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THE SIRA OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD IN THE REPERTOIRE
OF THE CONTEMPORARY EGYPTIAN MADDĀHIN.

KAMAL ABDEL-MALEK

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

(c) Kamal Abdel-Malek.



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Dedication

To my dear friend Steve Millier with great affection.

ABSTRACT

This is an interpretive study of the life of the Prophet Muḥammad as it is artistically depicted in the repertoire (especially the narrative ballads) of fifty-one contemporary Egyptian maddāḥīn (singers of eulogies in honour of the Prophet Muḥammad, sing. maddāḥ). The elements of this repertoire, as diverse as narrative ballads, classical odes, Qurʾān chanting, and the melodies of the secular songs of well-known Egyptian singers, do not exist as discrete units but rather as a lively tawlīfa (blend) -- to use a common term in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (CEA). This study is about blends where discrete units lose their borderlines and leak into one another, about phenomena which are "betwixt and between" the perceived scholarly categories which confidently delineate boundaries between elite and popular Islam, the historical and the legendary Muḥammad, the sacred and the profane, orality and writing, standard and colloquial Arabic.

In order to understand the process which marks the making of the people's Muḥammad, the study deals with the sources and the contents of the repertoire of the Egyptian maddāḥīn. The performance of these singers as well as their interaction with the audience are also considered. The "legendary" material in this repertoire is attested as historical by many authoritative and well-recognized

"orthodox" authors of the past. Classical Arabic, classical poetic forms, philosophical notions, long believed to be the exclusive possessions of the learned, are freely utilized in the ballads and popular songs under study. The people's Muḥammad appears as both a commanding figure, empowered by the supernatural, and a touchingly vulnerable human being; God's ascetic messenger and a man who savours life's lawful pleasures; an eloquent speaker who utters Qur'ān-like terse Arabic and a lovingly familiar figure who also uses local patois. Bipolarity, beloved of many scholars, is seriously challenged by the art of the Egyptian maddāḥīn. A renewed effort has to be made to discover more valid categories which will take into account the intermediary combinations (Mischbildungen) characteristic of that art.

Ceci est une étude interprétative de la vie du Prophète Muḥammad, une vie qui fut artistiquement représentée dans le répertoire, en particulier dans les ballades narratives des cinquante et un maddāḥīn égyptiens (chanteurs de panégyriques de la personnalité du Prophète Muḥammad, sing. maddāḥ). Dans ce répertoire, on retrouve des éléments divers tels les ballades narratives, les odes classiques, le chant Qur'anique ainsi que les mélodies des chansons séculaires interprétées par les chanteurs égyptiens célèbres et qui sont caractérisées par la tawlīfa (mélange - un mot qui est issu du dialecte arabe d'Egypte). Cette recherche porte sur l'étude de ces tawlīfa par lesquelles de différentes unités perdent leurs points de démarcation pour ensuite déborder sur d'autres tawlīfa, sur les phénomènes pouvant se situer dans une zone intermédiaire entre les catégories déterminées par les spécialistes; dessinant de façon rigoureuse la frontière existant entre l'Islam des élites et l'Islam du peuple, entre le Muḥammad de l'Histoire et le Muḥammad légendaire, entre le sacré et le profane, entre l'oralité et l'écriture, et enfin, entre l'arabe classique et l'arabe dialectal.

Pour comprendre le processus de la formation de l'imagerie populaire entourant le Prophète Muḥammad, la recherche se concentre sur les sources ainsi que sur le

contenu du répertoire des maddāhīn. De plus, la performance de ces chanteurs ainsi que leurs relations avec le public seront aussi analysés. Le contenu "légendaire" de ce répertoire sera considéré comme une vérité historique par beaucoup d'auteurs "orthodoxes" du passé. Dans cette étude, l'arabe classique, les formes poétiques classiques, les notions philosophiques ainsi que les éléments que l'on a considéré comme étant l'apanage exclusif des gens instruits sont librement utilisés dans les ballades et les chansons populaires analysées. Le Prophète du peuple y sera dépeint comme un être formidable, aidé par des forces surnaturelles tout en étant à la fois l'ascétique messenger de Dieu et un homme savourant les plaisirs de la vie; comme un orateur éloquent s'exprimant dans un arabe Qur'anique et un personnage familier et aimable, parlant dans le dialecte du pays. La bipolarité, une conception qui est très populaire auprès des spécialistes, sera sérieusement contestée par cet art des maddāhīn égyptiens. On devra alors faire les efforts nécessaires de façon à établir des catégories beaucoup plus solides pouvant tenir compte des combinaisons intermédiaires (Mischbildungen) des caractéristiques de cet art.

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Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-ʿIrasī and the people of Biyalā, my home town, I am truly grateful, for without their help this study would not have been possible. Dr. Muḥammad Ḥamūda ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān of al-Ḥāmūl kindly provided me with a copy of his M.A. thesis on the odes in honour of the Prophet Muḥammad. Members of my family, especially my dear sister Suzannah, her husband Fawzī, my nephews Bāsim, Eva, and Anīs, have helped me in gathering material for my study. Ḥagg ʿAlī Ghunēm of al-Ḥāmūl was my generous host on several occasions and has helped me in obtaining many recordings of madīḥ songs. I am also grateful to the Centre For Folk Arts in Cairo, especially to its director Mr. Ḥusnī Luṭfī, Ms. Ilhām Muḥammad Fathī, Mr. Aḥmad ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm, Mr. Muḥammad Hilāl, for having provided me with copies of the Centre's recordings of the madīḥ songs. I am grateful to my friend Steve Millier who has generously hosted me in his home for many weeks and who has unselfishly given of his time and effort in editing my study with remarkable speed and thoroughness. In the course of many conversations, my fellow Egyptian and friend Maha El-Marraghi has helped me formulate important ideas about my study and I will remain indebted to her for that. I am also thankful to Jane Tremblay of the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill for her translation of the abstract into French. I am grateful to the staff of the Islamic Studies library at McGill, especially Ms. Salwa Ferahian, and the staff of the Firestone library at Princeton University, for their help in locating important sources for my study. I am truly thankful to Ms. Violette

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I owe a great deal to my wife Diane who, like Penelope, has patiently put up with my many absences which my research required. To her and to my beautiful daughters Amira and Layla, I would like to express my unbounded love.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The system of transliteration in this study is based on the one used by the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, with one exception: the tā marbūṭa, is transliterated as "a" not "ah", except in the idāfa, where it is rendered "at". Arabic words like Allah, Islam, which have become part of the English vocabulary have not been transliterated according to this system. In general, colloquial vocables are transliterated according to the way they are pronounced by the singer, even if they are mispronounced or inconsistently rendered, e.g. yawm al-qiyama, mujtahid, al-nabī become respectively yōm il-iyāma, mugtahid, in-nabī. The helping vowel "i" is used in Egyptian Arabic to break the inadmissible sequence of three consonants as in il-farḍ <i> wi s-sunna, min ba'd <i> madh in-nabī is represented as a short vowel connected to the vocable with a dash: il-farḍ-i wi s-sunna, min ba'd-i madh in-nabī. In quoted passages from other works, the transliteration system of the author is retained, e.g. Yuusuf, mawwa:l. All the quotes from the sung repertoire are footnoted in accordance with the list of the singers attached to the Appendices, e.g., <23:b>: "23" refers to the singer Shēkh al-Ḥirasī and "b" refers to the second song in his repertoire. The following is a list of the Arabic letters and the symbols used for them in the present study.

Symbol

Arabic

ʾ	Arabic hamza - glottal stop.
ʿ	ع
a	fatḥa or alif pronounced short.
ā	long alif.
b	ب
d	Arabic dāl (د), sometimes dhāl (ذ).
ḍ	ض
dh	ذ
e	equivalent of classical ay (اِ), pronounced short.
ē	classical ay (اَ), pronounced long.
f	ف
g	Lower Egyptian pronunciation of (ج).

g	Upper Egyptian pronunciation of (Ġ).
gh	غ
h	ه
ḥ	ح
i	kasra or yā' (ِ) pronounced short.
ī	y (ِي) pronounced long.
-i	intrusive neutral vowel, preceded by a dash.
j	Upper Egyptian pronunciation of j (ǰ).
k	ك
kh	خ
l	ل
m	م
n	ن
o	و short

xiv

ō

و

q

ق

r

ر

s

Arabic sīn (س), sometimes thā (ث).

ṣ

ص

sh

ش

t

Arabic tā (ت), sometimes thā (ث).

ṭ

ط

u

ḍamma or wāw (و) pronounced short.

ū

wāw pronounced long.

w

wāw

y

yā short

z

Arabic zāy (ز), sometimes dhāl (ذ).

ẓ

Arabic ẓā (ظ) sometimes ḍād (ض).

INTRODUCTION

The present study is concerned with the life of the Prophet Muḥammad as it is artistically depicted in the repertoire (especially the narrative ballads) of fifty-one contemporary Egyptian maddāḥīn (singers of eulogies in honour of the Prophet Muḥammad, sing. maddāḥ). Elements of this repertoire as diverse as narrative ballads, classical odes, Qurʾān chanting, and the melodies of the secular songs of the well-known Egyptian singers Umm Kulthūm and ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ḥāfiẓ do not exist as discrete units but rather as a lively tawlīfa (blend) - to use a common term in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (CEA). This study is about blends where discrete units lose their borderlines and leak into one another, about phenomena which "fall betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial." <1> The repertoire of these maddāḥīn falls "betwixt and between" the canonical definitions of adab - with all its associations of Classical Arabic, rules, couthness, refinement - held by the overwhelming majority of Arab belletrists and scholars as well as many Arabists.

This is an interpretive study which derives some insights from recent Western works on the marginal and on marginality in literature <2> or more specifically what is referred to in anthropology as the "liminal". The terms "liminal" and "liminality" were made current by Arnold van Gennep in his book, Rites de Passage (1909) where he

provides a scheme of the rites of passage in this manner:

1. preliminal rites: when a person is separated from his community.
2. liminal rites: when a person is held in a transitional period between the two rites.
3. postliminal rites: when a person is re-incorporated into his community.<3>

The preliminal rites can be seen in funeral ceremonies whereas postliminal rites can be seen in marriage. As for liminal rites, they are prominent in pregnancy, betrothal and initiation.<4> The term "liminal" is derived from the Latin limen meaning threshold and etymologically associated with "nouns like limit, limb, limbo, limbus, slime, lintel; with verbs like limn, delimit, and eliminate; and with adjectives like preliminary, sublime and subliminal".<5>

In his book, The Ritual Process (1969), Victor Turner adds a spatial dimension to van Gennep's definition of the liminal. For him liminality can be a state in its own right and may even be a permanent one at that.<6> In this study the liminal is utilized in a way akin to Victor Turner's definition especially as it is elaborated by Gustavo Perez Firmat, whose many insights have greatly benefited me, when he states that "the liminal entity, whatever its nature (an individual, a group, an event, a text), is one that at a given situation takes up a position of eccentricity, one that occupies the periphery in relation to a contextually determined center."<7>

In Arabic literary scholarship there is hardly any study on margins and marginality; none at any rate which is in the tradition of Victor Turner's works <8>. There is a clear tendency in Islamic religious discourse to see the world in terms of binary oppositions: īmān (belief) / kufr (unbelief), Islam / zandaqa (unbelief, as in al-Ghazālī's Fayṣal at-Tafrīqa bayn al-Islām wa z-Zandaqa), ar-Raḥmān / ash-Shayṭān (God / the Devil, as in Ibn Taymiyya's al-Furqān bayn Awliyā, ar-Raḥmān wa Awliyā, ash-Shayṭān), dār al-ḥarb / dār al-islām (the abode of war / the abode of Islam). However, even with this tendency, one comes across concepts and terms scattered in the literature that evoke the idea of margins; terms such as the manzila bayn al-manzilatayn (Muṭtazilī term for the interstitial position between belief and unbelief), niyya (intention, as a state which lies between non-action and action), majmaʿ al-baḥrayn (the confluence of the two seas), barzakh (isthmus), "ummatan wasaṭan" (middle community, a Qurʾanic reference to the Muslim community: 2:143). The Egyptian writer Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm devoted a whole book to the notion that Islam is the religion of taʾāduliyya (equilibrium) <9>. Of all these terms, barzakh has a special significance for the present study. Persian in origin, the word barzakh is used three times in the Qurʾān. <10> In these verses, barzakh respectively signifies: a) a barrier between Hell and Heaven; b) the grave which lies between this life and the next; c) the isthmus between two seas, one with fresh water and the other with salt <11>. According to the ṣūfīs,

barzakh is the middle ground between the material and the spiritual worlds, whereas in at-Tahānawī's Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, barzakh is a limbo <12>. As an interstitial position, and not just a transitory stage, barzakh comes close to the notion of the liminal - although it does not carry with it the subversive quality of the liminal entity.

In the Western scholarship on the topic of the popular images of Muḥammad, there are two categories of works: a) collections of Muslim folk poetry in honour of the Prophet, recorded by Orientalists or Egyptologists who resided for some time in Egypt and b) studies on the Muslim perceptions and veneration of the Prophet Muḥammad. Under the category of collections, one may mention the Egyptian folk songs and narrative ballads recorded and published by Urbain Bouriant <14>, Heinrich ^CShaefer <15>, Enno Littmann <16>, Ernst Bannerth <17> and more recently, Giovanni Canova <18>, Jan Knappert <19> and Pierre Cachia <20>. Western studies that probe into the role of the Prophet Muḥammad in Muslim piety are very few indeed: Tor Andrae's Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde <21> (1918) Annemarie Schimmel's And Muhammad Is His Messenger <22> (1985), and Earle Waugh's The Munshidīn of Egypt <23> (1989). On the images of Muḥammad in the Egyptian elite literature, one may mention two important articles: Pierre Cachia's "In a Glass Darkly: the Faintness of Islamic Inspiration in Modern Arabic Literature" <24>, in which he ponders on the reason why Islamic topics have not fired the imagination of Arab

creative writers and Mustafa Badawi's "Islam in Modern Egyptian Literature", in which he presents a convincing argument that the life of the Prophet has been gradually secularized in the works of elite writers like al-Aqqād, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, and especially ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ash-Sharqāwī <25>. Moreover, Andrae's book, seminal though it may be, is now outdated. Schimmel's book is indeed a masterful study of representations of the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad in poetry and art. It covers both folk and elite traditions in the Muslim world but on the whole one finds that more attention is given to the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent than to those of the Arab world. Waugh's book, ridden with a considerable number of technical errors, is a study of the world view of the sūfī chanters (munshidīn) rather than the figure of the popular Muḥammad as such. No study, however, has been written specifically on the topic of the popular sīra of the Prophet Muḥammad as it is depicted in the repertoire of the Egyptian maddāḥīn.

In Egypt there have been some studies on the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad as he is portrayed in classical and modern elite literature, but virtually nothing on the folk songs or ballads about the Prophet <26>. A good survey of the classical poetic eulogies in honour of the Prophet can be found in al-Madāʾih an-Nabawiyya <27> (1935), by Zakī Mubārak and in al-Madāʾih an-Nabawiyya fī l-ʿAṣr al-Hāḍir wa Atharuhā fī l-Adab <28> (1967), an unpublished MA thesis of the Azharite, Dr. Muḥammad Ḥammūda ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān. On the literary treatment of the Prophet in Egyptian elite

literature there are two useful short studies: Muḥammad fī l-Adab al-Mu'āṣir <29> (1959) by Fārūq Khūrshīd and Muḥammad Aḥmad Zakī, and Muḥammad wa Hā'ulā <30> (1971) by the Egyptian poet 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī Ḥijāzī. More recently there appeared an important study on the figure of the Prophet in modern Arabic literature by Ḥilmī al-Qā'ūd, a young Egyptian scholar who teaches at a provincial university and who is known as a regular contributor to the Muslim fundamentalist magazine al-I'tiṣām. This publication represents the views of the younger generation of the Muslim Brothers of Egypt who call for the total application of Sharī'a and who boldly attack the present regime of President Ḥusnī Mubārak. His study is entitled Muḥammad Ṣallā llāh 'Alayh wa Sallam fī sh-Shi'r al-Ḥadīth <31> (1987). The study is important on two accounts: it deals with the most up-to-date poetry (in MSA) about the Prophet and it presents a fundamentalist point of view which critiques both the sūfī poetry - which stresses the pre-existence of Muḥammad and his miracles - and the "rational" and "progressive" views of the Egyptian modernists who secularize the biography of the Prophet and see him as the champion of liberation, rational thinking and even socialism.

It is only natural to find that such works as these, representing the classical or modern elite literature, are given a sort of permanence through their having been produced mostly by the major Cairo-based publishers. At the same time, there exists another world of ephemeral works containing collections of folk songs and narrative ballads

that deal in one way or another with episodes or persons in the life of the Prophet Muḥammad. I am referring to what are commonly called il-kutub iṣ-ṣafrā, cheap pulp booklets that are often undated, published mainly in provincial towns, and sold on sidewalks around major mosques, especially during the religious celebrations. Of these, the single most famous collections are composed and published by Muḥammad ʿAlī Sariyya (known as Abū Sariyya) who lives in the small village of Nawasa al-Ghēt in the Delta Province of Daqahliyya. His four-volume Dīwān al-Munshidīn <32>, and other collections, have formed part of the repertoire of a number of maddāḥīn including Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-ʿIrāsī, who in turn has a collection under the title Dīwān al-ʿIrāsī <33>. Another important popular poet who contributed to the repertoire of the maddāḥīn is the Azharite Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm ʿAjāj (d. ca. 1936) <34> whose collection Murawwiq al-Mazāj <35> includes a number of colloquial compositions which treat episodes in the life of the Prophet, especially his 700-line narrative ballad (mawwāl) about Muḥammad's birth <36>.

Some ballads in the popular sīra (paradigmatic biography) of the Prophet Muḥammad were recorded during live performances which I attended while I was in Egypt in the Fall of 1989; the rest were obtained from the archives of the Markaz al-Funūn ash-Shaʿbiyya (Center For Folk Arts) in Cairo and from commercial tapes purchased from outlets in Cairo, Ṭanṭā (Province of Gharbiyya) <37>, Banhā (Province of Qalyūbiyya) and Biyalā (Province of Kafr ash-Shēkh).

The tradition under study is primarily oral, composed mostly in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (CEA), with small sections in Classical Arabic (CA) which are often derived from classical and modern devotional literature, such as al-Jazūlī's (d. ca. 1465) Dalā'il al-Khayrāt <38>, the mawālīd works (literary compositions in honour of the Prophet) such as those of al-Munāwī (d.1621) <39> and al-Barzanjī (d.1766) <40>, the anāshīd (sing. unshūda religious song, hymn) of the various Egyptian sūfī orders - notably ash-Shādhiliyya <41>. The repertoire of the maddāhīn is mostly authorless and composed in verse with some portions in prose. A sizable part of it is composed of verse appropriated from classical and modern elite writers who range from the ascetic Abū l-ʿAtāhiya (d. 825 or 826), the mystics Sahl at-Tustarī (d.896), ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm al-Buraʿī (d. ca.1058), ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d.1235), the Andalusian-born Abū l-Ḥasan ash-Shushtarī (d. 1268-9), the modern poet Aḥmad Shawqī (d.1932), and others. It represents most geographic areas in Egypt, especially the Nile Delta, with the exception of the oases, Western desert and the Sinai. It can be listed under the rubric of folk literature but with the proviso that "...developments in different cultures need not be exactly parallel or co-terminous, that the public served by this literature is not homogeneous, and that the pen-and-paper compositions are an integral part of it." <42>

The oldest ballads in my possession are: a) "Ḥiml Zajal fī Qiṣṣat al-Isrāʾ wa l-Miʿrāj" which was recorded and

published, along with other ballads, by Urbain Bouriant in 1893 under the title: Chansons populaires arabes en dialecte du Caire d'apres les manuscrits d'un chanteur des rues <43>.

b) "Muḥammad's Marriage", a ballad which goes back to the 1930s and, as the maddāḥ Shēkh al-ʿIrasī told me, it was still sung not long ago. This ballad was recorded by the resourceful Enno Littmann and published in 1950 under the title Mohammed im Volksepos <44>. I was fortunate to have been able to obtain an undated pulp edition of it from a book peddler at as-Sayyid al-Badawī's mūlid in Ṭanṭā in October 1989. It is authored by one Shēkh ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad (nicknamed al-ʿArabī) and appears to be more complete than Littmann's "text" <45>. Some of the pieces I collected were recorded as early as 1959 by researchers in the Markaz al-Funūn ash-Shaʿbiyya in Cairo, but the majority of the pieces have been mostly recorded from live performances in the 1970's and 1980's by commercial recording companies, especially Ṣōṭ al-Gharbiyya in Ṭanṭā, and by myself during the celebrations of mūlid in-nabī (the anniversary of the Prophet's birthday) in October, 1989 at Biyalā (Kafr ash-Shēkh), Ṭanṭā (Gharbiyya), and Banhā (Qalyūbiyya).

One main feature of my methodology in the present study is that, unlike many other studies on the Prophet Muḥammad, mine does not consider the historical Muḥammad as the paradigm against which all the popular perceptions of the life and the figure of the Prophet are measured as divagations. For my study does not investigate the historicity of events in the life of the Prophet as the

maddāhīn relate them; this is a task that is better left to historians. I also refrain from calling the popular sīra low or little tradition. For all intents and purposes, the Muslim maddāh in my study is the authoritative voice and whatever he expresses is faithfully recorded.

There are three main questions that this study will address: 1> What do these ballads tell us about the life of the Prophet?; 2> If the main purpose of these ballads is to venerate the Prophet, how do the poetic devices and the maddāh's performance convey this message?; 3) In what way do these ballads occupy a liminal position between what scholars sometimes call official Islām and popular Islam.

In answering these questions, I bear in mind two methodological considerations: a) that since the material under study is presented from the viewpoint of the devotee (the maddāh or the member of the audience), terms are used and transliterated as they appear in the popular "register", e.g., zahr (punning) not jinās, and mūlid, lēla, zīkr not mawlid, layla, dhikr, (unless, of course, the devotee pronounces them this way), and b) that the madīh, being a performance of verbal art, is something more than words. The presence of an audience as well as the performer's artistry of voice and body movements are considered. For this reason appending some samples of performed songs is essential for a deep appreciation of the communal nature of the maddāhīn's repertoire.

This study is divided into three Chapters: The Context; The "Texts"; The Texture. Chapter One deals with the

context of these narrative ballads; first I discuss the background of the various maddāhīn, their training and the sources of their repertoire, noting in particular that they learn their material partly from cheap pulp booklets. I concentrate on the main occasion during which the maddāhīn's repertoire is sung; that is the Prophet's birthday (mūlid).

In Chapter Two, I deal with the several "texts" I collected in Egypt, noting that the "text" is not only meant in the sense of physical and fixed printed matter on paper but that it can also mean a version of a composition memorized by the maddāh and produced differently each time it is performed. I try to glean a composite popular sīra of the Prophet Muḥammad; what this repertoire tells us about the Prophet's birth, marriage, migration, miracles and physical and spiritual attributes.

Chapter Three deals with the texture of this repertoire. I discuss the narrative, noting how the boundaries of time and space are transgressed, and the way in which the inside-outside dialectic works. I also discuss five poetic forms of the maddāhīn's repertoire: the mawwāl (popular narrative ballad); qaṣīda (classical ode); taṭtīra (calling down "perfumed" blessings on the Prophet); ḥunūn (songs of the pilgrims on the way to and from Mecca); aghānī t-takhmīr (ṣūfī songs of khamr - wine -, mystical intoxication). The language and the style are also discussed. I analyze the different levels of language, noting that the ʿāmmiyya stands - in the eyes of Arab literati - on the periphery of

faṣāḥa (pure literary Arabic), balāgha (eloquence) and adab (canonical literature, good manners, refinement). The ʿāmmiyya, however, is shown to have some literary features which separate it from the common everyday spoken idiom; such literary ʿāmmiyya (al-ʿāmmiyya al-adabiyya) occupies the interstitial liminal / barzakhī position between the fushā (Classical or Modern Standard Arabic) and the ʿāmmiyya al-maṣriyya (Colloquial Egyptian Arabic).

The study stresses the hybrid nature of the people's sīra as it is narrated in the ballads of the maddāhīn. The key to understanding the popular Lebenswelt of the Egyptian maddāhīn is in terms of the mūlid where one encounters the suspension and even inversion of society's social - and literary - norms. The tumultuous world of the mūlid is characterized by its inversion of norms, its interpenetration of the sacred and the profane, its heteroglossic blending of linguistic levels as well as its collusion of text and body in the teeth of scholarly separation (a collusion so pervasive that one can talk about the "soma-poetics" of the maddāhīn's repertoire) <46>. The study derives insights on the nature of popular life from the works of both the medieval Muslim jurist Taqī d-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328) and the modern Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (d.1975). Ibn Taymiyya's critique of popular religion and his description of it as ʿīd (religious festival) <47> corresponds with Bakhtin's notion of the carnival as a semiotically interpretive term which illustrates the inversion of norms in the world of the

French writer Rabelais <48>. The study ends with a critique of the prevailing views on the binary division between standard and colloquial Arabic, and official and popular Islam.

Field Work:

During the fall of 1989, I left Montreal for Egypt in order to do research on al-madā'ih an-nabawiyya ash-sha'biyya (the popular eulogies in honour of the Prophet Muḥammad). My main concern was the potential difficulties which I might face in collecting these popular eulogies due to the fact that I am not a Muslim but a Christian Copt. I was afraid that I might not be able to have free access to the singers or their audience and that I might not be able to record freely. But as it turned out, there were far fewer problems than I had anticipated. A folklorist in Cairo asked me bluntly whether it was Zionists who were running or financing my research and whether the information which I was gathering might be used - even given my good will - to distort the image of the beloved Prophet of Allah. But as he got more acquainted with me and my research his fears were allayed. A clerk in my hometown Biyalā (Province of Kafr ash-Shēkh) wondered why a Copt like me would study the life of the Prophet of Islam, the assumption being that I was overstepping clearly-delineated sectarian boundaries.

My starting-point was the mosque of Sayyidnā l-Ḥusēn in

Cairo. It was there where I attended the gatherings of several sūfīs, especially the followers of the Aḥmadiyya "path" (named after Aḥmad al-Badawī, the famous sufī master whose shrine is in Ṭanṭā). I got acquainted with one of those followers who was willing to help me attend the various performances of the maddāhīn. The same day I met him, we travelled to the town of Banhā, south of Cairo, where we attended an all-night performance - called lēla - of Shēkh Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī.

I also made contacts with Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-ʿIrasī, the well-known maddāh in the town of Samannūd (Province of Gharbiyya) who generously invited me to stay as a guest in his home and to attend many of his performances, providing me with much information about his craft. Unexpectedly he was enthusiastic to help out especially after I told him that I was a Copt. He noted that at times he would be asked to perform for Christian families. I recorded his performances and videotaped his major one in Biyalā on the eve of the anniversary of the Prophet's birthday, on October 11, 1989.

Several times I visited Markaz al-Funūn ash-Shaʿbiyya in Cairo and through the help of its director Ḥusnī Luṭfī, and the folklorist Aḥmad ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm, I managed to obtain copies of all the recordings of madīḥ nabawī (eulogy in honour of the Prophet) from 1959 to the present.

I also met and talked with academics such as Dr. Shams ad-Dīn al-Ḥajjājī of Cairo University, Dr. Muḥammad Ḥammūda ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān, an al-Azhar graduate who teaches at the

Kafr ash-Shēkh University, and who generously lent me his only copy of his thesis on the eulogies in honour of the Prophet.

A final word about "liminality" as a hermeneutical tool needs to be added. The present writer can also be regarded as a "liminal entity". As an observer of this vernacular Islamic tradition in contemporary Egypt, I am neither a total outsider to it, nor a full-fledged insider. Being an Egyptian Copt, Islam is not my faith; nevertheless my social and cultural upbringing in Egypt has been thoroughly conditioned by Islamic customs and the Islamic world view.

Endnotes

1. Victor Turner, The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), p.95.
2. Notably Gustavo Perez Firmat, Literature and Liminality: Festive Readings in the Hispanic Tradition (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986); Victor Turner, The Ritual Process (see n.1.) and his Process, Performance and Pilgrimage (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979); Arnold Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, tr. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960); Jacques Derrida, "Living on Border Lines," in Geoffrey Hartman, ed. Deconstruction and Criticism (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), pp.75-176; Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).
3. Van Gennep, Rites, p.11.
4. Ibid.
5. Firmat, Literature and Liminality, pp.xiv-xv.
6. Turner, Ritual, pp.99-100, Firmat, Literature and Liminality, pp. xiii-xiv.
7. Firmat, Literature and Liminality, p.xiv.
8. See Turner's works in note 2.
9. Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm, at-Ta'āduliyya ma'a al-Islām wa t-Ta'āduliyya (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1983).
10. Qur'ān: 23:100; 25:53; 55:20.
11. Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, s.v. "Barzakh", p. 59.
12. Ibid., p. 60.
13. Ibn Ishaq, Sīrat Rasūl Allāh, tr. A. Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1955).
14. Urbain Bouriant, Chansons populaires arabes en dialecte du Caire d'après les manuscrits d'un chanteur de rue (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1893).
15. Heinrich Shaefer, The Songs of an Egyptian Peasant, edited and translated into English by Frances Hart Breasted (Leipzig: J.C. Heinrichs, 1904).

16. Enno Littmann, Mohammed im Volksepos: Ein Neuarabische Heiligenlied (Copenhagen: Enjar Munksgaard, 1950).

17. Ernst Bannerth, "Lieder agyptischer meddāḥīn", Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 56 (1960), pp. 9-20.

18. Giovanni Canova, "Muḥammad, L'Ebreo et la Gazella, Canto di un Maddāḥ Egiziano", Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli, 41 (1981), pp.195-211.

19. Jan Knappert, "The Figure of the Prophet Muḥammad According to the Popular Literature of the Islamic Peoples," Swahili, no.32 (1961), pp. 24-31; Islamic Legends: Histories of the Heroes, Saints and Prophets of Islam, 2 vols. (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1985).

20. Pierre Cachia, Popular Narrative Ballads of Modern Egypt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

21. Tor Andrae, Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Soner, 1918).

22. Annemarie Schimmel, And Muhammad Is His Messenger (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

23. Earle Waugh, The Munshidin of Egypt: Their Worldview and Their Song (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 1989). It is unfortunate that Waugh's book which fills a felt gap in our knowledge of popular Islam in Egypt is marred by many transliteration and translation errors. Consider for example these errors:

"faqr" is poverty not poor (p. 13); Ḥassān ibn Thābit not Hasan (p. 26); Salāma Ḥigāzī not Salim al-Ghāzī (p. 32); nugūt not nugaṭ (p. 39); khuluq is the singular of akhlāq not khulq (p. 44); Rabī' al-Awwal not Rabī' al-Amal (p. 53); 'Id al-Ghiṭās not 'Id al-Gritās (p.54); etc.

24. Pierre Cachia, "In a Glass Darkly: the Faintness of Islamic Inspiration in Modern Arabic Literature," Die Welt des Islams, 23-24 (1984), pp. 26-44, reprinted in his Overview of Modern Arabic Literature (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), pp. 201-217.

25. Mustafa Badawi, "Islam in Modern Egyptian Literature," Modern Arabic Literature and the West (London: Ithaca Press, 1985), pp. 44-65.

26. I have recently come across a reference to an unpublished M.A. thesis which studies mainly the music and the performance of eulogies sung in honour of the Prophet. See Majda Aḥmad Qandīl, "al-Madā'iḥ an-Nabawiyya wa t-Turāth

ash-Sha'bi" (M.A. thesis, al-Ma'had al-'Alī li l-Mūsīqā al-'Arabiyya, Cairo, 1982). See Qandīl's note in al-Funūn ash-Sha'biyya, 25 (1988), pp. 40-44.

27. Zakī Mubārak, al-Madā'ih an-Nabawiyya fī l-Adab al-'Arabī (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1935).

28. Muḥammad Ḥammūda 'Abd ar-Raḥmān, "al-Madā'ih an-Nabawiyya fī l-'Aṣr al-Ḥāḍir wa Atharuhā fī l-Adab" (M.A. thesis, al-Azhar University, 1967).

29. Fārūq Khūrshīd and Aḥmad Kāmil Zakī, Muḥammad fī l-Adab al-Mu'āṣir (Cairo: al-Maktab al-Fannī li l-Nashr, 1959).

30. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī Ḥijāzī, Muḥammad wa Hā'ulā (Cairo: Mu'assasat Rūz al-Yūsuf, 1971).

31. al-Manṣūra: Dār al-Wafā' li ṭ-Ṭibā'a wa n-Nashr wa t-Tawzī', 1987.

32. Muḥammad 'Alī Sariyya (Abū Sariyya), Dīwān al-Munshidīn, vol. I (Ṭanṭā: Maktabat Tāj, n.d.).

-----, Dīwān al-Munshidīn, vol. II (Cairo: Maṭba'at Nifertiti, n.d.).

-----, Dīwān al-Munshidīn, vol. III (Cairo: Maṭba'at Nifertiti, n.d.).

-----, Dīwān al-Munshidīn, vol. IV (al-Manṣūra: Maktabat ash-Shāmī, n.d.).

33. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-'Irasī, Dīwān al-'Irasī (Ṭanṭā: Maktabat Tāj, n.d.).

34. On 'Ajāj see Pierre Cachia's "The Career of Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm 'Ajāj," in Daniel Massa, ed. Across Cultures: Festschrift in Honour of Professor A.J. Aquilina (Malta: Malta University Press, 1977), pp.110-117.

35. Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm 'Ajāj, Murawwiq al-Mazāj (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a as-Sa'diyya, n.d.).

36. Ibid., "Mawlid in-Nabī" pp. 2-18.

37. The town of Ṭanṭā is an important centre for the marketing of the tapes of the maddāḥīn's songs especially the two recording companies: al-Gharbiyya and al-Aḥmadiyya. In 1989, the price of the cassette-tape on the market ranged from LE2.50 to LE4.00 (US\$1.00 to \$1.60).

38. Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Jazūlī, Dalā'il al-Khayrāt (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya l-'Arabiyya, n.d.).

39. ʿAbd ar-Raʿūf al-Munāwī, Mawlid an-Nabī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya l-ʿArabiyya, n.d.).

40. as-Sayyid Jaʿfar al-Barzanjī, Mawlid an-Nabī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, n.d.).

41. Aḥmad Ḥāmid ʿAbd al-Karīm ash-Sharīf, compiler. al-Qāmūs al-Jadīd fī l-Qaṣā'id wa l-Anāshīd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1972).

42. Cachia, Popular Narrative Ballads, p. 87.

43 (Paris: Livres Leroux, 1893), pp.79-93.

44. Enno Littmann, Mohammed im Volksepos. See note 22 above.

45. Shēkh ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad (nicknamed al-ʿArabī), al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja fī Zawāj an-Nabī Ṣallā llāh ʿAlayh wa Ṣallam bi s-Sayyida Khadīja. (Ṭanṭā: Maktabat Tāj, n.d.).

46. On the collusion between text and body and "soma-poetics", see the special issue of Alcheringa, a semiannual journal which is concerned with "ethnopoetics" and provides English translations of folk poetry from all over the world. See especially in that issue, Michel Benamou, "Postface: In Praise of Marginality", Alcheringa, vol. II, no. 2 (1976), pp. 133-141.

47. See Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya, Iqtidā' aṣ-Ṣirāt al-Mustaḳīm Mukhālafat Aṣḥāb al-Jahīm 2nd. edition, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiḳī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat as-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1369 H. / 1950). See an adequate but not a complete English translation by Muhammad Umar Memon, Ibn Taimiya's Struggle Against Popular Religion (The Hague: Mouton, 1976).

48. Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, tr. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONTEXT

The overwhelming majority of Arab scholars and Orientalists tend to define Arabic literature as encompassing only the literary works written in standard Arabic, a language which has maintained by and large the syntax of the language of the Qurʾān, if not some of its vocabulary. Compositions expressed in the colloquial regional dialects - such as the popular eulogies and narrative ballads of the Egyptian maddāhīn, the subject of the present study - have remained outside the pale of the formal, elite literature. Such dialectal popular literature - whether oral or, in the words of Pierre Cachia, pen-and-paper compositions - has suffered much neglect, if not outright contempt. "Anything expressed in the colloquial," says Pierre Cachia, "when not openly scorned, was looked upon as mere entertainment; more often than not the text went unrecorded, the artistry unrecognized, the author unremembered". <1>

However negative the official attitude may have been towards the dialectal popular literature, the creativity of the ageless masses never ceased to express itself in the form of azjāl <2> folk songs, mawāwīl <3> (folk ballads), folk tales, proverbs, riddles, etc. That is why we often find that along with the classical works of Medieval Islam,

the folk managed to produce a number of - mostly - dialectal works that are still extant, such as Alf Layla wa Layla, Sīrat ʿAntar, Sīrat Banī Hilāl, Sīrat aḏ-Ḍāhir Baybars as well as pen-and-paper compositions such as the azjāl of Ibn Quzmān (d. 1160) in Spain, of al-Ghubārī (14th. c.) and of Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk (d. 1211) in Egypt, and many others. Such parallel development of both the formal, elite literature and its dialectal popular counterpart is underlined by a contemporary Egyptian writer who argues that the classical works of Medieval Muslim authors like al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442), Ibn Iyyās (d. 1542), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) and others are examples of "establishment" literature and that to glean an authentic picture of Medieval Muslims, one ought to refer to works that were produced by the folk. <4>

Dialectal literature is held in contempt by the educated elite in the Arab world mainly because of its colloquial language. Colloquial Arabic is considered too low and too commonplace - being the language of the illiterate masses - to express the lofty and the intricate, or too ungrammatical and uncoded, thus too unruly, to express with accuracy any organized thought or complex feelings. One need only look at the plethora of books which cry out against the ungrammatical usages of Arabic - what became known as lahn - and the menacing encroachment of the colloquial on the classical tongue (al-fuṣḥā, lit. the most eloquent tongue). Most of these books bear the significant title Lahn al-ʿAmma <5> (the ungrammatical usages of the common folk).

This laḥn seems to have had a long history, going back all the way to the time of the Prophet Muḥammad himself, who is said to have upbraided a man for committing laḥn in his presence by saying to those around him: "arshidū akhākum fa-qad ḍalla" (guide your brother for he has gone astray) - an interesting anecdote which shows - if authentic - an association between deviation from the grammatical rules of the language and deviation from the rules of the religious precept. We are also told that ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the second khalīfa (successor) of the Prophet Muḥammad wrote once to Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī: "Now give your secretary a good lash and postpone paying his salary for a whole year," because the secretary had written to Caliph ʿUmar: "To ʿUmar: From Abū Mūsā," when he should have said: "from Abī Mūsā". <6>

The colloquial is also regarded as a social disease by writers who otherwise purport to be the spokesmen of the helpless and poor masses; for it is not unusual to find that prominent writers like Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, the doyen of Arabic literature, as he is so often called, or Najīb Maḥfūẓ, the winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize for literature who has been hailed for his insightful depiction of the poor in Egypt's alleyways, regard the Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (CEA) as a sign of ignorance if not a social disease. Says Maḥfūẓ, "The colloquial is one of the many diseases from which the people suffer and of which they inevitably will rid themselves when they move on the path of progress. I regard the colloquial as one of the maladies of our society, much

like illiteracy, poverty and disease". <7> And Aḥmad Taymūr, the great compiler of Egyptian popular expressions and proverbs, rather condescendingly speaks not of "our" but of "their" language and "their" idioms in a manner that reminds one of Professor Higgins' attitude towards the "vulgar" expressions of London's poor folk in Shaw's Pygmalion. Taymūr states that his purpose is to "purify" the colloquial, presupposed by him to be a mere linguistic degeneration of Classical Arabic. <8>

What are the reasons behind these negative attitudes towards the dialectal literature? There are in fact several reasons: some are religious, some are political and some are even psychological. First, it is believed that to use the colloquial as a literary medium is to deviate from the classical language in which the Qurʾān was revealed. This use, it is feared, may in time render the Qurʾān unintelligible, causing it to fall into disuse. That is why it is essential in literary composition and in the bureaucracy to use Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is similar to Classical Arabic, so that the Qurʾān and the rest of the religious lore may maintain its intelligibility. In fact, Ibn Khaldūn tells us in his Muqaddima that the desire to maintain the intelligibility of the Qurʾān was the motive behind the painstaking efforts of the Arab/Muslim grammarians to standardize Classical Arabic. <9>

Opponents of the use of the colloquial also point out that the colloquial is divided into many regional dialects and even local patois, and claim that by using it the

linguistic and cultural unity in the Arab and Islamic world, based on MSA, would be undermined. Calling for the use of the colloquial in any official or literary capacity is therefore considered as shu'ūbiyya, <10> or even as a cold-blooded act of ilhād lughawī (linguistic unbelief). <11> Writers like Salāma Mūsā, Aḥmad Luṭfī as-Sayyid, Luwīs 'Awaḍ and others beyond Egypt's borders like the Lebanese Anīs Frayḥa and Sa'īd 'Aql have been excoriated because in one way or another they advocated the use of the colloquial as a literary medium. <12> Salāma Mūsā was called "the enemy of Arabism and Islam" by the late 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ar-Rāfi'ī <13> and even as recently as 1979 he was dubbed "the Christian Coptic Crusader" whose heart sizzled with hatred of Islam and the Qur'ān. <14> In a recent book by the Egyptian literary critic Rajā' an-Naqqāsh with the telling title, al-In'izāliyyūn Fī Miṣr (The Isolationists in Egypt), Luwīs 'Awaḍ is criticized as shu'ūbī and in'izālī, i.e., advocating anti-Arab policies and calling for regionalism and isolationism. <15> In 1980, 'Awaḍ published a philological study on the Arabic language in which he argues, with copious data to support his contention, that Arabic is but a branch of the Indo-European family of languages. <16> The book stirred up much controversy and al-Azhar's protests against its publication led to its being banned in Egypt. <17> For its opponents, 'Awaḍ's book was conceived as an attempt by a controversial Copt to undermine the uniqueness of the Arabic language and therefore the uniqueness of the Qur'ān as the divine speech of God

Himself. As for the Lebanese Anīs Frayḥa's advocacy of the colloquial, it has long been opposed and even dismissed as being prompted by sheer personal grudge against Arabs, Arabhood, the Qurʾān and Islam. <18>

The opponents of the use of the colloquial are even more piqued when they consider that many of the early advocates of the colloquial were Orientalists such as the German W. Spitta (1818-1883) and K. Vollers (1857-1909), the Englishman W. Willcocks (1852-1937) and others. These men wrote books on the CEA and its grammar and advocated the use of the CEA, not only in literary compositions, or in translating from foreign languages such as for translating Shakespeare or the Bible, which in fact Willcocks actually did <19> but also in scientific writings.<20> Not surprisingly, such advocacy of the colloquial coming from Orientalists associated with colonial institutions was attacked as yet another Western attempt to undermine Islam by rendering the language of the Qurʾān unintelligible and by promoting regionalism and divisions among Arabs and Muslims.

Thus far we have described attitudes ⁱcritical of dialectal literature because of its use of the colloquial and the non-classical poetic forms such as the zajal and the mawwāl and the rest of what are termed "the seven arts" such as muwashshah, qūmā, dūbayt, kān-wa-kān, bullayq and others, (the list may vary from one source to another). <22> But it should be noted that the themes of the dialectal literature are also roundly condemned as being ignorant tales of no

moral or artistic value. The folk epics such as the Sīrat Banī Hilāl, Sīrat ʿAntar, Sīrat al-Amīra Dhāt al-Himma, and folk tales like the famous Alf Layla wa Layla (The Arabian Nights) have over the centuries been denigrated by serious-minded litterateurs.<23> As for the maddāhīn and their songs, they have been criticized for propagating false stories about the Prophet in the same manner their counterparts the guṣṣās of the classical and medieval times in the Islamic world were denounced.<24> Or at times they are unfavourably compared to the classical eulogists of the past who produced "high-quality" panegyrics in honour of the Prophet Muḥammad. This is how they are described in an Egyptian study on the figure of the Prophet Muḥammad in modern Arabic literature:

These poets/eulogists have grown in number and have received encouragement from the people. Today we see their traces in the mawlid (the anniversary of the Prophet's birthday), in the religious celebrations and during the mystical dhikr ceremonies (the repeated mention of the names of God accompanied by music and dancing by the sūfīs) beating the tambourines and chanting the eulogies (in honour of the Prophet) using repeatedly pus-like words. They are the traces of the artistic barrenness in the life of our poetry. These are not like al-Būṣīrī (Sharaf ad-Dīn al-Būṣīrī, d. 1294 or 1298) the author of the famous al-Burda, rather they are lacking in vigour, weak in the power of imagination, and limited in the scope of their artistry.<25>

It is against such socio-cultural polemics that the repertoire of the Egyptian maddāhīn ought to be placed. For its colloquial language and its shaʿbī (folk) contents the

maddāḥīn's art is banished to the margins by the canonists and is made to live as a feared liminal entity.

The Popular Madīḥ Poetry:

Poetry in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad composed in literary Arabic has a very long history, extending from the time of the Prophet himself to the present day. Among the many madā'ih nabawiyya (eulogies in honour of the Prophet) one may mention those of Ḥassān ibn Thābit (d. ca. 659), who was the Prophet's poet, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr (d. 632?), al-Kumayt ibn Zayd (d. 743), the Egyptian poet al-Buṣīrī (d. 1294 or 1298), famous for his eulogy "al-Burda", and his many imitators through the ages. <26> In modern times one can point to the madā'ih of the Egyptian poets al-Bārūdī (d. 1904), Aḥmad Shawqī (d.1932), famous for his "Fī Nahj al-Burda" in which he imitates al-Buṣīrī's "al-Burda", and for his "Fī Dhikrā l-Mawlid" which, as we will see later, has been incorporated into the repertoire of the maddāḥīn, Aḥmad Muḥarram, who composed an "Iliad" entitled "Majd al-Islām", and many others up to Dr. Aḥmad Haykal, the former Egyptian Minister of Culture, who delivered a qaṣīda in honour of the Prophet during the 1989 celebrations of the Prophet's birthday at al-Azhar University. <27>

Unlike these fushā eulogies, the madīḥ in the ʿāmmiyya is hardly documented and one can only give a sketchy account of its development.

Religious compositions in the colloquial are not a new phenomenon. It is said that the first to have composed mystical sūfī poetry in the non-classical form of muwashshaḥ, - strophic lyric in stanzas with different rhymes and at times a refrain which contains a phrase in the colloquial or in a foreign language - was the sūfī master Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240). <28> But it was his contemporary the great sūfī poet Abū l-Ḥasan ash-Shushtarī (d. 1268-9), the Andalusian-born mystic and the disciple of the controversial Ibn Sabʿīn, who was apparently the first to write in the non-classical vernacular verse of zajal. <29> Ash-Shushtarī lived in Egypt for some years and died near the city of Dumyāṭ (Damietta). In fact some of his zajal pieces are still recited by the contemporary maddāḥīn of Egypt, especially the sūfīs of the Shādhiliyya order in Dumyāṭ. <30> The following is a muwashshaḥ by ash-Shushtarī which is sung by Shēkh Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī of Cairo:

salabat laylā minya l-ʿaqla
 qultu yā laylā irḥamī l-qatlā'
 ḥubbuhā maknūn
 fī l-ḥashā makhzūn
 ayyuhā l-maftūn
 him bihā dhullā
 innanī hā'im
 wa lahā khādim
 ayyuhā l-lā'im
 khallinī mahlā
 lazamtū l-a'tāb
 wa ṭaraqtū l-bāb
 qultu lī l-bawwāb
 hal tarā waṣlā
 qāl lī yā ṣāḥ
 mahruhā l-arwāḥ

kam muḥibbin rāḥ
yaḥshaq l-qatlā
ayyuhā l-ḥāshiq
in kunt ṣādiq
li l-warā fāriq
taqhtanim waṣlā.^[31]

Laylā has stealthily robbed me of my reason
I say: "O Laylā, have mercy on (your) murdered victims
Love for her is hidden,
In one's interior (lit. intestines)
it is stored
O you who have been infatuated by her
Humiliate yourself in her love
I am captivated by her
To her I have become a servant
O reproacher
Let me off for a while
I remained at her threshold
And I knocked on her door
I asked the door-keeper
"Will I be united with her?"
He said: "Friend, perishing will
be the price (lit. her dowry)
O many were the lovers
Who yearned to die (for her sake) (?)
O lover
If you are truthful
Depart from this world
For you will, then, win union (with her).

Another master of zajal who composed religious narrative pieces about the Prophet is the fourteenth-century Egyptian zajjāl Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ghubārī <32>, who is said to have composed a long zajal about the Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem and his ascension to the heavens, which became part of the repertoire of the Egyptian maddāhīn and was current at least till the close of the last century when the French Urbain Bouriant collected and published a

version of it in 1893, along with other songs, from an itinerant singer (see Introduction). The following is a sample of his praise of the Prophet, taken from a longer zajal cited by al-Ibshīhī in his al-Mustaṭraf fī Kull Fann Mustaṭraf:

ashraf il-khalḥ-i bayyin il-islām
 wi l-hudā w iḍ-ḡalāl
 wi sh-sharāyiḥ wi l-ḥaḥ wi l-bāṭil
 wi l-ḥarām wi l-ḥalāl
 nabī min bēn aṣabḥu taḥḥiḥ
 nabaḥ il-mā iz-zalāl
 wi law inn-i n-nabāt gamīḥu iḥlām
 wi l-madād il-biḥār
 wi l-khalāy titktib madīḥu
 tāh kull-i kātib wi ḥār.

The most honourable among the creation has
 demonstrated the difference between Islam,
 Guidance and delusion
 Divine laws, truth and falsehood
 That which is licit and that which is not
 The Prophet from his fingers
 The pure water truthfully gushed
 Were all the plants to become plumes
 And the water of the seas to turn into ink
 And were the creation to compose eulogies
 in his honour
 Every scribe will be perplexed and at a loss.<33>

In the early part of the eighteenth century, the sūfī Ḥabd al-Ghanī an-Nābulusī (d. 1731) composed mystical verse in the non-classical forms of muwashshah, zajal and mawwāl. Selections from his colloquial compositions are still recited by some maddāḥin, especially his hymn which is

known as "Nashīd as-Sāqī" (the hymn of the cup-bearer):

sāqī yā sāqī
isqinī min khamrihi l-bāqī
w ikhshif lī ʿan qayd iṭlāqī
āh yā sāqī āh yā sāqī.

astāruhu rāḥat
ʿan ʿaynī wa z-zahr fāḥat
wa s-sukra bi l-asrār bāḥat
āh yā sāqī āh yā sāqī

iftaḥ lī bāb al-ḥān
wa smiʿnī min ṭīb l-alḥān
w irshifnī min kāsi l-malʿān
āh yā sāqī āh yā sāqī

lā yaʿrifu amrī
illā man yashrab khamrī
aḥshāʾuhu taṣlī fī ḥijrī
āh yā sāqī āh yā sāqī.

O cup-bearer, O cup-bearer
Give me some of his eternal wine to drink
And show me the fetters of my liberation
O cup-bearer, O cup-bearer.

His veils have been removed
Off my sight; the flower emits
(its fragrance)
And drunkenness has divulged
the secrets
O cup-bearer, O cup-bearer.

Open the door of the wine-shop for me
Let me listen to some of the sweet tunes
Sip me from my overflowing cup
O cup-bearer, O cup-bearer.

None will know me
Except the one who quaffs my wine
For his intestines will burn inside me
O cup-bearer, O cup-bearer.<34>

The nineteenth-century poet and native of Upper Egypt Ibn ʿArūs, whose life is shrouded in a mist of legend was known to have composed much religious verse in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic. Legend has it that he was a common criminal and a highwayman. One day he intercepted a bridal procession and because of his criminal reputation, people who were marching in the procession fled in panic, leaving behind the bride to his mercy. The beautiful young bride, who did not know who he was, showed no fear. When her camel stopped to eat some green grass, the bride urged him to move on by quoting verse. Moved by her innocence and stricken by a sudden fear of God, so the story goes, Ibn ʿArūs let the bride go and vowed to repent and start a new life. It is said that after that incident, he devoted his energies to composing religious poetry in the non-classical poetic form of wāw. <35> Because of this incident with the bride - the word for bride in Arabic is ʿarūs - he was henceforth to be nicknamed Ibn ʿArūs. <36> The following are examples of his religious zajal:

ḥarāmī w ʿāṣī w kaddāb
 ʿāgiz hazīl il-maṭāyā
 wi tubt-i w rigiṭ-i l il-bāb
 hayyā gazīl il-ʿaṭāyā
 ʿuddāmnā ʿabr-i w ḥisāb
 wiḥda wi ʿillit rifāʿa
 wi ʿabr-i mā lūshī bāb
 wa lā fihshī li n-nūr ṭāʿa
 il-ʿāʿil illī yiḥāsib
 nafsu wi yirgaʿ li ḥālu
 fī l-ḥashr-i tilʿāh kāsib
 wi l-fōz wi n-nāṣr-i gālu

 dunyāk hāzī gharūra
 kīf lā'ibāt il-khayāl
 yā mā fanit min 'uṣūra
 wi yā mā haddit rigāl
 dunyā tagārīb tagārīb
 tāhīt fīhā l-buṣāra
 il-mi'za tigrī warā d-dīb
 wi s-sab' taklu l-ḥumāra.

wi nikhtim il-'ūl 'aṣḍīn
 madḥ in-nabī sayyid tuhāma
 man sharraf il-kōn bi d-dīn
 wi l-mu'giza wi l-karāma.<37>

A thief, a sinner (lit. rebel), and a liar
 (I was)
 Powerless, and my mount emaciated
 I have repented and returned to the door
 Hurry, O giver of bounty (God)
 Before us are the grave and the reckoning,
 Loneliness and lack of companions
 A grave with no door
 No opening for light
 The sensible one is he who takes himself
 To task and returns to his senses
 On the Day of Gathering (the Last Day), you
 Find him a winner; victory and reward are his.

Your life is as illusive
 As the shadow puppets
 Many were the palaces it wrecked
 And many were the men it crushed.
 It is a life of vicissitude
 The sighted have been lost in it
 The goat chases a wolf
 And the lion is devoured by a she-donkey.

 We end our saying with the desire
 To eulogize the Prophet who is the lord
 of (the region of) Tihāma
 Who has honoured the universe with (his) religion
 (His) miracles and his wonder-making.

Besides maddāhīn like Ibn ʿArūs nineteenth-century Egypt saw many other varieties of popular singers, some of which no longer exist in our day. Among the main groups of this type, one may cite: 1. the Munshidīn; 2. the Darāwīsh and the Mutaṣawwifīn; 3. the Udabātiyya; 4. the Qaṣṣāṣīn; 5. the Ṣuhbagiyya. In what follows we will give a short account of these popular singers and the place of the maddāhīn among them. Unless stated otherwise, almost all the information in this section is derived from the 1984 study of the subject by the Egyptian scholar Nāhid Aḥmad Ḥafīẓ.<38>

The Munshidīn:

The Munshidīn (sing. munshid) <39> sing qaṣā'id (classical odes) and azjāl (non-classical strophic verse in the vernacular), especially during the mūlid celebrations of the various awliyā and during the zīkr ceremonies of the ṣūfīs. Some of the themes of their songs include:

1. Eulogies (madā'iḥ) in honour of the Prophet and his household (āla l-bēt).
2. Religious verse about the vicissitudes of life, the vanity of human existence and the necessity of accepting the decrees of fate. From among the ranks of munshidīn came famous singers who made a successful entry into the world of the national mass media, singers such as Shēkh ʿAlī l-Aṣabjī, Shēkh Yūsuf al-Minyalāwī, the

well-known ʿAbduh al-Ḥāmūlī and Shēkh Salāma Ḥijāzī in the last century. As for the present century mention may be made here of Muḥammad Afandī Nadīm, Shēkh Aḥmad al-Basātīnī, Shēkh ʿAbd Allāh al-Qūṣī, Sayyid Darwīsh (the renowned singer who died so tragically young), Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ash-Shiḥāʿī, Shēkh Zakariyya Aḥmad, Shēkh Abū l-ʿIlā Muḥammad and the famous singer Umm Kulthūm who was trained by Shēkh Abū l-ʿIlā in the art of inshād (religious singing) before she made her mark as the most famous female singer in Egypt, if not in the whole Arab world. Interestingly, as we will illustrate later on in this study, Umm Kulthūm's music and the words of her songs have had a strong influence on present-day Egyptian maddāhīn.

The Darāwīsh And The Mutaṣawwifīn:

Poor and mostly illiterate mystics, their songs revolved around the themes of the love of God and love for the Prophet. They were also called ahl il-waḡd (ahl al-wajd) (people of spiritual ecstasy) and for the most part were found in the zīkr ceremonies especially in the vicinity of the ṣārī (the banner-pole seen on the cite of the mūlid celebrations) around which they would gather to sing. During religious celebrations, they would continuously sing of mystical love until, we are told, they would lose consciousness; this state of unconsciousness they called fanā, il-ghinā, (the mystical annihilation of the self

induced by religious chanting), and the highest degree of this state of annihilation is the fanā, fī llāh (annihilation of the self in God). <40>

The various forms of their mystical songs ranged from the classical gaṣīda (pl. gaṣā'id, ode), to the post-classical tawshīḥa (pl. tawāshīḥ, a strophic verse form in Classical Arabic with an intricate rhyme scheme and with a final couplet, the kharja, often in the colloquial or a foreign phrase), to the non-classical mawwāl (ballad). Images of love, longing, wine, and drunkenness abound in their songs. But it should be noted that the love and wine imagery should not be taken merely as lyrics denoting profane love but rather as mystical songs of spiritual longing for God, the Divine Beloved, who is at times made to appear under the familiar names of Hind or Laylā or Suḍā - names of beautiful women who are often found in the poetry of profane love in Arabic and Islamic literature. <41> Below are some examples of their songs from the nineteenth century, some of which have survived until our own time: <42>

1.
 'albī kullu fī sh-shar'
 w anā fī l-gharb-i gharīb
 min nagd-i yilūḥ il-bar'
 nib,ā fī ḥāl 'agīb
 tit,aggib minnī l-khalāyi,
 lammā niḥḍar wi nghīb.<43>

All of my heart is in the east
 While I am in the west, a stranger

bukrah lu,ā yōm kull in-nās tikhāf minnu
wi yinfitiḥ bāb ish-shafā, a wi yfūt in-nabī minnu
min taḥt-i šābi, in-nabī naba, iz-zalāl minnu
rawā l-⟨itāsh wi qhēsh il-mu⟩minīn minnu. <44>

Tomorrow will be a gathering which all people
will dread
The gate of intercession shall fling open and
the Chosen Prophet shall pass through it.
From the Prophet's fingers, the pure water
gushed forth
He quenched the thirst of the multitude and the
crowds of the faithful from it.

These were a group of poor vagrants who used their humorous songs in order to beg. They often satirized social habits and figures like the mother-in-law, the troubles of the polygamous husband, the cuckolded husband, etc. The principal technique of their satirical sung verse is what is known as "mock-heroic style"; that is, they would employ serious and terse classical language to describe in an exaggerated manner a mundane issue. The discrepancy between the solemn diction and the mundane issue, or between the classical Arabic and the colloquial would often cause their audience to laugh. <45>

The Qaṣṣāṣīn:

These singers entertained people with their sung tales, especially at coffee-houses and often during the nights of different festivals. They were divided into three groups:

a) The Shuḥarā who formed the majority. They recited from memory the episodes of the popular epic of Banī Hilāl. Those among them who specialized in reciting about Abū Zēd al-Hilālī were called the Zaydiyya, those were known for their recitations about az-Zanātī Khalīfa were referred to as the Zanātiyya.

b) The Muḥaddithīn, who specialized only in reciting the popular epic of Sīrat az-Zāhir Baybars, and for this reason they were traditionally called the Ḥāhiriyya. They recited their epic partly by reading from a printed version and partly by narrating ex tempore.

c) The ḤAnātra, who specialized in reciting the heroic deeds of the pre-Islamic figure of ḤAntar (ḤAntara ibn Shaddād). They used a printed account of the epic as their source and dispensed with the accompaniment of the rabāb (spike-fiddle) as was the case with the Zaydiyya or the Zanātiyya. They may also have related stories from the life of Sēf Zū l-Yazan (Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan), another pre-Islamic hero, or tales from Alf Layla wa Layla (the Arabian Nights).

The Şuhbagiyya:

They were particularly famous during the period from 1860-1890, and would sing tawāshīh at coffee-houses around the popular quarter of Ḥayy al-Migharbilīn in Cairo. <47> Most famous among them were Saʿd Dibl and Maḥmūd al-Ḥuṣarī.

The Maddāhīn:

Their name is derived from their art of madīh (praise, eulogy) in honour of the Prophet or of awliyā, (sing. walī, saints, lit. friends [of God]). It should be noted that their songs are mostly narrative ballads about the life of the Prophet and his miracles, as well as about the lives of the other Prophets (qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā) <48> and the sacred biographies of several "saints". Among the themes of the narrative ballads which they are known to have been singing at least since the last century are:

1. The Prophet's miracles, notably those known as the Qamīṣ an-Nabī (the Prophet's Shirt), an-Nabī wa l-Ghazāla (the Prophet and the Gazelle), Nuṭq al-Jamal (the Utterance of the Camel), all of which are still sung at the present time and which we will discuss in the next chapter.

2. Qiṣṣat Ayyūb Lammā Ibtalā (The Story of Ayyūb (Job) When He Was Afflicted): it has long been a favourite of the singers and their audience, and the Egyptian state radio has produced a version of it.

3. Qiṣṣat Ibrāhīm wa Sāra (The Story of Abraham and Sarah), woven around their story in the Bible and the Qurʾān, with embellishments.

4. The Stories of the awliyā (saints), and the aqṭāb (the axes, the mystical ṣūfī masters believed to be the highest members of the mystical hierarchy), most notably those of as-Sayyid al-Badawī, Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī, and others.

The maddāh begins his song with the testimony of faith which states that there is no deity save Allāh, then calls down, or elicits from his audience the calling down of, blessings on the Prophet Muḥammad, often with an enumeration of his lofty qualities and miracles. He may then sing a ballad that tells an episode in the life of the Prophet or he may sing a song which simply praises the Prophet and his house or any of the several saints. At times the song can be a profound meditation on the theme of mystical union with the divine in which the concepts and images of the ṣūfīs crop up, and these songs are more often than not sung during the zikr ceremony of the various orders.

The maddāh may have with him a band of musicians (at

times called al-biṭāna or the now obsolete takht) who double as a chorus. It may include a player on the ūd (lute), the violin, or the nāy (a bamboo flute without a mouthpiece), an accordionist, and a drummer. He may also sing without a band or instruments like Shēkh Ismāʿīl al-ʿĀmirī (Gharbiyya), Fanjarī ʿUrābī Aḥmad (Sohāj), and the band of the "three brothers from Asyūṭ", to name a few. At times local instruments are played, instruments which are native to particular communities such as the sallāmiyya (a small bamboo-made flute, akin to the nāy but with a high-pitch tone), or the simsimiyya (a stringed instrument found only in the Suez Canal region, especially in the city of Suez). Some ingenious ways are devised to produce a tune, such as in the case of the maddāḥ Shēkh Faṭḥī Shihāta ʿAṭiyya from Kafr Bhēda (Daqahliyya) who strikes his sibḥa (prayer beads, rosary) against a metal cane in order to produce a rhythmic beat to which he sings his ballads.<49>

The Contemporary Maddāḥīn:

The following rough skeletal account of the development of vernacular madīḥ in Egypt from the 1940s onward is based on information provided by Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-ʿIrasī of Samannūd (Gharbiyya).

According to Shēkh al-ʿIrasī, in the 1940s there were several maddāḥīn in Egypt who enjoyed a measure of fame: Shēkh ʿAlī Maḥmūd, Shēkh Ibrāhīm al-Farrān, Shēkh Ṭāḥā

al-Fashnī, Shēkh an-Naqshabandī, Shēkh Naṣr ad-Dīn Ṭubār, Shēkh Muḥammad al-Fayyūmī, Shēkh Ismāʿīl Rashwān and others. Zakī Mubārak, in his book al-Madāʾih an-Nabawiyya mentions more names such as Shēkh Ismāʿīl Sukkar and Shēkh Ḥasan Jābir whom he describes as famous among the common people, adding that Shēkh ʿAlī Maḥmūd and the maddāḥa (female maddāḥ) Shēkha Munīra ʿAbduh were often invited to sing qaṣāʾid (odes) in honour of the Prophet on the state-owned radio. <50> Many of these maddāḥīn also had commercial records on the market, especially Shēkh an-Naqshabandī, and Shēkh Ṭāhā l-Farrān who sang a section of al-Munāwī's Mawlid. <51>

According to Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī it was Shēkh Ismāʿīl Rashwān (d.1984 or 1985) of Shubrā Qāṣ near as-Sanṭa (Gharbiyya) who started composing madīḥ in the Egyptian ʿāmmiyya. This may be the case in Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī's experience but the little information we have on vernacular madīḥ shows that poets as far back as the thirteenth-century were producing this kind of material, such as the Andalusian-born ash-Shushtarī who composed many azjāl on mystical themes, some of which, as we have already mentioned, still form a part of the repertoire of the maddāḥīn. <52> Likewise, the fourteenth-century Egyptian zajjāl ʿAbd Allāh al-Ghubārī composed in the ʿāmmiyya and one of his narrative pieces may have survived at least till the close of the last century when it was recorded from the mouth of an itinerant Egyptian "street singer" (chanteur de rue) by the French scholar Urbain Bouriant.<53> Other

collections, notably by those made by Edward Lane, Enno Littmann, Heinrich Shaefer and others, also clearly show that madiḥ in the vernacular was widely known at least as far back as the last century. <54>

Shēkh Rashwān used to frequent small villages in the Gharbiyya and Daqahliyya provinces. He went several times to Nawasa al-Ghēt (Daqahliyya) where he met Muḥammad Ḥalī Sariyya (Abū Sariyya) on whom he left a strong impression. Abū Sariyya followed in the footsteps of Shēkh Rashwān and started to compose also in the ḥammiyya but did not sing. His many collections of vernacular madiḥ, notably his Dīwān al-Munshidīn, form part of the current repertoire of Egyptian maddāḥīn as will be illustrated below.

The following is a brief account of a select number of maddāḥīn who represent several regions of Egypt - in particular the notably small villages and provincial towns of Lower Egypt. The maddāḥīn are classified according to their place of birth or residence and unless otherwise stated all information on them is derived from the archives of Markaz al-Funūn ash-Shaʿbiyya (Centre for Folk Arts) in Cairo.

1. Dumyāt:

Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-Jōharī from Dumyāt (Damietta) was fifty-nine years old in 1961. He had a band of maddāḥīn which included his sister Faṭma. He followed in his father's footsteps and became a maddāḥ at the age of fifteen; that is to say, by 1961 he had been in the service

of madīh for forty-four years. Besides singing, he played the bandīr (tambourine).

2. Marṣūra (Daqahliyya):

as-Sayyid al-Bayyūmī Mabruk was forty years old in 1965. He worked as a baker. He sang solo with simple rhythmic beats. He called his singing "istiḥbāb fī ḥadrit in-nabī" (out of love for the dignified Prophet) adding that he sometimes extemporized and that he never derived his material from written sources.

Saʿd Muḥammad Shabāna was twenty-eight years old in 1963. He was taught madīh by his brother when he was only nine years old. He performed solo, to the accompaniment of a drum, a version of the "Qamīṣ an-Nabī" (the Prophet's Shirt).

3. Būr Saʿīd (Port Said):

Anwar ʿIzz ad-Dīn Ṣaqr was fifty-five in 1977. He was married to two women and had a total of twelve children by both. When he had finished his primary education, he studied for a short while at al-Azhar. He memorized the Qurʾān and learned the singing of the madīh at the same time. But madīh is not his only occupation for he also works as a clerk in the Department of Fisheries. He has a band which includes a violinist, an ūd player, a drummer, and a ri (tambourine with jingles) player. His band performs in weddings, lēlas especially for returning huggāq (pilgrims), birthday parties and subū celebrations (celebrating the seventh day after

the birth of a baby). For a short while he performed at zār ceremonies (a ritual of sacrifices, incantations, drumming and dancing performed for the purpose of appeasing any one of a number of spirits by which a person may be believed to be possessed).

4. Kafr Bhēda (Gharbiyya):

Shēkh Faṭḥī Shīḥāta Ḥaṭṭiyya told his interviewer in 1959 that he memorized material from Muḥammad Ḥalī Sariyyā's Dīwān al-Munshidīn. At the end of his ballad on the Prophet's marriage to Ḥaṭṭiyya, daughter of Abū Bakr, he used to sing a rhymed advertisement about himself which runs this way:

min baḥd madḥ in-nabī
ismaḥ li ḥinwānī yā muḥtaram
nargū s-samaḥ ya man turīdu taḥarrufan
ismī anā faṭḥī shīḥāta ḥaṭṭiyyati
ammā l-balad kafr bhēda baldatī
wa markazī mīt ghamr-i daḥahliyyati
wi baḥdahā, awwil balad, tānī balad
wi baḥdahā tinzil ḥala kubrī l-balad
wi baḥdahā tisḥal ḥaliyyā ydillūk ahl il-balad. <5:a>

After praising the Prophet (Muḥammad)
Listen to my address, O honoured one
Your attention is requested, you who would
be acquainted (with us)
My name is Faṭḥī Shīḥāta Ḥaṭṭiyya
As for my village, it is Kafr Bhēda
Near Mīt Ghamr, in (the province of) Daqahliyya
After passing by the first village and the second
Get off at the bridge of the village
And ask the people of the village about me
and they will guide you to me.

5. Sōhāj:

Fanjarī Ḳurābī Aḥmad was sixty-five years old in 1981. He sings with no musical instruments and is totally illiterate. His songs are not melodious but rich in mystical symbols, some of which are difficult to comprehend.

6. Asyūt:

Muṣṭafā Aḥmad Ismāʿīl and his two brothers Ḥasan and Ḥusēn form a band of madīḥ singers. They sing traditional material such as taṭīra (calling down "perfumed" blessings on the Prophet) derived from al-Munāwī's Mawlid, and tawāshīḥ (stanzas in Classical or Modern Standard Arabic sung in praise of the Prophet).

7. Banī Slīmān (Sharqīyya):

ʿAlī Miḳawwaḍ was 28 years old in 1975. He is a fisherman and sings madīḥ in honour of the Prophet as well as ḥunūn songs during the ḥiḡḡ (hajj) celebrations. Accompanied only with simple drum beats, he sings solo.<55>

There are some singers who are well grounded in the tradition and make a successful livelihood out of madīḥ singing. The career of Shēkh al-ʿIrasī is very instructive. He is a maddāḥ, and yet at the same time is an imām (leader of prayer, director of a mosque), a khaṭīb (one who delivers the Friday sermon in the mosque during the communal prayer), and a mudarris (one who instructs mosque-goers in matters of faith). He was born in 1940 in Mīt Abū l-Ḥusēn (Gharbiyya)

to a peasant family which owned a small number of feddans. Even though young ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ used to help his father and brothers in tilling the land, he had time to pursue his studies. He finished his high school education in Samannūd - apparently the small village of Mīt Abū l-Ḥusēn did not have a high school. He then joined al-Azhar's Kulliyyat Uṣūl ad-Dīn (Faculty of Islamic Theology). In 1959, at the age of nineteen, he started his career, first as a munshid (singing praises to God and the Prophet during the zikr ceremonies of the ṣūfīs) or a qārī (chanter of the Qurʾān) in funerals. According to Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī the maddāḥ is a singer of praises to God or the Prophet, or of narrative ballads - in this sense the maddāḥ's work is wider in scope and diversity than a munshid whose singing is more or less restricted to zikr ceremonies. On his training as a maddāḥ, Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ gives us this account:

In my village we had the famous maddāḥ Shēkh Ismāʿīl Rashwān whose songs I liked very much. He had some songs in the fuṣḥā (MSA) and a folk story (ʾiṣṣa shaʿbiyya) or two and an ʾiṣṣa about the life of the Prophet in the form of zaḡal (cl. zajal, strophic vernacular poetry). <56> I memorized some of his repertoire and I started to look for other material to memorize. I found in the market some published collections of madīḥ such as Manāhil aṣ-Ṣafā and Ḥusn aṣ-Ṣanīʿ, both in fuṣḥā. After that I heard Shēkh al-Bannā who was from Kafr ar-Rokk near Simbillawēn (written Sinbilawayn - in the Province of Sharqiyya). He was singing in his lovely voice only azḡāl (cl. azjāl, sing. zaḡal) to the tune of some musical instruments. In this way he was able to convey his message easily to people. I enquired about the sources of al-Bannā's material and I was told about the madīḥ collections of Muḥammad ʿAlī Sariyya from Nawasa al-Ghēt (near al-Manṣūra, Daqahliyya). In al-Azhar, as you know, I studied

Arabic language, grammar, rhetoric, literary criticism, that is to say I had a taste for words, so I was selective when I dealt with Abū Sariyya because not all of his pieces are good for memorization; in fact some have rakāka (flimsy, pallid style). I also left out the poems which were based on false reports (unauthorized khavar - report, saying, tale about the Prophet). So I memorized a great number of Abū Sariyya's (vernacular) material as well as some mahfūzāt in the fushā (orally transmitted poetry in literary Arabic mostly - but not exclusively - by classical poets). I began to compose azgāl myself and show them to critics and I realized -- thanks be to God -- that these azgāl were better than Abū Sariyya's. With my compositions I was able to do without Abū Sariyya's. Now if I ever sing one of Abū Sariyya's pieces, I'd feel that my standard is lowered because my compositions are - thanks be to God - better. Composing requires a special atmosphere and a special mood, otherwise it is only naẓm (artificial arrangements of words), because if someone has a number of ideas (ma'ānī) and he wants to use them in composing, he may be able to compose the whole thing easily in one or one and a half hours, but in this case the composition will lack the hur'a (consuming fire) of poetry and the taste of poetry. Composing is not easy but I think that I should say something worthwhile and refrain from saying something which lacks poetic quality... so I had passed through three phases (in training): the first is the imitating phase when I was memorizing Abū Sariyya's material and that phase took three or four years (1959 - 1962 or 1963); the second phase I was still memorizing from Abū Sariyya and at the same time composing original pieces myself - that phase lasted about two years; the third phase then was complete independence, there was no need of Abū Sariyya, this phase came after five years of my start (from around 1964)... During my early years at al-Azhar University, I used to sing every night in a different village; a whole month and a half would pass before I could take one night off - usually when the lēla had to be put off. In my first year at al-Azhar I had to miss the final exam three times, but I managed later on - thanks be to God - to take the exams and pass. Now I have to organise my time so that I may be able to combine my work as an imām (leader of prayer, religious functionary) in the mosque and as a khaṭīb (deliverer of the Friday sermon in the mosque); these are grave responsibilities. I also teach a dars (instruction in religious matters, Islamic catechism) every night (in my mosque); at

times extra durūs (pl. of dars) in other mosques, that means that I sometimes have to teach one dars after sunset and another at night; add to all this my higher studies (for the Master's degree), this requires a lot of time. Meanwhile I am concerned about replenishing my repertoire because nobody now produces new material in the market; only things that are rakīka (poor in quality, pallid in style). Some of our brothers -- they should, nevertheless, be thanked -- at times would compose one ḥiṣṣa in the form of zaḡal and would come here to sell it to me, and would do the same thing with someone else, so, as a way of being generous with a guest, I buy it from him, how much? such-and-such amount, all right, here it is. Of course I know that the quality is not that good but I would not want to upset him, I would encourage him to go on composing but I would not memorize his piece. Why would I take the trouble of memorizing it and not sing it later? <57>.

There are, of course, instances when Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī and other singers buy and sing the madīḥ pieces offered them by these itinerant composers for a certain sum. The singers may do whatever they like with these compositions; the composers are almost never acknowledged nor do they seem to care about any copyright.

COMPOSITION AND TRANSMISSION:

Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī refers to some source books from which he derives his songs. <58> During my research in Egypt, I managed to purchase some of these source books which were all printed in pulp editions and available in side-walk stalls and small bookstores on aṣ-ṣanādiqiyya Street, near al-Azhar quarter in Old Cairo. Three categories of these

source books can be discerned (some have already been mentioned above): 1. the mawālīd books; 2. madīḥ books which contain hymns (anāshīd) and prose supplications (awrād) put out by different sūfī orders; 3. poetic compositions - mostly in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic - by the maddāḥīn.

1. The Mawālīd Books:

These compositions, partly in verse, partly in prose, are recited usually on the anniversary of the Prophet's birthday, hence the title mawlid, pl. mawālīd, birth. The better known examples of these books are:

1. ʿAbd ar-Raʿūf al-Munāwī (d.1621), Mawlid an-Nabī Ṣallā llāh ʿAlayh wa Ṣallam al-Mashhūr bi Mawlid al-Munāwī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.);

2. Jaʿfar al-Barzanjī (d.1766), Mawlid an-Nabī Ṣallā llāh ʿAlayh wa Ṣallam li l-Imām Jaʿfar al-Barzanjī Raḥimahu allāh (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, n.d.);

3. ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī (d.1200), Mawlid Ibn

al-Jawzī al-Mashhūr bi l-ʿArūs (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.) and the modern version known as al-Anwār al-Qudsiyya fī Mawlid al-Muṣṭafā Khayr al-Bariyya li Tarīqat as-Sāda ash-Shādhiliyya (Ṭanṭā: Maktabat Tāj, n.d.), which, as the title indicates, has been put out by the Shādhiliyya sūfī order.

2. The Madīḥ Books

These books are anthologies of various eulogies from different periods or collections of the works of one poet who specialized in eulogies in honour of the Prophet Muḥammad. The best known among the maddāḥīn and the ones from which they derive many of their songs are:

1. al-Qāmūs al-Jadīd fī l-Qaṣā'id wa l-Anāshīd li s-Sāda ash-Shādhiliyya (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1972)

2. ʿUmar Ḥasan Khalūṣī (comp.), Kitāb as-Saʿāda al-ʿAbadiyya fī Qaṣā'id wa Anāshīd as-Sāda ash-Shādhiliyya (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.),

3. Dīwān al-Anwār al-Bahiyya fī Madīḥ Khayr al-Bariyya

wa Qaṣā'id Naqshabandiyya (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya, n.d.)

4. Shēkh Zakariyya Muḥammad,

Ṣafā' al-ʿAshiqīn fī Madh Sayyid al-Mursalīn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.)

5. Muṣṭafā Yūsuf Ḥusēn (comp.), Ḥusn aṣ-Ṣanī' al-Badī' fī Madīḥ an-Nabī ash-Shafī' (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.).

6. Ibrāhīm Ibrāhīm al-Imām, Kitāb as-Sa'āda al-Abadiyya fī ṣ-Ṣalā' alā Khayr al-Bariyya (az-Zaqāzīq: Maṭba'at al-Iqtiṣād, n.d.)

7. al-Jazūlī, (Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad, d. ca. 1465), Dalā'il al-Khayrāt wa Shawāriq al-Anwār fī Dhikr aṣ-Ṣalā' alā n-Nabī l-Mukhtār (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.)

8. al-Imām al-Kāmil Sharaf ad-Dīn al-Būṣīrī, Burdat al-Madīḥ al-Mubāraka (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya, n.d.)

9. ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm al-Bura'ī, Dīwān al-Bura'ī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, n.d.)

10. Sharaf ad-Dīn Abū Ḥafs (Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ, Dīwān Ibn al-Fāriḍ (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1979)

11. Yūsuf an-Nabhānī, Ṭīb al-ʿAzā fī Madḥ Sayyid al-Anbiyā (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Adabiyya, 1314 A.H.).

The Maddāhīn's Collections:

1. Muḥammad (Alī Sariyya (Abū Sariyya), Dīwān al-Munshidīn, vol. I (Ṭanṭā: Maktabat Tāj, n.d.).

-----, Dīwān al-Munshidīn, vol. II (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Nifertiti, n.d.)

-----, Dīwān al-Munshidīn, vol. III (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Nifertiti, n.d.)

-----, Dīwān al-Munshidīn, vol. IV (al-Manṣūra: Maktabat ash-Shāmī, n.d.).

2. (Abd al-Fattāḥ al-ʿIrāsī, Dīwān al-ʿIrāsī fī l-Anāshīd an-Nabawiyya wa l-Mawāʿiẓ ad-Dīniyya 4th. ed. (Ṭanṭā: Maktabat Tāj, n.d.)

3. (Abd Allāh Ibn Aḥmad (known as al-ʿArabī),

al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja fī Nazm Zawāj an-Nabī Ṣallā llāh ʿAlayh
wa Ṣallam bi s-Sayyida Khadīja wa Dhikr Safarīh ilā sh-Shām
 (Ṭanṭā: Maktabat Tāj, n.d.)

It should be clear by now that the maddāhīn rely heavily on written sources whether of past or present authors, and that the language of their songs is mainly in the colloquial combined with a sizable portion of Classical or Modern Standard Arabic. Among them there are those who are specialized in composing the colloquial poems that are later set to music and performed in front of an audience. From the evidence I managed to gather, it is fairly obvious that composition precedes performance and that the singer relies on his or her memory to recall and sing the "text" of the song. But is there any improvisation at all? There are several instances where the singer changes a word in a line or a whole phrase, keeping the same rhyme and the general meaning. In fact one can say that it is habitual among the singers to substitute words, to give the colloquial equivalent of the classical vocable or simply to pronounce words in the colloquial way, as can be seen in this example of how Shēkh ʿEṭa freely adds or exchanges certain words:

quiūbu l-ʿāshiqīna tarā l-khafāyā

The hearts of the lovers see that which is hidden

He repeats the same line four times, each time substituting the word "il-ʿāshiqīn" (the lovers) with one of these: "il-ʿābidīn" (the worshippers), "il-muḡhramīn" (the

passionate lovers), "iṣ-ṣāliḥīn" (the pious ones). <16:b>
 Another instance of this practice can be seen in the way Shēkh Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī (Cairo) says "yā qalbī" (O my heart) then he follows it with "yā ḥalbī", substituting the classical "qāf" with the colloquial "ḥ" (glottal stop). <14:b>

Shēkh al-Ḥirasī mentioned to me during an interview that he would sometimes improvise on the spot a word or a phrase or a whole line but that this would depend on whether he was in a good mood that night or on his level of energy, but more importantly, on the level of interaction with the audience. He added that he used to have a good drummer in his band who was particularly skillful in engrossing the audience in the rhythm during which time the Shēkh would have half or even a quarter of a minute to improvise a word or sometimes two or a whole line. <59>

It is clear from the evidence we have been able to glean so far that improvisation during performance is rare, that the repetition we sometimes encounter as well as the formulaic language of the repertoire are an important stylistic quality of it and that the maddāḥ appropriates material from classical and modern poetry in the fuṣḥā (standard literary Arabic) and combines it with elements from folk tradition. It can be stated therefore that the maddāḥ's method of composition is more a case of tawlīf (harmonious blending) than taḥlīf (composition, origination).

TRANSMISSION:

The methods of transmission vary among the maddāhīn. The non-performing maddāhīn like Sariyya sell their compositions to the singers who are free to make any changes to them. Shēkh al-ʿIrasī mentioned that he used to edit Sariyya's pieces and rid them of their stylistic flimsies (rakāka). Some singers refer to this process of "editing" as ṣanfara (sand-papering). <60>

More than just smoothing over the words of the composition, there is much cutting and pasting. Let me illustrate this by citing some examples of pieces adapted from classical as well as modern poetry - all in literary Arabic. A piece called "Nasīm al-Waṣl" (The breeze of Love's Union) is cited in al-Qāmūs al-Jadīd and is sung by at least three maddāhīn. It is nine lines long (eighteen hemistichs), but the singers sing only five lines. This is how it runs in its printed form:

1. nasīmu l-waṣl-i habba ʿalā n-nadāmā
fa askarahum wa mā sharibū mudāmā
2. wa mālat minhum al-aʿnāqu shawqan
li-anna qulūbahum muliʿat gharāmā
3. wa lammā shāhadū s-sāqī tagallā
wa ayqaḡa fī d-duḡā man kāna nāmā
4. wa nādāhum ʿibādī lā tanāmū
yanālu l-waṣla man hagara l-manāmā
5. yanālu l-waṣla man sahira l-layālī
ʿalā l-aqdāmi anḡalahu l-qiyāmā. <61>

The breeze of love's union blew over the lovers
It intoxicated them even though they did not drink wine

Their heads swayed with longing
Because their hearts were filled with passion

When they witnessed the cup-bearer appear
And awaken during the night those who were asleep

He called on them: "O my worshippers, do not slumber
Only the one who abandons sleep will attain love's union

Love's union will be attained by the one who
 stays up the night
 On his feet, worn down by standing."

Two of the maddāhīn sing only these five lines, while one sings only the first three, but none sings any of the last four cited in the printed version - one wonders why? - and yet all three make some changes. All the quotes from the three maddāhīn are taken from their cassette-tapes which are distributed under the title "Zikr".

Printed Form al-ʿUsēlī Rashād ʿAbd al-Hādī

L.1

(a)n-nadāmā (a)n-nudāmā (a)n-nudāmā (a)n-nudāmā

mudāmā	al-mudāmā	mudāmā	mudāmā
(wine)	(the wine)		

L. 2

shawqan	maylan	maylan	shawqan
(longing)	(swaying)		

li-ann	kamin	li-ann	li-ann
(because	(because		
in MSA)	in CEA)		

qulūbahum qulūbihim qulūbihim qulūbihim

L.3

shāhadū	āyanū	shāhadū	-----
(they witnessed)	(they saw		
	with their eyes)		

L.5

anḥalahu	istaḥlā	iḥtamala	
l-qiyāmā	l-qiyāmā	ṣ-ṣiyāmā	-----
(standing	(standing	(bore the burden	
wore him	delighted him)	of fasting	
down)			

Another example of the changes which occur in the act of transmission is found in a piece sung by Shēkh ʿAbd al-Muṭṭī Nāṣir. <35:a> It is derived from the poem of the neo-classicist Aḥmad Shawqī (d.1932) entitled "Wulida l-Hudā" (The Guide Was Born). This poem is also sung by the popular singer Umm Kulthūm. Shēkh Nāṣir sings only a portion of the poem. These are the first sixteen lines of the poem as they appear in Shawqī's published collection of poetry. The changes which Shēkh Nāṣir introduces are cited below:

1. wulida l-hudā fa l-kā'inātu ḍiyā'u
wa famu z-zamāni tabassumun wa thanā'u

2. ar-rūḥu wa l-mala'u l-malā'iku ḥawlahu
li d-dīni wa d-dunyā bihi bushrā'u

3. wa l-ʿarshu yazhū wa l-ḥaḍīratu tazdahī
wa l-muntahā wa s-sidratu l-ʿaṣmā'u

(line 4 is skipped by the singer)

5. wa l-waḥyu yaqṭuru salsalan min salsalin
gibrīlu rawwāḥun bihā ghaddā'u

(first hemistich is from line 4, the second from line 21)

(lines 6-63 are skipped by the singer)

64. bika yā bna ‹abd-i llāhi qāmat samḥatun
bi l-ḥaqq-i min milal al-hudā gharrā›u

65. buniyat ‹alā t-tawḥīdi wa hwa ḥaqīqatun
nādā bihā suqrātu wa l-qudamā›u

(line 66 is skipped by the singer)

67. wa mashā ‹alā nūri z-zamāni bi nūrihā
kuhhān wadī n-nīli wa l-‹urafā›u

(lines 68-73 are skipped by singer)

74. allāhu fawqa l-khalqi fihā waḥdahu
wa n-nāsu taḥta liwā›ihā akfā›u

75. wa d-dīnu yusrun wa l-khilāfatu bay›atun
wa l-amru shūrā wa l-ḥuqūqu qaḍā›u

(lines 76-131 are skipped by the singer).<62>

1. The guide was born and light enveloped the world
The mouth of Time shone forth smiles and gratitude

2. The Trusted Spirit (the angel Jibrīl) and
the honoured host of angels around him
Brought the glad tidings to this world and to the
the spiritual one

3. (God's) Throne shone forth, Paradise,
The Farthest End and the precious Lote-Tree glittered

5. Revelation trickled on like pure fresh water
The angel Jibrīl was carrying it back and forth

64. With you, O son of ‹Abd Allāh, a tolerant faith
was erected
It came with Truth from among the faiths of guidance

65. It was built upon the oneness of God, a truth
Proclaimed by Socrates and the ancients

67. Through the ages and guided by its light
Walked the priests and the diviners of the Nile Valley.

74. God alone was above it (Muḥammad's community)

And under its banner all people were equal

75. The religion was easy (to practise), succession was
 through election
 Matters were run by consultation and rights by justice.

Shēkh Nāṣir makes no reference to the title of the poem or to its author. He skips lines 6-63 and does not sing any line of the poem after line 75 - although the poem is 131 lines in length. The first hemistich of line 4 in Shawqī's poem is added to the second hemistich of line 21, so that Shēkh Nāṣir's line 5 runs this way:

5. wa l-waḥy yaqṭuru salsalan min salsalin
 gibrīlu rawwāḥun bihā ghadā'u.<35:a>

And the revelation pours down like fresh water
 Which the angel Gabriel is carrying back and forth.

The singer makes three changes in line 3:

Shawqī

Shēkh Nāṣir

wa l-ʿarsh
 (and the throne)

al-ʿarsh
 (the throne)

al-ḥaṣīra
 (Paradise)

al-ḥaṣīra
 (the mat)

al-ʿaṣmā'u
 (the precious)

al-ʿaṣmā'u
 (the great)

The maddāḥ may also include in his repertoire material taken from the reported sayings and deeds of the Prophet

(aḥādīth). Shēkh al-ʿIrasī habitually cites the sayings of the Prophet using the scholarly formulae: on the authority of so-and-so who heard from so-and-so that the Prophet of Allāh said or did such-and-such. He will even cite the collection which has the saying - "akhrajahu t-Tirmidhī", "akhrajahu Abū Dāwūd", referring to the various authorities on the Prophet's aḥādīth. Ismāʿīl ʿAmir also makes use of the aḥādīth but augments the poetic lines found in them through the classical technique known as tadhyīl (adding to the end of the original poem more lines of one's own composition). Take for instance his ballad on the Prophet's birth:

balaghanī min kitāb aṣḍaq al-asfār fī riwāyat
 al-akhbār annā ar-rasūl dakhala ʿalā abī bakrin
 dhata marra fa qāma wāqifan ʿalā qadamayhi fa
 waḍaʿa an-nabī yadahu ʿalā katifihi wa qāla ʿalā
 rislika yā abā bakr, lā tafʿalnī kamā tafʿalu
 l-aʿājimu bi milūkihā fa ṭaṭaʿ abū bakr raṣahu
 wa anshada baytayni wa zayyalahum (sic) ismāʿīl
 al-ʿāmiri bi thalāthati abyāt min ladayhi:

1. qiyāmī li l-ʿazīzi ʿalayya farḍun
 wa tarku l-farḍi mā huwa mustaqīmu
2. ʿajibtu li man lahu ʿaqlun wa fahmun
 yarā hādḥā l-jamāla wa lā yaqūmu
3. yaqīnan inna ʿīsā rūḥu rabbī
 wa mūsā lā murāʿa huwa l-kalīmu
4. wa ibrahīmu l-mawlā khalīluhu
 bi ḥadhā jāʿanā n-nabaʿu l-qadīmu
5. wa lākin kullu dhālika lā yusāwī
 nidā r-raḥmāni aqbil yā ʿaẓīmu.

<4:a>

I have learnt from the book, The Most Truthful Book on the Narration of Reports (about the Prophet Muḥammad) that one day the Messenger (of God) came upon Abū Bakr who then stood up on his two feet, the Prophet then put his hand on Abū Bakr's shoulder and said: "Relax Abū Bakr, do not treat me the way non-Arabs (or Persians) treat their kings", whereupon Abū Bakr bent his head and recited two lines of poetry which have been augmented by three more lines by Ismā'īl al-ʿAmirī (the singer's name):

1. My standing up for the dignified (Prophet) is
a religious duty
To abandon the religious duty is impious
2. I am puzzled by the one who having understanding
and sagacity
Sees this beauty but will not stand up
3. ʿIsā is certainly the spirit of my Lord
And Mūsā, without doubt, is God's interlocuter
4. Ibrāhīm is the friend of the Lord
Thus was the news which came to us in time past
5. But all of this does not equal
The call of the Compassionate Lord (to Muḥammad):
"Come nearer, O great one".

The examples cited above show that during performance the maddāhīn change words, phrases, whole lines, or simply cut and paste parts of appropriated material drawn from classical or modern poetry composed in honour of the Prophet Muḥammad. They almost never acknowledge the source from which they derive their material and more often than not they interweave this appropriated material into their own song so skilfully that a new whole is created out of this amalgamation of classical and modern poetry, standard and colloquial language, and even sacred and profane themes as we will show below.

THE USE OF PROFANE SONGS:

The maddāhīn make use of the profane songs of well-known Egyptian singers such as Umm Kulthūm, ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ḥāfiẓ, Fāyza Aḥmad, Shirīfa Fāḍil, and others. <63> They either make use of the tunes without the actual words of the songs or they at times include portions of the songs or use the tunes with appropriate lines of their own making. The following are some examples:

The maddāḥa Haniyyāt Shaʿbān includes several tunes from the songs of Umm Kulthūm. In her ballad about the Prophet's migration to al-Madīna there is a scene in the cave where the Prophet and Abū Bakr are hiding from the Qurayshites who are intent on killing them. A snake chances to be in the cave and while the resplendent Prophet sleeps, the snake is uncannily attracted to him. When it is blocked by the frightened Abū Bakr from coming closer to the Prophet, it bites Abū Bakr. The Prophet is awakened by Abū Bakr's tears dripping on his face. The snake apologizes for having bitten Abū Bakr and recites a soliloquy in which it expresses how it was irresistibly drawn to the Prophet. At this point in the ballad one hears the tune of one of Umm Kulthūm's songs. The words are not mentioned but when one recalls them, one finds that they are quite appropriate for the scene. These are the words from Umm Kulthūm's song "Inta l-Ḥubb" written by the poet Aḥmad Rāmī and put to music by the well-known singer and composer Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb:

ahwāk fī ʾurbak wi f buʿdak
wa shtāʾ li waṣlak wa nsā qafāk

w-in ghibt aḥāfiḏ ʿalā ʿahdak
wa fḏal ʿalā widdī wayyāk.<64>

I love you whether you are near or far from me
I pine for my union with you, and I am content
with your rejection of me

I preserve my fidelity to you when you are absent
My affection for you I maintain.

The listeners who are familiar with the words of the song will no doubt be touched by this subliminal invocation of love and longing for their dear Prophet.

Shēkh al-ʿUsēlī makes use of the tunes of profane songs of the famous Lebanese-born Egyptian songstress Ṣabāḥ. In the Shēkh's "Zikr" song he at one point sings about God's Majesty (jalāla, a feminine in Arabic) addressing the (male) lover of Muḥammad in this way:

wi kalām ha-ḥullak alēh yā āshī muḥammad
yā ḥabībī wi smaḥ minnī
illī yiṣūn il-amāna yā bnī
lāzim markazu ha-yinšān
 <49:a>

And words I will mention to you, O lover of Muḥammad
Listen to them, O you who are dear to Me
He who upholds the trust, O son
His (spiritual) rank will be preserved.

These lines are immediately followed by a tune from one of the well known songs of Şabāḥ. The lines which go with that tune - but which the maddāḥ does not sing - are:

w-in kunt-i khāyif mi l-gharām
 mā tkhafsh-i wi ṭammin ›awī, iṭammin ›awī
 <65>

And if you are too fearful of the passion of love
 Fear not, and be fully reassured.

Perhaps one may ask why the devotee addressed here is fearful of the passion of love. The answer is found in the preceding lines of the maddāh's mystical song. God's Majesty warns the devotee that if he falls in love with her, he will be seeking his own annihilation:

izā kunt-i ha-tḥibbinī ha-tuḥkum ›alā nafsak
 ḥukm-i fīh iḍdām.
 <49:a>

If you fall in love with Me
 You will be passing the death sentence on yourself.

The devotee answers this time with more or less the exact words of a song by another famous songstress, Fāyza Aḥmad:

Shēkh al-ʿUsēlī

Fāyza Aḥmad

anā ›albī ilēh mayyāl
 wa lā fīsh ghēru ›a l-bāl
 dā wāḥa li l-kamāl
 ḥabībnā rasūl illāh

anā ›albī līk mayyāl
 wi mā fīsh ghērak ›a l-bāl
 inta w bass illī ḥabībī
 mahmā yi›ülū l-ʿuzzāl

My heart is inclined to him	My heart is inclined to you
None but him is in my thoughts	None but you is in my
	thoughts
He is an oasis of perfection	You alone are my beloved
Our beloved the Messenger	Whatever the reproachers
of God	may say.

<49:a>

<66>

The tune of the profane words or the words themselves then affirm the meaning of the profound mystical idea of annihilation of the self in the divine.

The last example is derived from a eulogy by Shēkh ʿAbd al-Hādī where he employs the familiar technique in Arabic poetry of muʿāraḍa (composing an imitation of a poem in the same metre and rhyme scheme). The model poem is "al-Aṭlāl" of the romantic poet Ibrāhīm Nājī (d. 1949), and is sung by Umm Kulthūm:

ʿAbd al-Hādī**Umm Kulthūm**

yā munā l-qalb-i yā
ṭāhā innanā

hal raʿā l-ḥubbu sukārā mithlanā

qad madaḥnāka fa zāda
shawqunā

kam banaynā min khayālin ḥawlanā

wa sabahnā fī ḍiyāʿin
ṣāṭiʿin

wa mashaynā fī ṭarīqin muḡmirin

tagrī l-farḥatu fīhi ḥawlanā	tathibu l-farḥatu fīhi qablanā
wa ṭaribnā min madīḥika yā hudan	wa ḍaḥiknā ḍiḥkata ṭiflayni ma'an
qaḍ hadānā fa balaghna qaṣḍanā <3:a>	wa 'adawnā fa sabagnā ṣillanā <67>

O desire of the heart, O ṭāhā, indeed	Has love ever seen intoxicated (lovers) like us
When we eulogize you, our longing is kindled	Many have been the dreams we created around us
We swim in brilliant lights	We walked on a moon-lit road
Where joy bounds around us	Where joy bounds before us
Eulogy for you enraptures us, O guidance divine	We laughed the way two children laugh
That has guided us to our goal	And we ran until we outdistanced our shadows

By taking classical pieces out of their "text-milieu" <68> and juxtaposing them with vernacular material, the maddāḥīn in effect "liminalize" these pieces. Once out of their "text-milieu", the appropriated classical quotes go through a process of cutting and pasting; none retains its title, or its author's name, many lose their ending and some of their beginning. This is one example where the boundaries between the elite and popular literatures are not as water-tight as may be thought and where the two literatures leak into each other to produce something new.

To conclude this section, it is clear that the careers of the Egyptian maddāḥīn show that they hail mainly from

small villages or provincial towns - some are gypsies. The majority of them are either totally illiterate or semi-educated, but an exceptional few - like Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī - are highly educated, not in Western-style secular schools or universities but in religious institutions such as al-Azhar. Perhaps partly because of this religious schooling and partly because they deal with religious subjects, many of them are given the title shēkh before their names and are often shown in the pictures on their cassette tapes wearing the religious garb of shēkhs - the ʿimma and the kakūla (the turban and the long straight overcoat with buttons down the front and a half-collar).

The apprenticeship of the maddāhīn is not always a case of a father-son tradition. There are examples where singing eulogies and ballads about the Prophet Muḥammad is a family business; one may cite the case of the three brothers of Asyūṭ or the Jōharīs of Dumyāṭ. At the same time there are even more examples of singers who have learned their art from others to whom they were not related.

Besides being professional performers, these maddāhīn engage in other trades; indeed some are peasants, bakers, fishermen, Qurʾān reciters or imāms in mosques. Many may be seen as living on the "margins" of social and economic life, in that they are in most cases obliged to maintain two jobs and more often than not their songs are more respected than their person.<69> Even the highly successful Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī does not as a rule perform in his hometown Samannūd for fear that this may undermine his reputation as an imām of a local

mosque. He even had reservations about being called a maddāh preferring the title ṣayyīt presumably because unlike the maddāh the ṣayyīt can be a Qurʾān chanter.<70>

II. The Mūlid:

The mūlid (mawlid in CA) <71> is an interstitial event in the Islamic calendar.<72> It marks the sacred occasion of the Prophet's birthday or that of any walī (saint). The same word also means in the Egyptian Colloquial an uproar, a chaotic situation, a mess.<73> When Egyptians want to express the idea of a free-for-all, they say "mūlid wi ṣaḥbu ghāyib".<74> The word mūlid therefore combines both sacred and profane meanings. Similarly some words associated with the sacred have also a profane meaning; words such as "iṣ-ṣala ʿan-nabī" (calling down blessing on the Prophet), can also mean "something which is worthless" as in the phrase "khad iṣ-ṣala ʿan-nabī" <75> (he received only the calling down of blessings on the Prophet, he got nothing in return) when it is a question of what someone obtained in return for his effort, or words such as fiṭī (classical faqīh, jurist) which means both a Qurʾān reciter and "one who combines sanctimoniousness and low scavenging ways", whence the verb "itfaḥin" meaning "to behave in a sanctimonious yet base and greedy way". <76>

Here I would like to describe some aspects of the 1989 mūlid celebrations which I attended in Biyalā (Kafr

ash-Shēkh), Ṭanṭā (Gharbiyya) and Banhā (Qalyūbiyya).

In Biyalā there was a great zaffa (procession) in which many of the local ṣūfīs marched with the banners of their different brotherhoods. There were donkey-drawn carts, overloaded with children and men, trucks equipped with colourful lights, loudspeakers blaring songs in praise of the Prophet and the occasional advertisement about a local dairy product. Different sweetmeats and the traditional sugar dolls were on sale everywhere. The night before, Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-ʿIrasī of the nearby town of Samannūd had been invited in - as he has been for the last two decades - to sing praises in honour of the Prophet Muḥammad and retell in his beautiful voice, and for the most part in Colloquial Egyptian Arabic (CEA), episodes from the life of the Messenger of Allah. For the Shēkh and his gallabiyya -clad listeners, it was the love of the Prophet which was at the heart of the celebration. Reliving the Prophet's life-story through the Shēkh's performance was an end in itself, an act of piety.

"As opposed to the official feast," remarks the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin, "one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical ranks, privileges, norms, and prohibitions".^{<77>} To a great extent, this observation can apply to the popular mūlid celebrations I witnessed in Banhā. Emotional intensity and excess could be seen in the ecstatic convulsions which overtook the zakkīra (sing.

zakkīr, the one who performs zīkr, dhikr in CA). They swayed violently out of control and at times dropped in a fit. Some foamed so much around the mouth that saliva covered their chins and chests. It is generally true that during the mūlid celebrations, the crowds push and shove and that sexually excitable men, especially turbaned gallabiyya -clad ones, brush themselves against the bodies of women who are unfortunate enough to be caught in the midst of these milling crowds. Sexual excitability is also visible among the zakkīra when, on the rare occasion, women take part in the zīkr. I witnessed this phenomenon during a lēla in the town of Banhā, the only time I actually saw women performing zīkr side by side with men. During the intervals between zīkr sessions, these men and women engaged in frivolous conversations interspersed with obscene references and free touching of one another - something that the rather conservative Egyptian society does not tolerate, at least among these working classes.

In the Ṭanṭā celebration, which also marked the mūlid of the patron saint as-Sayyid al-Badawī, crowds came from all over Egypt. There were many pavillions set up near the main mosque of al-Badawī, and many ṣūfī orders and their maddāhīn participated. One could see many of these ṣūfīs perform their zīkr dancing to the tunes and the songs of the maddāhīn, and in noticeable juxtaposition children as well as adults were swaying joyfully on swings installed for the occasion. Peep shows and Arāgōz (a puppet show, derived from the Turkish Karagoz, "Black Eye", a sort of "Punch and

Judy") provided additional entertainment.<78> In the Arāgōz show I witnessed humorous episodes with extremely obscene dialogue and gestures which went on while the religious songs of the maddāhīn broadcast on loudspeakers, could be heard inside the show enclosure. Here are two short episodes of the Arāgōz shows I attended:

Arāgōz (singing):

salāmāt salāmāt
yā ḥabibnā yā baladiyyāt
da nta waḥashtinā bi z-zāt

Greetings, greetings
O beloved one, o fellow-villager
We have really missed you.

chorus:

salāmāt salāmāt...

greetings, greetings

Arāgōz:

ṣallī ṣallī

call down blessings on the Prophet
call down blessings on the Prophet

chorus:

ṣallī ṣallī
‘a n-nabī ṣallī

call down blessings on the Prophet
call down blessings on the Prophet

A beggar:

‘āgiz wi ḡhalbān
ḡhalbān wi ‘āgiz wi ṭālib ḡḡa li l-lāh

I am poor and blind
I am poor and blind, I beg you to give
me something for the sake of Allah

A man:

‘a llāh yā llāh yā ‘amm-i yḡannin ‘alēk

Go away, uncle, may Allah make people be kindly
to you (i.e. I am giving no alms to you)

Beggar:

wi n-nabī ʾāgiz

I swear by the name of the Prophet (Muḥammad)
I am blind.

A man:

allāh yisahhil-lak

May Allah make things easy for you
(i.e. I am giving you no alms)

Beggar: ...

A man:

inta ʾāyiz ḥāga li llāh? ṭab
uʾaf ʾalā ganb-i kida.
Yā arāgōz.

You want some alms? O.K
Just stand here on the side
O Arāgōz.

Arāgōz:

naʾam
Yea

A man:

taʾālā yā ʾamm. wāḥid ʾalā bāb allāh
maʾaddī, tiddī-lu?
maʾaksh-i ʾūl-lu ʾa llāh.

Come here, uncle. A beggar is passing by, will
you give him (alms)? If you do not have anything
to give him, send him away (lit. tell him it is
all up to Allah)

Arāgōz:

ʾalā bāb allāh

It is all up to Allah (to help out)

Beggar:

da-nā ʾmā

But I am blind

Arāgōz: ...

Beggar:

da-nā ba-ḥassis

I grope (my way - because I am blind)

Arāgōz:

wa-nā ba-ʾaffish.

...

And I squeeze (a woman's sexual parts)

Beggar:
yā ʿēnī

Pity you.

Arāgōz:
kuss ummak.

Up your mother's cunt.

Beggar:
wi n-nabī ʿāgiz

I swear by the name of the Prophet, I am blind.

Arāgōz:
wi n-nabī ʿalā llāh

I beg you by the Prophet to go away.

Beggar:
wi n-nabī gaʿān

I swear by the name of the Prophet I am hungry.

Arāgōz:
ittikil ʿalā llāh

Go away (lit. depend on Allah)

Beggar:
li llāh li llāh li llāh

For the sake of Allah,
For the sake of Allah,
For the sake of Allah

Arāgōz:
mafīsh mafīsh mafīsh

Nothing, nothing, nothing
(will I give you)

Beggar:
wi n-nabī ākul, wi n-nabī ākul
ākul il..., il...
...
wi mahallabiyya wa ruzzan wa ruzzā

By the name of the Prophet, let me eat
Let me eat the..., the...

...
Eat pudding and rice

Arāgōz:

allāh allāh yā ʿabd il-bāsiṭ.

Encore, encore, O ʿAbd il-Bāsiṭ
(one of the most famous Qurʾān reciters
in Egypt)

Beggar:

nānū nānū nānū
wa ruzzan wa ruzzā
...
anā ākul ruzzan mutafalfilan

Nānū Nānū Nānū
(Let me eat) rice, rice
...
Let me eat fluffy rice

Arāgōz:

yā ṣalāt in-nabī ʿalā kuss ummak

May the blessing of the Prophet be
up your mother's cunt

Arāgōz:

wi r-ruzz abū laban
wi btingān misaʿʿaʿa
wi ʿalēhum ḥabbīt ʾūṭa

(Let me eat) rice with milk
And egg-plant in a moussaka dish
With a tomato on top.

Arāgōz:

aṣl ummak mara sharmūṭa

Your mother is a whore.

The other scene shows the Arāgōz in a domestic dispute with his sharp-tongued wife. It is not clear why they are fighting but we see them attempting to reconcile. The wife asks him to come closer to her and he hesitatingly approaches with his head down so that his pointed hood is moving towards her in an unmistakably sexual gesture. She urges him on by repeating "kamān", (more) until he loses

patience and in the typical Arāgōz manner hurls a vulgar oath at her. The wife then says:

The wife:

ṭayyib wi n-nabī tīgī
irfa' il-gallabiyya...kamān
irfa' il-ḥamīṣ ... wi j-jībōn
... ḥalla' ba'ā

All right, by the Prophet come here
Lift the dress... more
Lift the under-shirt ... and the "jupon" (slip)
Undress me completely.

At this point of the scene we see the Arāgōz poking the wife rhythmically with his pointed hood while he is neighing like a horse. Moments later we hear in the background the screams of a new-born baby. The Arāgōz and his wife are now reconciled and happy.

In Banhā, the lēla (the evening celebration) was arranged by a member of the Aḥmadiyya mystical order. I was asked by my informant Ibrāhīm to contribute to the expenses of the lēla; this I willingly did. The celebration took place in the street in front of the benefactor's house. A platform was set up for the maddāh Shēkh Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī and his band and florescent lights were placed around the house and in the street. Men and a few women dressed in humble black clothes sat on tattered and dirt-ridden mats spread on both sides of the street. The nearby grocer did extra business selling different items which ranged from cigarettes to soft drinks and to a local brand of aspirin. Metal tea pots were boiling with strong tea over kerosene stoves. Tea was generously offered gratis to all who

attended. Men were smoking cigarettes (a local brand called Cleopatra) as well as the familiar hookah which is called gōza, (it is made of a coconut shell, pronounced gōzt il-hind, hence the name), in which they smoked tobacco called miḥassil (the name is derived from the word for molasses, because the tobacco is treated with this syrup).<79> Some of the audience were handicapped or were beggars, some government employees and others peasants from nearby villages.

The performance started a little after midnight. Shēkh Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī stood out with his white turban, well-trimmed moustache and eyes deep in their sockets. His cheek bones were pronounced and when he became wrapped up in his singing he closed his eyes and shook his head rhythmically.

He sang of love and its woes, of the love of God and of His Prophet. Most of his songs centre on the key themes of ṣūfī life, of mystical love and the desire to unite with the One. But he weaves these abstract notions in touching narratives whose blocks are made of folk images and expressions. Take for example his song "Hilāl". A man called Hilāl goes to the Prophet to invite him to attend his wedding. The Prophet gladly accepts the invitation but soon the angel Jibrīl appears to tell the Prophet that God is calling back Hilāl, i.e. Hilāl is to pass away. Hilāl accepts his fate and entreats the Prophet to take care of his mother. There follow stanzas of touching details about the sacrifices mothers make for the sake of their children,

sacrifices which are at times met with ingratitude. Shēkh ad-Disūqī gives the touching example of the son who goes to the marketplace and buys fruit, hides it in the sleeves of his flowing robe and secretly gives it to his wife behind his mother's back. Such details touch a raw nerve in many of the Shēkh's audience who often live in overcrowded homes with their parents as well as their wives and children.

As the Shēkh sang, a number of men and at least two women were performing the zīkr dancing in a semi-circle. This was the first time that I saw women take part in the zīkr. But when I took photographs of them, there was a very strong and unexpected reaction from one of the women. She flew at me and snatched the camera from my hand, swearing by Allāh and His messenger that she would never give back my camera. She thought I was a journalist who would publish her picture in the newspapers and in doing so scandalize her and her family, not to mention her mystical order. I was told that not long ago a journalist took pictures of women dancing in a zīkr, published the pictures in a national newspaper and as a result the mystical order to which the women belonged had its government-issued licence rescinded.

Shēkh ad-Disūqī tried to calm people down to no avail and he then had to stop his singing and leave. I found myself in a precarious situation when people crowded around me and started to ask out loud who I was. No one knew me except my informant Ibrāhīm. I was afraid that people around would find out that I was not only a stranger but a non-Muslim. But Ibrāhīm thankfully began shouting at people

to leave me alone, calling me "ibn-i khaltī" (son of his maternal aunt). Only after much haggling and questions about whether I was taking pictures of her alone or of everyone else, the camera was returned to me but without the film. The lēla in Banhā was sadly interrupted because of my indiscretion.

The difficulties in taking photographs or videotaping these religious celebrations were also met in my hometown Biyalā (Kafr ash-Shēkh). In order to assuage the suspicious spectators - and some policemen in the vicinity - my relative who was entrusted with the task of videotaping the mūlid procession and who had an unmistakably Christian name, had to invent the story that he was fulfilling a religious vow on the part of a female relative who had taken a solemn oath that if Allāh granted her a child, she would videotape the procession of the Prophet's mūlid. Such a story was easily believed and the videotaping of the celebration went unhampered. I have to add here that as it turned out, we probably did not have to be so overcautious since many Muslim individuals in my hometown who knew about my research were touched by my interest in the life of the Prophet and offered me much help. In fact, during the celebration I was lovingly embraced by a member of a local sūfī order (who was also the owner of the bookstore from whom I bought many pulp editions of madīḥ). Singers were blaring compliments on the loudspeakers in my honour, calling me "Daktūr Kamāl," the son of Biyalā, the Professor of Madīḥ in the American Universities, and even the beloved of the Arab Peoples

(ḥabīb ish-shaḥb il-ʿarabī). The people of my hometown (baladiyyātī) taught me a lesson in religious tolerance.

In this chapter we have seen that the maḍīḥ in the colloquial is a tradition of long standing in Islamic/Arabic culture and that at least from the thirteenth century - with authors like ash-Shushtarī and al-Ghubārī - we can trace the development of these religious compositions in the colloquial. The account is still sketchy and deserves more investigation.

We have also seen that maddāḥīn under study hail mostly from small villages and provincial towns, although we have to consider that the successful ones among them at times move to Cairo. Recently in fact I was told by researchers in the Centre for Folk Arts that singers like Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī, Aḥmad at-Tūnī, Yāsīn at-Tuhāmī, and others now reside in Cairo.

A striking feature about the repertoire of these maddāḥīn is that it is a blend of subject matter - and as we will illustrate later on in this study it is also a blend of linguistic levels. It blends religious subject-matter with secular songs, especially those of Umm Kulthūm. But more importantly this repertoire incorporates without acknowledgement written compositions of classical and / or modern authors.

ENDNOTES

<1> Pierre Cachia, "the Career of Mustafa Ibrahim 'Ajaj," Journal of Maltese Studies 11 (1977), p.110. The same article appears also in Daniel Massa, ed. Across Cultures: Festschrift in Honour of Professor A. J. Aquilina (Malta University Press, 1977), pp. 110-117.

<2> Zajal is a strophic form of poetry written in the colloquial idiom and is made to follow certain traditional rhythmic patterns and rhyme schemes similar to those used in the classical Arabic poetry. Zajal first made its appearance in Muslim Spain in the twelfth century - or maybe earlier - and as such it is "the genre with the longest undisputed pedigree," as Pierre Cachia states in his article, "The Use of the Colloquial in Modern Arabic Literature," Journal of the American Oriental Society 87 (1967), p. 12. On the origin and development of the zajal see Şafīyy d-Dīn al-Ḥillī, al-Kitāb al-ʿAṭīl al-Ḥālī wa l-Murahḥaṣ al-Ghālī, ed. W. Hoenerbach (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1956); Ibn Khaldūn, al-Muqaddima, translated by Franz Rosenthal, vol. 3 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958); Ibrāhīm Anīs, Mūsīqā ash-Shiʿr, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglū al-Miṣriyya, 1965); Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim, al-Zajal wa l-Zajjālūn (Cairo: Dār ash-Shaʿb, 1962); ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ahawānī, al-Zajal fī l-Andalus (Cairo: Maḥad ad-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyya, 1957); Riḍā Muḥsin al-Qurayshī, al-Zajal fī sh-Sharq (Baghdad: Ministry of Information, 1977).

<3> On the mawwāl, see Pierre Cachia, Popular Narrative Ballads of Egypt; Nada Tomiche, "Le mawwāl egptien," Melange Marcel Cohen (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), pp. 429-438.

<4> See Ibrāhīm Manṣūr, al-Izdiwāj ath-Thaqāfī wa Azmat al-Muʿāraḍa al-Miṣriyya (Beirut: Dār at-Talīʿa li t-Ṭibāʿa wa n-Nashr, 1981), pp. 11-12.

<5> On the subject of "Lahn al-ʿAmma", see Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition, vol. v, s.v. Lahn al-ʿAmma, pp. 605-610.

<6> A. Chejne, The Arabic Language (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), p. 185.

<7> Fuʿād Dawwāra, ʿAsharat Udabāʾ Yataḥaddathūn (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1965), pp. 286-287.

<8> Aḥmad Taymūr, Muʿjam Taymūr al-Kabīr fī l-Alfāz al-ʿAmmiyya, ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-ʿAmma al-Miṣriyya li t-Taʿlīf wa n-Nashr, 1971), pp. 18-19.

<9> Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, 1959, II, p. 444, as cited by Z. Abdel-Malek in his article, "The Influence of Diglossia on the Novels of Yuusif al-Sibaa'i," Journal of Arabic Literature 3 (1972), p. 132.

<10> Aḥmad Ḥabd al-Ghafūr Ḥaṭṭār, Difāʿ al-Fuṣḥā (Mecca: n.p., 1979) p. 81.

<11> Ḥabbās Ḥasan, "ad-Daʿwa ilā l-Ḥammiyya wa Tark al-Ḥarb Intikās fī l-Jahāla wa Jināya ʿalā l-Qawmiyya," Risālat al-Islām (1957), p.149.

<12> For an understanding of the fuṣḥā-ḥammiyya conflict in Egypt see Naffūsa Zakariyya Saʿīd's book - useful but slanted - Tārīkh ad-Daʿwa ilā l-Ḥammiyya wa Athāruhā fī Miṣr (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1964); see also Ḥaisha Ḥabd ar-Raḥmān (pennamed Bint ash-Shāṭi), Lughatunā wa l-Ḥayā (Cairo: Maḥad al-Buḥūth wa d-Dirāsāt al-Ḥarabiyya, 1969); Anwar Chejne, The Arabic Language; Pierre Cachia, "The Use of the Colloquial in Modern Arabic Literature," Journal of the American Oriental Society 87 (1967), pp.12-22.

<13> See J. Brugman, An Introduction to the History of Modern Arabic Literature in Egypt (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), p.400.

<14> Ḥaṭṭār, Difāʿ al-Fuṣḥā, p.81.

<15> Rajāʿ an-Naqqāsh, al-Inḥizāliyyūn fī Miṣr (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-Ḥarabiyya li d-Dirāsāt wa n-Nashr, 1981), p. 8.

<16> Lūwīs Ḥawaḍ, Muqaddima fī Fiqh al-luḡha al-Ḥarabiyya (Cairo: al-Ḥayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-Ḥamma li l-Kitāb, 1980), p.26.

<17> See a reference to the banning of Ḥawaḍ's book in Ghālī Shukrī's scathing attack on the stifling of the freedom of expression as a result of the interference of the Muslim radicals in Egypt in his article, "Maḥākīm at-Taftīsh wa th-Thaqāfa al-Muqāda," an-Nāqid vol. I, No. 2 (August, 1988), pp. 26-27. See also Ḥawaḍ's candid memoirs (he died in September, 1990) in which he refers to his book and its banning by al-Azhar, Awraq al-Ḥumr (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1989).

<18> Ḥumar Farrūkh, al-Qawmiyya al-Fuṣḥā (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm li l-Malāyīn, 1961), pp. 138-139.

<19> See Naffūsa Zakariyya Saʿīd, Tārīkh ad-Daʿwa ilā l-Ḥammiyya wa Athāruhā fī Miṣr, pp. 55ff.

<20> See Ḥaisha Ḥabd ar-Raḥmān, Lughatunā, pp. 101-111.

<21> Ibid., pp. 101-107; an-Naqqāsh, al-In'izāliyyūn, pp. 77-97.

<22> See Şafī d-Dīn al-Ḥillī, al-Kitāb al-ʿAṭīl al-Ḥālī wa l-Murakhkhaṣ al-Ghālī; Pierre Cachia, Popular Narrative Ballads of Modern Egypt; Ḥusayn Naṣṣār, ash-Shi'r ash-Sha'bī l-ʿArabī (Cairo: al-Muḥassasa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿamma li t-Ta'līf wa t-Tarjama wa t-Ṭibā'a wa n-Nashr, 1962).

<23> See B. Connelly, Arab Folk Epic and Identity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 12-13.

<24> See Zakī Mubārak, al-Madā'iḥ an-Nabawiyya, p. 205.

<25> Zakī and Khūrshīd, Muḥammad fī l-Adab al-Mu'āṣir, p. 111.

<26> On al-Būṣīrī, see, among others, Zakī Mubārak, al-Madā'iḥ an-Nabawiyya, pp. 141-160; Annemarie Schimmel, And Muḥammad Is His Messenger, pp. 183-188.

<27> See al-Ahrām, October 13, 1989.

<28> See M. Lings, "Mystical Poetry," in Abbasid Belles-Lettres, eds. Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 261.

<29> Ibid.

<30> See Dīwān Abī l-Ḥasan ash-Shushtarī Shā'ir aṣ-Ṣūfiyya al-Kabīr fī l-Andalus wa l-Maghrib (Alexandria: Munsha'at al-Ma'ārif, 1960), p. 439. It should be noted that there is a new edition of ash-Shushtarī's vernacular poetry by the Spanish scholar F. Corriente, see Poesia Estrofica (Cejeles y/o Muwaṣṣahāt) Atribuida al Místico Grandino Aṣ-Suṣtarī (Madrid: C.S.I.C., 1988).

<31> Dīwān ash-Shushtarī, pp. 364-365.

<32> Ḥusayn Maḥlūm Riyāḍ and Muṣṭafā Muḥammad aṣ-Ṣabbāḥī, Tārīkh Adab ash-Sha'b (Cairo: Muḥammad Khalaf, 1936), p. 56; Aḥmad Ṣādiq al-Jammāl, al-Adab al-ʿAmmī fī Miṣr fī l-ʿAṣr al-Mamlūkī (Cairo: ad-Dār al-Qawmiyya li t-Ṭibā'a wa n-Nashr, 1966), pp. 175-181.

<33> al-Ibshīhī, al-Mustaṭraf fī kull Fann Mustazraf, vol. II, pp. 210-211, cited by al-Jammāl, al-Adab al-ʿAmmī, p. 181.

<34> Muḥammad Fahmī ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, al-Fann al-Ilahī (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1988) p. 51.

<35> See Pierre Cachia, Popular Narrative Ballads, p. 13.

<36> See Muḥammad ḥAbd al-Munḥim (pennamed Abū Buthayna), az-Zajal wa z-Zajjālūn (Cairo: Dār ash-Shaḥb, 1962), pp. 49-52.

<37> See Aḥmad Sulaymān Hijāb, Qāla Ibn ḥArūs (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat aṣ-Ṣabāḥ li ṭ-Ṭibāʿa wa n-Nashr, n.d.), pp. 23-25, 41.

<38> See Nāhid Ḥāfiḏ, al-Ghinā, fī l-Qarn at-Tāsi, ḥAsha (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1984).

<39> For a major study of the Munshidīn in Egypt see Earle Waugh, The Munshidin of Egypt.

<40> Nāhid Aḥmad Ḥāfiḏ, al-Ghinā, fī l-Qarn at-Tāsi, ḥAsha, p.13.

<41> See Annemarie Schimmel, "Eros - Heavenly and Not So Heavenly - In Sufi Literature and Life," in Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1979), pp. 119-141.

<42> See Rushdī Ṣāliḥ, Funūn al-Adab ash-Shaḥbī, vol. II (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1956), Appendix, p. 175.

<43> Attributed to al-Buhlūl, see Ḥāfiḏ, al-Ghinā, p.14, text in p.15.

<44> Ibid., p.15.

<45> Ibid., p.16.

<46> On the qaṣṣāṣīn, see "Ḳāṣṣ", Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition, pp.733-735.

<47> See Muḥammad Maḥmūd Sāmī Ḥāfiḏ, al-Mūsīqā al-Miṣriyya al-Ḥadītha wa ḥAlāqatuhā bi l-Gharb (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglū al-Miṣriyya, 1982), p.10.

<48> See for example Abū l-Fidā Ibn Kathīr, Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā, li Abī l-Fidā Ibn Kathīr, ed. Saʿīd al-Laḥḥām (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayā, 1988). For more see Bibliography.

<49> See the archives of the Centre for Folk Arts in Cairo.

<50> Zakī Mubārak, al-Madāʿih, pp. 204-205.

<51> Ibid., p. 203, note 1.

<52> See for example ash-Shushtarī's zajal called "Salabat Laylā" which is recited by several maddāḥīn. See ash-Shushtarī's collection Dīwān Abī l-Ḥasan ash-Shushtarī, ed. ḥAlī Sāmī an-Nashshār (Alexandria: Munshaʿat al-Maʿārif,

1960), pp. 364-365.

<53> See Urbain Bouriant, Chansons populaires arabes en dialecte du Caire. See Introduction, note 20.

<54> Cachia, Popular Narrative Ballads, pp. 21-22.

<55> See the archives of the Centre for Folk Arts, Cairo, from 1959 to the present.

<56> On zajal see note 3.

<57> Interview, Samannūd (Gharbiyya), September, 1989.

<58> Interview, Samannūd (Gharbiyya), October, 1989.

<59> Interview, Samannūd (Gharbiyya), October, 1989.

<60> Cachia, Popular Ballads, p. 51.

<61> See al-Qāmūs al-Jadīd, p. 130.

<62> Aḥmad Shawqī, ash-Shawqiyyāt, vol. I (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, n.d.), pp.34-41.

<63> On these famous singers see among others Simon Jargy, La musique arabe (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971); Aḥmad Abū l-Khiḍr Mansī, al-Aghānī wa l-Mūsīqā sh-Sharqiyya bayn al-Qadīm wa l-Jadīd, 2nd. ed. (Cairo: Dār al-ʿArab, 1966); Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Majīd, Li kull Uḡniya Qiṣṣa (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglū l-Miṣriyya, 1970); Kamāl an-Najmī, Muṭribūn wa Mustamiʿūn (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1970).

<64> See Umm Kulthūm Ḥayāt wa Aghānī Kawkab ash-Sharq Umm Kulthūm (Beirut: Maktabat al-Ḥayā, 1988), p.80.

<65> I have not found any published songs of Ṣabāḥ.

<66> See Fayza Aḥmad, Ajmal Aghānī Fayza Aḥmad (Cairo: Maktabat an-Naṣr, n.d.), p. 93.

<67> See Ḥayāt wa Aghānī ... Umm Kulthūm, p.97.

<68> See Firmat, Literature and Liminality, p. xvii.

<69> Cachia, Ballads, p. 41

<70> Interview, Samannūd, September, 1989.

<71> On the mawālīd celebrations especially that of the Prophet's birthday see J. W. McPherson, The Moulids of Egypt (Cairo, M. N. Press, 1941); Gustave E. von Grunebaum, Muhammadan Festivals (Leiden: Brill; New York: Schuman, 1958); Fārūq Muṣṭafā, al-Mawālīd; Dirāsāt li l-ʿAdāt wa

t-Taqālīd ash-Shaʿbiyya fī Miṣr (Alexandria: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿamma li l-Kitāb, 1980).

<72> Firmat uses this phrase to describe the carnival, see his Literature and Liminality, p. xv.

<73> Hinds and Badawi, A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1986), p. 955.

<74> Ibid.

<75> Ibid.

<76> Ibid., p. 666.

<77> Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, p. 10.

<78> On the Arāgōz, see Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition, s.v. "Ḳaragoz", vol. iv, pp. 601-603.

<79> See the entry "taʿmīra", a synonym of "qōza" in Aḥmad Amīn, Qāmūs al-ʿAdāt wa t-Taqālīd wa t-Taʿābir al-Miṣriyya (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat at-Taʿlīf wa t-Tarjama wa n-Nashr, 1953), p.123

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAKING OF THE PEOPLE'S PROPHET.

In this Chapter a richly textured portrait of the Prophet Muḥammad is presented. It is derived from the current repertoire of the Egyptian maddāhīn. Poetic images and diction in this repertoire vary in quality from the imaginative and the vivid to the sentimental and the effete. In fact one comes across some of these sung poems that may not strike one as good poetry - especially in translation - but it should be noted that it is not solely their poetic quality that concerns us. We are interested in the kind of stories which are woven by these singers around the life of their Prophet, stories which are being sung over and over and savoured by millions of common folk through the centuries. In a country like Egypt where there is a high rate of illiteracy, a printed book about the life of the Prophet may have a very limited circulation, but a ballad about the same subject - sung countless times - is ensured easier access to the minds and hearts of the illiterate folk. It is therefore important to study these songs of the maddāhīn and not be satisfied only with the writings of the Muslim elite authors. Our search for the meaning of Muḥammad for present-day Muslims will remain partial and fragmented if no serious attempt is made to understand the kind of popular material produced and propagated by ordinary Muslim folk.

Because there has been no study thus far which has presented the contents of this repertoire, a detailed account, rather than a summary, is given here of the life-story of Muḥammad as it has been artistically woven by these Egyptian popular singers. With the least amount of commentary at this stage, five aspects of the Prophet's life-story are presented: 1. his birth; 2. his marriage; 3. his flight into Medina (Hijra); 4. his miracles; 5. his attributes (physical and spiritual qualities). After presenting each aspect, there follows a brief discussion of the similarities and the differences between the maddāhīn's story and its counterpart in the classical sources such as: the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth (reports on the sayings and the deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad), the sīra books (biographies of the Prophet), the books of Dalā'il (proofs of the authenticity of Muḥammad's prophethood) and the Shamā'il (physical and spiritual qualities of the Prophet Muḥammad).

1. The Prophet's Birth:

The belief in the primordial light of Muḥammad (nūr muḥammad) permeates the popular repertoire of the contemporary Egyptian maddāhīn. We are told that when God wanted to create Muḥammad, He held a handful of His divine light and willed it to take the form of a human being whom He then called Muḥammad. From the light of Muḥammad, God proceeded to create the universe: mountains, stars, all the

1

Adam is the father of all mankind but the Prophet
existed before him
In the garden of eternity, Adam saw the light of
the Prophet
He lived in the House of Bliss; living gratified him
He obeyed Satan once, and became full of remorse
When he sought the Prophet's help, the Lord then
forgave him.

Amina, the Prophet's mother, conceived him in the month of Rajab and delivered him on the night of Monday, 12 Rabī' al-Awwal. There were many bashāyir (signs) which prefigured the momentous event of the birth. All through the nine

months of pregnancy, from Rajab until Rabī' al-Awwal, nine prominent prophets came down to congratulate Amina in the following order:

Month	Prophet	Message
1. Rajab	Adam	Brought the good news: she was pregnant with the lord of the two worlds, this one and the next.
2. Sha'abān	Shīth (Sheth)	Proclaimed the future birth of the progeny of 'Adnān, the joyous light, the one with cheeks like fresh roses.
3. Ramaḍān	Nūḥ (Noah)	Her son will be the ship of divine knowledge (<u>safīnīt il-'ilm</u>), the messenger of love and peace, the lord of all the prophets and the intercessor on the Last Day.
4. Shawwāl	Ibrāhīm (Abraham)	His light existed even before Adam's creation. He interceded for Adam. He will be matchless in his generosity. He will be the most honourable human who will fight the unbelievers.
5. Dhū l-Qi'da	Ismā'īl (Ishmael)	He will be the most noble Arab, the intercessor on the Last Day, the most eloquent of Allah's creatures.
6. Dhū l-Ḥijja	Dāwūd (David)	Her son will be the lord of creation. Even rocks shall become soft beneath his feet.
7. Muḥarram	Sulaymān (Solomon)	Her son will be the best among all the prophets. Angels will serve him. The wind will be under his command.
8. Şafar	Mūsā (Moses)	Even Adam asked for her son's intercession. God created him from His divine Light. Muḥammad, my brother, shall be exalted by the Lord.

9. Rabī' al-Awwal (Jesus) For the sake of Muḥammad, God created Paradise. You will soon give birth to him.<1>

Amina's pregnancy was free of pain and so was her labour. She was attended by the houris, the beautiful maidens of Paradise, as well as by a very special group of dāyāt (midwives) some of whom, in fact, either mothered or nursed other prophets: the Virgin Mary; Asiya, the Pharaoh's pious wife who nursed Moses; and even Sarah, Abraham's wife. Angels, led by Gabriel, descended from Heaven to congratulate Amina and to parade the newborn around the universe. Light came out of Amina. It was the light she had received from 'Abd Allāh. Idols fell and broke. All women who gave birth that day had baby boys.

il-kull-i ḥamalit walad lagl in-nabī l-'adnān
min agl-i 'aṣaba biy'ulū yinkirim faddān.<23:a>

For the sake of the 'Adnānī Prophet
All (women) gave birth to baby boys
It is said that for the sake of a reed
a whole acre is blessed.

Birds came down from Paradise. The smell of musk permeated the world, and the cup of joy circulated around. Even the pigeons sang.

The Prophet's birth prefigured disasters to some rulers of the unbelieving world surrounding Muḥammad's homeland. Interestingly, not only Chosroes of the Sassanids but also Pharaoh of ancient Egypt saw his court ruined the moment when Muḥammad was born, a sign that their empires would be

overtaken by the future Muslims:

lammā l-khēr bi milādu bān
waḡaḡ dīwān kisrā w faraḡōn <2:a>

When the good signs about his birth appeared
The courts of Chosroes and Pharaoh came tumbling down.

Muḥammad was born already circumcised, his eyes were kohled, i.e. were naturally dark without kohl, and his umbilical cord was already cut. Ḥabd al-Bārī Miḡawwaḡ, from al-Minyā (Upper Egypt), sings this famous piece, sung also by Fanjarī from Sohāj (Upper Egypt):

amdaḡ nabī kāmīl mukammal muktaḡal
waḡaḡathu āminatun mukhattan muktaḡal
maḡṭūḡatun surratahu, mutawwag bi l-bahāḡ
wa muḡayydan bi l-ḡilmi ayḡḡan wa l-ḡamal. <1:a>

I praise a prophet who is perfected,
made integral whole (by God)
When Āmina gave birth to him, he was
already circumcised and kohled
His umbilical cord was already severed;
he was crowned with splendour
Equipped was he with divine knowledge,
and the will to act.

The Prophet's light beamed everywhere:

waḡaḡathu ummu l-ḡaḡīma
anār il-wuḡūd fi l-lēl. <12:a>

His exalted mother gave birth to him
He illuminated the universe during
the darkness of night.

His light had the smell of musk, as the maddāḡ Faṭḡī Slīmān
(Province of Sharḡiyya) sings:

nūr in-nabī nawwār
 malā l-gihāt anbar
 wi l-misk-i w il-anbar
 min ṭīb bahiyy in-nūr.<41:a>

The Prophet's light shone
 It filled all the regions with
 the smell of ambergris
 Musk and ambergris are nothing but
 The scent of him who is resplendent.

And Shēkh Sayyid ʿEṭa (Province of Gharbiyya) sings about
 the splendid light of the baby Muḥammad whom he likens to
 the moon. Muḥammad's light is called the light of guidance:

nūr il-hidāyā ṣahar
 yiḥarrar il-insān
 min ṣulm aḥkūh
 illī ʿāmil ilāh wi gabān.<16:a>

The light of guidance appeared
 in order to free man
 From the injustice of his brother,
 a coward who acted like a god.

The baby Muḥammad was born already fasting as Shēkh
 Faṭḥī Shihāta ʿAṭiyya from Kafr Bahīda (Province of
 Gharbiyya) sings:

anā b-amdaḥ illī nizil ṣāyim wi rabbu hadāh
 shabʿāni taqwā w min ḥōḍ in-naʿīmi saqāh.<6:a>

I praise the one who was born fasting and his Lord
 had put him on the right path
 He was fed to his fill with godliness and (the Lord)
 quenched his thirst from the basin of bliss.

When he finally was given to Ḥalīma, his wet nurse, he would
 only suckle from her right breast. Many singers mention
 this intriguing detail in their repertoire:

ḥalīma dakhalit gat shaylāh
 riḍiḥ laban min sadyihā āh
 kān il-yimīn bass illī kafāh
 ammā sh-shimāl rafaḍu wi nafāh. <16:a>

Ḥalīma entered, went up to him and picked him up
 He suckled from her breast, yes,
 Only the right breast satisfied him
 But he rejected the left one, pushed it aside.

Miḥawwaḍ (Minyā) reiterates the same idea:

yaqrub ilā ṣ-ṣidr il-yamīn bi-raḥfatin
 yafṭur ḥalā mā kān fīhi wa qad ḥaṣal. <32:a>

He'd hold on to the right breast with tenderness
 Suckle from it what (milk) it may have,
 this indeed happened.

At least one maddāh explains why the baby Muḥammad clung only to the right breast. Being unselfish and fair-minded, even at that age, the baby Muḥammad had to leave the left breast for Ḥalīma's son, his step-brother. Shēkh Ḥaṭṭā (Gharbiyya) tells his audience:

riḍiḥ in-nabī bizz wāhid wi ḥal "il-ḥamdu llāh",
 we marḍāsh yimsik il-bizz it-tānī ya-sammīḥa yā
 llī bitwaḥḥidū llāh. lēh? marḍāsh yimsik il-bizz
 it-tānī lēh? ḥaṣhān akhūh, ibn-i ḥalīma r-raḍīḥ
 ibnahā. <16:a>

The Prophet suckled from one breast and said:
 "Thanks be to God", and he did not want to touch
 the other breast, O listeners who bear witness to
 the Oneness of God. Why? Why didn't he touch the
 other breast? Because of his brother, Ḥalīma's
 son, the suckling baby, her baby.

The baby Muḥammad was strikingly beautiful. His eyes
 were dark as though kohled "kaḥīl al-ḥēn"; his cheeks rosy,

his forehead radiant; he was like a moon in his splendour <16:a>. His lips were like rubies and he had space between his teeth (aflaq) <25:a>. When he was delivered he looked up to his Lord in supplication. He was an exceptional baby. When he was three months old, he was able to stand on his feet, at five months he could walk, at nine he could speak eloquent and correct Classical Arabic.<16:a>

Muḥammad's birth alarmed not only the faraway Chosroes and Pharaoh, but also local Jews. They recognized the baby Muḥammad as the long-awaited prophet who was destined to challenge their position and unmask their distorted beliefs. According to Shēkh Ḥeṭṭā, the Jews set out to kill him in his infancy but before they could lay a finger on him, God sent down a fire that consumed them. <16:a>

The maddāḥīn are intrigued by the name Muḥammad. It was God who advised Āmina to call her son Muḥammad as Shēkh al-Ḥirāsī (Samannūd, Gharbiyya) sings <23:a>. The Prophet in the repertoire has several names: with God he is called Ṭāhā, with the angels he is Aḥmad, in Heaven he is Maḥmūd and on earth, Muḥammad. With the exception of Ṭāhā, which is derived from the Qur'ān's mysterious letters, ṭā and hā, the other names are all derived from the Arabic root ḤMD, which denotes both thanking and praising. Thus Muḥammad is in fact a passive participle which means "he who is praised", as does Maḥmūd, and Aḥmad means "the more laudable one". It is believed that on the Last Day, the Prophet will intercede on behalf of his community and lead it into Paradise under the banner of praise "liwā, al-ḥamd"

<2>. A favourite technique of the maddāhīn is to devise meanings for each letter of the Prophet's name, as Shēkh Eṭa (Gharbiyya) sings:

ismu badaḥ bi mīm
 nūru ḥalēna ḥamīm
 wi nūru wayya bahāh
 tānī ḥurūfu ḥāḥ
 hayiḥmī biḥ man shāḥ
 tālit ḥurūfu mīm
 muftāḥ li-raḥma ḥaḥīm. <16:a>.

His name starts with "m"
 His light envelopes all of us
 His light as well as his resplendence
 The second letter (in his name) is "ḥ"
 With it he will protect whomever he wishes
 The third letter is "m"
 It is a great key to mercy
 (the singer does not mention the final letter "d")

It should be noted that there are some differences between the maddāhīn's story of the Prophet's birth and its equivalents in the classical accounts, notably in the biography of Ibn Ishāq as it was edited by Ibn Hishām. In what follows we will discuss some of the details of the maddāhīn's story and compare and contrast them to their parallels in the biographies written by Ibn Ishāq and others.

There are some intimations about the primordial light of Muḥammad in Ibn Ishāq's biography, although we must hasten to add that he cautiously prefaced his account with the disclaimer "zaḥamū" (they alleged), a code word used to cast doubt on the authenticity of the account. It is said,

Ibn Ishāq tells us, that when Amina was giving birth to the baby Muḥammad, there came out of her a light which illumined the castles of Buṣrā (Bostra) in Syria.<3> There is no elaboration on the concept of the primordial light having existed before the creation as the maddāhīn relate in their songs. Nor does Ibn Ishāq mention any of the details about the baby Muḥammad being born already circumcised or that his mother was helped by angels or by Mary or Āsiyā (the Pharaoh's believing wife).

Interestingly, yet not surprisingly, one discovers that it is in the late biographies of the Prophet that one comes across these miraculous details in the life of the Prophet as the Egyptian maddāhīn tell it. For example, the story about the baby Muḥammad being born already circumcised is found in a late biography entitled as-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya an-Nabawiyya sometimes known as Insān al-ʿUyūn fī Sīrat al-Amīn wa l-Maʾmūn <4> written by Ibn Burhān al-Ḥalabī who was born in Cairo in 1567 and worked as a professor in al-Madrasa aṣ-Ṣalāhiyya until he died in 1634. He composed several works of commentaries and supercommentaries but he is best known for his biography of the Prophet.<5> It is in his biography that we find most of the details in the maddāhīn's story of the Prophet's birth. The circumcision story is cited there on the authority of the jurist Anas ibn Mālik who reports the Prophet's saying: "A sign of the honour conferred on me by my Lord is that I was born (already) circumcized and that no one had seen my genitalia", <6> and the polymath jurist and Qurʾān exegete

Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī (d.1505) may also be cited as confirming this detail on the authority of several transmitters.<7>

The presence of Maryam (Mary), the mother of ʿIsā (Jesus) and of Asiyā, the Pharaoh's believing wife, who secretly took care of the baby Mūsā (Moses), is attested in as-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya on the authority of Ibn al-Muḥaddith. According to this account Amina said:

Tall women, who looked like women of the house of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, came to me. Faces more luminous than theirs I have not seen. One of them came near me and I leaned against her. Labour pain overtook me and grew stronger. It was as though one of them came near me and handed me some water to drink; the water was whiter than milk, cooler than ice and sweeter than honey. The woman said to me: "Drink", so I drank, then the third woman said: "Drink more" and she rubbed my abdomen and said: "In the Name of God, come out by the will of God, may He be exalted". They, the women, said to me: "We are Asiyā, the Pharaoh's wife, and Maryam, daughter of ʿImrān".<8>

The significance of this detail lies not only in the notion that the God-favoured Prophet was served by mothers or nurses of previous prophets <9> but also in the belief that he will be married in Paradise to both of these women as well as to Kulthum, the sister of the prophet Mūsā, as reported by al-Ḥalabī <10> and Ibn Kathīr in his Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā. <11>

The curious detail about the baby Muḥammad nursing only from Ḥalīma's right breast and the explanation given by Shēkh ʿEṭā can be found in another late biography, that of

Imām Aḥmad Zaynī, known as Daḥlān, who was the Shafi'ite muftī in Makka. It is entitled as-Sīra an-Nabawiyya wa l-Āthār al-Muḥammadiyya and in the section about the Prophet's childhood we are told the following:

Ḥalīma said: "I gave him my right breast and he took it, suckling as much as he liked, I, then, turned him to the left breast but he rejected it. This has been his habit ever since". People of knowledge said that God had intimated to him that he had a partner (in suckling) and he (therefore) behaved fairly. <12>

2. The Prophet's Marriage:

In the repertoire which I managed to collect, there are two ballads that narrate stories about the Prophet's first wife Khadīja. One ballad is composed by a certain Shēkh ʿAbd Allāh ibn Aḥmad (known as al-ʿArabī) and published - undated - in an old pulp edition by Maktabat Tāj in Ṭanṭā. It is entitled al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja fī Naẓm Zawāj an-Nabī Ṣallā Allāh ʿAlayh wa Sallam bi s-Sayyida Khadīja wa Dhikr Safarīh ilā sh-Shām. Enno Littmann recorded another version of this ballad in Cairo in 1938, which he later published in 1950 under the title Mohammed im Volksepos: ein neuarabisches Heiligenlied.<13> Here I will rely on Ibn Aḥmad's version because it is clear to me that it is "more complete", for Littmann's version in comparison misses whole lines or even stanzas which affect the narrative continuity,

let alone the metre and rhyme scheme. The other ballad, entitled "Qiṣṣat Zawāj an-Nabī bi s-Sayyida Khadīja" <14> is composed and sung by Shēkh al-Ṣirāsi, and bears much resemblance to al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja". The third ballad is about ʿĀ'isha; it is sung by Shēkh Fathī Shihāta Ḥaṭṭiya <6:a> from the village of Kafr Bhēda, near Mīt Ghamr in the Province of Gharbiyya.

The ballad, "al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja", starts with the traditional invocation of the Prophet's name and the expressed hope that the Prophet may intercede on behalf of the maddāh on the Day of Judgement. We are told that Muḥammad wants to settle down and marry. As would a contemporary Egyptian young man, Muḥammad duly consults his family about his marriage plans. Being an orphan, he goes to his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, to seek his advice. Abū Ṭālib reacts favourably and promises to defray the wedding costs. Other uncles are subsequently notified: Ḥamza, al-Ḥabbās and even the wicked Abū Lahab, described as the wealthiest. Abū Lahab promises to pay for all the wedding costs only if Muḥammad is willing to go with him to show respect to the idols. With a pious admonition, Muḥammad chides Abū Lahab and refuses his conditions, vowing to earn the money needed himself by the sweat of his brow and the labour of his right, i.e., pure hand. Muḥammad is already called the Prophet by the singer/narrator, as well as the interlocutors in the ballad, even though he is reported in the classical accounts to have received the Revelation only after his marriage to Khadīja, in fact fifteen years after the

marriage, when he was forty years old.

One of Khadīja's slaves goes to tell her about Muḥammad. On the basis of the slave's description, Khadīja falls in love with Muḥammad and sends for him, but, for a while, he demures, being too timid to see her. They finally meet and she asks him to work for her by selling her merchandise in Syria to which he agrees.

With a small trading caravan that includes in its company some of his uncles and even his opponent, Abū Jahl, Muḥammad set out for Syria. He is shown to have extraordinary physical strength; his strength surpasses even the strength of forty prophets, each of whom is endowed with the strength of forty men. He also performs a number of miracles. At his behest, water gushes out of the scorched earth and date trees spring up instantly. During his journey, he meets many people to whom he preaches the message of Islam. Men, jinn and even animals recognize him as the Messenger of God. As in the Sīra of Ibn Ishāq, he is shown to preach Islam to Baḥīra, but unlike the account in the Sīra, he craftily disarms him in a conversation and even manages to convert him, along with his fellow monks, to Islam:

ṭī'ū kalāmī w 'ūlū kilmit it-tawḥīd
da llī tu'ānis likum fī l-karb wi t-tawḥīd
'ālū shahadnā b inn allāh ḥamīd wi magīd
w inn aḥmad rasūl allāh wi ḥabībnā
wi maggidū b it-tuhāmī ghāyit it-tamgīd.<15>

Listen to me and say the testimony to the oneness of God

It will keep you company at the time of adversity
 and loneliness"
 They said: "God is praiseworthy and glorious
 And Aḥmad is the messenger of God and our beloved"
 And they profusely extolled the Tihāmī.

He also succeeds in fighting off the treachery of those who conspire to kill him. Abū Jahl, the bete noire of the Sīra is constantly humbled and his conspiracies against Muḥammad thwarted. A wicked Jew and his one-eyed wife, who attempt to kill Muḥammad by throwing a rock on him from the roof of their house, are taught a severe lesson. The rock misses the divinely protected prophet and kills the Jew's two children instead. Not only Muḥammad, the Prophet, but also Muḥammad the merchant is divinely guided. The angel Gabriel feeds him with, as it were, precious "inside information" about the Syrian market. For instance, the angel tells Muḥammad when it is more profitable to sell and when to hold off. To increase the value of the camels which Muḥammad sells, the angel causes the Syrian camels to lose their appetite and grow weak and emaciated. The panicky Syrian buyers rush to purchase Muḥammad's camels and other merchandise. In this way Muḥammad manages to make a handsome profit; an item which is usually valued at 10 dirhems now sells for 1,000.

Back in Mecca, the anxious Khadīja receives Muḥammad with great joy. In passionate language, she expresses her burning love for him and proposes marriage. Once again, as

would a dutiful Egyptian young man, Muḥammad goes to consult his uncles. One uncle objects that Khadīja is "a fickle girl" but goes along with Muḥammad's desire to marry her anyway. The men agree to go to Khuwaylid, Khadīja's father, to ask for her hand. When the men arrive, they find Khuwaylid sitting in front of his house, inebriated and with a cup of wine in hand. This is a significant detail that may be intended to prefigure the upcoming tension and conflict, since wine-drinking is a taboo in Islam. Khuwaylid is shown to stand for Mecca's pagan values; values which run counter to Muḥammad and his message. As expected, Khuwaylid refuses Muḥammad's marriage proposal on the grounds that Muḥammad, being poor, is not an equal social match for Khadīja and her family. Tempers rise, and some of the uncles want to punish Khuwaylid for being arrogant and impertinent, but Muḥammad dissuades them.

On their way from Khuwaylid's house to Khadīja's, Muḥammad leaves his uncles. A moving detail, designed to achieve pathos, is provided here. We are told that Muḥammad goes to lie down by his mother's grave. Muḥammad, the poor one, the orphan, now feels rejected and unwanted; what else can comfort him but the memory of the mother of whose affection and care he had been deprived ever since he was a toddler? This is perhaps the only time in the narrative when Muḥammad, otherwise the Prophet Triumphant par excellence is shown to be vulnerable.

When al-Abbās goes to fetch Muḥammad, he finds him asleep beside his mother's grave. A snake is spotted

crawling around the sleeping Muḥammad. Alarmed, al-ʿAbbās draws his al-muhannadī (Indian-made sword) to kill the snake which then cries out to Muḥammad for help. The snake turns out to be one of the kings of the jinn. Muḥammad prevents al-ʿAbbās (referred to in the ballad as Muḥammad's cousin), from killing the genie/snake. Once saved, the snake thanks the Prophet and entreats him to intercede on its behalf on the Day of Judgment:

yā llī iṣṭafāk il-ilāh il-wāḥid il-bārī
illī ilēk fī gamī, l-aw,āt bi ybārī
waffēt bi ‹ahdī allazī kān fī l-›idam gārī
kun lī shafī, yā bn-i rāma fī nihār il-khōf
yōm tarā n-nās tibkī w il-‹ara› gārī. <16>

You who are chosen by the Sole Creator
The One who always bestows His beneficence on you
I have fulfilled my time-old vow
Be my intercessor, O son of Rama, on the Day of
Terror
The day when people will be seen weeping and when their
sweat will stream forth.

Another attempt is made to win Khuwaylid's consent for Khadīja's marriage to Muḥammad. In a patriarchal society - whether 7th century Arabia or 20th century Egypt - a father's consent for his daughter's marriage has to be solicited, even though the daughter may be a forty-year old widow, reputed to be the wealthiest and most influential woman in town. Khadīja sends some of her attendants to her father to ask for his permission.

Khuwaylid does not relent and insults the men Khadija has sent - why Khadija could not talk to her father directly is not explained. Muhammad's uncles are now very angry.

They scramble to beat Khuwaylid. Ḥamza draws his Yemeni-made sword. Khuwaylid becomes frightened but laughs (presumably nervously, out of fear), then runs away.

Here, as the narrative draws to an end, Abū Jahl, the pagan chief whose plots to kill Muḥammad have failed, springs onto the scene. He is seen chasing the accursed Khuwaylid while tears are streaming down his cheeks. This is rather puzzling. Why does Abū Jahl chase Khuwaylid or weep so profusely? The answer to all of these confusing details can be sought in Ibn Aḥmad's version. It contains lines which are not found in Littmann's version. According to Ibn Aḥmad's version Khadīja manages to have her father's consent to her marriage through the help of her uncle Waraqa Ibn Nawfal (he is in fact her cousin, according to the classical sources). But the drunk father changes his mind once he becomes sober. He is seen at Khadīja's door once again objecting to her marriage to Muḥammad. Khadīja secretly slips 900 dinars into al-ʿAbbās' hand requesting that he give the money to her father as though it were a gift from Muḥammad's family. Khuwaylid accepts the money gladly and blesses the marriage. Meanwhile, driven by envy, Abū Jahl comes by to thwart Muḥammad's marriage plans. He sarcastically advises Muḥammad's uncles to marry him off, not to the wealthy Khadīja but to any woman from the poor Arabs of the Ghaṭafān tribe. The uncles are now very angry and they scramble to kill Khuwaylid; he becomes so frightened that he bursts out in nervous laughter.

Both versions then show Abū Jahl stopping at one of the

many Meccan idols. He looks at it with revulsion, then takes off his naʿl (shoes) with the intention of beating it - a supreme insult in Arab cultural symbolism. Iblīs, who is known to take on the form of these idols, becomes very frightened of Abū Jahl and takes flight. Abū Jahl continues to beat the idol, calling it "yā azrat il-aṣnām" (You most stinking fart among idols). Is he now recanting his polytheistic beliefs and practices? Are the tears streaming down his cheeks tears of repentance? Is he about to embrace Islam? We are not directly told. The last we hear of Abū Jahl is that after his sudden change of heart, he stays home for three days in utter dejection and confusion.

Echoing almost to the letter the typical end of Egyptian folk tales where the hero marries his love and both "ʿāshū fī t-tabāt wi n-nabāt wi khallifū ṣubyān wi banāt", (lived happily ever after and had boys and girls), the ballad ends with the Prophet finally being able to marry Khadīja. Heaven and Earth are bedecked for the occasion, and joy is present everywhere; even the ḥūr, the beautiful maidens that are promised to pious Muslim men in Paradise, are seen singing for the happy occasion:

tamm il-faraḥ li t-tuhāmī sayyid il-kawnēn
 ʿashara rabīʿ il-ūlā f lēlit l-itnēn
 nizil min is-samā fī ʿurs-i ṭāḥā z-zēn
 w itzayyinit-lu l-arāḍī w is-sabaʿ samawāt
 wi l-ḥūr ghannit wi ʿālit ifraḥī yā ʿēn. <17>

Joy was accomplished for the Tihāmī,
 master of the two worlds
 On the tenth day of Rabīʿ al-Awwal,

Monday night
 For the wedding of Ṭāhā the beautiful one,
 the inhabitants of Heaven descended
 The Earth(s) and the Seven Heavens were adorned
 for his sake
 The houris sang and said: "Be merry, o heart".

Many of the details in this section about the Prophet's marriage to Khadīja are to be found in the classical accounts. There are some differences though. Unlike the story narrated in Ibn Ishāq's Sīra, the maddāhīn tell of Khuwaylid Ibn Asad, Khadīja's father, as the one who was objecting to her marriage to Muḥammad but who finally married her off while he was drunk. Such a detail is actually found in the account of az-Zuhri, one of the earliest biographers of the Prophet, as mentioned by al-Ḥalabī.<18> But Shēkh al-ʿIrasī affirms to his audience that it was Khadīja's uncle, ʿAmr ibn Asad, who married her off to the Prophet because her father Khuwaylid was dead.<23:a>

The conversion of the monk Baḥīrā to Islam is not explicitly mentioned in the classical accounts which I have consulted; therefore, it seems to be a detail peculiar to the Egyptian maddāhīn. I have found, however, allusions in the classical accounts to some controversial reports which claim that the famed monk Baḥīrā became one of the Prophet's ṣaḥāba (companions), that is to say, that he must have converted to Islam. These reports are denied by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī in his al-Iṣāba which studies the lives of the

Prophet's companions.<19> The monk who is reported to have converted is Naṣṭūrā, this on the authority of an-Naysābūrī.<20>

The ballad hints at another conversion; that of Abū Jahl. At the end of the ballad one is left with the impression that the wicked Abū Jahl repented and abandoned the worship of idols. Ibn Ishāq's account does not say anything about Abū Jahl's conversion - or Baḥīrā's for that matter - for Abū Jahl is said to have remained Muḥammad's arch enemy until he was killed by Muḥammad's army at the battle of Badr. <21>

3. The Prophet's Flight Into Medina:

There are two ballads in the repertoire which deal with the flight of the Prophet into Medina. One is sung by Shēkh Muḥammad (Abd Allāh; the other by Haniyyāt Shaḥbān, a singer who lives near Biyalā (Kafr ash-Shēkh). Both ballads are remarkably similar in content as well as in wording.

The ballads narrate that when the Prophet has been called upon by God to propagate Islam amongst the pagans of Mecca, he is met by much hostility. The wicked Abū Jahl conspires to kill him but God sends Jibrīl in order to forewarn the Prophet. Along with his friend Abū Bakr, Muḥammad then flees Mecca. The pagans of Mecca set out to catch both men who take refuge in a cave on the way to Medina. Their pursuers would have caught them in the cave

Wearied by the relentless pursuit, the fatigued Prophet falls asleep in the cave, resting his head on Abū Bakr's lap. A dangerous snake creeps out of its pit being irresistibly attracted to Muḥammad's beauty and resplendence. Alarmed by the approaching snake, Abū Bakr hastens to block its pit. The snake bites Abū Bakr but he courageously bears the pain and does not move away from the snake lest he should disturb the sleeping Prophet. At any rate, the Prophet is awakened when Abū Bakr's silent tears fall down on the Prophet's face. Turning to Abū Bakr, the Prophet sees what has happened and then

ʔāl yā abū bakr lā baʔs ʔalēk
 ʔalbī w rabbī rāḏī ʔalēk
 ʔandī dawā rabbinā yishfīk
 matkhafsh-i mish massak aḏrār
 dahan in-nabī l-garḥ-i b rīʔu
 ṭāb il-alam min ṭīb rīʔu
 subḥān man aṭʔā l-mukhtār.<2:a>

He said: "O Abū Bakr, may no harm
afflict you
My heart and my Lord are satisfied with you
I have a remedy for, may our Lord cure you
Do not fear; no harm shall afflict you"
The Prophet applied his saliva to the wound
Pain subsided because of his aromatic saliva
Exalted is the One who has bestowed (this power)
on the chosen Prophet.

The snake asks the Prophet for forgiveness and entreats him to intercede on its behalf on the Last Day. Muḥammad forgives the snake and promises it paradise.

During their three-day stay in the cave, Asmā, Abū Bakr's daughter, brings them food and water. She is spotted by Abū Jahl who interrogates her about Muḥammad's whereabouts. When she refuses to tell him, he slaps her so severely that her ear-rings fly and she bleeds so painfully.

Abū Jahl and his followers hire a man by the name of Surāqa ibn Mālik to track down Muḥammad in return for one hundred camels. On his fast horse, Surāqa sets out on his mission and soon he manages to catch up with Muḥammad and Abū Bakr. The hoofs of Surāqa's horse are mysteriously stuck in the sand as he is about to capture Muḥammad. It then dawns on him that he is up against an unusual man, and, then and there he utters the Muslim testimony of faith that there is no deity but God and that Muḥammad is the messenger of God. He even expresses his love for the Prophet:

yā ḥabībī yā rasūl allāh
 yā shafī'ī yā bn-i 'abd-i llāh
 yōm liqā' allāh
 yā ḥabīb allāh, yā rasūl allāh.<2:a>

O my beloved, O son of 'Abd Allāh
 O my intercessor, O son of 'Abd Allāh
 On the day of meeting the Lord
 O beloved of God, O messenger of God.

Finally Muḥammad and Abū Bakr arrive in Medina where they are greeted by singing crowds. A she-camel, with a

sedan chair covered with Indian-made silk, is brought to Muḥammad to ride. In order to decide where to build a new house for the Prophet, the Medinans let the she-camel roam around unbridled until it stops at a certain spot; there they build the Prophet's house.

There are some Qur'anic references to the event of the Prophet's flight into Medina, some of which are cited by the maddāhīn. In "Sūrat Yā-Sīn", one finds these verses:

Ya-Sin. By the wise Qur'an. Lo, thou art sent. On a straight path, A revelation of the Mighty, the Merciful, That thou mayst warn a folk whose fathers were not warned, so they are heedless. Already hath the word proved true of most of them, for they believe not. Lo, we have put in their necks carcans reaching unto the chins, so that they are made stiff-necked. And we have set a bar before them and a bar behind them, and (thus) have covered them, for they see not. <Q. 36: 1-9>

The last verse is mentioned by Haniyyāt Shaḥbān when she relates that in order to set the Meccan pursuers off track the Prophet throws a handful of dust into their faces. <40:a> The same detail as well as the same Qur'anic verses are also cited in Ibn Ishāq's account of the Prophet's flight into Medina:

The Prophet of God came upon them (the pursuers) and took a handful of dust... and God took away their sight so that they were not able to see him. The Prophet continued to sprinkle the dust on their heads while he was reciting these verses from "Yā-Sīn"...<22>

That Surāqa ibn Mālik was hired by the Meccan polytheists in order to track down the Prophet and Abū Bakr is also found in Ibn Ishāq's biography of the Prophet <23> but there is no mention that he actually converted to Islam. Moreover there is no mention by Ibn Ishāq or Ibn Hishām of the detail about the snake which bites Abū Bakr and the Prophet's miraculous healing of that poisonous bite. There is only a short reference on the authority of Ibn Hishām to the effect that before letting the Prophet enter the cave, Abū Bakr made sure that there were no snakes or wild beasts in it.<24> Perhaps by creating the story of the snake's bite, the Egyptian maddāhīn may have given themselves the opportunity to add yet another miracle to the Prophet's credit.

4. The Prophet's Miracles

The repertoire of the Egyptian maddāhīn is replete with vivid episodes about the Prophet's miracles. There is a kind of "cluster" of recurrent miracles with which these maddāhīn adorn their repertoire. Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī sings a piece which he suspects may be attributed to the famed jurisconsult Abū Ḥanīfa. The piece mentions ten miracles, referred to as faḍāʾil (lit. virtues).<23:a>

Another singer, Wafāʾ al-Mursī, who has produced a number of commercial tapes, mentions twelve miracles which she calls karāma (pl. karamāt, charismata):

alā yā shawqanā laka yā muḥammad
 rasūlu llāhi man ḥāza l-karāma
 nabiyyunā rtaqā fī gunḥ-i layla
 fa aṭāhu rabbu itnāshar karāma
 ‹alāma min ‹alama min ‹alama
 karāma min karāma min karāma

awwal muḡiza lak yā muḥammad
 mishī ‹a r-raml-i mā-banlūsh ‹alāma

wi tānī muḡiza lak yā muḥammed
 ‹adamu f il-ḥagar bayyan ‹alāma

wi tālit muḡiza lak yā ḥabībī
 izā kān yimshī bitṭillu l-ghamāma

wi rābiḡ muḡiza lak yā muḥammad
 yanṣur khalfu kamā min amāmu

wi khāmis muḡiza lak yā shafīḡī
 yifigg in-nūr min taḥt il-‹amāma

wi sādis muḡiza lak yā muḥammad
 ‹ala kumm in-nabī baḍit il-yamāma

wi sābiḡ muḡiza lak yā ḥabībī
 yashumm iṭ-ṭīb ammā l-makrūh ḥarāma

wi tāmin muḡiza lak yā muḥammad
 ‹ala khadd in-nabī shāma w ‹alāma

wi tāsiḡ muḡiza lak yā ḥabībī
 fī l-ghār khayyam wī bāḍ il-ḥamāma

wi ‹āshir muḡiza lak yā muḥammad
 rufiṭ ilā llāh aḡlā maqāma

wi iḥadā ‹ashr muḡiza l-ittuhāmī
 nizil-lu l-qurʿān muntaẓim intiẓāma

wa ithnā ‹ashr muḡiza l-ittuhāmī
 yakūnu shafīḡunā (sic) yawma l-qiyāma.<33:a>

Our longing for you, O Muḥammad
 The messenger of God who earned divine honour

Our Prophet ascended (to Heaven)
 under the wing of night
 His Lord gave him twelve honourable signs

The first of your miracles, O Muḥammad,
 You Walked on the sands without leaving foot-prints

The second of your miracles, O Muḥammad,

Your feet left imprints on the rocks

The third of your miracles, my beloved,
When you moved about, a cloud was shading you

The fourth of your miracles, O Muḥammad,
You could see behind as well as in front of you

The fifth of your miracles, O my intercessor,
Light burst forth from under (your) turban

The sixth of your miracles, O Muḥammad,
On your sleeve, O Prophet, the dove laid her eggs

The seventh of your miracles, O my beloved,
You smell only the good not the bad smell,

The eighth of your miracles, O Muḥammad,
On your cheek, O Prophet, is a beauty mark
and a sign

The ninth of your miracles, O my beloved,
At the cave pigeons nestled and laid their eggs

The tenth of your miracles, O my beloved,
You were elevated to God, the highest station

The eleventh of the Tihāmī's miracles
The Qur'ān descended on him in perfect order

The twelfth of the Tihāmī's miracles
He will be our intercessor on the Last Day.

To understand the role of the miracle stories in the popular repertoire, we ought to look closely at some of the main recurrent miracles. Of the many miracles, these five seem to be the most prominent: 1. The splitting of the moon (inshiqāq al-qamar); 2. The Prophet and the gazelle (an-nabī wa l-ghazāl); 3. The Prophet and the camel (an-nabī wa l-jamal); 4. The nocturnal journey and the ascension to Heaven (al-isrā' wa l-mi'rāj); 5. The sighing palm trunk (ḥanīn al-jidh).

1. The Splitting of the Moon:

Shēkh Sharaf, who is known to those who frequent the mūlid of as-Sayyid al-Badawī in Ṭanṭā, narrates this miracle in touching detail. Abū Jahl, Muḥammad's arch enemy and the villain de piece of the whole repertoire, incites a man called Ḥabīb ibn Mālik to kill Muḥammad. Ḥabīb has a daughter who is severely handicapped, and so he suggests that if Muḥammad fails to cure her then he, Muḥammad, will be executed as an impostor. He even adds a more crippling demand: Muḥammad must also perform another miracle, that of causing the moon to appear at the end of the month and split into two halves; one half is to enter into his right sleeve and exit from his left sleeve; the other half is to enter his left sleeve and exit from his right sleeve, and then circumambulate the ka'ba seven times. The Prophet smiles for he was reassured of God's help in the Qur'ān: "The hour approached, and the moon was split" (Qur'ān 54:1). Indeed, when night falls, the Prophet brings the moon down to earth:

wi lammā atā l-lēl
 nizil il-amīn gibrīl
 ,āl-lu il-,amar yā gamīl
 taḥt irattak (iradtak) wi munāk
 sakḥkhar lak il-aflāk
 wi rabbak yā nabī m'āk
 naṣarak ,alā l-kafrīn
 inzil yā ,amar
 il-mawlā amar
 ta,āla yā-,amar
 il-mawlā amar
 inzil yā-,amar li z-zēn
 wi shūf kill il-ḥaḍrīn
 iḡhar w-insha,, itnēn
 ṭili, il-,amar ḡāhīr
 ba,ā l-makān ḡāhīr
 amām in-nabī ṭ-ṭāhīr
 wā,if khāḍi, li z-zēn

anā mīn yā ʾamar?
 ʾāl-lu in-nabī l-aṭḥar
 subḥāna man ʾaṣwar
 nūrak yā nūr il-ʿēn.40:a>

When night fell
 Gabriel, the trustworthy, descended,
 Said to (the Prophet): "The moon, O Beautiful One,
 Is at your beck and call
 He (God) has subdued the spheres for you
 Your Lord, O Prophet, is with you
 He has made you victorious over the unbelievers
 Come down, O moon,
 Thus the Lord commanded
 Come near, O moon,
 Thus the Lord has commanded
 Come down, O moon, for the sake of the
 Beautiful One
 Come and see all those present"
 The moon appeared and split into two
 It beamed, made itself manifest
 The place became clearly visible
 In front of the pure Prophet,
 The moon stood, and surrendered itself
 "Who am I, O moon?"
 The moon said: "The purest prophet
 Exalted is He who fashioned
 Your light, O light of the eye"

The moon splits into two: one half enters into the Prophet's right sleeve and the other half into the left sleeve. Both halves stay there, content to be so close to the beloved Prophet. When the Prophet tries to get the moon out of his sleeves by shaking his hands several times, the moon does not budge, for it desires the Prophet's company:

khallīnī wayyāk
 ikhrug barra yā ʾamar
 ʾām radd ʾalēh wi ʾāl
 khallīnī wayyāk
 ʾāl in-nabī, ikhrug barra
 il-ʾamar ṭili min ikmāmu u sagad.
 <41:a>

"Let me be with you"
 "Get out, O moon"
 The moon answered the Prophet saying
 "Let me be with you"
 The Prophet said: "Get out"
 The moon exited from his sleeves and
 prostrated to him.

Moreover, the handicapped daughter of Ḥabīb ibn Mālik is brought to the Prophet who lovingly healed her:

baʾat saḥīḥa ʾāl
 bi amr-i min il-mutaʾāl
 sāḥit yā ḥāḍirīn
 fiḍilit tishhad wi tʾūl
 ṣaḥḥaḥnī ṭāhā r-rasūl
 duʾū-lu ṭ-ṭubūl
 aḥmad kaḥil al-ʾēn. <41:a>

She became totally cured
 As the Most High willed it
 She shouted: "O people present"
 She repeatedly uttered her testimony:
 "Ṭāhā, the Messenger, healed me
 Beat the drums in his honour,
 Aḥmad whose eyes are kohl-colored"

"ṣaḥḥaḥnī" means "he healed me" but could also mean "he made me whole, wholesome". The daughter of the pagan chief was not only "fractured" physically but also spiritually. The physical healing here is reflected spiritually, for the girl recants her pagan past and embraces the religion of the divinely-guided Messenger of Allah. The image of the Prophet as a ṭabīb (physician) appears time and again in the

repertoire (see the section on the Prophet's attributes below).

The miracle of the splitting of the moon is attested by a number of classical sources which cite the authority of the Qur'anic verse: "The hour approached and the moon was split" (S. 54:1) as well as the Prophet's hadīth (reports about his sayings and deeds) relating to the subject. In the collections of the hadīth widely believed to be authoritative by Muslims, we find the following citations of this miracle: in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, three reports are cited, 830, 831, 832, on the authority of ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd, Mālik ibn Anas, and Ibn ʿAbbās, respectively.<25> In al-Musnad of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, an account of this miracle is cited on the authority of Ibn Masʿūd:

haddathanā sufyan ʿan ibn abī najīḥ ʿan mujāhid ʿan abī maʿmar ʿan ibn masʿūd: inshaqqa al-qamar ʿalā ʿahdī rasulī l-llāhī ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa sallama shiqqatayn, ḥattā naẓarū ilayhi, fa qāla rasūlu allāhī ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa sallama: ishḥadū.<26>

Sufyān related to us on the authority of Ibn Abī Najīḥ who related it on the authority of Mujāhid who related it on the authority of Abī Maʿmar who in turn related it on the authority of Ibn Masʿūd: During the lifetime of the Messenger of God, may God's blessings and greetings be upon him, the moon had split into two sections and when (people) looked at it, the Messenger of God, may God's blessings and greetings be upon him, said: Bear witness.

The same report is also cited by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī's Dalā'il an-Nubuwwa, <27> al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's ash-Shifā bi Ta'rīf Ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā, <28> and Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī's al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā <29>, mostly on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās.

None of the classical accounts which I have consulted mentions the curious details about the moon entering or clinging to the Prophet's sleeves as Shēkh Sharaf's ballad narrates.

2. The Prophet and the Gazelle:

Both Shēkh Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī, who is known to sūfī groups in and around Cairo, and Faṭḥī Slīmān from the Province of Sharqiyya, sing the beautiful story of a female gazelle which was caught in the snare of a wicked Jew while she was searching for food for her baby gazelles. The Prophet happens to pass by her and, moved by her entreaties, offered to be kept as a hostage in her place so that she might go and feed her young. Says the kind-hearted Prophet to the wicked Jew:

in-nabī ʾāl yā yahūdī
ḥillahā min il-qiyūdi
khallihā itrūḥ <trūḥ> wi t'ūdi
wi khallini <andak rahīna. <14:a>

The Prophet said: "O Jew,
Release her from her fetters,
Let her go and come back,

Take me hostage in her place"

But to her surprise, her young refuse to nurse while their beloved Prophet is kept as a hostage. The oldest one speaks out:

ḡālīt ik-kibīra b kull-i tamām
labanik yā māmā
labanik yā mma ḡalēna ḡarām
ṭūl mā ḡāminna bāhī t-tamām
ḡand il-yahūdī rahīna. <14:a>

The eldest said, with full determination (?)
"Your milk, mother, is forbidden to us
As long as our guarantor, the fully resplendent one,
Is a hostage with the Jew"

and in Faṭḡī Slīmān's version, all of the young chide the mother gazelle:

ḡālū l-ḡiyāl lēh yā mminā
tirhanī nabiyyinā
rūḡī rizḡina ḡalā rabbinā
w aho rāziḡ id-dūd fī l-ḡagar. <41:a>

The young gazelles said: "Why did you, mother,
Leave our Prophet a hostage
Go back; our livelihood is in God's hands
He provides (even) for the worms inside the rocks."

The gazelle and her young then decide to go and release the Prophet from bondage. Overwhelmed by the sight of the returning gazelle and her young, the Jew embraces Islam right then and there:

il-yahūdī ḡāl yā muḡammad
inta ḡabīb wi ḡētnā muḡammad
min ḡand rabbak ḡēt yā muḡammad
inta ḡabīb ir-rūḡ yā muḡammad
inta ḡharāmī w ḡabībī yā muḡammad

inta imānī yā ḥabībī yā muḥammad
wi rabbak anā muḥmin bih.

Refrain:

lā illāha illā llāh
muḥammad rasūlu llāh

naṭaḥ shahāda l-innabī f il-ḥāl
>āman bi wāḥid yā rōḥī mutaḥāl
>āman il-yahūdī b-innabī f il-ḥāl
lammā b >ēnu shāhid il-ghazāl
wi muḥammad rasūlu llāh. <14:a>

The Jew said: "O Muḥammad
You are (our) beloved, you came to us,
O Praised One
Upon orders from your Lord you came,
O Muḥammad
You are (my) soulmate, O Muḥammad
You are my dear beloved, O Muḥammad
You are my faith, O beloved Muḥammad
I testify that I believe in your Lord

Refrain:

There is no god but God,
Muḥammad is His Messenger

The Jew uttered the testimony of faith
at once
He professed his faith in the One God,
the Most High
The Jew professed his faith in the Prophet
at once
When, with his own eyes, he saw the gazelle,
And Muḥammad, the Messenger of God.

The classical sources which cite the story of the Prophet and the gazelle are many.<30> The hunter in these sources is reported to have been a bedouin, not a Jew as Shēkh ad-Disūqī's ballad narrates. Here is a ḥadīth on the authority of aṭ-Ṭabarānī, al-Bayhaqī and Ibn Ḥajar (who corrected some of its details) based on an account given by Umm Salama, one of the Prophet's wives:

kāna an-nabī ṣallā llāhu ‹alayhi wa sallama fī ṣaḥrā›, fa nādathu ṣabyatun: yā rasūla llāh. qāla: mā ḥājatuki? qālat ṣādanī hādhā l-aṣṣabī, wa lī khishfāni fī dhālika al-jabal, fa aṭliqnī ḥattā adhhaba fa urḍiṣṣumā wa arji. qāla: wa tafṣalīna? qālat: naṣam, fa aṭlaḡahā fa dhahabat wa rajaṣat fa awthaḡahā, fa ntabaha al-aṣṣabī wa qāla: yā rasūla llāh; a-laka ḥājatun? qāla: tuṭliḡ ḥādhīhi aṣṣabya. fa aṭlaḡahā fa kharajat taḡdū fī ṣṣaḥrāṣi, wa taḡūl: aṣḥḥadu an lā illāha illā llāh, wa annaka rasūlu allāh. <31>

The Prophet, may God's blessings and greetings be upon him, was in the desert when a young gazelle called out to him: "O Messenger of God". He said: "What do you need?". She said: "This bedouin captured me. I have two youngsters on this mountain; release me so that I can go and suckle them then return". The Prophet said: "Would you do that?" She said: "Yes" whereupon he released her. She went away then she returned and he (the Prophet) tied her. The bedouin then was alerted to that and said: "O Messenger of God, do you need anything?" The Prophet said: "Release this young gazelle", whereupon the bedouin released her. The gazelle ran away in the desert saying: "I bear witness that there is no deity save God and that you (Muḥammad) are the Messenger of God".

Unlike the classical account, the popular ballad stresses the conversion of a wicked Jew and not of a gazelle. Does this detail bespeak a tendency to stereotype the Jew as a cruel money-grabber who shows no compassion, even to a helpless animal? Is the singer here playing on a familiar antagonism against the Jew, familiar in the early Sīra of Ibn Ishāq, but perhaps enhanced in modern times by the Arab-Israeli conflict in recent years?

3. The Prophet and the Camel

Like the gazelle, the camel stands for beauty. The name jamal is derived from the same Arabic root for beauty and beautiful, jamāl, jamīl. <32> There are two stories which involve the Prophet and a camel. The first, to which reference is often made by many maddahīn and which was apparently known in Egypt as early as the sixteenth century <33> tells of a camel that goes to the Prophet to complain about being ill-treated by its owners. The references are brief but recur many times. Shēkh Sharaf (Gharbiyya) sings:

ḡabbil ḡadamu l-baḡīr
wi shakā-lu m-iḡ-ḡalmīn.<40:a>

The camel kissed his feet,
And complained to him about the tormentors.

ḡAbd al-Bārī Miḡawwaḡ (Minyā) invokes the camel story as well as that of the gazelle:

nifsī azūrak w aḡallī l-farḡ-i fī ḡaramak
yā lli l-gamal wi l-ghazāl ḡabbilu ḡadamak.<31:a>

How strongly I wish to visit you and perform
my prayers at your sanctuary

You whose feet the camel and the gazelle kissed.

A longer story which is sometimes known as "Nuṡḡ al-Jamal" (the Camel's Utterance) tells of a bedouin who, yearning to visit the Prophet, sets out on a long journey on the back of a young, agile gaḡūd (young camel). On the way he meets three Jews who, possessed by envy when they set eyes on his

The Jew stood and set out to slap his
 (the bedouin) face
He resorted to trickery and kept tugging
 at his beard
Quickly the Prophet spoke and calmed him down
He said to the Jew: "Shēkh, do you not have
 two witnesses?"

The Jews, of course, produce the necessary witnesses and there seems to be nothing the bedouin can do to challenge their well-attested claim. At that point, a miracle occurs: the camel loosens its tether and comes forward to testify against the Jews:

1



The Jews set off running like mules
The Prophet signaled (to the men): "Stop the
Jews, O men"
They brought them back at once and went on
roping them
In the presence of the Chosen One they
burnt the Nazarenes.

There are several references to complaints uttered by a camel to the Prophet Muḥammad in the classical accounts. We find these in Ibn Kathīr's Shamā'il ar-Rasūl <35>, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ's ash-Shifā, <36>; as-Suyūṭī's al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā <37>, and others. In Ibn al-Jawzī's account we read about several encounters that the Prophet had with camels, all of which purport to be complaints of ill-treatment by the owner. <38>

None, however, mentions the exact details of the three Jewish conspirators and their dishonest attempts to claim the ownership of the camel, as portrayed in the popular ballad we have just discussed. As is the case with the gazelle and the cruel Jew mentioned above, one strongly suspects that the "Utterance of the Camel" is made to perpetuate a negative stereotype about the Jew. This is a stereotype which had been consonant with antagonisms engendered by the Arab-Israeli conflict but which - with the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty - is now felt to be out of pace with the new situation. Hence the expurgation of my text of the ballad, with the result that the dishonest Jews avoid the unpleasant fate reserved for them in earlier Cachia's version. It should be noted that my expurgated version was recorded some years after the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979.

4. The Night Journey and the Ascension to Heaven

The oldest ballad in my possession, which narrates the story of the Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem and his ascension to Heaven, was first recorded by Bouriant from an itinerant folk singer and published along with other ballads in 1893. <39> The same ballad was later to appear in Muḥammad Qindīl al-Baqlī's collection, Adab ad-Darāwīsh, <40> a collection which Pierre Cachia believes has been filched from Bouriant's earlier collection. <41>

The ballad describes the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey (isrā) to Jerusalem and his ascension to Heaven (mi'rāj). It is divided into a maṭla (opening verses) of two distichs, repeated at the end of the ballad, and forty-nine stanzas, each consisting of five distichs.

The last stanza mentions a certain al-Ghubārī as the author of the ballad. Is this the famous fourteenth-century Egyptian zajjāl Abū 'Abd Allāh Khalaf ibn Muḥammad al-Ghubārī? Perhaps he is, for there appears no evidence to the contrary. And if indeed the author is the famous al-Ghubārī, then we may have in our possession not only a rare example of his zajal pieces, most of which are presumed lost, <42> but also the oldest narrative ballad to have become part of the repertoire of modern Egyptian maddāḥīn. <43>

The ballad derives most of its details from the popular account of the Prophet's night journey and ascension to Heaven by the ḥadīth transmitter Ibn 'Abbās <44>, an account

which is reproduced in a pulp edition and circulated among the audience of the maddāhīn (I obtained my copy of Ibn Abbās' Miṣrāj from a street book-vendor during the mawlid celebrations in the town of Ṭanṭā).

The ballad starts with the conventional calling down of blessings on the Prophet and then narrates that the angel Jibrīl came to Muḥammad along with al-Burāq, a fabulous mount which is bigger than an ass, smaller than a horse and with a woman's face, and invited him to ascend to Heaven to meet with the Lord. The Prophet was overjoyed and proceeded to mount al-Burāq:

fa ʾāl in-nabī likī yā burāq il-amān
ghadan ashfaʾ likī min ḥarr il-lahīb
wi fī waṣfahā kānit tiḥīr il-ʾuʾūl
kamā ʾālit aṣḥāb il-kalām il-ʾagīb
lahā wagh-i misl il-ʿedamī f iṣ-ṣifāt
wi ghurra tifūʾ il-badr-i ʾind il-maghīb
wi aqlāʾhā khilʾit il-lāh is-samā
khalaʾahā l-muḥaymin min gawāhir ghawāl
w aqdamhā hum wi l-ḥawāfir ḍurar
khalaʾhum muḥaymin ḥayy ʾādir galāl.<45>

The Prophet said: "I grant you protection,
O Burāq,
Tomorrow I shall intercede for your safety
from the scourging heat of Hellfire
Her description deludes the mind
As was reported by the people of the wonderful
lore
She had a face whose features resembled those
of a human,
A forehead that outshone the full moon
after the sunset
Her sides were the work of the Lord of
the Heavens
The Supreme Ruler created them out of
precious jewels
Her legs and hooves were made of pearls
Created by a Majestic, All-Powerful, Living,

Supreme Ruler.

The Prophet is flown to Jerusalem where he leads in prayer several of the prophets who had preceded him. The ascension to Heaven is made possible by a ladder whose steps are made of gold, silver and chrysolite. The journey from the earth to the first Heaven is said to take five hundred years but, the ballad narrates, the Prophet's has been much speedier.

The inhabitants of the first Heaven welcome the Prophet and tell him that he is the most favoured among God's creation and that he will lead his community into eternal bliss (lit. the right-hand side).

The Prophet enters the third Heaven whose thickness is the distance of a five-hundred-year journey and whose inhabitants have no sustenance but the ceaseless worship of God.

The fourth Heaven is made of gold. In it the Prophet sees a wondrous angel who has one thousand heads, each head having one thousand faces, each face having one thousand eyes, and in each eye there being one thousand believers whose tongues incessantly praise the Lord. The angel holds in his hands a tablet which has inscribed on it the names of all of God's servants. When the Prophet inquires about that angel, he is told that he is 'Izrā'il, the angel of death. The Prophet then asks him the reason why he is holding a tablet and the significance of the lote tree nearby. This is how the scene is narrated:

wa lākin urīdak yā akhī ‹Izrā›īl
 ti,ūl lī ‹an ish-shagara w dā l-lōḥ wa mā
 sababhum wa mā r-rōḥ wa ‹abḍak lahā
 tuqīm fī l-arāḍī aw turūḥ lī s-samā
 fa ‹āl ‹Izrā›īl yā man bi wa ‹du ṣada›
 wi min faḍlu abrā l-‹uyūn mi l-‹amā
 (min il-‹amā)
 a,ūl lak ‹an ish-shagara wi dā l-lōḥ yaqīn
 wa mā aṣluhum yā bn il-kirām il-uṣāl
 u,af w istimi, ‹ōlī fa ‹āl lu na,am
 l ākhir kalāmī yā malīḥ il-khiṣāl.

But I want you, O brother, ‹Izrā›īl,
 To tell me about the tree and the tablet
 And the reasons why they are there, and
 the soul and about your seizing it
 And whether the soul dwells on earth or
 goes up to Heaven
 Said ‹Izrā›īl: "You who fulfill your promises
 And through whose grace the blind were cured
 of their blindness
 I will tell you truly about the tree and the tablet
 And about their origin, you son of genuine noble men
 Stand and listen to what I will say", the Prophet
 said to him: "Yes"
 "Till the end of my speech, O you who are
 good-natured"

khala, rabbinā sh-shagara wi fīhā wara,
 ‹adad kull-i man fī l-arḍ-i yā bn il-kirām
 wi dā l-lōḥ mi, aṣidhā b ism il-‹ibād
 wi fīhā ‹urif ahl iṣ-ṣalā w iṣ-ṣiyām
 izā mā faragh ‹umr ibn ādam ṣa,at
 min il-ghuṣn-i zahra a,raf ismu ‹awām
 fa in kān taqī ab,at min ahl il-yimīn
 wi in kān shaqī ab,at min ahl ish-shimāl
 mulūk yi,baḍū rōḥu bi sm il-‹allī
 wa lā ‹ēshit ahl il-arḍ-i illā khayāl.<46>

Our Lord created the tree; the number of its
 leaves is
 The number of the earth inhabitants, O son of
 honourable people
 This tablet opposite it has the names of
 God's servants
 In it are registered the people of pious deeds
 (people of prayers and fasting)
 When the life-span of one of Adam's offspring
 is expired, there drops
 From the tree branch a flower; and I would then
 know his name at once
 If he is pious, I would send for him an (angel)

from those on the right side
 If he is iniquitous, I would send for him one
 from those on the left side
 These are angels who would snatch his soul by the
 permission of the Most Exalted
 Life of the inhabitants of the earth is nothing but
 a passing shadow.

The Prophet weeps as he tells the Lord that his community is
 weak - and therefore might be liable to God's punishment.
 But he is reassured by the Lord:

bakā sayyid il-umma w gibrīl bakā
 ma'a l-muṣṭafā zēn il-ʿarab wi l-ʿaḡam
 wi qāl in-nabī yā rabb-i qōmī ʿuḡāf
 fa ʿāl ummitak yā muḥammad khayr il-umam
 wi yōm il-ḥisāb fī l-ḥaṣr-i yushfaʿ luhum
 nahār il-ʿiyāma wi l-qadam ʿa l-qadam (ʿalā l-qadam)
 firiḥ aḥmad il-mukhtār nabī l-hudā
 lammā simiʿ min rabbinā zī l-maqāl
 wi sārū bi izn allāh li khāmis samā
 wi sukkanhā fihā w humm b ishtighāl.<47>

The master of the community wept, and Gabriel wept
 With the Chosen One, the best of the Arabs and
 the Persians
 The Prophet said: "O Lord, my people are weak"
 The Lord said: "Your community, O Muḥammad, are
 the best of communities
 On the Day of Reckoning during the Gathering,
 they will be pleaded for
 On the Day of Resurrection, when foot will
 step on foot"
 Aḥmad, the Chosen One, the Prophet of Guidance,
 rejoiced
 When he heard these words from our Lord
 They moved on, with God's permission, to
 the Fifth Heaven
 Its inhabitants were present; their attention
 engrossed.

The fifth Heaven is made of silver. There the Prophet
 sees an angel who was wondrously created from both snow and

fire; the snow will never extinguish the fire, nor will the fire melt the snow. Beside the angel there are the seven gates of Hell guarded by towering black giants. Mālik, the master of these giants, is seated on a chair of flames. In Hell the Prophet sees several classes of the damned: women crucified by their hair; men chewing on a stinking carcass, paying no attention to a lawfully slaughtered grilled mutton; people with their tongues hanging down upon their chests; some people drinking pus; others devouring suckling babies; and others being dragged face down into raging flames. The angel Jibrīl then explains to the kind-hearted Prophet, who has burst into tears, the different sins of these damned souls:

bakā sayyid il-umma fa ,āl gibrīl
 ,alā ēsh inta tibkī kull-i shē, lū sabab
 tarā hāzihī sh-shubbān wa hāzā shabāb
 wi hāzī ish-shuyūkh kānū ahl il-ghaḍab
 wi hāzī n-nisā kānū hum il-lāṭimāt
 amar rabbinā min shu,ūrhūm tinṣilib
 wi hāzī l-liḥūm il-minattina yā malīḥ
 biyitnahshū fihā n-nisā w ir-rigāl
 ahl iz-zinā kānū yiḥibbū
 gazāhum bī zāka l-fi,l-i hāzī l-fi,āl.

The master of the community wept; Gabriel said to him:
 "Why are weeping; everything has a reason
 You see these young men, this youth, and these
 old men, they were people of the (divine) wrath
 These women were the bemoaners who used to slap
 their faces in grief
 Our Lord has commanded that they be crucified
 by their hair
 This stinking meat, O Beautiful One
 Women and men are biting at
 The adulterers were in love with adultery,
 He (God) meted out these punishments to them
 for this act of adultery.

w inzur shuhūd i-zūr yā sayyidī
 tarā alsinithum nazla l iṣ-ṣudūr
 w akl iḍ-ḍarī, y aḥmad wi shurb iṣ-ṣadīd
 gazā yā muḥammad shāribīn il-khumūr
 w ahl iz-zinā fī kull-i yōm yuqṭalū
 wa man yākul amwāl il-yatāmā figur
 wa lākin bi faḍlak yighfir allāh luhum
 wi nta l-mushaffa, yā agall ir-rigāl
 wa yā ,abl-i ,abl il-qabl-i fī l-mubtadā
 wa yā khātam ir-rusul il-kirām il-āṣāl.<48>

Look at the perjurers, O Master,
 You will see their tongues hanging down their chests
 The eating of the suckling babies, O Aḥmad, and the drinking of pus
 Are the punishments meted out to the wine drinkers
 The adulterers are repeatedly being killed everyday
 The people who eat up (unlawfully) the money of the orphans are debauchers
 But for the sake of your grace,
 God forgives them
 For you are the intercessor, O most exalted among men
 You who preexisted before preexistence at the beginning of Time.
 And who are the seal of the honourable noble prophets.

In the sixth Heaven, the Prophet is exalted by the angels who testify that the Lord has favoured him over all creation and has in fact made out of Muḥammad's light all mankind, the sun and the moon.

Finally the Prophet reaches the seventh Heaven which is made of matchless pearls. There he sees two angels: one who is giant-like - were he to hold the earth in his hand, it would look like a mustard seed in the desert; the other angel is so wondrously huge that were he to be so permitted by God, he could swallow up the lands, the seas, and the mountains. Arriving at the lote tree at the farthest end, the angel Jibrīl has to leave the Prophet because he is not allowed to come closer than that to the divine presence. The

b annu yaşil gāhak fa nāla l-wiṣāl.<49>

The Noble Lord of mankind addressed the Prophet
And told him: "I have created you before
the beginning of the Heavens

Before the creation of Adam, O Muḥammad, and Hūd
Have no fear in My Presence,
Honour my carpet, O one of pious ancestors
When Aḥmad, the Prophet of Guidance became
reassured
The Exalted Everlasting God said outloud:
"On Mount Sinai, I have commanded Moses
the Interlocutor
To seek your favour and he attained union
(with God).

The Prophet returns to earth and tells the people of Quraysh about his miraculous journey. Abū Bakr and all the companions believe him; only Abū Jahl and some Jews reject his story and question him about the description of Jerusalem. To help the Prophet with the right description, the Lord orders the angel Jibrīl to carry Jerusalem to the Prophet. In this way the Prophet is able to see the city and describe it accurately to Abū Jahl and the Jews who can neither see the city nor the angel Jibrīl. In the end, the Prophet is proven to be truthful and his enemies have to withdraw crestfallen.<50>

The other ballad differs in many details and does not mention Muḥammad's meeting with God. It comes close to Ibn Ishāq's account in his Sīrat Rasūl Allāh. <51>

"What happened to the Prophet on the Night of Rajab 27?" asks Shēkh ʿAbd an-Nāṣif Khaṭṭāb, who is known in and around Ṭanṭā. He then proceeds to tell his audience the story of the Prophet's night journey to Jerusalem and eventual

ascension to Heaven on the back of the mysterious burāq. His audience is already familiar with the famous isrā and miṣrā story but they are excited to hear it. He proceeds to mention Muḥammad's journey through the Seven Heavens, but one of his listeners shouts "dī baṭī a ḥawī, mumkin tisri shuwayya" (this is really slow, can you speed it up a little?) Echoing the episode when several prophets visited Amina during the months of her pregnancy with the Prophet, the story narrates the Prophet's meeting with a different prophet in each of the seven Heavens:

awwil samā ādam ḥablu
shāf illī nūru mā fariḥ-i ḥenēh
māhū aṣlu shāf in-nūr da zamān
wi naṭaḥ lisānu w ṣallā ḥalēh

tānī samā yiḥyā w ḥisā
itḥaddimū-lu w asnū ḥalēh
wi ḥālū marḥab bi ḥabībna
illī shaffaḥ fī l-khalḥ-i ḥalēh (?)

tālīt samā yūsif yā gamīl
da gamāl muḥammad ḥaṭṭā ḥalēh
wi ḥāl-lu kullinā min nūrak
dī ḥāga wāḍḥa u h-ankir lēh.

rābiḥ samā n-nabī idrīs
ḥām lī n-nabī b-yiraḥḥab bēh
nabīnā ḥal-lu ḥalayka salām
idrīs tabassam radd-i ḥalēh

wi harūn fī khāmis samā ḥablu
w-khaḍu mḥāh waṣṣa-lu l-akhīh
mūsā l-kalīm fī samā sadṣa
wi āla ḥimrān min ḥawalēh

wi l-farḥa tammat bi muḥammad
wi l-kull-i ḥāmū yṣallū ḥalēh
fī s-sabḥa ḥablu khalīlu llāh
akhaz muḥammad bayna yadēh

wi ḥal-lu ibnī wi ḥafīdī
wi ḥabbilu min bēn ḥaynēh

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(A sign) of God's favour and bounty.

Shēkh Khaṭṭāb does not mention the details of the Prophet's meeting with God; this is done by the maddāh, Maḥmūd al-Badrāwī, from Upper Egypt, who cut a record with the Cairo-based Nefertiti Recording Company. In al-Badrāwī's "Lēlit il-Isrā", the Prophet went with the angel Gabriel to the lote tree at the farthest end of heaven and as he was about to see God, the angel held back, for even he was not admitted into the divine presence. In contrast with the case in the classical accounts, the angel Gabriel not only holds back but he even asks the Prophet to intercede with God on his behalf:

wa lammā taragqā ‹inda sidrati l-muntahā
 ra›ā ‹indaha mā-laysa yudraku iḥṣāhu
 takhallaf ‹anhu l-waḥyi nādā muḥammadun:
 atatruk yā gibrīl ḡayfan wa tansāhu
 fa qāla yā-ḡabībī
 fa qāla: ‹udhrī yā muḥammad qad badā
 wa hādhā maqāmūn laysa mithlī yi›addāhu
 wa law annanī qadimtu f in-nuri khaṭwaṭan
 l aḡraqnī min dhālika n-nūri adnāhu
 fa qāla lahu l-mukhtār hal laka ḡāḡatan
 turīdu qaḡahā ‹inda rabbin qaṣadnāhu?"
 fa qāla murādī yā ḡabībī dhikratī
 fa qāla murādī muḥammad dkikratī
 idh anta khāṭabt al-karīma b asmāhu
 wa fāraqahu gibrīl ‹inda liqā›ihi
 wa qāla laqad fāza n-nabī bī mawlāhu
 wa lamma tanā›ā sami›a n-nidā yā marḡaba
 bī khayri rasūlin lī l-barāyā ṣ-ṣtafaynāhu
 wa min taḡt-i sāqi l-›arsh-i qad kharra sāḡidan
 fa nūdī irfa› khayra ‹abdin haḡaynāhu
 wa l-ḡugbu qad rufi›at ‹an iz-zāt w anḡalat
 wa ‹alā bisāṭ in-nūr aḡlasahu llāhu
 nādāhu qaṣdī yā ilāhī sutratī
 nādāhu qaṣdī yā ilāhī naḡratan

bi riḏāka ṭannā anta anta llāhu.<7:a>

When he ascended to the lote tree
He saw there what could not be quantified
The Revelation (bearer) left him; Muḥammad shouted:
"O Gabriel, do you leave (your) guest and ignore him?"
Gabriel said: "O beloved of mine"
Gabriel said: "My excuse, O Muḥammad, is manifest
This is a place not to be intruded upon by the likes
of me
For should I walk one step into the light
I would be burnt by its proximity"
The Chosen One said to him: "Do you desire a thing
From the Lord whom we are seeking?"
Gabriel said: "My desire, O beloved, is to mention me
"My desire, O Muḥammad, is to mention me
When you address the Generous One by his
divine Names"
Gabriel left him when Muḥammad met with God
And he said: "The Prophet has won (the grace)
of his Lord"
When he moved further away, he overheard the call
"Welcome
To the best messenger to mankind we have ever chosen "
At the feet of the Throne, (Muḥammad)
fell on his knees
He was addressed: "Rise up ,the best servant We have
ever guided"
The veils were, then, removed; the Divine Essence
made manifest
On the carpet of light, God seated Him
He called on Him: "My desire, my Lord, is to be guarded"
He called on Him: "My desire, my Lord, is a sign
That You are pleased with us. Indeed, you are God".

Fatḥī Slīmān (Sharqīyya) sings about the heavenly journey and gives details about the respect angels conferred on the Prophet as he ascended from the first to the seventh Heaven. In the first the angels call him "ḥabībunā" (our beloved), in the second "nabiyyunā" (our Prophet), in the third "shafī'unā" (our intercessor) in the fourth "ṣafīyyunā" (our close companion), in the fifth "khalīlunā" (our close

He heard the calling from the Lord who raised the Heaven
"Welcome to Our beloved Prophet."

in kân min âdam khalâqtahu awwalan
anta yâ mukhtâr awwala khalqinâ

in kân min idrîs kasaytahu ðullatan
anta yâ mukhtâr kasaytak bi nûrinâ

in kân min nûḥ aṭaytahu safînatân
anta yâ mukhtâr safînatu ʿilminâ

in kân min ʿîsâ rafaṭtahu li s-samâ
anta yâ mukhtâr şirt-i galîsunâ (sic).

in kân min yûsif aṭaytahu gamâlan
anta yâ mukhtâr agmal khalqinâ

in kân min mûsâ raṭtuh alâ l-gabal
anta yâ mukhtâr şirt-i kalîmunâ (sic)

in kân min ayyûb gaṭnâhu şâbiran
anta yâ mukhtâr şâbir li amrinâ

in kân min dâwûd al-ḥadîd aṭāṭahu
anta yâ mukhtâr lân lak şakhrinâ (sic)

in kān min šāliḥ aṭṭaytahu nāqatan
anta yā mukhtār rakabt-i burāqinā (sic)

in kān min sulaymān aṭṭaytahu khātaman
anta yā mukhtār khātama ruslinā.<41:a>

If I created Adam first
You, Chosen One, are the very first of Our creation

If I clothed Idris in a special garb
I clothe you, O Chosen One, with our light

If I provided Noah with a ship
You, O Chosen One, are the ship of Our Knowledge

If I raised Jesus to the Heaven
You, Chosen One, are Our intimate companion

If I bestowed beauty on Joseph
You, O Chosen One, are the most beautiful of
our creation

If I saw Moses on the mountain
You, O Chosen One, are Our interlocutor

If We made Job a forbearing man
You, O Chosen One, endure patiently Our commands

If iron became pliable for David
For you, O Chosen One, Our rocks become supple

If I granted Šāliḥ a she-camel
You, O Chosen One, mounted Our Burāq

If I awarded Solomon a ring
You, O Chosen One, are the Seal of Our messengers.

There are references in the Qurʾān to the event of the isrāʾ (night journey) from Mecca to Jerusalem, and these references have been taken as the basis for the story. The Qurʾān says in Sūrat al-Isrāʾ (Q. 17):

subḥāna lladhī asrā bi-ʾabdihi laylan mina
l-masjidi al-ḥarāmi ilā l-masjidi l-aqṣā lladhī
bāraknā ḥawlahu li-nuriyhu min āyātina innahu huwa
s-samīʿu l-baṣīr.

Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night

from the Inviolable Place of Worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that We might show him of Our tokens Lo He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer.

But there is no direct reference to the event of the heavenly ascension. Many Muslims however, and certainly the Egyptian maddāhīn and their audience, take "Sūrat an-Najm" (The Star, Q. 53) in the Qur'ān as the basis for their belief in Muḥammad's heavenly ascension.<52>

There are also several traditions (aḥādīth) which narrate details of the night journey to Jerusalem and the heavenly ascension, traditions which are found in the collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. <53> But these traditions are brief and are meant to impart information and teach a lesson, not to cause "surprise, or create a symbol or uncover the deep recesses of the self... as one finds in the stories of the sūfīs or the quṣṣās (story-tellers) and litterateurs". <54>

We have already mentioned that the account given by Ibn 'Abbās (d. 688-9) forms the basis of the ballad attributed to the fourteenth-century al-Ghubārī. In fact the author refers to this specifically in the ballad (see the whole ballad in the Appendix). This ballad is more concerned with the description of angels and of Hell and in this respect it differs from the ballads of Shēkhs Khaṭṭāb, al-Badrāwī and Slīmān - which are similar to Ibn Ishāq's account - where we find more attention given to the different prophets whom Muḥammad met in each of the seven

Heavens. In all the ballads there is, however, one common denominator: Muḥammad is the best of God's creation, the most noble, the intercessor for his community and the only one who was granted an audience with the Lord.

5. The Sighing Palm Trunk

There are several brief references to this miracle in the repertoire but the whole episode is sung, and composed, by Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī of Samannūd (Gharbiyya). The miracle tells of a palm trunk against which the Prophet used to lean while preaching in a modestly built mosque. When Muslims begin to increase in number and the mosque becomes crowded with believers, a man by the name of Tamīm ad-Dārī suggests to the Prophet that a proper pulpit be built. The Prophet agrees but when he actually comes to mount the newly-built pulpit he is interrupted by loud crying which sounded like that of a child. The worshippers look around for the source of crying only to find, much to their surprise, that the palm trunk against which the Prophet used to lean is sobbing because of the pain it feels at being separated from the beloved Prophet:

fī awwal khuṭba ṭiliʿ iz-zēn
 ʿ al-manbar yukhṭub li l-ḥaḍrīn
 simʿum bukā ʿālī w anīn

asnā› khiṭāb in-nabī muḥammad

baṣṣum li gihat iṣ-ṣōṭ yishūfūh
dihishum wi ḥtārum lammā ›irfūh
aṣl illī byibkī l-giz› yā hūh
›ashān bu›ād in-nabī muḥammad

il-giz› biyibkī w yi›inn anīn
yibkī bukā› abū ›alb-i ḥazīn
law biyisma› luh ḥagar la-ylīn
kulluh ›alashān il-hādī muḥammad. <24:b>

For the first sermon, the Beautiful One climbed
The pulpit to deliver the sermon to the congregation
They heard loud crying and sobbing
During the sermon he was delivering

People looked towards the source of the noise
Astounded were they when they saw what it was
It was the tree trunk which was crying, O people
Because of being away from the Prophet Muḥammad

The tree trunk was crying and sobbing
Like a person who was grief-stricken
If a stone should happen to hear it, it would
melt (with grief)
That was all for the sake of the Prophet Muḥammad

The Prophet then turns to the trunk and, moved by its
sobbing, embraces it "zayy il-umm ma-biḍḍumm ibnaha
iṣ-ṣuḥayyar" (as the mother would embrace her infant). The
trunk then engages in some sort of lover's ›itāb (reproach):

mīn ›allimak › l-gafā ma-kanitsh-i ›ādātak
waḥishnī nūrak wi wa›afātak wi kalimātak
yā llī mulūk is-samā khadamū siyādātak <24:b>

Who taught you that harshness; it was not your nature
I yearn for your glow, poses, and words
You whose authority the heavenly angels serve.

The Prophet gives the sighing palm trunk a choice between
being replanted and becoming a palm tree or being duly

buried with a guarantee that it would be resurrected on the Day of Judgment and become a palm tree in Paradise. The palm trunk chooses the latter. This is indeed wise, says al-ʿIrasī to his audience. The episode ends with the trunk eulogizing the Prophet:

mīn yishbihak fī l-gamāl yā hanā llī waldīnak
gibrīl wa mīkāl fī lēlit il-isrā sandīnak
gāy tikhlaʿ in-naʿl-i ʾāl-lak da ḥnā ṭalbīnak.<24:b>

Who can be compared to you in beauty, happy are
the parents who begat you
Gabriel and Michael were your attendants on the
night of the Night Journey
You were about to take off your sandals and retire
(the angel) said: "We request your presence".

There are several classical accounts of this miracle, which itself is not mentioned in the Qurʾān. It is considered as an authentic report (ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ) by transmitters such as al-Bukhārī and Muslim <55>, and at-Tirmidhī.<56> It is narrated in Dalāʾil an-Nubuwwa by Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī <57>, in al-Wafā bi Ahwāl al-Muṣṭafā by Ibn al-Jawzī <58>, ash-Shifā bi Taʾrīf Ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā by al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ <59>, and others. But accounts differ in minor details - for example over the identity of the person who built the minbar for the Prophet: was it Tamīm ad-Dārī as Shēkh al-ʿIrasī narrates, a Greek carpenter, or the young slave of a woman from among the Anṣār (the Helpers)?

In his Shamāʾil ar-Rasūl, Abū l-Fidā Ibn Kathīr gives nine accounts of this miracle, on the authority of familiar transmitters like Ibn Ḥanbal, Mālik, Ibn ʿAbbās, Jābir,

al-Bukhārī, Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, and two of the Prophet's wives: ʿAʾisha and Umm Salama.<60> All accounts agree on the essentials of the story: a tree trunk cried like a child - or like a she-camel (nāqa) or a ten-month pregnant goat (ʿishār) - when the Prophet abandoned it. But none narrates the whole episode as we find it in the ballad of Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī. In fact it is clear that his ballad is an amalgamation of these traditions. For example, that Tamīm ad-Dārī was the one who built the pulpit is mentioned in the sixth report on the authority of Abū Nuʿaym <61>, that the reason for building the pulpit was to enable the increasing numbers of believers to see the Prophet in the mosque is mentioned in the seventh report, <62> and that the tree trunk was to choose between being rewarded in this life or in the after-life is mentioned in the eighth report.<63> None of the reports mentions the lover's reproach uttered by the palm trunk at the end of Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī's ballad.

5. The Prophet's Attributes

A close look at the ballads will show that some of their motifs echo the classical lore. Throughout the ballads, a two-pronged leitmotiv is discernible: the Prophet's noble qualities and outward beauty as well as the proofs of his prophethood. Repeatedly the Prophet is described as the exemplar of human beauty and as a true

miracle-making prophet who is often acknowledged by men, animals and even inanimate things as God's messenger. Does this two-pronged leitmotiv not echo the classical genres known as shamā'il and dalā'il? Let us trace this notion a bit further.

As Annemarie Schimmel has noted, the two genres probably came into being sometime in the 4th/10th century. Their earliest authors were Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1037) and al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066).

Both (works) are more or less biographies of the Prophet, studded with evidentiary miracles - those that happened before and after his call to prophethood and those that pointed to his exalted status as the last Prophet. Both sources speak of his noble genealogy and his qualities and indulge in telling many of the miracles through which men and animals recognized him as God's special messenger. Such tales formed the bases for legends and poems in which popular views about Muhammad were to be reflected throughout the centuries.<64>

Now let us analyse how these two classical genres are echoed in the repertoire.

The repertoire is full of supreme praise for the Prophet. His physical beauty is unsurpassed, his moral character unblemished. It appears that his physical beauty is reflected in his character and vice versa.

Quoting 'Alī, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, Ibn Iṣḥāq gives us an account of the Prophet's physical attributes:

Muhammad was middle-sized, did not have lank or crisp hair, was not fat, had a white circular face, wide black eyes, and long eye-lashes. When he walked, he walked as though he went down a declivity. He had the "seal of prophecy" between his shoulder blades ... He was bulky. His face shone like the moon. He was taller than middling stature but shorter than conspicuous tallness. He had thick, curly hair. The plaits of his hair were parted. His hair reached beyond the lobe of his ear. His complexion was azhar (bright, luminous). Muhammad had a wide forehead and fine, long, arched eyebrows which did not meet. Between his eyebrows there was a vein which distended when he was angry. The upper part of his nose was hooked; he was thick bearded, had smooth cheeks, a strong mouth, and his teeth were set apart. He had thin hair on his chest. His neck was like the neck of an ivory statue, with the purity of silver. Muhammad was proportionate, stout, firm-gripped, even of belly and chest broad-chested and broad-shouldered.<65>

Much like the books of the dalā'il and shamā'il, the repertoire of the Egyptian maddāhīn exhibits a fascination for the Prophet's beauty. He is often called kaḥīl al-ʿēn (he who has kohl-coloured eyes). In fact, the mention of this quality permeates the repertoire and becomes, in effect, an inseparable epithet of the Prophet. He is also called iz-zēn (the beautiful one), malīḥ il-wagh (the one with a beautiful face), kāmīl il-awṣāf (the one who possesses perfect qualities), kāmīl il hindām (the one who is well attired), il-badr il-kāmīl (the full moon, the moon being the symbol of beauty in Egyptian popular imagination; a beautiful woman is called amar, (moon), or ammūra, (moon-like), kāmīl iz-zēna (the one who is well groomed). There are some curious physical qualities, again indicative of his beauty and charm. He had shāma alā l-khaddēn (a

beauty mark on the cheeks), his lips were as red as aqīq (rubies), his hair was layyin (soft, straight) and resembled the horse's hair (sha'r khēlī i.e., dark brown, "strandy", straight - this is a beautiful quality in Egypt where the majority of people have curly hair). Unlike the case in the classical Sīra where the Prophet is often described as rab'a <66> (middle stature) the Egyptian maddāhīn describe the Prophet as tall. Here is how Shēkh Sharaf (Gharbiyya) describes the Prophet:

ṭawīl il-qāma, aḥmar il-khaddēn, aḥdab il-aynēn,
kaḥīl aṭ-ṭarafēn, izā takallam kharag in-nūr min
bayn sanāyāh il-lu'lu'iyya.<41:a>

He is tall in stature, with rosy cheeks, long eye-lashes, dark eyes, when he speaks, light pours forth from between his pearl-like teeth.

And Haniyyat Sha'bān (who lives near Biyalā, Province of Kafr ash-Shēkh) also stresses the Prophet's tallness and other qualities:

waghu zayy il-amar, abyaḍ il-wagh, kaḥīl
il-aynēn, ṭawīl il-gāma, fī khaddu l-yimīn shāma.
<40:a>

His face is like the moon; it is fair in colour; his eyes are kohl-coloured; he is tall in stature; on his left cheek there is a mole.

The mole on the cheek is a sign of beauty, and a popular song in Egypt describes an Alexandrian beloved as a man with a mole on his cheek:

abū shāma l-asmarānī
 fi baḥr-i sh-shōḥ ramānī
 wi lammā saḥalt-i ḥannu
 laḥetu skandarānī.

The swarthy (lover) with a mole on the cheek
 Has submerged me in the sea of love,
 When I enquired about him, I found out he was
 Alexandrian.

In Upper Egypt the mole is called wajana and Ḥabd al-Bārī
 Miḥawwāḍ (Minyā, Upper Egypt) sings:

anā b-amdaḥ illī ḥala khaddu l-yamīn wajana
 lōlā n-nabī z-zēn id-darb il-kabīr ma-jīnāh
 (mā-jīnāh) <32:a>

I praise the one on whose right cheek there is a mole
 But for the sake of the beautiful Prophet, we would not
 have walked the long route.

A recurrent attribute of the Prophet is his
 resplendence; there are many images that depict the light
 that beamed forth from him. He is often called bahiyy
in-nūr (he who is resplendent), il-badr il-kāmil (the full
 moon), or waghu zayy il-ḥamar (his face is as resplendent as
 the moon). It should be remembered that according to the
 repertoire of the maddāḥīn, the Prophet was created out of
 light and that his light had existed even before Adam's
 creation, and still lives on.<67> The light of the Prophet
(nūr in-nabī) is an oft-used phrase in Egyptian Arabic, such
 as when Egyptians express their delight by shouting "yā nūr
in-nabī" (O light of the Prophet). Songs in honour of
 would-be pilgrims on the way to Mecca portray the route to
 Mecca as being illuminated by the light of the resplendent

Prophet. Says Anwar ʿIzz ad-Dīn Ṣaqr from Port Said:

nūr in-nabī zāyin is-sikka
 min būr saʿīd lammā l-makka
 yā rabb-i iwʿidnā b-ḥigga
 wi ḥigga-i bēt allāh wi nzūr
 yā farḥit il-ḥuggāg bi n-nūr.

 waṣalnā makka f ʿaṣriyya
 bānit il-anwār in-nabawiyya.<38:a>

The Prophet's light is adorning the route
 From Port Said to Mecca
 O Lord, grant us a pilgrimage trip
 To perform the pilgrimage and visit God's sanctuary
 O how happy are the pilgrims with (Muḥammad's) light.

 We arrived in Mecca one evening
 The Prophet's light shone forth.

A similar song from Dumyāṭ (Damietta) says more or less the same thing but replaces Port Said with Dumyāṭ:

nūr in-nabī zāyin is-sikka
 min dumyāṭ li-ghāyit makka.<7:a>

The Prophet's light is adorning the route
 From Damietta to Mecca.

In Suez, a song celebrates the beaming light of the Prophet which puts the full moon to shame (it is taken from the songs of the Shādhiliyya Order):

ashraqat anwār muḥammad
 f akhtafat minhā l-budūr
 anta shamsun anta qamarun
 anta nūrun fawqa nūr.<68>

Muḥammad's lights shone forth
 They dimmed the full moons

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The Prophet is like a bridegroom
His mention animates the spirit
The Christians and the Zorcastrians
Embraced Islam at his hands.

The Prophet is also depicted in a song from Sohāj (Upper Egypt) as a bridegroom who is to be joined in the bonds of matrimony with one of the feminine (grammatically speaking) divine attributes of God, His jalāla (Majesty). Fanjarī (Urabī Aḥmad from Sohāj sings this intriguing piece in which Muḥammad and the God of the Muslim bipartite shahāda: lā ilāha illā llāh, Muḥammadun rasūlu llāh (there is no deity but God (and) Muḥammad is the Messenger of God) are joined together in holy matrimony:

rāḥum yigībū l-ʿarūsa wi l-ʿarīs li t-tnēn
li>yū l-ʿarūsa l-galāla wi n-nabī z-zēn.<l:a>

They set out to seek the bride and the groom
They found out that the bride was God's Majesty,
the groom was the Beautiful One (Muḥammad).

There are some curious epithets given to the Prophet which are not found in the classical accounts of the sīra. One such epithet is ibn rāma (son of Rāma). The first thing that perhaps comes to mind is a reference to Rama, the Hindu god. It is, however, such a bizarre idea to think of Egyptian Muslims calling their Arab Prophet the son of a Hindu god that one had better reject it out of hand. Dr. Muḥammad Rajab an-Najjār of Kuwait University suggested once to me that rāma is a place in Paradise, whereas Shēkh al-ʿIrasī has suggested that "rāma" is a place near Mecca. There is evidence to support al-ʿIrasī's suggestion in al-Ḥamawī's Khizānat al-Adab.<69> But why would the Prophet be associated especially with such a place? One does not

find a satisfactory answer.

Another similarly puzzling word is tība. It is obviously a place. Fanjarī of Sohāj sings:

bi ḥa>> tība w zamzam wi l-imām (alī w nabīh
min khadam jadd-i lāzim rabbunā yiḥadēh
(yiḥadēh?).<1:a>

By the Fair City, by the well Zamzam, by Imām (Alī
and his Prophet
Whosoever serves earnestly, the Lord will guide him
(bestow His bounty on him?).

The Egyptian folklorist Shawqī (Abd al-Ḥakīm thinks that tība is none other than Thebes of Ancient Egypt <70>. This seems to suggest an attempt on the part of the maddāḥīn to indigenize the Prophet Muḥammad by associating him with Egyptian place names. But it is quite plausible that the reference is not to Tība (Thebes) but to Tayba, an epithet for al-Madīna (Medina).<71>

The belief in the Prophet's intercession with God on behalf of his community runs deep in the maddāḥīn's ballads. The Prophet is called shafī (intercessor), and ḡamīn (guarantor). Muṣṭafā Ismā'īl and his brothers Ḥasan and Ḥusēn, from Asyūṭ, sing this piece, in Classical Arabic, about the Prophet's role as an intercessor for his community on the Last Day:

idhā ma n-nāsu yawma d-dīni
qāmū ilā r-raḥmāni w agtama'a l-gamī'u
wa galla l-khaṭbu wa nqaṭa'a t-tarāḡī (?)
wa nādā l-ālamūna man ish-shafī'u
hunāka yaqūmu aḥmadu fī yadayhi

liwā'u l-ḥamdi mun'aqidun rafī'u
fa-yasgudu thummā yashfa'u fī l-barāyā
wa yamtāzu (yaqtāzu?) l-mukhālifu wa l-muṭī'u. <25:b>

When people on the Day of Reckoning
Come forward to the Merciful, and the crowd throngs
When the situation becomes grave, and conciliation absent
When people cry out: "Who is the intercessor?"
Then, Aḥmad will rise up, hoisting in his hands
The knotted banner of praise
He will prostrate himself, then seek intercession
 on behalf of mankind
The disobedient ones and the pious will be favoured
 (will pass on?).

And Na'īma Shirif Muḥammad, the female singer from Minyā in Upper Egypt, calls the Prophet the wasta <30:a> (intermediary). The term she uses has a strong local flavour, for it is through a network of wasta "connections" (an old-boy network) that Egyptians manage to tackle the notoriously cumbersome bureaucracy in their contemporary society. The Prophet is the special "connection" between the Muslim and God. In fact, one comes across other images of the Prophet and his family that conjure up a very elaborate bureaucratic system. Some songs depict the Muslim believer as an applicant who knocks at the Prophet's door, only to have it opened by Zēnab, the Prophet's grand-daughter, nicknamed Umm Hāshim and given the epithet ra'īsīt id-dīwān (the head of the chancellery). The maddāḥ as-Sayyid al-Bayyūmī Mabruk from Mansūra (Daqahliyya) sings:

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The Prophet is also called ṭabīb or ṭabīb l-agrāḥ, the physician of the wounds. He is the dā, (illness), and the dawā, (remedy): he is the love disease (ayā l-ḥubb) and its cure. Saʿīd Muḥammad Buḡhdādī from Shaṭā (Dumyāt) sings:

ḥubb in-nabī fī l-ḥalb-i dawā
 kullinā ha-nḥūl sawā
 ṣalawātu llāhi ḥalēh. <7:a>

The love for the Prophet is a cure for the heart
 All of us will say together:
 "May Allah's blessings be upon him"

And Shēkh Muḥammad ḥAbd al-Hādī from Rashīd (Bihēra)
 expresses the idea that the Prophet is both the disease and
 the cure:

lammā inshaghal ḥalbī b hawāh
 anā ruḥt adawwar ḥ ad-dawā
 ḥālū lī ṣallī ḥ an-nabī
 huwwa dalīlī w maksabī. <20:a>

When my heart was preoccupied by his love
 I set out to look for the cure
 They advised me: "Call down blessings on the Prophet"
 He is my guide and my profit.

The disease of love is even sought after. Shēkh Muḥammad
 aṭ-Ṭablāwī (Gharbiyya) sings:

ḥayyān wi dakhal il-ḥiyāda
 wagad iṭ-ṭabīb ḥayyān
 nādā ḥ at-tamargī yā nēna
 laḥāh yā ḥēnī ḥayyān
 khalāṣ fataḥnā l-ḥiyāda
 wi l-kashf-i b il-maggān
 niḥṭī d-dawā l is-salīm
 wi niḥzil il-ḥayyān. <44:a>

A sick man entered the physician's clinic
 He found that the physician was sick
 He then, O mother dear, called the male nurse,
 But found him sick too, poor man
 The clinic has been kept open
 Check-ups are now free of charge
 Medicine is administered to the healthy
 And the diseased ones are kept away (from them).

This metaphor of love as disease that is welcomed and even desired runs throughout the repertoire. What better illustration of the profound love one can have for the Prophet than the notion that those who are not infected by this love-sickness are in fact the ones deficient in health and in need of treatment.

ENDNOTES

<1> Based on Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī's Dīwān al-ʿIrāsī, pp. 10-12 and Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm ʿAjāj, Murawwiq al-Mazāj, pp. 2-18.

<2> Schimmel, And Muḥammad is His Messenger, p.86.

<3> Ibn Hishām, as-Sīra an-Nabawiyya, vol. I, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd as-Salām at-Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1987), pp. 180-181.

<4> ʿAlī ibn Burhān ad-Dīn al-Ḥalabī ash-Shāfiʿī, as-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyya, 1320 A.H./1902 A.D.), 3 vols.

<5> See Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, s.v. "al-Ḥalabī", p. 127.

<6> al-Ḥalabī, as-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya, vol. I, p. 53.

<7> Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-Kubrā, vol. I, ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Hurās (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1967), pp. 132-133, and in the most recent Beirut edition, vol. I (Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985), pp. 90-91; al-Ḥalabī, as-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya, p. 53-54.

<8> ʿAlī al-Ḥalabī, as-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya, vol. I, p. 65.

<9> See Schimmel, And Muḥammad, p.151.

<10> al-Ḥalabī, as-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya, p.65.

<11> Ibn Kathīr, Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ, (Judda: Maṭābiʿ al-Ikhwān, n.d.), p. 300.

<12> Imām Aḥmad Zaynī (Daḥlān), as-Sīra an-Nabawiyya, on the margin of al-Ḥalabī's as-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya, vol. I, p. 48; see also another edition of Zaynī's biography, vol. I (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa li ṭ-Ṭibāʿa wa n-Nashr, n.d.), p. 24

<13> (Copenhagen: Enjar Munksgaard, 1950).

<14> See al-ʿIrāsī, Dīwān al-ʿIrāsī, pp. 15-30.

<15> al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja stanza 81.

<16> Ibid., stanza 54.

- <17> Ibid., stanza 202.
- <18> al-Ḥalabī, as-Sīra al-Ḥalabiyya, pp. 245-246.
- <19> Ibid., p. 238.
- <20> Ibid.
- <21> See Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition, vol. i, s.v. "Abū Jahl", p. 868.
- <22> Ibn Hishām, as-Sīra an-Nabawiyya, p. 124
- <23> Ibid., pp. 1300-132.
- <24> Ibid., p. 127.
- <25> al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: The Translation of the Meanings of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari, vol. iv, ed. Dr Muḥammad Muhsin Khan (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1979), reports 830-832.
- <26> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Musnad, vol. v, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1950), p. 204.
- <27> Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣḥāfī, Dalā'il an-Nubuwwa (Haydarabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif, 1950), pp. 233-236.
- <28> See Abū l-Faḍl 'Iyāḍ ibn Mūsā ibn 'Iyāḍ al-Yaḥsubī known as al-Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ, ash-Shifā bi Ta'rīf Huqūq al-Muṣṭafā, vol I, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī, (Cairo: 'Isā l-Bābī l-Ḥalabī), pp. 353, 396-400.
- <29> See as-Suyūṭī, al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā, vol. I, pp. 312-314, Beirut ed. (1985), pp. 209-210.
- <30> See Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣḥāfī, Dalā'il an-Nubuwwa, p.320 ff., ad-Damīrī, Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān al-Kubrā, vol.II (Cairo, 1305 A.H./1887 A.D., reprint Beirut, n.d., 126-127. See Ibn 'Arabī, and Aḥmad Shihāb ad-Dīn al-Qalyūbī, Nawādir in O.Rescher, ed., Die Nawadir (Stuttgart, 1920), n. 35, pp. 30-31, as-Suyūṭī, al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā, vol.I, pp. 265-267 and in the Beirut edition, vol. I, pp. 101-102; Canova, "Muḥammad, L'Ebreo e la Gazzella", pp. 199ff.
- <31> See the report in Abū l-Faḍl 'Iyāḍ, ash-Shifā, pp. 441-442.
- <32> Shawqī 'Abd al-Ḥakīm, Mawsū'at al-Fūklūr wa l-Asāṭīr al-'Arabiyya (Beirut: Dār al-'Awḍa, 1982), p. 212.
- <33> See Cachia, Popular Ballads, p. 224, n. 4.
- <34> Ibid., pp. 206-207. Please note that the quote from Cachia's book is transliterated according to the system

I am following in this study and that I have also made some minor changes to the translation.

<35> Ibn Kathīr, Shamā'il ar-Rasūl, pp. 258-273.

<36> Abū l-Faḍl 'Iyāḍ, ash-Shifā, vol. I, p. 440.

<37> as-Suyūṭī, al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Kubrā, vol. I, pp. 255-259 and in the Beirut ed. vol. I, pp. 94-98.

<38> Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Wafā, pp. 301-302. For more on this legend, especially as it is known in Algeria and Egypt, see R. Basset, "Une complainte arabe sur Mohammed et le chameau," Giornal della Societa Asiatica Italiana (1902), pp. 1-26 as well as Prosper Alpin, Histoire naturelle de l'Egypte par Prosper Alpin, tr. R. de Fenoyl, IFAO (Voyageurs Occidentaux en Egypte, No. 20 Cairo, 1979), I, pp. 153-154. I owe these citations to Pierre Cachia's book Narrative Ballads.

<39> Bouriant, Chansons populaires arabes. See Introduction for full citation.

<40> Adab ad-Darāwīsh (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglū al-Miṣriyya, 1970), pp. 168-183.

<41> Cachia, "An Uncommon Use of Nonsense Verse in Colloquial Arabic," Journal of Arabic Literature 14 (1984), p. 61.

<42> Cachia, Popular Ballads, p.21.

<43> Ibid.

<44> al-Imām Ibn 'Abbās, al-Isrā' wa l-Mi'rāj (Ṭanṭā: Maktabat Tāj, n.d.).

<45> Baqlī, Adab ad-Darāwīsh, stanza 4.

<46> Ibid., stanzas 18-19.

<47> Ibid., stanza 20.

<48> Ibid., stanzas 25-26.

<49> Ibid., stanzas 39-40.

<50> Ibid., stanza 43.

<51> See Ibn Hishām, as-Sīra an-Nabawiyya, pp. 47-57.

<52> See Nadhīr al-'Aẓma, al-Mi'rāj wa r-Ramz aṣ-Ṣūfī: Qirā'a Thāniya li t-Turāth (Beirut: Dār al-Bāḥith, 1982), p. 39.

- <53> Ibid.
- <54> Ibid., p. 15.
- <55> al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, vol. V, pp. 40-41.
- <56> at-Tirmidhī, Sunan, vol. V, p. 594.
- <57> al-Iṣfahānī, Dalā'il an-Nubuwwa, vol. I, pp. 399-404.
- <58> Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Wafā, pp. 321-324.
- <59> Abū l-Faḍl al-Iyāḍ, ash-Shifā, vol. I, pp. 427-430.
- <60> Ibn Kathīr, Shamā'il ar-Rasūl, pp. 239-251.
- <61> Ibid., see the report on the authority of Abū Nu'aym, pp. 247-248.
- <62> Ibid., pp. 248-249.
- <63> Ibid., p. 250.
- <64> Schimmel, And Muhammad is His Messenger, p. 33.
- <65> Ibid., p. 34. The quote is from Ibn Hishām, as-Sīra an-Nabawiyya, pp. 51-52.,
- <66> Ibid.
- <67> On the light of Muḥammad see Tor Andrae, Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1918), pp. 319ff and Schimmel, And Muhammad, Ch. 7 "The Light of Muhammad and the Mystical Tradition," pp. 123-143.
- <68> See al-Qāmūs al-Jadīd, p. 100.
- <69> Zakī Mubārak, al-Madā'ih an-Nabawiyya, p.52.
- <70> Shawqī al-Ḥakīm, Mawsū'at al-Fūklūr wa l-Asā'ir al-'Arabiyya (Beirut: Dār al-'Awḍa, 1982), p.64.
- <71> See Z. Mubārak, al-Madā'ih an-Nabawiyya, pp. 41, 45.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TEXTURE

The most striking feature of the maddāhīn's narrative is the ease with which the boundaries of time and space are transgressed. The Prophet is the last of the Prophets, the seal, and yet he is the first to be created. He is both inside time and outside it. He had existed before Adam and yet he was the last of a series of prophets at the head of which stood Adam. His primordial nūr (light) was transferred from the loins of Adam to Shīth and then to Ibrāhīm and onwards until it reached ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, his father. Just as Muḥammad is made free of the bounds of time, so also is he unrestrained by the bounds of space. He moves instantaneously from earth to heaven as in the isrāʾ ballads or from Syria to Mecca as in the ballad of al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja. Muḥammad of the maddāhīn's ballads then is a liminal entity which stands outside the perceived spatial and temporal boundaries. The learned and the "piety-minded" may fear such aggressive liminality which transgresses the set boundaries of what they perceive as orthodox Islam. And yet the majority of the miracle stories sung by these maddāhīn are attested as authentic by men whom the learned would regard as the guardians of orthodox Islam, men like Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn al-Jawzī, and others.

The Inside-Outside Binarism:

The repertoire is full of references to inside and outside entities. First we have the inside group which is Muḥammad's own community (umma), comprised of kinsmen, loyal slaves, companions, and of course his present-day followers, and secondly the outside group of non-Muslims, comprised of Jews, Christians and pagans. The boundaries between the inside and the outside groups are sharply drawn and the tension between them is ever-present, perhaps corresponding to the classical distinction between dār al-islām and dār al-ḥarb (the House of Islam and the House of War). The tension between the two groups is punctuated by frequent clashes. Throughout the repertoire negative epithets are indiscriminately given to non-Muslims. In al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja, Abū Jahl is called "il-la'in" <1> (the accursed one), and so is Khuwaylid, Khadīja's father; Christians are accused of slyness<2>, and a Jew is called "il-kalb dā l-baṭṭāl" (this dog and scoundrel) <3>. It is noticeable that negative epithets are sometimes interchangeable among the non-Muslims; for example a Jew is called a "kāfir" <4> (infidel) and Abū Jahl, the pagan (who is also dubbed a kāfir) is described as more sly than the Christians<5>. No boundaries are recognized among non-Muslims; epithets like "an-naṣārā l-yahūd" <6> (the Jewish Nazarenes) are not uncommon.

The tension between the two groups continues until the outside group is totally absorbed by the inside group. In

almost every instance all non-Muslims are made to convert to Islam: Baḥīrā the monk and his followers <7>; a Jew and his wife<8>; the Jew in the gazelle story <9>; the polytheists Surāqa<10> and Ḥabīb ibn Mālik in "Inshqāq al-qamar" <11>; there is even a hint that Muḥammad's arch enemy Abū Jahl may have recanted his polytheism and embraced Islam <12>.

But nowhere else is the dichotomy between the inside and the outside groups made more manifest than in the case of Muḥammad's encounter with Baḥīrā, the famed monk. This dichotomy is subtly but powerfully described. When Muḥammad enters Baḥīrā's monastery, we are told that a ṣanam (idol), presumably a statue of Christ, falls and breaks, never to rise again (ma-nāām). <13> In contrast to this, the monks and others present who are destined to embrace Islam rise up to greet the Prophet as a sign of respect for the one whose religion God Himself set up (āām). <14> At this point Baḥīrā's original destiny is effaced, and a new one replaces it. Here the Islam / Christianity dichotomy is depicted as a clash of destinies in which Islam is made to triumph and rule supreme.

Such binary opposition between the inside and the outside groups, however, is at times tempered by a notion of interconfessionalism. Indeed in the repertoire one comes across some amazing examples of not only tolerance towards other religions, especially Christianity, but a tendency to appropriate non-Islamic symbols and practices, informed by the outlook that all religions are universally valid. Christian figures are portrayed as conduits through which

ḥannā fataḥ ḥān wi fīh kāṣāt min barra
 wi n-nās wayyā l-ginn-i waḥfīn ḥalā l-bāb
 nadahit il-bunayya w ḥalit mīn illī ḥalā
 min barra
 l-bāb barra
 ḥal-lahā anā mawsūm min il-qayyūm
 wi mḥayā rasm-i mamḍī wi makhtūm min abī
 fātima l-barra. <8:a>

Ḥannā opened a wine-shop which had foreign-made goblets
Humans and jinn were standing at the door outside
The young girl shouted and said: "Who is at the
 door outside?"
He (the devotee, the seeker after truth) said:
 "I am marked by the Everlasting God
I have a permit, signed and sealed by the
 the father of Fāṭima the godlly."

Ḥannā is an unmistakably Christian name. The wine is the symbol of the mystical union (invoking also the Christian communion) with the divine and both humans and the jinn seek that union. The young girl stands for the divine or the jalāla (God's Majesty); union with her is only possible through the Prophet's sealed approval. But the keeper of the wine-shop and the goblets which hold the mystical wine originate outside the realm of Islam.

We can find another example of this in a eulogy by Shēkh Sayyid ḤAsar al-Maḥallāwī which he sang during the celebration of al-Sayyid al-Badawī's mūlid in Tanṭā

ta·ālū yā hl-i l-balā nishkī l-ba·ḏinā ḥālnā
nu·ud ma·a ba·ḏinā madām ḥalkum wāfi· ḥālnā
yā rāhib id-dēr yā qissīs yā ḥannā
ūm iftaḥ linā l-bāb il-bāb (sic) khallīnā nshūf
ḥālnā
ihnā nkawēnā bi l-hawā lammā nishif ḥālnā.<28:a>

Come, O love-afflicted people, let us complain
to one another about our affliction
Let us sit with one another so long as your
affliction is similar to ours
O monk of the monastery, O Priest, O Ḥannā
Get up and open the door for us, let us tend
to our affliction
We have been cauterized by love until we have
withered.

Again the figure of the Christian Ḥannā is made the conduit for achieving the divine union which is to take place in a monastery. Ḥannā is asked to open the door for the Muslim devotee and both are described as being branded by the love for God.

Other eulogies speak of Ḥanūna, the Christian woman, often made a nun, who, again, is asked by a Muslim devotee to open the door of the convent but this time the maddāh makes full use of the evocative erotic situation and the nun is asked to "expose the divine truths" (farragīnī <a l-ma'nāt>). <15>

There are classical antecedents to this notion of the universality of all religions. We find this notion in the mystical poetry of al-Hallāj (d. 922) when he says:

tafakkartu fī l-adyāni jadda taḥaqquqin
 fa alfaytuhā aṣlan lahu shuʿaban jammā
 fa-lā taṭlubanna li marʾi dīnan fa-innahū
 yaṣuddu ʿani l-aṣli l-wathīqi wa inna-mā
 yuṭālibuhu aṣlun yuʿabbiru ʿindahū
 jamīʿa l-maʿālī wa l-maʿānī fa yafhamā.

I have deeply reflected over all the religions and found
 them to be one Root with many branches
 Do not ask a man to adopt a particular religion for
 (in that case) he will be separated from the firm root
 Verily it is the Root which seeks the man and elucidates
 all meanings and grandeurs for his comprehension.<16>

As a part of his overall belief in the unity of being, Ibn
 ʿArabī (d.1240) also espouses the unity of all religions:

laqad ṣāra qalbī qābilan kulla ṣūratin
 fa marʿan li ghizlānin wa dayran li ruhbāni
 wa baytan li awthānin wa kaʿbata ṭāʾifin
 wa alwāḥa tawrātin wa muṣḥafa qurʾāni
 adīnu bi dīni l-ḥubb-i annā tawajjahat
 rakāʾibuhu fa l-ḥubbu dīnī wa imānī.<17>

My heart is capable of adopting every form:
 Now a pasture for gazelles, now a monastery for monks
 Now a temple for idols, now a pilgrim's Kaʿba
 Now the tablets of the Torah, now the copy of the Qurʾān
 I confess the religion of love wherever its caravan turns
 For love is my faith and true conviction.

And Abū l-Ḥasan ash-Shushtarī (d.1268/9), the Andalusian
 mystical poet who lived and died in Egypt, near Dumyāt
 (Damietta), was reported to have had many contacts with
 monks and was often invited to stay in their monasteries.
 <18> He has a zajal piece which is strikingly similar to the
 piece of Shēkh al-Maʿallawī quoted above. This is how
 ash-Shushtarī's zajal runs:

iḥḍar yā man huwa barrā
 w aḥbur li dayrinā
 tusqā kūsa (cl. kuḥūs) masarra
 min khamrat al-munā
 las (cl. laysa) yabqā fihā dharra
 min waḥshat ad-dunā (pl. of ad-dunyā).<19>

Come here O you who are outside
 And enter into our monastery
 You will be given to drink goblets of joy
 Full of the wine of desire
 There remains in them not a single atom
 Of the dreariness of this world.

Among those who make up the "inside" group in this repertoire, i.e. the Muslim group, there are also individuals whom the repertoire considers as outsiders seeking a way to get inside the house of Islam. The repertoire is full of references to il-ḥāṣī, the sinner, who is always seen at the threshold begging for forgiveness from no less than the Prophet himself or one of his household, notably his granddaughter Zaynab (daughter of Fāṭima and Ḥalī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law). The ḥāṣī is portrayed as a liminal entity, for while he is not an outsider neither is he a bona fide insider. He is often seen in this liminal position at the threshold, knocking at the door, asking to be forgiven and to be brought into the fold through the Prophet's shafā'a (intercession). As the door marks the border between the inside and the outside, so does the ḥāṣī. His position reminds one of the Muṭazilī concept of being in the manzila bayna al-manzilatayn, an interstitial state between īmān (belief) and outright kufr (unbelief).

The Invisible Government:

Some of the maddāhīn portray in their songs a picture of what is at times called al-ḥukūma al-bāṭiniyya <20> (cosmic government, invisible government) with administrative departments run by different holy figures who rule the world among themselves. They are under the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad who is called the supreme axis. This is a schema of the cosmic government in descending hierarchical order of authority:

THE COSMIC GOVERNMENT

Quṭb al-Aqṭāb al-Awḥad
(Muḥammad)

al-Quṭb al-Ghawth

Imām

Imām

Awtād

Abdāl

Nuḡabā

Nuḡabā

Ruḡabā <21>

Zaynab, the granddaughter of the Prophet Muḥammad figures prominently in this cosmic government. Given the epithets is-Sayyida (the Lady, the Mistress), il-Karīma (the honoured or generous one), Umm Hāshim (mother of Hāshim), or at times Māmā (mother), Zaynab (often pronounced Zēnab), is regarded as the directress of the day-to-day affairs in this cosmic government. She is the head of the dīwān

(administrative department, chancellery), and devotees
direct their petitions to her:

1.
wāʾif ḥadā s-sitt umm hāshim
b-andah w aʾūl māmā yā karīma. <28:a>

I am standing near the lady Umm Hāshim
Shouting: "O Mother, O generous one"

2.
yā māmā intī s-sabab yammā zēnab
yā maska silūk in-nās
yā silk kullu ḥanān yā manbaʿ il-iḥsās
garḥī ittasaʿ yā karīma wa lā li-ʿētlūsh dawā
fī n-nās
ʾālit-li khattak ʾalā kurs-i ʾarshī ʿēh raggaʾak
li n-nās
in kān lazim-lak saʾāda ghēb ʾan dunyitak wi n-nās. <28:a>

You, Mother Zēnab, are the reason (for my state)
You who are holding the strings (of people's fate)
You who are like an (electric) wire of affection, you
who are the source of sensitivity
My wound has worsened, O noble one;
I have not found a cure for it in people
She said: "I have seated you on my heavenly
throne, why did you return to people?
If you want to gain bliss, you must absent yourself
from your world and from people".

Sometimes the devotee has to press his case and entreat Umm
Hāshim to help him out:

ʾammāl anādī ʾalēkī yammā yā zēnab
lēh w intī ma-bitruḍḍīsh
huwwa nā fi-lī raḍḍī yammā
ʾēnī wa-llā ma-ʾaḡabkīsh
huwwa kull-i man labas il-ʾmam yā rōḥī
ʾēnī ʾālū ʾalēh darwīsh
ʾālit ir-rakk-i ʾa l-ʾamal yā sayyid
aḡlu mish kalām tahwīsh
wi llī la-ʾētu māmā l-karīma ʾalā bayyina
ʾaṭū-lu r-rigāl baʾshīsh. <28:a>

But Umm Hāshim can also mete out punishments to sinners:



Under the authority of Zaynab, a number of awliyā: or "saints" help devotees by working miracles in their lives. Each walī is specialized in one area of human needs. For example in and around the provincial town of Ṭanṭā, a region where most of the maddāhīn under study are active, local

beliefs have it that the following saints are specialized in certain kinds of blessings:

* Sīdī Ḥizz ar-Rijāl is famed for curing children's diseases.

* Sīdī Marzūq comes instantly to one's rescue.

* Sīdī Ḥalī l-Ḥāmūlī helps old maids find suitable husbands and women are reported to entreat him with this rhymed petition: "sīdī yā ḥāmūlī gawwiznī w anā qīb-lak sham'a ṭūlī". (Sīdī O Ḥāmūlī, marry me off and I will bring you a candle my size).

* Sīdī Aḥmad al-Bablī helps the oppressed, and the locals often call on him with this petition: "yā bablī kun bāb-lī" (O Bāblī be my succor, lit. a gate unto me).<22>

One ballad mentions a ṣūfī neophyte who goes through different initiatory steps symbolized by having his papers signed by several holy figures, in a manner which reminds one of the mundane world of Egyptian government bureaucracy:

murīd ṭaraḥ il-bāb ḥālit ra'īsīt id-dīwān
iftaḥ yā naqīb hātu
madām salīm fī l-ḥamal
nimqī-lu gawābātu.<3:a>

A neophyte knocked at the door, the headmistress of the
chancellery said:
"Open the door, O Deputy (of the mystical order)
and bring him in
So long as his deeds are good
We shall continue to put our seal on his papers
(approve his petitions?).

And in a more elaborate part, the neophyte is given the "run around" by the officials of al-ḥukūma al-bāṭiniyya (the Hidden Government):

murīd gālu ḥāl ḥāl āh min ḥālu
 kaminnu ḥalā bayyina shēkh il-ḥarab gālu
 maḍā-lu ḥalā daftaru
 wī ḥalā l-imām il-ḥusēn ḥālu
 sāḥit dikhūlu r-rīḥa ḥāmit is-sitt baḥtā-lu
 waḥaf amām umm-i hāshim yishkī lahā ḥālu
 ḥālit ir-raḥīsa yā nafīsa shūfi l-murīd mālu
 ḥālit nafīsa yā raḥīsa silkinā ghayyar baḥa ḥālu
 min yōm ma-dakhal il-ḥimā w in-nōm ma-yiḥlā-lu
 izā nām aw ḥām ism-i n-nabī f(ī) bālu
 ḥālit ir-raḥīsa dā lliḥ dakhal ḥayyinā ṣiliḥ
 il-karīm ḥālu.<3:a>

A neophyte was seized by a spiritual state and he was
 in agony
 Because he was clear of conscience, Shēkh al-ḥarab
 (the saint Aḥmad al-Badawī) came to him
 Signed his papers
 And referred him to al-Imām al-ḥusēn (Ḥusayn)
 When he entered the ruling headquarters, the Great
 Lady sent for him
 He stood in front of Umm Hāshim to complain to
 her about his condition
 The Head Lady said: "O Nafīsa, see what the
 neophyte wants"
 Nafīsa said: "O Mistress, our (mystical) way
 has affected him
 From the day he was ushered into the sacred precinct,
 sleep does not appeal to him
 If he lies down or if he gets up, the Prophet's
 name is on his mind"
 The Head Lady said: "Whoever is ushered into our
 sacred precinct, God will set him straight."

Poetic Forms:

In this section we will discuss the various poetic forms utilized by the maddāhīn.

A. The Mawwāl:

Most of the repertoire is cast in the non-classical form of the mawwāl, a form believed to have originated in ninth-century Iraq.<23> The mawwāl is of two kinds (it should be noted that the terms here are far from being uniform and that practitioners in the field apply them rather loosely): il-akhḍar (the green), which centres on themes related to love and the joys of life, and il-aḥmar (the red), also known as wāw which deals with the pains of life and complaints about the treachery of people and time. It relies heavily on paronomasia and is cast mainly in the basīṭ metre. Traditionally it has four aqfāl (lines) with the same rhyme. But since its introduction into Egypt from Iraq, it has come to know two more varieties: the five-line mawwāl which is commonly called il-aḥrag (the lame), and the seven-line mawwāl which is called is-subāḥī or in-nuḥmānī or iz-zuhērī. The rhyme scheme in the traditional mawwāl (called rubāḥī) is AAAA, in the khumāsī AAABA, and in the subāḥī AAABBBBA. Another kind of mawwāl is the mardūf (cumulative, incremental, or simply riding pillion). It usually consists of five 3-line stanzas, each stanza having the same internal rhyme scheme, differing from those of

other stanzas. The first three lines, called the farsh (spreading - of rugs, mats, etc.) cite three "aah"s , a sort of groaning sound which expresses the grief of the poet/singer over the injustices of people and Time. The following stanzas, the last of which is called ghaṭā (lid, cover), explain the reasons behind the grief in cumulative (cumulation is irdāf, hence mardūf) and touching details designed to achieve pathos. The rhyme scheme follows this pattern:

stanza 1: a a a
 stanza 2: ab ab ab
 stanza 3: abc abc abc
 stanza 4: de de de
 stanza 5: f f f.<24>

The majority of the maddāḥīn's repertoire is composed in the form of the aṣṣarq. Shēkh Ḥabīb al-Fattāḥ al-Ḥirāsī's repertoire is replete with the aṣṣarq:

lēlit milād in-nabī kānit hanā w srūr
 il-kōn kullu inshraḥ w il-arq-i ḥammāt nūr
 w ahl is-samā m il-faraḥ baḥatū banat il-ḥūr
 l umm il-ḥabīb in-nabī ḥalashān yihannūhā
 wi gatt-i mulūk is-samā ḥalashān yishāhdū n-nūr.<25>

The night of the Prophet's birth was full of joy
 The whole cosmos rejoiced and the earth was awash
 with light
 Prompted by joy the inhabitants of the Heaven
 sent down the beautiful maidens of Paradise
 To congratulate the mother of the beloved Prophet
 And the angels of the Heaven came down to witness
 the light (of the Prophet).

B. The Qaṣīda:

The qaṣīda as a classical poetic form is utilized along with the mawwāl in the repertoire. The qaṣā'id of Ibn al-Farīq (d. 1235), al-Buṣīrī (d. 1294 or 1298) and more recently those of Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932) are sung in whole or in part as in the case of Aḥmad at-Tūnī, Yāsīn at-Tuhāmī, Sayyid Ḥasār al-Maḥallawī. There is also a qaṣīda attributed to the jurist Abū Ḥanīfa sung by Shēkh al-Ḥirāsī.

c. The Tawshīha:

The tawshīha (pl. tawāshīh) is a poem in Classical or Modern Standard Arabic sung in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad. I have come across only two examples of tawāshīh in the repertoire I collected in Egypt. Here is a short tawshīha chanted with no musical instruments by a band of three brothers from Asyūṭ:

al-ḥaqqu lanā ṣāra wāḍihhan wa galayya
w as-saḥdu binā bāna khādīman abadiyya
wa l-luṭfu binā ḥamma ṣāhīran wa khafiyya
lammā baḥṭha llāhu mursalan ḥarabiyya
sādat bi fakhār ḥalā l-bariyyati ḥadnāu. <25:a>

Truth has patently manifested itself for us
Bliss has evidently been turned into our eternal
servant
God's benevolence has enveloped us manifestly
and secretly
When God sent down (to the world) an Arabian
messenger

The tribe of ʿAdnān proudly ruled
over the world.

The Hunūn:

Known also as Aqhānī l-Ḥuḡḡāq (songs for the pilgrims), these songs are meant to honour the Muslim on his way to or from Mecca during the season of the pilgrimage. The following are two examples of these songs, the first is from the region of Upper Egypt and the second from the Delta in northern Egypt.

zawwagū l-bawwāba wi ḥattā ʿatabhā
w iḥmilū f iz-zōga ghazāla w waladhā
zawwagū l-bawwāba wi ḥattā l-ʿatābī
zawwagūhā mlīḥ lihā l-ḥajj-i yājī
zawwagū l-bawwāba wi ḥattā gafāhā
w iḥmilū f iz-ziwāga ghazāla w ḡanāhā
risil il-ḥajj-i gāl dagīg yā ṣabāyā
la jl-i farsh-i l-ḥumūl wi dabḥ-i t-tanāyā
risil il-ḥajj-i wi gāl dagīg ḥaḡḡarū-lī
la jl-i farsh-i l-ḥumūl wi dabḥ-i l-ʿijūlī. <26>

Adorn the gate and its threshold too
Adorn it and paint a gazelle and its foal
Adorn the gate and its threshold too
Adorn it well for the Ḥajj will pass through it
Adorn the gate, its front and back
Adorn it and paint a gazelle and its suckling foal
The Ḥajj asks the young women (of the household)
to bake the bread
To spread the mats and slaughter the sheep
The Ḥajj asks that the bread be baked
And mats be spread, and calves be slaughtered.

This second example of the hunūn songs is from the city of
Būr Saʿīd (Port Said):

11

ra,aytu rasūla l-lāhi ṣallā l-lāhu ‹alayhi wa
sallama fī l-manāmi ru,yatan ḥaqīqīyya/ wa man
ra,āhu fī l-manāmi fa-qad ra,āhu ḥaqqan kamā rawat
‹anhu l-afāḍilu l-a,alām / ra,aytuhu muzammalan fī
thiyābin sundusiyya / marbū, a l-qāmati abyāḍa
l-lawni gamīla ṣ-ṣūrati wa faṣīḥa l-kalām /
kāmīlan fī dhātihi ṣallā l-lāhu ‹alayhi wa sallama
/ mukammalan fī awṣāfihi l-khilqīyya / mā khalaqa
l-lāhu qablahu wa lā ba,dahu mithlahu fī l-anām /
‹azīma l-ra,si aswada sh-sha,ri tatīhu fī
maḥasīnihi l-‹uqūlu z-zakī,ya / wa tataḥayyaru fī
kamāli gamālihi l-afḥām / qamariyya l-gabīni
ḥawaqibuhu nūniyya / kaḥīla t-tarafayni ahdaba

l-*aynayni* *zarīfa* l-*qawām* / *abyaḍa* l-*khadayn* *ṣallā*
 l-*lāhu* *alayhi* wa *sallama* / *musharraban* bi
 l-*ḥumrati* *waganātuhu* *ḍawīyya* / wa *waghuhu* k-*annahu*
 l-*badru* *laylata* t-*tamām* / *yagrī* l-*ḥusnu* fī
khaddayhi *ṣallā* l-*lāhu* *alayhi* wa *sallama* / *kamā*
tagrī sh-*shamsu* fī *masālikihā* l-*falakiyya* /
kawkabiyya l-*anfī* *yazūlu* min *ḍiyā'ihi* ṣ-*ḍalām* /
yāqūtiyya sh-*shafatayni* *ṣallā* l-*lāhu* *alayhi* wa
sallama / *mufallaga* al-*asnāni* *ṣallā* l-*lāhu* *alayhi*
 wa *sallama* / *idhā* *takallama* *kharaga* n-*nūru* min
bayni *thanāyāhu* l-*lu'lu'iyya* / *wāsi'a* l-*fami*
salsabīla r-*rīqi* *gamīla* l-*ibtisām* / *kaththa*
 l-*liḥyati* *ṣallā* l-*lāhu* *alayhi* wa *sallama* /
 mu-*tadila* l-*unuqi* fī *ṣafā'i* l-*fiḍḍati* n-*naqiyya* /
 wa *lahu* *aynāni* fī *ḍahrihi* *yarā* *bihimā* man
khalfahu *kamā* *yarā* man fī l-*amām* / *bāriza*
 l-*aḍuḍayni* *ṣallā* l-*lāhu* *alayhi* wa *sallama* /
 ṭ-*awīla* z-*zindayni* *ṣallā* l-*lāhu* *alayhi* wa *sallama* /
karīma l-*kaffayni* *agwada* min as-*suḥubi* l-*mumṭirati*
 l-*ghaymiyya* / *salīma* ṣ-*ṣadri* *mumtali'an* min
 al-*āyāti* wa l-*aḥkām* / *baṭnuhu* *ṣallā* l-*lāhu* *alayhi*
 wa *sallama* *alā* *taqwā* l-*lāhi* wa ma-*ārifihi*
maṭwiyya / wa *idhā* *nāmat* *aynāhu* *qalbuḥu* lā *yanām*
 / *munīra* s-*sāqayni* *ṣallā* l-*lāhu* *alayhi* wa *sallama*
 / *zarīfa* l-*ka'bayni* *ṣallā* l-*lāhu* *alayhi* wa
sallama / a-*qābuhu* *sirāgiyya* / wa *lahu* fī ṣ-*ṣakhri*
ghāṣati l-*aqḍām*.

Refrain:

ṭ-*aṭṭir* *allāhumma* *qabrahu* l-*karīm* bi *iṭrin*
shadhiyyin min *ṣalātin* wa *taslīm* / *allāhumma* *ṣallī*
 wa *sallim* wa *bārik* *alēh*. <30>

I saw in a dream the person of the messenger of God, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / He who sees him in a dream sees him in fact as is related by the pious transmitters on the Prophet's authority / I saw him in clothes made of silk brocade / he was medium in height, fair in complexion, beautiful in appearance and eloquent in speech / perfect in his essence, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / made perfect (by God) in his physical attributes / the likes of him among men God has never created before or after him / his head was big, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / his hair was black, in his beauty intelligent minds would be lost / and in the perfection of his beauty understanding would be perplexed / his forehead was moon-like, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / his eyebrows were (as arched) as the (Arabic) letter N (*nūn*) / he had kohl-coloured eyes, long eyelashes,

pleasant gait / his cheeks were fair in complexion, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / reddish and glowing / his face was like the moon on the night it waxes full / beauty runs in his cheeks, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / as the sun runs in its spheric routes / his nose was (as luminous as) a star, darkness would roll off before his resplendence / his lips were ruby-red, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / his teeth were set apart, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / when he spoke, light would shine forth through his pearl-like teeth / his mouth was wide, his saliva was sweet and his smile beautiful / his beard was thick, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / he was awe-inspiring, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / his neck was straight and as pure as silver / he had eyes in his back with which he could see those who are behind him as well as those in front of him / his upper-arms were muscular, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / he was more generous than the rain-filled clouds / his chest was sound and full of divine verses and precepts / his abdomen, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / was folded on God's fear and knowledge / were his eyes to close during sleep, his heart would stay awake / his legs were luminous, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / his ankles were pleasantly shaped, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / his heels were luminous and his feet would dive into the rocks.

Refrain:

Send down, O Lord, perfumed blessings and peace on his tomb / O Lord, grant him blessings, peace and benediction.

F. Aghānī at-Takhmīr:

Known as "songs of fermentation or intoxication" these are often sung during ṣūfī zikr ceremonies. They are meant to express the ṣūfī's intoxication by his love for God.

By the mention of the Beloved's name.

Before the creation of the world
Our essence was pure
That was why we acquired knowledge
By means of that wondrous wine.

They said: "Describe it
You who have quaffed it
For you have known it, O people
of immaterial knowledge"

I said: "It is pure but not water
Ask the (mystical) lovers
You will find wonder."

Poetic Techniques:

In this part we will discuss the rhyme schemes and the use of antithesis, puns, metalepsis, use of the alphabet and of numbers on the part of the maddāhīn.

Rhyme Scheme:

The maddāhīn employ a variety of rhyme schemes. Some are quite regular, others are not. Of the regular ones, some bear striking similarities to the traditional musammaṭa of the (Abbāsī age: <33>

dā nā khaṭrī arūḥ wa azūr
wa tmallā bi n-nūr

wa shūf banāt il-ḥūr
tikhdīm rasūl allāh

 yā kāmīl il-ma'anā
 madḥak muḡamma'anā

madām in-nabī ma'anā
 ningaḥ bi amr allāh.<37:a>
 (AAAB)

It is my intention to go to visit
 and be filled with the light
 (or to gaze at at the light)
 And witness the beautiful maiden of Paradise
 serve the Messenger of God.

O perfect in wisdom (all qualities?), praising
 you is what unites us
 As long as the Prophet is with us,
 we are assured success by God's command.

2.
 in-nabī zēn il-milāḥ
 madḥuhu li z-zanb-i maḥ
 al-mukhaṣṣaṣ bi s-samāḥ
 wa l-muḡallal bi l-ghamām

man 'alēh iḡ-ḡabb-i sallam
 wa l-ba'ir ḥaqqan takallam
 istami' yā khill wi fham
 li l-ma'anī wi n-niḡām.
 (AAAB) <18:a>

The Prophet is the paragon of beauty
 Praising him remits sins
 He who has been granted (the power)
 to plead (for sinners)
 He who has been protected (against
 the sun) by the clouds

He whom the lizard greeted
 And to whom the camel talked
 Listen, friend, and comprehend
 The meaning and the verse.

3.
 anā b-amdaḥ illī nizil ṣayīm wi rabbuh hadāḥ
 shab'an taḡwā wi min bīr in-na'im wi saḡāḥ
 marr iṭ-ṭabīb 'a l-mabālī iddā li kull-i ḡarḥ-i

man kân ṭabībuh in-nabī yā farḥitu yā hanāh dawāh
(AAAA)<5:a>

I am praising the one who was born fasting and his
Lord was guiding him
He was satiated with righteousness and his Lord
gave him to drink from the well of bliss
The physician passed by the afflicted ones and
prescribed medicine for each wound
Happy is the one whose physician is the Prophet.

4.
yā ‹ashiḡīna muḥammadan wa gamālihi (sic)
ṣallū ‹alayhi fa tas-ādū bi ṣalātihi
nazrun (nadhrun) ‹alayya izā (idhā) waṣaltu
maḡāmahu
la umarrigha l-khaddayni fī ‹atabātihi
(ABAB)<45:a>

O lovers of Muḥammad and his beauty
Call down blessings on him and you will
 be blessed
If I reach his mausoleum, I vow
To rub my face (lit. two cheeks) in its threshold.

At times there is no rhyme, as in this example from Shēkh Sharaf (Ṭanṭā):

<and illāh ṭāhā
 wa <and il-malā>ika aḥmad
 wi fī s-sama maḥmūd
 wi fī l-ard-i muḥammad.<41:a>

For the Lord, he is Ṭāhā
For the angels, he is Aḥmad
On earth he is Muḥammad.

The same singer breaks the rules of grammar for the sake of rhyme (i.e. the adjectives in the second and the third lines should be in the feminine in order to agree with the preceding feminine nouns):

yā ḥabīb bintak ṣaḥīḥ
 mā lhāsh aḥḍā ṣaḥīḥ
 sankā wa aḥwālḥā qabīḥ
 wī ḥtart fīḥā snīn.<41:a>

It is true, O Ḥabīb, that your daughter
 Does not have sound limbs
 She is repellant and her appearance is ugly
 For years you have been saddled with her.

The Use of Antithesis:

Antithesis abounds in the repertoire: ḥalāl / ḥarām (licit, lawful / illicit, unlawful), nūr / ḡalām (light / darkness), dā / dawā (disease / remedy). Ismāʿīl (Amir (Gharbiyya?)) uses the antithesis between sour and sweet as a correlative of the sūfī dialectics. God's jalāla (Majesty, feminine in Arabic) is addressing the young mystic:

ʿablin (qabla ann) tidū sukkarī
 sabba, wī dū, khallī
 ʿashān tifarra, il-murr-i baʿā min
 lazzit ish-sharbāt.<4:a>

Before you taste my sweet side
 Hurry to taste my sour
 So that you may discriminate between
 bitterness and the pleasure-filled sherbet.

Shēkh (Eṭa (Gharbiyya)) skillfully combines the antithetical adjectives sāyim / shabʿān (fasting / full, satiated) in the person of the baby Muḥammad who, he says, was born sāyim (fasting) as a sign of his piety, and yet he was shabʿān (full) of righteousness:

anā b-amdaḥ illī nizīl ṣāyim wi rabbu hadāh
shabʿāni taqwā wi min bīr in-naʿīm wi saqāh.<16:a>

I am praising the one who was born fasting and his
Lord was guiding him
He was satiated with righteousness and his Lord
gave him to drink from the well of bliss.

A more dexterous use of antithesis is found in a song where
the dark mole of Muḥammad's cheek is made to radiate light
and wards off the darkness of the night:

lak shāma ʿalā l-khaddēn yā muḥammad
tinwwar ḡalām il-lēl.<37:a>

You have a (dark) mole, O Muḥammad
That illumines the pitch-black night.

And in one instance, the maddāḥ Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī employs a
formal chiasma:

fīh illī gurḥu dawāh
wi fīh illī fī dawāh gurḥu.<14:a>

One man's illness is his cure
Another's cure is his illness.

The Use of Punning:

The practitioners of the popular art of balladry call
punning zahr (flower) and its practice tazhīr
(flowering).<34> Punning, known in the classical literary
tradition as jinās, is an essential part of the mawwāl,

without which it is called abyaḍ or "blank". <35> Far from being the exclusive possession of the learned, punning is employed freely and at times deftly by the ballad singers. These are several kinds of punning which I found in the repertoire:

1. Tāmm (Perfect):

When the two punning words agree in orthography but differ in meaning.<36> The following is an example from the ballad Zawāj an-Nabī:

ʾālit khadīga li ṭāhā yā akram il-aḥbāb
yā aʿazz-i min gifnī maʿa l-aḥbāb.

Khadīja said to Ṭāhā (Muḥammad): "You who
are the most honourable of the beloved ones
You who are more precious than my eyelids and eye pupils.

The first instance of aḥbāb means beloved ones, while the second one means eye pupils. Ismāʿīl ʿĀmir makes this pun on the word "rūḥī":

yā rūḥī rūḥī b aṭṭāb il-ḥabīb wi shūfīh.<4:a>

O my soul, go to the threshold of the beloved
and look at him.

This example can also be regarded as a pun of the muzdawwij type because the two words follow each other.<37> But a more elaborate example of tāmm punning can be found in stanza 13 of Zawāj an-Nabī:

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3. Muḍāri':

When the two punning words differ in their initial letters as in the case of: ḥamām / ghamām (pigeons / clouds)<39>, and yā llī / zullī, or to a lesser extent ḥulī / zullī in the following line from the ballad of Ismā'il
(Amir:

yā bint yā llī fī bāb 'izzik ḥulī zullī.<4:a>

O young maiden, at the door of your pride, my
humiliation tastes sweet.

4. Tarṣī':

When the two punning words or phrases are not only rhythmic but also rhymed as in the Qur'anic verse (88: 25-26):

innamā ilaynā iyābuhum thummā inna 'alaynā
ḥisābuhum.

Lo, unto us is their return. And ours is their
reckoning.<40>

A good example of this pun type is found in a ballad by al-ʿArabī al-Bilbīsī's use of il-lēl/il-wēl:

hidiyya min rabbīnā ynawwar ḡalām il-lēl
wa anqaz il-kōn dā kullu mi ḡ-ḡalāl wi l-wēl.<12:a>

(Muḥammad is) a gift from our Lord; he has lit

the darkness of the night
And has salvaged all the world from unbelief
and adversity.

5. Nāqış (Imperfect):

When one of the punning words is almost a homonym but lacks a letter, whether initial, medial or final, as in harr / naħr or sirr / sifr.<41> The following example comes close to the technique of nāqış (observe the words at the end of each line in the Arabic):

wi n-nabī yā muḥammad tinzur-lī
wi-nn kunt-i khaṭaṭ at ibṭā iḥzur-nī
aṣl anā ḥayyān wi taḥālā zurnī.<16:b>

O Muḥammad, for the sake of the Prophet, look at me
And if I erred, forgive me
For I am afflicted, come and visit me.

6. al-Ishtiḳāq (Derivation):

When all the punning words are derived from the same root and are possessed of a similar sense as in the Prophet's saying: "dhū l-wajhayni lā yakūnu wajīhan ḥinda llāhi" (the one with two faces (deceitful) is not deemed honourable by God).<42>

Many maddāḥīn sing this line which is an example of ishtiḳāq:

amdaḥ nabī kāmil mukammal muktamal.<32:a>

I am praising a prophet who is perfect (in his qualities), made perfect and complete (by God).

Another singer plays on the derivatives of amm and khāl (paternal uncle and maternal uncle):

ammak illī nta maḥmūm bi niḥmatihi
wi khālak illī nta min adrārihi khālī.<42:a>

Your paternal uncle is anyone who envelopes you
with his generosity
Your maternal uncle is anyone from whose harm you
are free

But the best example of sustained ishtiqaq punning is found in a song by Shēkh Ḥabd al-Hādī:

aḥmad muḥammad ḥamad rabbu bi nashr id-dīn
asḥad saḥīd insaḥad baḥā sayyid iṣ-ṣalḥīn
ṣāfī iṣṭafāh rabbinā gaḥalu ḥalēnā amīn
munṣif naṣaf kull-i man gālu bi ḥaḥ-i yaqīn
ḥādīl ḥadal bi l-kitāb
muḥammad ḥabībī ḥamīnī shafīḥī.<3:a>

Aḥmad Muḥammad praised his Lord for having
granted victory to the faith
The happiest of the fortunate ones who was blessed
and became the lord of the righteous ones
A pure (man), chosen by God to be our overseer
A fair-minded one, with manifest righteousness, he
treated justly anyone who sought him out
A just one who judged in accordance with the Holy Book
He is Muḥammad, my beloved, my bondsman,
and my intercessor.

The use of punning is a source of delight for the maddāḥīn and their audience. The more subtle the pun is, the more delight the listener may have. The excessive use of

puns, however, is not always gratuitous. It seems to fit in with the importance of "kitmān al-asrār" (concealing the secrets) which the maddāhīn who have a ṣūfī outlook do not tire of repeating in their songs. Sings Ismā'īl Ḥamir:

il-ḥubb-i lu nās ḥirfū l-asrār
sharṭ il-fatā l-ḥurr-i lā ḥulnā wa lā ḥālū.<4:a>

Love has its own people who have known its secrets
The free-born is the one who does not divulge secrets.

And Sa'd Muḥammad Bughdādī from Shaṭā (Dumyāt) advises the one who has been afflicted by the love for the Prophet not to divulge it to others:

dārī ḥalā balwitak yā llī ibtalēt dārī.<7:a>

Hide your affliction you who have been afflicted
(by the love for the Prophet).

Punning is part and parcel of the art; the maddāhīn often use it and their audience expect to hear it. To achieve zahr words are deliberately mispronounced, short vowels are prolonged, or long ones shortened. Consequently the meaning for the uninitiated can be obfuscated. The purpose of using language here is not to achieve clarity (bayān, lucid discourse, exposition of ideas, one of the names by which the Qur'ān is called) as perhaps is the case in elite literature. On the contrary, and much to the

pleasure of the audience, language is used to hide not to expose, to obfuscate not to clarify, to warp not to set straight. Language is not used to achieve the kashf al-mahjūb (uncovering that which is concealed) - to borrow the title of the ṣūfī al-Hujwīrī - but rather to achieve the ḥajb al-makshūf (concealing that which is explicit). In short, language is made a means to undermine meaning; to exclude the uninitiated "educated" listener; it is anti-faṣāḥa and anti- bayān.

Metalepsis:

The transgression of temporal and spatial boundaries is seen more clearly in the metaleptic reversals and the miracle episodes. Metalepsis is a literary trope which "places the present before the past, effect before cause, epigone before precursor".^{<43>} Through this metaleptic trope the Egyptian maddāhīn (and ṣūfīs in general) make Muḥammad precede his ancestors in time, and, in effect, they make the belated Prophet engender his own father.

Another manifestation of metalepsis is seen in the images of ayā l-ḥubb (love sickness), which is a recurrent motif in the repertoire. The love for the Prophet is depicted as ayā (disease) but unlike any ordinary disease, it is not to be avoided but is in fact to be avidly sought and its contagion welcomed. In the case of an ordinary disease, caution is taken to prevent it from invading the body. It is to be held at bay, as an entity on the

periphery, and if it invades the body, all efforts are made to block its metastasis. But in the repertoire ayā l-ḥubb is to be contracted; its metastasis accelerated so that the disease may flare up and spread from the periphery and be happily allowed to take over the centre of the āshī, muḥammad (beloved of Muḥammad). This total metaleptic reversal is effectively depicted by Shēkh Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭablāwī (Ṭanṭā, Gharbiyya):

ayyān wi dakhal il-iyāda
 wagad iṭ-ṭabīb ayyān
 nāda at-tamargī yā nēnā
 laḥ yā enī ayyān
 khalāṣ fataḥnā l-iyāda
 wi l-kashf-i b il-maggān
 niṭī d-dawā l is-salīm
 wi niḥzil il-ayyān. <43:a>

A patient entered the clinic
 He found that the physician was ill
 He called the (male) nurse
 But found him, poor one, also ill
 The clinic is made ready
 Examining the patients is free of charge
 Medicine is administered to the healthy people
 And the ill are kept away from them.

This disease is depicted as a welcome disruption of the body's normal order, whereas normalcy is depicted as a disease for which medicine (dawā) is to be administered. In the maddāḥ's view, love for the Prophet is a disease that should inflict all devotees. If there are some devotees who are still "wholesome", they are the ones who ought to be given medication (i.e. infected) and the "diseased" lovers ought to be kept away from those dangerous "wholesome" ones.

Much like the Greek word pharmakon which means both poison and remedy (antidote), the Arabic dyad dā (disease) and dawā (cure) are used in the repertoire as metaphors for the Prophet:

in-nabī yā-hl il-hawā
ḥubb in-nabī fī l-ḥalb-i dawā
kullinā ha-nḥul sawā
ṣalawātu llāhi ḥalēh.<29:a>

Love for the Prophet, O people of passion,
Is a cure for the heart
We will all say together
May God's blessings be upon him.

The physician (ṭabīb) is at times the Prophet himself. He is called ṭabīb l-agrāḥ (the physician of the afflicted or the healer of the wounds). Shēkh Aḥmad at-Tūnī (Cairo/Asyūṭ) sings:

in-nabī yā ṭabīb l-agrāḥ
taḥāla ḥadānā w irtāḥ
wa llāh il-ḥalāla kutār
gāb id-dawā wa ḥaṭāḥ

wēn il-mabālī wēn
iḥnā ḥulnā l-kull-i mabālī
gāl nisā w rigāl?
gulnā ṣughār u kbār
gāl adāwī mīn wa akhallī mīn
wi l-kull-i fī l-ḥubb-i maḥlūmīn.<47:a>

O Prophet, O healer of the wounds
Come to our quarters and rest
The afflicted are truly so many
He brought the medicine and gave it out

"Where are the afflicted? Where are they?"
We said: "We are all afflicted"
He said: "Men and women?"

We said: "Children and grown-ups"
 He said: "Whom shall I cure and whom shall
 I leave out
 When everyone is love's casualty?"

Another metaleptic example is provided by Shēkh Muḥammad
 ʿAbd al-Hādī (Rashīd, Biḥēra). The patient diagnoses and
 prescribes treatment for the physician:

ʿalīl wi rāḥ l iṭ-ṭabīb waḡad iṭ-ṭabīb ʿayyān
 wi bdāl mā kashaf iṭ-ṭabīb waṣaf id-dawā l-ʿayyān
 ʿāl-lu dawāk yā ṭabīb ʿand in-nabī l-ʿadnān
 ʿūm ishfi ṣadrak bi nūr il-ḥubb w il-īmān.<3:a>

A patient went to the physician and found him sick
 Instead of the physician examining the patient, the
 patient prescribes the medicine
 He said: "O physician, your cure is with the Prophet
 from the tribe of ʿAdnān
 Rise and cure your chest with the light of love and faith.

A classical antecedent of this kind of metaleptic
 inversion can be found in the poetry quoted in the ṣūfī
 anthology al-Qāmūs al-Jadīd from which the maddāḥīn derive
 many of their songs:

tawaḡḡa, bi mā, al-ghaybi in kunta dhā sirrin
wa illā tayammam bi ṣ-ṣaʿīdi awi ṣ-ṣakhri
wa qaddim imāman kunta anta imāmahu
wa ṣalli ṣalāta l-fajrī fī awwali l-ʿaṣri
fa hādhihi ṣalātu l-ʿarifīna bi rabbihim
fa in kunta minhum fa ndaḥi l-barra bi l-baḥri. <44>

Perform ablution with the water of transcendence
 if you are a seeker of knowledge
Or else rub yourself with dust or stone
And put in front of you a leader (of prayer)
 whom you once led (in prayer)
And pray the dawn prayer in late afternoon
For this is the prayer of the gnostics
If you are one of their number then drain
 the sea-shore by means of the sea.

If one is to be counted as a true seeker after divine truth, one ought to invert every aspect of "natural" or "normal" order. One should perform ablution but not with ordinary water; one should pray but not according to the canonical time-table. Nor is that all; the seeker after divine truth should be able to do or at least contemplate doing the metaleptic and impossible task of draining the land, not drenching it, by means of sea water.

In the repertoire we come across similar cases of metaleptic inversions. If observable reality shows that ships float on sea water or at times sink into it, the repertoire inverts this fact:

safīna fī l-baḥr-i ghiri, il-baḥr-i guwwāhā. <16:a>

A ship on the sea in which the sea drowned.

The Prophet Muḥammad is here portrayed as a ship in which the sea of knowledge is submerged. Such metaleptic inversion echoes a poetic line by the great mystic and poet

Mawlānā Rūmī (d. 1273) in which he addresses Muḥammad's wet-nurse Ḥalīma. The child Muḥammad is supposed to have been lost and Ḥalīma is anxiously looking for him:

Do not worry - he is not lost to you
It is he, in whom the whole world will be lost.<45>

Other examples of metalepsis are also found in several ballads where God urges people to follow the path of Muḥammad when one expects just the reverse: that Muḥammad the mortal should be the one urging people to follow the path of God. The classical antecedent of this metalepsis is found in al-Hujwīrī's Kashf al-Maḥjūb where the famous mystic Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 875) is quoted as saying:

I cried: 'O Lord, with my egoism (mani-yi man) I cannot attain to Thee, and I cannot escape from my selfhood. What am I to do?' God spoke: 'O Abū Yazīd, thou must win release from thy thouness by following my beloved (i.e. Muḥammad).<46>

The following are two examples that I found in the repertoire, the first in a ballad sung by Shēkh ʿAbd al-Hādī (Rashīd, Biḥēra) in which he addresses God's majesty:

anā ʾult-i ēh yā galāla bass-i yirḍīkī
ʾālit-lī usluk ṭarīq il-muṣṭafā l-ʾadnān.<3:a>

I said: "What is it that would satisfy you,
O God's Majesty
She said: "Follow the path of the ʾAdnānī Prophet".

The second example shows the maddāḥ imploring God to forgive him his sins and grant him, not God's, but Muḥammad's

acceptance:

yā rabb-i tūb ṣalēnā yā rabb
yā rabb iṣṭīnī mi d-dunyā riḍā
nabīnā ṣannī. <32:a>

O Lord, forgive us, O Lord
O Lord, grant me in this life our
Prophet's acceptance of me.

The Use of the Alphabet:

The maddāḥīn refer to the orthography of two words in particular: Allāh and Muḥammad. We have seen how Shēkh Ṣeṭā makes reference to the letters /m/ /ḥ/ /m/ /d/ in the name Muḥammad, beginning every line with a sentence which starts with each of these letters. The following is an example of how the letters in the name Allāh are interpreted:

alif wi lāmēn wi heh waḥda yihizzu l-kōn
wi ḡīf ṣalēhum ḥarf il-kāf wi ḥarf in-nūn
khallīk maṣāhum wi khāf minhum tinūl i-khēr
li ann-i rabbak yaqūl li sh-shayṣ kun fa yakūn. <3:a>

An A and two l's and one h shake the universe
Add to them the letter k and n
Hold on to them and fear them, you will be rewarded
Because your Lord says to a thing: "Kun (Be)" and it
becomes.

Shēkh Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī sings this stanza:

bi ṣuyūnhā nāditnī
fī l-galb-i garḥitnī
alif wi l-lāmēn
wi bi l-heh dallitnī. <14:c>

With her looks she has called me in
In my heart she wounded me

The A and the two l's
And with the h, she has guided me.

The Use of Numbers:

Numbers from one to ninety-nine are used to refer to certain mystical but at times mysterious notions. The numbers one and ninety-nine commonly refer to God who is one and who has ninety-nine "most beautiful names" (asmā' allāh al-ḥusnā) which are mentioned in the Qur'ān. Shēkh Jum'a makes use of the numbers 1-14 to refer to God whom he calls "Laylā", the famous female beloved of the Majnūn and the sūfī symbol of the absolute into whom the mystic is to be totally annihilated. The number 14 may also refer to the popular Shī'ī symbol of Muḥammad, Fāṭima and the Shī'ī twelve Imāms.

wāḥid yā laylā
itnēn yā laylā
talāta yā laylā
arba'a yā laylā
khamṣa ma b-anamsh-i wa lā laylā
sitta yā laylā
sab'a yā laylā
tamanya yā laylā
tis'a yā laylā
'ashara yā laylā
ḥidāshar yā laylā
itnāshar yā laylā
talattāshar yā laylā
arba'tāshar yikallimūki w inti

wāḥid huwwa l-malik wi b-allaqabu b laylā
itnēn il-lēl wi n-nahār wi huwwa l-karīm laylā
talāta 'arshī wa kursī wa l-qalam wa l-kātibu laylā
arba'a l-arba' kutub wa l-kātibu laylā
khamṣa l-khamas ṣalawāt yā bā yā sayyid
yā sāgid ilā

yā sāgid ilā
yā sāgid ilā laylā
is-sitta yā muḥammad
is-sittat ayyām khalq id-dunyā
is-sab'a saba' samawāt tirfa'hum yā sīdī laylā

The number forty is used in several places in the maddāḥīn's repertoire. The Prophet is described as physically stronger than forty prophets, each one of them being normally stronger than forty men as the ballad al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja tells us. <48> The number of the unbelievers who chased the Prophet out of his hometown was forty and they were armed with forty swords. <40:a> We should remember that the Prophet was forty when he started his prophetic career. <49> In Ismā'īl ḌAmir's Mawlid in-Nabī, Laylā, the symbol for the divine Beloved, is made to say to a neophyte:

law dāwimt iz-zikr fiyyā arba'īna nahār
fī lēla 'abl-i ṭilū' il-fagr-i tiwṣallī.<4:a>

If you continue to mention my name for forty days
One night before the break of dawn, you shall
be united with me.

The Poetic Diction and Imagery:

The diction used in the repertoire is predominantly in the Colloquial Egyptian Arabic. The presence of the Cairene dialect is pervasive but one also comes across some regional and provincial dialects. As is to be expected, Upper Egyptian dialect (ṣa'īdī or ṣi'īdī) is encountered in the pieces sung by Upper Egyptian maddāhīn like Fanjarī Aḥmad 'Urābī from Sohāj, Shōqī l-Qināwī from Qinā, Na'īma Shirīf Muḥammad from Minyā, and some others. A characteristic of this ṣa'īdī dialect is the pronunciation of the hard /g/ of Cairene Arabic as /j/ just as the case in Classical Arabic, and the /q/ as hard /g/. Na'īma sings:

'ugbālak yā mamdūḥ afandī bi zwārit in-nabī
w-arūḥ aghannī w jīnā b is-salāma.<30:a>

May it be your turn, Mamdūḥ Effendi, to visit
the Prophet
I shall come to sing: God has vouchsafed our arrival.

Some vocables also betray a ṣa'īdī provenance. In al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja one comes across a line spoken by the monk Baḥīrā:

hayyā sʿifū-lī walīma dilwakīt fī l-ḥāl.<50>

Come, hurry up and make me a banquet immediately.

The vocable dilwakīt is definitely ṣaʿīdī for "right away, immediately", as opposed to the Cairene dilwaʿtī. Ibn Aḥmad, the alleged author of the version of the ballad in my possession has dilwakīt whereas Enno Littmann has the Cairene bī l-ʿaḡal. <51> Other examples include ḥadāh (chez-lui) as opposed to the Cairene ʿandu:

ʿāmū ḥadāh fī l-waṭan lēla wi tānī yōm.<52>

They stayed for one night as his guests
and the following day.

Another example is the use of the word ʿād (totally) as opposed to the Cairene kull:

fa ʿāl-lahā yā khadīḡa ibshirī bi l-khēr
il-māl kullu fidākī w intī tikfīnī ʿād.<53>

He said to Khadīja: rejoice over (Allāh's) bounty
All wealth is to be ransomed for your sake, and
you totally suffice me.

Metaphors which are derived from the everyday expressions and experiences of the Egyptian folk are many. The vigil which the ṣūfīs are urged to hold and the warning against falling asleep during it are artfully expressed in the lines which portray divine grace as milk which goes sour if it is not drunk early enough:

iṣḡā yā nāyim ṣaḡī n-nōm

The Prophet's saliva is as sweet as sugar (ri in-nabī sukkar) and he who tastes it becomes intoxicated (man zāqahu yaskar). Love for the Prophet cauterizes the heart:

Love is what cauterizes us
We love the seal of the Prophets.

Homonymyms can also be used as antonyms. The word baṭṭāl which can mean "a scoundrel" as well as "invalid, null and void" is at one point contrasted with the word baṭal <hero>. The two words are derived from the same root, bṭl. Madkūr, one of Khadīja's slaves is called Baṭal <54> but the wicked Jew is called baṭṭāl. <55>

Personal names are used as adjectival epithets. Consider the names of slaves in al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja: Mufliḥ, <the successful one>, Maysara <easiness>, Najāḥ, <success>, Madkūr - who is called Baṭal <hero> - is derived from the root dakar (cl. dhakar) meaning "male", a name which conjures up the notion of strength or virility in the Egyptian social idiom; the name may also mean someone mentioned (in the angel's book as saved or deserving of Paradise)). The name of the ascetic Faḍlōn in the ballad composed by Abū Sariyya and sung by Shēkh Sharaf is derived from the root fdl which has the meanings of credit, excellence, virtue, honour, all of which correspond to the moral characteristics of the ascetic Faḍlōn who - much like Yūsuf of the Qur'ān - resists the seductive ways of a beautiful temptress.<41:b>

The Heteroglossic Diction:

Linguistically speaking, Arab society by and large is often described as diglossic; that is to say that it employs two different varieties of Arabic: the fushā (Classical and Modern Standard Arabic, lit. the purest, the most eloquent) and the āmmiyya (colloquial Arabic, lit. the common language, the language of the āmma, the common people). The Lebanese scholar Anīs Frayḥa describes this linguistic dualism as a case of two languages which reflect two different worlds: the world of reality and the world of

artificiality.

We think, speak, murmur our prayer, talk tenderly to our children, whisper in the ears of our beloved ones, seek understanding with whoever we want to and insult those who we see fit to in a flowery and smooth spoken language which does not delay thinking, nor requires much effort. But when we assume a formal position in the capacity of a teacher, preacher, lawyer, broadcaster or lecturer, we have to attire ourselves with another linguistic personality, and we have to talk in a language with difficult vowel-endings, and stiff rules in its constructions and expressions. <56>

This linguistic dualism, it is argued, has some grave psychological implications for the Arab. The two levels of language that the Arab has to live with reflect two levels of being. As Elie Shouby, an Arab psychologist has put it:

The expected gap between the real self of the Arab and his ideal self becomes even larger when strengthened by the superimposition of the gap between literary Arabic, which reigns supreme in the ideal self, and colloquial Arabic, which is the monopoly of the practical functions of the real self. When the Arab thinks of his ideal self he thinks in terms of what he has learned from reading and listening, that is, in terms of literary Arabic. But in his everyday living, he is free to distinguish between his ideal self and what he really thinks and does, thanks to his use of the colloquial Arabic. <57>

The views stated above do not allow the possibility that serious and sacred subjects such as the life-story of the Prophet Muḥammad can also be couched in the regional dialects and that the common folk at times appropriate parts of the literature of the elite which is composed in literary

Arabic.

Again on the question of bipolarity, the American linguist Charles Ferguson discusses the issue of diglossia in the case of Arabic - and other languages.<58> But the repertoire of the maddāhīn with its heteroglossic ballads poses a serious challenge to the theory of Arabic diglossia which asserts the existence of two varieties of the same language, one high and one low, or one written and one spoken. Alas the neatness of the theory does not correspond to the untidy margins of observable reality. For, in fact, there are many linguistic Mischbildungen or intermediate combinations of standard and colloquial Arabic in the repertoire that would warrant the use of the term heteroglossia rather than diglossia. Let me illustrate this point by citing the following five examples:

1.
yā sāqiya l-khamr iṭṭīnī l-qadaḥ w imlāh
ḥattā anā duṭ-i ṭaṣmu lam baḥēt aslāh.<16:b>

O cup-bearer, give me the cup and fill it up
So that (when) I have a taste of it, I will
not forget it.

Using the linguistic classifications of the Egyptian linguist El-Said Badawi in his book, Mustawayāt al-ʿArabiyya al-Muʿāṣira fī Miṣr (1973) <59>, one can regard the first line as an example of Classical Arabic (fuṣḥā t-turāth) with two exceptions: iṭṭīnī, and imlāh, are not correct according to the grammar of the Classical Arabic. The second line does not conform in its entirety either to the Classical or

the colloquial Arabic. It should be noted, however, that the use of "lam" to negate the verb in the perfect tense is so common in the language of the Egyptian ballad singers that one is inclined to see it as a characteristic of their literary colloquial (al-ʿāmmiyya al-adabiyya) and not as a case of "pseudo-classicism" as Pierre Cachia asserts in his study on the Egyptian ballads.<60>

2.

yā bint-i yā llī fī bāb ʿizzik ḥulī zullī.<4:a>

O young woman, at the threshold of whose pride my
humiliation tastes sweet.

The whole line with the exception of the colloquial relative pronoun "(i)llī" may be considered Standard Arabic, I say maybe because of the lack of some vowel-endings, what is known in Arabic as "taskīn awākhir al-kalimāt". At any rate, the use of "illī" (that, who) is enough to classify the line as an example of "ʿāmmiyyat al-muthaggafīn" the colloquial of the intellectuals, since the passive voice in "ḥulī zullī" which is a mark of of Classical/MSA, is virtually unknown in the spoken Arabic of Egypt.

3.

ʾālū-lī ngēb-lak midāwī yā walah
anā ʾult-i mish nāfi
anā dawāyā ʾa llī lā tarāh il-ʾēn
huwa l-ḥakīmu l-ʾalīmu ʾ-ḍarr-i w an-nāfi.<35:a>

They said to me: "Lad, shall we fetch you a medicine-man?"
I said: "That would not do,
My cure is up to the One who is not seen by the eye,
He is the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, the Harmful and the
Benefactor"

The first two lines in the stanza above are in ‘āmmiyyat al-ummiyyīn (the colloquial of the illiterate) with their use of the "hamza" to render the "qāf" and the rural "walah" (lad, boy) and "midāwī" (medicine-man) instead of the more common "walad" and "duktūr" or "ṭabīb". The third line with its negative "lā tarāh" (does not see) instead of the colloquial "mā-tshifūsh" is an example of "‘āmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn" (the colloquial of the intellectuals) whereas the last line with its echo of the Qur’anic "most beautiful names of God" and proper vocalization is an example of fushā t-turāth (Classical Arabic).

4.

qasaman bi ḥālī wa l-maqām wa rutbatī
law buḥtu nafasan la njalā nūru waḥdatī
qasaman yamīnan
aḥlā yamīn, ajmal yamīn

qasaman bi ḥubbī w bi ḥalbī llī nāzir līk
b-aḥbudak bi r-rūḥ wi l-ḥalb-i mughram bīk
alif wi lāmēn wi hā il-ism-i dī maḥanēk

qasaman bi ḥubbī wi l-ḥalb-i lēk mukhlīṣ
gālū ḥalayyā gōl ḥamalt-i anā aḥmā
w akhraṣ. <14:c>

I swear by my (mystical) state, station and rank
That if I exhale a breath, the light of my oneness
will be manifested

I swear, I take an oath
The sweetest oath, the most beautiful oath

I swear by my love and my heart drawn to you
I worship you by my spirit and the heart is in love
with you

The letter A and the double L and the H form the Divine
Name and its meaning

I swear by my love and the heart which is loyal to you
They alleged lies about me but I acted as though
I was blind and mute.

The first two lines are in Classical Arabic (fushā t-turāth), while the rest, with the "qāf" now rendered as a hamza or a provincial hard "g" now standard "qāf" as in "qasaman", and as well the reference to the Arabic alphabet which at least requires familiarity with the orthography of the word "Allāh", is an example of the "colloquial of the intellectuals" (āmmiyyat al-muthaqqafīn).

5.
 ṣifātu l-ḥishqī tajrīdun
 ḥann-i l-malakōti wa l-mulki
 shurūṭu l-ḥishqī an tabqā
 maḥa l-maḥbūbi ka l-milki

 fī baḥri sh-shōg wi nzilnā
 fī baḥri sh-shōg wi nazalnā
 wi nzilnā wi nazalnā
 nazalnā fīh ka l-fulki
 nazalnā l-baḥri l-baḥri qad nawwar
 wi sibnā l-ahl-i w al-mulki.<47:a>

Love is described as a state of being divested
 of (the desire for) the kingdom of heaven and earth
 The stipulations of love are to become with the beloved
 as his own property

In the sea of passion we descended
 We descended in it as though it were an ark
 When we descended into the sea, it shone forth
 We left behind our kinsmen and our possessions.

The first stanza is in the Classical Arabic, duly vowelled according to the grammatical rules of the language. What follows has elements of Classical/Modern Standard Arabic as in the case of "ka", "qad", "mulk", in addition to the regional variations in "nizilnā", "nazalnā", as well as "shōg" which is unmistakably Upper Egyptian.

We have already seen that the level of diction varies

in the repertoire from the purely colloquial to the conspicuously classical, and from the terse to the effete. Such variegation in diction is at times utilized by the maddāh in his characterization of persons in his ballads. On occasion the Prophet is made to speak in a regional dialect or even patois. Sometimes he sounds like a ṣi'īdī (Upper Egyptian), using vocables like ḥadāyā, ēsh, ād (as in al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja). But mostly the Prophet's speech is in literary Arabic, both grammatical and proper. It is clearly different from the speech of other characters in the repertoire. For example, the Prophet uses highly formulaic language that expresses Islamic piety. God is often talked of as ādīr <61> (powerful), la ilāha siwāh <62> (there is no god but He), rabb-i l-bēt <63> (the Lord of the sanctuary), il-ḥa <64> (Truth), wāḥid aḥad <65> (the one and only).

At times the notions Muḥammad expresses are conspicuously complex and philosophical, and the diction is made to correspond accordingly. Consider for example the Prophet's speech to Abū Lahab when the latter asks him to show respect to the Meccan idols:

allāh wāḥid aḥad mā-lu rafī w anīs
wa lā shabīh yishbiḥu khālī (an il-a-rāḍ. <66>

God the one and the only has no associate or companion
No one resembles him; He is free from accidents.

The last line contains highly philosophical ideas about God being pure essence, devoid of all accidents. With the

exception of the wrong preposition an in "khālī an", which in Classical Arabic is khālī min, the line sounds like the kind of sentence one may come across in a philosophical work on the nature of God. Elsewhere the Prophet is made to say about God:

wi ṣawwar il-ʿabd-i min baʿd-i l-ʿadam insān. <67>

And He formed <His> servant a human being
after <the servant> had been nothing.

Does this image not echo the philosophical belief that the Active Intellect causes a thing to pass from a potential to an actual state? What is the origin of these philosophical notions in the ballad? Does this betoken folk awareness of philosophical subjects, an awareness which is the exclusive pride of the educated elite? Or does this point to an educated editing hand - such as Shēkh Ibn Aḥmad's - that may have at one point tampered with the folk narrative? But if indeed that were the case, one would have expected to find Littmann's version of the ballad, which is presumed to be an authorless, orally-transmitted piece, free of such philosophical notions. Could these images then be the influence of learned sūfī concepts which are not unknown to the folk maddāhīn and their vastly unlettered audience?

The Prophet's speech sets him apart from the rest. As he is shown to be superior in other qualities, likewise he is superior in his speech. The implication here is that the literary Arabic is superior to the colloquial, the latter being routinely dismissed as a linguistic degeneration of

the former. Islam's formal lore is exclusively in the classical literary Arabic: the Qurʾān, the Ḥadīth, and all the works on theology and law. Moreover, the Qurʾān's uniqueness lies in the linguistic excellence of its classical literary Arabic. In addition to all of these reasons that help the literary Arabic maintain its supremacy, there is also the important factor that all the religious duties that a Muslim - especially an Arab Muslim - has to perform must be carried out in literary Arabic. Take the five daily prayers for example. They have a fixed wording which is exclusively in literary Arabic. A Muslim repeats this formula daily; he cannot improvise or pray directly to God in his own language or dialect. The Muslim shahāda (testimony of faith) "ashhadu an lā ilāha illā llāh, w anna muḥammadan rasūlu l-lāh" is a fixed-phrase formula, (there is no god but God and Muḥammad is His messenger). One cannot imagine an Egyptian Muslim saying for example, "anā b ashhad bi ann-i mafīsh ilāh illā rabbīnā w miḥammad akīd rasūl min (and-i rabbīnā (there ain't no god except God and Muḥammad is sure thing the guy God sent). In fact the colloquial in this case will be categorically dismissed as unfit to express Islamic piety, and to use it for this or a similar purpose, would be - in the words of an Egyptian author - tantamount to a preposterous act of ilhād luhgawī (linguistic heresy).^{<68>} That is why, unlike ordinary men, the Prophet has to speak in literary Arabic. Status here is illustrated and reinforced through the use of different levels of language. Literary Arabic with its inflections

and terse structures is believed, even by the unlettered folk, to be superior to the colloquial, and has, therefore, to be chosen as the idiom for the sublime utterances of the beloved Prophet.

A "SOMA-POETICS" OF PIETY:

A striking feature in the art of the maddāhīn is the collusion between "text" and body; a collusion which runs counter to the scholarly separation of the two. For the maddāh's body cannot be separated from the text of his song. Through his body movements, he brings the text to life. He embodies his text in such a way that one can talk about a "soma-poetics" of the art of the maddāhīn, i.e. the poetics of body and text. To understand the significance of this collusion between body and text, one should try to read the text of a song then attend a performance of it by the maddāh.

Take the example of Shēkh at-Tūinī's ballad "Anā B-Amdaḥ". He starts with a musical prelude from a song by Umm Kulthūm. He then sings "anā b-amdaḥ" (I eulogize), therefore establishing his profession as a maddāh of the Prophet Muḥammad. He repeats his first two lines, breaks them into small segments, repeats each several times, interspersed by "mm mm mm, aah aah aah". He stresses the nasal sounds of /m/ and /n/, therefore the line which goes:

ūd il-qanā inḥanā wi māl

The bamboo lance bowed down and leaned

is repeated several times with a stress on "inḥanā" and an unnatural prolongation of the "innnn"; this prolongation prefigures another one in the repeated first line

"anā b-amdaḥ illī yafūḥ il-misk min qadamu

I am praising the one from whose feet musk exudes.

He does not complete the line and acts as if his tongue were stuck with "il-" which he repeats several times until his audience goes wild with excitement, he then follows this with the line :

inta sabēt il-ūqūl yā muḥammad.

You have captivated the minds, O Muḥammad.

The love for the Prophet is shown to be so overwhelming that the maddāḥ is rendered incapable of finishing his line. With the letter /l/ the tongue of the singer is literally stuck to his palate.

Shēkh at-Tūnī is apparently known for what is called by Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī "nasal singing", that is to say his stress on the nasal sounds produces a tone which Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī admits at times moves him to tears.

Looking at Shēkh at-Tūnī's ballad - or that of any maddāḥ for that matter - as mere printed matter robs it of its meta-lingual qualities; qualities that have to do with presence and immediacy. In fact one could say that the

maddāh and his performance are at times more valued by the audience than the sung "text". After all in most cases the audience is thoroughly familiar with the content of the song; in the context of the popular sīra of the Prophet Muḥammad, the audience certainly know the details of his life all too well. It is for the sake of the performance of the good singer and story-teller that they come, sometimes from far-away places. In fact they would often listen to the same song over and over. Unlike the case with the literate tradition where the educated may or may not read the same book more than once in their life time, the maddāhīn's audience would not tire from repeatedly attending the performance of the same song, especially if the singer is competent. Listening for this audience is not to discover the unfamiliar but rather to re-discover the familiar.<69>

For the audience, the presence and the body of the maddāh are indispensable. One has to attend any of the performances to see the insistence of the audience on being able to see the maddāh. People would push and shove in order to stand or sit where the maddāh is in sight. It is his person and his body that they desire to see as they listen to his voice.

There is a good reason for that insistence on seeing the body of the maddāh; it is the medium through which the linguistic utterance is articulated and intoned. It is, as it were, the punctuation mark in the "text" of the song, except that the intonation is not always voiced. The maddāh

sways his body, clenches his fist, closes his eyes, gesticulates with his hands, leans forward or backward, smiles or grimaces to underline some segments in his song. All of this will be missed if one cannot see him.

The audience actively participate in the performance, therefore any evaluation of the texture of the repertoire under study must take the audience into consideration. They cheer, ask the maddāh to sing some favourite song, or insist that he repeat a segment, prolong or shorten another. During the zīkr excitable dancers may snatch the microphone from the hand of the singer and shout some phrases which express their emotional state. These are some examples taken from different performances:

1. yā sīdī ⟨alī, in-nagda yā sīdī ⟨alī, ilḥa⟩
wilādak yā sīdī ⟨alī, da ḥnā fī dār is-salṭana yā
sīdī ⟨alī, yā kubbāniyyit in-nūr yā sīdī ⟨alī.
ilḥa⟩ il-magānīn yā sīdī ⟨alī, ilḥa⟩ il-mahāwīs yā
sīdī ⟨alī. <35:a>

O Sīdī ⟨Alī, help, O Sīdī ⟨Alī. Come to the rescue
of your children, O Sīdī ⟨Alī. We are in (your)
royal presence, O Sīdī ⟨Alī. O source of
resplendence (lit. electricity company), O Sīdī
⟨Alī. Come to the rescue of the madmen, O Sīdī
⟨Alī. Come to the rescue of the insane ones, O
Sīdī ⟨Alī.

2. ikhawātak ⟨ayyānīn yā gum⟨a. sīdī mḥammad
ish-shinnāwī yā gum⟨a ḥaḍīr hinā m⟨ānā. sīdī
ibrāhīm id-disū, i wī sīdī ⟨alī zēn il-⟨ābidīn. wī
lēltak full yā gum⟨a wī ṣallī ⟨alā ḥaḍrit
in-nabī. <49:a>

Your brothers are afflicted (by love for God or
the Prophet) O Gum⟨a. Sīdī Mḥammad ish-Shinnāwī

and Sīdī Ibrāhīm id-Disū'ī and Sīdī 'Alī Zēn al-'Abidīn (son of al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, the Prophet's grandchild) are present here with us. Your night is as fragrant as jasmine. Call down blessings on the dignified Prophet.

Admiration for the singer can be expressed by complimentary phrases such as "Yā ḥalāwa , yā ḥalāwa" (How sweet); "Yā ḥalawtak yā gamīl yā bn-i l-gamīla" (How sweet you are, O son of the sweet woman); "Yā ḥabībī yā 'asal, yā ḥabībī yā riqā yā bū sa'id" (O my sweet beloved, O Riqā, father of Sa'id). Here is an exchange between Shēkh al-'Irasī and a member of his audience:

Man**Shēkh al-'Irasī**

'alayya n-ni'ma 'asal.

allāh yikrimak.

'asal

allāh yidīk iṣ-ṣiḥḥa.

ēh il-ḥalāwa dī

yā sayyid il-mursalīn

yā ahlan

ahlan wa sahlān minawwarīn.

yā ṣabāḥ il-khēr
kull-i sana wi ntū
ṭayyibīn.
allāh yibārik fikum.

I swear you are as
sweet as honey.

may Allāh bless you.

You are as sweet as
honey

may Allāh grant you
good health

What sweetness.

O lord of the Prophets

Welcome

Welcome, welcome, you have

made the place glitter with light. May you be well this year and the year after. May Allāh bless you.

Cheering the singer can take different forms. The audience may shout simple compliments such as the ones we just mentioned in the case of Shēkh al-ʿIrasī and others. But if women are present, one may hear joyful ululations - called zaqhārīt (sing. zaghrūta). Throughout the ballad about the Prophet's birth sung by al-ʿArabī al-Bilbīsī, women's ululations of joy are often heard. <12:a> The audience may also show their approval by shouting the names of different saints or members of the Prophet's household especially Ḥusēn, his sister Zēnab, and his son ʿAlī Zēn al-ʿAbidīn. Here are some of the shouts of the audience of al-Bilbīsī during his ballad about the Prophet's birth:

* yā gamāl in-nabī, yā ḥaḍrit in-nabī.
O how beautiful the Prophet is, O dignified
Prophet.

* yā sīdī ʿalī zēn il-ʿābidīn.
O my master ʿAlī Zēn il-ʿAbidīn
(son of al-Ḥusayn)

* yā mawlānā yā ḥusēn
O our master, Ḥusēn.

* ṣallī ʿalā kāmīl in-nūr
Call down blessings on the one with
dazzling resplendence.

* sīdī ibrahīm yā disūʿī
O my master Ibrāhīm Disūʿī.

* madad yā badawī
Help, O Badawī (Aḥmad al-Badawī)

* waḥḥidūh
Say He (God) is One.

* ṣallī ḥa n-nabī yā ḥagg-i ḥarabī
Call down blessings on the Prophet,
O Ḥagg ḤArabī (the singer).

* madad yā sayyida zēnab
Help, O our Lady Zēnab.

* ṣallī ḥa n-nabī
Call down blessings on the Prophet.

* kida kida yā ḥagg-i ḥarabī
O how beautiful, O Ḥagg ḤArabī.

(zagharīt)
cries of joy. <12:a>

and these are the cheers of Aḥmad at-Tūnī's audience while
he was singing "Anā Bamdaḥ illī Yafūḥ il-Misk min Qadamu":

* yā ṣultān il-maddāḥin.
O sultan of the Maddāḥīn.

* yā ḥaḍrit in-nabī.
O dignified Prophet.

* yā būnā yā ḥnayyin
O our affectionate father.

* madad yā āla l-bēt madad
Help, O people of the Prophet's family.

* yā karīma, yā sitt il-kull.
O generous one, O Mistress above everyone.

* ēh dā l-gamāl dā, ēh dī l-ḥalāwa dī
What beauty, what sweetness.

* naḥam yā sāqī r-rāḥ, naḥam yā
balsam il-girāḥ
Yes, O cup-bearer (of divine wine), yes

balsam of wounds.

* yā sulṭān il-maddāḥīn yā aḥmad.
O Aḥmad, O sultan of the Maddāḥīn.

The repertoire under study with its multiplicity of linguistic levels corresponds semiotically to the mūlid. Its "mūlid-esque" character can be seen in the inversions and interpenetration of disparate elements: the sacred biography and the profane tunes or words of Umm Kulthūm's songs; the chaste diction of the maddāḥ's eulogies of the Prophet and the bawdy dialogue of the Arāgōz; the Classical Arabic of the ode and the Colloquial Egyptian Arabic of the narrative ballad. It is also "mūlid-esque" in its gregarious nature: the mūlid is a communal celebration, so is the repertoire about the Prophet Muḥammad, for there can be no ṣayyīṭa (local appellation of the singers of religious ballads) without sammī'a. In fact any of the songs in the repertoire cannot be appreciated adequately if reduced to printed matter on a sheet of paper. One can only begin to appreciate a song during a live performance. One realizes that it is affected by the performance of the maddāḥ as much as by the reactions of his audience who shout, whistle, ask him to repeat or hurry up or even interrupt by grabbing the microphone from him to shout their own praises. The maddāḥ's song is indeed a communal act.

ENDNOTES

<1> Littmann, Mohammed im Volksepos, stanza 38, p.24.

<2> Ibid., stanza 43, p.26.

<3> Ibid., stanza 16, p.50.

<4> For example in this line from al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja:

nāda hināk kalb kāfir min il-yahūd baṭṭāl

There shouted an unbeliever, a dog, a scoundrel
of a Jew

<5> As in this line from al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja.

bi-kmin luh makr-i ḥan makr in-naṣārā zād.

For his slyness outdid that of the Nazarenes.

<6> See Cachia's discussion of this expression in the ballads of the Azharite Ḥajāj in Popular Ballads, pp. 76ff.

<7> Littmann, Mohammed im Volksepos, stanzas 83ff, pp. 40ff.

<8> See discussion of this detail in Chapter Two.

<9> Ibid.

<10> Also in Haniyyāt Shaḥbān's "Hijrat ar-Rasūl".

<11> See discussion of the ballad in Chapter Two.

<12> At the end of Mohammed im Volksepos.

<13> Ibid., stanza 83, p.40

<14> Ibid., stanza 84, p.42.

<15> See Shawqī Ḥabīb al-Ḥakīm, ash-Shi'r ash-Shaḥbī al-Fulklūrī ḥind al-ḤArab, p. 155.

<16> See Divan, ed. Massignon, p.84 as cited by S.H. Nadeem, A Critical Appreciation of Arabic Mystical Poetry (Lahore: Islamic Book Service, 1979), p.70.

<17> Ibn ʿArabī, Tarjumān al-Ashwāq, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1961), pp. 43-44.

<18> M. Lings, "Mystical Poetry," in ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres, eds. Julia Ashtiani et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.261.

<19> See the collection of his poetry, Abū l-Ḥasan ash-Shushtarī, Dīwān Abī l-Ḥasan ash-Shushtarī Shāḥīn aṣ-Ṣūfiyya al-Kabīr fī l-Andalus wa l-Maghrib (Alexandria: Munshaʿat al-Maʿārif, 1960), p.97.

<20> For a study on this concept see Aḥmad ash-Sharqāwī al-Hukūma al-Bāṭiniyya, (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1982).

<21> Ibid., p.159.

<22> Ibid.

<23> For the most comprehensive and the best study on the mawwāl, see Cachia's Popular Narrative Ballads.

<24> See my A Study of the Vernacular Poetry of Aḥmad Fuʾād Nigm (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1990), p. 92.

<25> al-ʿIrasī, Dīwān, p. 12-13.

<26> Aḥmad Rushdī Ṣāliḥ, Funūn al-Adab ash-Shaʿbī, vol. I (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1956), p.115.

<27> works such as those of al-Munāwī, Mawlid an-Nabī.

<28> Ibn al-Jawzī, Mawlid Ibn al-Jawzī al-Mashhūr bi l-ʿArūs.

<29> al-Barzanjī, Mawlid an-Nabī.

<30> al-Munāwī, Mawlid an-Nabī... al-Mashhūr bi Mawlid al-Munāwī, pp. 5-6.

<28> Provided by Shēkh al-ʿIrasī.

<31> Interview, Sept. 1989.

<33> See Yusrī l-ʿAzab, Azjāl Bayram at-Tūnisī (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿamma li l-Kitāb, 1981), p.88.

<34> See Cachia, Popular Ballads, p. 34.

<35> See Cachia's article, "The Egyptian Mawwāl - Its Ancestry, its Development and its Present Forms," Journal of Arabic Literature 8 (1977), p. 92.

<36> Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, Khizānat al-Adab wa Ghāyat al-Arab (Beirut: Dār al-Qāmūs, 1304 H.), p.30.

<37> Riḍā Muḥsin al-Qurayshī, al-Mawāliyya (Baghdad: Ministry of Information, 1977), p.202.

<38> Ibid., p.196.

<39> Ibid., p. 197.

<40> Ibid.

<41> Ibid., p. 205.

<42> Ibid.

<43> Firmat, Literature and Liminality, p. 21.

<44> See al-Qāmūs al-Jadīd, p. 52.

<45> See Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī's Mathnawī, vol. IV, line 976 as cited by Schimmel, And Muḥammad is His Messenger, p. 10.

<46> al-Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb, tr. Nicholson, p.238 as cited by S.H. Nadeem, A Critical Appreciation of Arabic Mystical Poetry (Lahore: Islamic Book Service, 1979), pp. 40-41.

<47> The tape I have of his songs does not mention his name. His audience, however, call him Shēkh Gum'a several times during the performance.

<48> Littmann, Mohammed im Volksepos, stanza 33, p.22.

<49> Ibn Hishām, as-Sīra an-Nabawiyya, p. 263.

<50> al-Jawāhir al-Bahīja, see Appendix.

<51> Littmann, Mohammad im Volkessepos, stanza 74, p. 38.

<52> al-Jawāhir, stanza 107, p. 18; Littmann, Mohammad, stanza 124, p. 56.

<53> Littmann, Mohammad, stanza 130, p. 58.

<54> Ibid., stanza 202, p.84.

<55> Ibid., stanza 106, p. 50.

<56> Cited in Anwar Chejne, The Arabic Language: Its Role in History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1969), pp.162-3.

<57> Cited in Ibid., p. 162.

<58> Charles Ferguson, "Diglossia", in P.P. Giglioli, ed. Language and Social Context (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1972), p.235-244.

<59> as-Sa'id Badawī (El-Said Badawi), Mustawayāt al-ʿArabiyya al-Muʿāšira fī Miṣr (Cairo, 1973).

<60> See Cachia, Popular Ballads, p. 60.

<61> Ibid., stanza 10, p. 14.

<62> Ibid.

<63> Ibid., stanza 11, p. 14.

<64> Ibid., stanzas 90, p. 44; 181, p. 76.

<65> Ibid., stanza 8, p. 12.

<66> Ibid.

<67> Ibid., stanza 10, p. 14.

<68> ʿAbbās Ḥasan, "ad-Daʿwa ilā l-ʿAmmiyya wa Tark al-Iʿrāb Intikās fī l-Jahāla wa Jināya ʿalā l-Qawmiyya," Risālat al-Islām 9 (1957), p. 149.

<69> Aḥmad ʿAlī Mursī, Muqaddima fī l-Fūklūr (Cairo: Dār ath-Thaqāfa li n-Nashr wa t-Tawzīʿ, 1987), pp. 132-133.

CONCLUSION

il-maḍḥ-i kida
 wiṣāl wi ttiṣāl
 wa-hū min dā wi dā
 il-maḍḥ-i kida
 mish ʿayza kalām
 il-maḍḥ-i kida.

The art of the sung praises in honour
 of the Prophet Muḥammad is like
 Lovers' union and connectedness
 From this and from that
 This art is (formed)
 No doubt, this art is like this.

<Ḥajja Wafā> al-Mursī
 in her ballad "Muʿjizāt ar-Rasūl",
 in imitation of Umm Kulthūm's famous
 song, "il-Ḥubb Kida">.

On October 12, 1989, the Muḥammad ʿAbduh auditorium at al-Azhar University in Cairo was crowded with turbaned shēkhs, men in Western-style suits and ties, and some women in traditional Islamic garb. They were invited to hear President Mubārak's speech on the occasion of the anniversary of the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday. There were recitations from the Qurʾān, and a former Minister of Culture, Dr. Aḥmad Haykal, declaimed a monorhymed qaṣīda (ode) in sonorous Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) eulogizing the Prophet of God. The President gave out prizes, monetary awards, and certificates of distinction to a number of Egyptian and foreign individuals who had contributed to the study of the Prophet's life. The name of the late ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād (d. 1964), author of the secularized

biography of the Prophet Muḥammad entitled ‘Abqariyyat Muḥammad (the Genius of Muḥammad), was honoured, as well as others including the Italian scholar Francesco Gabrieli cited for his works on the Prophet and on early Islamic history. "The Prophet's preaching," President Mubārak told his listeners, "about the necessity of hard work and against overspending will help us in solving the economic problem." <1> He proceeded to explain that the real benefit that could be derived from the occasion (min muntalaq al-intifā‘ bi dh-dhikrā) was the inspiration that could help Egyptians attain a true revival (ṣaḥwa) and renaissance (nahḍa).

That night Egyptian television also showed a state celebration of the Prophet's birthday in what looked like an opera house. A musical ensemble came on the stage, its members dressed in Western-style suits and bow ties, playing violins and cellos, while government ministers and their elegantly-dressed spouses looked on from their balcony seats.

Concomitant with the Cairo celebration was another in the village of Biyalā (Province of Kafr ash-Shēkh) where I was at the time conducting research for the present study. The Biyalā celebration took on a different form. Unlike the official celebration in Cairo, in Biyalā, as we have mentioned above, there was a great zaffa (procession) in which many of the local ṣūfis marched with the banners of their different brotherhoods. There were donkey-drawn carts, overloaded with children and men, trucks equipped

with colourful lights, loudspeakers blaring songs in praise of the Prophet and the occasional advertisement about a local dairy product. Different sweetmeats and the traditional sugar dolls were on sale everywhere. The night before, Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-ʿIrāsī had been invited in to sing praises in honour of the Prophet Muḥammad and retell in his beautiful voice episodes from the life of the Messenger of Allah. For the Shēkh and his gallabiyya-clad listeners, it was the love of the Prophet which was at the heart of the celebration. Reliving the Prophet's life-story through the Shēkh's performance was an end in itself, an act of piety. There was no intifāʿ bi dh-dhikrā, no utilitarian approach to the occasion as was evident in the President's speech. There was no concern about a national renaissance, no preoccupation with secularizing religiously evocative terms such as ṣaḥwa (revival), a term often used by the opponents of the state among the various Islamic radical groups. In fact, the Shēkh plainly stated that he and his listeners desired nothing from the evening except God's thawāb (reward) being bestowed on them. And while the President stressed the importance of ʿamal (labour, effort) and injāz (achieving results) as the prerequisites for the national welfare, the Shēkh talked about niyya (intention) as something better than labour itself. Trust in God and love of the Prophet were the main themes that ran through the repertoire of the Shēkh.

OFFICIAL VS. POPULAR ISLAM:

Looking at the two celebrations of the Prophet's birthdary, many scholars may be tempted to see them as a case of binary opposition of popular vs. elite, low vs. high culture, oral vs. written tradition, etc. But the repertoire under study and its social and artistic texture show that this need not be the case. While this study has sought to avoid such extremes, binary opposition seems to be the principle which informs many Western works on the Islamic tradition: there is the Islam of the elite and the Islam of the people; the great tradition and the little (or folk) tradition; official Islam and popular Islam. In the 1950s and 1960s, works of undeniable merit were produced by Marshall Hodgson and Gustav E. von Grunebaum in which one finds a better awareness of official and popular traditions of Islam but, as Dale Eickelman has rightly noted, there was no attempt at exploring the interrelationships between the two or the areas of integration that may lie across their boundaries.<2> Even when the popular tradition is explicitly discussed, more often than not it is looked at from the perspective of the "Great Tradition".

This great tradition-oriented reading of popular Islamic tradition at times results in the unfortunate misunderstanding that the latter is "... something provincial or an inferior and imperfect realization of 'genuine' or 'high' culture religious belief and practice...".<3>

These binary oppositions are also operative in many Western studies on the life of the Prophet Muḥammad. "There are thus two figures of Muḥammad," states Arthur Jeffery, "the Muḥammad of history and Muḥammad of faith, the historical preacher who lived and labored in seventh-century Arabia and the mythical figure of the Prophet which lives in the faith of his community".^{<4>} The tendency among Western scholars is to study the figure of Muḥammad under these two categories: history and faith. Tor Andrae wrote two separate studies on the Prophet; one on the Muḥammad of history, the other on the Muḥammad of faith (legends).^{<5>} William Muir, in his biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, banished the legendary material to the footnotes whereas Lamiaress and Dujarric concentrated on the legendary material while citing the historical data in the footnotes.^{<6>}

By and large, scholarship on the Prophet Muḥammad gives more weight to the formal discourse of the learned faqīh (Muslim jurist) than to the folk singer's praises of the Prophet. More respect - and more scholarly attention - is accorded to written tracts on religious doctrines than to the faith as lived, practised, and expressed by the common believers. This excessive preoccupation with texts written exclusively in Classical Arabic to the exclusion of local contexts has been the hallmark of the work of Islamicists and Arabists. Their preferences are overwhelmingly in favour of the written over the oral, of that which is composed in the classical literary Arabic over that in the colloquial, of the old evidence over the new and the

immediate, and of the pronouncements of the elite over the utterances of the masses.

However, I believe that focusing on the recorded formal discourse of the educated Muslim elite can only prejudice the scholar against the Muslim masses who are overwhelmingly unlettered and who live, experience and express their faith in folk conventions of their own. To ignore these masses and their religious experiences and expressions is to cut oneself off from the reality of their everyday life; and in order to veer away from such prejudice against the Muslim folk one ought to recognize, as Charles Adams has rightly noted, "...that the reality of religion has its locus in the experience of the devotee and that scholars must, above all else, subject themselves to that experience"<7>. There are examples of this being done, as in the case of Annemarie Schimmel's book And Muhammad is His Messenger, albeit rarely. Perhaps this valid advice has, for the most part, not been heeded, and it is no exaggeration to insist that a vast amount of research needs to be done.

To a large extent the present study, with its focus on the popular stories woven by contemporary Egyptian Muslims around the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, is in effect a study of Islam in a local context. However, any study of aspects of popular religious faith in Islam must address an issue that has bedevilled many Western scholars; that is the apparent dichotomy between popular and official Islam, a dichotomy between the general outlook and practices of two seemingly separate levels of Muslim society. Many have

resorted to a cut-and-dry binary division of Islam into great and little or high and low tradition. In their view, the great or high tradition belongs to the sacred books and the literate discourse of the elite while the little or low tradition belongs to the mundane concerns and practices of the common people. Alas, the complex life of contemporary Muslims seems to resist such neat scholarly division and charting. For one can indeed, as the present study illustrates, find links between the two traditions that may escape the eye at first sight.

Let us take for instance the Cairo and the Biyalā celebrations of the Prophet's birthday. Both celebrations can furnish many elements that could be considered as forming the opposing sides of a dichotomy between official and popular forms of Islam. However, a closer look at the two forms will show that the two poles of the dichotomy are not as far apart as might be thought. This is how this dichotomy appears at first sight:

Official Celebration

Popular Celebration

Cairo, the capital city
al-Azhar
Elite
Modern Standard Arabic
Written texts

Biyaalā, a village.
Village street
Common people.
Colloquial Egyptian Arabic
Oral material.

The hero as prophet
(al-ʿAqqād)

qaṣīda

badla
(Western-style suit)

The Prophet as hero
(Shēkh al-ʿIrasī)

mawwāl

gallabiyya
(local flowing robe).

There are, to be sure, basic differences between the two forms of celebration, which, by extension, can be regarded as two forms of Islam: official and popular. However, a closer look will reveal that there is no clear boundary between the two forms of Islam as this study has attempted to show. The qaṣīda as a literary form in Classical Arabic is also used in present-day popular eulogies in honour of the Prophet, along with the mawwāl. And the popular repertoire of the Egyptian maddāhīn is not always oral, for some practitioners of the art learn their balladry from pen-and-paper compositions printed in cheap pulp editions.

Another dichotomy which parallels that of the official vs. popular Islam is the standard Arabic vs. the colloquial. However, as we have seen already the language of the maddāhīn's repertoire cannot be simply identified as totally colloquial (ʿāmmiyya), for the maddāhīn may select appropriate material from classical or modern devotional literature, which is primarily in fushā (Classical or Modern Standard Arabic). Moreover the colloquial used in the repertoire has certain "literary" characteristics which set

it apart from the spoken idiom of everyday speech.

Depending on the artistry of the maddāh, elements from both the popular and the elite traditions are at times so harmoniously blended in the ballads as to render it difficult for an observer to identify them and separate one from the other. Indeed, in the better pieces of this repertoire, one may see - to borrow a Qur'ānic phrase - a majma' al-bahrayn, "a meeting of two seas" of traditions. For in the same ballad one comes across examples of scenes from everyday life as well as highly learned and philosophical notions. Indeed, the repertoire combines and aggregates elements of different traditions.

Official vs. Popular Islam Reconsidered:

In his study of the issue of official and popular Islam, Jacques Waardenburg differentiates between the two in terms of an interaction between theory and practice:

Popular Islam comes down then to a kind of 'practiced' Islam, and the interactions between official and popular Islam can be largely understood as an interaction between the theoretical considerations of the religious scholars and the practical activities in Muslim societies, both justifying themselves by means of Islamic religion.<8>

Waardenburg here sounds much like von Grunebaum, who states that great traditions are the norm whereas little traditions

are the practice his essay published in the book edited by him entitled, Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization (1955). <9> Waardenburg tends to pit the religious scholars against the common people, official against popular Islam, theory against practice. Not that he is unaware of the areas where official and popular Islam may overlap - especially in the case of Šūfism. He correctly observes that in Muslim societies "normative and popular Islam appear to fulfill complementary functions so that they should not be seen as completely separated from each other".<10> But the strident tone of binary opposition reverbrates throughout:

This popular kind of Islam may be far from both the religious Muslim scholars and the cultural elite in general and also from the political central state authorities.<11>

Later on he confirms the same idea when he adds

Popular Islam ... has tended to lead a life apart both from the centres of religious learning and from modern society.<12>

The career of the maddāhīn, especially that of Shēkh al-ʿIrasī who is both a maddāh, an Azhar-trained scholar and an imām (leader of prayer in a mosque), shows that the distance between popular and official Islam (at least in the Egyptian context) is not so polarized as stated by Waardenburg and that the religious scholar himself can be a vehicle for propagating folk traditions, at times, with the

use of the modern media of print and sound recording.

The popular biography of the Prophet Muḥammad as it is depicted in the ballads of the maddāḥīn is banished outside the pale of elite literature. Its colloquial language, its folk poetic forms, its imagery, its prodigies, are all liminal entities that are perceived as menacingly encroaching on the canonical adab, a term which connotes Classical Arabic, rules, refinement, good manners. In such an adab-dominated world view, the art of the maddāḥīn is regarded as the opposite or the "other", a non-literature, or as Connelly calls it "illiterature", a degenerated and debased form of literature, the equivalent of literary ilhād (unbelief). And yet the two varieties of literature, as we have shown, in fact at times form intermediary combinations (Mischbildungen) on the continuum of tradition. The perceived bipolarity between the two dissolves in the art of the maddāḥīn as the bipolarity between man and woman is shown by the literary critic Terry Eagleton to dissolve under scrutiny:

Woman is the opposite, the 'other' of man: she is non-man, defective man, assigned a chiefly negative value in relation to the male first principle. But equally man is what he is only by virtue of ceaselessly shutting out this other or opposite, defining himself in antithesis to it, and his whole identity is therefore caught up and put at risk in the very gesture by which he seeks to assert his unique, autonomous existence. Woman is not just an other in the sense of something beyond his ken, but an other intimately related to him as the image of what he is not, and therefore as an essential reminder of what he is. Man therefore needs this other even as he spurns it, is constrained to give a positive identity of what

he regards as no-thing. Not only is his own being parasitically dependent upon the woman, and upon the act of excluding and subordinating her, but one reason why such exclusion is necessary is because she may not be quite so other after all. Perhaps she stands as a sign of something in man himself which he needs to repress, expel beyond his own being, relegate to a securely alien region beyond his own definitive limits. Perhaps what is outside is also somehow inside, what is alien is also intimate - so that man needs to police the absolute frontiers between the two realms as vigilantly as he does just because it may always be transgressed, has always been transgressed already, and is much less absolute than it appears.<13>

To conclude, this then has been an interpretive study of the life of the Prophet Muḥammad as it is artistically depicted in the repertoire (especially the narrative ballads) of fifty-one contemporary Egyptian maddāḥīn. As we have shown throughout, elements of this repertoire, as diverse as narrative ballads, classical odes, Qur'ān chanting, and the melodies of the secular songs of well-known Egyptian singers, do not exist as discrete units but rather as a lively tawliḥa (blend). This study has been about blends where discrete units lose their borderlines and leak into one another, about phenomena which are "betwixt and between" the perceived scholarly categories which confidently delineate boundaries between elite and popular Islam, the historical and the legendary Muḥammad, the sacred and the profane, orality and writing, standard and colloquial Arabic.

In order to understand the process which marks the making of the people's Muḥammad, the study has dealt

with the sources and the contents of the repertoire of the Egyptian maddāhīn. The performance of these singers as well as their interaction with the audience have also been considered in order to underline the communal nature of this tradition. The "legendary" material in this repertoire has been found to be attested as historical by many authoritative and well-recognized "orthodox" authors of the past. Classical Arabic, classical poetic forms, philosophical notions, long believed to be the exclusive possessions of the learned, are freely utilized in the ballads and popular songs under study. The people's Muḥammad appears as both a commanding figure, empowered by the supernatural, and a touchingly vulnerable human being; God's ascetic messenger and a man who savours life's lawful pleasures; an eloquent speaker who utters Qur'ān-like terse Arabic and a lovingly familiar figure who also uses local patois. Bipolarity, beloved of many scholars, is seriously challenged by the art of the Egyptian maddāhīn. A renewed effort has to be made to discover more valid categories which will take into account the intermediary combinations (Mischbildungen) characteristic of that art.

ENDNOTES

<1> al-Ahrām, October 13, 1989, p. 7.

<2> Dale Eickelman, "The Study of Islam in Local Contexts" Contributions to Asian Studies, 17, p.2.

<3> Ibid.

<4> As cited in James E. Royster, "The Study of Muḥammad: A Survey of Approaches From the Perspective of the History and the Phenomenology of Religion," Muslim World, 62, p.66.

<5> Tor Andrae, Mohammed; the Man and His Faith, tr. Th. Menzel (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960); on Muḥammad of "legends", see his Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben seiner Gemeinde (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt Soner, 1918).

<6> Royster, "The Study of Muḥammad", p. 67, n. 75 and n. 76.

<7> See Charles Adams' preface in R.C. Martin, ed. Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1985), p.ix.

<8> Jacques Waardenburg, "Official and Popular Religion in Islam," Social Compass 25 (1979), p. 322. The article was later reprinted in a book on the same subject. See Pieter Hendrick Vrijhof and Jacques Waardenburg, eds. Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies (The Hague: Mouton, 1979).

<9> Gustave E. von Grunebaum, ed., Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955 & 1963), pp. 17-37, see especially pp. 28-29.

<10> J. Waardenburg, "Official and Popular Religion in Islam," p. 329.

<11> Ibid., p. 321.

<12> Ibid., p. 331.

<13> Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: an Introduction (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 132-133.

LIST OF MADDAHĪN AND RECORDINGS OF PERFORMANCES:

NAME AND PERFORMANCE	PLACE OF RESIDENCE OR ACTIVITY.
1. Fanjarī ḡUrabī Aḡmad a. Madīḡ.	Sohāj
2. Shēkh Muḡammad ḡAbd Allāh a. Hijrat ar-Rasūl	Ṭanṭā (Gharbiyya)
3. Shēkh Muḡammad ḡAbd al-Hādī a. Madḡ fī ḡubb ar-Rasūl	Rashīd (Biḡēra)
4. Ismāḡīl ḡAmir a. mawlid ar-Rasūl	
5. Fathī Shihāta ḡAṭiyya a. Madīḡ.	Kafr Bhēda (Daqahliyya)
6. Maḡmūd al-Badrāwī a. al-Isrāḡ wa l-Miḡrāj	Cairo/Upper Egypt
7. Saḡd Muḡammad Bughdādī a. Madīḡ Nabawī	Shaṭā (Dumyāt)
8. Shēkh Zakariyya ḡAlī l-Bannā a. Qaṣāḡid Nabawiyya	Kafr Idmīr (Daqahliyya)
9. Shēkh Jumḡa al-Bannā a. Zikr	
10. Shēkh Sayyid al-Bayyūmī a. Madīḡ	al-Manṣūra (Daqahliyya)
11. Ramaḡān Aḡmad Bihērī ḡAṭiyya Sayyid Bihērī a. Madīḡ Nabawī	Shaṭā (Dumyāt)
12. al-ḡArabī Farḡān al-Bilbīsī a. Mawlid an-Nabī	Cairo/Giza

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 13. Shēkh ad-Dishnāwī | Cairo |
| a. Fī Madḥ ar-Rasūl | |
| 14. Shēkh Ibrāhīm ad-Disūqī | Cairo/Banhā |
| a. al-Ghazāla | |
| b. Riḥlat al-Hijj-i w az-Zikrayāt | |
| c. Aḥbāb an-Nabī | |
| 15. Shēkh ʿAbd ar-Riḥīm Duwaydār | Miḥallit Marḥūm
(Gharbiyya) |
| a. Milād al-Muṣṭafā | |
| 16. Shēkh as-Sayyid ʿEṭa | Ṭanṭā (Gharbiyya) |
| a. Qiṣṣat Milād ar-Rasūl | |
| b. Zikr IV | |
| c. Zikr V | |
| d. Yā - Rasūla Allāh | |
| 17. Jād Fatḥī Jād | Ḥilwān/Cairo |
| a. Labbayka allāh | |
| 18. Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-Joharī | Dumyāt |
| Faṭma Muḥammad al-Joharī | |
| a. Madīḥ Dīnī | |
| 19. Shōqī l-Gnāwī | Qinā/Cairo |
| a. Madḥ an-Nabī | |
| 20. Shēkh Ḥāmid Ḥafūr | Ṭanṭā (Gharbiyya) |
| a. Zikr | |
| 21. Faṭma ʿId | Qināyāt (Gharbiyya) |
| a. Madḥ | |
| 22. Shēkh Sayyid Imām | Cairo |
| a. Fī Riḥlat al-Haramayn | |
| 23. Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāh al-ʿIrāsī | Samannūd
(Gharbiyya) |

- a. Qiṣṣat Zawāj an-Nabī min
as-Sayyida Khadīja Biyalā, all
of the Delta.
- b. Qiṣṣat Mu'jizāt an-Nabī
- c. Qiṣṣat Khawf Abū Jahl
- d. Zikr
- e. Madḥ
- f. Ḥafr Zamzam
- g. Sayyidnā Mūsā
- h. Sayyidnā Yūsuf
- i. Rābi'a al-Adawiyya
- j. Qiṣṣat ash-Shabrāwī
- k. Qiṣṣat aṭ-Ṭālib
al-Afīf
- l. Qiṣṣat Ḥasanāt
- m. Sangām
24. Aḥmad Ismā'īl Cairo
a. Mawlid ar-Rasūl
25. Muṣṭafā Aḥmad Ismā'īl
Ḥusēn Aḥmad Ismā'īl
Ḥasan Aḥmad Ismā'īl Asyūṭ
a. Taṭīra
b. Tawāshīḥ Dīniyya
26. Shēkh Sayyid Khamīs al-Maḥalla
a. Taṣawwuf Ahl al-Bēt al-Kubrā
(Gharbiyya)
27. 'Abd an-Nāṣif Khaṭṭāb Tanṭā
a. al-Isrā' wa l-Mi'rāj (Gharbiyya)
28. Sayyid 'Asar al-Ma'allāwī Cairo
a. Lēla min Layālī s-Sayyid
al-Badawī fī Madḥ ar-Rasūl

29. as-Sayyid al-Bayyūmī Mabruk
a. Madḥ al-Manṣūra
(Daqahliyya)
30. Na'ima Shirīf Muḥammad
a. Abd al-Bāsiṭ Muḥammad
a. Aghānī Tawdī al-Ḥujjāj
(Ḥunūn). Minyā
31. 'Alī Mi'awwaḍ
a. Madīḥ li n-Nabī Banī Slīmān
(Sharqiyya)
32. 'Abd al-Bārī Mi'awwaḍ
a. Bushrakī yā Amina
33. Shēkh 'Antar Sa'id Misallim
a. as-Sīra an-Nabawiyya
l-'Aṭira, I, II & III. Kafr ash-Shēkh
34. Ḥajja Wafā' al-Mursī
a. Mu'jizāt ar-Rasūl Tanṭā
35. 'Abd al-Mu'ṭī Nāṣir
a. Zikr II Tanṭā
36. Shēkh Muḥammad Naṣr
a. Madḥ fī Ḥubb ar-Rasūl
37. Anwar 'Izz ad-Dīn Ṣaqr
a. Madā'iḥ Nabawiyya Būr Sa'id
(Port Said)
38. Faṭma Sarḥān
a. Qamīṣ an-Nabī
b. Nuṭ' al-Jamal Basyūn
(Gharbiyya)
39. Sa'd Muḥammad Shabāna
a. Qiṣṣit Qamīṣ an-Nabī Manṣūra
(Daqahliyya)
40. Haniyyāt Sha'bān
a. Hijrat an-Nabī Tanṭa
(Gharbiyya) & Cairo
41. Shēkh Sharaf Tanṭā

SELECTIONS OF SONGS AND NARRATIVE BALLADS.

**MUHAMMAD'S NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENSION TO HEAVEN:
TWO VERSIONS OF AN EGYPTIAN BALLAD.**

The ballad transcribed and translated below was first recorded and published by Urbain Bouriant in his Chansons populaires arabes en dialecte du Caire d'apres les manuscrits d'un chanteur des rues <1> It was later to appear in Muḥammad Qindīl al-Baqlī's Adab ad-Darāwīsh <2> The version below is taken from al-Baqlī's collection, which Pierre Cachia believes has been filched from Bouriant's earlier collection <3>. Apart from correcting obvious misprints, I have faithfully transcribed al-Baqlī's version. In the footnotes I have cited Bouriant's variants as well as his emendations of the original manuscript; emendations that al-Baqlī adopted.

The ballad describes the Prophet Muḥammad's night journey (isrā) to Jerusalem and his ascension to Heaven (mi'rāj). It is divided into a maṭla' (opening verses) of two distichs, repeated at the end of the ballad, and rhymed stanzas, each consisting of five distichs.

ḤIML ZAJAL FI QIṢṢAT AL-ISRĀ' WA L-MI'RAJ
A LOAD OF VERSE ABOUT THE STORY OF THE NIGHT JOURNEY
AND THE ASCENSION TO HEAVEN.

ṣalātī w taslīmī 'alā man naṭaq
ilēh il-ḥaṣā w aḍ-ḍabb-i sallim wi qāl
agirnī agāruh khātam il-anbiyā
wi fī ṣ-ṣakhr-i ghāṣ il-muṣṭafā b in-ni'āl.

My praise and greeting upon the one to whom
The pebbles spoke and whom the lizard greeted saying:
"Save me"; the seal of the prophets saved it
And into the rocks the sandals of the Chosen
One dived.

1.

ṣalātī w taslīmī 'alā man tasīru
ilēh il-maṭāyā kull-i 'ām b il-ḥagīg
'alēh iṣ-ṣalā minnī b ṭūl id-dawām
kullama ṭāl il-mawqif wi ṭāl id-ḍagīg
wi lammā nizil fī l-ghār ḥabīb il-'ulūb
'ashshish 'alēh il-'ankabūt bi n-nasīg
abū bakr-i ṣuhru mu'nisu fī l-ghār <4>
'alēh is-sakīna unzilat fī l-ḥāl.
wi wā'adahum <5> allāh innihum ghālibīn

wi minhūm ʿalā qalb il-ʿādī tihāl.

My praise and greeting upon the one to whom
Mounted men turn for the yearly pilgrimage
I constantly call down blessings on him
During the long stand and the clamour
(of the pilgrims).

When the well-favoured one stopped at
the cave

The spider wove its cobweb around it
On Abū Bakr, the Prophet's kin and
 companion in the cave,
Divine tranquility descended, no doubt
God had promised to grant them victory
And that they would be the pain (?)
 in the hearts of their enemies.

2.

wi fī lēlit ann asrā bihi gibrīl
li rabbu wi qāl yā karīm il-kirām
ilāh is-samāwāt <6> yā aḥmad yiṣalli ‹alēk
wi qad khaṣṣaṣak yā muṣṭafā b is-salām
da ‹āk il-muḥaymin ḥaḍratu yā malīḥ
wi kān in-nabī gālis min il-faraḥ qām
ra ‹ā ma ‹a amīn il-waḥy burāq

taḡaddam laha ṭāhā l-mumaggad wi qāl
tawakkaltu ʿalā l-ḥayy allazī lā yamūt
laka l-ḥamdu yā rabbī ʿalā kull-i ḥāl.

On the night when Gabriel took him on the
nocturnal journey
To his Lord, saying to him: "O noblest of
the noble ones
The Lord of Heaven blesses you, O Aḥmad,
And He has singled you out for salutation
The governing Lord has invited you into
His Presence, O Beautiful One"
The Prophet was seated and rose up out of joy
Along with Gabriel, the faithful agent of
Revelation, he saw the Burāq
To her the glorified Ṭāhā turned and said:
"I have put my trust in the living Everlasting
One,
Praise is due to You, my Lord, through thin
and thick.

3.

wi min qabl-i mā yirkab nabī l-hudā
 ʿalā ẓahrihā minhā ẓahar-lu ʿagab
 danā l-muṣṭafā minhā yurīd ir-rukūb

ilā ḥaḍrit il-ḥayy il-ḥalīq il-muḥtagab
 abat ḥan muḥammad summā ḥādīt in-nufūr <7>
 fa qāl laha gibrīl dā n-nabī l-muntasab
 qiffī yā burāq l-aḥmad wa lā tinfirī
 amā tikhtisī min ṣafwit allāh il-galāl
 fa qālit ḥabībī kun ghadan shafīḥī
 alā yā malīḥ il-qadd-i w il-iḥtidāl.

Before the Prophet of guidance mounted her back
 Wonderous were the things he saw in her
 The Chosen One came near to mount her
 To the presence of the Everlasting and Lofty

Invisible One

The Burāq rejected Muḥammad and repeatedly shied
 away from him

Gabriel said to her: "This is the Prophet
 of noble lineage

Stand firm, O Burāq, for Aḥmad; do not shy away
 Do you not feel ashamed (to do that to) the choicest
 among the creatures of the Lord of Majesty?"

The Burāq said: "Beloved, plead for me (with God)
 on the Last Day (lit. tomorrow)

O one with graceful and proportionate stature."

4.

fa qāl in-nabī likī yā burāq il-amān

1

2

5.

wi fī agniḥithā kēf salāsil ḍurar
 tabāarak wa subḥān al-muṣawwir lahā
 wi muddat baṣarhā khumsumi, at <9> sana
 min il-khīl gamīla mā khuliq mislahā
 rikibhā bn-i ʿabdi llāh ḥabīb il-qulūb
 wi lu <10> muḡizāt ma yinḥsir faḍlahā
 ʿan gibrīl arwā muḥammad kalām
 wi qāl yā ṣaḥāba lu zawāyib ṭuwāl
 sittā m iz-ziwāba li z-ziwāba sana
 li man kān musāfir fi l-gibāl wi r-rimāl.

In her wings there were chains of pearls
 Blessed and exalted be the One who formed her
 The range of her sight is measured by five
 hundred years of (journeying)
 A beautiful horse she is; her match has not yet
 been created
 The son of ʿAbd Allāh, the apple of everyone's
 eye, mounted it
 Measureless is the merit of his miracles
 About Gabriel Muḥammad recounted stories
 He said: "O Companions, Gabriel has
 locks of long hair

6.

About the Chosen One you are told stories
Recorded in the biographies by the people of piety
That he ascended by night to God the Truthful One
On a Burāq that was swifter than the twinkling
of an eye
He went from the his sacred quarters (?) to
the House of God to the Sanctuary to the maqām (
To the Further Mosque; all this came true.
In Jerusalem Gabriel stood and said: "O Prophet

fa şallā wa şallū l-anbiyā kulluhum
raʾā w ʾāyin bi ruʾyāh taqīrr il-ʾuyūn
wi baʿd iş-şala aḥmad raqā l iş-şuʿūd
li ḥaḍrat illāh in qāl li sh-shē kun yakūn
qāl il-ḥagar fī l-quḍs-i anā mustagīr
min in-nār wi khāyif w inta qalbak ḥanūn
fa qāl in-nabī fī l-ākḥira lā takhāf
wi lā takhshā yōm il-ḥisāb min suʾāl
ghadan ashfaʾ ilēk inta w fī ummītī
wi kull-i man yatbaʾ ṭarīq il-ḥalāl.

Muḥammad prayed and all the prophets prayed
He saw and witnessed; seeing him is the delight
of the eye
After praying, Aḥmad set out to ascend
To the presence of the God who if He says to a
thing: "Be ", it becomes
In Jerusalem the rock said: "I seek refuge from
the Hellfire

I am frightened; your heart is full of affection
 The Prophet said: "Do not be afraid on the Last Day
 Fear not the judgement of the Day of Reckoning
 Tomorrow I will intercede for you and for my community
 And for everyone who follows the righteous path.

8.

wa lammā sarā <12> zēn il-ʿarab wi l-ʿagam
 naṣab li n-nabī mi-rāg ʿalēh irtaqā
 lu sillīma faḍḍa w ukhrā dahab <13>
 w ukhrā zabargad qālit ahl it-tuqā
 raʿā baḥr-i zākhir taḥt-i sumk is-samā
 min il-mubtadā yigrī l yōm il-luqā
 wi lammā waṣal zēn il-ʿarab wi l-ʿagam
 lu inshaqq-i lammā gāwazu b intihāl
 kammā inshaqq-i baḥr- il-arḍ-i l agl il-kalīm
 nigī w aghraq rākibīn iḍ-ḍalāl.

When the best of the Arabs and the Persians journeyed
 by night
 A ladder for the Prophet was erected and he ascended on it
 The ladder had one step in silver and the other in gold
 And another in chrysolite, thus recorded people of piety
 The Prophet saw an overflowing sea under the thickness of
 Heaven

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11

11

The son of ʿAbd Allāh went and Gabriel went with him
To the First Heaven at whose gate Gabriel knocked
He said: "Open for Aḥmad, the apple of the eye
The gate-keeper of Heaven hurried to open the gate

Between the Heaven and the earth an earnest journey
 Can take five hundred years for one to arrive there
 Muḥammad entered the Heaven and found its thickness
 In the form of smoke; inside it there was a crescent
 Between the Heavens (the distance) is as great as
 The distance between them and the earths, the mountains
 and the sand (of the desert)

10.

wa sukkanhā fīhā wa lā qūtuḥum (qūt luhum)
 siwā yaʿbudū l-ḥayy al-lazī lā yamūt
 illāhun baṣaṭ li l-arḍ-i fawqa ruʿs-i malak
 ʿalā s-sawr ʿalā ṣ-ṣakhra ʿalā ḡahr-i ḥūt
 ʿalā l-māʿ <15> ʿlā l-quḍra taʿisa man kafar
 uqaf w istimiʿ fī madḥ-i aḥmad biyūt
 wi qal-lu l-lāh ahlan wa sahlān bi man
 ʿarafnā smahu mīm wi ḥā w mīm wi dāl
 w ʾāmit milūk awwil sammā kulluhum
 iṭāʿa l man shuddat ilēh ir-riḡāl.

The inhabitants of the Heavens have no sustenance
 Other than the worship of the Living Everlasting One
 The God who balanced (?) the earth on top of the head of
 an angel
 Who stands on top of a bull which stands on top of a rock

which rests on top of a whale
 Which is on the surface of the water which rests on the
 Omnipotence of God; wretched is the unbeliever
 Stand and listen to verses in the eulogy of Aḥmad
 God said to him: "Welcome to the one
 The letter of whose name are M and Ḥ and M and D
 All the angels of the First Heaven rose up
 In obeisance to the one to whom travellers are bound.

11.

wa qad bashsharū aḥmad nabī l-hudā
 wi qālū lu innak ḥabīb il-ḥabīb
 wi lā misl-i ḥusnak fī gamīḥ il-warā
 wi qaddak kamā l-ghuṣn-i l-qawīm ir-raṭīb
 ilā r-rutbat il-ḥulyā daḥāka l-ḥallī
 wi tishfaḥ ghadan fī ummitik min lahīb
 wi tudkhul buhum yā aḥmad li zāt il-yamīn
 tukhrug buhum ḥan dōr zāt ish-shamāl
 faraḥ ṣafwit allāh ḥīna simiḥ dā l-kalām
 wi rabbu ḥaṭāh is-saḥd-i min ghēr suḥāl.

They brought the joyful news to Aḥmad, the messenger
 of guidance

They said to him: "You are the Beloved's favoured one
 Among all creation, there is none to match your beauty

10

15

wi sumk is-samā t-tanya min niḥās
wi sukkanhā fihā tisabbiḥ dawām
wi qālū l aḥmad yā agall il-warā
nirīd iṣalā khalfak wi nta l-imām
li annak qarīb il-⟨ahd-i min rabbinā
wi tishfa⟨ ghadan fī ummitak yōm iz-ziḥām
fa ṣallā buhum zēn il-⟨rab wi l-⟨agam
wi ba⟨d iṣ-ṣalā sallim muḥammad wi qāl
akhī gibrīl sīr bī fa qāl lu na⟨am
li rabbak usrī bīk yā a⟨azz ir-riqāl.

12

1

wi sārū bi zni llāh li tālīt <16> samā
wi hum fī ş-şu'ūd misl-i lamḥ il-başar
aman <17> allāh gibrīl wa khayr il-anām
nabī 'alā gam' il-umam yuftakhar
atā t-ālita <18> gibrīl ʔaraḡ bābihā
fataḥ bābahā qibrīl wi mā fatar

100

1

16.

wi lu ra>s-i taḥt il-^ʿarsh-i yā man ḥaḍar
 wi riglēh fī asfal tukhūm is-sarā
 wi lōḥ bēn yadēh fīh asmā ^ʿ21 il-^ʿibād
 wi gam^ʿ il-khalāyiq fīh wi gam^ʿ il-warā
 wi sidra ṭawīla shafhā l-muṣṭafā
 wa qad khāba man kazzab bihā ^ʿ22 w iftarā
 wi lu ^ʿalā l-yimīn amlāk li man ^ʿalā l-yimīn
 wi lu ^ʿalā sh-shimāl amlāk li ahl ish-shimāl
 fa qāl in-nabī lu yā akhī gibrāʾīl
 li hāzā l-malak mā shuft-i ^ʿumrī misāl.

He had a head beneath the divine Throne, O you who
 are present

His feet planted in the depth of the earth's
 boundaries

In his hands was a tablet, inscribed on it
 were the names of God's servants

And all that was created and all of mankind

A tall lote tree the Chosen One witnessed

Failure shall be the lot of the one who denies
 it and calumniates against it

On his right hand side he had angels for the people
 of the right side

On the left hand side he had angels for the people
 of the left side

The Prophet said to Gabriel: "O brother

Gabriel I have never seen the like of this angel".

17.

fa qāl-lu gibrīl dā akhī ‹izrā›īl
 taqaddam ilēh ‹andū w sallam ‹alēh
 yukhbirak bi sh-shagara w bi l-lōḥ ḥaqīq
 sababhum yiqūl lak yā muḥammad ‹alēh
 taqaddam khiyār l-anbiyā kulluhum
 nahaḍ ‹izrā›īl surʿa w sallim ‹alēh
 wa qāl marḥabā yā man daʿāk il-‹allī
 ilā ḥaḍritu wi l-qurb-i minnu tanāl
 fa qāl lu <23> daʿānī man rafaʿ dī s-samā
 wi basaṭ il-arāḍī summā arsā l-gibāl.

Gabriel said to the Prophet: "This is my brother

‹Izrā›īl

Move closer to him and greet him

He will truthfully tell you about the tree

and the tablet

He will tell you, O Muḥammad, about

why they are there

The best of all prophets moved up

(to ‹Izrā›īl)

‹Izrā›īl rose to his feet at once to

greet him

He said: "Welcome to you whom the Exalted

One has called in

To be in His presence and to win His

nearness"

The Prophet said to him: "I have been

called in by the One who raised this Heaven

Falttened the earths and set the mountains

firmly in their places.

18.

wa lākin urīdak yā akhī <Izrā>īl

tiqūl lī <an ish-shagara w dā l-lōḥ wa mā

sababhum wa mā r-rōḥ wa qabḍak lahā

tuqīm fī l-arārḍī aw turūḥ li s-samā

fa qāl <Izrā>īl yā man bi waḍḍaḍ

wi min faḍlu abrā l-ḥayyūn mi l-ḥamā (min il-ḥamā)

aqūl lak <an ish-shagara wi dā l-lōḥ yaqīn

wa mā aṣluhum yā bn il-kirām il-uṣāl

uqaf w istimiḥ qōlī fa qāl lu naḥam

li ākhir kalāmī yā malīḥ il-khiṣāl.

But I want you O brother <Izrā>īl,

To tell me about the tree and the tablet

And the reasons why they are there, and

khalāq rabbīnā sh-shagara w fīhā warāq
 ‹adad kull-i man fī l-arḡ-i yā bn il-kirām
 wi dā l-lōḡ mi‹asidhā b ism il-‹ibād
 wi fīhā ‹urif ahl iṣ-ṣalā w iṣ-ṣiyām
 izā mā faragh <24> ‹umr ibn ādam saḡaṭ
 min il-ghuṣn-i zahra a‹raf ismu ‹awām
 fa in kān taḡī ab‹at <25> min ahl il-yimīn
 wi in kān shaḡī ab‹at <26> min ahl ish-shimāl
 mulūk yi‹baḡū rōḡu bi sm il-‹allī
 wa lā ‹ēshit ahl il-arḡ-i illā khayāl.

Our Lord created the tree; the number of its
leaves is
The number of the earth's inhabitants, O son of
honourable people
This tablet opposite it has the names of
God's servants
On it are registered the people of pious deeds
(people of prayers and fasting)
When the life-span of one of Adam's offspring
is expired, there drops
From the tree branch a rose; and I would then
know his name at once
If he is pious, I would send for him an (angel)
from those on the right side
If he is iniquitous, I would send for him one
from those on the left side
These are angels who would snatch his soul by the
permission of the Most Exalted
The life of the inhabitants of the earth is nothing but
a passing shadow.

20.

bakā sayyid il-umma w gibrīl bakā
 maʿa l-muṣṭafā zēn il-ʿarab wi l-ʿagam
 wi qāl in-nabī yā rabb-i qōmī ɖuʿāf
 fa qāl ummitak yā muḥammad khayr il-umam

The lord of the community wept, and Gabriel wept
With the Chosen One, the best of the Arabs and
the non-Arabs (the Persians)
The Prophet said: "O Lord, my people are weak"
The Lord said: "Your community, O Muḥammad, is
the best of communities
On the Day of Reckoning during the Gathering,
they will be pleaded for
On the Day of Resurrection, when foot will
step on foot"
Aḥmad, the Chosen One, the Prophet of Guidance,
rejoiced
When he heard these words from our Lord
They moved on, with God's permission, to
the Fifth Heaven
Its inhabitants were present; their attention
engrossed.

22.

fa qāl in-nabī ʿesh ism-i hāzā l-malak
 fa qāl lu gibrīl dā yusammā ḥabīb
 taqaddam ilā ʿandu wi sallim ʿalēh
 w unẓur bi ʿēnak ʿan yimīnu tuṣīb
 taqaddam lu ṭāhā w sallim ʿalēh
 wa ʿandu raʾā bāb il-ʿazāb wi l-lahīb
 wi li n-nār sabaʿ abwāb ʿalā kull-i bāb
 ginūd ʿand-i mālik sūd shawāhiq ṭuwāl
 wi mālik ʿalā kursī min in-nār galas
 muʿbis muqaṭṭib <29> bi l-ghaḍab lam yazal.

The Prophet said: "What is the name of this angel?"

Gabriel answered him: "He is called Ḥabīb,

Go closer to him and greet him

Look with your eyes on his right hand side, you will see"

Ṭāhā came close to him and greeted him

Beside the angel the Prophet saw the gate of torture

and Hellfire

Hell had seven gates; at each gate

Stood, with Mālik, guards who were towering

black giants

Mālik was seated on a chair of flames

Scowling and frowning with anger as he still is.

24.

wi nās taḥt-i anyāb il-afā'ī dawām
 wi nās fī guhannam yishrabū min ṣadīd
 wi nās fī guhannam yaklū ḡ-ḡarī'
 wi nās fī guhannam fī maqāmi' ḥadīd
 wi nās fī laḡā yuṣṣabū <31> 'a l-wuḡuḥ
 yuṣubbū 'alēhum min il-'azāb ish-shadīd
 wa lā yisma'ū fīhā wa lā yiqsha'ū
 wi fīhā 'aḡārib sūd shabīh il-bighāl
 wi ḥayyāthā <31> akbar min gizū' im-nakhīl
 lihum summ-i yikhra' ṣumm-i ṣakhr-i l-gibāl.

Some people were constantly caught between the fangs
 of vipers

Others in Hell were drinking pus

Some people were eating suckling babies

Others in Hell were in iron-made funnels(?)

Some people were dragged face down in the raging flames

Severe torture was inflicted on them

They could neither hear nor see

In Hell were black scorpions as large as mules

Its vipers were larger than the trunks of the date-trees

Their venom could pierce hard and solid mountain rocks

The master of the nation wept; Gabriel said to him:
"Why are weeping; everything has a reason
You see these young men, this youth, and these old men,
they were people of the (divine) wrath
These women were the bemoaners who used to slap
their faces in grief
Our Lord has commanded that they be crucified
by their hair
This stinking meat, O Beautiful One,
At which both women and men are biting
These adulterers were in love with adultery,
He (God) meted out these punishments to them
for this act.

26.

w inṣur shuhūd i-zūr <34> yā sayyidī
tarā alsinithum nazla li ṣ-ṣudūr
wi akl-i iḍ-ḍarī, yā aḥmad wi shurb iṣ-ṣadīd
gizā yā muḥammad shāribīn il-khumūr
wi ahl iz-zina fī kull-i yōm yuqṭalū
wa man yākul amwāl il-yatāmā figūr
wi lākin bi faḍlak yighfir allāh luhum
wa anta l-mushaffa, yā agall ir-rigāl
wa yā qabl-i qabl il-qabl-i fī l-mubtadā
wa yā khātam ir-rusul il-kirām il-āṣāl.

Look at the perjurers, O Master,
You will see their tongues hanging down their chests
The eating of the suckling babies, O Aḥmad, and the
 drinking of pus
Are the punishments meted out to the wine drinkers
The adulterers are repeatedly being killed everyday
The people who usurp (lit. eat up unlawfully) the money of
 the orphans are debauchers
For the sake of your grace, God forgives them
For you are the intercessor, O most exalted among men
You who preexisted before preexistence at the beginning
 of Time.
And who are the seal of the honourable noble prophets.

27.

yaqūl fī s-sigūd sabbuḥ (?) wa quddūs dawām
 tabāarak wa subḥāna llazī qtaḍar
 illāh alā alī muhayymin baṣīr
 khalaq dī s-samā ḥikma taḥisa man kafar
 w arsal muḥammad sayyid gamīl il-anām
 khalaq min ḍiyāh ish-shams-i summā l-qamar
 wa yaṣḥad izā qāla l-malak bi l-kalām
 lahu nashr-i yaḥkī l-miski yā ahl il-kamāl
 wi shāfū amlāk is-samā s-sādīsa
 wi hum yasquḍū ḥawlu yamīn maḥa shamāl.

While he was kneeling down the angel was saying:

"Glorified and holy always,
 Blessed and exalted is the One who is Omnipotent
 God the High, the Lofty, the Overlord, the Seer
 He had created this Heaven (as a sign) of His wisdom,
 wretched is the unbeliever
 He had sent Muḥammad, lord of all mankind,
 Out of Muḥammad's light He had created the sun
 and the moon"

Muḥammad ascended as the angel finished his speech
 He had fragrance which resembled that of musk, O people of
 perfection

They saw the angels of the Sixth Heaven
 As they were kneeling down right and left around Muḥammad.

28.

wi lammā raʾā ṭāhā nahaḍ lu wi qām
 wi qāl yā muḥammad rabbinā sharrafak
 ʿalā kull-i man qablak wa man yitbaʿak
 wi bi l-ʿilm-i wi l-qurʾān la-qad ʿarrafak
 wa qad nult-i rutba lam yinūlhā nabī
 muqarrib wa la mubʿād bihā yūqifak
 yaqūl lu tamannā w isʿal lu mā turīd <35>
 wi nta l-mushaffaʿ yā agall ir-rigāl
 fī ummitak tisaffaʿghadan yā ḥabīb
 bi izn-i mawlānā l-ʿallī zū l-galāl.

When the angel saw Ṭāhā, he rose to his feet for him
 He said to him: "O Muḥammad, our Lord has honoured you
 Over all your predecessors and followers
 With knowledge and the Qurʾān He has acquainted you
 You reached the rank to which (God) had raised you,
 A rank no prophet, close or not close (to God), had achieved
 The angel said to Muḥammad: "Make your wish and ask (God)
 for what you desire
 You are the intercessor, most honourable of men
 Tomorrow, on behalf of your community you will plead
 With the will of our High Majestic Master"

29.

wi sārū bi izni llāh li-sābiḥ samā raḥū sumkahā min

durr-i mā-lu şifā

wi fihā mulūk aksar min is-sādisa

wi akbar wi aḥḡam ḡikmitu fī ḡulāh

wi fihā mulūk (malak) law yiqbaḡ il-arḡ-i dī

la-kānit bi kaffu khardala fī falāh

wi-fihā malak law yiḡzan allāh ilēh

balaḥ dī l-arāḡī w il-buḡūr wi l-gibāl

bi şadru shabīh id-dīk yuḡazzin <36> āzān <37>

fa tismaḥ diyūk il-arḡ-i min ḡhēr muḡāl.

With God's will, they moved on to the Seventh Heaven

They found its walls made of matchless pearls

It had more angels than the Sixth Heaven

And greater and more immense, blessed is His wisdom in the
heights

It had an angel, were he to hold this earth in his hand,

It would look like a mustard seed in a desert

Another angel who, were God to permit him,

Could swallow up these earths, seas and mountains

On his chest there was a rooster-like (bird) which

crowed the call for prayer

The roosters of the Earth hear it, no doubt.

30.

tigawbu b it-tasbiḥ ayā sayyidi
 tisabbiḥ wi tiskut ma'a sukūtu wa qad
 ʿuṭī ʿilm-i mā sāʿit il-masā w iṣ-ṣabāḥ
 wi min kutri zuḥdu nūr gibīnu waqad
 wi lammā raʾā ṭāhā nahaḍ lu w qām
 wi qāl yā tuḥāmī yā ḥabībī la qad
 ʿuṭīṭ il-hudā w in-naṣr-i yā bn il-kirām
 wi yā man bi faḍlu intaqalt intiqāl
 min ādam li shīs li idrīs li nūḥ li l-khalīl
 ilā ṣahr-i ʿabdi llāh firīḥ bīk wi nāl.

They would answer it: "O master" and with praises of God
 They would utter the praises with it and fall silent with
 its silence

It was granted the knowledge about the evening times and
 the morning times

Because of its excessive ascetic ways, the light of its
 forehead was shining forth

When it saw Ṭāhā, it rose up for him

It said: "O Tihāmī, my beloved,

You have been granted the guidance and victory, son of
 honourable people

You who, by the grace of (God), have been transferred
 From the loins of Adam to Sheath to Idrīs to Noah

to Abraham, God's friend

To the loins of ʿAbd Allāh who rejoiced about you
and was rewarded.

31.

wa qīla an fī sābiʿ samā yā fahīm
raʿā sayyid il-umma agll il-warā
bēt ismu l-maʿmūr bi zikr il-ilāh
wi fihā saḥāyib muznahā māṭira
waqaf gibrīl fī sidrit il-muntahā
wi qāl yā safīʿ il-khalq-i fī l-ākhirā
waṣalnā maqāmī yā ḥabībī maʿan
famā ḥīlatī yā ṭāhā wa lā lī iḥtiyāl
wa lākin taqaddam yā kathīra l-ʿulūm
ilā ḥaḍrat il-bārī yizīdak galāl.

It is said that in the Seventh Heaven, O perceptive one
The master of the community, the most exalted of mankind saw
The House which is called al-Maʿmūr, the one inhabited

by the mention of God's name

In the Seventh Heaven there were heavy rain clouds
Gabriel stood by the lote tree of the farthest end
And he said: "O intercessor for mankind on the Last Day
Together we have reached my station, O beloved of mine
I have no choice and no way out (at this point)

But go forward, O possessor of much knowledge,
 To the presence of the Creator who would bestow on you
 more majesty.

32.

wi lammā raḥā ṭāhā l-gibrīl waqaf
 fa qāl in-nabī yā akhī gibrīl
 mā aṭīqu ṣ-ṣuḥūda wa lā lī rafīq
 wa anta tugāwizunī wa anā lak khalīl
 fa qāl gibrāʾīl yā aḥmad ilāhī ṣṭafāk
 taqaddam li-quḍām tilqā mīkāʾīl
 yisabbih ilāh il-ḥarḥ-i ṭūli d-dawām
 ḥalā baḥr-i wāqif kam wazan mā wi kāl
 wi min baḥd-i kēlu yirsilu li s-saḥāb
 ilā ayy arḍ-i bi izni l-lāh sāl.

When Ṭāhā saw Gabriel demur
 The Prophet said: "O brother Gabriel,
 I cannot bear to ascend without a companion
 You have left me behind and I am your confidant"
 Gabriel said: "O Aḥmad, my Lord has chosen you,
 Go forward and you will find the angel Mikāʾīl (Michael)
 Who is ceaselessly praising the Lord
 He is standing by a sea, much water has he

weighed and measured

After measuring the water, he sends it to the clouds

Then, with God's permission, the water will

pour on any land.

33.

wi-lammā taqaddam yilti,ī mīkā,īl

sallim ‹alā ṭāhā b afṣaḥ lisān

fa radd is-salām li aḥmad ḥabīb il-qulūb

wi qāl marḥaban ya man waṣalt il-amān

da,āk il-muḥaymin ḥaḍritu ya malīḥ

ilāh izā arād amran <38> wa qāl kun fa yakūn

yiqūl lak tamannā w is,al-lu mā turīd

w anta l-mushaffa, yā agall ir-rigāl

wa yā qabl-i qabl-i l-qabli fī l mubtadā

wa anta l-mufaḍḍal yā a,azz ir-rugāl

When the Prophet moved on, he found the angel Mīkā,īl

He greeted Ṭāhā in the most eloquent language

The angel returned the greeting of Aḥmad, the beloved

And said to him: "Welcome to the one who has arrived

in the vicinity of (God's) protection

The Master has called you into His presence, O Beautiful One

He is the God who, if He desires something, says: "Be"

and it becomes
 He asks you to make a wish and request from Him what
 you desire
 You are the intercessor, O most exalted of men,
 You who preexisted before preexistence at the beginning
 of Time
 You are the most well-favoured, O most honourable of men.

34.

wi sār in-nabī l-hādī li,ī mīkā,īl
 wi qāl <39> yā marḥaba b aḥmad bahiyy id-ḍiyā
 ayā nuzhat id-dunyā w baḥr il-ʿulūm
 wi yā kinz il-fuqrā w il-aghniyā
 wi yā mungid il malhūf wi ghaws in-nagāḥ
 ayā hāshimī ya khātam il-anbiyā
 illāh is-samā b in-naṣr qad ayyidak
 yā man sabā l-aḥzāb nihār il-qitāl
 ayā muṣṭafā lawlāka mā kān ḥagīg
 wa lā rannim il-ḥādī w la,la, wi qāl.

The guiding Prophet moved on and found Mīkā,īl
 Who said to him: "Welcome to Aḥmad whose light
 is resplendent

da,ā mīkā,il li l-muṣṭafā bi l-qubūl
wi qāl yā rasūla llāh balaght il-murād
fa shfa, tushaffa, yā nabī fī ummitak
fidā ummitak yā aḥmad <40> khiyār il-,ibād
fa yā farḥuhum bīk yā diyā l-qulūb
wi lammā tihibbuhum fī nihār il-mi,ād
wi lākin taqaddam til,ā isrāfīl
gālis <41> ,alā kursī w li ṣ-ṣūr tazāl <42>
galīl iṣ-ṣafā yā aḥmad ,aẓīm il-waqār
wa lā fī l-mulūk il-kull-i lu min misāl.

Mikā'il prayed that the Chosen One be well

received (?)

And said to him: "O messenger of God, you have

achieved (your) goal

Plead for your community, O Prophet, and you will

be pleaded for

For this community, which belongs to you, is

the best of mankind

O how they will rejoice in you, O light

of the heart

When you favour them on the Day of Reckoning

But proceed and you will find Isrāfīl

Seated on a chair and still holding the horn

He is exceedingly pure, O Aḥmad, and self-poised

None is his match among all angels.

36.

wi qīla an isrāfīl aẓīm iṣ-ṣafā

wi lā fī l-mulḳ il-kull-i man yishbiḥu

wi lammā ra'a ṭahā nahaḍ lu wi qām

wi f'l-ḥāl waqaf ganbu wi raḥḥab bu

wi mā masak <43> biyaddu ṣ-ṣūr li yōm

il-ḥisāb

wi lākin bi hāzā qad amar rabbu

wi fī ṣ-ṣūr aḍaḍ ṣuwar il-khalāyiq gamī

wi fī n-nafkha l-ūlā yiqūmū zi'āl

wi fī n-nafkha l-ukhrā yiqūmū l-gamī

ilā rabb-i ghāfir zanabinā w il-fiḳāl.

It is said that Isrāfīl is exceedingly pure
And among all angels, there is none who
resembles him

When he saw Ṭāhā, he rose up for him
Stood beside him at once and welcomed him
He did not hold in his hand the horn of
the Day of Reckoning

Even though that was the command of his Lord
Inside the horn was the full number of the
likeness of mankind
From the first blow, they will be partially (?)
resurrected

From the second blow, all of mankind will rise up
To meet a Lord who forgives our sins and (evil) deeds.

37.

wa mā zāl muḥammad sayyid il-mursalīn
ḳalā r-rafraḳ il-akhḍar <44> wa huwa bihi yasīr
ilā an dakhal ḥaḍrit rafīḳi d-darag
ilāh ḳalī muhaymin baṣīr
waṣal li ḥaḍra lam yaṣilhā malak
muḡarrab wa lā mubḳad ilēhā yisīr

wa lā misl-i aḥmad qad khuliq fī l-wugūd
 min il-mubtadā l il-muntahā yā rigāl
 atā b il-hudā w ish-sharḥi wi l-bayynāt
 wi waghu yafūq il-badri ḥinda l-kamāl.

Muḥammad, the master of God's messengers, was still
 On the green raḥraf, which was moving on with him
 Until he entered into the presence of the One with the
 lofty station

A Lord who is most High, Master, and Seer
 The Prophet reached the station which no angel, close or
 not close (to God), had ever reached
 In all existence none like Aḥmad has ever been created
 From the beginning till the end of Time, O men
 He brought guidance, the divine law, and the clear proofs
 His visage outshines the full moon.

38.

wi lammā danā qāl lu l-lāh marḥabā
 bi khawāṣ il-khawāṣ aḥmad aṣīl il-guḍūd
 fa lā shakki annak ḥallī <45> l-martaba <46>
 wa lā nāl sulaymān li baḥḍi faḍlak wa hūd <47>
 tamannā w sal mā shiṭ-i yā muṣṭafā
 fa qāl ummitī: talaṭaf buhum ya wadūd
 fa qāl ummitak yā aḥmad khiyār il-umam

When he came near, God said to him: "Welcome,
The best of the most excellent, Aḥmad of the
the most noble lineage
Undoubtedly yours is the highest rank; neither
Solomon nor Hūd have attained some of your grace
Make a wish and request what you desire, O Muṣṭafā"
The Prophet said: "My community, be kind to it,
O Amicable One
God said to him: "Your community, O Aḥmad,
is the best of communities
You are the most favoured, O most exalted of men
Hellfire is for your foe, miserable is his fate
I have created you, O one with stunning beauty"

wa qad khātabahu rabb il-ʾibād il-karīm
wa qāl lu khalaqtak qabl-i khalq is-samā
wa min qabl-i ādam yā muḥammad wa hūd
wa lā takhshā fī ḥaḍratī min faza
wa sharrif busāṭī yā taqī l-gudūd
wa lammā tmaʾann aḥmad nabī l-hudā



wa lammā rtaga, ṭāhā ḥabīb il-qulub
bēt umm-i hānī ingaḍa, fī amān
akhaḍ raḥtu sur'a wa qām nāhiḍan
yikhabbir li aṣṣābu bi afṣaḥ lisān
fa aḥkā lihum mā qaḍ ra'ā fī ṣ-ṣ-ūd

wi qāl khāliqī rād lī bi hāzā makān
 abū bakr-i şaddaq wi ş-şaḥāba gamī
 wi qālū muḥammad qad şadaq fī l maqāl
 fa khālif abū gahl-i t-ta'īs il-la'in
 wi qāl yā qurēsh hal yistimi' zā s-su'āl.

When Ṭāhā, the beloved, returned
 To Umm Hāni's house, he lay down peacefully
 He rested for a short time, then rose up
 To talk to his companions in the most eloquent Arabic
 He told them what he had seen in his ascension
 And he said: "My Creator had desired that place for me"
 Abū Bakr believed him, so did all the companions
 They said: "Muḥammad was truthful in what he said"
 Abū Jahl, the wretched and accursed one, differed
 And said: "O Quraysh, can this issue be believed?"

41.

fa in kān surī <48> bika yā muḥammad tiqūl
 'an il-quḍsi mā huwa yā aṣīl il-gudūd
 fa aṭraq muḥammad yintiḡir wa'd-i sayyid
 lu l-luṭf-i wi t-tadbīr wi gam' il-wugūd
 amar rabbinā gibrīl yishīl il-quḍs
 'alā kāhilu li l-muṣṭafā mā yiḡūl
 wi šār in-nabī yikhbbir bi-mā qad ra'ā
 'alā ş-şidq-i yi'limhum bi aṣḡaq maqāl

—

wa lammā amar rabb is-samā gibrāʾīl
tawāṭat gamīʾ il-arḍ-i ḥattā l-gibāl

C



wa qad salla sayfu ḥaydar il-murtaḏā
wi qāl yā quraysh asrā muḥammad ṣaḥīḥ
na'am qad surī bihi fī z-ḡalām il-akūr

wa khātab rabbu bi l-kalām il-faṣīḥ
 wa qāl lu tamannā qad uṭīṭa l-murād
 baʿastak li gamʿ-i khalq-i nāṣiḥ nāṣiḥ
 wa qad istakhāru khāliqū zū l-galāl
 wa lā nāl nabī mā nāl min il-ittiṣāl
 muḥammad muqarrab muḥtabā muḥtabā
 shafīʿ il-warā min nār tiziḍ ishtaʿāl.

Ḥaydar al-Murtaḍā drew his sword

And said: "O people of Quraysh, Muḥammad had indeed

gone on his night journey to Heaven

He had been taken on this journey during the

turbid night

He had spoken to his Lord in the most eloquent tongue

His Lord said to him: "Make a wish, you will be

granted what what is desired

I have sent you to the throngs of people as

a sincere counselor"

His Lord of Majesty has consulted him about what

is good (for mankind)

No other prophet has attained this love communion

(with God)

Muḥammad is the most favoured elect, the one who

pleads (with God) to spare mankind the ever-burning Hellfire"

44.

nabīnā muḥammad lu faḍāyil kitīr <52>
wi min baḍāhā abrā l-ḥiyūn mi l-amā
lamas giz-ī lu akhḍar w aḡhar waraḡ
wi min rāḡatēh arwā l-ḡiyūsh mi ḡ-ḡamā
wi min ḡabl-ī khalḡ il-khalḡ-ī aḡmad khuliḡ
wi min ḡā ḡimā khēr il-anām iḡtamā
wi min baḡ-ī faḡlu kān yiḡizz il-ḡharīb
wi kān yikrim is-sāḡil wi ḡār il-ḡhazāl
wi izā mā khaḡar fī arḡ-ī ḡafrā nabbittit
wi min ṣidḡ-ī ḡazmu haḡḡ-ī rukn iḡḡalāl.

Our Prophet Muḥammad has done many meritorious deeds
Some of which include his healing of the
 sightless eyes
When he touched the (dead) tree trunk, it turned
 green and burst into leaf
From his hands the multitudes quenched their thirst
Before the creation of the creation Aḥmad was created
Whoever seeks refuge with the the best of mankind will be
 granted protection
Among his good deeds was his kindness to the stranger
He was generous with the beggar, he rescued the gazelle
If he happened to pass through an arid land, it would
 bring forth vegetation
By the strength of his resolve, he tore down the

anā kull-i ma-mdaḥ fī ḥabīb il qulūb
w akarrar madīḥu astarīḥ mi t-taʿab
nabī qad nataq bēn rāhatēh il-ḥaṣā
wi min hēbtu wallū l-aʿādī shuʿab
wi bi l-ruʿb zēn il-anbiyā ntaṣar
wi izā mā samaʿ kāfir bi zikru irtaʿab
wi fī badr-i wi ḥnēn intaṣar ʿalā l-ʿidā
saqāhum bi kōs il-ʿalāqim niṣāl
wa aṣḥābu ahl it-tuqā w it-tuqā (sic) <53>
fakka l-asad min fōq il-khiyūl il-āṣāl <54>

The more I praise the beloved of hearts
And repeat my praise, I feel relieved of weariness
He is the Prophet in whose palms pebbles spoke
And because of his awe-inspiring appearance, enemies flew
in scattered bands
By inspiring fear, the best of the prophets was triumphant
The unbeliever trembled at the mention of his name
At the battles of Badr and Hunayn, Muḥammad triumphed
over the enemies
With (his) spearheads he made them drink from the cups of
the colocynth-like bitterness

The Prophet's companions, the people of piety and purity
 (in-nuqā?)
 On the backs of the thoroughbred horses were like the jaws
 of a lion.

46.

yasīn sabaq il-aḥzāb nahār il-qitāl
 wi zalzil il-iḍḍā b ʿazmu sh-shadīd
 wi fāṭir qulūb aḍḍāh wi ghāfir ḥimāh
 wi ṣāhib il-gumʿa wi raʿyu sadīd
 wi ayyidu r-raḥmān bi naṣru l-mubīn
 w aḍḍāh atathum wāqiʿa bi l-ḥadīd
 wi kām ṣahar lu fī quraysh muʿgizāt
 wi qahar ʿidāh <56> bi l-ḥusām fī l-qitāl
 lu <57> kull-i ʿām il-ḥagg-i yisʿā <58> zumar
 ṭāhā khitām il-anbiyā la muḥāl.

Yāsīn outdid the parties (of his foes) on
 the day of the battle
 The strength of his resolve shook his foes
 He cleft the hearts of his enemies and guarded
 his sanctuary
 He is the master of the Sabbath; his judiciousness
 well-attested
 God the Merciful One has armed him with clear victory

His enemies were smitten by iron-clad blows
 Many were the miracles he had performed among the people
 of Quraysh
 In battle he had subjugated his enemies by the sword
 Every year the pilgrims march in groups towards him
 Ṭāhā is veritably the seal of the prophets.

47.

nataq lu l-ḥagar w inshaqq-i l aglu l-qamar
 nabī muftakhar ṭāhā l-bashīr in-nazīr
 saʿat lu sh-shagar lammā ilēhā amar
 wi nūru stamarr fāq is-sirāg il-munīr
 wi rabbu naṣar qōmu ʿalā man kafar
 wi ʿāsh fī saqar man khālafu yā khabīr
 wa lā misl-i aḥmad qad khuliq fī l-wugūd
 min il-mubtadā l il-muntahā yā rigāl
 atā b il-hudā w ish-sharʿi wi l-bayyināt
 wi waghu yafūq il-badr-i ʿinda l-kamāl.

For his sake the pebbles spoke and the moon split into
 two halves
 He is the glorified Prophet, Ṭāhā, the bringer of
 glad tidings, the warner
 At his command trees hurried to him

I am al-Ghubārī, known among men of letters
The seeker after my art can never have access to it
O one of understanding, you have accompanied me on this
ascension to Heaven

Traversing all the reflections about the praise of the

Messenger of God

I remained three months poring over

The beginning of the first line of verse, adding and

saying:

My greetings and prayers for the one to whom

The pebbles spoke and whom the lizard greeted saying:

"Save me", and the seal of the prophets saved it

And into the rocks, the sandals of the Chosen One dived.

ENDNOTES

<1> (Paris: Livres Leroux, 1893), pp. 79-93.

<2> (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglū al-Miṣriyya, 1970), pp. 168-183.

1. See Pierre Cachia's "An Uncommon Use of Nonsense Verse in Colloquial Arabic", Journal of Arabic Literature IV, p. 61.

The following are the variants in Urbain Bouriant's version of the same piece in his Chansons Populaires Arabes en dialecte du Caire d'après les manuscrits d'un chanteur des rues. Paris, Livres Leroux, 1893. pp. 79-93.

4. il-maghār
5. wa awḥadhum.
6. is-samā.
7. nufūd.
8. likī.
9. khumsmāyā.
10. "wi lū" plus an alif.
11. dawā, last letter is an alif not an alif maqṣūra.
12. sarā with an alif not an alif maqṣūra.
13. dhahab.
14. sarā.
15. mā.
16. li ṭāliṭ.
17. amīn.
18. il-ṭāliṭa.
19. il-ṭāliṭa.

20. il-ʿanā.

21. asmā.

22. "kazab bahā" is Bouriant's emendation of "ʿazab wi man" in original manuscript.

23. fa qālū.

24. Qindīl has "faraʿ" (branches off). I replaced it with Bouriant's "faragh" because I think "faraʿ" is a misprint.

25. ibʿaṭ.

26. ibʿaṭ.

27. tishfaʿ.

28. bi sh-shtimāl.

29. Bouriant's emendation of "musif".

30. mun ḡag.

31. Bouriant's emendation of saḡabuhum.

32. There is no shadda on the yāʾ in Qindīl's version.

33. minhā.

34. iz-zūrā.

35. Bouriant's emendation of "yʾūl... wi sālu ʿan mā turīd".

36. yiʾazzin.

37. azān.

38. amr.

39. Bouriant suppressed "ʾulnā" at start.

40. yā-ḡmad.

41. lu after "gālis".

42. yazāl.

43. māsik.

44. rafraf is a means of transportation in Paradise.

45. ‹ālī.
46. martaba.
47. Bouriant's emendation of "lā nāl sulaymān afḍālak
wi hūd".
48. sarā.
49. il-aṣāl.
50. mā yashā.
51. Bouriant's emendation of "il-ilāh".
52. kaṭīr.
53. wi n-nuqā.
54. il-aṣāl.
55. sabā.
56. aḍdāh.
57. manuscript has "lu" which Bouriant emends to
"lahū".
58. manuscript has "lu" which Bouriant emends to
"lahū".
59. rasīlī.
60. aṣannif.

SELECTIONS OF SONGS FROM THE MADDAḤIN'S REPERTOIRE.

These songs are derived from the recordings of the Centre For Folk Arts in Cairo.

Ṭanṭā (Gharbiyya)

Singer: Muḥammad Saʿīd Ṭanṭāwī.

Type of song: Madīḥ.

Singer with a chorus, accompanied with the violin, riḡḡ (a type of tambourine with jingles) and the nāy (end-blown reed flute).

Chorus:

yā sayyida yā sayyida yā sayyida

yā sayyida yā bint-i ashraf wālida, yā sayyida

Singer:

qasaman bi nūr il-muṣṭafā wa gamālihi

lam yakhliq ir-raḥmānu misla ṣifātihi

al-misk wa l-kāfūr min ʿaraq in-nabī

{madad, madad}

wa l-wardu wa l-yasmīnu min waganātihi

Chorus:

yā sayyida yā sayyida yā sayyida
 yā sayyida yā mmu sh-shimū*ḥ* l-*ḥ*āyida
 yā kht il-ḥasan w ukht il-ḥusēn yā sayyida
 yā bint ashraf wālida yā sayyida

Singer:

ḥalā khadd-i ṭāhā shāmātu wa ḥalāmātu
 subḥāna man khaṣṣa l-gamāla li zātihi
 a-lā f aḥlamū anna n-nabiyya muḥammadan
 ahlu is-samā wa l-arḍi fī barakātihi

Chorus:

yā sayyida yā sayyida yā sayyida

Singer:

yā ḥashiqīna muḥammadan wa zamānahu
 ṣallū ḥalayhi fa tas*ḥ*adu bi ṣalātihi
 nazrun ḥalayyā izā waṣaltu maqāmahu
 la umarrigha l-khadayni fī ḥatabātihi

Chorus:

yā sayyida yā sayyida yā sayyida

Singer:

wa aqūl li ʿaynī unḡurī wa tamattaʿī
 hāzā rasūlu l-lāhi ashrafu khalqihī
 ṣallā ʿalayka llāhu yā ʿalama l-hudā
 mā dāma ʿarshu llāhi maʿa samawātihi

(al-fātiḡa).

Chorus: O Sayyida, O Sayyida, O Sayyida (title of Zaynab, the
 Prophet Muḡammad's grand-daughter)

O Sayyida, daughter of the most noble mother (Fāṡima, the
 Prophet Muḡammad's daughter)

Singer:

I swear by the light and the beauty of the Prophet
 The Compassionate Lord has not created the Prophet's
 match

Musk and camphor are (derived) from the Prophet's
 perspiration

{Madad, madad}

Roses and jasmine flowers are his cheeks.

Chorus:

O Sayyida, O Sayyida, O Sayyida

O Sayyida, O one with the lit candles

O sister of al-Ḥasan and Ḥusēn, O Sayyida

O daughter of the most noble mother, O Sayyida

Singer:

On Ṭāhā's cheek there are signs and marks

Exalted is the one who has favoured him with beauty

Verily you should know that the Prophet Muḥammad

Covers with his blessings the inhabitants of Heaven

and Earth.

Chorus:

O Sayyida, O Sayyida, O Sayyida

O Sayyida, O one with lit candles

O sister of al-Ḥasan and Ḥusēn, O Sayyida

O daughter of the most noble mother, O Sayyida.

Singer:

O lovers of Muḥammad and his times

Call down blessings on him and you will rejoice in

his blessings

If I reach his mausoleum, I vow
To rub my cheeks into the dust of its thresholds.

Chorus:

O Sayyida, O Sayyida, O Sayyida
O Sayyida, O one with lit candles
O sister of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusēn, O Sayyida
O daughter of the most noble mother, O Sayyida.

Singer:

I tell my eye: "Look, and savour (the sight)
This is the Prophet of God, the most noble of
God's creation

May God's blessings be upon you, O banner of guidance,
As long as God's throne and heaven endure.

(to the audience: Recite the Fātiḥa (the first chapter
of the Qur'ān).

Būr Sa'id (Port Said):

Singer: Anwar 'Izz ad-Dīn Ṣagr. Type of song: Madīḥ. Solo
with the accompaniment of the drum, the riḳ (a type of
tambourine with jingles) and the sallāmiyya (pipe flute with
a high-pitched tone).

A. On Leaving For The Pilgrimage:

Singer:

yā farḥit il-ḥuggāg bi n-nūr
 wi hummā nawayīn ḥa l-hādī
 wa llāh munāy aḥigg w azūr
 dā kull-i ḥaḥdī wi murādī
 yā farḥit il-ḥuggāg

nūr in-nabī zāyin is-sikka
 min būr saḥīd lammā l-makka
 yā rabb-i ḥiwḥidnā b ḥigga
 wi ḥhigg-i bēt allāh wi nzūr
 yā farḥit il-ḥuggāg bi n-nūr

il-ḥagg-i anwar bi-yghnnī yiḥūl
 fī madḥ in-nabī agall-i rasūl
 lammā nawīnā ḥalā l-hādī
 ḥalā s-siwēs ṣaffar yā wabūr
 lammā ruḥnā mint is-siwēs
 liḥēnā il-bākhira bi-tnādī
 yālla yā ḥagg-i bīnā nsāfir
 nizūr nabīnā ṭāhā l-hādī
 lammā ruḥnā l-gabal iṭ-ṭūr
 aḥramnā ḥulnā hnāk dastūr

Chorus:

yā farḥit il-ḥuggāg...

Singer:

waṣalnā gadda fī ʿaṣriyya
bānit il-anwār in-nabawiyya
dughrī rikibnā l-ʿarabiyya
li-ʿenā l-miṭawwif bi-ynādī

Chorus:

yā farḥit il-ḥuggāg...

yā llī sakant il-ḥugāz (sic) yā nabī

wi lak maʿām ʿālī

mughrām bi ḥubbak yā ḥabībī wi fīk

il-madh-i yiḥlā-lī

imtā azūrak yā nabī yā-bū maʿām ʿālī

wa mdaḥ wa aghannī wa ʿūl:

nabī yā nabīnā yā zēn

nabī yā kaḥīla l-ʿēn

lak shāma ʿalā l-khadēn yā muḥammad

tnwwar ḡalām il-lēl.

Chorus:

nabī yā nabīnā yā zēn...

Singer:

rī in-nabī sukkar
 man zāqahu yaskar
 yāmaā fatan askar
 dā ḥabībī aḥmad kaḥīla l-ēn.

Chorus:

nabī yā nabīnā yā zēn...

Singer:

shuft il-ḥabīb wi l-amar wi htart anā bēnhum
 lawlā sawād il-iyūn wi l-bayāḍ bēnhum
 mā kān fuādī wi albī irf in-nabīn minhum.

Chorus:

nabī yā nabīnā yā zēn...

O how happy the pilgrims are with the light (of the Prophet)
 As they are planning to visit the Guiding One
 By God, my hope is to perform pilgrimage and visit
 (the Prophet)
 This is indeed my purpose and strong wish.

Chorus:

O how happy the pilgrims are with the light (of the Prophet)
 As they are planning to visit the guiding Prophet

The light of the Prophet is adorning the route
 From Port Said to Mecca
 O Lord grant us the opportunity to perform the pilgrimage
 And visit and circumambulate the House of God
 O how happy the pilgrims are ...

Chorus:

O how happy the pilgrims are...

Hajj Anwar is singing
 Eulogies in honour of the Prophet, the most honourable
 messenger (of God)

When we were on our way to the Guiding Prophet
 The steamship whistled its way to Suez
 When we arrived at the harbour of Suez
 The steamship was calling: "Hajj, let's journey
 To our Prophet the guiding Ṭāhā"
 When we arrived at the Ṭōr mountain*
 We entered into the state of consecration and
 uttered: "By your leave "*"

Chorus:

O how happy the pilgrims are...

One evening we arrived in Mecca
 The Prophet's lights shone forth
 At once we rode the car
 The guide for pilgrims was calling (us)

Chorus:

O how happy the pilgrims are ...

O Prophet who resided in Hijaz and has an elevated
 tomb (or lofty standing)

I am passionately in love with you, O my beloved,
 singing your praises pleases me

When will I be able to visit you, Prophet of lofty
 standing (or elevated tomb)

And sing your praises and say:

"O Prophet, our Prophet, the Beautiful One,
 The one with kohl-coloured eyes
 You have a beauty spot on the cheeks, O Muḥammad,
 Which illumines the darkness of the night.

Ref.

O Prophet, our Prophet, the Beautiful One...

The Prophet's saliva is sugar
 He who tastes it will become drunk

O Prophet, our Prophet, the Beautiful One...

Chorus:

O Prophet, our Prophet, the Beautiful One...

B. On Returning From The Pilgrimage:

yā rāgiḥ min makka haniyyā-lak
yā mā ḥubb in-nabī shaghal bālak
zurt il-ḥaramēn yā gamālhum
mattaḥ-t-i ḥiyūnak bi naḥarhum
wi shuft in-nūr ḥuddamhum

wi nafaṭt-i ḥan-nabī mālak .

ḥarafāt yiḥl li n-nabī l askun ḥalā bābak
 w abḥā saḥīd yā nabī w abḥā min aḥbābak
 ḥāl in-nabī yā ḥarafāt ilzum iḥtābak
 mā yikmal il-ḥigg-i yā ḥarafāt illā-bak

ḥalā ḥarafāt labbētum
 wi ṭuftum il-marwā w saḥētum
 min zamzam qad rawētum
 wi nafaṭt-i ḥan-nabī mālak.

bāḍ il-ḥamām wi l-yamām wi l-karawān ghannā
 wi llī nshabak bi n-nabī lā nām wa lā thannā
 anā ṭul ḥayātī w nifsī trīd wi titmannā
 lammā samaḥ lī l-ilāh wi sagatt-i f il-miḥrāb
 il-misk-i fāḥ m il-maḥām ḥattā l-ḥamām ghannā.

You who have returned from Mecca, I congratulate you
 Much has the love for the Prophet preoccupied your heart
 You have visited the two holy places (Mecca and Medina),
 O how beautiful they are
 You have filled your eyes with joy by looking at them
 You have witnessed the light before them
 You have spent your money for the sake of the Prophet.

The (holy mountain of) ʿArafāt says to the Prophet:

"Would that I were located at your door
O how I would be overjoyed, O Prophet, and count as
one of those who love you

The Prophet says: "O ʿArafāt, stay in your place
(lit. threshold)

The Ḥajj rites cannot be completed without you.

On ʿArafāt you (pilgrims) have uttered:

"Here we are, O Lord",
You have ambulated from the Marwā and run
(to the holy place of Ṣafā)
From the well of Zamzam, you have
quenched your thirst
And have spent your money for the sake
of the Prophet

The pigeons and the doves laid their eggs and the
curlew chirped its song
And whoever is entangled in the love of the Prophet
would not rest or savour (comfort)
All life long I have desired and longed for
(the Prophet)

When God decreed that I should prostrate myself in the
prayer niche (of the Great Mosque of the Prophet)
The fragrance of musk spread from the (Prophet's)
tomb, even the pigeons cooed a song.

Dumyāt (Damietta).

Singer: Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-Jōharī.

Type of song: Madīḥ.

Singing with a chorus with no musical instruments.

in-nabī zēn il-milāḥ
 madḥu li z-zanb-i māḥ
 al-mukhaṣṣaṣ bi s-samāḥ
 wa l-muḥallal bi l-ghamām
 man ḥalēh id-ḡabb-i sallam
 wa l-baḥīr ḥaqqan takallam
 istimiḥ yā khill-i wi fham
 li l-maḥānī wi n-niḡām

Chorus:

in-nabī zēn il-milāḥ...

Singer:

in-nabī zayy l-ḥarūs
 zikr in-nabī yiḡyī n-nifūs
 wi n-naṣārā wi l-magūs
 dōlā aslamū ḥalā yadīh.

igat ghazlt il-barr-i tashkī
 li n-nabī ḥaqqan wa tabkī
 āh yā muḥammad dā nta makkī

gīranī yā bn il-kirām.

Chorus:

in-nabī zēn il-milāḥ

Singer:

āh in-nabī ›āl yā ghazāla

mālakī fī sū›ī ḥāla

ikhbirīnī lā muḥāla

wa ṣḍiqīnī fī l-kalām.

qālit iṣ-ṣayyād qaraṣnī

āh yā muḥammad wa ftarasnī

tārika awlādu (sic) baṭnī

ḥāluhum fī in›idām.

āh in-nabī ›āl yā yahūdī

ḥillahā min zā (sic) l-qiyūdī

khallihā trūḥ wi t›ūdī

wi hiyya ha-tirga› ›awām.

(Inaudible)

āh yā muḥammad yā bn-i rāma

yā shafūq ›alā l-yatāmā

kun ḡamīnī yōm il-›iyāma

mi l-lahīb yōm iz-zihām.

(Inaudible).

The Prophet is the best among the beautiful
 Praising him remits sins
 He who is designated an intercessor
 The one who was shaded by the cloud
 The one who was greeted by the lizard
 The one to whom the camel talked
 Listen, O friend, and comprehend
 The meaning and the verse.

Chorus:

The Prophet is the best among the beautiful

The Prophet is like a groom
 The mention of the Prophet's (name) revives the spirits
 The Nazarenes and the Zoroastrians
 At his hands converted to Islam

The gazelle of the land came to complain
 To the Prophet, weeping
 "O Muḥammad, you are a Meccan
 Save me, son of noblemen."

The Prophet said: "O gazelle
 Why are you in such bad condition?
 Tell me at once,
 Relate to me what is truthful"

The gazelle said: "The huntsman has caught me
 Ah, O Muḥammad, and he (almost) devoured me
 I have left my foals behind
 Their condition is miserable."

The Prophet said: "O Jew,
 Cut her loose of these knots
 Let her go and come back
 She will return soon."

(Inaudible)

O Muḥammad, son of Rāma
 O you who show compassion to the orphans
 Save me on the Last Day
 From the flames (of Hellfire) on the Day of the Gathering.
 (Inaudible)

Sharqiyya

Singer: ʿAlī Miʿawwaḍ.

Banī Slīmān (Sharqiyya)

Type of song: Madīḥ.

Solo singing accompanied only by the drum.

anā gult-i ḥarām ʿalayyā
 wi ṣfarr lōnī bi lōn il-kahrabāniyya
 khud ummak fī ṭūlak

in nawēt yā ḥāgig
 tiktib-lak ḥigga wi tislam ‹iyūnak
 khud ummak fī ṭūlak
 in nawēt yā ḥaggig
 tinktib-lak ḥigga wi tislam ‹iyūnak

{yā ‹ēnī, yā rabb iw'idnā}

khud ummak yā ‹umdit baladnā
 yā ‹umdit baladnā
 rayḥīn nizūr in-nabī
 wiṣaytak waladna

{singer weeps}

ṣughayyar bi shūsha
 za'gitu fī j-jabal tibakkī l-wiḥūsha
 ṣughayyar sharāra
 za'gitu fī j-jabal tibakkī l-ḥijāra.

I said: "This is unlawful to me"
 I became as pale as the electrical thing.

(Researcher: what electric thing?"

A man: the one who touches the electric
 wire, does he not, I beg your forgiveness,

become pale?)

Take your mother with you

O you who intend to perform the pilgrimage rite

For this will be counted in your favour, and

you will be granted safety.

Take your mother with you, O headman of our village

O headman of our village

We are on our way to visit the Prophet

We entrust you with our child

{the singer weeps}

He is a youngster with a forelock

His cry in the wilderness would cause

wild beasts to weep

He is a youngster who is like a spark

(not yet a blaze)

His cry in the wilderness would cause

rocks to weep.

Minyā

Singers:

Naḥīma Shirīf Muḥammad.

Shahbān Ḥalī (drummer)

Ḥabd al-Bāsiṭ Muḥammad (singer and instrumentalist)

Type of song: Ḥunūn (pilgrimage songs).

Duo, accompanied only by the drummer.

Naḥīma:

{ugḥud yā wād in-nās ḥarrāna}

ēēēh in-nabī mā-khalg misālu

ḥilw yā gamāl in-nabī

ṣallū ḥalēh in-nabī mā-khalag misālu.

Ḥabd al-Bāsiṭ:

āāāh nabī mā khalag misālu

ḥalāwa yā gamāl in-nabī

Naḥīma:

iiiyoooh

in-nabī dā būh iddaḥā-lu

illī twaḥad bi z-zyārit in-nabī muḥammad

şallum ‹alēh in-nabī dā būh idda‹ā-lu.

‹Abd al-Bāsiṭ:

aywa yā nabī yā nabī aywa dā būh idda‹āl-u
illī rāḥ wi zār in-nabī
āh yā nabī dā būh idda‹ā-lu.

Na‹īma:

nabī yā bū sh-sha‹r-i layyin
ḥalīma tgūl li n-nabī
āh yā ḥabībī yā bū sh-sha‹r-i layyin.

‹Abd al-Bāsiṭ

oooh
nabī yā bū sh-sha‹r-i layyin
ḥalīma tgūl li n-nabī
āh yā ḥabībī yā bū sh-sha‹r layyin.

Na‹īma

wi n-nabī mā ghērak ḥabībī mā ghērak ḥinayyin
tirigg-i galb il-‹āṣī yā nabī
ḥilw il-ḥabīb mā ghērak ḥinayyin

‹Abd al-Bāsiṭ

aywa yā nabī yā nabī aywa mā ghērak ḥinayyin
aywa dā ḥilw gamāl in-nabī
aywa yā nabī mā ghērak ḥinayyin.

Na'ima

iiiyoooh

nabī yā bū sh-sha'r-i khēlī

ḥalīma tgūl li n-nabī ḥilw il-ḥabīb

yā bū sh-sha'r-i khēlī.

ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ

aywa yā nabī yā nabī yā nabī yā bū

sh-sha'r-i khēlī

ḥalīma tgūl li n-nabī āh yā nabī yā bū

sh-sha'r-i khēlī.

Na'ima

yā nabī yā nabī yā nabī

inta ḥabībī gamālu in-nabī

dā nta gamālu in-nabī āh yā nabī

wi n-nabī kāmil il-ma'ānī

wa lā ḥadd-i zayyu n-nabī

ṣallum ʿalā l-ḥabīb dā kāmil il-ma'ānī.

ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ

āh yā nabī yā kāmil il-ma'ānī

ḥalīma tgūl li n-nabī

ḥabībī yā kāmil il-ma'ānī.

Na'ima

iiih

gamālu gamālu gamālu

yā nabī gharāmu yā nabī yā nabī yā nabī
 ṣallī ʿa n-nabī ḥabībī
 yā nabī yā nabī yā nabī
 inta l-waṣṭa yā nabī
 gharāmu yā nabī

iiih

nabī dā būh iddaʿā-lu
 illī waʿadu l-karīm bi zyārit in-nabī muḥammad
 ḥilw il-ḥabīb dā būh iddaʿā-lu.

Naʿīma:

{Sit down boy, people are hot, sit down}.

Indeed God has not created the like of the Prophet
 Splendid is the Prophet's beauty
 Call down blessings on the Prophet

ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ:

Indeed God has not created the likes of the Prophet
 Splendid is the Prophet's beauty.

Naʿīma:

iiiyooh

Indeed blessed is the one

(lit. his father must have prayed for him)

Who was granted the opportunity to visit the Prophet

(to perform the pilgrimage rite)

ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ:

By the Prophet, blessed is the one

Who was granted the chance to visit the Prophet

The one who went and visited the Prophet

Yes, by the Prophet, blessed is he.

Naʿīma:

iiih

O Prophet, O one who has straight hair

Ḥalīma says to the Prophet:

"Beautiful is the Prophet who has straight hair"

ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ:

oooh

O Prophet, O one who has straight hair

Ḥalīma says to the Prophet:

"O my beloved who has straight hair"

Naʿīma:

Truly there is none but you, my beloved, who

is as compassionate

Who can soften the stone-hearted sinner

You are the sweet beloved, none but you is
as compassionate.

ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ:

Truly, Prophet, O Prophet, there is none
but him who is as compassionate
Splendid is the beauty of the Prophet
Truly none but you, O Prophet, is as
compassionate.

Naʿīma:

iiiyooh

O Prophet, O one whose hair is like the
horse's hair
Ḥalīma said to the Prophet: "O how sweet
is the beloved
Whose hair is like the horse's hair."

ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ:

Truly, Prophet, O Prophet, you
whose hair is like the horse's hair
Ḥalīma said to the Prophet: "O Prophet, O one
Whose hair is like the horse's hair."

Naʿīma:

iiih

O Prophet, O Prophet, O Prophet

You are my beloved, O how beautiful the Prophet is

O how beautiful the Prophet is

He is all-wise (lit. his meaning is perfect)

None is his match

Call down blessings on the beloved (Prophet); he

is all-wise

ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ:

Truly, you are all-wise, O Prophet

Ḥalīma said to the Prophet: "O Prophet, you

are all-wise.

Naḥīma:

iiih

How beautiful, how beautiful, how beautiful

Love for the Prophet, O Prophet, O Prophet,

O Prophet

Call down blessings on the Prophet, my beloved

You are the intercessor, O Prophet

Love for the Prophet, O Prophet.

iiih

O Prophet, blessed is the one

Who was promised a visit to the Prophet Muḥammad

by the Generous One (God).

Sweet is the beloved, blessed is the one

(who was promised a visit to the Prophet).

Province of Daqahliyya (Manṣūra):

Singer: as-Sayyid Bayūmī Mabruk

Type of song: Madīḥ.

Solo, accompanied only by the drum.

(first two lines are inaudible)

wi ndah li bint-i bint in-nabī

tiftaḥ-lak il-abwāb

yā āla ṭāhā ‹abdukum khaddāmukum wā›if ‹a l-bāb

‹alā ḥālu bitgūrū lēh wi kār ‹amal ēh wi mālu

law kār garā minnu zanb-i samḥū-lu fīh

wi tlaṭṭafū bu wi law bi l-‹ēni naṣra lu.

Call the grand-daughter of the Prophet

To open the doors for you

O people of the Prophet's household, your obedient
 servant is at the door
 Why are you unkind to him? What did he do? What is
 wrong with him?
 If he committed a sin, forgive him
 Have mercy on him, even if by means of a glance at him.

Kafr Idmīr

Singer: Shēkh Zakariyya Ḥalī l-Bannā

Type of song: Qaṣā'id Nabawiyya (odes in honour of the Prophet).

Solo, with no musical instruments.

ḥannā fataḥ ḥān wi fīh kāṣāt min barra
 wi n-nās wayyā l-ginn-i waḥfīn ḥalā l-bāb
 min barra
 nadahit il-bunayya w ḥālit min illī ḥalā
 l-bāb barra
 ḥāl-lahā anā mawsūm min il-qayyūm
 wi mḥāyā rasm-i mamḍī wi makhtūm min abī
 fāṭima l-barra.

Ḥannā opened a wine-shop which had foreign-made goblets
 Humans and jinn were standing at the door outside
 The young girl shouted and said: "Who is at the
 door outside?"

He (the devotee, the seeker after truth) said:

"I am marked by the Everlasting God
 I have a permit, signed and sealed by the
 the father of Fāṭima the godly."

Manṣūra:

Singer: Muḥammad Ḥasan ḲUmar.

Type of song: Madīḥ

Solo, accompanied by the drum.

aghathnā adriknā sal Ḳannā lā tansānā yā
 munā Ḳēnī
 yā awwala n-nabiyyīn yā khātama l-mursalīn yā
 shafīḲ Ḳalā l-muznibīn
 lammā nta gamīl yā nabī wi mā fīsh gamīl illāk
 Ḳammāl taḲṭṭaḲ fī gismī yā nabī illī nshaghal
 bi hawāk
 dā-nā dā-nā law ḲṭṭaḲū-nī gīzal yā nabī yā
 nabī yā nabī
 mā-nsāsh shafāḲa wayyāk

wi ḥyāt gamāl il-ḥasan wi l-ḥusēn
 wi raḥīsit id-dīwān ḥa l-bāb kida wayyāk
 yōm il-ḥiyāma yā nabī fī r-riḥāb
 istannā khudnī māk
 yā-llī rabb il-ḥibād iṣṭafāk yā nabī
 dā l-umma bitistannāk
 dā-nā dā-nā l-amshī warā llī
 anā ḥul bāb is-salām wayyāk
 wi ḥyāt gamālak yā nabī
 ādī l-ḥamar ḥahar wi nig-m-i biyistannāk
 dā-nā l-asraḥ wa-rūḥ yā nabī
 wa-ḥul bāb ir-riḍā wayyāk
 wa-llāh riḍāk yā nabī bāb il-lāh wayyāk.

ṣallū yā mustamiḥin
 ḥalā llī shahar id-dīn
 in-nabī sirru ḥaḥim
 w-ādī ṣ-ṣaḥāba wayyāh
 imshī ḥalā ḥayyu
 imshī ḥalā nūru
 mā fīsh gamīl zayyu
 timshī ḥalā ḥayyu
 mā-fīsh gamīl zayyu
 ma-ḥlā ḥamar ḥayyu
 in-nig-m-i byistannāh
 arūḥ li-mīn yā zēn
 wi nta shafīḥ wi ḥamīn
 inta ḥalēnā raḥīm

inta gamīl wi salām
 inta n-nabī l-ʿadnān.

Come to our rescue, save us, take heed of us,
 do not abandon us, O apple of the eye
 You who are the first of the prophets, the last
 of the messengers and the intercessor for the sinners
 Is it because you are beautiful, O Prophet, and none but
 you is as beautiful

That you are torturing me, the one who is
 absorbed in your love?

O Prophet, were I to be torn to pieces,
 I would not stopt seeking your intercession
 By the life of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusēn (the Prophet's
 grand-children)

And the directress of the chancellery (Zaynab) who will
 be standing with you at the door

On the Last Day, O Prophet, wait for me
 in the outer space (?) and take me with you

You who have been chosen by the Lord of the people
 (Your) community is waiting for you

I vow to follow the one who ... (inaudible)

I declare that yours is the door of safety

By your beauty, O Prophet

I vow to wander about, O Prophet

And say, yours is the door to forgiveness

By God, (I am seeking, I am praying for) your forgiveness,
for you are the door to God (?).

Call down blessings, O listeners,
On the one who has proclaimed the faith
The Prophet's power is overwhelming
Here are his companions
Walk in his light
Walk in his light
There is none who matches his beauty
O how beautiful is the moon of his light
The star awaits you (O Prophet)
To whom should I go, O resplendent one
You who are intercessor and bondsman?
You who are compassionate with us
You who are beautiful and peaceful
You who are the Prophet from the tribe of ʿAdnān.

Manṣūra:

Singer: Shēkh as-Sayyid al-Bayyūmī.

Type of song: Madīḥ.

Solo, unaccompanied by musical instruments.

1.

yā munā ʿēnī yā munā ʿēnī yā dawā ʾalbī

yā marham gurūḥī

shayyaṭ aṭṭūl li n-nabī
 anā mushtā ilā dīnī
 shayyaṭ wa ṭāl-lī
 taṭālā wayya muḥibbīnī
 shayyaṭ aṭṭūl yā nabī
 māli māl yiwaddīnī
 shayyaṭ wi ṭāl-lī
 iṭmil bi ṭūlī wi yōm il-ḥashr-i tilaṭīnī.

O desire of my heart (lit. my eye), O remedy
 of my heart, O ointment of my wounds
 I have sent a word to the Prophet,
 "I pine for my religion"
 He sent his reply to me: "Come with my lovers"
 I sent my reply to him: "I do not have the money to go"
 He sent his reply to me: "Carry out my sayings and
 you will meet me on the Day of Resurrection".

2.

kēf il-ṭamal fī llī akhaḍ ṭahdu
 wi baḍ kida naṭaḍu
 wi ḥawwilūh ṭa l-gilas li yinḡurū naṭu
 ṭālit ir-raṭīsa ummu hāshim

iṭrūdūh madām ‹ahdinā na›aḍu
 siddū ‹alēh il-masā›ī w nashshifū-lu arḍu
 wi zawwidū-lu l-balā w ta››alū-lu maraḍū
 yimkin yinīn fī s-saḥārī yiḡhar linā gharaḍu
 wa llā (wa allāhi) in ṭar› bābinā ninḡur
 ilēh barḍu.

What was to be done to the one who took his oath
 then reneged on it later?

He was sent to the chancellery to be tried
 for perjury

The Mistress Umm Hāshim said: "Banish him for
 he has violated our covenant

Block the water canals; let his land dry out
 Increase his calamities; let disease weigh
 heavily on him

If he should groan (out of pain) at dawn; if his
 real intention (to repent) becomes clear
 And if he were to knock at our door, by God, we will
 still answer him."

3.

dā muḡibbi la-qṭāb ba›d-i mā ṭāb bulī tānī
 garḡī g-gidīd ṭāb ammā l-›adīm bulī tānī

{madad yā sīdī ḥasanēn}

[Wonderful, O Shēkh Sayyid, go on]

3.

If you are desirous of the divine help, why are you acting

so haughtily

Iblis (Satan) disobeyed his Lord once, remember what

befell him

The one who once fell in love with the Prophet

A mark (of love) appeared on him

He would walk like an invalid

His sickness and malaise would be manifest on him

One night he was (like) a police sergeant

At dawn he was promoted to the rank of bey.

{help O Sīdī Ḥasanēn (local saint)}.

Sohāj (Upper Egypt):

Singer: Fanjarī ‹Urabī Aḥmad

Type of song: Madīḥ

Solo, with no musical instruments.

1.

madad madad madad madad

ya ‹nī yṣādīf yōm wa shūf in-nabī bi ‹ēnī

yā qamar in-nabyyīn yā (inaudible) ... li l-mādiḥīn

yā safīnat al-ghāriqīn yā najāt al-hālikīn

yā anīs al-muwaḥḥidīn yā jalīs az-zakirīn

yā wāṣil al-munqaṭi'īn yā shafī' fī l-muznibīn

yā muḥammad.

2.

ghazāla bitirḥā fī wādī j-jibāl
 gābalhā l-yahūdī w shadd-i l-ḥibāl
 tiḥill il-ghazāla min hāzī l-qiyūd
 tiḥish yā muḥammad wi ḥumrak yiṭūl
 masaknī l-yahūdī ṭalaḥnī r-rasūl
 wi labanik yā māmā ḥalēnā suqām
 khudīnī yā māmā nisallim ḥalēh
 allāhumma ṣallī wa sallim wa bārik ḥalēh.

3.

amdaḥ nabī kāmil mukammal muktamal
 waḥḥaḥ athu āminatun mukhattana muktaḥal
 maḥṭūḥatun surratuhu mutawwaj bi l-bahāḥ
 wa muḥayyadan bi l-ḥilmi ayḥan wa l-ḥamal
 yaḥṭī ḥalā l-bizzi l-yamīni bi raḥfatin
 yaḥṭur ḥalā mā kāna fīhā wa qad ḥaṣal
 ammā sh-shimāl fa lam yazuḥḥā dāḥiman
 illā ... (inaudible) wa fī l-qisma ḥadal.

4.

‹ajabī ‹alā wulēd fī taqwā l-ilāh zawwad
 fī zikr ij-jalāla wi ṣalāti n-nabī it-awwad
 ‹āsh ‹alā qadr-i mā ‹āsh lā mayyal wa lā ḥawwad
 wa lā jalas yōm ma-llī galbuhum sawwad
 lammā tarawḥan ‹aṭū-lu l-ism (inaudible, maybe
 saḥwardī, suhrāwardī?)
 min ba-d-i mā māt lā ‹affan wa lā dawwad.

5.

‹ēnī ra-it ‹abd-i kān bi-yr-ā ghanam sīdu
 ‹aṭatu l-‹ināya ṣabaḥ sīdu yibūs īdu
 fī awwal il-lēl yigrā (cl. yaqra) il-‹ilm wi y-īdu
 wi fī ākhir il-lēl yisallim ‹a n-nabī b īdu.

6.

‹ēnī ra-at ganṭara bi sittā w talātīn ‹ēn
 ‹ashara fī ‹ashara fī ‹ashara w arba-ā wi tnēn
 rāḥum yigībū l-‹arūsa wi l-‹arīs li tnēn
 liqyū j-jalāla - kilmit it-tawḥīd - il-‹arūsa
 wi n-nabī iz-zēn.

1.

Maḍad, maḍad, maḍad

Will I one day chance to see the Prophet with
my own eyes?

O full moon of the prophets, O ... (inaudible) of
Mādiḥīn (the praise singers)
O ship for the drowning, O salvation for the damned
O intimate friend of the monotheists, O table companion
of those who repeatedly mention the name of God
O link between those who are disconnected, O intercessor
for the sinners, O Muḥammad.

2.

A gazelle was grazing in the valley
A Jew took her and fastened the ropes (around it)
You cut these fetters off the gazelle
May you live on, O Muḥammad
"I was captured by the Jew, and released by the Prophet"
"Your milk, O mother is forbidden to us,
Take me, O mother, to greet him (the Prophet)
May God's blessings, greetings be upon him".

3.

I am praising a prophet who is perfect (in his qualities),
made perfect and complete (by God)

— 10 —

I marvel about a lad who multiplied his fear of God
He was accustomed to the repeated mention of God's Majesty
and the calling down of blessings on the Prophet
He lived as long as he did; he did not digress or deviate
(from the path of righteousness)
Nor was he the table companion of those whose hearts were
blackened
When he was dying, they gave him the name (inaudible, maybe
Sahwardī, Suhrāwardī?)
After he had died, he never decayed nor was he worm-eaten.

to kiss his hand

At the begining of the night he was repeatedly reciting knowledge
And at the end of the night, he shook hands with the Prophet.

6.

My eye caught an aqueduct with thirty-six gates
Ten plus ten plus ten plus four plus two
They went out to seek both the bride and the groom
They found (God's) Majesty - that is to say the
testimony to the oneness of God - was the bride
And the beautiful one (Muḥammad) was the groom.

Asyūt (Upper Egypt):

Singer: three brothers, Muṣṭafā, Ḥusēn, Ḥasan Aḥmad Ismāʿīl.

Type of song: Taṭṭīra (calling down "perfumed" blessings on the Prophet).

Solo performance by Muṣṭafā with no musical instruments.

1.

raʾaytu rasūla l-lāhi ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallama fī
l-manāmi ruʾyatan ḥaqīqīyya/ wa man raʾāhu fī l-manāmi

fa-qad ra'āhu haqqan kamā rawat 'anhu l-afāḍilu l-a'alām /
 ra'aytuhu muzammalan fī thiyābin sundusiyya / marbū'a
 l-qāmati abyaḍa l-lawni gamīla š-šūratī wa faṣīḥa l-kalām /
 kāmīlan fī dhātihi ṣallā l-lāhu 'alayhi wa sallama /
 mukammalan fī awṣāfihi l-khilqiyya / mā khalāqa l-lāhu
 qablahu wa lā ba'dahu mithlahu fī l-anām / 'aẓīma l-ra'si
 aswada sh-sha'ri tatīhu fī maḥasinihi l-'uqūlu z-zakiyya /
 wa tatḥayyar fī kamālī gamālīhi l-afhām / qamariyya l-gabīn
 ḥawagibuhu nūniyya / kaḥīla ṭ-ṭarafayni ahdaba l-'aynayni
 ẓarīfa l-qawām / abyaḍa l-khadayn ṣallā l-lāhu 'alyhi wa
 sallama / musharraban bi l-ḥumrati waganātuhu ḍawīyya / wa
 waghhuhu k-annahu l-badru laylata t-tamām / yaḡrī l-ḥusnu fī
 khaddayhi ṣallā l-lāhu 'alyhi wa sallama / kamā tagrī
 sh-shamsu fī masālikihā l-falakiyya / kawkabiyya l-anfī
 yazūlu min ḍiyā'ihī ẓ-ẓalām / yāqūtiyya sh-shafatayn ṣallā
 l-lāhu 'alyhi wa sallama / mufallaga al-asnāni ṣallā l-lāhu
 'alayhi wa sallama / idhā takallama kharaga n-nūru min bayni
 thanāyāhu l-lu'lu'iyya / wāsi'a l-fami salsabīla r-rīqi
 gamīla l-ibtisām / kaththa l-liḥyati ṣallā l-lāhu 'alayhi wa
 sallama / mu'tadila l-'unuqi fī ṣafā'i l-fiḍḍati n-naqiyya /
 wa lahu 'aynāni fī ẓahrihi yarā bihimā man khalfihī kamā
 yarā man fī l-amām / bāriza l-'aḍuḍayn ṣallā l-lāhu 'alayhi
 wa sallama / ṭawīla z-zindayn ṣallā l-lāhu 'alyhi wa sallama
 / karīma l-kaffayni agawada min as-suḥubi l-mumṭirati
 l-ghaymiyya / salīma š-ṣadri mumtali'an min al-āyāti wa
 l-aḥkāmi / baṭnuhu ṣallā l-lāhu 'alyhi wa sallama 'alā taqwā
 l-lāhi wa ma'ārifihi maṭwiyya / wa idhā nāmat 'aynāhu
 qalbuhi lā yanām / munīra s-sāqayni ṣallā l-lāhu 'alyhi wa

sallama / ẓarīfa l-kaḥbayni ṣallā l-lāhu ḥalayhi wa sallama
/ aḥqābuhu sirāgiyya / wa lahu fī ṣ-ṣakhri ghāṣati l-aqdām.

Refrain:

ḥaṭṭir allāhumma qabrahu l-karīm bi ḥiṭrin shadhiyyin min
ṣalātin wa taslīm / allāhumma ṣallī wa sallim wa bārik
ḥalēh.

I saw in a dream the person of the messenger of God, may
God's blessings and peace be upon him / He who sees him in a
dream sees him in fact as is related by the pious
transmitters on the Prophet's authority / I saw him in
clothes made of silk brocade / he was medium in height, fair
in complexion, beautiful in appearance and eloquent in
speech / perfect in his essence, may God's blessings and
peace be upon him / made perfect (by God) in his physical
attributes / the likes of him among men God has never
created before or after him / his head was big, may God's
blessings and peace be upon him / his hair was black, in his
beauty intelligent minds would be lost / and in the
perfection of his beauty understanding would be perplexed /
his forehead was moon-like, may God's blessings and peace be
upon him / his eyebrows were (as arched) as the (Arabic)
letter N (nūn) / he had kohl-coloured eyes, long eyelashes,
pleasant gait / his cheeks were fair in complexion, may

God's blessings and peace be upon him / reddish and glowing
/ his face was like the moon on the night it waxes full /
beauty runs in his cheeks, may God's blessings and peace be
upon him / as the sun runs in its spheric routes / his nose
was (as luminous as) a star, darkness would roll off before
his resplendence / his lips were ruby-red, may God's
blessings and peace be upon him / his teeth were set apart,
may God's blessings and peace be upon him / when he spoke,
light would shine forth through his pearl-like teeth / his
mouth was wide, his saliva was sweet and his smile beautiful
/ his beard was thick, may God's blessings and peace be upon
him / he was awe-inspiring, may God's blessings and peace be
upon him / his neck was straight and as pure as silver / he
had eyes in his back with which he could see those who are
behind him as well as those in front of him / his upper arms
were muscular, may God's blessings and peace be upon him /
he was more generous than the rain-filled clouds / his chest
was sound and full of divine verses and precepts / his
abdomen, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / was
folded on God's fear and knowledge / were his eyes to close
during sleep, his heart would stay awake / his legs were
luminous, may God's blessings and peace be upon him / his
ankles were pleasantly shaped, may God's blessings and peace
be upon him / his heels were luminous and his feet would
dive into the rocks.

Refrain:

Send down, O Lord, perfumed blessings and peace on his tomb
/ O Lord, grant him blessings, peace and benediction.

2.

al-ḥaqqu lanā ṣāra wāḍihhan wa galayya
w as-saʿdu binā bāna khādīman abadiyya
wa l-luṭfu bīnā ʿamma ṣāhīran wa khafiyy
lammā baʿatha llāhu mursalan ʿarabiyya
sādat bi fakhār ʿalā l-bariyyati ʿadnān.

Truth has patently manifested itself for us
Bliss has evidently been turned into our eternal
servant
God's benevolence has enveloped us manifestly
and secretly
When God sent down (to the world) an Arabian
messenger
The tribe of ʿAdnān proudly ruled
over the world.

3.

idhā ma n-nāsu yawma d-dīni
qāmū ilā r-rahmāni w agtama'a l-gamī'u
wa galla l-khaṭbu w inqāṭa'a t-tarādī (?)

Excerpts From the Songs of Shēkh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-ʿIrāsī

The following is an excerpt from Shēkh al-ʿIrāsī's performance on the night of October 11, 1989, during the celebrations of the mūlīd in-nabī (the anniversary of the Prophet Muḥammad's birthday) in Biyalā (Province of Kafr ash-Shēkh).

Host:

al-ān ilā l-madīḥ wa l-qaṣā'id an-nabawīyya li faḍīlat
ad-duktūr ʿabd il-fattāḥ muḥammad al-ʿirāsī wa firqatuhu
l-mūsīqiyya fa nargu l-hudū wa l-istimā wa kull-i ʿām
wa antum bi khēr.

{mūsīqa}

al-ḥamdu li l-lāhi rabbi l-ʿālamīn wa ṣ-ṣalaṭu wa s-salāmu
ʿalā ashrafi l-mursalīn sayyidinā muḥammadin an-nabī l-ummī
il-karīm wa ʿalā ālihi wa ṣaḥbihi ajmaʿīn wa baʿd fa yusʿiduna
an naḥtafila ʿalā dhikri l-lāhi tabāraka wa taʿāla wa dhikrā
rasūli l-lāhi ṣallā l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam adh-dhikrā
al-ʿaṭira allatī ʿaṭṭarat ad-dawla bi asrihā wa mā ʿalaynā

gamī'an ma'shar al-mustami'īna l-kirām fī hādhihi l-layla
 illā an nabghiya bi sahratinā hādhihi wajha l-lāhi tabāraka
 wa ta'āla li-kayy nastafīda thawāba hādhihi n-niyyati wa niyyatu
 l-mu'mini khayrun min 'amalihi kamā qāla r-rasūlu ṣallā l-lāhu
 'alayh wa sallam wa l-ān nabda' bi dhikrihi ṣallā l-lāhu 'alayh
 wa sallam fa-naqūl:

fī l-iḥtifāl bi n-nabī 'irfān bi afḍālu
 'arrafnā dīn rabbinā ammā ḡalāl zālu
 wi shafī'nā fī yōm tagallī l-lāh bi galālu
 wi dī 'alāma inninā ḡbābu
 mashiyīn 'alā mabda'u fī sīru w fi'ālu
 ḡubbī t-tuhāmī nabīnā wāḡib wi farḡ-i 'alēnā
 (inaudible) ma'a ahālīnā
 wi l-khal'i agma'in.

wa lā yitimm il-īmān
 wa lā riḡā r-raḡmān
 illā bi ḡubb il-'adnān
 illī 'arrafnā d-dīn
 wi ḡubb-i rasūli l-lāh
 'alamtu nmashshī warrāh
 wi ykūn hawānā fī hawāh
 wa awāmru fō' il-'ēn.

ḥaḍirit in-nabī ‹alyh iṣ-ṣalātu wa s-salām bimā rawā l-imāmu
 l-bukhārī min ḥadīth anas bi-yūl: lā yuḥminu aḥadukum ḥattā
 akūna aḥabba ilayhi min wālidihi wa waladihi wa n-nāsi agmaʿin.
 mā-ybʾāshi l-insān kāmil il-īmān illā lammā yḥibb ḥaḍrit
 in-nabī ‹alayhi ṣ-ṣalātu wa s-salām "an wālidiḥ": maḥabbat
 at-taʿzīm, "ḥattā akūna aḥabba ilāyhi min wālidiḥ wa waladiḥ":
 maḥabbat ash-shafaqa, ashfaq ‹alayh min al-walaḍ, "wa n-nāsi
 ajmaʿin": illī minhā nafs il-wāḥid, ḥubb-i ‹alāmtu l-ittibāʿ:

wi ḥubb-i rasūli l-lāh
 ‹alāmtu nmashshī warāh
 wi ykūn hawānā fī hawāh
 wi awāmrū fō, il-ʿēn.

asmū bi ḥubbika muḥminan wa mubāhi
 fa rḥam muḥibbaka yā rasūla l-lāhi

yā raḥmatan fī l-ʿālamīna wa raʿfatan
 bi l-muḥminīna wa munqidhī fī (inaudible)

yā minḥatī fī miḥnatī wa hidāyatī
 fī zulmatī wa wasīlatī li ilāhī

yā dhikrā rūḥī wa btihāla gawāriḥī
 wa ṣadā qalbī wa btisāma shifāhī.

madḥ il-ḥabīb in-nabī dayman mugammaḥnā
 la-inn-i ḥubb in-nabī malā ḥulūbnā wi shaḥshaḥnā
 wi sīrtu dayman fīhā l-anwār bi tinfaḥnā
 yā llī tilūmnā ḥalā ḥubb in-nabī daḥnā
 law shuft-i nūru la-timshī fī hawāh maḥanā
 law kull-i mā nimliku la-gl in-nabī maḥanā
 barḍu mā niḍdar nigazīh wi bdīnu mā nwaffih
 ḥarrafnā dīn rabbinā wi fi l-ākhra yinfaḥnā.

mīn yishfaḥ linā

fī yōm ḥashrinā

(inaudible)

huwa (sic) nūru l-warā

wa ḍiyāḥu th-tharā.

Host:

Now let's go on the songs and odes in praise of the Prophet
 Muḥammad, as sung by his excellency Dr. Ḥabd al-Fattāḥ
 al-Ḥirasī and his ensemble, so please keep quiet and listen
 and we offer you our best wishes for the occasion (of the
 anniversary of the Prophet's birthday).

{a musical interlude from one of Umm Kulthūm's songs}

Thanks be to God the Lord of the two worlds (this one and
 the other) and may God's blessings and greetings be upon the

most honourable of all messengers our lord Muḥammad, the unlettered (or perhaps gentile) dignified prophet, and upon members of his household and all of his companions. Now (to get to our topic) we would like to express our pleasure to celebrate (this occasion) by invoking the name of God, may He be praised and exalted, and the memory of the Messenger of God, may God's blessings and greetings be upon him; his blessed memory which has blessed the entire country (lit. which has perfumed the entire state). What we, the honoured crowd of listeners, ought to do is hope that, with this night (of celebration) we will be granted God's approval (lit. face), may He be praised and exalted, so that we may gain the reward of our intention. The intention of the man of faith is more valued (by God) than his actions, as the Messenger of God said, may God's blessings and greetings be upon him. And now let us start by invoking his (the Prophet's) memory, may God's blessings and greetings be upon him, by saying:

Celebrating the (memory of) the Prophet is an acknowledgement
of his merits

For he has taught us the religion of God, and

demolished unbelief

He will be our intercessor on the day when God will

manifest His Majesty

This is indeed a sign that we are the Prophet's favoured ones

The one who are following his precepts, his way and deeds
 Love for our Prophet the Tihāmī is a religious duty
 (inaudible) with our kinsfolk
 And all the creation.

One's faith is not complete
 Nor is God's approval (granted)
 Except through one's love for the one from
 the people of ʿAdnān
 Who has taught us the religion (of God)
 The sign of our love for the Messenger of God
 Is to follow him
 To love him and let his precepts take precedence
 over all else

With my love for you (Muḥammad) I rise high and boast
 Have mercy on your lover, O Messenger of God

You who are a mercy to the worlds
 You who are a mercy to the faithful and my saviour
 (inaudible)

You who are my reward (after) adversity, my guidance
 In my darkness, my way to my Lord

You who are the thoughts of my soul, the supplication
 of all my being
 The echo of my heart and the smile on my lips.

Praising the beloved Prophet is what brings us together
Because the love for the Prophet has filled our hearts

and spirited us

His luminous life-story benefits us

Leave us O you who blames us because of our

love for the Prophet

For if you see his light, you will, like us,

fall in love with him.

If everthing we possess is (offered) for the sake

of the Prophet

We still would not do him justice, nor would we

(be able) to pay our debt to him

He has taught us the religion of our Lord, and on the

Last Day, he will be our gain

Who will intercede on our behalf

On the day of Gathering?

(Inaudible)

He is the light of creation

The brightness of the Pleiades.

Some of the Moral Characteristics of the Prophet.

Source: ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-ʿIrāsī, Dīwān al-ʿIrāsī (Ṭanṭā:
Maktabat Tāj, n.d.), pp. 31-32.

yā llī nta mughram bi nūr iz-zēn wi gamālu
 iḵraf şifātu wi ṭabḵu ēh wi khişālu
 wi smaḵ kalāmu wi tābiḵ sunnitu ḵalā ṭūl
 man ḥabb-i wāḥid yitabḵu fī gamīḵ ḥālu

yā llī tiḥibb il-hādī ḥabīnā
 shūf şifātu wi ṭabḵu ēh
 tilḵā l-hādī şifātu gamīla wi llī yḥibbu

yqtadī biḥ

kān ḥalīm wi kān raḥīm
 wi ysāḵid ahlu bi ḵdēh<1>
 kān biyikhşif naḵlu bi idu
 kān yiraḵḵaḵ tōbu kamān
 barḍu shātu kān yiḥlib-hā
 kullu tawāḍuḵ kullu ḥanān
 kān biyākul mi llī ygīlu
 wa lā ḵayyibshi ḵumru ṭaḵām
 il-hadiyya kān yiḵbal-hā
 ammā şadaḵa ḵandu ḥarām
 kān faḵīr lakinnu rāḍu
 law ha-yiḵḍī l-yōm şiyām
 kān karīm law bētu fāḍī
 barḍu yiḵzim ḵa ṭ-ṭaḵām <2>
 kān yiḵīsh ḵīshit faḵīr
 ma-tlaḵīsh ḵandu sirīr
 farshitu kānit ḥaşīr
 wi l-mikhadda min idām
 yaḵnī gild wi fīhā līf

in-nabī aṣlu ʿafīf
wa llāh kān waḍʿu ẓarīf
is-saraf aṣlu ḥarām.

O you who are in love with the light and the beauty
of the Prophet
Know his attributes, natural inclinations, and moral traits
He who loves someone should follow in his footsteps

You who love our Prophet the guide
Learn about his attributes and his natural inclinations
You will find that the Prophet's (lit. the guide's) qualities
are beautiful

He who loves him should follow in his footsteps
He was patient and compassionate <1>
He used to help his family with his hands
He used to repair his sandals himself
He used to patch his robe also
He used to milk his goat himself
For he was modest and affectionate
He used to eat whatever was offered to him
He never found fault with food
He used to accept gifts
But for him charity was forbidden
Poor though he was, he was content
Even if he would (have to) fast all day long

He was generous even if his home was empty (of food)

He would still invite (people) to eat <2>

He used to live a poor man's living

You would not find a bed in his house

His bed was a mat

The pillow was made of "idām"

That is to say leather stuffed with luffa

Indeed the Prophet was modest.

Endnotes

<1> The second hemistich of line 5 and the first hemistich of line 6 in the printed text are skipped in the Shēkh's sung version.

<2> Two lines (13-14) are skipped in the sung version.

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