribl’s Daf’ al-îṣr, and in the twentieth century, it was still used by the native Cairene Jews.

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47 Davies, Seventeenth-Century Egyptian Arabic, p. 185-186.
48 As in modern Cairo Arabic, see Woich, Das Kairenisch-Arabische, p. 22-23.
49 See Woich, Das Kairenisch-Arabische, p. 299.
50 See Zack, Egyptian Arabic, p. 100.
It might seem that أراح is a form IV52; however, this is contradicted by the fact that the imperative is أروح, while form IV would have ی: "get it, and go with it to the goldsmiths to sell it!" (26). "go, make haste!" (40). It is therefore more likely that the alif is a prosthetic alif, indicating the bukara-syndrome (insertion of a vowel in clusters –Crv). The bukara-syndrome can appear at the beginning of a word as well; this variety of the syndrome is found in Middle Egypt today: e.g. arāgil “a man” and arama “he threw”53. There are other examples from Middle Arabic texts of this prosthetic alif, which gives the impression of a form IV where a form I would be expected. This was often caused by the elision of the unstressed vowel in the first syllable, which gave rise to an initial consonant cluster. This was then solved by adding the prosthetic alif: ُزُهْرَ > ُزَهَرَ > ُزَهْرَ54.

4.2.9.2. Stem V

The verbs of stem V have the prefix it-: اَتَتَحقَ “make sure” (4).55 Assimilation of the t to the next consonant occurs: وَانَ جَا العَدْوَا يَصُوُّهُ بَعْضُهُ “and if the enemy came to climb it” (2) (note also the secondary emphasis of the s).

4.2.9.3. Primae wāw

The imperfect of وصل keeps the wāw: إِلَيْكُمُ اَتَوصَ “until I arrive at you” (17). The imperative of وقف is إِقْفَ “stand still!” (25). In modern Cairo Arabic this is ۲عَافَ.

4.2.9.4. Primae ʾalif

There are several examples of the word أخذ “to take” without the initial ʾalif: حِرْدانُ جَرَّاح “I took his praise as my treasure” (18), حردان الرجال ُخَذَوهُنَّ “the men took ُحُردُانَ” (38). Instead of a hamza we find ُيَ “to take prisoner” (e.g. 40) (from استنسر), which indicates that

53 See BEHNSTEDT – WOIDICH, Dialektatlas, maps 47 and 48.
55 See also VROLIJK, Bringing a laugh, p. 148, for examples from the 15th century.
the *hamza* may have been replaced by *yāʿ*, not necessarily in this particular form, but possibly in the *maṣdar*, استیسارد استیسارد and from there استیسارد.

4.2.9.5. Plural of the imperfect

The plural forms of the imperfect do not have *n*: يِجّهُوْا “they prepare” (yadha, 21), يِقْدِرُوا “they take” (qaddarwa, 39), يِقْدِرُوا “they have power” (45).

4.2.9.6. The participle of جَا

In the participle of جَا, the جَا is shortened before the two consonants: "and they are coming in my direction" جَيِّن وَلِيّ "and they are coming in my direction" (23); جَيِّن الدَّار "that ship is coming" (25), as in modern Cairo Arabic: gayy, gayya, gayyin.

4.3. Syntax

4.3.1. The bi-imperfect

There are a few examples of the bi-imperfect: الأَرْيَاحُ بِواَ بِلْ يَلِعَ "in it (= the sea) are waves with which the winds play" (7)٥٦. فَلَى إِشْ "tell me what you see up there on the wall, inform me about it" (16). يِبْتَلُّ "he is telling you" (26), وَنَا بِيَأَمِّلٍ بِالْحَيَّ "and I know all about it" (30).

4.3.2. The future marker

The future marker *ha-*., which is used in Cairo these days, does not occur in this text. Instead, رَأْيَهُ is used, from which *ha* developed at a later stage٥٨: أَمْوَتُ رَأْيَهُ "I will die" (6). رَأْيَهُ "they will die from thirst" (25). "I will go to the Christian" رَأْيَهُ لِلنَّصْرَمَ "I will go to the Christian" (35). The last example is clear evidence that at this point in time رَأْيَهُ no longer meant “to go”, but had already achieved the status of a future marker.

٥٦ On p. 16 almost the same sentence occurs, but without agreement between verb and subject: والْمَوْجُ يِبَلْ يُ بِالأَرْيَاحِ.

٥٧ I.e. السُّورُ, but is consequently written with *ṣād*, with secondary emphasis of the *s*.

٥٨ See Woidich, *Das Kairenisch-Arabische*, p. 280.
The future could also be expressed with the participle of verbs of movement:

"tomorrow we will leave from here" (40).

4.3.3. The negation

4.3.3.1. لا and ما

The negation ما is the form most commonly used before verbs in the perfect, imperfect and in nominal and prepositional sentences:

ما يوم طلعت

“not once have I climbed up walls” (13),

ما اجزؤ عليه

“why don’t you invite [me] to it?” (25),

ما هو جهول

“he is not ignorant” (8),

ما لو مثيل

“it does not have an equal” (7).

لا is found sometimes before the imperfect:

لا تنقى مثل

“you will not find my equal” (11).

4.3.3.2. ما...شي

There is one instance of the negation ما...شي: ما...شي يلزمشى “the messenger does not deserve blame” (22 and 23). The negation ما...شي is now the usual way to negate the perfect, imperfect, bi-imperfect and prepositional sentences in Egyptian Arabic. Proof of the existence of the negation ما...شي in the 17th century is found in Hazz al-quîf 61:

4.3.3.3. لم

Although لم is utilised to negate sentences in Li’b al-manâr, it is not used according to the rules of Classical Arabic. It seems to have the same use as ما, i.e. negating all kinds of sentences, which is a feature of Middle Arabic:

- لم شفتك ما

“I didn’t see anything of value in you” (33).

- لم تنطفى ما

“it is not extinguished” (10).  

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59 As in modern Cairo Arabic, see W OIDDICH, Das Kairenisch-Arabische, p. 295.

60 = اسماء with secondary emphasis.


62 This is a general trend seen in Middle Arabic texts. See BLAU, The emergence and linguistic background of Judaeo-Arabic: a study of the origins of Middle Arabic, London, 1965, p. 106.
is also used to negate prepositional sentences: لم فيلك كلام “you don’t say anything” (10), and nominal sentences: لم ناس مفلكل “there are no people like you” (34).

4.3.4. Agreement

Agreement is often against the rules of Classical Arabic, but is in accordance with modern Egyptian Arabic:
- The human plural can agree with the feminine singular: فيها رجال اعدت لقتل الأعدا “in them (= the ships) are men who are prepared to fight the enemies” (36)63.
- The non-human plural can agree with an adjective or verb in the plural: القيود “the heavy chains” (39), يكسروا “rifles that destroy” (45)64.
- كثير can always remain masculine, as in modern Egyptian Arabic65: مناكب كثير “many helpers” (38).
- For the (lack of) agreement between a noun and its demonstrative, see: The demonstratives.

4.3.5. Asyndetic clauses

A subordinate clause can follow a verb without a conjunction, as in خلّى بروح “let him go” (38). Like in modern Cairo Arabic, خلّي بروح is followed by the object, which is the subject of the subordinate clause66. In the subordinate clause, the verb is in the imperfect.

Final clauses, i.e. clauses indicating a purpose, are also asyndetic: نزوح دشرة “and if the enemy came to climb it” (2), نزوح ونروج “we will go to buy him” (39). In modern Cairo Arabic, these kinds of sentences can be made either with ‘ال(لا)سان or asyndetically, e.g. نزيلت issu ‘(alas)an aširi wizza “I went to the market to buy a goose”67.

5. Conclusion

Liʿb al-manār is a 16th century Egyptian shadow play which contains a number of typical Middle Arabic features. The negation لم is used in

63 See WOIDICH, Das Kairenisch-Arabische, p. 249.
64 Ibidem.
65 Ibidem, p. 197.
66 Ibidem, p. 325.
67 Ibidem, p. 379.
combination with the perfect to negate the past tense, and in combination with the imperfect indicative to negate the present tense. It can even be used to negate prepositional and nominal sentences. \(\text{ذّي}\) can be used in combination with feminine nouns and, in general, the rules of agreement are not applied in the way that they should be in Classical Arabic.

The text also has many features that can be found in modern Egyptian Arabic. Some examples are the personal pronouns, the interrogatives, and the use of the \(\text{بي-يمرثي}\). There is also one instance of the negation \(\text{ما-}…\text{سی}\), although the negation \(\text{ما-}\) is the form most commonly used. There are other features which highlight that certain developments in the language had not yet been completed at the time \(\text{ليه البالمانار}\) was written. An example is \(\text{راییہ}\), which by that point in history had developed into the future particle, and eventually resulted in the prefix \(\text{ها-}\) that is used in modern Egyptian Arabic. Another example is the attributively used demonstrative. This was preposed in that period, while it is postposed now. In this text, the preposed demonstrative is always written as \(\text{دو}\) followed by the article, regardless of whether the following word is masculine, feminine or plural, e.g. \(\text{دالفاعم}\). The independently used demonstratives are \(\text{دو} \text{دی} \text{دو} \text{دی} \text{دا} \text{دو} \text{فذی} \text{دو} \text{دو} \text{دی} \text{دو} \text{ذأدي} \text{دو} \text{ذأدي} \text{دو} \text{ذأدي} \text{دو} \text{ذأدي} \text{دو} \text{ذأدي} \text{دو} \text{ذأدي}\). The varieties are \(\text{دولا} \text{دلیک}\), like in modern Egyptian Arabic. 

Another interesting feature is the use of the relative pronoun \(\text{أداة}\), which has never before been attested in Egypt, but used to be very common in Andalusia and North Africa. It is, like \(\text{يلي}\), a contraction of *\(\text{الاقدا}\). It is likely that \(\text{يدی} \text{ودی}\) have existed side by side in Egypt, with \(\text{ودی}\) eventually prevailing, as happened in Morocco during the 20th century.

Abstract

The Egyptian shadow play \(\text{ليه البالمانار}\) ("The play of the lighthouse") is one of the texts in a manuscript acquired by the German Orientalist Paul Kahle (1875-1964) in 1907. Although the manuscript dates from 1119/1707, the text of the play can be traced back to the 1500s. It tells the story of a battle between Christian invaders and Muslim soldiers, with the action taking place in and around the famous lighthouse of Alexandria, which collapsed in the first half of the 14th century. Shadow plays were written to be performed in front of an audience comprised of people from all walks of life, including those who were not necessarily educated. Accordingly, the language of this play is Middle Arabic rather than Classical Arabic, with a heavy component of the purely colloquial. \(\text{ليه البالمانار}\) is full of interesting samples of Egyptian Arabic. In this article, the orthographical, morphological and syntactic features found in the play are described.
Figure 1: Shadow figure of the Lighthouse of Alexandria, dated 1289/1871-2. The figure is reproduced from P. Kahle, “Islamische Schattenspielfiguren aus Ägypten. II. Teil”, in Der Islam, 2 (1911), p. 181. Reproduced with permission of the publisher, De Gruyter, Berlin.