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The MEDITERRANEAN LANGUAGE REVIEW is an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed forum for the investigation of language and culture in the Mediterranean, South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region. The editors of this periodical welcome articles, reviews, review articles and bibliographical surveys in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish relating to the following aspects of Mediterranean languages, past and present:

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Contents

Articles

- Natalie Operstein
The Orthography of the Dictionnaire de la langue franque 1
- Michael Waltisberg
Einzelheiten der syrischen Grammatik 35
- Yehudit Dror
'an al-maq̄dariyya in the Qur 'ān 85
- Luca D'Anna
*Two Texts in the Arabic Dialect of Miṣrāta
With Preliminary Notes and Observations* 111
- Amal Zu'bi
Pausal Forms in the Arabic of Nazareth 159
- Carmen Berlinches Ramos
*Kəll səne w ʔəntu sāl̄mīn!
Five Dialectal Texts About Muslim Religious Feasts in Damascus* 175

Book Reviews

- Lucie Gramelová
Albānština – lingvistický pohled [Albanian – Linguistic View]
(Zuzana Krinková) 187
- Holger Gzella
A Cultural History of Aramaic: From the Beginnings to the Advent of Islam
(Christian Stadel) 190
- Deniz Zeyrek, Çiğdem Sağın Şimşek, Ufuk Ataş, Jochen Rehbein (eds.)
Ankara Papers in Turkish and Turkic Linguistics
(Aslı Göksel) 198

Kəll səne w ʔəntu sālmin!
Five Dialectal Texts About Muslim Religious Feasts
in Damascus

Carmen Berlinches Ramos (University of Vienna)

Religious festivities are eagerly anticipated in the city of Damascus. The three main feasts for most of its inhabitants are *Ramaḍān*, *ʕīd al-ʕītr*, and *ʕīd al-ʔaḍḥā*. Ramadan is regarded as especially holy¹ because it is the month of the fast,² with abstinence from indecent talk and insulting, the avoidance of actions which might arouse passions, recitation of the *Qurʔān*, and the observance of retreat.³ Ramadan is not always easy to observe for a Muslim, particularly if it falls in summer, when the temperature in the city can be very high and nights are short. However, it is always welcomed because, besides its holiness, it is a month of joy, socializing, and delicious food. Ramadan is followed by *ʕīd al-ʕītr*, “the feast of the breaking of the fast” or “the lesser feast”, which lasts three days. Seventy days later, at the time of the Pilgrimage, is celebrated *ʕīd al-ʔaḍḥā* “the sacrifice feast”, which lasts four days and commemorates Abraham’s willingness to obey God’s command to sacrifice his son.⁴

This paper presents five texts related to the above religious celebrations.⁵ They were produced by young educated natives of Damascus and constitute additional material about the dialect of the Syrian capital.⁶ Damascus Arabic is a typical “Syro-Lebanese” sedentary dialect that has been studied for more than a century (Lentin 2006: 546), thus it is a very well-known and prestigious one.

The texts were literally transcribed⁷ from spontaneous recorded conversations and therefore they might contain incomplete sentences and grammatical errors. Because the topics of the texts are connected with religion, they use specifically reli-

1 It is also the only month of the year mentioned in the *Qurʔān* (II, 181/165) (Plessner 1997: 417).

2 Fasting in Ramadan is the Fourth Pillar of Islam.

3 Cf. Berg & al. 1997: 94.

4 For these two feasts see Mittwoch 1986: 1007–1008.

5 I would like to thank Stephan Procházka for the comments and suggestions that he kindly made about the last draft of this paper.

6 All the texts belong to a corpus-based research focusing on youth speech in Damascus. This work was conducted between 2007 and 2011, and, except for the texts included in this paper, has been recently published (Berlinches 2016).

7 The transcription used in this paper follows the conventions traditionally adopted in the field of Arabic dialectology.

gious terms, most borrowed from Standard or Classical Arabic.⁸ Therefore they also show some influence of both varieties and are at a slightly more formal register than the language of daily life. The English translations closely reflect the Arabic texts. However, in order to make the whole text coherent, minor changes had to be made, as addition of conjunctions, other fillers or clarifications, as well as to avoid repetitions or incomplete sentences.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the most common spoken greeting in Damascus Arabic during these three special days is *kəll səne w ʔante sālem / ʔanti sālmə / ʔantu sālmīn*,⁹ the proper reply being *w ʔante sālem / ʔanti sālmə / ʔantu sālmīn*. In written texts, e.g. on greeting cards, *ramaḏān karīm* is expressed for Ramadan and *ʕīd mubārak* for the other two feasts.

Informants:

ʕalāḥ was born in Damascus in 1985. His parents are from Damascus. The recording took place in October 2007 while he was living in Kafarsūse and was in the third year of English Philology at the University.

Sāra was born in Austria in 1989 and moved to Damascus a few months later. Her parents are from Damascus. The recording was made in November and December 2007 when she was living in Rəkn əd-Dīn and had just begun her studies of English Philology at the University.

Bilāl was born in Damascus in 1980. His parents are from Damascus. He had completed high school. The recording was made in November 2007 while he was living in Rəkn əd-Dīn and was employed in a company.

Batūl was born in Damascus in 1986. Her parents are from Damascus. The recording was made in December 2007 while she was living in Mazze and was in the second year of Philosophy at the University.

ʕAmʔr was born in Damascus in 1978. His parents are from Damascus. He had completed high school. The recording was made in June 2008 while he was living in Mazze and working in his own business.

Nūr was born in Damascus in 1981. Her parents are from Damascus. She studied Architecture at the University. The recording was made in June 2008 when she was living in Rəkn əd-Dīn and was unemployed.

8 Standard Arabic is used in education, in many public forums (including the media), in religious contexts, and in communication between Arabs from different regions (Owens 2001: 430).

9 Lit.: “Every year and you (m./f./pl.) are fine”.

Texts

1. *Ramaḍān* (Ṣalāḥ and Sāra)

- (a) (Ṣalāḥ): halla? nəḥna bən-nəsbe ʔəlna l-məs^olmīn ramaḍān šah^or muqaddas¹⁰. yaʔni ramaḍān ʔəkke¹¹ ləḥna¹² lāzem ^onšūm bass kamān fi šaḡlāt ^oktūr bətsūr bass bi-ramaḍān yaʔni sawāʔan¹³ bəl-ʕibādāt¹⁴ ^olli mnətʕabbada, bəš-ṣalāt ^olli mənšal-liyya, bət-tašarrufāt ^olli lāzem nəḥna nətsarrafa maʕ ən-nās. bi-ramaḍān bass bi-ramaḍān nəḥna mnəʕmel hək ši. fa-fi ʔəlo rəḥ xāšša ʕan žadd.
- (b) yaʔni masalan nəḥna l-ʕēle, ʔalīl ^oktūr ^olli bətəztəmeʕ maʕ baʕda, yaʔni bikūn əl-ʔabb ^obyəštəḡel, ʔaḥyānan əl-ʔəmm ^obətəštəḡel, əl-ʔūlād¹⁵ bəl-madrəse u baʕd əd-ḡəḥ^or bikūnu ʕam-yəḏ^orsu fa-ma byəztəmʕu bi-ʔahāliyyon yaʔni ʕal-ʔak^ol ḥatta ma byəztəmʕu. fa-bi-ramaḍān lāʔ, mažbūrīn ʔənnon yaʕʕdu¹⁶ sawa. bikūnu ʔīl ən-nḥār šāymīn wəl-masa byəztəmʕu ʕa-lə-ʔtūr kəllayāton. fa-hayy ʔawwal šaḡle bi-ramaḍān, ʔənnə bižammeʕ əl-ʔah^ol.
- (c) tāni ši l-ʕādāt ^ob-ramaḍān yaʔni l-ʕādāt ^olli tʕawwadu ʕalēa¹⁷ n-nās. tʕawwadu masalan ʔənnə yzūru baʕd. fa-yaʔni ʔana baʕref masalan bi-ʕēlətna kəll yōm ʔiza nəḥna ma ʕanna ḥada, nəḥna lāzem ^onrūḥ la-ʕand ḥada. yaʔni ʔalīl ^oktūr əl-ʔiyyām ^olli nəḥna bass ʕēlətna ^obnəʔtar¹⁸ fiyya maʕ baʕd. fa-ma baʕref, hayy əš-šaḡlāt ^olli ʔana bšūfa bi-ramaḍān.
- (d) (C.B.: What about you, Sāra, how do you experience Ramadan?)¹⁹ (Sāra): halla? lə-šḥūr ḥəlu ktūr ^oktūr ^oktūr ^oktūr bi-ramaḍān, bass əl-wāḥed hək mu dāʔiman byəʔder yfī? ʕas-šḥūr, bikūn taʕbān. hayy šaḡle yaʔni šlōn bəddi ʔəl-lek? ma

10 The phoneme *q* appears in loans from Classical or Standard Arabic: in the dialect of Damascus it is reflected as a glottal stop (ʔ). Also, the vowel *u* in open and non-final syllables only occurs in loans from Standard Arabic.

11 This is a loanword from the English expression *okay*.

12 Variant of *nəḥna*, resulting from the dissimilation *n > l* (Behnstedt 2008: 162). This phenomenon is not very common but has been registered in people of every age and might be characteristic of traditional neighbourhoods (see Lentin 2009: 134 and Berlinches 2016: 75, fn. 43).

13 This term is a classicism: adverbs presenting the suffix *-an* (originally nouns with nounation) are loans from Standard Arabic (Dagher 1994: 124), for instance: *ʔaḥyānan* “sometimes” and *dāʔiman* “always”.

14 The vowel *i* in open and non-final syllables, like the vowel *u* (see fn. 10), only occurs in loans from Standard Arabic.

15 This is a borrowing from Standard Arabic *ʔawlād*, showing monophthongisation of the diphthong *aw* in *ū* (see also fn. 27).

16 This verb, which belongs to the historical root {qʕd}, shows an assimilation (*qʕ >*) *ʔʕ >* *ʕʕ* followed by a reduction of the gemination (= [yəʕdu]). However, we retain the geminated consonant in the transcription to avoid modifying the original structure of the word.

17 This variant of *ʕalēha*, which shows the dropping of *-h-* of the personal pronoun for the 3rd person fem. sing. *-ha*, is rarely heard in Damascus. However, it has been already documented by Cowell 1964: 478.

18 In the first person plural, the modifier for the present tense *b-* sometimes remains as it is, although its assimilation into *m* (*bnəʔtar > mnəʔtar*) is much more frequent.

19 In all the texts the questions or comments of the interviewer are marked with the letters “C.B.” between brackets.

baʕref yaʕni ʔanno ramaḍān ʔanno ʕaḥḥa ʕan ʒadd waʕla, ʔanno əl-wāḥed masalan byəmtəneʕ ʕan əl-ʔak²¹. ʔiza kān ^ʔlsāno ʕalīṭ ^ʔkūr ^ʔkūr kamān la-ʔanno masalan... ʕrəfti kīf ʕaliyyi? ʔanno bixaffef mn əl-kalām əs-sayyeʔ yaʕni ʔanno ramaḍān ʔanno rādeʕ, rādeʕ hōn ʕanna, kūr nəḥna mənḥəbbo.

- (e) (C.B.: What do you usually do in Ramadan?) (Sāra): kīf yaʕni? (ʕalāḥ): yaʕni yōmek əṭ-ṭabīʕi bi-ramaḍān kīf? (Sāra): ʔe, halla? ʔawwal əš-ši yaʕni masalan ʔiza bəddna nətsaḥḥar, mnətsaḥḥar, ʔaw ʔaḥyānan masalan ^ʔmnəshar la-taqrīban taqrīban waʔ^ʔt lə-ʕhūr ^ʔmnətsaḥḥar. bfiʔ masalan ʕādi ʔe brūḥ ʕaʒ-ʒāmʕa, bəʕzaʕ, yaʕni mnākōl maʕ ʔahli w hēke.²⁰
- (f) baʕdēn fi ʕalāt ət-tarāwīḥ²¹, waʕla fi ʕālam bəṭʕallīha w fi ʕālam ma bəṭʕallīha. (C.B.: And you?) lāʔa. (C.B.: Why?) lēš? waʕla la-ʔanno bkūn taʕbāne kūr u halla? masalan kamān bi-ramaḍān bəz-zāt bəz-zāt ʔanno l-ʕālam ^ʔkūr ^ʔkūr bəṭʕīr təʔra l-qəʔān. ʔana ʔe, hayy bəʔra, bəʕmel ši mnīḥ ^ʔb-ḥayāti.
- (g) (C.B.: When do you read the *Qurʔān*?) əl-masa. halla? fi ʕālam masalan ʔanno ʕa-ʕalāt əš-səb^ʔḥ, baʕ^ʔd lə-ʕhūr wəlla ʔabl lə-ʕhūr, ma fi waʔ^ʔt byəʕʕdu byəʔru. ma fi waʔ^ʔt muʕayyan bass ma baʕref yaʕni l-wāḥed biḥəss ʔanno bi-ramaḍān ʔanno ʔaʕla byəʔʔabbal-lo. ʔaʕla byəʔʔabbal dāʕiman u hēke bass bi-ramaḍān bəz-zāt.

Ramaḍān

- (a) (ʕalāḥ): For us, the Muslims, Ramadan is a holy month. It is true that we must fast, but there are many things that happen only in Ramadan, along with the rites we perform, the prayers we pray, and the manner in which we must behave toward other people. In Ramadan, only in Ramadan, do we do such. Thus it has a special soul, really!
- (b) For example, our family usually meets very seldom. Our father works, sometimes our mother works, the children are in school and in the afternoon are studying. Thus the family doesn't meet, not even for meals. But in Ramadan no: all are obliged to sit together. They fast the whole day and in the evening meet to breakfast. Therefore, this is the first thing about Ramadan: the family meets.
- (c) Second, the customs in Ramadan – that is to say, the customs the people are used to. They are accustomed, for example, to visit each other. I know, for example, in our family, if we have no guests,²² we must go to someone else's place. Very

20 This sentence presents a contradiction in agreement, probably influenced by the previous sentence. The informant starts by using the verbs in the first person singular of the imperfective (*bfiʔ* “I wake up”, *brūḥ* “I go” and *bəʕzaʕ* “I come back”) but the last is in the first person plural of the imperfective (*mnākōl* “we eat”). This switching of subjects seems illogical and does not agree with the personal pronoun *-i* suffixed to the following noun (*ʔahli* “my family”: *ʔah^ʔlna* “our family” would be more suitable). It must be a slip of the tongue.

21 This plural pattern {1awā2i3} is borrowed from Modern Standard Arabic. In the dialect of Damascus, the first of the two long vowels is shortened, for example: *xawarīf* “lambs” or *taʔalīd* “traditions”.

22 Lit: *ʔiza nəḥna ma ʕanna ḥada* “if we have no one”, meaning a guest.

- few are the days in which we, only my family, eat breakfast. So, I don't know; these are the things I see in Ramadan.
- (d) (C.B.: What about you, Sāra, how do you experience Ramadan?) (Sāra): The pre-dawn meal in Ramadan is very very nice, but one cannot always wake up at the pre-dawn meal, (he/she) is tired. This is something, how can I tell you? I don't know. Ramadan is healthy, seriously, because one abstains from eating. If someone is used to often saying bad words,²³ in Ramadan also... do you understand me? I mean that he uses bad words less often. Ramadan restrains, restrains here, we like it so much.
- (e) (C.B.: What do you usually do in Ramadan?) (Sāra): What do you mean? (Šalāh): She means what a regular day is like. (Sāra): Okay. The first thing is that if we want to eat before dawn, we do it. Or sometimes, for example, we stay up till almost the pre-dawn meal. I wake up, for example, as usual, I go to the university, I come back, I eat with my family, and so on.
- (f) Later is the *tarāwīḥ* prayer. Seriously, there are people who pray it and people who don't pray it. (C.B.: And you?) No. (C.B.: Why?) Why? To be honest, because I am very tired. Also, for example, the people read the Koran a lot, and particularly in Ramadan. Me yes, I read it, I do something good in my life.
- (g) (C.B.: When do you read the *Qurʾān*?) In the evening. For instance, there are people (who read it) at the morning prayer, after the pre-dawn meal or before the pre-dawn meal. There is no time established for reading it. There is no specific time, but, I don't know; one feels that in Ramadan God hears (prayers). God always hears (them), but specifically in Ramadan.

2. *əl-ḥāra š-šāmiyye bi-ramadān* (Bilāl)

- (a) əl-ḥāra š-šāmiyye kānet kəll ən-nās taʿref baʿḍa. kəll əl-ʿālam təḥki maʿ baʿḍa w salāmāt u kaza. w xāṣṣatan ʔaḥla ši kān bi-ʔiyyām ramadān.
- (b) ʔiyyām ramadān hayy kānet ʔanno kəll əl-ḥāra tḥəssi ʔanno ʕam-ʔṣūm maʿ baʿḍa. u ʔiza wāḥed masalan ma ʕando ʔakʔl, ma fi ḥada yʔadden ʕalē l-məğreb u ma yläʔi ʔakʔl bi-bēto. dāʔiman əl-ʕālam wəž-žirān yəsʔkbu la-baʕḍon səkbāt, kəll wāḥed šu tḥəbex yʔaddem la-žirāno. w ʔykammel ḥada š-ši ləl-ʕid.
- (c) bəl-ʕid ykūn dəyman ʔanno ʕalāt əl-ʕid kəll əl-ʕālam mawżūde bəž-žāmeʕ ʔmšān ʕalāt əl-ʕid w ʔlli ḥada yğtḥ biḥəssu ʔanno huwwe ya ʔamma marḍān ya ʔamma msāfer, ġər ḥək ma fi, la-ʔanno žbāri bəddo ykūn bi-ʕalāt əl-ʕid.
- (d) u kəll əl-ʕālam ʔtzūr baʕḍa, ykūn fi zyāret əl-... žirān ʔabʔl zyāret əl-ʔarāybīn. huwwe bi-ḥabʕet əl-ḥāl ykūn əl-ʔarāybīn ʔrāb ʕala baʕḍon, ykūnu sāknīn bəl-ḥārāt əš-šāmiyye.
- (e) bass hallaʔ bi-ma ʔanno kəllə ʕār yəskon barrāt əl-ḥārāt əš-šāmiyye, fa-ʕāru ʔanno ʔawwal ši yzūru ž-žirān baʕḍən yəḥlaʕu w ʔyzūru barra.

23 Lit.: *Isāno ʕalīḥ* “foul-mouthed” (lit. “his tongue is obscene”). The adjective *ʕalīḥ* “obscene, indecent” presents an emphatic *ṣ* – historically *s* – due to the contact of the emphatic consonant *t*.

The Damascene neighborhood in Ramadan

- (a) (In) the Damascene neighborhood everyone knew each other. All talked with each other, greeted each other, and things like that. Particularly, the most beautiful thing was in the Ramadan days.
- (b) In the time of Ramadan you felt that all the neighborhood was fasting together, and, for example, if someone didn't have food, there was no one who didn't find food at home at the time of the sunset prayer. Always people and neighbors served food. Everyone served food to each other and everyone offered what they cooked to his neighbors. And this continued to the feast.²⁴
- (c) In the feast there was always the feast's prayer. Everyone was present in the mosque for the feast's prayer. And whoever missed (it) was²⁵ either sick or travelling. There was no other reason, because he must attend the feast's prayer.
- (d) And all the people visit each other. (Nowadays) visiting neighbors happens before visiting relatives. (Before) it was normal that relatives were near each other: they lived in Damascus neighborhoods.
- (e) But now, since all (went to) live outside Damascus neighborhoods,²⁶ it happens that first they visit neighbors and after that they go to visit (their relatives) outside.

3. *ramadān* (Batūl)

- (a) (C.B.: Batūl, what is Ramadan like for you?) mnīḥ ʔkūr, ḥəlu. ʔana bḥəbb ramadān ʔkūr. fi ši bi-ramadān ḥəlu ʔənnə bizakkrek ʔb-ʔalla, ʔənnə lāzem ʔtsāʔdi n-nās yəlli ma maʔa maʔāri, bəḥəssi ʔənnə kif hənnen lamma bikūnu žūʔānīn²⁷ ʔaw bəddon yāklū ši, ma fi maʔhon yaʔni ma fiyyon yāklū.
- (b) bi-ramadān ḥōn bass ʔayer ʔənnə l-məʔʔkle ʔənnə l-ʔālam kəlla bi-ramadān byāklū ʔaktar mən gēr ramadān la-ʔənnon... masalan māma btəʔmel xamsīn nōʔ ʔakʔl u kəlla ʔazāyem u yaʔni ʔakl ʔkūr bikūn fiyya, ʔaktar mn əl-ʔiyyām əl-ʔādiyye yaʔni.
- (c) bi-ramadān lāzem ykūn ʔal-ʔakʔl dāʔiman təʔiyye w lāzem ykūn šōraba ʔaw ḥəmmoʔ, ši mən ḥəmmoʔ ʔaw fūl. u ʔawwal yōm ramadān, ʔaw ʔawwal yōm əl-ʔīd, lāzem ykūn fi ši laban ʔaw hēke yaʔni ši ʔabyaḍ mənʔān ʔənnə səne ždīde sənət xēr. yaʔni šu kamān?
- (d) bi-ramadān mənfiʔ ʔa-ʔalāt əʔ-ʔəbʔḥ, ʔabʔl ʔalāt əʔ-ʔəbḥ ʔb-ʔi nəʔʔ sāʔa w ʔmnəʔmel... mnəʔsahḥar u mnākol ḥawāḍer yaʔni ʔaḡlāt žəbne, labane, kaza maʔ əl-xəbʔz. u baʔdēn mənʔallī ʔ-ʔəbʔḥ u mnərʔaʔ mənʔnām. mənfiʔ yaʔni kəll wāḥed ʔala ʔəḡlo baʔdēn.

24 Referring to *ʔīd al-ʔītr* “the feast of the breaking of the fast”.

25 Lit.: *biḥəssu* “they feel”, referring to the neighbors.

26 Meaning outside the traditional neighborhoods.

27 This is an active participle in the plural of the verb *žāʔ*, *bižūʔ* “to be hungry”, which follows the pattern {1a23ān(īn)} and shows a monophthongisation of the diphthong *aw* in *ū*, which is exceptional in this dialect.

- (e) əl-ʔiftār halla? bi-hayy əl-ʔiyyām ʕam-bikūn ləs-sāʕa sətte taʔrīban yaʕni mənɔdall ʕāymīn mən xamse ʕ-səb²⁸h la-sətte l-masa. mnəʔtar baʕdēn u ʔahla ši bi-ramaɔān əl-musalsalāt.
- (f) (C.B.: Why are there so many TV serials in Ramadan?) yaʕni huwwe ʕāyer la-ʔənno yaʕni bikūn kəll əl-ʕālam məʔtəmʕa maʕ baʕɔa bi-ramaɔān yaʕni ʔaɔlab əl-ʕazāyem ʔaw btəʔtəmeʕ əl-ʕēle kəlla bi-nafs əl-wa²⁹t masalan əs-sāʕa sətte l-kəll byākol, ʔamma bəl-ʔiyyām əl-ʕādiyye ʔənno kəll wāhed byākol ³⁰b-wa²⁹t muʕayyan.
- (g) u baʕ²⁸d lə-ʔtūr ma fi... yaʕni ma bikūn fi ʕaɔlāt. fi ʕəɔ³¹l ʕādatan ʔəlla masalan ʔaʕhāb²⁸ əl-mahallāt. bass bisāwu yaʕni musalsalāt ³²ktūr ³⁰mʕān əl-ʕālam tətʕarraʔ ʕalēha, təltaha la-bēn-ma yʕīr lə-ʔtūr ʔaw baʕ²⁸d. ʕu ʔəsmo? ʕu biʕīr kamān?
- (h) (C.B.: Is Ramadan very difficult?) lāʔ, halla? ʔawwal yōm ʔaw tāni yōm bəthəssi ʕwayy rāsek ʕam-yūʕaʕek u xāʕʕatan yəlli... ʕālam bidaxnu ʔaw byəʕrabu ʔahwe ktūr, ʔaktar ši byəʕʕabu yaʕni bihəssū ʕaʕ³⁰b. bass yaʕni baʕdēn mata-ma²⁹ mara? ʔawwal ³¹tlətt-iyyām ³²btəʕawwadi yaʕni ʔənno ʕādi.
- (i) fi kamāne bi-ramaɔān ʔənno baʕ²⁸d yaʕni baʕ²⁸d lə-ʔtūr, baʕ²⁸d ʔadān əl-ʕəʕe, mənʕalli ʕəʕrīn rəkʕa, hadōle bisammūhon tarāwīh. kəll taʔrīban əl-ʕēle bətrūh ʕaʕ-ʕāmeʕ ³⁰mʕān yʕallu³⁰. halla? yaʕni ʕāyer ʔənno l-kəll birūh ʕaʕ-ʕāmeʕ ³⁰mʕān yʕalli l-ʕəʕrīn rəkʕa. bihəss əl-wāhed ʔənno sāwa ši bi-ramaɔān la-ʔalla la-ʔənno ʕār fi ʕila³¹ maʕ rabb əl-ʕālamīn. ʔe, ʕu kamān? hayy ramaɔān.³²

Ramaɔān

- (a) (C.B.: Batūl, what is Ramadan like for you?) It is very good, nice. I like Ramadan very much. There is something nice about Ramadan, which is that it reminds you of *ʔalla*. That means you must help people who have no money: you feel how they feel when they are hungry or want something to eat and don't have (anything), they cannot eat.

28 This is a plural borrowed from Standard Arabic: in Damascus Arabic it is *ʕhāb* “owners” (see Stowasser & Ani 1964: 166).

29 This temporal conjunction is a borrowing from Standard Arabic.

30 The collective noun *ʕēle* “family”, which is the subject of the sentence, shows a deflected agreement with the first verb (*bətrūh*, 3rd person fem. sing.) and a strict agreement with the second one (*yʕallu*, 3rd person pl.). Generally, and according to Cowell (1964: 424), a collective human designation may be used with feminine verbal predicates. One may assume that the reason for the conflict in agreement must be related to the contrasting sense of the two actions: the family goes together (collective) but each member prays individually.

31 This noun is a borrowing from the Standard Arabic *ʕila* “connection, tie”, first because it presents the vowel *i* in an open non-final syllable (see fn. 14) and second because it does not show the *ʔimāla* (*a > e*) in the feminine suffix *-at*. This kind of *ʔimāla* is heard in Damascus after consonants that are not back or velarized (*t, ʕ, ɔ, x, ɔ, g, q, h, ʕ, h, ʔ*) and sometimes after *r*, depending on the phonetic environment (Lentin 2006: 547).

32 This is an invariable presentative, which corresponds to the fem. sing. demonstrative pronoun. (See Procházka forthcoming: section 2.1)

- (b) But in Ramadan the problem is that all the people eat more than when it is not Ramadan because... For example, my mother makes fifty kinds of food. And it is all about invitations and there is a lot of food with them, more than in normal days.
- (c) In Ramadan there always must be *təs?iyye*³³ and there must be soup or chickpeas, something made of chickpeas or broad beans. And the first day of Ramadan, or the first day of the feast, there must be some yogurt or something similar – I mean, something white – for the new year to be a good year. What else?
- (d) In Ramadan we wake up at morning prayer, around half an hour before the morning prayer, and we make... we have a pre-dawn meal and eat appetizers; that is to say, things made of cheese, yogurt, something with the bread. After that, we pray the morning prayer and we go back to sleep. Later, we wake up and each one (goes) to his job.
- (e) In these days breakfast takes place approximately at six, which means that we fast from five in the morning till six in the evening. Later on, we have breakfast, and the most beautiful thing in Ramadan are the TV serials.
- (f) (C.B.: Why are there so many TV serials in Ramadan?) Because people meet in Ramadan. Most of the invitations... or all the family meets at the same time. For instance, at six everyone eats; but for normal days, each one eats at a different time.
- (g) And after breakfast there is no... there is nothing. Usually there is work except for the owners of the shops. But they make a lot of serials for people to watch till breakfast or after – how is it called? What also happens?
- (h) (C.B.: Is Ramadan very difficult?) No. The first day or the second you feel a little headache, particularly those...people who smoke or drink a lot of coffee, those are more tired or find it difficult. But later on, after the first three days, you get used to it, it is normal.
- (i) In Ramadan there is also... after breakfast, after the evening prayer, we pray twenty *rəkfa*.³⁴ These are called *tarāwīh*.³⁵ Almost the whole family goes to the mosque to pray. Now it is that everyone goes to the mosque to pray the twenty *rəkfa*. One feels that did something in Ramadan for *ʔalla*, because there is a link with the Lord of all creation. Yes, what else? This is Ramadan.

4. *ʕīd əl-fəʔr* (ʕAm^ər)

- (a) halla? ʕīd əl-fəʔr huwwe ʕīd ʔmʔallaf mən ʔtlətt-iyyām. byəʕi baʕʔd ramaḏān, baʕʔd šah^ər əʕ-syām, šah^ər kāmēl ʔsyām. fa-huwwe ʔahamm ʕīd ʕand əl-ʔəslām, ʕand əl-məs^əlīmīn u ʕand əl-ʕarab. kān huwwe ʔawwal yaʕni ʔawwal fatra

33 A famous heavy dish made of chickpeas, bread, and hummous paste on top. It is cooked with Arabic ghee, and some add meat.

34 = “The act of bowing, bending”: a sequence of utterances and actions performed by the Muslim as part of worship or *ṣalāt*. Cf. Bosworth & al. 1995: 406.

35 = The prayers of the nights of Ramadan. About them, see Wensinck 1997: 222.

mənʕaʕtel fiyya ka-ʕətle, bən-nəsbe ləš-šəǧʕl əl-xāšš baʕʕd səne kāmle taʕrīban ʕaw baʕʕd ʕašʕrt-əšhor kān fi l-ʕīd lə-kbīr.

- (b) fa-l-ʕīd lə-zǧīr ʕawwal yōm ʕahamm əš-ši ʕənnə mənʕalli ʕalāt əl-ʕīd əs-sāʕa ʕalāt əš-šəbʕh, u baʕʕdēn lāzem ʕnzūr əl-maʕāber. baʕʕdēn mənʕūr ʕarāybīnna yaʕni kəll əl-ʕīle ʕanna: ʕəxwāti w ʕazwāʕon. u kəll ʕarāybīnna byəʕtəmʕu b-bēt wāhed u mnəʕtar sawa.
- (c) baʕʕdēn mənʕūr ʕarāybīnna b-hal-ʕiyyām u mnəʕlaʕ maʕ rəʕʕātna məmken ʕb-waʕʕt tāni ʕb-tāni yōm ʕaw tālet yōm, bass ʕawwal yōm lāzem ʕnzūr ʕarāybīnna w ʕnzūr əl-tərbe ʕahamm əš-ši.
- (d) (C.B.: And the second day?) tāni yōm mənʕūr ʕarāybīnna. (C.B.: Again?) ʕarāyeb bass ʕawwal yōm əl-ʕarāyeb lə-ʕrāb ʕktūr yaʕni ʕəxwāti. hənne ʕbyəʕu la-ʕanna yaʕni ləhna bētna fi ʕabi w ʕəmmi, hənne sətt u ʕədd, fa-ʕəxwāti w ʕazwāʕon u ʕawlādon bizūrūna, lāzem ʕawwal yōm.
- (e) (C.B.: What is the atmosphere in Damascus like?) ʕaħla ši l-ʕīd bən-nəsbe halla? la-lə-wlād lə-zǧār bi-sabab fi maraʕīh, yaʕni biħəbbu ktūr əl-maraʕīh wəl-zəhlēʕāt yaʕni l-ʕīd halla? ʕaktar ši mhəmm³⁶ la-lə-wlād lə-zǧār.
- (f) bən-nəsbe la-lə-kbār həlu bass huwwe həlu ʕaktar ši la-ʕənnə ʕəstirāħa ʕənnə ʕətle, byərtāh fi əl-wāhed ʕšwayy, xəšūsi bəš-šəǧl əl-xāšš halla? ma fi ʕətle ʕanna ʕabadan ġər bəl-ʕīd, b-hal-fatra bass. yaʕni hāda huwwe l-ʕīd.

*ʕīd al-ʕītr*³⁷

- (a) *ʕīd al-ʕəʕr* is a three-day feast. It comes after Ramadan, after the month of the fast, a complete month of fasting. So it is the most important feast in Islam for Muslims and for Arabs. Before, regarding the private job, it was the first period in which we had vacation as a holy day, after almost a year or ten months following *əl-ʕīd lə-kbīr*.³⁸
- (b) Therefore the first day of *əl-ʕīd lə-zǧūr*³⁹ the most important thing is that we pray the prayer of the feast, at the time of the morning prayer. Later on, we must visit the graves. After that, we visit our relatives, that is to say, all the family (who lives) here: my siblings and their spouses. All our relatives meet at one house and we have breakfast together.
- (c) Afterwards, during these days, we visit our relatives, and we go out with our friends maybe at another time, or the second or third day. But the first day we must visit our relatives and visit the graveyard; this is the most important thing.
- (d) (C.B.: And the second day?) The second day we visit our relatives. (C.B.: Again?) Relatives, but the first day the relatives who are very close, that means

36 An alternate way for expressing a comparative of superiority is the relative construction *ʕaktar ši...* “the thing more...” followed by an adjective. For example, *ʕaktar ši mhəmm* “more important” rather than the relative *ʕahamm*, with the same meaning.

37 For the transcribed title, we preferred Modern Standard Arabic.

38 Lit.: “the great feast”, better known as *ʕīd al-ʕadħā* “the sacrifice feast”.

39 Lit.: “the lesser feast”, better known as *ʕīd al-ʕītr* “the feast of the breaking of fast”.

my siblings. They come to us. In our house are my father and my mother, who are (also) grandmother and grandfather. So my siblings, their spouses and their children visit us. It has to be the first day.

- (e) (C.B.: What is the atmosphere in Damascus like?) The feast is more pleasant for the small children because there are swings – they like swings a lot – and slides. Nowadays the feast is more important for the small children.
- (f) Regarding the adults, it is pleasant, but mostly because it is a break, a holiday in which one rests a little bit, particularly in the private sector, because we don't have holidays but in the feast, in this period. So this is the feast.

5. *ʕīd əl-ʔaḏḥa* (Nūr)

- (a) ʕīd əl-ʔaḏḥa ʔana bḥəbbo la-ʔənnə byəzi baʕd əl-ḥažž. ən-nās bətkūn kəlla ʔālʕa ʕal-ḥažž. yōm əl-waʔfe, yōm waʔfet ʕarafe ktīr ḥəlu ʔənnə təʔtaḥi l-... təlfəzyōn u bəʕšūfi kəll əl-ʕālam wāʔfīn ʕaž-žabal u ʕam-byəḏʕu rabbon.
- (b) u ʔana bḥəbbo la-ʔənnə marra ḥāḥa kān rāyeḥ la-hnīk fa-ktīr ʔtxayyalʔt ʔənnə huwwe ktīr ʔhnīk wāʔef ʕaž-žabal. baʕdēn tāni yōm əl-wāḥed bifīʔ ʕaʕ-ʕəbʔḥ, lāzem ʔnrūḥ nədbəḥ xārūf⁴⁰ la-ʔənnə ʔəḏʔḥye, mnədbəḥ xārūf. (C.B.: Do you do it?) lāʔ, mu nəḥna, ʔana lāʔ. bass ḥāḥa birūḥ u byəʕtəri xārūf u byāxdo la-ʕand əl-laḥḥām u byəḏbaḥo w mənwazzeʕ əl-laḥme ʕal-ʕālam əl-faʔtīr⁴¹ u hək.
- (c) baʕdēn lāzem nəḥna l-ʕēle kəlla təžtəmeʕ bi-bēt žəddi ʔaw bēt sətti yaʕni kəllon ʕammi w ʕammti w lə-wlād, u mnəžtəmeʕ u mnəḥbes ʔtyāb ʔždīde w mənruḥ yaʕni mənšūf baʕḏ. yəmken huwwe l-ʕīd ʔktīr ḥəlu la-ʔənnə bəʕšūfi l-ʔarāybīn yaʕni ma bəʕšūfiyyon ġēr bəl-ʕīd, məmken ʔənnə b-ġēr ʔiyyām ma təʔdri tšūfiyyon. bəl-ʕīd bəʕšūfi kəll əl-ʕālam.
- (d) (C.B.: That's very nice!) ʔe. u biḏall ʔarbaʕt-iyyām. btākli ḥəlwiyyāt, btākli ktīr ḥəlu, ma bəḥəbbi l-ḥəlu? (C.B.: Yes.) baʕdēn ʔāxer əl-ʕīd bəʕʕīri... bass tākli ḥəlu, bəʕʕrabi ʔahwe w ʕaʕīr u ktīr fi taʔalīd⁴² ḥəwe yaʕni.
- (e) bətrūḥi maʕ ʔḥābek, maʕ rəʔʔātek, kamān bəʕšūfi kəll... (C.B.: Where do you go?) məmken ʔnrūḥ nəʕʕod ʔb-ši maʕʕam ʔaw ʔb-ši makān bəʕ-ʕām əl-ʔadīme. mənšūf baʕḏ, mnəʕʔal ʕan baʕḏ. bass ʔahamm ši l-ʕēle, yaʕni l-ʕēle la-ʔənnə bəžtəmeʕ. fa-ktīr ʔbḥəbbo.

40 According to Fleisch (1961: 369–370), the pattern {1ā2ū3} has been influenced by Syriac Aramaic.

41 The adjective *faʔīr* “poor” has a broken plural, *fəʔara* (cf. Stowasser & Ani 1964: 176; Barthélemy 1935–1969: 616; Cowell 1964: 206). According to some native speakers, this plural is a mistake made by the uneducated. However, it is also heard in the adjective *garīb* “strange” > *ġarībīn* (own data), instead of its broken plural *ġəraba*. A possible explanation is that the pattern {1ə2a3a} is very rare.

42 About this plural pattern, see footnote 21.

Ṣīd al-Ḥaḍḥā

- (a) I like Ṣīd al-Ḥaḍḥā because it comes after the pilgrimage. All are gone on the pilgrimage. The day of *waḥfe*⁴³ in Arafat is very nice because you turn on the television and watch all the people standing on the mountain and worshipping their God.
- (b) And I like it because once my father went there, so I imagined him standing there on the mountain. After that, the second day one wakes up in the morning, we have to slaughter a lamb as a sacrifice, we slaughter a lamb. (C.B.: Do you do it?) No, not us, not me. But my father goes to buy a lamb and he takes it to the butcher and he slaughters it. And we distribute the meat to the poor people and so.
- (c) Afterwards we – the whole family – meet at my grandfather’s home or at my grandmother’s home, which means everyone: my (paternal) uncle, my (paternal) aunt and the children. We meet, we wear new clothes, and we go and see each other. Maybe this feast is very nice because you see relatives you don’t see on other occasions. Perhaps because other days you cannot see them. During the feast you see everyone.
- (d) (C.B.: Very nice!) Yes. And it lasts four days. You eat sweets, you eat many sweets. Don’t you like them? (C.B.: Yes.) Then at the end of the feast you become⁴⁴... you only eat sweets and drink coffee and juice. And there are many nice traditions.
- (e) You go with your friends and you also see every... (C.B.: Where do you go?) We may sit in a restaurant or in a certain place in the old city. We see each other, we ask about each other. But the most important thing is the family, because the family meets. Therefore I like it very much.

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43 Lit.: “the day of the standing”.

44 The informant opened her arms widely to represent a fat body.

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