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CHAPTER 2

Description of the Manuscript

As far as we know, there is only one manuscript of *Daf al-Iṣr*.¹⁰⁴ This is the autograph, which is kept in the St. Petersburg University Library, number MS OA 778. This chapter will discuss how it ended up there, as well as its physical condition and appearance.¹⁰⁵

2.1 The historical background of the manuscript – from Cairo to St. Petersburg

After the death of Yūsuf al-Mağribī in 1611, the autograph of *Daf al-iṣr* came into the possession of Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Surūr al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī (d. 1653?).¹⁰⁶ Ibn Abī al-Surūr produced an abbreviated version of *Daf al-iṣr* in 1057/1647 and called it *al-Qawl al-muqtaḍab fīmā wāfaqa luġat 'ahl Miṣr min luġāt al-'arab*.¹⁰⁷ The first folio has some owner marks, but these cannot be deciphered, because the page is damaged. On the last page, fol. 134b, one of the subsequent owners wrote his name and the date *Ġumādā* 1095 AH (1684 AD). Unfortunately, most of the name has been erased, making it partly illegible.¹⁰⁸ At a certain point, *Daf al-iṣr* passed into the hands of Yūsuf al-Mallawī Ibn al-Wakīl.¹⁰⁹ No information about the manuscript's whereabouts can be found for the years after it was with Ibn al-Wakīl; we only know that it finally came into the possession of the Egyptian scholar Muḥammad 'Ayyād al-Ṭanṭāwī (1810-1861), about a hundred and fifty years later. Not only has al-Ṭanṭāwī been vital to the history of the manuscript, but he is also an important source of information about Egyptian Arabic in the 19th century. Accordingly, al-Ṭanṭāwī will be presented to the reader in the following paragraph.

¹⁰⁴ See GAL S II p. 394. The “Abschrift in Halle (ZDMG 45, 480, no. 124)” mentioned there is the abbreviated copy made in the 19th century by the orientalist Thorbecke, see §3.5.

¹⁰⁵ I examined the manuscript in May 2001 in the library of the University of St. Petersburg.

¹⁰⁶ See Ibn Abī al-Surūr (1962) p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ The relation between *Daf al-iṣr* and *al-Qawl al-muqtaḍab* will be discussed in §3.4.

¹⁰⁸ The only legible part of the name is: “*al-faqīr* Muḥammad (..) ibn al-marḥūm al-ṣayḥ Nūr al-Dīn ibn al-marḥūm al-ṣayḥ Šaraf al-Dīn 'Alī b. al-marḥūm (...) al-Aḥmad. We do not have any additional information about these people. It is unclear whether they owned the manuscript before or after Ibn al-Wakīl.

¹⁰⁹ See Ibn Abī al-Surūr (1962) p. 2. This person, also known as Yūsuf b. Muḥammad ibn al-Wakīl al-Mīlawī, was a copyist, translator and historian, who was active at the beginning of the 18th century. He is mentioned in GAL S II pp. 410, 414 and 637. On the title page of the manuscript of one of his works, *Buġyat al-musāmīr wa-ġunyāt al-musāfir*, his name is written as al-Mallawī. See Rosenthal (1963) p. 452-4.

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2.1.1 Muḥammad ‘Ayyād al-Ṭanṭāwī

Al-Ṭanṭāwī was born in 1810, in the village of Nağrīd, which is located in the neighbourhood of Ṭanṭā, in the Egyptian Delta. He was the son of a travelling salesman, and his full name was Muḥammad b. Sa’d b. Sulaymān ‘Ayyād al-Marḥūmī al-Ṭanṭāwī al-Šāfiī. The *nisba* al-Marḥūmī refers to the birth place of his father, Maḥallat Marḥūm, a village close to Ṭanṭā.¹¹⁰ He first went to the local *kuttāb*, and at the age of 13 moved to Cairo, where he joined al-Azhar University.¹¹¹ Ibrāhīm al-Bāğūrī (1783-1861) was his main teacher there.¹¹² The most notable of his fellow students was Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (1811-1883), *bāš-muṣaḥḥih* (“chief-corrector”) at the Būlāq printing house. He became known because of the assistance he gave to Edward William Lane in compiling the latter’s dictionary.¹¹³

Upon completing his studies, al-Ṭanṭāwī held a position as a lecturer at al-Azhar for almost ten years.¹¹⁴ He gave private lessons to foreigners, such as the orientalist Lane, Fresnel, Perron and Weil,¹¹⁵ as well as two Russian diplomats, Mukhin and Frāhn. Mukhin had read Oriental Studies at the University of St. Petersburg,¹¹⁶ and in 1839, offered al-Ṭanṭāwī the opportunity to teach at the Institute of Oriental Languages in St. Petersburg, when a post became vacant because of the demise of its teacher of Arabic, Demange. Al-Ṭanṭāwī arrived in St. Petersburg in 1840.¹¹⁷ In 1847, he became the third Professor of the Arabic language at St. Petersburg University, and the first Arab to hold the post.¹¹⁸ He kept this position until his death in Russia in 1861, and was buried in the Volkovo cemetery.¹¹⁹ Al-Ṭanṭāwī left us one of the most interesting sources of Egyptian-Arabic from the 19th century, a work called *Traité de la langue arabe vulgaire* (or in Arabic, *Aḥsan al-naḥb fī ma’rifat lisān al-‘arab*).¹²⁰ His manuscript collection, containing about 150 manuscripts among which was *Daf al-iṣr*, was bequeathed to

¹¹⁰ See Kratchkovsky (2000) pp. 21 and 23.

¹¹¹ Ibid. p. 25.

¹¹² Ibid. p. 26.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 27-8 and *El²* II p. 167a (I. Goldziher).

¹¹⁴ See Kratchkovsky (2000) p. 31.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 34-39.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 41.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 44-5.

¹¹⁸ See Sharbatov (1984) p. 67.

¹¹⁹ See Kratchkovsky (2000) p. 7 and 117.

¹²⁰ A detailed linguistic study of this work can be found in Woidich (1995) pp. 271-287; a concise description of the book can be found in Sharbatov (1984) pp. 72-75.

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the St. Petersburg University library, where they remain. Unfortunately, where and how al-Ṭanṭāwī acquired *Daf al-iṣr* is still unknown.

2.2 Physical appearance and condition of the manuscript

The manuscript in its present form consists of 134 folios. It was numbered in Arabic numbers by Baron Victor Romanovič Rosen (1849-1908), who catalogued all of the collection of Arabic and Persian manuscripts at St. Petersburg University.¹²¹ The binding was carried out by the University librarian, Zaleman.¹²² On its title page is written, in a different handwriting to that of al-Mağribī's, *al-Faḍl al- 'āmm wa qāmūs al- 'awāmm li-Yūsuf al-Mağribī*. In the lower left corner of each verso page, a catchword is inscribed. Each page contains between 18 and 24 lines. The size of the manuscript is 21.5 cm in length and 15.5 cm in width. Part of the manuscript is missing, from *kurrāsa* (quire) 3 to 13, which equates to 11 quires or 110 pages.¹²³ In its original state, it numbered 25 quires (including those which were lost), the last of which consists of only four folios. Quire 3 (fol. 20b) ends with the word *قطرب* and quire 14 (fol. 21a) starts with the word *حقف*.¹²⁴ Another irregularity can be found in the 23rd quire, which consists of eight folios (111a-118b) instead of the usual ten. However, there is no text missing so it can be assumed that al-Mağribī unintentionally used an incomplete quire.

The manuscript is in fairly good condition. In some places, there is some minor damage to the pages. The first folio has sustained the most damage: it has two holes and the upper margin is missing. Furthermore, the upper margins of fols. 4, 5, and 7 are torn, as is the lower margin of fol. 10.

It seems that the manuscript is a first draft of *Daf al-iṣr*, because there are large

¹²¹ Rosen himself refers to this in his letter to Thorbecke, published in Kratchkovsky (1955) p. 369.

¹²² See Kratchkovsky (1955) p. 372.

¹²³ Here Kratchkovsky (1955) p. 373 erroneously mentions that 12 quires, i.e. 120 pages are missing.

¹²⁴ 'Awwād (1968) states in the foreword of the facsimile edition that the manuscript after the missing part continues with the word *ردف* (see p. 11); however, this is incorrect. Indeed the word *ردف* is mentioned: *ويقولون أي الشعراء ردف المحبوب كالحقف* (line 3), but the word which is explained here is *حقف*, not *ردف*. This becomes clear starting from line four of the same folio where the different plurals of the word *حقف* are given. Another indication is that the next explained word is *حلف* (fol. 21). Furthermore, the final explained word in the missing part is from the root *ḤFF*, because the quotation in lines 1-3 of fol. 21a is from the chapter *ḤFF* of *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*.

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numbers of corrections, additions and comments added in the margins, which are in the same handwriting as the main body of the text. Any subsequent copyist would have incorporated these corrections in the text. Al-Mağribī wrote *Daf al-iṣr* between *Dū al-Ḥiġġa* 1014¹²⁵ (April-May 1606) and half *Ġumādā al-'Ūlā* 1015 (half September 1606).¹²⁶ This is a brief period of time considering the size of the work, as he realized himself:

فإن هذا الكتاب حصل في مدة يسيرة، يسره الله عسيره، فإن ما فيه من المنظوم نظم حال الكتابة
مع جريان القلم، وكأنه نقل من نسخة ثم¹²⁷

“This book was produced in a short time, may God make his difficulties easy, and the poetry it contains puts the state of the book in proper order with the running of the pen, as if it was written down from an existing copy.”

The year 1014 AH is mentioned several times in the manuscript, on fols. 13a and 16b, and the year 1015 AH is referred to on fol. 19a. In 1016 AH, almost a year after its completion, the manuscript was still in al-Mağribī's possession, because he wrote in the margin of fol. 89b that someone he had mentioned there, had died that year. He also refers to another event that occurred in 1016.¹²⁸

Red ink is used in some parts of the manuscript, notably more towards the end. Often the word *yaqūlūn* “they say”, which is used to introduce a new entry, is written in red ink to make it stand out from the rest of the text. Moreover, the two parts of a line of poetry are often divided by commas in red ink. Some words, such as *yaqūlūn* or the titles of chapters, are written somewhat larger than the rest, and the word *yaqūlūn* is sometimes accentuated with a small stroke on top.

Daf al-iṣr contains entries for 1406 words¹²⁹ in 134 folios. Taking into consideration that 110 folios were lost, the original manuscript in its complete state must have contained around 2560 entries.

¹²⁵ Mentioned in *Daf al-iṣr* on fol. 1a. On fol. 133a he mentions he started the work half *Ṣawwāl* 1014 (beginning of February 1606); probably by the time he reached the end of the book he did not remember exactly when he had started it.

¹²⁶ See fol. 133a.

¹²⁷ Fol. 133a.

¹²⁸ In the margin of fol. 43a.

¹²⁹ 'Awwād (1968) has 1371 entries in his index. This difference is due to the fact that 'Awwād failed to mention some of the entries, such as the entries *'aflak*, *falāka*, *maflūk* on fol. 61b. Also, some other words, which are not introduced with *wa yaqūlūn*, escaped his notice, such as *al-ḥafalā* on fol. 69b and *kūkī* on fol. 62a.

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2.3 The title

The title of the book was, initially, *al-Faḍl al-‘āmm wa qāmūs al-‘awāmm*, “The general benefit and the dictionary of the common people”, see folio 2a. It is written in its abbreviated form *al-Faḍl al-‘āmm* at the beginning of the quires on fols. 11a, 21a, 41a and 61a. On fol. 71a we find the abbreviated title, *Qāmūs al-‘awāmm*. However, al-Mağribī erased this title on folio 2a, and wrote the new title in the margin: *Daf al-iṣr ‘an kalām*¹³⁰ *ahl Miṣr*. On the headings of the quires we find that the old title (*al-Faḍl* etc.) has been changed into the new one.¹³¹ This happens for the last time on folio 111a. On folio 119a, al-Mağribī wrote the new title directly. It is, therefore, clear that he changed the title during the writing process. He probably got the idea for the new title from the poem he wrote on fol. 99b:

راوا في عالم الرويا * ضياءً منك يجلو الأضر
فقلت وجآ في التاريخ * علي پاشا ينور مصر

“They saw in a vision / a light which removed the burden from you
I said, ‘In the history / Ali Pasha¹³² came to enlighten Egypt’.”

One thing has to be noted: in most places in the manuscript where al-Mağribī has changed the title, it was changed to *Daf al-iṣr ‘an luğāt ahl Miṣr*,¹³³ while the variant with *kalām* instead of *luğāt* can be found in only one place, on folio 2a. Accordingly, it is not entirely clear which title al-Mağribī preferred. However, it seems likely that, at a certain stage, he decided to change the new title from *luğāt* / *luğāt* to *kalām*, but did not take the trouble to go through the whole document to do this. Since the variant with *kalām* is the one the text has become known for, this is the title I will use in this work.

There is some confusion about the title *Daf al-iṣr ‘an kalām ahl Miṣr*. Some authors refer to it, erroneously, as *Raf al-iṣr ‘an kalām ahl Miṣr*, e.g. GAL II p. 368, including Ibn Abī al-Surūr in his introduction to *al-Qawl al-muqtaḍab*, even though he possessed the original.¹³⁴ The confusion is probably due to the existence of a famous work entitled *Raf al-iṣr ‘an quḍāt Miṣr* by Ibn Ḥağar al-‘Asqalānī (773/1372-

¹³⁰ Was first *luğāt*, then changed into *kalām*, or vice versa, this is unclear.

¹³¹ Fols. 51a, 81a, 91a, 101a, 111a.

¹³² ‘Alī IV, governor of Egypt from Ṣafar 1010/August 1601 to Rabī‘ II 1012/September 1603. See Holt (1973) p. 189. “Several pashas also held the rank of vizier”, see Winter (1992) p. 32.

¹³³ Fols. 51a, 81a, 91a, 101a, 111a, 119a, 129a.

¹³⁴ Ibn Abī al-Surūr (1962), p. 9. More on Ibn Abī al-Surūr and *al-Qawl al-muqtaḍab* will be said in §3.4.

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852/1449).¹³⁵ Nonetheless, there is no doubt that al-Mağribī wrote *Daf* and not *Raf*. Al-Mağribī's *dāl* cannot be mistaken for a *rā'*. The meaning of the two words is similar, the first being "pushing away", the second "lifting up", and therefore "removing".

¹³⁵ See GAL II pp. 80-83.