

Migrated Features from Ancient Yemen and North Africa, and Vestiges of a Pre-Modern Cairene Arabic Variety

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1. Introduction

The following article is a brief socio-historical linguistic study of four Judeo-Arabic manuscripts, copied sometime during the eighteenth/nineteenth century, and today held in the custody of the Jewish Karaite community in Ramle.¹ By means of their Hebrew orthography and non-standard Arabic literary style (which will be described below), the manuscripts display an array of conspicuous Arabic linguistic features which prove to correspond with certain waves of migration of people within the Islamic empire. The findings reflect usage of old features which may be linked to the settlement of Yemenite Arabs in the western parts of the early-Islamic empire, notably in urban areas such as the city of Fuṣṭāṭ (Old Cairo). Moreover, features may also be linked to later waves of migration to Egypt, mainly from North Africa – parts of which may have initially come from Spain – that have taken place at various points throughout medieval times. Finally, there may also be identified in the material studied here, traces of a pre-Modern Cairene variety which seems to have been suppressed as substandard or fallen out of use in Modern Egyptian Arabic.²

1 I am grateful to the Karaite Community in Ramle for having granted me the permission to work on their collection of manuscripts.

2 It should be noted that this article is based on work which is still in progress, as part of a doctoral dissertation currently entitled *Historical and*

It is reasonable to assume that the manuscripts in question found their way to Ramle as a result of the Jewish ~~exodus from~~ Egypt in the 1950s.³ Up until that period, Jews had lived in Egypt since before the time when ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ led the Muslim conquest of Egypt in the mid-seventh century and established a military garrison on the eastern side of the river Nile, to be known as the city of Fuṣṭāṭ.⁴ It is not clear exactly how the Karaite community (or Karaite doctrine) in particular found its way to Egypt, but we know that it was firmly established in Fuṣṭāṭ by the ninth century. Early Muslim accounts from the tenth century described the Karaites as “those who avow and justice (ʿ*adl*) and unity of God (*tawḥīd*),”⁵ and Maimonides described them by the name *Maḏhab*, “a term denoting the four orthodox rites of Islam.”⁶ Several scholars have paralleled Karaite ideology and doctrine with that of the Jewish Sadducees and Essenes, who rejected the idea of an oral law, or they have been compared to the Islamic school of the Muʿtazila and circles such as the Kalām.⁷

As indicated above, the material studied for the present article reveal a spoken vernacular and a literary tradition deeply rooted in the history of the Arabic language, parts of which ~~has~~ fallen out of use today; it exhibits a tradition and a language alive with traces of Arab migration history. Three waves of migration have been studied in particular: namely (a) the settling of Yemenite tribes in the Nile Delta of Egypt during the first centuries of the Islamic expansion, (b) migration from North Africa to Egypt during the Middle Ages and (c) mass migration to urban areas following the early nineteenth-century modernization of Egypt. Not surprisingly perhaps, the most recent development is also the most evident, as the texts display a number of traces of a pre-modern spoken variety of

Geographical Layers of Medieval Egyptian Arabic: The Case of Judeo-Arabic to be finished in 2018.

- 3 On the dispersion of the Egyptian Jewry that took place during the twentieth century, see e.g. Beinun 1998.
- 4 The Jewish community were told to have constituted of as many as 40,000 individuals when the Muslims conquered Egypt, however the allegation seems strongly exaggerated (cf. Baron 1967, 90).
- 5 See Sasson 2010, 253.
- 6 Cf. Blau 1999, 157-58.
- 7 A brief overview of this topic can be found in Sasson 2010, 255. On the Muʿtazila, see Gimaret 1993. On the various theological schools of the Kalām and the influence of Muʿtazilism on Jewish thought, see Gardet 1971.

Cairene Arabic. It is quite unproblematic to identify components from this variety, as large parts of the findings may be supported by late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century philological works and research by contemporary scholars of Egyptian historical dialectology. Admittedly, the attempt to identify and analyze developments which took place at an earlier period than the pre-modern is more challenging. Links between North Africa and Egypt have been treated in literature on Egyptian Judeo-Arabic, and studied, *inter alia*, by dialectologists such as Manfred Woidich and Peter Behnstedt.⁸ However, these seem to focus on the question of isoglosses and to offer a synchronic rather than a diachronic overview. The connection between Egyptian Judeo-Arabic material and the variety employed by the Yemenite tribes in the early years of the Islamic expansion has, as far as I am aware, not been extensively studied before. That said, the Yemenite varieties share many features with the Egyptian, a number of which have been attested e.g. in varieties outside of Cairo.⁹

The present work, with its description of a selected number of characteristic features, will serve as a contribution to the compilation of a grammar of Late Egyptian Judeo-Arabic. It builds on Joshua Blau and Simon Hopkins' pioneer work on Judeo-Arabic,¹⁰ and follows the lines of the earlier works which touch upon the particular field of Late Egyptian Judeo-Arabic, such as that of Benjamin Hary, Gabriel Rosenbaum, Geoffrey Khan and Esther-Miriam Wagner.¹¹ I also endeavor to contribute to bring about the reconstruction of Old Arabic features in Egypt, and to complement the important works by grammarians and dialectologists of earlier Egyptian Arabic varieties. Aside from Haim Blanc's article on Egyptian Arabic in the seventeenth century,¹² these are essentially the monographs of Humphrey Davies and Liesbeth Zack,¹³ who

8 Woidich 1993; Behnstedt 1998.

9 Note that the features treated here are written, not spoken. See 1.2, below, for a discussion on this. On the Yemenite-Egyptian connection, see Reichmuth 1983, 28-29. In works on southern Arabian and Yemenite dialects, Watson 2011, 35 has also identified interesting similarities.

10 Blau 1980; 1988; 1999; Blau and Hopkins 1985; 1987.

11 Hary 1992; 2009; Rosenbaum 2002; Khan 1992; 2006; 2007 et. al.; Wagner 2010.

12 Blanc 1981.

13 Davies 1981; Zack 2009.

have all studied the various non-standard and pre-modern characteristics of the seventeenth-century Egyptian vernacular.

My findings will illustrate how studying the language of a small and partly segregated community (due to their ~~religious denomination~~ and orthographic practices) may uncover language features which have fallen into disuse among the larger majority. Put in the words of David Cohen (who to a large degree disapproves of the term Judeo-Arabic), “the retention in Jewish usage of characteristics which had disappeared or been transformed in neighboring Muslim speech patterns was often due to the greater resistance of the Jews to certain socio-cultural pressures. Thus in numerous places where nomads had become part of the sedentary population their linguistic influence had operated with much greater force on the Muslims than on the Jews.”¹⁴

1.1 The Scope of This Paper: Identifying Three Defining Waves of Migration

Firstly, the idea of a connection between nineteenth-century Jewish Karaites and early Muslim Yemenite tribes undeniably poses intriguing and difficult questions, many on which we may only draw indefinite conclusions. Did native Egyptian Jews adopt the written and spoken variety of their ~~new~~ Muslim rulers and preserve certain features in their storytelling traditions until the eighteenth and nineteenth century? Or were perhaps ancient Yemenite features initially adopted more frequently in North Africa and Spain, and only effectively entered Egypt through migration at a later stage?

Much of the material, such as the manuscripts 46 and 52 in which we find the ‘Ibrāhīm-Nimrūd Legend,’ show a high degree of rapprochement between Jewish and Muslim thought and strong influence and acceptance of exegesis and doctrine which closely resembles Islamic religion, culture and language. This rapprochement is most evident when looking into the manuscripts’ repeated paraphrasing of Islamic literary discourse. As introduced above, the sources from which the manuscripts are transmitted point to a Yemenite or South-Western Arabian origin. Two observations support this notion: The manuscripts display Qur’ānic content that

14 Cohen 1978, 300-1.

can be linked to specific *sūras*, which all are invariably Meccan. All the Qur'ānic paraphrasing goes back to the first years in which the Prophet Muḥammad started receiving revelations.¹⁵ This consistency complies with the claim made by Chaim Rabin that the Prophet, when situated in Mecca, learned his ideas about the Hebrew Bible from local Jews whose spiritual center was Ṣafār in Yemen *rather* than from those connected to Tiberias.¹⁶ Adding to this, Solo W. Baron suggests that Muḥammad's knowledge of Biblical material came mostly from oral communication with Jewish and Christian acquaintances.¹⁷ Furthermore, the content of the manuscripts establishes an interesting connection to the early settlement of the Yemenite tribes in the Nile Delta during the Islamic expansion. This becomes evident from the apparent transmitter of the particular story version presented in the manuscripts. The story is attributed to the famous *'Isrā'īliyyāt*¹⁸ collector Ka'b al-'Aḥbār,¹⁹ who was a Yemenite rabbi from the times of the Prophet Muḥammad. He is reported not to have met the Prophet in person, but is considered one of the earliest important converts from Judaism to Islam, and the oldest authority on Judeo-Islamic traditions.²⁰ Judged by his scholarly relations and unmistakable *nisba*, al-Ḥimyarī, Ka'b was a member of the Yemenite tribe of Ḥimyar.²¹ Ḥimyar was one of a selected number of Yemenite tribes who, together with, *inter alia*, 'Azd, Kinda and Lakhm, settled in the

15 These can be linked to the *sūras* 112, 19, 21 and 6. On the classification of Meccan (versus Medinan) *sūras*, see Nöldeke 1860, 59.

16 Rabin 1951, 53. Here, Rabin is reasoning on the fact that Muḥammad and the Meccans must have learned a lot from Yemen during the early period of Islam.

17 Baron 1967, 82-83 argues that the distinction between Biblical records on one hand and Jewish *aggadah* ('tales') and other patristic legends on the other cannot always have been clear to Muḥammad or his Jewish and Christian acquaintances.

18 On the term *'isrā'īliyyāt*, which may in very general terms be explained as Islamic adoptions of Jewish lore, see Vajda 2012.

19 Abū 'Iṣḥāq b. Mātī' b. Haysū' (or Haynū') al-Ḥimyarī al-'Aḥbār, also known as Ka'b al-'Aḥbār, allegedly related to Dhū Ru'ayn of the Ḥimyar tribe.

20 See Schmitz 1978, 316-17.

21 Various sources confirm that there was close contact between Ka'b al-'Aḥbār and Abu Hurayra, and in turn Wāḥib ibn Munabbih. See e.g. Thackston 1978, 337-338; 344-45. They were all descendants of the Old South Arabian kingdoms of Saba and Ḥimyar and are considered authorities on the traditions surrounding the *'isrā'īliyyāt* literature.

Nile Delta after the Islamic expansion and who “dominated the political and intellectual life of Muslim Egypt for the first two Islamic centuries”.²² Although there are still no texts that can be linked directly to Ka‘b al-‘Aḥbār,²³ Heinrich Schützinger notes that a version of the Ibrāhīm-Nimrūd Legend attributed to him is said to have been located at the library of the synagogue in Fustāt (which is almost identical to the version in the manuscripts 46 and 52).²⁴ Here it is found in a Judeo-Arabic manuscript dating back to the twelfth century.²⁵ These points draw an intriguing picture of the link between the Karaite Egyptian exegetic material and the initial period of the Islamic colonization of Egypt, which in turn supports a general notion of Yemenite influence in the Egyptian vernacular. Accordingly, I have pointed out the language features in the material at hand which corresponds to Yemenite usage during the advent of Islam and which may have been brought with the new Arab settlers.²⁶ Stefan Reichmuth points out that there are a number of shared features in the western areas of the Islamic Empire, some of which are treated in this article, stating that a “large group of [shared] features is found in Mecca, areas of Yemen, in Egypt and in Old Andalusia [...] Thus, only the assumption of a common origin remains. Here the contours of an older West Arabian type of language seem to appear, which has shaped the dialects of Egypt and Andalusia, and has also influenced North Africa, central Arabia, and particularly the Negev.”²⁷ The Muslim conquest and subsequent Arabization of North Africa and Spain is thus of particular interest regarding the history and formation of

22 Kennedy 1998, 64. He bases much of his work on the historical accounts of Abu ‘Amr al-Kindī. Magidow, whose dissertation attempts to reconstruct the diversity of the pre-Islamic Arabic dialects, states that “[t]he other Arab settlers [in the Delta] were, like the conquering army, largely from the south-west peninsula” (Magidow 2013, 215).

23 He is frequently mentioned in the chronicles of al-Kisā’ī’s (*Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’* ‘The Stories of the Prophets’). See al-Kisā’ī 1924.

24 Schützinger 1961, 192.

25 In the two articles “Légendes bibliques attribuées à Ka‘b el-Ahbar”, Chapiro 1920; 1919 presents a fragment of what is believed to be a twelfth-century Judeo-Arabic version of the story. See also Finkel 1937. The same story version, translated to English via Hebrew via Judeo-Arabic, appears in Louis Ginzberg’s *The Legends of the Jews* (1909). 1909.

26 These features appear in Rabin 1951. For more recent work on the issue, see El-Sharkawy 2008.

27 Reichmuth 1983, 28-29 My translation.

the Egyptian vernacular – as a portion of features, it is true, appears to have found their way back to Egypt during the Middle Ages.

Secondly, there are in the manuscripts several indications of Western Arabic dialectal influence on the Egyptian vernacular (and particularly the variant employed by the Egyptian Jews), notably as a result of Spanish and North African emigration to Egypt which took place during medieval times. Understandably, the presence of North African components in Egyptian Arabic is studied to a much larger degree than the idea of a Yemenite influence, and is also widely accepted among scholars of Late Egyptian Judeo-Arabic.²⁸ The typical North African linguistic features, some of which are presented below, indicate waves of migration which arguably reached their peaks after the Fāṭimid conquest during the tenth century and with the arrival of Iberian exiles at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century.²⁹

Thirdly, the material presented here reveals interesting written and spoken language variety features ~~typical for~~ Karaite Jews in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Cairo. This variety displays a mixture of Classical Arabic (CA) and the Modern Egyptian Arabic or Cairene Arabic spoken vernacular (Modern EA). Furthermore, it exhibits evidence of the supposed ‘non-standard Cairene’ vernacular, a term that was coined by Blanc in his article on the Jewish variety in twentieth-century Cairo,³⁰ and which was later treated by Rosenbaum under the term ‘modern spoken Egyptian Judeo-Arabic.’³¹ Nada Tomiche, who was the first to write about the Arabic spoken by the Jewish community in Egypt, also offers many valuable observations on the issue.³² Taking these works into consideration, the texts at hand display traces of a pre-modern EA vernacular and perhaps remnants of a particular Jewish Egyptian

28 See e.g. Blau 1999, 13-14; 55-68; Khan 2006.

29 See Stillman 1998.

30 Blanc 1974. For this article, on the ‘nekteb-nektebu imperfect,’ Blanc had studied the spoken variety of the Jewish community in Cairo. He made a point out of not labelling the variety he recorded as ‘Jewish Cairene,’ but rather ‘non-standard Cairene.’ This non-standard Cairene variety is believed to have fallen into disuse over time in Cairo, and retained only by Jews. Nevertheless, non-standard Cairene features occur in other (non-Jewish) spoken varieties found outside of Cairo.

31 Rosenbaum 2002.

32 Tomiche 1968.

Arabic variety which may have its roots in an earlier period of the development of the vernacular, employed by Jews, or even by a larger portion of Egyptians.³³ The common perception regarding the linguistic situation of the Jews in Egypt argues that the Rabbanite Jewish vernacular exhibited a distinctive Jewish style and register, whereas the Karaite Jewish vernacular was virtually identical to that of the Muslim Egyptian majority.³⁴

Admittedly, the texts also display distinctive Late Judeo-Arabic³⁵ orthographic peculiarities and an interesting admixture of Hebrew, hebrewisms and use of Aramaic – as does the Judeo-Arabic literature in general. However, in this particular context we are concerned with identifying the various historical layers of the Arabic language. Special attention is paid to features reflecting ancient Yemenite, medieval North African and pre-modern/non-standard usage. In order to identify such features, I have circled out characteristics that diverge linguistically from CA and the Modern EA vernacular.

1.2 Analytical Approaches to the Genre of Literary works:

Some Challenges and Advantages

The limited scope of this article does not permit a wide-ranging discussion on the issues surrounding the *genre* of Arabic literary works such as the popular prophetic legends found in our manuscripts. Suffice to say, the sociohistorical linguistic study of this particular genre comes with certain methodological challenges and advantages. For example, when compared to other types of research data corpora, literary works tend to be represented by a limited number of scribes and thus a limited range of idiosyncrasies. Even though there are many advantageous sides of working with idiosyncrasies, one will always have to consider the problematic issue of significance. In terms of reliable dating, the fact that literary works may have been subject to translation, copying, re-editing and revision over ~~many decades, perhaps even~~ centuries,

33 Khan 2006, 40.

34 See Khan 2007, 533. It remains, nevertheless, to carefully compare the Rabbanite and the Karaite spoken varieties in order to map the *degree* to which they differed.

35 The Late Judeo-Arabic period is understood to have begun around the fifteenth century and continued until the end of the nineteenth century. See Khan 2007, 526; Hary 2009, 34.

pose a challenge not only in dating the material, but also in reconstructing earlier phases of various linguistic phenomena and placing them within a certain time and space.³⁶ In the case of the material at hand, the texts may contain *šarḥ*, commentary or reproductions of religious literary traditions, or contemporary Muslim (or even Christian) writings.³⁷ Further complicating this picture are of course the various combinations of Classical, literary or pseudo-literary constructions on the one hand, and vernacular elements which may be hard to distinguish from the written ones on the other.³⁸

On a more optimistic note, popular legends are often filled with lively prose and offer large sets of data for identifying linguistic features, as the historically oral character of these narratives stimulates the use of a contemporary vernacular style and register. We may even say that the type of literary works treated here represents a genre that has been transmitted orally down to modern times, and thus displays a language free of literary norms.³⁹

1.3 Methodological and Technical Considerations

In the case of spellings which appear unfamiliar to the register of Modern EA, these have been cross-checked with late nineteenth and early twentieth-century dictionaries and grammars.⁴⁰ In order to facilitate the reading for those not accustomed to Hebrew letters, Judeo-Arabic words and phrases have been transliterated in Arabic script when appropriate.⁴¹ In the event of letters vocalized with Hebrew signs, I have transliterated the words in Latin script rather than Arabic in order for the vowels *e*, *a* and *o* to be correctly rendered (as they are not found in the Arabic writing system). Exam-

36 See Wagner 2010, 11-12 for a thorough discussion on this issue.

37 *Šarḥ* (pl. *šurūḥ*) denote verbatim translations of sacred and liturgical Hebrew/Aramaic texts into Judeo-Arabic, cf. Hary 2009, 25.

38 On this issue, see Hary 2009, 93; Khan 2016, 39.

39 As argued by Khan 2016, 39.

40 These are Cameron 1892, Spiro 1895, Vollers and Burkitt 1895, Nallino 1900 and Willmore 1905, and the modern EA dictionary of Hinds and Badawi 1986. The references used for cross-checking CA features are the Arabic-English dictionary of Wehr 1979 and the database of al-Bāḥiṭ al-‘Arabī. The latter includes Lisān al-‘Arab, Maqāyis al-Luġa, aṣ-Ṣaḥḥāḥ fī l-Luġa, al-Qāmūs al-Muḥiṭ and al-‘Ubāb az-Zāxir. See <http://www.baheth.info>.

41 See e.g. Blau 2002, 22 for details on transliteration from Hebrew to Arabic letters.

ples in CA are given in Arabic letters in order to reflect the written conventions of the Arabic script, whereas examples in EA are transcribed in Latin script for the sake of rendering long and short vowels, consonant shifts and other features which are not always possible to convey with Arabic letters.

2. Grammatical Notes: Vestiges of a Pre-Modern Urban Variety in Cairo and Migrated Features from North Africa and Yemen

The following part introduces a set of Judeo-Arabic orthographic characteristics and subsequently presents a selection of linguistic features which prove to deviate from Modern EA and CA. Among these we find traces of what may have come as a result of migration from Yemen and North Africa, and of features belonging to a pre-modern spoken variety of Cairene Arabic.

2.1 Phonetic Spelling

As attested frequently in Judeo-Arabic sources, the manuscripts occasionally display a text in which consonants as well as vowels have been written partly or fully in accordance with the scribe's pronunciation, sometimes even with diacritic signs reflecting vocalization.⁴² This kind of phonetic spelling is a valuable factor which unveils details on a number of linguistic levels of the Arabic and Judeo-Arabic language that are usually impossible to detect in conventional Arabic spelling.

42 The issue of phonetic spelling is discussed in e.g. Hopkins 2004, 236; Blau 2002, 21-22; Bar-Asher 1998, 22. Note, however, that Late Egyptian Judeo-Arabic orthography is not phonetic to the same degree as the orthography described in the earlier Judeo-Arabic sources (cf. Khan 1992, 237). For example, the definite article is by rule always spelled *al-* even when assimilated with the following letter in pronunciation. Khan also stresses the fact that "vocalization of these texts does not systematically reflect a purely dialectal form of Arabic [...] including those with a high degree of dialectal features," (Khan 2016, 37) as these texts may also exhibit pseudo-Classical features.

2.2 Plene Writing of Vowels and Consonantal Shifts Exhibiting Oral Content

The manuscripts are full of cases where short vowels are written in plene. Plene writing of short vowel *a*, *i* and *u* can be illustrated by the examples *רב העלמין* *רב אלעלאמין* ‘Lord of the worlds,’⁴³ *גיהאט* *גיהאט* ‘sides; parts’⁴⁴ and *חוגרה* *חוגרה* ‘room,’⁴⁵ respectively. These *matres lectionis* are all reflections of medial vowels corresponding to short vowels in the Modern EA and CA syllable structure. In the former example, there is also an occurrence of *scriptio defectiva* for long vowel, in *עאלמין* *עאלמין* > *עלמין* *עלמין*.⁴⁶ This is in line with Khan’s findings on Late Egyptian Judeo-Arabic orthography.⁴⁷ Rendering of plene short *u* is most common, and corresponds to the situation in many Judeo-Arabic texts.⁴⁸ Commenting on eighteenth/nineteenth-century Judeo-Arabic letters from Egypt, Wagner notes, “Plene writing of short *u* is very common in most letters and almost obligatory in some.”⁴⁹

The consonant shifts appearing in the manuscripts are most probably exhibiting a form of oral content. These shifts are typically from interdental to stops such as *ḏ* > *d* and *ṭ* > *t*, attested in e.g. *דכר* *דכר* ‘male’ and *תם* *תם* ‘then; thereupon.’⁵⁰ Another common Modern EA shift is *z* > *z* as in *אלזאלמין* *אלזאלמין* ‘the wrongdoers.’⁵¹

2.3 Vocalization

Vowel signs are attested occasionally in all the manuscripts, most frequently in one of them.⁵² Based on its usage throughout the

43 MS 46/3a:7.

44 MS 45/13a:10.

45 MS 52/2a:6.

46 This may be interpreted as reflecting short vowel in the spoken vernacular of the scribe (cf. Khan 2006, 52).

47 Khan 1992; 2006.

48 This is discussed in Blau 2002, 32; Blau and Hopkins 1987, 135; Wagner 2010, 54 and is according to Hary 1992, 248 typical of Late Egyptian Judeo-Arabic orthography.

49 Wagner 2010, 54.

50 Both items are found *passim*. The manuscripts also includes the shift *ḏ* > *z*, which is probably a result of Egyptian pronunciation of CA, in which *z* is phonetically closer to *ḏ* than *d*.

51 MS 46/4b:10.

52 Manuscript 52 displays significantly more vowel signs than the other manuscripts.

manuscripts, it is reasonable to believe that the signs resemble a simple vocalization system following Tiberian tradition of a somewhat unconventional Sephardi type. The main reason for this characteristic lies in the fact that it displays a limited set of vowel phonemes (*a*, *e*, *i*, *ā*, *o*, *u*) without shortened or lengthened allophones.⁵³ The system ~~does~~ also seem to display both *shewa* (ə) and *zero* (∅) pronunciation for the sign ֿ. Due to the lack of sufficient examples, it is however treated as *zero* (∅).

Another possibility is that the system follows a rather established Sephardi type reading tradition in which pronunciation of *šere* (*e*)/*segol* (*e*, *ei*) on the one hand and *qameš* (*ā*)/*pataḥ* (*a*) on the other have levelled.⁵⁴ That said, *segol* never appears in the manuscript and there are clear distinctions between *a* and *ā*, as in יָרָא וְלֹא יִרְאָה *yārā wi-lā yurā* ‘He sees and is not seen’ (displaying *ā*)⁵⁵ and וְאַשְׁאַל *wi-s'al/wi-is'al* ‘and ask!’ (displaying *a*).⁵⁶ The distinction is most probably due to the emphatic (or non-emphatic) character of the phonetic environment in which *a* and *a* appear.

2.4 Vocalisms

In the material we find shifts and switches reflecting vocalisms which have disappeared or are only rarely found in Modern EA. These are e.g. יִסְגִּידוּ יִסְגִּידוּ ‘they prostrate before’⁵⁷ corresponding to Modern EA *yasgudu/yusgudu*⁵⁸ and the variants אֻבְבָאע אֻבְבָאע ‘finger’⁵⁹ corresponding to Modern EA *šubā* ‘*šābi*’⁶⁰ and אֵלְאוּמְרָאָה

53 See Morag 1972, 30-31. ~~The assumption coincides with findings in Egyptian Judeo-Arabic material from the same period. See e.g. Hary 1992, 89 on the preference of final 'alif for SA *tā*' *marbūta*.~~

54 As described by Khan 2010, 215.

55 MS 52/*passim*.

56 MS 52/6a:16.

57 MS 46/10a:24.

58 *Yasgud/yusgud* according to Badawi and Hinds 1986; *yisgid* according to Spiro 1895.

59 MS 13/4a:12.

60 The variant אֻבְבָאע is only attested in one (Willmore 1905) out of six respective dictionaries and grammars of EA in which the entry on ‘finger’ is found; all of the remaining five dictionaries and grammars refer to either صُباع or صُباع.

الامراه ‘the woman; ~ wife’⁶¹ corresponding to Modern EA *il-mara* or CA الامرأة.⁶²

here are cases in the manuscripts where the shift *a* and *i* to *u* (possibly $> \bar{a}$ and $> o$) seem to have been triggered by labialization. Some variants reflecting this (which have also disappeared from Modern EA) are the plural قوَصص קווצץ ‘stories’⁶³ corresponding to Modern EA *qīṣaṣ/’iṣaṣ*, and מוּחַבְתְּהוּ מוּחַבְתְּהוּ ‘His love; ~affection’⁶⁴ corresponding to Modern EA *maḥabba*. The findings support the notion of preference of *u* over Modern EA *i* in Egyptian Judeo-Arabic (notably regarding certain noun patterns) as noticed by Khan and Rosenbaum and verified in the work of Hary and Wagner.⁶⁵ It is also attested in the seventeenth-century Egyptian variety recorded by Davies and Zack.⁶⁶

2.5 ’Imāla in the Medial and Final Position

In most modern dialects *’imāla* in medial position is represented by the vowel \bar{e} , but in some by \bar{i} .⁶⁷ As a general rule, medial *’imāla* is the process in which CA \bar{a} near *i* vowels is reflected by \bar{e} . This is attested several times in manuscript 52, in הַגָּב *hje’b* yielding **higēb* ‘barrier’⁶⁸ and אֵלְבֵיִם אֵלְבֵיִם *’lbhe’eym* **il-behē’im/il-behēyim* ‘the thumbs.’⁶⁹ On a few occasions, CA *a* is even found represented by *i* and \bar{i} , similar to the *kilāb-klīb shibboleth* of the Jewish

61 MS 46/2b:7.

62 This reflects a typical Egyptian Arabic feature where the vowel of the first syllable in certain cases is omitted and prefixed to the first radical (cf. Willmore 1905, ix), thus *ṣubā’* $>$ ($> \bar{s}bā’$) $>$ *’uṣbā’*, which is attested in the manuscripts and the respective dictionaries; *mar’a* $>$ ($> mr’a$) $>$ *imra’a* ($>$ *’umra’a*), which is only attested in the manuscripts, not in the respective dictionaries. An alternative, yet plausible explanation for the variant can be derived by analogy from a discussion in Hary 2009, 101, in which he suggests the vocalism *murat-* ‘the wife of’ derived from EA *mrāt-*, hence the shift *mura(h)* $>$ *’umra(h)*.

63 MS 46/2a:3.

64 MS 45/11b:5.

65 See Khan 1991, 226; Rosenbaum 2002, 37; Hary 2009, 101; Wagner 2010, 57.


66 Davies 1981, 108; Zack 2009, 96-97.

67 In Alexandria and central parts of the Delta, there is a stronger tendency of rising towards \bar{i} (cf. Behnstedt and Woidich 1985, map 35).

68 MS 52/8a:12; 8a:14.

69 MS 52/4a:10.

Baghdadi communal dialect.⁷⁰ The occurrences attested in the manuscript are אִבְיַנָּא *'ibīyn* ' **'ibīnā* 'our father',⁷¹ and וְרִגְלֵיהּ *wrijli-yh* **wi-riglīh* 'and his feet',⁷² presumably after the shift < *ē* < *ey*.⁷³

 *'imāla* in pausal position, i.e. the case of word-final CA *ā* represented by *ē*, has fallen out of use in Modern EA, a process which is believed to have been finalized sometime during the nineteenth century.⁷⁴ Davies brings to the attention the use of pausal *'imāla* in his seventeenth-century material, however only in cases following the consonants *f b* and *k*.⁷⁵ He quotes Blanc who writes, "the spelling with /-h/ in place of alif [in words subjected to final *'imāla*] is of an essential pausal nature".⁷⁶ In manuscript 52, it is not necessarily the spelling of *h*, but rather vocalization that reveals *'imāla*. Among of the most interesting occurrences of this somewhat progressive use of pausal *'imāla*, we find in פִּלְמָא *flme* ' **fa-lammē* 'so when',⁷⁷ אֵלֵּלָהּ תְּעַאֲלֵי *'llh t 'le* ' **allāh ta 'ālē* 'God, Exalted (is He),'⁷⁸ סִיְרֵה *sīyreh* **sīreh* 'conduct',⁷⁹ בְּהָא *bhe* ' **bihē* 'of it; about it'⁸⁰ and חֲתֵי *hte* ' **hattē* 'until',⁸¹ etc. In his twentieth-century data, Blanc found that pausal *'imāla*, was confined to rural dialects, and was heard only when following consonants that are neither emphatic, nor guttural, nor, in certain dialects, labial.⁸² In manuscript 52 pausal *'imāla* occurs frequently, even after consonants such as *l* and *h*, as demonstrated in the examples. We know

70 See Blanc 1964, 42.

71 MS 52/10b:9.

72 MS 52/4b:3.

73 As pointed out above, the vocalization system attested in the manuscript distinguishes between vowel *i* and *e*. However, as one should consider the possibility of orthographical heterogeneity in Judeo-Arabic writings, it can be noted that Khan has found plene written *i* corresponding to Modern EA long *ē* and where CA has diphthong *ay* (cf. Khan 1992, 226). Blanc (1981, 195) argues that since the 1830s (and probably even at an earlier stage), larger and larger parts of Egypt moved towards monophthongization of *ay* (> *ē*).

74 Blanc 1973-4, 378 *apud* Zack 2009, 95-96. See also Behnstedt and Woidich 1985, map 35.

75 Davies 1981, 81-82.

76 Blanc 1973-4, 388. Humphrey Davies' translation.

77 MS 52/3b:5.

78 MS 52/*passim*.

79 MS 52/6a:17.

80 MS 52/3a:18.

81 MS 52/3a:6; 3a:17.

82 Blanc 1973-4, 376

that pausal *'imāla* was pronounced by Algerian Jews,⁸³ a feature which might have found its way into Egyptian Arabic as a result of migration. Furthermore, the pausal *'imāla* in general and the latter example **hattē* in particular may also point to a Yemenite influence, as Rabin noted: “The particle *hattä* ‘until’ was in the Yemen pronounced with *'imāla*, i.e. *hattē*.”⁸⁴

2.6 The Relative Pronoun *aldi*

In manuscript 45 the scribe consistently distinguishes between the two letters ד and ד , whereas the CA relative الذي is consistently spelled with an interdental stop, that is, الدى .⁸⁵ The two following pairs illustrate this degree of consistency in manuscript 45 very clearly: الذى occurs twice, whereas الدى occurs thirty-five times; ذلك (‘that’) occurs twenty-one times whereas דאלך occurs only once. This supports Blau and Hopkins’ suggestion that the relative in some cases was pronounced *alladi* or perhaps *aldi* (or *aldi*), as was revealed in a number of twelfth/thirteenth-century vocalized letters from the Cairo Geniza.⁸⁶ Wagner suggests three possibilities for the form, namely that *aldi* may be (a) the pseudo-archaic, written *koine* of the Arabic speaking Jewish communities, sometimes vocalized *illadi*, (b) reflecting an artificial literary form or the Egyptian reading tradition, or that it is (c) a pronunciation characteristic of Late North African Judeo-Arabic.⁸⁷ *Aldi* is also attested by Cohen for the Eastern parts of North Africa.⁸⁸ On this variant, Kerstin Eksell writes “it can be argued that the modern [North African] *d-* and *dyāl* forms go back to intermediate forms such as *aldi* and *addi*, and that these were relative pronouns related to *alladi* and similar forms.”⁸⁹

Building on the arguments above, there is a possibility that *al-ladi/illadi/aldi* here reflects an initial influence from Yemen, notably an adapted use of the pre-Islamic Yemenite *dī* (or *alladī* which

83 Cohen 1978, 300.

84 Rabin 1951, 40.

85 MS 45/*passim*.

86 Blau and Hopkins 1985.

87 Wagner 2010, 233-34. She uses the term “Late Maghrebian Judeo-Arabic.”

88 Cohen 1978, 302.

89 Eksell 2006, 84 [my italics].

was heard in Huḏayl and areas of Yemen),⁹⁰ used without distinction for number or gender. On *ḡī* in the pre-Islamic Yemenite variety, Rabin notes that “it is also used in the colloquials of the Maḡrib, where Yemenite influence is strong.”⁹¹

2.7 *Tafxīm*, *tarqīq* and the Merger of Sibilants

Shifts (or variants) which seem to have been triggered by *tafxīm* and *tarqīq*⁹² (or secondary emphatization) in some way or the other are frequently attested in the material. Such shifts usually affect *t* <> *ṭ* and *s* <> *ṣ*, and are attested in e.g. *צוֹט* ‘a voice’⁹³ and *פִּסְאָרָר יִסְמְעוּ* ‘so they started listening.’⁹⁴ The more uncommon shift *š* > *ṣ* is attested in e.g. *אַשְׁכָּא* ‘individuals; persons’⁹⁵ needs some investigation, in which there are at least two (somewhat coinciding) possibilities: One is that the grapheme *צ* merely reflects an emphatic *š* (or more precisely *ṣ̣*). Another possibility is that the shift from *š* to *ṣ* is a result of a process of (a) the shift *š* > *s* and (b) regressive *tafxīm* *s* > *ṣ*, hence *אַשְׁכָּא* > *אַסְכָּא* > *אַסְכָּא*.⁹⁶ In any case, if this were to be a literal or pseudo-literal feature, the emphatic *ṣ* (or *ṣ̣*) would probably never have occurred. It is more plausible that the shift reflects the circumstance that the text was once written down directly from an oral shape (e.g. in a process of dictate) or from memory, and should therefore be regarded a spoken feature. A similar case from the material is *אַלְצִיטָאן* ‘Satan,’⁹⁷ which most probably reflects a sibilant *s* (after the shift *š* > *s*), ~~the nature of~~ which has been somewhat triggered by emphasis. It indicates that the shift *šm* to *sm* is not merely a result of personal orthographic preference from Hebrew/Aramaic influence (see the Hebrew-Arabic cognates offered below), but rather a reflection of actual pronunciation.

90 Rabin 1951, 39.

91 Rabin 1951, 39.

92 On *tafxīm* and *tarqīq*, see Bakalla 2009, 421-22.

93 MS 46/8a:7; 52/9a:4.

94 MS 46/10a:1.

95 MS 46/8a:17.

96 In Modern EA, regressive emphasis spread is not restricted by vowel quality or syllable structure. It simply spreads from an emphatic syllable to the preceding syllable, albeit only in the same word (cf. Broselow 1976, 45-46; Hoberman 1989, 73; 83).

97 MS 46/6b:14.

We also find the shift $\zeta > \dot{\zeta}$, in משנוע מִשְׁנוּעַ ‘manufactured,’⁹⁸ which may reflect a case of *tarqīq* triggering the shift $\zeta > s$ followed by a consonant shift $s > \dot{s}$, i.e. משנוע > מסנוע > מצנוע. Again, one cannot rule out a possible Hebrew/Aramaic orthographic influence, however grapheme שׁ reflecting s is very rare if not completely absent in eighteenth/nineteenth-century Judeo-Arabic sources,⁹⁹ and would only be expected to appear in Hebrew-Arabic cognates, such as *lišōn/lisān*; *šamāyim/samā*; *šalōm/salām*, etc. That said, the shift in such cognates (including a number of those reflecting voiceless $\dot{s} > s$ below) all seem to be affected by being in close proximity to voiced sonorants such as *m*, *n* and *r*.

Less obscured mergers of sibilants also occur in the material, for example, reflecting voiceless $\dot{s} > s$, אסרקת אסרק אסרק ‘it shone’¹⁰⁰ and الشمس אלסמס ‘the sun’¹⁰¹; reflecting voiceless $\zeta > s$, ~~וצאר ימשי~~ ‘and they started listening’¹⁰² (~~but ימשי~~ ~~וצאר ימשי~~¹⁰³); reflecting voiceless $s > \dot{s}$, אשיר אשיר ‘I move’¹⁰⁴; and reflecting voiced $s > z$, במהנדזין ‘by/with the engineers.’¹⁰⁵ At first sight the mergers above may seem rather random, but when looking into on the different examples and their orthographical realization we may in fact recognize a North African **substrate**. Philippe Marçais writes that this type of merger is found in the Jewish North African dialects, in which *s*, \dot{s} , *z* and \dot{z} (in addition to *j*)¹⁰⁶ are realized as an intermediate sound between *s* and \dot{s} when voiceless, and as *z* (and *j*) when voiced.¹⁰⁷ Except for the case of *j*, the Jewish North African mergers seem to correspond with findings in our manuscripts. Cohen describes these mergers as being a feature which marked the difference between Jews and Muslims in Tunisia.¹⁰⁸ Due to the limitation that lies in the orthography of the manuscripts, there lies

98 MS 46/10a:18.

99 Wagner 2010, 36; 40.

100 MS 46/4b:7; 4b:8.

101 MS 52/4a:16.

102 MS 46/10a:1.

~~103 MS 46/9b:11.~~

104 MS 52/7b:13.

105 MS 52/2a:13.

106 The manuscripts show no evidence of *j* being used in the place of the EA *g*, thus it is unlikely that *j* is part of this merger.

107 Marçais 1977, 10.

108 Cohen 1978, 300.

an inevitable (graphemic) neutralization of the sounds in the letters, which makes it impossible to draw definite conclusions. Nevertheless, mergers of voiceless $s > \check{s}$, $\check{s} > s$, $\check{s} > s$ as well as voiced $s > z$ are all attested in one orthographical way or the other. Khan notes that the phonological merger of s with \check{s} is found, *inter alia*, in the Jewish dialect of Fes in Morocco and can perhaps be traced back to the immigration of North African Jews into Egypt from medieval times and onward.¹⁰⁹

2.8 The *nekteb* – *nekteb* (!) Paradigm

Not surprisingly, there are several attestations of the so-called *nekteb* imperfect in the material.¹¹⁰ It is by many regarded as one of the most marked feature of the Egyptian Judeo-Arabic and non-standard variety employed in Cairo;¹¹¹ all the relevant scholars pointed out in the introduction have elaborated on the issue. The use of singular *nekteb* is attested throughout our material, however, the absence of plural *nektebu* in a text as ‘recent’ as the eighteenth and nineteenth century is a bit surprising. The following passage illustrates the use of singular *nekteb*:

אדא חסית בברגות קרצני נהרוש לחמי באלכזיט לאן אלצפר יאסי עלא אללהם
 אדא חסית בברגות קרצני נהרוש לחמי באלכזיט לאן אלצפר יאסי עלא אללהם

If I feel a flea biting me, I scratch my skin (lit. flesh) with the thread because my fingernail will damage the skin.¹¹²

109 Khan 2007, 532. See also Blau 1999, 251.

110 Western Arabic (North Africa, Malta and medieval Spain and Sicily) display 1st person singular *nf'l* and plural *nf'lū* whereas Eastern Arabic have the 1st person prefixes *a-* for singular and *n-* for plural. Thus, *nekteb* ‘I (shall) write’ and *nektebu* ‘we (shall) write’ is typical for the Western type paradigm, whereas *akteb* and *nekteb* are typically Eastern (cf. Blanc 1974, 206). This dichotomy is a salient symptom of the role of Egypt and particularly the Nile Delta as the transitional area between Eastern and Western Arabic. See Versteegh 2001, 134.

111 Note that even though the *nekteb* – *nektebu* imperfect serves as an exclusive Jewish communal feature within Cairo, it occurs in Lower as well as Upper Egypt, in urban as well as rural areas, in sedentary as well as Bedouin varieties, and in *gāl*-dialects as well as *qāl*-dialects (cf. Blanc 1974, 211).

112 MS 13/4a:3-5.

As there is only evidence of the singular *nekteb*, and no evidence at all of plural *nektebu*, we might have here neither a paradigm of Western *nekteb* – *nektebu* nor Eastern *akteb* – *nekteb*, but even the intermediate *aktib* – *niktibu*.¹¹³ Rather, we seem to have a case of *nekteb* serving for both singular and plural. Blanc believed this particular paradigm to be a sign of a ‘stabilized intermediate dialect.’ He did not personally come across this paradigm, but recorded it in the seventeenth-century work of Yūsuf al-Širbīnī.¹¹⁴ Viktor V. Lebedev also recorded it in a seventeenth-century Karaitic text.¹¹⁵ According to Blau, Maimonides’ twelfth-century writings also indicate the preference of the paradigm.¹¹⁶ If the eighteenth/nineteenth-century copies in question are in fact representative of *nekteb* – *nekteb*, they suggest a relatively late recording of the feature which might have been employed within certain speech communities.

2.9 Interrogatives

The variety employed by Cairene Jews in the twentieth century has retained the interrogative particles *’ēš* ‘what,’ *lēš* ‘why’ and *kēf/kīf* ‘how,’ which have fallen out of use in Modern EA.¹¹⁷ These interrogatives are all attested throughout the manuscripts. According to Rosenbaum’s findings on twentieth-century spoken Egyptian Judeo-Arabic,¹¹⁸ *’ēš* is usually placed at the beginning of the phrase instead of at the end, as illustrated in איש ראית פי הזא אלגבאל ‘what did you see in that mountain?’¹¹⁹ Zack’s findings on the seventeenth-century spoken Cairene vernacular confirms this, however her material only display interrogative *iš* (sic) having the function of a subject.¹²⁰ *’Ēš/’iš* appears occasionally in the manuscripts 45, 46 and 52, and several times in manu-

113 See Behnstedt and Woidich 1985, map 211.

114 Blanc 1974, 210-11; 213-14.

115 Lebedev 1965, *apud* Blanc 1981, 200.

116 Blau 1999, 251.

117 Blanc 1974, 216; 1981, 195; Rosenbaum 2002, 38 et. al. The use of *’ēš* is attested already in medieval Judeo-Arabic (cf. Blau 1980, 65), and was according to Davies 1981, 278-79 common in the seventeenth century. See also Tomiche 1968, 1180.

118 Rosenbaum 2002, 38.

119 MS 45/5b:11.

120 Zack 2009, 109. Singer 1958, 135-36 and Munzel 1950, 573 also confirms this (*apud* Zack 2009, 109).

script 13. In the latter manuscript, however, it is used both at the beginning and end of a phrase, as in *דא איש דא איש* 'what's that'¹²¹ and *איש מענא איש מענא* 'what's the meaning?'.¹²² In this particular manuscript, the more common Modern EA variants *'ēh* and *lēh* also appear, both particles placed at the end of the phrase: *הא תגביי אלכרבאל ליה* 'he said to her, "So why are you bringing me the sieve?"'¹²³; *דא איש דא איש* 'what's that?'.¹²⁴ *Kēf/kīf* is attested several times, but only once in a context where it reflects actual speech rather than literal CA (based on the oral character of the sentence): *תתפצלי עלייא ותדבריני כף נעמל*: 'be so kind and tell me what to do'.¹²⁵ It is difficult to assert whether *kēf* or *kīf* is reflecting a non-standard Cairene (or Egyptian Judeo-Arabic) feature, some kind of 'Syrianism' or merely CA;¹²⁶ it should however be noted that *kēf* was widely distributed in seventeenth-century Egyptian,¹²⁷ and is in agreement with the findings of Tomiche and Rosenbaum on Spoken Egyptian Judeo-Arabic.¹²⁸ It is still used in Upper Egypt.¹²⁹

2.10 Accusative *-ā* Preserved in Pause: The case of *'ayḏā*

In manuscript 52 accusative ending *-an* is consistently marked with a two-dotted *'alif*. However, *איצא* ¹³⁰ *איצא* is never marked, which indicates that it at one point might have been pronounced *'ayḏā* rather than *'aydan*. Blau finds the same feature in a twelfth-century Egyptian manuscript of *Pirkei Avot*.¹³¹ The feature of accusative *-ā* preserved in pause is even found occasionally in Egyptian nineteenth-century sources as pointed out in e.g. Wagner and Hary.¹³² It is also attested in the Ancient West-Arabian variety of

121 MS 13/*passim*.

122 MS 13/1b:5-6.

123 MS 13/8a:4-5.

124 MS 13/8a:1

125 MS 13/10b:1-2

126 See Blanc (1974, 215), who also discusses the use of *'ēš*. Blanc did however not regard *'ēš* and *kēf/kīf* to necessarily be a reflection of Syrian or Palestinian origin.

127 Davies 1981, 321.

128 Tomiche 1968, 1180; Rosenbaum 2002, 38.

129 Behnstedt and Woidich 1985, map 188.

130 MS 52/*passim*

131 Blau 1999, 171.

132 Wagner 2010, 49; Hary 1992, 89.

'Azd (situated between Yemen and Ḥijāz),¹³³ a tribe which settled together with the Yemenite tribes in the Nile Delta following the Islamic conquest of Egypt. One should of course not dismiss the possibility that *'ayḏā* merely reflects a CA pausal reading *-an > -ā*, but this custom may after all have its roots in the south-western part of the Arabian Peninsula.

2.11 Separated *tanwīn* Accusative Ending *'an/ʿin*

According to Blau, the emergence of the independent particle *'an* comes from the *tanwīn* accusative ending which is separated from the word and no longer functions as an indefinite article, but rather as a “morpheme indicating that the noun to which it is affixed is followed by an attribute.”¹³⁴ Blau and subsequently Wagner (whose taxonomy has been applied here) distinguish between three different categories of the independent particle *'an* appearing in in their data.¹³⁵ These are *'an* + attributive adjective, *'an* + attributive noun and *'an* + attributive clause. In the present material, the former is attested, in *פאנגעז אנגעזאן עזים* *'an* *פאנגעז אנגעזאן עזים* ‘he was greatly disturbed (lit. ~ disturbed a great disturbance),¹³⁷ *בכת בכא אן שדיד* *'an* *בכת בכא אן שדיד* ‘she cried intensely (lit. ~ a strong cry),¹³⁸ and *פי יום אן ואחד* *'an* *פי יום אן ואחד* ‘in one day’.¹³⁹ Kees Versteegh noted a similar feature in the dialects of Najd – which in pre-Islamic times was settled by, *inter alia*, the tribe of Kinda – where the particle *'in* was appointed to the modifier (without pause).¹⁴⁰ It is employed the same ways as pointed out by Blau and Wagner on the particle *'an*,¹⁴¹ and it is quite probable that it was,

133 Rabin 1951, 56.

134 Blau 1999, 174-75.

135 Blau 1999, 175; Wagner 2010, 186.

136 The root consonants *j-* *-z*, does not appear in any of the relevant dictionaries or grammars. This part corresponds with the writings of al-Ta'labī, reading *ففرع من ذلك فرعا شديدا* (al-Ta'labī 1906, 41; al-Tabarī 1969, 236) ‘he was greatly disturbed from that.’ Here, the verb *פאנגעז אנגעזאן* is most probably a result of metathesis of *انزعج* ‘to feel worried,’ carrying either the same or a similar semantic meaning.

137 MS 46/2a:11

138 MS 52/4b:7

139 MS 52/10a:7

140 Versteegh 2001, 149.

141 Blau 1999, 175; Wagner 2010, 186.

at least occasionally, pronounced 'in in Egypt.¹⁴² The examples offered by Versteegh are strikingly similar vis-à-vis those listed above, viz. *bēt-in kibīr* 'a big house' and *jiz'-in minh* 'a part of it.' It is also found in adverbial expressions such as *maṭal-in* 'for example.'¹⁴³

2.12 Islamic Discourse from the Early Meccan Period

Throughout the material, words and phrases show a high degree of influence from the Islamic cultural environment. In the manuscripts 46, 52 and 13, an extended use of Islamic terminology and discourse illustrates a relatively high degree of rapprochement between Jews and Muslims.¹⁴⁴ As stated above, the Qur'ānic verses which are paraphrased in the manuscripts are exclusively from the period of the early Meccan *sūras*. It should be noted that they – for some reason – show small but significant and interesting deviations from the standardized 'Uṭmānic Codex of the Qur'ān.¹⁴⁵ The example below illustrates the occasional verbatim similarity between the manuscripts and a part from the chapter of al-'An'ām:

פלמא אסרק אלצו ונצזר אלשמס קד אסרקת נורהא קאל הדא רבי פלמא אזלאמת
אלשמס קאל אדלם יהדיני רבי לאכונ מן אלקום אלזאלמין
فلما اسرق الضو ونضر الشمس قد اسرقت نورها قال هذا ربي فلما ازلامت الشمس قال
اذلم يهديني ربي لآكون من القوم الزالمين

When the light shone and he [Ibrāhīm] could see the sun, and its light was shining, *he said*, “*This is my Lord*” (Q 6.76).¹⁴⁶ But when

142 Ørum 2017, 118.

143 Versteegh 2001, 149.

144 On this, Blau notes that “sometimes the most hallowed matters of Judaism are denoted by terms borrowed from Islam” (Blau 1999, 159). To his *prima facie* surprise, he points out the use of certain terms such as *ar-rasūl* denoting Moses, *Qur'ān* denoting the *Miqra* ‘the Hebrew Bible,’ *sayyidnā al-xalīl* denoting Abraham and nothing less than *rasūl allāh* denoting Elijah.

145 For the material presented here, I have yet not identified any particular deviations which correspond with other Qur'ānic codices (according to those presented in Jeffrey 1937). Out of these, companions of the Prophet Muḥammad who came from Mecca and the south-western part of the Arabian Peninsula are of particular interest.

146 [”]he said, [”]This is my Lord. [”] (The Qur'ānic translations appearing here are based on those of Arberry 1996.)

the sun darkened, he said, “*If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people gone astray*” (Q 6.77).¹⁴⁷

3 Discussion and Conclusions

As evident by the findings above, many features correspond with the vernacular use attested in the literature on Cairene Arabic and stereotypical ‘Peasant’ Egyptian Arabic from the seventeenth century.¹⁴⁸ Many of these features also correspond with the vestiges and characteristics of Blanc’s notion of non-standard Cairene and the Jewish communal dialect for whose existence Rosenbaum and Hary argue,¹⁴⁹ as well as the many issues treated in the literature on Late Egyptian Judeo-Arabic. These characteristics are found in the non-standard or pre-modern use of vocalisms e.g. preference of vowel *u* over *i* and *a* (2.2 and 2.4), progressive use of *’imāla* in the medial position (2.5), interrogatives *’ēš* ‘what’ and *kēf/kīf* ‘how’ (2.9) and the case of *nekteb* (2.8). Concerning the history and formation of the Modern EA variety, the similarities between a pre-modern EA variety and the variety features attested in Late Egyptian Judeo-Arabic material deserves further investigation, as they share almost exclusively the same characteristics.

The data presented here also indicates a wave of migration from North Africa (not to mention Muslim Spain), at least in the case of the Arabic-speaking Jews. This concerns the various mergers of sibilants (2.7), relative *aldi* (2.6) and the *nekteb* imperfect (2.8). Whether these features reflect exclusively Jewish local or regional forms or in fact remnants of older varieties spoken by a larger number of speakers, has hitherto not been extensively studied. The findings above confirm, however, the notion that small and relatively isolated groups preserve old language characteristics to a larger degree than those who are part of the majority.

The description of the material presented here also demonstrates that the Jews of Egypt possessed vast knowledge of Arabic and Islamic religion, culture and language. This is noticeable from their paraphrasing of historically early Qur’ānic discourse—which

147 MS 46/4b:7-10. Q 6:77 reads الْقَوْمَ الضَّالِّينَ رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ ‘If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people gone astray.’

148 Zack 2009 and Davies 1981, respectively

149 Rosenbaum 2002 and Hary 2009.

is attested solely from the period when the Prophet Muḥammad was living in Mecca (2.12). Here emerge many intriguing questions on the history of oral Biblical and Qur'ānic transmissions in Mecca during the Prophet Muḥammad's time, a subject which deserves further investigation.

Judging by the high level of rapprochement between the two communities, one could argue that the Karaites were influenced by Muslim Arabic matters not only in the social and cultural sphere, but also in terms of language.¹⁵⁰ We may also argue that the spoken variety employed by Muslims and that of the Karaites were once similar,¹⁵¹ but that the Jews in general or the Karaites in particular retained a number of traits for a period of time after the Muslim majority had started employing what we today know as Modern EA. The findings thus suggest that certain variants attested in the manuscripts have once been in use by a much larger speech community than solely that of the Egyptian Jews, evident by fact that many of these particular features have been attested in studies of earlier varieties of Egyptian Arabic, even in the particular case of Cairo.

The apparent Yemenite origin of some of the Karaite literature correlates with the historical migration and resettling of people from the South-Western Arabian Peninsula in Egypt. The awareness of such Yemenite tribes who settled in and influenced politics and culture in the Nile Delta in the early period of Islam proves to be very valuable, not only when documenting the process of Islamic expansion and Arabization, but also when tracing the history and migration of particular linguistic traits. I have suggested that all the following features may in fact be linguistic remnants of the early migration of the Yemenite tribes: The somewhat progressive use of *'imāla* in pausal position i.e. when occurring after *l*, *h* and *r* (2.5), vernacular reading or use of *alladi/illadi/aldi* (2.6), pausal accusative *-ā* in the case of *'aydā* (2.10), and the independent particle and modifier *'an/ 'in* (2.11). It becomes clear that vestiges of Ancient Western Arabian variants are found scattered along the path of the Islamic conquest, moving through Egypt, North Africa and into Muslim Spain, where they were further molded – later to have found their way back during medieval times. And it is cer-

150 See Blau 1999, 54.

151 Blau 1999, 43.

tainly in the language and literary heritage of the minorities and the seemingly insignificant that these are best discovered.

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