Egyptian Arabic in the seventeenth century: a study and edition of Yusuf al-Magribi's 'Daf al-isr an kalam ahl Misr'

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Aspects of Daily Life

Al-Maġribī describes many aspects of daily life in Egypt at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Amongst the other images he paints for us, the descriptions of food and drinks, clothes, medicinal plants and utensils really help us to form a picture of how Egyptians lived in this period. These aspects will, therefore, be highlighted in this chapter.

5.1 Food and drinks

5.1.1 Sweetmeats

It seems that Egyptian dietary habits have not changed much over the years. Like today, the Egyptians in al-Maġribī's time seem to have had a sweet tooth. Al-Maġribī mentions a number of sweets, some of which are still well-known, such as the all-time favourites كعكة "pastry made of thin vermicelli-shaped dough" (32b, 33b), كحك العيد "cookies served at the religious holidays" (62a), قطايف "sweet pancakes" (32b), نقل "a dessert of dried fruit or nuts" (93a), مفتقة, "pastry made of molasses and other ingredients", مرباه "jam made of molasses and other ingredients" (52a) "jam" and دكر "honey" (83b). We also find reference to some sweetmeats that are less familiar these days: معمونية, "a kind of marzipan, apparently named after al-Ma'mūn" (109a), a sweetmeat which al-Maģribī calles alternately مفتوحة (10a) and حشمانط "a pastry filled with almond paste (عجوة 128b)), a popular dish in the seventeenth century which was still known at the time of Aḥmad Taymūr Bāšā but is now, apparently, forgotten; هطلية, a sweet dish made of wheat...
starch and milk (94a)\textsuperscript{56} and  \textit{ruhāmiyya} “marble sweet” (97b), so called because its colour resembles that of marble.  \textit{ruhāmiyya} is not found in dictionaries of modern Egyptian Arabic, but recipes are available online. It consists of crumbled cookies covered with white cream. The “marble effect” is created by drawing dark lines on the cream with chocolate.

Nuts were eaten as well: Al-Mağribī mentions  \textit{fustuq} “pistachios” (53a), nowadays called  \textit{fuzdu} in Egypt;\textsuperscript{57}  \textit{bunduq} “hazelnuts” (38a), which were called  \textit{fendu} (53b) by the Turks, and chestnuts, which were called  \textit{qaṭal / qaṣṭal} (89a) or  \textit{abū farywa} “the one with the little fur” (89a), nowadays known as  \textit{abu farwa}.

\textbf{5.1.2 Savory dishes}

\textit{idām} “gravy” (95a) was eaten with bread, like today, and was perhaps wiped up with a  \textit{qišfı} “bread crust” (32b). There were different types of bread:\textsuperscript{58}  \textit{šarık} (60b) and  \textit{sūmūl} (81a) (both unspecified by al-Mağribī;  \textit{šurēk} is today used for a type of bun, and comes from the Turkish  \textit{çörek},\textsuperscript{59} while  \textit{sūmūl} was used for “coarse bread, soldiers’ bread” in the nineteenth century\textsuperscript{60}),  \textit{kumāğā} “dry bread” (10a) (from Persian  \textit{qomāqā}) and  \textit{ǧirāyı} (1.4b) (also not specified by al-Mağribī; nowadays the word is used for “bread ration, coarse bread”\textsuperscript{61}, which is the name of the bread eaten in the Egyptian army these days, which is a kind of old, dried  \textit{čī balādi}). People ate  \textit{fūl} “broad beans” (88a; 110a) and rice,\textsuperscript{62} and the latter could be seasoned with pepper and was then called  \textit{mufīlfīl} (88a). Lane describes this as follows:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Davies (1981) p. 486: “HYṬLYḤ – ‘a dish made of wheat starch and milk; it is extremely delicious to eat and lighter than rice pudding, especially if honey is added to it’”.
\item \textsuperscript{57} This is probably in analogy to  \textit{bundu}, which has the same ending -\textit{u}.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Al-Mağribī calls bread  \textit{ḥubs}, not  \textit{čī}, in the context of the entries, but this is a classicism. The part of the book in which  \textit{čī} was mentioned as an entry, is lost, but in  \textit{al-Qaww al-muqtadab} p. 73 we find that the word  \textit{čī} was indeed included in  \textit{Daf’ al-şpr}, so we know for certain that the Egyptians called their bread  \textit{čī}.
\item \textsuperscript{59} See Hinds-Badawi (1986) p. 463b.
\item \textsuperscript{60} See Spiro (1999) p. 331b.
\item \textsuperscript{61} See Hinds-Badawi (1986) p. 157b-158a.
\item \textsuperscript{62} This is written as  \textit{čī} on fol. 88a, but as  \textit{raz} on fol. 10a.
\end{itemize}
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“A dish of boiled rice (called “ruzz mufelfel”, the “piláv” of the Turks), mixed with a little butter, and seasoned with salt and pepper.”

Al-Maġribī also mentions a rice dish, دستلاملم/uni0644.medi.preAlefs/uni067E.init pılāv, “a rice dish” which he ate in the homes of his Persian friends.

Food without salt was known as مکفن mukıffın (117b). Part of the basic diet were بصل “onions” (65b), توم “garlic” (96a) and سلمج “turnips” (101a). The clarified butter, nowadays called سلاد silā (9a) in al-Maġribī’s time.

Bouillon المرق maraq (55a) was used just as it is today. A type of cheese, حالوم hálūm (96b), which is still available today, was also eaten.

Thin sheets of dough, called رقاق ruqāq (40b), were used in various dishes and are still eaten. Small savory pastries, such as بريان bıryk (56b), and the still popular triangular سنوبسك sanbūsk (60b), which is now filled with cheese, minced meat or spinach, are both mentioned in داف al-iṣr, as are كشك kišk (62a), a dish which is still popular and is prepared with wheat and milk, and ناقنيق naqāniq “small sausages” (56a). The latter dish is still known in Syria, but in Egypt is now called سعو suqū, from the Turkish sucuk. A dish which is no longer familiar in Egypt is اربئية arbijya “hare ragout” (11a).

265 Ibid. p. 254.
266 We still find مسلي masli “clarified butter” in Egypt nowadays, although Hinds-Badawi (1986) p. 428b mentions that it is not pure dialect.
267 From Coptic, see Crum (1972) p. 670a.
268 Its popularity is attested to by its use in the following proverbs: فلان اكل كشك عند فلان “so-and-so ate kišk at so-and-so’s house”, which meant “he ate a lot of food till his belly swelled up”, see Davies (1981) p. 458; and هعوو فارحا b-kišk “he is the favourite”, see HB 753a.
271 See Dozy (1927) I p. 19a.
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5.1.3 Drinks

Red wine was called ǧīryāl (67b) due to its colour, because the word literally means "golden red".272

A sweet drink called سوية  суبيع (9a), which is still popular today, is mentioned by al-Maġribī. It was originally a Turkish word: Redhouse (1992) p. 1086b سوية "sweet drink prepared from pounded almonds, melon or cucumber seeds, etc.". In Egypt these days, however, it is prepared in a different way, with fermented rice and sugar.

From coffee beans, or ﺏўﻦ  qahwa “coffee” was made. Coffee was first introduced to Cairo by السفی in the Yemeni quarters of al-Azhar, sometime in the first decade of the tenth century AH / sixteenth century AD.273 According to al-Maġribī, coffee sellers used to say ڬبا “for free!” when pouring out the drink.274 He also explicitly mentions that an excellent type of coffee drunk in Egypt is made of قشر qisr, i.e. the husks, of the bean. This use of the husks is also mentioned in Hattox’s study about coffee in the Middle East:

“Some descriptions refer almost exclusively to using the husks. The description initially given Khā/uni0.BEir Beg of coffee, that it is “cooked from the husks of the seed called bunn that comes from the Yemen,” is one example.”275 Nowadays in Yemen, coffee is still made from the husks, see Behnstedt (2006) p. 996: "gieşrin: Kaffeeschalen, ein Getränk, gebraut aus Kaffeeschalen, Ingwer und Zimt".

Al-Maģribī quotes from a poem created by one of his teachers, ًAlī al-Maqdisī, in praise of coffee, and there is another about the same topic which al-Maģribī produced.276 He even mentions that when the value of the letters of the word qahwa is added up, it has the same numerical value as the word qawī.277 To him, this

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274 See fols. 5b and 124b; al-Maģribī by mistake mentions the entry ڬبا twice, first in the chapter َلاٰٰ and later in the chapter َلاٰٰ. He actually has another explanation of the word, see the entry ِجا in the Glossary.
275 Hattox (1991) p. 84.
276 Both on fol. 5b.
277 Every letter of the alphabet has a certain numerical value. Q = 100, H = 5, W = 6, Y = 10, see EI III p. 595 (T. Fahd).
QHWH: 100+5+6+5=116.
QWY: 100+6+10=116.
is proof of its positive qualities. It was the cause of some hilarity when, during a maǧlis, a Turk who had apparently not mastered the Arabic language pointed out that when the word فهواه is inverted it reads حق “it is the truth”. As well as this passage on fols. 5b-6a, the word فهواه appears five more times in the context of entries in Daf al-ṭiṣṭ, and is mentioned in seven poems in total. It is, therefore, clear that the drink had become important in Egyptian society since the time of its first appearance there.

5.2 Drugs and tobacco
Al-Maġribī mentions the use of drugs on a few occasions. The people of Egypt said, for instance: ياكول من الكيف yākul min al-kyf “he eats of the hashish”. The word kyf is a metonymy: it was first used to describe the state of pleasure caused by hashish, and therefore later also came to mean the drug itself. We can conclude from yākul that the hashish was eaten, not smoked, as still happens today. Sometimes people mixed it (قل الحشيش qıtıl ıšīš). Although al-Maġribī does not mention with what, it could perhaps have been the innovation called tobacco (see below). Al-Maġribī mentions the word إفون āfyūn “opium” (117a) as well, although he tells us no more than يقولون āfyūn, using a quotation from ıł-Qāmūs ıł-muštūl “high or stoned, intoxicated” or can be في سلطنة fi satla (same meaning). It is unclear, however,

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278 See fol. 6a.
279 A social gathering. For more information about this cultural phenomenon, see §1.3.
280 Fol. 6a. See also §4.3.
281 On fols. 5b (twice), 6a, 11b, 76a, 99b, and 130b.
282 Fol. 33b.
283 See Dozy (1927) II p. 505 “... Proprement l’état de gaiété, d’ivresse, causé par le hachich, et ensuite le hachich meme”.
284 Prosper Alpin mentions in his Médecine (1980) I p. 255 that the Egyptians used opium very frequently. Alpin stayed in Egypt from 1581 to 1584.
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whether he means that such a person was drunk or high. He explicitly mentions that these two words are used frequently by the people from the Ḣiğāz.

Tobacco was a completely new phenomenon in al-Maġrībī’s time. He explicitly mentions that in the year he wrote ʿDaʿf al-ʿiṣr, i.e. 1014/1606, a new phenomenon called ṭālḥa had come into fashion. This is correct, since we know that tobacco was introduced to Egypt in 1603-1604, and it would be reasonable to assume that it would take some time to become popular with the general public. What al-Maġribī tells us about it is extremely interesting. Shops which specialized in tobacco were established, and there were even suggestions that other special places should open for it, like coffee houses. He mentions in the margin that one ʿraḍl (around 443 gram) is sold for three gold coins (

This must be the gold coin called ʿaṣrafi (or ʿṣṛīfī) muḥammadī, since this was the only one in use in Cairo in the Ottoman period until the end of the 17th century. Its weight was 3,448 gram. Therefore, 1 ʿraḍl of tobacco was worth 10,344 grams of gold. The only thing al-Maġribī can tell us about the origin of tobacco is that it came from the West. He tried it once and did not like it at all because it made him feel dizzy. He further mentions that people smoke it, and for this activity they use the phrase ʿaṣla ṭuḥānahā “they drink its smoke”. Moreover, he tells us that there was some question about whether it was permissible to smoke while fasting during Ramaḍān. According to a certain ʿayh called al-Zayyādī it was actually allowed, which al-Maġribī believed to be reprehensible.

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288 Fol. 16b. Tobacco was first introduced in Europe by Columbus in 1493, although at that time it stirred mostly botanical interest, see EI 2 X 753a (R. Matthee). At the end of the 1580s, smoking was made popular by Sir Walter Raleigh, who introduced it at the English court. See Milton (2000) p. 182ff.
289 See EI 2 X p. 753b (R. Matthee).
290 Note that the weights varied throughout the Ottoman period, and also depended on the place and the commodity; this is therefore an estimation, see Raymond (1973) I p. iivi. The ʿraḍl remained commonly in use in Egypt until around the 70s of the last century, along with the wiyya "ounce", in parallel with the metric system.
291 See Raymond (1973) I p. 28.
292 Ibid.
293 Also in Turkish, the word for “to drink”, içmek, is used for “to smoke”.
294 This is probably ʿAlī b. Yahyā Nūr al-Dīn al-Zayyādī al-Miṣrī al-Ṣafiʿī, d. 1024/1615. He was originally from Maballat Zayyād in al-Buḥayra, but lived and died in Cairo. He was a famous faqīh and muftī. See Zirikli (1955) V p. 32 and al-Muḥbūbī (online version): http://islamport.com/d/1/trj/1/144/3525.html.
295 See fol. 75b.
It is natural that such an innovation caused some controversy, even though it nowadays seems incredible that some might have considered smoking during Ramaḍān to be acceptable. During the Ottoman rule smoking became common place, as was proven by archaeological finds. Ward and Baram (1999) p. 145 state that “archaeologists have noted that clay pipes are among the most plentiful artifacts studies from the era that the Ottoman Empire ruled over the Middle East.”

5.3 Medicine

In al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṣ, many herbs and vegetables are praised for their medicinal properties. These descriptions were copied by al-Maġribī, showing that the belief in the healing power of these plants had not diminished since al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṣ was written in the fourteenth century. For instance, باقلا ‘baqillā “broad beans” were believed to relieve coughing (66a), while نجل ‘fiğl “radishes” are almost a magical medicine, curing such various afflictions as pain in the joints, jaundice, dropsy, and bites of snakes and scorpions” (86b).

Some of the complaints from which 17th century Egyptians suffered were: شكاق ‘šaqāq “a disease which causes cracks in the skin” (47a), شكيفة ‘šaqīfa “a splitting headache” (47a), قتن ‘fatq “hernia, rupture” (51b), قصف ‘qasaf “chapped skin” (32b),

The dilemma of Muslim scholars on this point is described in EI 2 X 754a (R. Matthee): “As in many places around the world, tobacco in the early stage of its introduction in the Middle East aroused suspicion on the part of clerics and bureaucrats alike. Muslim scholars, unable to find references to tobacco in the Qur’ān, resorted to analogical reasoning to determine whether smoking was permitted or should be condemned and banned as contrary to religion. As tobacco did not resemble any of the forbidden substances mentioned in the Qur’ān, proscribing it was not a simple matter. Nor was it easy to “prove” that tobacco in itself was bad, or harmful to one’s health. (...) Arguments for and against tobacco were often made in the context of the controversy between the representatives of orthodoxy, who rejected tobacco, and members of Şūfī orders, who took to smoking”. Apparently al-Maġribī was an exception to the rule that Şūfīs took to smoking. Kātib Čelebi describes the way smoking was received in Istanbul and discusses whether it is permitted under Islamic law, see Ḥalifa (1957) pp. 50-59. Rosenthal (1971) p. 129 recounts an interesting anecdote narrated by Ibn al-Wakīl al-Mīlawī (see §2.1) about two men smoking in a park who are caught red-handed.

Still used nowadays in expressions like کا’بی مصا’ع “the skin of my heel is cracked”.

Both مصا’ع and وصف are still used in Egypt with the same meaning.
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or "death rattle" (51a), a condition which once afflicted al-Mağribī.299 Anyone who became ill was normally dependent on the services of the muzayyin or barber,300 who could stitch up a wound (20a), prescribe a marham “ointment” (106a) or lu‘ūq “electuary” (54b).301 William Lane did not have a high opinion of them, finding that the Egyptian barbers were “miserably ignorant of the sciences which they profess, and unskilful in their practice”.302

An antidote called tiryāq fārūq “distinguishing theriac” (52a) was used for snakebites. The Ottoman traveller Evliya Čelebi (1611-after 1683) gives us a detailed description of how it was manufactured in Egypt. In the month of July, specialist hunters used to catch a great number of snakes, which were then transported to the hospital of Qalāwūn, slaughtered, hung out to dry, and then used to prepare this special medicine.303

5.4 Games

Al-Mağribī mentions some terminology connected with the game of chess. The word firzān (117a) is normally used for “queen” in chess, and is derived from the Persian farzin “wise man, counsellor”.304 Dast (3a), another Persian word, means “game”.305 Less common are three other chess-terms used by al-Mağribī. When somebody loses a game, he says māmād, meaning literally “affected by ophthalmia”, as if the loser wants to say mā ra‘ayt fī hādā dast “I did not see in this game”.306 Although at first sight it would be tempting to compare this to the “blind mate”, this would be inaccurate because the latter is “a mate which the winner does not see is mate”,307 while al-Mağribī

299 See §1.2.
300 Lane (2003) p. 218; “The Egyptian medical and surgical practitioners are mostly barbers”. This remained the case until recently, but barbers or miz̄yyin̄ have gradually lost their popularity after doctors reached almost every corner of Egypt. For instance, circumcision was always an exercise practiced by the miz̄yyin.
301 These last three words are still in use in Egypt nowadays.
305 See Wieber (1972) p. 291.
306 Daf al-ısr fol. 3a.
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mentions that in the case of marmād, it is the looser who did not see. This term is not found in this specific context in any dictionary, but it is mentioned with exactly the same meaning and explained in Ibn Tağrī Birdī’s al-Nuqūm al-zāhirā fi ‘ulūm Miṣr wa-l-Qāhirā:

ووقع بينه وبين قاضي القضاء عز الدين عبد العزيز بن العز البغدادي الحنبلي مفاوضة في بعض مجالس السلطان لمعنى من المعاني، فكان من جملة كلام ابن السفاح هذه، أن قال: يعف الوطن - وشدة الياء - فقال عز الدين المذكور: أسكتبا برمرماد، فضحكل السلطان ومن حضر، واقتصف عليه الحنبلي. فلما نزل من القلعة، سألت من عز الدين عن قوله مرماد، فقال: الأركان كثيراً ما يلعبون الشطرنج، وقد صار بينهم أن الذي لا يعرف شيء يسمى مرماد، فقصئت الكلام بما اعتادوا وعفوهن أنه لا يعرف شيء، وأنه حامل بما يقول، وتمي ما قصدته.  

"Between him" (309) and the 'judge of judges' ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. al-ʿizz al-Baġdādī al-Ḥanbalī, was a discussion in one of the Sultan’s mağālis about the meaning of a certain word. One of the things Ibn al-Saffāh said was the following: ‘rayyi’ al-waʿaf (‘the income resulting from a dedicated land for a purpose’), with a šaddā on the yā. So, the aforementioned ‘Izz al-Dīn said: ‘Shut up you marmād’, leading to laughter from the Sultan and the other attendants, and al-Ḥanbalī demanded justice (?). (310) So when they went down from the citadel, I asked ʿIzz al-Dīn about the meaning of the word marmād, and he said: ‘The Turks play chess often, and when it happens that there is somebody among them who is ignorant, they call him marmād, so I meant this word in the way they are using it in, and let them know that he doesn’t know a thing and that he is ignorant about what he said, and that is what I meant.”

So, although the term was unfamiliar to an Arabic speaker, it was well-known by the Turkish speaking courtiers. More mysterious is the term مرماد قفة marmād quffā (32b). The meaning of the word يديدب yidīydib (13a) is also not entirely clear, although it seems to be related to the noun dadabān / didabān “sentry” (see Hinds-

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309 Ibn Tağrī Birdī (1963) XV pp. 174-175.
310 i.e., the judge Šihāb al-Dīn ʿAhmad b. ʿalīh al-Dīn Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAhmad b. ʿUmar, known as Ibn al-Saffāh al-Ḥanbālī al-Saffī, whose demise Ibn al-Tağrī Birdī had just mentioned in the preceding paragraph.
311 The meaning of انصتف here is unclear. Dozy II p. 680 "دَمَرَ جَمِيعَاتٍ إِلَّا أَنْ وَسَعَهَا " demander justice d’un tel (pour) une personne; parier de quelqu’un comme de son égal, ne pas lui donner de titre". 

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Badawi (1986) p. 282b), whose origin is the Persian didabān (see Steingass p. 552a). Neither of these words is mentioned by Wieber and Murray, two authorities on chess.

Another game described by al-Maġribī, although not in such detail, is the ṭāb (16b). It is still played today with four pieces of palm branch which are white on one side and green on the other, a board, and a few stones. It is described in detail in Lane’s Manners and customs (2003) pp. 346-349.

5.5 Clothing and jewellery

Al-Maġribī pays a great deal of attention to the different types of clothing worn by the Egyptians. In total, he mentions 27 types of garments or words related to clothing, from the *amāma* “turban” (103a) to the *tarjīl* “slipper” (75), and from the *tabbān* “short under-pants” (110a) to the *buhnuq* “veil” (36b). People used to wear a ʿširwāl “drawers” (80b), also called ʿsrwāl (80a), which was kept up with a waistband, called *dikka* (57a) or *nayāfiq* (56a). They wore a zabān “inner vest”, a ʿqrṭāq “tunic” or ʿqr (130a) gābā “sleeved robe”, and when it was cold, a woollen cloak which was called ʿabā (9a) or *ụbāya* (128b).

Two types of garment are particularly worth mentioning here because they are generally not well-documented. The first one is the *ḥanyni* (112b), which is described in Dozy I 330b as “semble être le nom d’un vêtement”, occurring once in 1001 Nights. Al-Maġribī does not take us closer to an understanding of what kind of garment this might be, since he only mentions that it is *ṣy yulbās* “a thing that is worn”. Unfortunately, it is the same with the second item, the *kāmiliyā* (91b): *yqūlūn kāmiliyā limā yulbīs līm tu* “they say kāmiliyā to something that is worn, and it is not known [in Classical Arabic]”. This word, like *ḥanyni*, is not found in any other source apart from Dozy II 489b, who does not specify it: “espèce de robe” (his source is Ibn Iyās).

To these items of clothing we can add some words for jewellery, all of which are well known today: *ḥazām* “nose ring” (97a), *ḥulḥāl* “anklet” (72a), *dibla* “ring” (72b), ʿṭwq “neckband” (47b), ʿgūš “glass bracelets” (101a) (nowadays the diminutive ʿgiwēša is used) and *li*bba *mašāšina* “a jingling necklace” (115b).
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5.6 Kitchen utensils, tools, and other household items

There are 33 entries about the utensils used in daily life in Daf al-īṣr. Many of these are kitchen items, such as the ʿakka “receptacle for clarified butter” (61a), salāya “mortar and pestle” (128b), ملعقة magrafa “ladle” (31b), لح› ق luhuq “small cooking pot” (54a), أبشر qurbaq “ever with a spout” (36b), مأمون māʾūn “kitchen pot” (119a), and هؤن huyn “mortar” (120a). We also find reference to different types of jugs: بايّا bāqeyya “jug” (1.3b), فلک bokla “vessel for water for washing one’s backside”, قلا qulla “earthenware water jar” (89b), and also the pad put under the jug when carried on the head: دوامة dawāya (125b).

The mention of other items gives us some idea about the things found in the average household at that time: دوامة dawāya “inkwell” (127a), لغة lęqa “bit of wool which is inserted in an inkwell” (55a), مشرج mardan “spindle” (114a), مرجعة marjūna “basket” (114a), مسلسلة misalla “thick needle” (91b), منسن misann “whetstone” (115b), مصفاة masqala “burnisher” (81a), غلبہ ilba “small container” (17a), ههج hujj “small box” (38b), قروة qorwa “basket of palm leaves” (130a), فلة qaffa “basket made of palm stalks” (32b), قديل qandil “oil lamp” (90b), قنينية qanīniyya “glass drinking-bowl” (117b), and مكحله mukhiya “kohl-holder” (90b). The most important thing to note about these items is that they show that Yūsuf al-Maġribī, an Azharite scholar and سبئيūfī, did not believe it was beneath him to show an interest in such everyday things, which were mostly the domain of women. Indeed, that al-Maġribī was interested in the world of women and children becomes apparent from the presence in Daf al-īṣr of several expressions used exclusively by them. For these, the reader is referred to §6.5.1.1.

311 For this translation of the word istinjā’ see Hinds-Badawi (1986) 851a and Hava (2001) 753b.

312 Al-Maġribī also mentions that in the Maġrib, مكحله means “rifle”, because of the similarity between the kohl and gun powder. It is still used with this meaning in Morocco, see Harrell-Sobelman (2004) p. 81a.