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Publication date

2012

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Estudios de dialectología árabe

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Zack, L. (2012). Quenching the thirst for knowledge: an analysis of the colloquial material in al-Xafāǧī's "Šifā' al-ǧalīl fīmā fī kalām al-'arab min al-daxīl". *Estudios de dialectología árabe*, 6, 193-220.

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Quenching the Thirst for Knowledge

An Analysis of the Colloquial Material in al-Xafāǧī's *Šifāʔ al-ǧalīl fīmā fī kalām al-ʕarab min al-daxīl*

Liesbeth ZACK*

1. Introduction

Šifāʔ al-ǧalīl fīmā fī kalām al-ʕarab min al-daxīl (“Quenching the thirst for the loanwords in the speech of the Arabs”, hereafter called *Šifāʔ al-ǧalīl*) is a book written by Šihāb al-Dīn al-Xafāǧī (d. 1069/1659) in which words of foreign origin in the Arabic language are explained and analyzed. As well as these loanwords, and in the style of the *laḥn al-ʕāmma*-literature, the book contains examples of “language mistakes” made by Arabic speakers due to the effect of the colloquial. It also contains some expressions used by the *ʕāmma* (common people) in Egypt. In this article, the use of *Šifāʔ al-ǧalīl* for our knowledge of colloquial Arabic as spoken in al-Xafāǧī's era will be discussed. The purpose of this paper is twofold: to research the extent to which *Šifāʔ al-ǧalīl* contains information about the colloquial of Egypt; and to assess the way in which al-Xafāǧī accounted for these words, i.e. did he acknowledge them to be dialect, and did he produce any etymological theories?¹

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¹ I thank the participants in the conference in Zaragoza for their valuable remarks. I also wish to thank Manfred Woidich for his valuable comments on earlier versions of this article. Of course, any errors remain my sole responsibility. For the purpose of this research, the 1952 edition by Muḥammad ʕAbd al-Munʕim Xafāǧī is used, while the 1282 AH edition is sometimes referred to in cases of doubt about the validity of the text.

2. About Šihāb al-Dīn al-Xafāǧī

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar Šihāb al-Dīn al-Xafāǧī al-Miṣrī al-Ḥanafī was born around 977/1569² in Siryāqūs, near Cairo³. He received his earliest education from his maternal Uncle, Abū Bakr al-Šanawānī, who al-Xafāǧī calls “the Sībawayhi of his time”⁴. He then studied under several teachers in Cairo, Mecca and Medina, and Constantinople. He continued to live in Constantinople until his teachers died, one after the other, when he decided that there was no longer any reason for him to remain there. He was subsequently appointed *qāḍī* in several towns, before being sent to Egypt as *qāḍī-ʿaskar*, a position he lost soon afterwards. He then returned to Constantinople, but after making an enemy of the *mufṭī* Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā’, he was sent as *qāḍī* to Cairo as a form of punishment, and spent the rest of his life in the city dedicating his time to his writing. He died in Cairo in 1069/1659.

Among his most famous books are two biographical works: *Xabāya al-zawāyā fīmā fī al-riǧāl min al-baqāyā* and *Rayḥānat al-alibbāʾ wa-nuzhat al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*. Both deal with the lives and work of al-Xafāǧī’s contemporaries, with notably more attention paid to their poetry than to the details of their lives. Some of his other well-known books are:

- *Ṭirāz al-maǧālis*, which contains extracts of older works, some of which have apparently been lost; the topics include poetry, lexicography, rhetoric and philosophy;

- *Šarḥ Durrat al-ǧawwāš*, a commentary on al-Ḥarīrī’s famous work⁵, which is of the *laḥn al-ʿamma*-type, i.e. where mistakes that were made in the Arabic language were corrected; and

- *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl fīmā fī kalām al-ʿarab min al-daxīl*, which is the work under discussion in this article⁶.

² See al-Ziriklī (1954: I 238). Others give his birth year as 979/1571, see Krenkow (1978: 912a). Al-Xafāǧī wrote his autobiography in his work *Rayḥānat al-alibbāʾ wa-nuzhat al-ḥayāt al-dunyā*, but failed to mention when and where exactly he was born.

³ See *GAL* II p. 368.

⁴ See Krenkow (1978: 912a) and al-Xafāǧī (1952: 3fn).

⁵ *Durrat al-ǧawwāš fī awhām al-xawāšš* by Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿUṭmān b. al-Ḥarīrī al-Baṣrī (446/1054-516/1122), who is best known for his *Maqāmāt*. See Margoliouth-Pellat (1971: 221a), *GAL* I p. 325ff. and *GAL* S I pp. 486ff.

⁶ See for a more extensive overview of the life and works of al-Xafāǧī: Krenkow (1978), *GAL* II pp. 368-9, *GAL* S II, p. 396.

3. The contents of *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl*

3.1. Loanwords in the Arabic language

The book claims, as its title indicates, to be dedicated to the description of words of foreign origin in the Arabic language. The word *daxīl* that is mentioned in its title is defined by Lane as “A word that is adventitious, not indigenous, to the language of the Arabs; that is introduced into that language, and does not belong to it”⁷. Some other terms that are used for arabicized loanwords are: *ʔašǧamī* أعجمي, *mušarrab* معرب and *muwallad* مولد. There are, however, subtle differences in the meanings of these words. The word *ʔašǧamī* means “Persian”, but is also used for non-Arabic in general, while the verb *šarrab* is often used with the meaning of “to arabicize, to pronounce a word agreeably with the ways of Arabic speech”⁸. Al-Ġawālīqī⁹ formulates it as follows: the words were originally foreign (*ʔašǧamī*), but then the Arabs pronounced them according to their own language, thereby making the words arabicized. Accordingly, they are actually Arabic, but were originally foreign¹⁰. According to purists, such as al-Ġawharī, the author of the *Šihāḥ* (d. 393/1002), and al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122), only the words that had entered the Arabic language during the *ǧāhiliyya* and the first two centuries of Islam, and which were compatible with the paradigms (*ʔawzān*) of the Arabic language, could be labelled as *mušarrab*. Words which did not conform to these rules were labelled *muwallad* “bastardised”¹¹. So, according to these purists, the latter are, therefore, words which entered the language at a later stage or did not conform to the paradigms of Arabic words.

In the introduction of *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl*, al-Xafāǧī explains the changes that words might have undergone when they were introduced into the Arabic language¹². Some examples of phonetic change are the Persian *g* (*kāf ʔašǧamiyya*), which became *k* or *ǧ* or *q* because of the closeness in articulation

⁷ Lane (1955-1956: III 860a-b).

⁸ See Lane (1955-1956: V 1991c).

⁹ Abū Maṣṣūr Mawḥūb b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Xaḍīr al-Ġawālīqī lived from 466/1073 to 539/1144 in Baǧdād, see *GAL* I p. 332 and *S I* p. 492. He is most famous for his work *Kitāb al-mušarrab min kalām al-ʔašǧamī ʔalā ḥurūf al-mušǧam*. Its purpose was “to preserve the *fašīḥ* language by collecting together words of foreign origin and recording them as such. This explanatory lexicon, which was highly thought of in its time, has proved to be very useful and made Ibn al-Ġawālīqī’s reputation” (Fleisch (1965a: 490a).

¹⁰ See al-Ġawālīqī (1990: 92).

¹¹ See Ayalon (1998: 240a-b). This view was also expressed by al-Ġawālīqī, who is quoted in the introduction to *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl* (p. 23) stating that “that is correct, which occurs in the Qurʔān, the *ḥadīṯ*, the old poetry, or the speech of those whose Arabic is reliable”.

¹² All of these rules had already been set down by Sibawayhi in his *Kitāb*, chapter *mā ʔuṣriba min al-ʔašǧamiyya* (1988: IV 303-307). The subject of phonological and morphological changes in loanwords in Arabic is discussed in detail in al-Qinai (2000).

of these sounds to the *g*¹³, and the *p*, which became *f* or *b*¹⁴. Another observation al-Xafāǧī makes¹⁵ is that words were either adapted to the patterns of Arabic words, such as *dirham* and *dīnār*, while others were not, like *xurāsān*¹⁶.

In Arabic roots, certain combinations of radicals are not possible, such as the combination of *ǧ* and *q* in the same word, or *ṣ* and *ǧ*, or *s* and *q*. This means that when one encounters a word like جرنقة “a loaf of bread”, or جص “plaster”, or أستاذ “teacher”, the combination of the radicals indicates that these words must be of foreign origin¹⁷.

3.2. Comparison between al-Xafāǧī’s *Šifāʔ al-ǧalīl* and al-Ġawālīqī’s *al-Muṣarrab*

al-Xafāǧī intended to complement the earlier *al-Muṣarrab* of al-Ġawālīqī. The *Muṣarrab* was considered to be the standard work on the subject of loanwords in the Arabic language. In *al-Muṣarrab*, al-Ġawālīqī enumerates the arabicized words that were used by the Arabs in the *ǧāhiliyya*, mentioned in the *Qurʾān* and the *ḥadīth*, and in poetry¹⁸. Al-Xafāǧī explains in the introduction to *Šifāʔ al-ǧalīl* that he wanted to complement *al-Muṣarrab* by adding *al-muwallad*, i.e. foreign words that had entered the Arabic language in the post-classical period, something which, according to him, had not been done before¹⁹. Another objective was to correct the flaws in works such as *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ*²⁰, which sometimes failed to mention the foreign origins of words, or failed to mention their meaning²¹. The result of this effort is a work containing 1405 entries, of which 476 (exactly one third) are taken from *al-Muṣarrab*, although they are not copied literally.

A few examples are set out below with which to firstly compare the entries in *al-Muṣarrab* with the same entries in *Šifāʔ al-ǧalīl* and, secondly, to

¹³ See al-Xafāǧī (1952: 25-26) and Sibawayhi (1988: IV 305).

¹⁴ See al-Xafāǧī (1952: 25-26) and Sibawayhi (1988: IV 306); Sibawayhi describes the *p* as the sound “between the *bāʔ* and the *fāʔ*”, while Al-Xafāǧī describes it as “the *bāʔ* which is mixed with the *fāʔ*”. An overview of the adaptation of Persian words to the Arabic sound system is given in Asbaghi (2008: 582-584).

¹⁵ Again, repeating what Sibawayhi wrote in his *Kitāb*.

¹⁶ See al-Xafāǧī (1952: 27).

¹⁷ See al-Xafāǧī (1952: 27-28).

¹⁸ See al-Ġawālīqī (1990: 91).

¹⁹ Al-Xafāǧī (1952: 22).

²⁰ *Al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ wa al-qābūs al-wasīṭ al-ǧāmiʔ li-mā dahab min al-ṣarab šamaṭīṭ* by Abū al-Ṭāhir Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Maǧd al-Dīn al-Šāfiʿī al-Širāzī al-Firūzābādī (729/1329-817/1415), see Fleisch (1965b: 926a ff.), *GAL* II p. 231ff. and *GAL* S II p. 234ff.

²¹ Al-Xafāǧī (1952: 32).

determine in which way al-Xafāḡī altered, added to, or deleted from the entries contained in al-Ġawālīqī's *al-Muṣarrab*.

* خربز

In *al-Muṣarrab* p. 287:

وفي الحديث عن أنس قال: رأيت النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم يجمع بين الخربز والرطب. وهو البطيخ بالفارسية.

“He said in the *ḥadīṭ*, on the authority of ʿAnas: ‘I saw the Prophet, God bless him and grant him salvation, eat water melons and fresh dates together’²². This is watermelon in Persian”.

In *Šifāʿ al-ḡalīl* p. 112, an abridged version of this definition is given, without the quotation from the *ḥadīṭ*, and without the reference to the Persian origin of the word:

خربز: بطيخ معرب.

“*xirbiz*: watermelon, arabicized”.

* عسكر

In *al-Muṣarrab* p. 430:

قال ابن قتيبة: والعسكر فارسي معرب. قال ابن دريد: وإنما هو لشكر بالفارسية. وهو مجتمع الجيش.

“Ibn Qutayba said: ‘*al-ʿaskar* is arabicized Persian’²³. Ibn Durayd said: ‘It is *laškar* in Persian’²⁴. It is the gathering place of the army”.

In *Šifāʿ al-ḡalīl* p. 112, al-Xafāḡī summarizes the original text by removing the references to the two authors and also adds a new meaning to it:

عسكر: معرب لشكر وهو مجتمع الجيش ويسمى به الجيش نفسه.

“*ʿaskar*: the arabicized form of *laškar*. This is the gathering place of the army, and the army itself is [also] called like this”.

Note that neither of the two authors explains how لشكر could evolve into عسكر. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, the editor of *al-Muṣarrab*, puts forward the convincing theory that the *l* was perceived as the article and was subsequently dropped, giving the following sequence²⁵: عسكر < أسكر < الأسكر < لئسكر²⁶.

²² See e.g. al-Nasāʿī (1991: IV 167) no. 6726 for this *ḥadīṭ*.

²³ Ibn Qutayba (1900: 532).

²⁴ Ibn Durayd (1925: III 502).

²⁵ Al-Ġawālīqī (ʿAbd al-Raḥīm) (1990: 430fn).

²⁶ The theory is supported by Vollers (1891: 353). The switch from *š* to *s* and vice versa when borrowing a word from another language is quite common; see the examples in Vollers (1896: 614). Moreover, the addition of the letter *ʿ* at the beginning of the word to reflect the spiritus lenis is a common phenomenon, e.g. عنيط from Greek ἰδιώτης, see Vollers (1891: 352).

In some cases, the additions of al-Xafāḡī are substantial, as in the following entry:

دهليز *

In *al-Muʿarrab* p. 318:

الدَّهْلِيْز: فارسي.

“*al-dihlīz*: Persian”.

Al-Xafāḡī added some useful information and an entertaining poem (p. 124-5):

دهليز: بالكسر ما بين الباب والدار فارسي معرب عن الجوهرى وفي شرح الفصيح هو اسم الممر الذي بين باب الدار ووسطها عن ابن درستويه جمعه دهاليز قال يحيى بن خالد ينبغي للانسان أن يتأق في دهليزه لأنه وجه الدار ومنزل الضيف وموقف الصديق حتى يؤذن له وموضع المعلم ومقيل الخدم ومنتهى حد المستأذن، ومن لطائف بديع الكلام: القبر دهليز الآخرة، ومن لطائف ابن سكرة

نزلتي بالله زولي
واتركي حلقي لحقي
وانزلي غير لهاتي
فهو دهليز حياتي

“*dihlīz*: with *kasr*, this is [the area] between the door and the house, [it is] arabicized Persian, according to al-Ġawharī. In *Šarḥ al-faṣīḥ*²⁷ it is the name of the corridor which is between the door of the house and its centre. According to Ibn Durustawayh²⁸, its plural is *dahālīz*. Yaḥyā b. Xālid²⁹ said: ‘A person must keep his *dihlīz* elegant, because it is the face of the house and the dwelling place of the guest and the resting place of the friend until he is permitted [to enter] and [it is] the place of the teacher and the resting place of the servants and the very limits for the person who asks permission to enter, and one of the inventive jokes is: the grave is the *dihlīz* of the afterlife, and one of the witticisms of Ibn Sukkara³⁰ is:

‘My cold, for God’s sake, disappear!
And descent on another uvula but mine

²⁷ This is the *Šarḥ al-faṣīḥ* by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Hišām b. Ibrāhīm b. Xalaf Ibn Hišām al-Laxmī al-Sabtī (d. 577/1182 in Seville); see Pellat (2004: 388a). The quotation is from p. 143. The *Šarḥ al-faṣīḥ* is a *šarḥ* of the *Kitāb al-faṣīḥ* by the famous grammarian and philologist Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Zayd b. Sayyār Šaybānī Ṭaʿlab (200/815-16 - 291/904); see Bernards (1998: 433a).

²⁸ The grammarian Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Ġaʿfar ibn Durustawayh (258/871-346/957). His only remaining work is *Kitāb al-Allāq li-l-kuttāb*. See Vadet (1971: 758a) and *GAL S I* p. 174.

²⁹ Yaḥyā b. Xālid al-Barmakī, a member of the famous Barmakid family, was *wazīr* of Hārūn al-Rašīd. He died in 190/805. See Barthold-Sourdel (1960: 1033a ff).

³⁰ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Abū al-Ḥasan al-Hāšimī ibn Sukkara, who was from Baghdad, died in 385/995. See al-Šafadī’s *Kitāb al-Wāʿi bi-l-waʿayāt* (2000: III 251-253, no. 1361) in which these lines are also quoted. Al-Šafadī says the following about this short poem: “*wa-huwa laʿif ʿiddan*”.

Leave my throat to my own right
Because it is the anteroom of my life”

3.3. The correction of “language mistakes” in *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl*

Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl contains an aspect which has no relationship with loanwords at all, namely the inclusion of a number of words and expressions normally found in the *Laḥn al-ʿāmma*-literature, i.e. words and expressions regarded as “not correct Arabic”. These often also included colloquialisms. Works of the *Laḥn al-ʿāmma* (“errors of language made by the common people”) genre already existed in the second century AH³¹. Their design was “to correct deviations by reference to the contemporary linguistic norm, as determined by the purists”³². The reason for including these entries could be that al-Xafāǧī regarded them as not belonging to the Classical Arabic language, just like the foreign loanwords he discusses in *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl*. As mentioned above in §2, al-Xafāǧī wrote a commentary on al-Ḥarīrī’s famous *Durrat al-ǧawwāṣ*, which is an example of the *laḥn al-ʿāmma* literature. This confirms that al-Xafāǧī was familiar with this genre and was perhaps inspired by it as well.

4. Analysis of the different types of entries discussed in *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl*

In this section, we will discuss the different types of entries that are found in *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl*. The first paragraph will highlight some entries which are Classical Arabic and are not considered to be loanwords, colloquialisms or language errors. The second paragraph will reveal some examples of post-classical loanwords, and will also include additional information on these entries which is not mentioned by al-Xafāǧī. The third paragraph will discuss examples of language mistakes, which will provide us with some insight into the colloquial Arabic of that time. Finally, the fourth paragraph will consider a number of examples of colloquial expressions and proverbs.

4.1. Explanation of Arabic words and expressions

This category contains words and expressions which are perfectly correct Classical Arabic. It is therefore appropriate to ask why al-Xafāǧī included

³¹ According to Pellat (1986: 607a), the *Kitāb mā talḥan fīhi al-ʿawāmm* or *Risāla fī laḥn al-ʿāmma*, which is attributed to al-Kisāʿī (d. 189/805), is probably the first work of the genre.

³² Pellat (1986: 605).

them in his book at all. An example of these kinds of entries is the word أَلطاف, the plural of لَطْف, which means “presents” (p. 59). Another example is مدينة “slave girl” (p. 252). Al-Xafāǧī labelled most of these types of entries with معروف “known”, by which he means that they can be found in the famous dictionaries of that time. It is possible that he included these words in order to explain the obscure meanings of otherwise well-known words. We will not, however, investigate this category further.

4.2. Loanwords

In *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl* there are many post-classical loanwords, whose origin al-Xafāǧī often tries to explain. The following is a small sample thereof. These words have been selected because of their particular interest, either because they are labelled by al-Xafāǧī as “colloquial”, or because he has an interesting view on their provenance. Only the passages of the entries that are relevant to this paper are quoted here.

* بابا *bābā* (p. 71) “barber”:

بابا: بمعنى مزين عامية قبيحة وفي مفيد النعم أنه الذى يغسل الثياب (...)

“*bābā*: with the meaning of barber, is ugly colloquial, and in *Mufīd al-niṣam*³³ [it is mentioned] that he is the person who washes the clothes”.

In Turkish, *baba* was and still is to this day used as an honorific for older men³⁴. The reason why al-Xafāǧī describes it as “ugly colloquial” may be due to the fact that this honorific title was used as a form of address for a lowly barber, because “[i]n spite of their useful services, the barber was a person of very humble status, ridiculed by writers”³⁵.

* بابيه *bābah* (p. 73) “type”; “a shadow-play”; “Coptic month in which the Nile overflows”:

بابيه: بمعنى نوع ومنه قولهم للعب خيال الظل: بابيه (...) وبابه أحد شهور القبط وفيه تكون زيادة النيل (...)

“*bābah*: with the meaning of “type”, and from it [is derived] their word for the shadow play: *bābah*. (...) And *bābah* is one of the Coptic months in which the Nile rises (...)”.

³³ *Mufīd al-niṣam wa-mubīd al-niṣam* by the Egyptian judge Abū Naṣr ʿAbd al-Wahhāb b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Kāfī Tāǧ al-Dīn al-Subkī. He was born in 727/1327 in Cairo and died in 771/1370 of the plague. See *GAL* II, 108-10 (89-90), where the title of the book is mentioned as *Muṣīd* instead of *Mufīd*.

³⁴ See Taeschner (1960: 838b).

³⁵ Beg (2004: 350a).

The second and third definitions are confirmed as existing in modern Egyptian Arabic by Badawi and Hinds (1986: 49a). The month *bābah*, which is the second month of the Coptic calendar (October-November), is known as πⲟⲡⲉ in Coptic³⁶. The first meaning, “shadow play”, is used by Ibn Dāniyāl, the famous 13th/14th century author of shadow plays. For instance, on the first page of his play *Ṭayf al-xayāl*, he uses the word تبايات³⁷. Moreh (1992: 114) mentions that the word *bāba* was used with the meaning of “shadow play”, and was a synonym of *ḥayāl al-dill*. The origin seems to be the meaning of “chapter”. Lane (1955-1956: I 273a) formulates the definition of *bāb* as follows: “a piece consisting of words relating to matters of one kind”; the word *bāba* carries the same meaning.

* *bass* (p. 68) “only”:

بس: بمعنى حسب في استدراك الزبيدي ليست عربية وذكرها في العين

“*bass*: with the meaning of ‘sufficiency’ in *al-Istidrāk* of al-Zubaydī³⁸ is not Arabic. He³⁹ mentioned it in *al-ʿAyn*”.

Al-Xafāḡī comments that according to al-Zubaydī this word is not Arabic, but he fails to mention its provenance. It is actually derived from the Persian *bas*⁴⁰ and is still used in Egypt today.

* *biṭāqa* (p. 63-4) “piece of paper tied to the leg of a pigeon; the pigeon who is carrying the paper”:

بطاقة: مولدة بمعنى رقعة صغيرة وتطلق على حمام تعلق به، قلت هي لغة صحيحة وقعت في الحديث الشريف، وقال في فقه اللغة إنها معربة من الرومية (...)

“*biṭāqa*: arabicized with the meaning of “a small piece of paper”, and it is also used for the pigeons to which it is attached. I said: it is correct Arabic, [because] it appears in the *ḥadīṭ*, and he said in *Fiqh al-luḡa*⁴¹ that it is arabicized from the Greek (...)”.

³⁶ See Crum (1972: 266b). See also Vittmann (1991: 206-207) for more details on the etymology of the Coptic month *bāba*.

³⁷ See Ibn Dāniyāl (1992: 1 of the Arabic text).

³⁸ Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Maḍḥiḡ al-Zubaydī (ca. 316/928-379/989), famous philologist, *ḥaqīḡ* and poet; see Sellheim (2001: 548a). The book referred to here is *Istidrāk al-ḡalaṭ al-wāqīʿ fī Kitāb ʿAyn*, which corrects the errors of the *Kitāb ʿAyn* of al-Xalil; see Pellat (1986: 608a).

³⁹ I.e. al-Xalil.

⁴⁰ See Steingass (1975: 184).

⁴¹ *Fiqh al-luḡa wa-ʿasrār al-ʿarabiyya* by Abū Maṣṣūr ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-ʿaṣālibī (350/961-429/1038). See al-ʿaṣālibī (2000: 340) in the chapter on “what some of the authorities attributed to the Greek language”, where he mentions that *بطاقة* means “a piece of paper on which is the price of an article”.

The word *biṭāqa* was believed by some to actually be Arabic, with *bi-* being the preposition followed by *ṭāqa* “thread”⁴², as al-Xafāḡī continues to explain: “... قال لأنها بطاقة من الثوب وهذا خطأ: ‘it is said [that it is called like that] because it is [hanging] with a string of thread (*bi-ṭāqa*) from the garment; but this is wrong (...)’”. In fact al-Taṣālibī was right by tracing it back to Greek; the origin of the word is the Greek *πιτάκιον*⁴³. In Classical Arabic it is normally used with the meaning of “price tag”⁴⁴, but in Egypt it was at that time used specifically with the meaning of “note sent with a pigeon”. This is also attested by Yūsuf al-Maḡribī (d. 1019/1611)⁴⁵, who wrote a book on the dialect of Egypt at the beginning of the 17th century entitled *Dafʿ al-iṣr ʿan kalām ahl Miṣr*, “Removing the burden from the speech of the Egyptians”⁴⁶. Al-Maḡribī was a friend of al-Xafāḡī and they shared an interest in Arabic linguistics and the origin of (colloquial) Arabic words⁴⁷. He mentions the following:

ويقولون جات البطاقة للورقة التي ترسل في رجل الحمام

“They say: ‘the pigeon post has arrived’, [referring] to the piece of paper which is sent [attached] to the leg of the pigeon”⁴⁸.

* باس *bās* (p. 68) “to kiss”:

باس: بمعنى قبل مولدة عامية، تكلموا بها وصرفوها (...)

“*bās*: with the meaning of “to kiss”, is arabicized colloquial. They have started to use this word and to conjugate it (...)”.

This word is derived from the Persian بوس *bōs* “a kiss”⁴⁹, and is an example of a word that had been fully integrated into the language. The noun *bōs* was probably felt to be a *maṣdar* of a hollow verb, like *nōm*, and could therefore have a perfect form, *bās*, like *nām*. In this way, it became a verb that could be conjugated, as al-Xafāḡī noted.

* بورى *būrī* (p. 75) “grey mullet”⁵⁰:

بورى: قرية بساحل مصر قرب دمياط ينسب إليها السمك البورى قاله ياقوت

⁴² For this meaning of *ṭāqa*, see e.g. Lane (1955-1956: V 1895a).

⁴³ See Badawi and Hinds (1986: 81a) and Vollers (1897: 295). In Greek it means “writing tablet”; see Liddell and Scott (online version).

⁴⁴ See e.g. Lane (1955-1956: I 218b).

⁴⁵ Yūsuf Abū al-Maḡribī ḡamāl al-Dīn b. Zakariyyā’ b. Ḥarb al-Maḡribī al-Miṣrī al-Azharī.

⁴⁶ The text edition, as well as a study of the content of this book, has been published by Zack (2009).

⁴⁷ See Zack (2009: 9-10).

⁴⁸ See Zack (2009: 155).

⁴⁹ See Steingass (1975: 206).

⁵⁰ See Badawi and Hinds (1986: 111b) for this translation.

“*būrī*⁵¹: a village on the coast of Egypt, close to Damietta, from which the [name of the] *būrī* fish is derived. Yāqūt⁵² has said so”.

There was indeed a place in Egypt called *Būra*, as mentioned by Yāqūt⁵³:

بورة: مدينة على ساحل بحر مصر قرب دمياط. تنسب إليها العمائم البورية والسمك البوري

“*Būra*: a town on the coast of Egypt near Damietta. The *būriyya* turbans and the *būrī* fish are attributed to it”.

Although this sounds plausible, there is a consensus that the word *būrī* is actually derived from the Coptic ⲃⲟⲣⲉ “a fish”⁵⁴.

The town *Būra* no longer exists in modern Egypt, but Ramzī (1994: 178) locates it at the present-day village of *Kafir al-Battīx*, on the West bank of the Damietta-branch of the Nile, approximately seven kilometres from Damietta. His explanation for the disappearance of the name *Būra* is that the village became famous for its many watermelon plantations, and became therefore known as *Kafir al-Battīx*. However, the precise location of the town of *Būra* cannot be determined definitively, because al-Maqrīzī describes it as being on the shore of Lake Manzala, between Tinnīs and Damietta, although Ramzī discounts this location (see Ramzī (1994: 178-179).

* *ġibs* (p. 90) “gypsum”:

جبس: الذى يلاط به البيوت والصواب فيه جص ويقال قص، كذا فى تصحيح التصحيف وإنما الجبس فى كلامهم الدنى، وكذا جبر خطأ والصواب جيار وهو الصاروج قاله الزبيدي.

“*ġibs*: which is used to plaster houses. The correct [way to say this] is *ġiṣṣ*, and *qiṣṣ* is also said. This is [written] in *Taṣḥīḥ al-taṣḥīf*⁵⁵. But *ġibs* is used in their inferior speech, as is *ġīr*, and the correct [form] is *ġayyār*, which is “quick lime”⁵⁶. So al-Zubaydī has said”⁵⁷.

If al-Xafāġī had included this entry because it was a loanword, he would have been correct, because its origin is the Greek γύψος⁵⁸. However, it seems that he did so not for that reason, but because he considered it to be “inferior speech”. Yet, some research in Classical Arabic dictionaries reveals that جبس

⁵¹ Or, *būrā*, it is unclear whether a *yā?* or *alif maqṣūra* is meant here.

⁵² Yāqūt al-Rūmī (574 or 575/1179-626/1229) wrote *Muḡam al-buldān*, a geographical dictionary.

⁵³ Yāqūt (1977: I 506).

⁵⁴ See Crum (1972: 42a), Bishai (1964: 41) and Youssef (2003: 49).

⁵⁵ *Taṣḥīḥ al-taṣḥīf wa-taḥrīr al-taḥrīf* by al-Ṣafādī.

⁵⁶ See Lane (1955-1956: IV 1675a) for this translation of صاروج. Of course, صاروج is itself also a loanword, because as stated in §3.1, the letters *ṣād* and *ġīm* cannot occur together in an Arabic root.

⁵⁷ Al-Zubaydī (1964: 145).

⁵⁸ See Room (2002: 268).

was a well-accepted word. For instance, Ibn Man Manẓūr (1883-1891: VII 333) mentions in *Lisān al-ʿArab*:

الجيس: الذي يُبنى به عن كُرَاع.

“*al-ǧibs*: which is used to build, according to Kurāʿi”⁵⁹.

Al-Firūzābādī (1999: 481c) simply translates it with جِصَّن. The verdict *الجيس* therefore seems to be somewhat hasty.

* جملون *ǧamalūn* (p. 100) “pitched roof”:

جملون: هو عند عوام مصر سقف محدب (...)

“*ǧamalūn*: the common people of Egypt use this for a curved roof”.

Al-Xafāǧī does not refer to its source, and it is unclear whether he mentions it because he believes it to be of foreign origin, or because it is used by the “common people” of Egypt. Lane (1955-1956: II 460c) gives the following translation:

“جَمَلُون: *A building, or structure, in the form of a camel’s hump:*

(TA:)⁶⁰ [اَجْمَلِينُ. pl. جَمَلُونُ]”

Badawi and Hinds (1986: 173a) suggest that it could be derived from the Italian *comignolo*, which means “the top of the chimney”. However, this is contradicted by the *Tāǧ al-ʿarūs*, which compares the shape of the roof to the hump of a camel, thereby explaining the root ǦML. The origin of the ending *-ūn* is unclear; there could be a relation with the diminutive suffix *-ōn* in Syriac⁶¹.

* طوبة *tūba* (p. 175) “a brick”; “the name of a Coptic month”:

طوبة: للأجرة قال أبو بكر لغة شامية وأحسبها رومية واسم شهر بالقبطية وهو غير

عربي

“*tūba*: a brick. Abū Bakr said⁶²: ‘It is Syrian, and I believe it is Greek’, and [it is also] the name of a month in Coptic, and this is not Arabic.”

Al-Xafāǧī copies the opinion of Ibn Durayd, namely that the first word is Greek. It is actually Coptic, from *τῶβε*⁶³. The word *الطوبة* *al-tūba* is also the origin of the English *adobe*. The English borrowed it from the Spanish, who in turn borrowed it from Arabic, including the article⁶⁴. In English it means

⁵⁹ Kurāʿi al-Naml, the nickname of ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Hunāʿī (d. after 309/921); see al-Zirikli (1954: IV 272) and *GAL* S I 201.

⁶⁰ The definition is from *Tāǧ al-ʿarūs*, see al-Zabīdī (1965-2001: XXVIII 243).

⁶¹ See Brockelmann (1976: 74 § 146) for more information on this diminutive suffix.

⁶² Ibn Durayd (1925: I 311).

⁶³ See Crum (1972: 398a), Vittmann (1991: 216), Vollers (1896: 654), Behnstedt (2006: 504).

⁶⁴ See Room (2002: 9).

“mud brick”, just as in Arabic, although it is probably more well-known now as the name of a particular software company. The origin of the second word (which is not mentioned in *al-Muṣarrab*) is correctly related to the Coptic by al-Xafāḡī. Its source is the Coptic τωβε, which is the fifth month of the Coptic year (January-February)⁶⁵.

* طيز *tīz* “buttocks” and بوز *būz* “mouth, snout” (p. 179-80):

طيز: بالكسر الدبر عامية مبتذلة (...) والبوز الفم عامية أيضا ويطلقونها في الأكثر على فم الكلب ونحوه

“*tīz*: with *kasr* are the buttocks, vulgar colloquial (...) and *al-būz* is the mouth, colloquial as well, and they apply it mostly to the muzzle of a dog and the like.”

These two words are mentioned together because they are both parts of the body and considered to be “vulgar colloquial”. Although al-Xafāḡī does not classify them as loanwords, they are both derived from Persian, with *tīz* being from تيز *tīz*⁶⁶ and *būz* from پوز *poz*⁶⁷. Both words are still used in Egypt, but are regarded as coarse in Cairo⁶⁸, although in some parts of the countryside *būz* is the normal word for “mouth”⁶⁹. Continuing in the category of coarse names for body parts, we find the following entry:

* كس *kuss* “vulva” (p. 226):

كس: قال المطرزي وغيره فارسي معرب كوز وقال ابن الأنباري هو مولد والحق الأول قال الصغانى فى خلق الانسان لم أسمعه فى كلام فصيح ولا شعر صحيح إلا فى قوله (...)

“*kuss*: al-Muṭarrizī and others said: ‘[it is] Persian, arabicized from *kūz*’, and Ibn al-ʿAnbārī⁷⁰: ‘it is bastardized’, and the correct opinion is the initial one. Al-Ṣaḡānī⁷¹ said in *Xalq al-insān*: ‘I have not heard it in correct Arabic speech nor in correct poetry except in his speech (...)’.

⁶⁵ See Crum (1972: 397b).

⁶⁶ See Junker and Alavi (1965: 200b) and Vullers (1962: I 490a). Steingass (1975: 342) mentions تيز دان *tīz-dān*. It could also be derived from Syriac *tīzā*, see the discussion in Behnstedt and Woidich (2011: 178b).

⁶⁷ See Steingass (1975: 259), Junker and Alavi (1965: 137a) and Vullers (1962: I 381a).

⁶⁸ See Badawi and Hinds (1986: 112a and 554a).

⁶⁹ For instance in Xarḡa, see Behnstedt and Woidich (1994: 40a).

⁷⁰ Al-Muṭarrizī: Burhān al-Dīn Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Muṭarrizī (538/1144-610/1213); see Sellheim (1993: 773b). Ibn al-ʿAnbārī: Abū al-Xayr Salāma b. ʿAbd al-Bāqī b. Salāma al-Anbārī al-Dayrī (died 590/1194); see *GAL* I 327 p. 277 and *S I* p. 487. Both authors wrote a commentary on al-Ḥarīrī’s *Maqāmāt* entitled *Ṣarḥ al-Maqāmāt*, from which these quotations are taken. See al-Suyūṭī (s.d.: I 310).

⁷¹ Raḍī al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Ḥaydar b. ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl al-Ḳurašī al-ʿAdawī al-ʿUmarī al-Ṣaḡānī (577/1181-650/1252).

Although Steingass does not mention the word (out of prudery?), the dictionaries of both Junker and Alavi and Vullers mention كس *kos*, with the meaning of “vulva”⁷².

* قيطون *qaytūn* (p. 209) “small room”:

قيطون: بيت في جوف بيت تسميه العرب المخدع وقع في شعر قديم (...) فقول الجوهري: القيطون المخدع بلغلة أهل مصر فيه شيء وقيل هو رومي معرب

“*qaytūn*: a room in the inside of the house; the Arabs call it *al-mixdaḥ*. It occurs in old poetry (...) so the words of al-Ġawharī: ‘*al-qaytūn* is a small room in the language of the people of Egypt’⁷³ contain some [truth] and it is said that it is arabicized Greek”.

Al-Xafāḡī’s assumption that the word is Greek is correct. According to Vollers (1897: 302), its origin is the Greek *κοιτών*⁷⁴. Vollers’ translation of the Arabic *qaytūn* is interesting. He mentions that in Alexandria, it meant (in the 19th century) “Zimmer, Zelt, Cisterne” (“room, tent, cistern”), which is in accordance with the Greek. In Cairo, however, it meant “Kloake” (“sewer”), according to Vollers. Therefore, the meaning given to *qaytūn* by al-Xafāḡī is in accordance with its use in Alexandria in the 19th century. However, al-Xafāḡī’s contemporary and friend Yūsuf al-Maḡribī defined *qaytūn* as follows: يقولون قيطون للذي على الخليج “they say *qaytūn* to that which is on the Xaliḡ”⁷⁵ (al-Xaliḡ was a canal in Cairo branching off from the Nile, which was filled up at the end of the 19th century). Al-Maḡribī’s definition of “room overlooking the Xaliḡ” could explain Voller’s definition of “sewer”: assuming that the water of the Xaliḡ wasn’t that clean, and that people threw their garbage into the sewer from this room, it could easily be referred to as “the sewer”. The glossary of the Islamic Art Network gives us a similar meaning of *qaytūn*, as provided by al-Maḡribī: “In Egypt, it was the space in a house that overlooked water. Most of the houses overlooking the ponds in Cairo (*birkat al-fil* or *al-azbakiyya*) had a *qaytun* as its basement”⁷⁶. Spiro (1999: 471a) mentions: “*qatūn*, private quay or verandah on a canal”. See also the entry “tent” in Behnstedt and Woidich (2012: 58-61).

* مريسي *marīsī* (p. 246) “a well-known wind”:

مريسي: ربح معروفة عند أهل مصر وقال بشر بن غياث المعتزلى المريسي (...) كاسم هذه الربح نسبة إلى مريس قرية بأرض مصر ومريس جنس من السودان من بلاد النوبة

⁷² See Junker and Alavi (1965: 600b) and Vullers (1962: II 832a).

⁷³ See al-Ġawharī (1282: II 402).

⁷⁴ This meant “bed-chamber” in ancient Greek; see Liddell and Scott (online version).

⁷⁵ See Zack (2009: 279).

⁷⁶ Islamic Art Network, <http://www.islamic-art.org/Glossary/NewGlossary.asp?DisplayedChar=17>.

وتأتيهم في الشتاء ریح من ناحية الجنوب يسمونها المريسی لاتیانها من تلك الجهة وقيل إن بشر المريسی نسبة إلى درب المريسی ببغداد لأنه سكنه وقيل المريسی خبز وسمن تسمیه أهل مصر البسیس⁷⁷ كذا فی طبقات الحنفیة

“*marīsī*: a well-known wind for the Egyptians. And he⁷⁸ said: ‘Bišr b. Ġiyāt al-Muḥtazilī al-Marīsī⁷⁹, like the name of this wind, is a *nisba*-adjective to Marīs, a village in Egypt, and Marīs is a tribe in the Sudan from Nubia, and in the winter a wind comes to them from the south, which they call the *marīsī*, because it comes from that direction. It is also said that Bišr al-Marīsī is a *nisba* to the Marīsī neighbourhood in Baghdad, because he lived there. And it is said that *al-marīsī* is bread and ghee, which the Egyptians call *basbīs*.’ This is [written] in *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥanafīyya*”⁸⁰.

Al-Xafāğī does not offer his own explanation for this word, save that it is “a well-known wind”, but instead suffices with following al-Qurašī’s account that it is the *nisba* to a Nubian village and therefore means “from the south”. This latter theory is confirmed by the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, which describes Marīs as follows:

“al-Marīs, the term applied to the area of the ancient kingdom of Nobatia, northernmost of the Nubian Christian kingdoms. (...) Broadly, it encompassed the area from Aswān to the northern border of al-Muḥurra (...) Several of the Arab writers tell of the Marīsī wind, which brought a pestilence to Egypt, so that people began, when the wind arrived, to buy ointments and shrouds for their funerals”⁸¹.

Badawi and Hinds (1986: 819a) believe that the word is Coptic. The name al-Marīs does indeed have a Coptic origin; see *ⲙⲁⲣⲏⲥ* “Southern Country, Upper Egypt” (Crum 1972: 300b) and *ⲣⲏⲥ* “southern country” (Vittmann 1991: 212)⁸². Compare also the place names Arīs (ilḤēz in al-Baḥariyya) and Barīs (in Xarğa)⁸³. Aḥmad Youssef (2003: 51) refers in his book about ancient Egyptian loanwords to a new beer, which is popular now in Aswan and is called Marīsa. He then links this word to the Coptic *ⲙⲣⲏⲥ* “new wine”⁸⁴; however, *marīsa* means a drink made out of millet in Sudanese

⁷⁷ Sic. The text of al-Qurašī (1993: 449) reads البسیسة and the 1282 AH edition of *Šifāʾ al-ğalīl* p. 213 has البسیس.

⁷⁸ This refers to Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Naṣr Allāh b. Sālīm b. Abī al-Wafāʾ al-Qurašī al-Ḥanafī (696/1297-775/1373), Egyptian professor of Ḥanafite jurisprudence and biographer; see Rosenthal (1960: 70b).

⁷⁹ Prominent theologian who lived in Baghdad and died there in 218/833. See De Vaux-Nader-Schacht (1960: 1241b).

⁸⁰ *Al-Ġawāhir al-muḍḍīʾa fī ṭabaqāt al-ḥanafīyya* by al-Qurašī (see note 78).

⁸¹ Munro-Hay (1986: 574b).

⁸² See also Corriente (2008: 101).

⁸³ Personal communication, Manfred Woidich.

⁸⁴ See Crum (1972: 183a).

Arabic⁸⁵, and is related to *maras*, *yimris*, “etwas einweichen, in Wasser auflösen” (Behnstedt and Woidich 1994: 447a).

* منف *Manf* (p. 250) “the town of Pharaoh”, i.e. Memphis:

منف: بالفتح ثم السكون مدينة فرعون وهي أول مدينة عمرت بعد الطوفان نزلها مضر⁸⁶ بن حام بن نوح في ثلاثين رجلا فسميت مافه ومافه بلغة القبط ثلاثون ثم عربت فقيل منف (...)

“Manf: with *fāṭḥ* and *sukūn*, the town of Pharaoh. It was the first town to be built after the Flood. Miṣr bin Ḥām bin Nūḥ inhabited it with thirty men, so it was called *Māfā*, because *māfā* is thirty in Coptic, and then it was arabicized [and] so it was called *Manf*.”

It seems that this entry was copied from Yāqūt’s *Muṣṣam al-buldān*, albeit with somewhat different wording⁸⁷. The word for thirty in Coptic is ⲙⲁⲁⲃ⁸⁸ *maab* or *maav*. The first author to connect the name Manf with the Coptic ⲙⲁⲁⲃ was Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam in *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-axbāruḥā*⁸⁹. Maspero and Wiet (1919: 163-4) say the following about the name ماففة:

“Ancien nom, d’après Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, de la ville de Manf: ce mot veut dire en copte *trente* (I, p. 74; cf. Calcaschandi, p. 41, Ibn Iyās, I, p. 13), ce qui est à peu près exact (ⲙⲁⲁⲃ, ⲙⲁⲁⲃ). Il semble qu’il y ait là l’écho d’une légende copte, destinée à expliquer l’origine de Memphis (Maspero, ap. *J.S.*, 1899, p. 85).

Dans Abū Ḥāliḥ (Evetts, *Churches*, texte ar., p. 96 ; trad., p. 199) on lit منافة ; dans *Kawākib* (p. 7): ماف. - Cf. Yāqūt, IV, p. 667.”

Al-Xafāḡī continues by pointing out that Manf should not be confused with Manūf:

قلت: فمئف اسم مصر ومنوف اسم القرية المعروفة الآن ومن الناس من توهم أن منوف غلط من منف.

“I said: so Manf is the name of Cairo and Manūf is the name of the well-known village now. There are people who mistakenly think that Manūf is a corruption of Manf”.

The name Manūf has a completely different etymology to Manf. In Coptic it is called *Panouf*. There were two places with this name, *Manouf al-Suflā* (nowadays *Maḥallat Manūf*), known as *Panouf Ḥīt* in Coptic, and *Manouf al-ʿUlyā* (the modern *Manūf/Minūf*), which is *Panouf Rīs* in Coptic⁹⁰.

⁸⁵ See Hillelson (1925: 185).

⁸⁶ Sic, read مصر.

⁸⁷ Compare Yāqūt (1977: V p. 213-4). He mentions Bayṣar bin Ḥām bin Nūḥ, the father of Miṣr, as the first inhabitant of Manf.

⁸⁸ See Crum (1972: 161a).

⁸⁹ See Haarmann (1986: 411a).

⁹⁰ See Halm (1986: 453b).

* قلاية *qillāya* (p. 215) “a place of worship for the Christians, like a monastery” (pl. قلايا):

قلايا: جمع قلاية معبد للنصارى كالدير قيل انه رومى معرب وأهمله كثير وهو عربى صحيح وقع فى الشعر الموثوق به قال فى معجم البلدان قلاية القس بناء كالدير والقس اسم رجل وكانت بظاهر الحيرة (...)

“*qalāyā*: the plural of *qillāya*, a temple of the Christians, like a monastery. It is said that it is arabicized Greek, but many people have overlooked this, and it is [actually] correct Arabic and occurs in reliable poetry. He said in *Muṣṣam al-buldān*⁹¹: ‘the *qillāya* of the priest is a building like a monastery, and *al-qiss* is the name of a man [who lives there]. It was in *Dāhir al-Ḥira*’⁹² (...).”

The interesting thing in this entry is the line of reasoning that al-Xafāḡī follows: first of all, there are reports that the word is of Greek origin. Then, however, the word is found in lines of “reliable” poetry, i.e. poetry from the first centuries AH, and the matter is therefore settled: it is *ṣarabiyya ṣaḡiḡa* “correct Arabic”. The word is, however, in fact Greek: “قلاية” Mönchswohnung; Patriarchat, durchs Aramäische aus *κελλίον*⁹³. In modern Egyptian Arabic, it means “monk’s cell”⁹⁴.

4.3. Analysis of the dialectal features in *Šifāʔ al-ḡalil*

As well as mentioning words of foreign origin, al-Xafāḡī also refers to examples of so-called “mistakes” made in Classical Arabic, thereby adding to the book a component of *lahn al-ṣāmma*, “errors of language made by the common people”, although he does not do this systematically. These entries do, however, provide a glimpse of the dialect of that time. A few examples are set out below:

* -*ī* (p. 278): al-Xafāḡī observes that the Egyptians put a long *ī* instead of a short one for the 2nd person sg. f. in the perfect when a suffix follows, so, *ḡarabtih* “you beat him” became *ḡarabīh*. This was already the case in 15th century Cairo Arabic, as noted by Vrolijk (1998: 145), who gives the example *waṣadīnī* وَعَدَيْتِنِي “you promised me”. This phenomenon is still found in the dialect of Cairo today. It is also a very old feature in Classical Arabic; Brockelmann (1960: 58 § 46a) mentions that the 2nd person sg. f.

⁹¹ Yāqūt (1977: IV 386).

⁹² Al-Ḥira: town close to al-Kūfa and capital of the Laxmids. From the event of Islam, it lost its importance until it was finally and completely eclipsed by al-Kūfa. See Yāqūt (1977: II 328-331) and Beeston and Shahīd (1971: 462a-463a).

⁹³ Vollers (1897: 301-2).

⁹⁴ See Badawi and Hinds (1986: 717a).

perfect often has a long vowel before the suffix in the language of the *ḥadīṭ*, e.g. ضربتيني “you hit me”.

* *-ā* (p. 278): In the same entry as the one mentioned above, al-Xafāḡī notes that people pronounce the *fāṭḥa* of the suffixes *-ta* and *-ka* of the 2nd person sg. as *-tā* and *-kā*, and gives the examples قمتا *qumtā* “you stood up” and إنكا *innakā* “you”. This seems to be a form of hypercorrection, where the pronunciation of the suffix *-a* was exaggerated, because in the dialect the pronunciation was *qumt* and *innak*⁹⁵.

* ايش *ʔayš* “what” (p. 38). According to al-Xafāḡī, *ʔayš* developed from *ʔayy šayʔ* by *taxfif*⁹⁶. *taxfif*, literally “making a word light or easy of utterance” can, according to Lane’s dictionary (1955-1956: II 770a), be accomplished in several ways:

1. by the suppression of the *hamza*, or its conversion into *ا* or *و* or *ي*;
2. by making a double consonant single;
3. by making a movent consonant quiescent.

All of these cases of *taxfif* can be found in this change: the *hamza* of *šayʔ* disappeared and the two *yāʔs* of *ʔayy* became a single *yaʔ*, while *šay* became *šī* and was finally shortened to just *š*⁹⁷. In modern Cairo Arabic, the development has gone one step further, with the deletion of the final *š*, leaving only *ē*. *ayy šayʔ* (in all its different forms and shapes), instead of *mā* as an interrogative, is an ancient feature which has already been attested in texts from the first millennium⁹⁸. This was, according to Joshua Blau, due to the “very heavy functional load of *mā* (which had become the standard negative particle)”⁹⁹. Sobhy (1950:4) suggests that ايش is ancient Egyptian, while Crum’s Coptic dictionary mentions (1972: 22): “ⲁⲩⲩ (...) I. interrog pron, *who, what?*” which makes Sobhy’s suggestion understandable. However, the fact that *ayš* / *ēš* / *ē* is found in many Arabic dialects¹⁰⁰ makes the Coptic etymology unlikely.

⁹⁵ Vrolijk (1998: 152) mentions: “Vowelised examples of 2ms *-ak* and 2fs *-ik* are so frequent that I shall abstain from giving selected examples”.

⁹⁶ *ʔayš bi-maʔnā ʔayy šayʔ xuffif minhu*.

⁹⁷ Larcher (2002-2003) discusses the process from *ʔayyu šayʔin* to *ēš* and mentions many authorities who have described this phenomenon, including al-Xafāḡī (on p. 66).

⁹⁸ See Blau (2002: 36 and 130). Corriente (1975: 53) refers to many early examples of *ʔayšī* and *ʔayš* from *Kitāb al-ʔagānī* by Abū al-Faraḡ al-Iṣfahānī (4th century AH). Spitta-Bey (1880: 80) mentions that he found *ēš* in a manuscript from the 3rd century: *Kitāb naṭr al-durr* by Maṣūʔ b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ābī.

⁹⁹ Blau (2002: 36).

¹⁰⁰ For instance *ʔēš* in Palestinian, see Elihay (2004: 115), *aš* in Moroccan, see Harrell and Sobelman (2004: 2), *ʔēš* in Gulf Arabic, see Qafisheh (1997: 24) and *ayš* in Yemenite, see Deboo (1989: 28).

* *aywah* “yes” (p. 43): al-Xafāḡī cites al-Zamaxšarī, who explains the word *aywa* as being a compound of *ʔi*, which means “yes”, and the *wāw* of oaths to form *ʔiwa*. The people then added the mute *hāʔ*, which is not incorrect, as some claim. The quotation is from al-Zamaxšarī’s *al-Kaššāf* (1997: II 335).

Another explanation is that *aywa* has its origin in *إي والله* or *أي والله* “yes, by God!”; see, for instance, Dozy (1927: II 47b). Interestingly enough, in their dictionary of Egyptian Arabic, Badawi and Hinds (1986: 46b) regard *aywa* as a Coptic loanword. This theory is supported by Sobhy (1950: 5), who claims that *aywa* is derived from the Coptic *aha*¹⁰¹.

* *ʔawrāh* (p. 39) “he showed it” instead of *أراه*. The addition of the *wāw* probably occurred because the word *أرى* was felt to have only two radicals, the *rāʔ* and the *yāʔ*, since the initial *hamza* is the prefix of form IV. People have the tendency to add an extra radical to words with two radicals, in order to “normalize” them, so the *wāw* was added, perhaps backformed from the imperfect form *yurī*, thereby creating the root WRY¹⁰². We know that in Egypt in the 17th century, the form *warrā*, i.e. form II of the same root, including the extra *wāw*, was already in use¹⁰³.

* *ʔawmayt* (p. 39) “I made a sign”. This is an example of the disappearance of the *hamza*: *ʔawmaʔ* became *ʔawmā*, and from there the 1st/2nd m. person became *ʔawmayt* (or *ʔawmēt*).

* *باء الجر* (p. 61) “the preposition *bi-*”. Al-Xafāḡī mentions that some people change *bi-* into *ba-* when a suffix follows, as after the preposition *li-*. Vrolijk (1998: 155) refers to the following for the use of *bi-* in 15th century Egypt:

“The one-consonant preposition *bi-* (*Dav.* 184-185), which must always be connected with a following word, behaves like suffixing *li-*: *بِيا* *biyā* ‘with me’ (60: 2), *بِكَ* *bak* ‘with you 2ms’ (94: 5), *بِكَ* *bik* 2fs (84: 5) and *بُو* *bū* 3ms (83: 1)”.

In modern Cairo Arabic, the *i* in *bi-* is lengthened when followed by a suffix, e.g. *bīk*. However, when *bi-* is suffixed to the preceding word, it gets the vowel *a*. Woidich (2006: 29) mentions the following examples: “*mawʔudābak* “sie ist dir versprochen””; and “*afrāḡbak inta w hiyya* “ich will eure Hochzeit feiern””.

¹⁰¹ See also Crum (1972: 64b).

¹⁰² There are many examples of *أورى* from Middle Arabic texts, see Blau (2002: 40) and Blau (1966-1967: I 175).

¹⁰³ See Zack (2009: 313).

* بدرى *badrī* (p. 76) “early”. In Classical Arabic, the word *badrī* is used only for rain which falls before the winter, or for a baby camel which is born before the others¹⁰⁴. But al-Xafāǧī mentions that:

أهل مصر يستعمله لأول كل شيء حتى الوقت والفاكهة

“The people of Egypt use it for the first of everything, even the time and fruits”.

This is still the case in modern Egyptian Arabic¹⁰⁵.

* خراساني *ʿabdallāwī* (p. 183) “type of watermelon”, also called *عبدى*. The entry is actually *عبدى*; the “common people”, however, incorrectly called it *ʿabdallāwī*, and this is what it is still known as in Egypt today¹⁰⁶. This is a *nisba*, which refers to ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, who brought this type of melon to Egypt¹⁰⁷.

* فضولى *fuḍūlī* (p. 205) “curious”. This entry is very interesting:

فضولى: معروف وهو مولد لكنه ليس بخطأ ولم يسمع له فعل والعامّة تقول تفوضل وهي كلمة قبيحة وإنما أوردتها¹⁰⁸ لأنه استعملها بعض من يدعى الأدب حتى ان كاتباً كتب عمراً في كتاب بغير واو فقال له بعض الناس اكتب الواو فقال لقد تفضل مولانا بالواو يعنى تفوضل أى أتى بالفوضول.

“*fuḍūlī*: [its meaning is] known. It is bastardized, but it is not wrong. No verb of it has been heard. The common people say *tafūḍal*, which is an ugly word, but I mentioned it because one of the people who claim to be cultured used it. It happened even that a scribe wrote *ʿAmr* without the *wāw*, so one of the people told him: “Write the *wāw*!”, and he said: “*tafaḍḍal* your Lordship with the *wāw*,” which means, *tafūḍal*, i.e., he acted with curiosity.”

The pun is difficult to translate; the words of the writer literally mean: “your Lordship had the kindness to provide the *wāw*”, but they could be interpreted as the word *tafaḍḍal*, to which a *wāw* is added, which makes *tafūḍal*, and this could then be translated as: “your Lordship was curious”. In modern Egyptian Arabic, verbs of form III with the vowels *ō-i* instead of *ā-i* are not unknown, although they are rare. Woidich (2006: 68-69) mentions the examples *sōraʿ*, *yisōraʿ* “ohnmächtig w.” (“to faint”) and *dōḥas*, *yidōḥas* “ausschwären” (“to fester out”), and remarks that most of these verbs have a

¹⁰⁴ See Lane (1955-1956: I 166a).

¹⁰⁵ See Badawi and Hinds (1986:56b).

¹⁰⁶ Badawi and Hinds (1986: 559a): “*ʿabdillāwī* orange melon (Cucumis chate)”.

¹⁰⁷ ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir (182/798-230/844) was first governor of the area between al-Raḡqa and Egypt, and later became governor of Khurāsān. He was a man who liked luxury and was therefore the one who introduced the excellent melon into Egypt, and this was thus named after him. See “ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṭāhir” in Zetterstéen (1987: 31).

¹⁰⁸ The text edition has: أوررتها.

meaning indicating “to fall sick”. Al-Xafāǧī presents us here with a similar verb of form VI, which could perhaps be translated as “to be sickly curious”.

4.4. Proverbs and expressions

The final aspect of *Šitā? al-ǧalīl* that I will discuss here are some proverbs and expressions which were used by the people of Egypt. These are classified by al-Xafāǧī as being used by العامة “the common people”. Some examples are:

* *أكل اللجم ?akal al-luǧum* (p. 42) “he is infuriated”, literally “he ate the bridles”. Al-Xafāǧī explains that this is a corruption of the proverb غضب الخيل “the horses got angry because of the bridles”, which means that someone gets angry about something which does not do him any harm¹⁰⁹.

* *حماتي تحبني ḥamātī tuḥibbinī* (p. 106): “my mother-in-law loves me”, used by someone who unexpectedly receives a benefit; the underlying idea is that somebody whose mother-in-law loves him should be regarded as lucky. Nowadays, *ḥamātak biḥibbak* is used in the sense of “you’ve come at the right time (to one who arrives when food is being served)”¹¹⁰.

* *رد الباب radd al-bāb* (p. 134) “he closed the door”, labelled by al-Xafāǧī as عامية مبتذلة “vulgar *ʿāmmiyya*”. This seems to be something of an exaggeration, because it is also mentioned in Classical Arabic dictionaries, such as al-Muḥarrizī’s *al-Muǧrib* (1979: 326): رَدَّ الباب أَصْفَقَهُ وَأَطْبَقَهُ.

* *سكران طينة sakrān ṭīna* (p. 153) “dead drunk”. Al-Xafāǧī’s explanation is that somebody in this state would be likely to fall into the mud. The expression is still used in Egypt today¹¹¹.

* *ضحك حتى استغرق في ضحكه ḍaḥik ḥattā istaǧraq fī ḍaḥikih* (p. 195) “he laughed vehemently”. This is, according to al-Xafāǧī, a corruption of *istaǧrab fī ḍaḥikih*, which is again a variant of *iǧtarab* or *?aǧrab fī ḍaḥikih*. This means according to Lane “he laughed so that either the sharpness of his teeth (غروب) appeared, or until he shed tears (غرب)”¹¹². Perhaps people no longer understood this expression, and turned it into *istaǧraq* “he was immersed in

¹⁰⁹ Al-Maydānī (1959: II 56 no. 2662) gives a slightly different interpretation in his *Maǧmaʿ al-amṭāl*: يضرب لمن يغضب غضباً لا ينتفع به ولا موضع له. “this (proverb) is used for somebody who gets angry with an anger which is of no use to him and which is out of place.”

¹¹⁰ Badawi and Hinds (1986: 224a).

¹¹¹ See Badawi and Hinds (1986: 554b).

¹¹² See Lane (1955-1956: VI 2240c-2241a).

laughter”¹¹³. In the same entry (p. 196), al-Xafāǧī mentions that the “common people” also say ضحك حتى انقلب *ḍahik ḥattā inqalab* “he laughed until he fell upside down”. There are many expressions in Classical Arabic of the type *ḍahik ḥattā faʿala* (see Müller (1993: 38), but perhaps the combination with *inqalaba* was not used in Classical Arabic.

Conclusion

Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl fīmā fī kalām al-ʿarab min al-daxīl by Šihāb al-Dīn al-Xafāǧī (d. 1069/1659) was intended to be a dictionary of loanwords in the Arabic language and an addition to al-Ġawālīqī’s *al-Muʿarrab*. However, upon careful perusal of this work, it becomes obvious that many of its entries are not loanwords at all, but Arabic. *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl* is, in fact, also a work in the *Laḥn al-ʿamma*-style, in which the author corrects so-called “mistakes” which were made in the Arabic language. These entries are words or expressions which were used by the *ʿamma*, the “common people”, in a different way or with a different meaning to that of Classical Arabic, or which do not exist at all in Classical Arabic. There are also entries which al-Xafāǧī did not write to correct a mistake, but to simply provide an explanation of a word or expression that is perfectly sound Classical Arabic, but was perhaps not very well known or misunderstood (e.g. the entries أَلطاف “presents” and مدينة “slave girl”). To summarise, the entries of *Šifāʾ al-ǧalīl* can be divided into the following categories:

- Words of foreign origin (either copied from *al-Muʿarrab* or added by al-Xafāǧī himself);
- So-called “language mistakes”, i.e. Arabic words or expressions which were not used in accordance with the rules of Classical Arabic;
- Colloquial expressions and proverbs;
- Explanations of Classical Arabic words and expressions.

Al-Xafāǧī relies heavily on the statements of other dictionaries and works on the Arabic language when it comes to providing the etymology of foreign loanwords. He follows the rule of calling a word “correct Arabic”, even when it is a loanword, when it had entered the Arabic language in the classical period (the *ǧāhiliyya* and the first two centuries of Islam) and conforms to Arabic paradigms. An example of such an entry is the word *biṭāqa* “piece of paper”, which is originally Greek, but can be found in the *ḥadīṭ*; therefore al-Xafāǧī declares it to be *luǧa ṣaḥīḥa*, “correct Arabic”. From the point of view of historical linguistics, the words that are labelled as

¹¹³ See Müller (1993: 166-177) for more information on the expressions *istaǧraba / istaǧraqa fī al-ḍahik*. The combination of *istaǧraqa* and *ḍahik* does not occur in the early Arabic dictionaries; the first one to mention it is al-Zamaxšarī (d. 538/1144) in his *ʿAsās al-balāǧa*; see Müller (1993: 174).

belonging to the *šamma* are the most interesting, because they provide us with an insight into the colloquial Arabic of al-Xāfāǧī's time.

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