

Wedding songs in the dialect of the Jews of Ḥabbān in eastern Yemen

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The village of Ḥabbān was a village inhabited by one of the most amazing and most isolated Jewish communities in the world. Called Ḥabbān in its Jewish dialect, it is located in eastern Yemen in present-day *Shabwa* (*Ṣabwa*) district, some 300 km north-east of Aden and about 100 km from the Indian Ocean. This Jewish community numbered 450 people in 1947. Although the administrative Yemenite district belongs to *Shabwa*, the Jewish community of Ḥabbān tends to regard its place of origin as the *Hadramawt* (*Ḥaḍramawt*) region. They attribute their small number to innumerable pogroms and riots that forced them to convert to Islam. Ḥabbān was remote geographically from other Yemenite Jewish communities, with which it had hardly any contact. The Ḥabbāni Jews were renowned as excellent goldsmiths and sil-

ver and gold jewellers; their dialect contains an enormous vocabulary in this field. The history of the first settlement of Jews in this remote corner of the southern Arabian Peninsula is shrouded in mystery. Their outward appearance distinguishes them from other Jewish communities in Yemen: they had long hair, would go about half-naked, and wore no *kippa* on their heads. Local traditions date this community to the First Temple era. These Jews differed from their Yemenite co-religionists in their appearance and religious tradition,¹ but also in their Jewish dialect with its very large original vocabulary, which may well have been preserved because of their isolation. Thus customs and folklore in this community are unique and preserve ancient and singular traditions. The *Ḥabbāni* Jews (Sing.m *Ḥabbāni*, Sing.f. *Ḥabbānyah*, Pl.m *Ḥabbanīm^H* or *Ḥabbanīn*, Pl.f. *Ḥabbānyet*) lived in the *Jewish Quarter*, which was called *Ḥāft elYahūd*.² Their neighbourhood lay on a mountainside on which the Sultan's fortress (*elMiṣan^{ʿa}*)³ was built. The Moslems however resided in a neighbourhood which topographically lay lower down the slope than the Jewish Quarter, which generally caused resentment towards the Jews.

Nowadays most of the Jews from *Ḥabbān* live in *Moshav Baréket* in Israel in the vicinity of Ben-Gurion Airport. A few live in *Kfar Shalém* near Tel Aviv. The clustering of the majority of the community together still today helps them maintain their tradition.

The Jews of *Ḥabbān* were divided into several clans, which still today are preserved in Israel; every person is deeply conscious as to the clan he or she belongs to. Each clan has its own standing and characteristics. The most eminent are the *Ma^ʿtūf*, *Hillel*, *Šammakh* (*Šammax*), and *Gahlān*.⁴

I conducted my fieldwork in *Moshav Baréket* in 2013.⁵ This article is based on a recording I made on 22 December 2013 in the village with Mrs. *Tova Hillel*, born in 1945 in *Ḥabbān*. Al-

¹ For more details see YOSEF SHA^ʿAR, ‘Yehudéy Ḥatsarmávet: rešit hityašvút ha-Yehudím be- Ḥatsarmávet’ [=The Jews of Ḥadramawt: The beginning of the Jewish settlement in Ḥadramawt]. In *Tehuda* 16, 1996 pp. 23-26. See also S^ʿĀDYA BEN YITSHAḲ MA^ʿTŪF, *Yahadút Ḥabbān (Ḥatsarmávet) ba-Dorót ha-ʿAḥaroním* [The Jews of *Ḥabbān (Ḥadramawt)* in recent centuries]. *Baréket: The Author*, 1987), p.1.

² S^ʿĀDYA BEN YITSHAḲ MA^ʿTŪF, *ibid.*, pp. 9, 18-24.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴ A family clan is called *hil*, apparently from the Arabic word *ʿahl* [=family]. There is also *hil ʿĀdani*. *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.

⁵ I would like to express my thanks to Mr. Evyatár Sa^ʿ Īd for helping me during my fieldwork.

so in 2013 I held several interviews at *Baréket*, where I also attended marriage ceremonies. This linguistic informant participates regularly in marriage ceremonies in *Baréket* as a singer, and one of the last original authorities in all the details of this ritual. This community still upholds its folklore and customs very strictly, as most Jews of the village in Israel remain deeply religious. Ceremonies are held in the synagogue or in a hall at the village centre. The community is intensely aware of its exceptional tradition: there is a museum of their folklore in the village; the marriage ceremonies especially are still fully adhered to, as are other ceremonies that fill community life.

1. Some important phonological remarks on the dialect

The dialect of the Jews of *Habbān* renders several consonantal shifts from Classical Arabic. Ancient **q* shifts to *g*,⁶ as is normal in Bedouin tribal dialects. **ḡ* has an allophone which sounds like *gʷ*, hence differs from *q* which turns into *g*. The *ʕ* is very pharyngeal.⁷ Consonants *ṭ* and *ṣ* are emphatic in their articulation, but not surprisingly are not greatly velarized. In this dialect we find the suffix *-k* in feminine personal pronouns *tu-š*, e.g. *ʔabūš* [=your father] and *ʕalīš* [=on you]. All interdentalals are preserved.⁸ These consonantal features represent a highly conservative dialect.

Long vowels tend to be shortened, especially if they consist of only one syllable, as is the case with the particle *yā* [O!] which is often shortened to *ya*.

Accentuation is unique and tends to be implemented as in some Yemeni dialects, thus is not always on the last long vowel. An example is **nīswān*, which is implemented as *nīswa(ā)n* [=women].

2. Marriage Folklore

The marriage customs of the *Habbāni* Jews differ entirely from those of other Jewish communities in Yemen. The richness of the traditional musical and oral repertoire and variety is remarkable. In *Habbān* itself the marriage ceremonies were many – about twenty in number, and went on for several weeks before the marriage itself: *elxiṭbe* (asking the parents for their daughter's hand); *elqali* (a bean-roasting ceremony at the

⁶ Compare PETER BEHNSTEDT, *Die nordjemenitischen Dialekte* (Teil 1: Atlas) (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 1985), p. 41, Karte 1.

⁷ See more in WERNER DIEM, *Skizzen yemenitischen Dialekte* (Beirut und Wiesbaden: In Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, 1973), p. 9.

⁸ Compare PETER BEHNSTEDT, *ibid.*, p. 44-45, Karte 5.

bride's house, and again at the groom's (*ḥarīw*⁹), as refreshments before the marriage ceremony); *elmadd* (display of the dowry items which the groom gives the bride); *eššidux* (<שדדש, namely sprinkling oil on the bride's head); *shēq eṭṭīb* (grinding a mixture of perfumes); *sabt ilkullān* (trickling oil and scattering dust on the groom's head); *ḥaṭab* (wood chopping); *laylet elgšūd* (a night dedicated to liturgy singing); *hiddi* (preparation of special footwear for the groom); *laylet elleile* (applying henna to the groom's feet and hands); *dagg elḥenne* (grinding henna); *ḥenne* (applying henna very artistically to the bride's hands and feet); *giddušm*¹⁰ (<קדדשדד, the wedding ceremony itself); *šibeh* ('seven blessings'); *šabbāt Sos-²Asīs* (*Aliyah la-Torah* of the groom); *rudiyyeh* (the first visit of the bride to her parents' house after the wedding); *rḥāš* (dismantling the bride's braids); *gahwet essukar* (drinking coffee with sugar) and *xidded*¹¹ (a sophisticated braiding ceremony¹²). Today only twelve of these ceremonies are maintained; eight have been abandoned and two entirely changed.¹³

Most of the women's marriage songs¹⁴ are not written, so I had to transcribe some of them, which appear here in the appendix. There is an element of improvisation in the songs I recorded, sung by Tova Hillel. The songs during the marriage ceremony are accompanied by various kinds of dance.¹⁵

⁹ Compare with the same meaning PETER BEHNSTEDT, *Glossar der Jemenitischen Dialektwörter in Eduard Glasers Tagebüchern (II, III, VI, VII, VIII, X)* (Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1993), p. 56.

¹⁰ Compare the root √שדד in MOSHE PIAMENTA, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*. V.2 (Leiden, New York, København, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1991), p. 389.

¹¹ See MOSHE PIAMENTA, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*. V.1 (Leiden, New York, København, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1991), p. 121: 'Plaiting of Jewish Ḥabbāni bride's hair when returning from ritual bath'.

¹² Compare JOSEPH CHETRIT, *ha-Ḥatuná ha-Yehudit ha-Masortí be-Maróko* [=The traditional Jewish wedding in Morocco] (Haifa: University of Haifa, 2003), p. 535. The tying of a ribbon to the bride's hair among the Jews of Morocco is called *rḥoṭ āzallum*.

¹³ See more in YAEL SHAY, 'Shirá u-maḥól ba-ḥatuná be-kérev nešót Ḥabbān' [=Wedding songs and dance among the women of Ḥabbān], in *Tehuda*, 15, 1996, pp. 54-57.

¹⁴ On Women's songs in the Jewish communities of Yemen see also HAIM SA'ADON (editor), *Teymān* [=Yemen]. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2002.

¹⁵ Tova Hillel was born in Ḥabbān in 1945. The recording was conducted at her home on 22 December 2013 in Bareket.

3. The recorded songs

A *bahālīl* song: This is regarded as an opening song, recalling for the groom Jacob's marriage to Leah instead of Rachel.¹⁶ This song cautions the groom to watch out for any trickery, as played on Jacob. The song begins with an allusion to the name *Leah* through the Arabic *ʔillā* [literally: = except] and *llā* [= God]: *ʔillā ya-sma llā wa ḥāʔur* {1} [= In the name of God, be careful]. This type of song seems archaic, since it combines Hebrew words and tradition with hints at Arabic words. The two first phrases were sung by the professional singer (Tova Hillel) and the women taking part in the braiding ceremony answered her, as if in a so-called 'echo dialogue'. Here I noticed some room for improvisation, for example, inserting the particle *wi*, which can be understood as a warning, e.g. *ʔillā wi ya-sma llā wa ḥāʔur*. These four verses also serve as a blessing on the bride for a good life as she leaves her parents' house for her new home. Especially notable is the fourth verse: *we gʔaʔliš dūb mugʔbūr* [So you will be all the time honourable]. The rhyming pattern is ABAA.

The *bahālīl* is followed by the song *yā lēlt erraḥmān* [O night of the Merciful]. This song tells of the astrologically happy, blessed hour of the wedding (*ḥarāwa*¹⁷), represented by the timing of the appearance of the star (Classical Arabic سعد السعود¹⁸), formally *Beta Aquarii*, a double star in the constellation Aquarius, but here denoting a fluid and undefined time of good fortune. A pun is found, based on the root $\sqrt{s-ʔ-d}$ [= to be happy]. This song describes the entry of the groom. Sometimes improvisations show up in the song, such as *we lʔanbar* [=and the amber] inserted in the fifth line: *we-lmēzkē we lʔanbar yin-faḥ* [And the perfumes and amber spread]. This song is a synaesthesia of several senses: sight [of the green plants] and smell [of the perfumes *mēzkē* and resin *bʔūd*]. The rhyming pattern here is ABCBCB.

¹⁶ In a wedding song from the Jewish community in Baghdad, Iraq, there is also a reference to Jacob: '*baššīgu Yaʔqūb bilēla*' [=Inform Jacob on the night]. See Y. AVISHUR, *ha-ḥatuná ha-Yehudít be-Bagdād u-vnotéha* [=The Jewish wedding in Baghdad and its vicinity] (Haifa: University of Haifa, 1990), II, p.87, and also *ibid.*, p. 95: *Yaʔqūb yā ʔēni*; compare also *ibid.*, pp. 99, 108 (23.3).

¹⁷ The groom is called *ḥarīw* and the bride *ʔarūs*.

¹⁸ Compare ALI AHMAD HUSSEIN, *The Rhetorical Fabric of the Traditional Arabic Qaṣīda in its Formative Stages*. (Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), p. 141: 'I met by her the *saʔd as-suʔūd*. At other times / I become displeased once I abandon [my] water courses'.

The *bahālil* and the subsequent entry of the groom are followed by a second type of song, which accompanies the last stages of the henna spreading ceremony. Its rhythm is slower and it is accompanied by drumming and the *zafīfāh* circle-dance.¹⁹

This latter type of songs is quite unusual since it mentions the most important *Habbāni* clans or families. In the song sung by my informant three clans are named: the *Maʿtūf*, *Šāmmax* (*Šammakh*), and *Gahlān*. Each is described differently and in a different rhyming pattern. The *Maʿtūf* family is presented in reference to the *Habbāni* fortress (*elMišanʿa*) which is a parallel image to the portrayal of the bride. The fortress is stunning – as is the bride – since it contains vast halls, chandeliers and priceless swords. It denotes the clan’s economic strength.

The *Šāmmax* (*Šammakh*) family is presented through not only a depiction of the bride but also of her father.²⁰ Rather than a lavish lifestyle, this song addresses religion, where a local ceremony of slaughtering a chicken over the bride’s head is described as an atonement (*Kapparōt*). This means that this clan is religiously observant and performs Jewish religious customs meticulously.

The third song of the second type is dedicated to the *Gahlān* clan, portrayed through images from nature: water [*la-yākarráʿ men galtš* Oh stored water of a water-reservoir!] and honey [*ʿasal šafīyy* and *gibh gawiyy*=pure honey and fine hive], and there are hints at a life of indulgence through the attribute *al-haliyy* [spoiled] applied to the bride of this family.

A third type of songs, sung by my informant, comes after the *bahālil*. These too have a slow rhythm, accompanied by the *zafna*-dance.²¹ Sometimes the women clap their hands, although the rhythm tends to vary. This song is called *we-da-llayla saʿīda* [O happy night!]. The informant noted that this song is accompanied by body movements rendered by the verb $\sqrt{n-ʿ-š}$ (Sing. *tinʿaš* pl. *yinʿašu*). The dance itself is offered *min hazzit gubāli* [to whom may dance in front of me]. The third song is dedicated to the bride, beginning with encouraging phrases meant to turn the gloomy mood into a joyful wedding atmosphere: *we-da-llayla ʿazamna nhizz ilgaʿed liswad* [Tonight we are determined to dispel the doleful air]. The bride is

¹⁹ See more in YAEL SHAY, *ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁰ Compare Y. AVISHUR, *ha-ḥatuná ha-Yehudit be-Bagdād u-vnotéha* [=The Jewish wedding in Baghdad and its vicinity] (Haifa: University of Haifa, 1990), I, 109: ‘בת אלמלוך וכ’וואלכי שג’עאלי’ [=You are the daughter of kings and your maternal uncles are brave men].

²¹ YAEL SHAY, *ibid.*, p. 56-57.

described as beautiful with her diamonds and jewellery; she smells as good as fresh basil, and she is well rounded. The description builds up by means of rhetorical questions in a dialogue between the singing women and the bride. The women ask *minnēn ʾinti ḥaṣīnā? min ilsamn ilmṣaffa w kubr lʾagīnā?* [Where do you get to be so pretty from? Where to you get to be so pretty from? Is it from the pure butter? Or is it from the large dough?]; the bride answers as if she has not heard their questions asked in public. She speaks of the husband she is going to marry, as if he is the actual cause of her beauty *min zōg iddāllāʿ ma-yʿudni bi-ṭṭabīnā*²² [Or perhaps will it be the spoiling husband?] The third song ends with the groom's appeal, in which he gives sexual intimations referring to the semantic meaning of 'lending', which at this point are acceptable as he is going to marry the bride *ṣubayya sillifni w-ʾana ḥibb ilmsillif* [Oh girl, please lend me as I love this money-lender!]. He also hints to his future bride about his excellent financial situation *bēti mṭarrāf ʿala bēti taranga w rummāna tʾinnif* [my house is wide={big} And...I have near my house a citron tree and a pomegranate, both loaded with fruits?].²³

The fourth type of songs has a characteristic quick rhythm, accompanied by *raqṣa*-dancing²⁴ and drum beating. This is the time of the procession (*sīyyar*). A wide range of improvisations tell of God versus Satan, each respectively seeking to draw/lure the bride onto the right/wrong path. The bride is admonished to go in the good path of God and the Holy (Jewish) Bible, to behave well *tigʿay*²⁵ *w khaylā* [you have to behave yourself] with the groom, and to eschew rumour-mongering, which is characteristic of women and demons.

My recordings covered a fifth type of wedding songs, titled *yegūl ʾAbū-Sālem* [Abu-Sālem says:]. This type refers to three men: Abu-Sālem, Abu-Sādyā, and Abu-iazāl. One of the first two is apparently the father of the groom [Abu-Sālem]; his companion is perhaps a rabbi [Abu-Sādyā]. Abu-iazāl is the name given to the father of the bride [literally = *father of the deer*] since this type of song has an image of the bride as a

²² See *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*. V.2 (Leiden, New York, København, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1991), p. 300: طيبينه pl. طيبان = rival wife, a wife other than the first of dual or plural marriage'.

²³ Compare Y. RATZABY, *Mizimrat Temán: Yemenite Folksongs* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1981), p. 53: 'עץ פרי הדור' בנגי [=there is a citrus tree in my garden].

²⁴ YAEL SHAY, *ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

²⁵ <√*w-q-ʿI : see HAMDÍ A. QAFISHEH, *NTC's Yemeni Arabic-English Dictionary* (Lincolnwood, Chicago: NTC Publishing Group, 1999), p. 632: 'to be'.

deer. It has a long neck, which is a symbol of beauty *w ʿunguha šībreyṅ*²⁶ *w ʿarbaʿa banāyṅ -ʿala đība*²⁷ *zayyad b-gāma* [And her neck is in the length of twenty centimetres and two thumbs]. The groom swears that he will be faithful to his bride and will never love another woman *dowba ʿalayy ma-ḥib miḥla ḥaḍa* [Atonement on me, I will never love anybody except her]. A description follows telling why the groom fell in love with his bride, and one reason is her hair, which is combed to perfection. This hints at the hair-braiding ceremony, which is of great importance for the Jews of Ḥabbān.

A very interesting description of the bride's outer appearance in this type of song symbolizes a woman's exemplary beauty. The picture starts with her beauty-spot (*šāma*) and her eyes (*ʿyūn*), then step by step descends to describe other bodily parts: her nose (*xuṣm*²⁸), her lips (*mibšima*²⁹), her neck (*ʿūnug*³⁰), her chest (*šadr*), and finally her belly (*buṭṅ*).

Nothing below this part is portrayed for reasons of modesty.³¹ The descriptions in this song seem very archaic and belliose in their type, akin to similes in pre-Islamic poetry for women. The bride does not leave the house of her future husband except on account of the exigencies of war. Even the description of the chest, namely the breasts, is markedly crude: the ideal is a huge breast, 'as wide as a square'. It reminds us of pre- and early Islamic poetry of men who fell in platonic love with women. But here the similes and depictions are blunt and too sensual for a description of a bride, who is going to be a wife of one man. Even the picture of the bride's belly is somewhat coarse, apt for a vision of an overweight woman whose plump belly is described as 'prime silver silk...for bonnets'.

²⁶ See PETER BENSTEDT, *Glossar der Jemenitischen Dialektwörter in Eduard Glasers Tagebüchern*, p. 112: 'Spanne'.

²⁷ Compare JEFFREY DEBOO, *Jemenitisches Wörterbuch* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1989), p. 45: ḍabi/ḍuba, ḍuban=gazelle.

²⁸ SʿĀDYA BEN YITSHAḲ MAʿTŪF, *Milón ʿIvri-ʿArvi be-Dialékt Ḥabbāni* [=A Hebrew-Arabic dictionary in the dialect of Ḥabbān] (Baréket: The Author, 2007), p.8.

²⁹ Compare MOSHE PIAMENTA, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*. V.1, p. 33: 'mouth'.

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³¹ Compare the poetry of Šanfarā for modesty criteria: ولقد أعجيني لا سقوطا قناعها [=I liked that her veil never falls down]. AḤMAD MUḤAMMAD ʿABĪD, *Çiʿru Çanfarā lʿAzdiyyi* [=The poetry of Shanfarā from the tribe of ʿAzdi] (Abu Dhabi: alMağmaʿu aṭ-Taqaḥfiyyu, 2000), p.1.

4. Conclusion

The Jews of *Ḥabbān* lived as a remote and isolated community in eastern Yemen – a geographical location that contributed to making its tradition unique. Thematically its wedding songs share a common basis with those of Jews in other parts of Yemen, and also of other Jewish communities, for example, in Iraq and Morocco. The *Ḥabbāni* Jews were renowned as bodyguards. The songs reflect the bride's feisty spirit: she does not leave her house for reasons of modesty – but if she breaks the rule it is only because of wars.

As mentioned earlier, the outward appearance of the *Ḥabbān* Jews made them exceptional among the Jews of Yemen. Their long hair and half-nakedness gave them an archaic look. This echoes the pre-Islamic ambience. Likewise the bride's physical description – from her upper bodily features such as her hair, then down to her belly. This same motif is found in the pre-Islamic poetry of an-Nābiḡa. Common Jewish motifs are the references to Jacob and Leah and the portrayals of the groom and bride. However, what makes these songs unique is the account of the *Ḥabbān* landscape with its fortress, in reference to the various clans of this Jewish community.

The dialect of the songs is archaic in its vocabulary and it associates with the dialects of eastern Yemen and *Ḥaḍramawt*. This was the sole Jewish community in this remote corner of the world. The fact that most of the *Ḥabbān* Jews have lived in the same village since their arrival in Israel, their religiousness, and their high motivation to preserve their customs, undoubtedly help preserve their tradition and dialect, unlike dialects of Jews from other Arabic-speaking countries, which are threatened with extinction. However, the geographical distance from their original village in eastern Yemen delays dialectal obsolescence only temporarily. Most probably, also inevitable is the disappearance of the subtleties of culture that only in the vast deserts of *Ḥaḍramawt* could have been preserved for centuries as an oral tradition.

5. Appendix : The Wedding Songs Xidded

I. 'bahāṭil'

<i>ʔillā (wi) ya-sma ḷlā wa ḥāḍur</i> ³²	In the name of God, be careful
<i>ʕalīš ya-bint eḷ ḥbūr</i> ³³	on you, you too, oh daughter of rabbis
<i>wa-min ʕyūn ilmanāḥīs</i>	Beware of the eyes of the envious
<i>we g^v a^liš dūb mug^vbūr</i>	So you will be all the time honourable
<i>ʕya-lēlt erraḥmān'</i>	O, the night of the Merciful
<i>ya-lēlt errḥmān</i>	O the night of the Merciful
<i>dxal se'd is'ūd</i>	The Sadalsuud-star entered
<i>fī ha-lx'ēr mayyah</i> ³⁴	All the plants are swaying
<i>we rriyāḥa tnūd</i>	And the pleasant smells scattered
<i>we-lmēzke yinfah</i>	And the perfumes spread
<i>we lksā daxxan b'ūd</i>	The [groom's] clothes ³⁵ smell of resin

<i>II. ya-benti Ben-Me'ṭūf (x2)</i>	O daughter of Ma'ṭūf-Family
<i>ya-ḥarf elḥrūf</i>	O daughter of Ma'ṭūf-Family
<i>ya-mešna'at Ḥabbān dī fīš il-wuṣūf</i>	O ineffable fortress of Ḥabbān
<i>fīš elganābi we ttarāki we-ššyūf</i>	In you there are halls, chandeliers and swords

<i>ya-benti Ben Šāmmāx (x2)</i>	O daughter of Šammākh-Family
<i>ʔabūš ilmirba'ī</i>	Your father is a great man

³² Compare S'ĀDYA BEN YITSHAḲ MA'ṬŪF, *Milón ʕIvri-ʕArvi be-Dialékt Ḥabbāni*, p. 137.

³³ Compare MOSHE PIAMENTA, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*. V.1, p. 81: 'ḥibr pl. -ān scholar, scholar of the law'.

³⁴ Compare MOSHE PIAMENTA, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*. V.2 (Leiden, New York, København, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1991), p. 475: 'میح II-I to pass by land; V to go and come'.

³⁵ On the groom's attire in Jewish communities in Yemen see ESTER MUCHAWSKY-SCHNAPPER, *Yehudéy Teymán* [=The Jews of Yemen] (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1999), pp. 94-95.

<i>gídlīš talāṭa ʿayyām</i>	Since the last three days
<i>bigaʿdiš tinšaʿi</i>	He lets you shine
<i>bahúwwaʿiš bā-simm</i>	He makes a ritual on your behalf
<i>ʿasa la-tifzaʿi</i>	Hopefully you will not be afraid of it
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<i>ya-benti Ben-Gahlān (x2)</i>	O daughter of Gahlān-Family
<i>ya-bint elhaliyy</i>	O a spoiled child!
<i>la-ya-ʿasal šafiyy</i>	O a pure honey!
<i>min lgibḥ elgawiy</i>	From a fine hive
<i>la-yūkarráʿ men galtš</i>	O stored water of a water-reservoir!
<i>III. we-ḍa-llayla saʿīda</i>	O happy night!
<i>w zād elwagt sāʿīd</i>	And the time became happier
<i>we-ḍa-llayla ʿazamna</i>	This night we are determined
<i>nhizz ilgaʿed liswad</i>	To revoke the depressive atmosphere
<i>(yinʿašu³⁶)</i>	
<i>lak ya-ḡāli lg^yadd</i>	To you, O dear Grandfather
<i>wa-ya-ḥayya-lla</i>	Welcome all
<i>min hazzit gubāli</i>	To whom may dance in front of me
<i>(tinʿaš)</i>	
<i>baddit bi-lʿung liblag</i>	She revealed with her white neck
<i>w fīha ʿarbaʿa marāri</i>	Which has four gems
<i>wa-ya-ḥayya-lla</i>	Oh, welcome all
<i>lʿung ḍī šall lmarāri</i>	The neck that took all the gems
<i>ʿAllā ya-laʿba</i>	What a lovely bride is she!
<i>ḡālet ʿuḡḡiš</i>	Your mother prayed:
<i>šāneš ʿAllā</i>	‘May God keep you!
<i>we tifdiš ilḡanam w ilbagar</i>	And may he redeem you with sheep and cattle
<i>we lhāres ʿAllā</i>	And may he guard you!’

³⁶ The dancer stands in front of the bride; she tries to make sure not to turn her back on the bride or the wedding guests. She turns her head and twists her braids before the bride and then another dancer stands up and dances in front of the bride, while the first dancer returns to her place. See more in YAEL SHAY, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<i>ʔAllā ya-laʿba</i>	What a lovely bride is she!
<i>ya-šgūrr kulla ḥamāḥim</i>	Oh fragrant basil full of sprouts!
<i>w min šámmeš šgurr</i>	Who smells you [knows that you are] a fragrant basil
<i>ya-šabiyy sīlim darāhim</i>	Oh girl, full of silver coins!
<i>šubayyā xabbrīni</i>	Tell me, oh girl!
<i>minnēn ʔinti ḥašīnā</i>	Where do you get to be so pretty from?
<i>min elsamn ilmšaffa</i>	Is it from the pure butter?
<i>w kubr lʿagīnā</i>	Or is it from the large dough?
<i>minnēn ʔinti ḥašīnā</i>	Where do you get to be so pretty from?
<i>min elsamn ilmšaffa</i>	Is it from the pure butter?
<i>w kubr lʿagīna</i>	Or is it from the large dough?
<i>min ezzōg lddállāʿ</i>	Or perhaps will it be the spoiling husband?
<i>ma-yʿudni bi-ttabīnā</i>	That never threatens to take a second wife!
<i>šubayya silliftni</i>	Oh girl, please lend me
<i>w-ʔana ḥibb ilmsillif</i>	As I love this money-lender!
<i>wa la-ma-taʿriftni</i>	Don't you know me? -
<i>bēti mṭarráf</i>	My house is wide,
<i>ʿala bēti taranga w rummāna tʿinnif</i>	And that I have near my house a citron tree and a pomegranate, both loaded with fruits?!
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<i>IV. Zaffe: Sīyyar</i>	Marriage/Procession
<i>ʿala séyri, ʿala séyri</i>	On the procession, on the procession
<i>ʿala ya-sāʿūt erraḥmān (x2)</i>	On the procession, on the procession
<i>ʔAlla yexzak ya-šáyṭān</i>	May God humiliate you, O Satan!
<i>ʔallā tedxuli l-ʔáwṭān</i>	Please do not enter (O bride) his territories!
<i>fī xēr ya-binti</i>	There is goodness, O girl
<i>waddaʿtēš erRaḥmān</i>	May God accompany you,
<i>binti bi-gʿāh ʔAllā</i>	my daughter with the glory of God
<i>w bi-gʿāh essēfer^H</i>	and the glory of the Bible!
<i>ḍi- fī min ʿehūd ʔAllā</i>	These are the promises of God

<i>ʔAllā baṣīš ya-bintiy</i>	I recommend you this advice, O my daughter, in the name of God!
<i>min tigʻay w khaylä</i>	that you have to behave yourself
<i>ʔAllā baṣīš ya-bintiy</i>	I recommend you this advice, O my daughter, in the name of God!
<i>min megʻad ennīswan</i>	Stay away from women -gossip- sessions
<i>ysayneš w-yilhayneš</i>	That will waste your time and distract your mind
<i>w yilgu fi-gulayybiš gʻann</i>	Lest they will bring into your heart demons!
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<i>V. yegül ʔAbū-Sālem</i>	Abu-Sālem says
<i>yegül ʔAbū-Sālem</i>	Abu-Sālem says:
<i>w-ʔAbū-Sʻadiyü</i>	And also Abu-Sʻadya
<i>yegül ʔAbū-Sālem</i>	Abu-Sālem says
<i>w-ʔAbū-Sʻadiyü</i>	And also Abu-Sʻadya
<i>w-Abu-iazāl li-lʻōhagiyü</i>	And also Abu-Ghazāl to those who fell in love:
<i>dowba ʻalayy ma-ḥibb</i>	Atonement on me, I will never love
<i>miṭla ḥaḍa</i>	Anybody except her
<i>ma-ḥābbeta sāmnet fuʻādi</i>	The moment I fell in love with her - she poisoned my heart
<i>gaṭṭaʻa lḡinwada</i>	She broke my shoulders
<i>w-itṣargaḍat ʻindhā šawāḍi</i>	And warriors kneeled before her
<i>w xaddaha múxḍub³⁷ mīlan be- mīl</i>	Her hair-tail is combed meticu- lously
<i>mil eḍḍahab namnam w šāma (yādān³⁸)</i>	Full with shining gold and she has a beauty-spot
<i>w ʻyūnaha ya-nār tišʻal sʻeyl</i>	And her eyes are blazing fire
<i>min ḥīrritha tiʻhar šmāma</i>	Their heat causes chills.

³⁷ Compare MOSHE PIAMENTA, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*. V.1, p. 130: ‘to stir up (a liquid); to mix’. See also PETER BEHNSTEDT, *Die nordjemenitischen Dialekte* (Teil 1: Atlas) (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 1985), p. 329: ‘umrühren; beat up’.

³⁸ A word that appears in the songs and whose meaning is not certain but only rhetorical.

<i>w xúšmaha ya-seyfyuṣḡul ṣaḡīl</i>	And her nose carved neatly
<i>ma-xārg^y a ʔillā li-ḡirāba</i>	She goes out only towards wars.
<i>we mībṣima barig barag min naháy!</i>	Her lips have a shine like hives
<i>tgūl ḡa-barig thāma!</i>	You could say - it is like a lightning of Tihāma! ³⁹
<i>w ʕunḡuha šībreyṅ w ʔarbaʕa banāyn</i>	And her neck is in the length of twenty centimetres and two thumbs
<i>ʕala ʕiba zayyad b-ḡāma</i>	Which is longer than the length of a deer's (neck)
<i>w ṣádraha mīdān li-lmūlaʕīn</i>	And her breast is as wide as a square for those who crave
<i>w kam min wullāʕ garred ḡuṣāna!</i>	How many cravers dragged her horses!
<i>w búṡnaha ṣūṣi ṣawānef ḡarīr</i>	And her belly is like prime silver silk
<i>ma-xargyaʕaha ʔilla li-lʕimāma!</i>	which is used only for Bonnets!

³⁹ Compare MOSHE PIAMENTA, *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic*. V.1, p. 54 'low plain'.

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