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Tracing a Gypsy Mixed Language through Medieval and Early Modern Arabic and Persian Literature

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Abstract: In this paper I will analyze and trace samples of a tribal dialect that thrived in medieval Islam and has survived into the modern period. It is a mixed language or para-language that takes the form of embedding a substitutive vocabulary into the grammatical structure of other languages and it has historically been spoken within communities of peripatetics and commercial nomads, or GYPSY 1 groups. In 10th-century Arabic sources produced in Būyid Iraq and Iran, non-speakers named this language *lughat al-mukaddīn* (the language of the beggars), another demonstration of an outsider's perspective. However, speakers of this language called it *lughat Banī Sāsān* (the language of the Sāsān clan) or *lughat al-shaykh Sāsān* (the language of the Master Sāsān). The language, in name and application, was not identified with a territory or an ethnicity, but rather with a peripatetic tribal group, the Banū Sāsān, whose members worked as beggars and entertainers. As early as the 13th century, speakers of this language referred to it as *al-sīn* and non-speakers named it *lughat/lisān al-ghurabā'* (the language of the Gypsies). Between the 13th and 15th centuries, Arabic and Persian writers composed texts explaining various Sāsānī words to their Arabic- and Persian-speaking audiences. Texts also survive from this period with snippets of *sīn* prose and poetry.

Keywords: Gypsy groups, Banū Sāsān, *sīm*, *sīn*, historical linguistics.

Introduction

In common parlance the term “Gypsy” refers narrowly to a member of a traveling people who originate from India, speak Romani and traditionally live off sea-

Article note: I am grateful for the comments of Wolfgang Müller, Maurice Pomerantz and Adam Talib.

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sonal work, itinerant trade and fortune-telling. The linguist Yaron MATRAS has proposed that the term is more precisely a double signifier. What he calls GYPSY 1 denotes “communities of peripatetics or commercial nomads, irrespective of origin or language,”¹ and GYPSY 2, which is necessarily a subset of GYPSY 1, captures the popular understanding of Gypsies who speak Romani, Asiatic Domari or Armenian Lomavren. Speakers of these languages refer to themselves as *Roma*, *Dom* and *Lom*, respectively. Evidence from specialists in comparative linguistics and genetics show that the European Roma and their Romani language originated in northwest India, specifically among the peoples known as the Ḍomba.² In medieval Sanskrit sources the Ḍomba caste comprised segregated and enslaved outcasts who earned their livings as blacksmiths, entertainers and musicians. The exact timing of the migrations of the Roma, Dom and Lom is not known. While it is possible that they left at separate times, it is also possible that they left at the same time, separated and perhaps reconnected on their respective routes. The shared innovations and distinct developments give us a complex picture that suggests a complex scenario of migration. In any event, it appears that these migrants entered the Persian and Arabic territories no later than the 7th century.

Medieval Persian and Arabic narrative sources offer some details about the nature and timing of peripatetic migrations westward into Iraq and Iran, but the history of Gypsies – of all types – in medieval Islam remains largely uncertain. Several 19th- and early 20th-century orientalisks hypothesized that the Jatt tribe of northwest India/Sind, who live today in Pakistan and whose language is Indo-Aryan, were the forerunners of the Roma and Dom.³ Geneticists have more recently presented evidence that rare genetic mutations are singularly prominent in populations of the Roma of Slovakia and the Jatt of Pakistan.⁴ Traditionally, they have worked as petty traders, craftsmen, fortune tellers, musicians, jugglers, snake-charmers and animal trainers. Byzantine and Arab authors confirm that the Ḍuṭṭ (the Arabic form of the tribal name Jatt) worked in lower Iraq and that the Sayābija of Sind had settled along the Persian Gulf coast. In the late 7th century the Umayyad caliph al-Mu‘āwiya had 27,000 Ḍuṭṭ and Sayābija forcibly removed

1 Yaron MATRAS, “The Role of Language in Mystifying and Demystifying Gypsy Identity,” in *The Role of the Romanies*, ed. Yaron Matras, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004, 53.

2 N. RAI, G. CHAUBEY, R. TAMANG, A.K. PATHAK, V.K. SINGH, et. al. “The Phylogeography of Y-Chromosome Haplogroup H1a1a-M82 Reveals the Likely Indian Origin of the European Romani Populations,” *PloS ONE* 7(11) (2012): e48477.

3 Charles LELAND, *The Gypsies*, Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1882, 331–333; Michael DE GOEJE, *Mémoire sur les migrations des Tsiganes à travers l’Asie*, Leiden: Brill, 1903, 5.

4 Manir ALI, Martin MCKIBBIN, et. al. (2009), “Null mutations in *LTBP2* cause primary congenital glaucoma,” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 84: 664–671.

from the lower Tigris valley and transported to northern Syria to work.⁵ DE GOEJE claimed that the spread of proto-Roma, -Lom, and -Dom Gypsies can be traced to the forced migration of the Ẓuṭṭ, who then entered Anatolia and Armenia from Syria.⁶

In this paper I would like to add another dimension to his argument. GYPSY 1 groups without Indian roots were circulating and forming in the early Islamic period. The visibility of diverse, mobile ethnic groups in this period is exemplified in al-Jāḥiẓ' (d. 868) biographical sketch of a Basran named Khālīd b. Yazīd al-Mukaddī (the beggar). He earned his living as a *kajār*, beggar (*mukaddī*) and storyteller (*qaṣṣ*). The term *kajār* was written as كحار in the manuscript, but if pronounced *kachār* or *kajār*, it has resonances with the modern Arabic term *ghajar*, which is both an Egyptian term designating a gypsy and the name of a Gypsy tribe in Egypt that may have once spoken an Indo-Aryan language. Today, the Ghajar speak Arabic with much western Romani vocabulary.⁷ This Khālīd b. Yazīd consorted with vagrants of al-Jabal (in eastern Iraq), robbers of al-Shām, the Ẓuṭṭ of the lower Iraq marshlands, Kurdish chiefs, Bedouins, the assassins of the Baṭṭ river (in Khūzistān), the robbers of al-Quṣṣ (a mountain in Kirmān province), the butchers of al-Jazīra and outlaws from Qīqān (in Sind) and Qaṭris (in southern Iraq).⁸ As BOSWORTH has noted, "Ethnically, these beggars of the early Islamic period must have been a very mixed group from the start."⁹ The largest confederation of mendicants of the period, the Banū Sāsān, was likely a voluntary formation of people of various ethnicities and confessions, outcasts of various tribes and/or independent tribes of beggars.

5 C.E. BOSWORTH, "Sayābidja," *EP*, 9:97–98.

6 Michael DE GOEJE, *Mémoires sur les migrations des Tsiganes à travers l'Asie*, Leiden: Brill, 1903.

7 On the term *mukaddī*, see Charles PELLAT, "Mukaddī," *EP*, 7:494–495, and C.E. BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature*, Leiden: Brill, 1976, 1:34. Some examples of Ghajar Romani include *pani* (water, sea), *machi* (fish), *bakra* (sheep), *mansh* (father), *ag* (fire), *ghora* (horse). For the *sin*, see Appendix 1. For Ghajar vocabulary lists, see Captain NEWBOLD, "The Gipsies of Egypt," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 16 (1856): 285–312; John SAMPSON, "The Ghagar of Egypt: A Chapter in the History of Gypsy Migration," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 7 (1928): 78–90; and Emile GALTIER, "Les Tsiganes d'Egypte et de Syrie," in *Mémoires de l'Institut français d'Archéologie orientale au Caire*, vol. 27, Cairo: L'Institut Français d'archéologie orientale, 1912, 1–9.

8 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Bukhālā'*, ed. Ṭaha al-Ḥajiri (Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1981), 46, 49–50.

9 BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:19.

Who Were the Banū Sāsān?

Although the figure of the wily beggar from the Banū Sāsān inspired generations of medieval Arabic and Turkish poets, prose writers and playwrights, the shape of this group, their origins and migrations are poorly understood. The identity of the Banū Sāsān has confounded researchers, who have mostly translated the name as “the sons of Sāsān” or “the children of Sāsān,” which, while literally correct, does not convey their method of social organization.¹⁰ While *banū* can mean “sons” or “descendants,” in most contexts it is translated as “clan” or “tribe.” Most famously, the Prophet Muḥammad was born into Banū Hāshim, a subdivision of Qabila Quraysh, or the Hāshim clan of the Quraysh tribe. The Banū Sāsān appropriated tribal categories to consolidate the identity of this ethnically diverse group and to give it legitimacy in a society where kinship ties were key social markers. If we consider the Banū Sāsān a tribal entity, rather than “the shadowy brotherhood of the medieval underworld”¹¹ or simply “the name allotted to these bandits”,¹² then we begin to recognize that not only members of the Banū Sāsān, but also outsiders clearly employed tribal categories to describe this group.

Two 10th-century poets who identified as members of the Banū Sāsān wrote ethnographic poems about this patronage group. One of them, Abū Dulaf Miṣʿar b. Muhallil al-Yanbūʿī al-Khazrajī (d. second half of the 10th century), was, to judge by his name, of Arabian origin. The Khazraj clan was a branch of the south Arabian Azd clan, and Yanbūʿ was a west Arabian port city. This Abū Dulaf composed a long poem whose narrator claims to be of “*al-qawm al-bahālīl, banī l-ghurr, banī sāsān*,” which reads as a standard statement of tribal pedigree.¹³ Terminology related to tribes (*qawm, ʿāl, shaʿb, banū, qabila, faṣīla, ʿimāra, baṭn, fakhidh, ʿashīra*, etc.) is notoriously unstable, but we can roughly understand this passage to mean that the narrator belonged to the “people of the beggar chiefs,” as *bahālīl* means “beggar chiefs” in the dialect of the Banū Sāsān. In turn, the *bahālīl* group is divided into the tribes of *al-ghurr* and *sāsān*, neither of which I have been able to trace in the sources. In this same poem the narrator identi-

10 Manuela HÖGLMEIER, *Al-Ġawbarī und sein kašf-asrār. Ein Sittenbild des Gauners im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter: Einführung, Edition und Kommentar*, Berlin: Schwarz, 2006, 390; M. M. BADAWI, “Medieval Arabic Drama: Ibn Dāniyāl,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 13 (1982): 102.

11 Jonathan P. BERKEY, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001, 29.

12 Cyrus Ali ZARGAR, “The Satiric Method of Ibn Dāniyāl: Morality and Anti-Morality in ‘Ṭayf al-Khayāl’,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 37.1 (2006): 88, fn. 58.

13 Al-Thaʿalibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr fī maḥāsin ahl al-ʿaṣr*, ed. Mufid Muḥammad Qumayḥa, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1983, 3:416, v. 9; BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:191, v. 9.

fied the beggars who use false tears to solicit charity as *umarā' al-qawm*, or the princes of the people.¹⁴ Individual members of the Banū Sāsān assume tribal identities and construct the collective as tribal.

The name of the second Sāsāni poet Abū l-Ḥasan 'Aqil b. Muḥammad al-Aḥnaf al-'Ukbarī (d. 964) indicates that he had a clubfoot (*aḥnaf*) and that he came from the Iraqi town of 'Ukbara. Al-Tha'ālibī referred to him as “the poet of the beggars,”¹⁵ and al-'Ukbarī himself referred to the beggars of the Banū Sāsān as his family. “My brothers of the Banī Sāsān, people of shrewdness and good fortune, / Theirs is the land of Khurasan, and then Qāshān as far as India, / And as far as Byzantium and Zanj, and to Bulghār and Sind.”¹⁶ He also named two nomadic groups as enemies of the Banū Sāsān: Arab Bedouins and the Kurds, implying that the Banū Sāsān were also nomads who competed with them for resources and prestige. Similarly, al-'Ukbarī's delineation of the territory controlled by the Banū Sāsān is so large as to be meaningless, suggesting that he was probably aiming at what a 13th-century commentator expressed about them: “They have no ancestry; their only ties are to the earth.”¹⁷ In the testimonies of both Abū Dulaf and al-'Ukbarī, the language of tribal identity need not refer narrowly to blood ties or an ethnic identity. As Ira LAPIDUS has aptly shown for the premodern Middle East, the tribe was a social construct that could be based on “the agglomeration of diverse units, including individuals, clients, religious devotees, and fractions of clans as well as perhaps lineages and clans.”¹⁸ The writings of both Abū Dulaf and al-'Ukbarī were commissioned by an outsider, but we cannot discount the possibility that they were also addressed to insiders. These works may also have served to consolidate a group identity that was still crystallizing in this period.

Medieval Middle Eastern tribes were typically named for a historical or fictional personage, and tribe members claimed descent from him. The Prophet Muḥammad's clan, for instance, was named for his great-grandfather Hāshim. The Banū Sāsān was no different, as it was named for the ancestral leader, a

14 BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:83, 2:200, v. 67. Some manuscripts have *amhar al-qawm*, which means ‘the most skillful of the confederation,’ but the significant thing here is the use of the term *qawm*, a tribal entity.

15 Al-Tha'ālibī, *Yatīmat*, 1:137.

16 Aḥmad al-Ḥusayn, *Adab al-kudya fī al-'aṣr al-'abbāsī: dirāsa fī adab al-shaḥḥādīn wal-mutasawwīlīn*, Damascus: Wizārat al-thaqāfa, 2011, 179; BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:68.

17 Al-Sharīshī, *Sharḥ maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo: Al-Mu'assasa al-'arabiyya al-ḥadītha li-l-ṭab' wal-nashr wal-tawzī', 1976, 5:328 [*laysa la-hum aṣl yunsabūna ilayhi illā al-arḍ*].

18 Ira LAPIDUS, “Tribes and State Formation in Islamic History,” in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds. Philip M. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, 29.

certain Shaykh Sāsān. In the 8th century medieval outsiders identified this person as Sāsān, the son of the pre-Islamic Persian emperor Bahman b. Isfandiyār. When Sāsān was denied access to the throne, he abandoned court and took to a peripatetic existence, and his followers became known as the Banū Sāsān.¹⁹ By claiming a noble lineage, the Banū Sāsān strategically deployed genealogy to elevate their social status in a society where status depended on ancestry. Arnold FRANKLIN has shown that medieval Jews, Berbers and Persians claimed similarly prestigious lineages as “a strategy that various populations utilized as they sought cultural legitimacy within the medieval Arab-Islamic world.”²⁰

Sources from medieval Sāsānī writers or their sympathetic contemporaries do not corroborate the specific Iranian origin of this story, though they do emphasize the royal and ancient nobility of Sāsān and their status as his descendants. Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. ca. 1350), also wrote a poem about the Banū Sāsān, whom he described as “heirs to King Sāsān.” They claimed to have “linked [his] ancestry to the lineage of Sāsān.”²¹ A character in Ibn Dāniyāl’s shadow play about the Banū Sāsān states: “We are the Banū Sāsān, descended from kings who possessed golden ornaments.”²² Clearly, they styled themselves as heirs to a prestigious and wealthy dynasty. The 13th-century Syrian al-Jawbarī wrote a book purporting to reveal to outsiders the secrets of his own tribe, the Banū Sāsān. In it he claimed that the loftiest group (*ṭā’ifa / martaba*) of the Banū Sāsān consisted of the preachers, and that Shaykh Sāsān had originally established this group.²³ Other than these brief mentions, details about Shaykh Sāsān are thin. Modern scholars have struggled to make sense of his identity. BOSWORTH offered two summaries of Shaykh Sāsān, using mystical categories to place him: “One could describe Shaikh Sāsān as their patron saint, except that he has no sort of religious aura.”²⁴ In the other, BOSWORTH notes that a poet “is boasting of his

¹⁹ BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:22. Ibn Funduq repeats and elaborates this story in his *Tā’rikh-i Bayhaq*, ed. Aḥmad Bahmanyār, Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Furūghī, 1982, 38 ff. For a summary of his version of events, see Parvaneh POURSHARIATI, “Local Historiography in Early Medieval Iran and the Tā’rikh-i Bayhaq,” *Iranian Studies* 33.1/2 (2000): 133–164. Compare the Persian poet Bashar b. Burd’s (d. ca. 783) declaration that “I am a person of high class, raised above others, Khusrāw is the grandfather through whom I claim precedence, and Sāsān was my father.” (Cited in Arnold FRANKLIN, *This Noble House: Jewish Descendants of King David in the Medieval Islamic East*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 171).

²⁰ FRANKLIN, *This Noble House*, 9.

²¹ Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Dīwān Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī*, Najaf: Al-Maṭba‘at al-‘ilmiyya, 1956, 424.

²² Paul KAHLE, “The Arabic Shadow Play in Egypt,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1940): 32.

²³ HÖGLMEIER, *Al-Ġawbarī*, 121 [Arabic].

²⁴ BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:22.

claimed affiliation to the Shaikh of the beggars, just as the head of Šūfī orders traced the *silsilas* back to ‘Alī or to other supposed founders.”²⁵ This comparison with founders of Sufi orders, another type of brotherhood created out of affinity and not from blood ties, is rather apt. Other writers refer to Shaykh Sāsān as “legendary” or “mythical,” but no one refers to him as the ancestral patronym, real or imagined, of a tribe.

Medieval Middle Eastern tribes also often had tribal dialects. To return to our early Islamic example, members of the Banū Quraysh spoke Qurayshī or Meccan Arabic. Similarly, members of the Banū Sāsān shared a dialect, which was called *lughat al-shaykh Sāsān* or *lughat Banī Sāsān*. Again, the dominant view of this group has been shaped by 19th-century Orientalist research that dismissed the language as a thieves’ argot (*Gaunersprache*) or a beggars’ slang (*Rotwälsch*).²⁶ This view epitomizes the perspective of outsiders, and more recent research is starting to move beyond that characterization. Konrad HIRSCHLER and Manuela HÖGLMEIER consider the *lughat Banī Sāsān* to have been a sociolect, meaning a dialect associated with a particular social group, in this case a peripatetic tribe that subsists on begging and performance.²⁷

In the 13th and 14th centuries the subdivisions of the Banū Sāsān were consistently named *ṭawā’if* (sing. *ṭā’ifa*), which can be translated as “clans” or “sub-tribes,” and medieval Arabic chronicles referred to the chief of the beggars as *shaykh al-ṭawā’if*. In the 15th century, the term *ṭarā’iq* (sing. *ṭarīqa*, lit. “path”) is also used.²⁸ Both terms are usually rendered ‘orders’ or ‘guilds’ because the divisions of the Banū Sāsān generally fell along professional lines. One *ṭā’ifa* specialized in astrology and another in animal training. The term *ṭā’ifa* also refers to an individual Sufi order or craft guild of the period. The Sāsānī idiom, like that of

25 BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 2:304.

26 BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:150–179. Such a move has clear parallels with the characterization of Romani in late medieval and early modern Germany as a Rotwälsch. Only centuries later was it confirmed that the Roman of Germany spoke Romani with borrowings from Yiddish, German and Greek.

27 Konrad HIRSCHLER, “Konformität und Randständigkeit: Bettler im vormodernen Nahen Osten,” in *Bettler, Prostituierte, Paria: Randgruppen in asiatischen Gesellschaften*, eds. Anja Pistor-Hatam and Antje Richter, Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2008, 91; HÖGLMEIER, *Al-Ġawbarī*, 63.

28 Al-Ḥillī, *Diwān*, 423 (*ṭawā’if al-ghurabā’*; *hādhaḥī al-ṭā’ifa*; *ba’ḍ al-ashyākhihim*; HÖGLMEIER, *Al-Ġawbarī*, 348 [Arabic] (*bayn al-ṭawā’if*); Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Zarkhūrī, *Zahr al-basātīn fī ‘ilm al-mashātīn*, Leiden Or. 119, fol. 86 (*ṭarā’iq banī sāsān*); Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghushn al-Andalus al-raṭīb*, ed. Reinhart Dozy, Leiden: Brill, 1855–1861, 1:21 (*ṭarīqat sāsān*). This last phrase appears in Abū ‘Umar al-Zajjāl’s (d. 1440–1) *maqāma* about the Banū Sāsān. On the *shaykh al-ṭawā’if*, see William BRINNER, “The Significance of the Ḥarāfish and Their ‘Sultan’”, *JESHO* 6.2 (1963): 204.

Sufis and professional guilds, derived from the language of tribal social organization. A Sufi order (*ṭarīqa* or *ṭāʾifa*) was typically named for its founding spiritual leader, and all of the members shared a spiritual genealogy leading back to this shaykh. Each local order was headed by a shaykh. The Banū Sāsān, Sufi orders and craft guilds created social solidarities independent of kinship ties, though they derived social legitimacy from the idiom of kinship.

Rather than constituting a mysterious, dysfunctional social group, the Banū Sāsān seem to have organized themselves in ways ordinary for the time. Viewed from this perspective, the Banū Sāsān lose some of their mystery, but one clearly sees that their social patterns are not deviant or even obscure. They actually accord with traditional tribal hierarchies in medieval Islam and behave as one would expect a commercial nomadic tribe to behave, that is, they share a common line of descent (from Shaykh Sāsān), have a recognized leader, reproduce their customs and trades generationally (begging, entertaining) and speak a tribal dialect (*lughat al-shaykh Sāsān*).

In this paper I will analyze and trace samples of this tribal dialect that thrived in medieval Islam and has survived into the modern period. It is a mixed language that takes the form of embedding a substitutive vocabulary into the grammatical structure of other languages and it has historically been spoken within communities of peripatetics and commercial nomads, or GYPSY 1 groups. In general, the lexicons of GYPSY 1 groups do not have independent grammars, as is also the case with Para-Romani languages such as Calò and Angloromani, which have Romani-derived lexicons embedded in Andalusian Spanish and English grammars, respectively.²⁹ In the Middle East this phenomenon is observable in Loterāʾi, a mixed language that consists of special substitutive vocabulary inserted into local Iranian languages. This language is attested as early as the 10th century in Astarabad (known today as Gorgan, Iran) whose speakers were not identified by ethnicity or religious affiliation, and today is mostly spoken by Iranian Jews.³⁰ The *sīn* lexicon survives today in the languages of peripatetics, dervishes and entertainers in the Maghreb, Egypt, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. In North Africa, some Ghawṣ dialects have *sīn* vocabulary; in northeast Africa the ancient mixed language is still known as *sīn* and sometimes as *sīm*; in Central Asia, the dialect of *Abdal dili* or *abdolti* incorporates some *sīn* words. These particular

²⁹ Yaron MATRAS, Hazel GARDNER, Charlotte JONES and Veronica SCHULMAN, "Angloromani: A Different Kind of Language?" *Anthropological Linguistics* 49.2 (2007): 142–184.

³⁰ Martin SCHWARTZ, "Loterāʾi," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, 2012, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/loterai> (accessed on 23 September 2015), and idem, "Loterāʾi: Jewish Jargon, Muslim Argot," in *Jews of Iran: The History, Religion, and Culture of a Community in the Islamic World*, ed. Houman M. Sarshar, London: I. B. Tauris, 2014, 33–57.

dialects take the form of communicating in the dominant surrounding language with insertions of *sīn* vocabulary.

Būyid Iraq and Iran: Two *Qaṣīdas*

The earliest mention of the Banū Sāsān occurs in a work by the Persian author Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 756), so the *terminus ante quem* for tribal formation was 756. Two hundred years after this mention the Banū Sāsān rose to quick prominence in the literary circles of Būyid Iran. The Būyids, who themselves claimed descent from the Sasanian emperor Bahram Gōr, controlled most of Iraq, Iran, Jordan and Syria from 934 to 1062. They professed Shiʿism and presented themselves as the inheritors of the pre-Islamic Sasanian dynasty, which had been overthrown by the Muslims in 651. The Būyid ruler bore the Persian title Shahanshah (king of kings) and did not seek to usurp the caliphal title. Būyid metalworkers consciously reproduced figural and animal Sasanian motifs in their works, and it is in this milieu that the Banū Sāsān, a peripatetic tribal group, found welcome court patrons.

Tenth-century Būyid and ʿAbbāsīd authors described them as speakers of a particular language, of which some vocabulary has been preserved in poetry by members and associates of the Banū Sāsān. While based in Rayy, the Būyid grand vizier al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād (d. 995) kept a circle of these poets close to him. Ibn ʿAbbād befriended a member of the Banū Sāsān – a man named al-Aqtaʿ whose hand had been amputated as punishment for stealing – and “learned from him the language of the beggars and the parlance of the persistent mendicants.”³¹ Ibn ʿAbbād learned enough of the Sāsānī language to include Sāsānī words in his own poetry. A sample verse, with Sāsānī words in parentheses, reads:

Don't hold yourself back from pleasures, if they present themselves; persist in them
to the utmost, and don't bother about being blamed!
Don't spit them out again when you have attained them, but spend the night with a
beardless youth (*shawzar*), a wide-buttocked lad, a loved one,
For wine (*ṣamī*) and copulation (*matr*), after indulgence with him – these are the
really good things of life, so don't turn away from what is good!
Set about indulgence in eating to the full, and in wine from a flowing bowl, for
fortune mingles indifferently the good (*takṣīḥ*) with the bad (*tahzīb*).³²

³¹ Al-Tawḥīdī, *Akhḫāq al-wazīrayn*, Damascus: al-Majmaʿ al-ʿilmī al-ʿarabī, 1965, 185 [*kāna yataʿʿalamu minhu kalāma l-mukaddīna wa-munāghāta l-shahḥādhīna*].

³² Ibid, 215. Translated in BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:73.

We know the meanings of these words because of the interlineal glosses in poems that al-Šāḥib had commissioned from two other Sāsānīs, al-Aḥnaf al-‘Ukbarī, whom he described as “the incomparable one of the Banū Sāsān in Baghdad at this present time”³³ and Abū Dulaf al-Khazraǧī. He specifically asked them to write poems about the Banū Sāsān. Both al-‘Ukbarī and Abū Dulaf produced *qaṣīdas* (polythematic poems with a single metre and rhyme-letter) describing their traditional professions and introducing vocabulary from the tribal language. Al-‘Ukbarī’s *qaṣīda* was apparently written first. In it, he mentioned various trades practiced by members of the Banū Sāsān, including the beggar who feigns blindness (*iṣṭīl*), the peddler of amulets (*man yanfīdhu sirmāṭan*), the astrologers, bloodletters, sellers of unguents and medicines, sufis who rambled about their asceticism and the beggar leaders of the “tribe of exile” (*bahālīlu banī l-ghurba*).³⁴ Sometime after this, “Abū Dulaf presented the Šāḥib with a *qaṣīda* in which he imitated al-Aḥnaf al-‘Ukbarī’s poem rhyming in *dāl* concerning this slang. In it, Abū Dulaf mentioned the beggars, and made people aware of their different subdivisions and their various practices.”³⁵ The narrator of Abū Dulaf’s 196-verse *qaṣīda* is the author himself, who claimed membership in the Banū Sāsān (vv. 9–10) and proceeded to recount every deceptive practice employed by these people. The poem contains 238 words from the Sāsānī lexicon, many of which are also found in al-‘Ukbarī’s poem, and they are all given explanatory glosses.

BOSWORTH’s investigations of the Banū Sāsān lexicon show that much of this lexicon derived from several languages that suggest Persianate, Hellenistic, and Semitic influences and a late antique origin for the lexicon:

- Greek
 - *iṣṭabl* / *iṣṭabl* “mosque” < Greek *stávlon* “resting-place, stable”
 - *qalaftūriyya* “the form of a talisman not made from a matrix” < Greek *phylaktērion* “amulet”³⁶
- Syriac
 - *qamṭar* / *qimṭar* “case for books and records” < Syriac *qamṭriyā* < Greek *kamtra* “case for books or papers”
- Persian
 - *tukhandiju* “you laugh” < Persian *khandagī* “laughter”
 - *jarrakha* “to dance” < Persian *charkh* “wheel; circle of dancing dervishes”

³³ Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, 3:137. Translated in BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:68.

³⁴ *Dīwān al-Aḥnaf al-‘Ukbarī*, ed. Sulṭān b. Sa’d, Riyadh: s. n., 1999, 39. A portion is cited in al-Ḥusayn, *Adab al-kudya*, 101.

³⁵ Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, 3:356–357. Translated in BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:76.

³⁶ From Greek to *luḡhat Banī Sāsān*, the phonemes appear to have been reordered.

- Hebrew
 - *šammā* “to give wine to drink” < Hebrew *šāmē* “to be thirsty”
 - *kūsh* “black slave” < Hebrew *kush* “Nubia”
- Arabic
 - *bahlūl* “beggar leader” < early Arabic *bahlūl* “generous, noble”
 - *ās* “physician” < Arabic *asā* “to treat, cure”
- Akkadian
 - *shallafa* “to destroy” < Akkadian *šulputum* “to ravage”
 - *shann* “two” < Akkadian *šenā* “two”
 - *sikr* “weir” < Akkadian *sekēru* “to block up, dam”³⁷

Martin SCHWARTZ has recently shown the Jewish Aramaic roots of several other terms.³⁸

- Aramaic
 - *maysarānī* “beggar who pretends to have fought the infidel on the frontier” < Aramaic *mēyṣar* “border”
 - *barkakk* “person who extracts molars” < Aramaic associate *bar* + *kakka* “(molar) tooth”
 - *kidh* “penis” < Jewish Aramaic *gīd* “penis”³⁹
 - *dammakha* “to sleep in the cold” < Aramaic *dmkh* “to sleep”

In verse 83 Abū Dulaf explicitly counted Persian- and Aramaic-speaking members among the Banū Sāsān. Aramaic was a late antique Middle Eastern lingua franca until the collapse of the Achaemenid Empire in 330 BCE, at which moment Greek gained ascendancy. The Islamic conquests of the Middle East in the 7th century spread the Arabic language into areas where Aramaic, Syriac, Greek and Persian had until then been chiefly spoken. As such, the inclusion of terms from Akkadian, Persian, Arabic, Aramaic, and Greek (and one or two terms from Syriac) could signal the ancientness of the Banū Sāsān and early language contact with Byzantines and Sasanians.

In Abū Dulaf’s 10th-century poem, *lughat Banī Sāsān* strikingly shows no influence from Turkic languages, though as we will see, by the 14th century, Turkish, Sogdian and Indic words had entered the lexicon. If this mixed language

³⁷ In a 21st-century Shi’i Bahraini dialect, *sakkar* means “to block (irrigation channel).” Clive HOLES, *Dialect, Culture, and Society in Eastern Arabia: Glossary*, vol. 1, Leiden: Brill, 2001, 242.

³⁸ SCHWARTZ, “On Some Iranian Secret Vocabularies,” *Essays in Persian Linguistics*, Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter, forthcoming.

³⁹ SCHWARTZ, “Loterā’i: Jewish Jargon,” 50, 54.

is an ancient one, one may speculate that the significant number of terms of obscure etymology, such as *samqūn* (boy), *zaghmara* (to be certain, convinced), and *muljam* (cat), ultimately derive from an extinct or unrecorded parent language.

Būyid Iran and ‘Abbāsīd Iraq: *Maqāmāt*

The Banū Sāsān was a common literary trope in Arabic literature from the 10th to the 15th centuries. The theme of the eloquent, wily, peripatetic beggar inspired a new genre of Arabic literature, the *maqāma*. Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 1008), a poor peripatetic whose name literally means “the innovator of the age from Hamadhān,” is credited with founding this literary genre. He met Abū Dulaf in Rayy, most likely at al-Šāhib b. ‘Abbād’s literary salons and seems to have derived inspiration from the work being produced there. In his personal letters, al-Hamadhānī referred to his 52-episode work as *Maqāmāt al-kudya* (Episodes of Begging) or *Maqāmāt al-Iskandarī*, but in all likelihood, al-Hamadhānī never compiled his own *maqāmāt* in a definitive written collection.⁴⁰ In any case, his title *Maqāmāt al-Iskandarī* refers to the anti-hero Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī, who is dressed as a beggar and moved from town to town tricking unsuspecting audiences out of their money. In only one episode, the 19th, entitled *Al-Maqāmat al-sāsāniyya* is al-Iskandarī depicted as a member of the Banū Sāsān. While in Damascus the narrator sees outside of his door “a troop (*katība*) from the Banī Sāsān. They had muffled up their faces, and besmeared their clothes with red ochre while each of them had tucked under his armpit a stone with which he beat his breast. Among them was their chief (*za‘īm*), who was reciting, they alternating with him.”⁴¹ The leader of this Sāsānī troop is al-Iskandarī.

Al-Hamadhānī’s most famous imitator was the ‘Abbāsīd Basran official al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1122), whose 50 *maqāmāt* spawned countless commentaries, entered the canon of Arabic literature and inspired some of the most treasured specimens of medieval Arabic book arts. The window for medieval Arabic illustrated books was short, lasting only from the 12th to the 14th centuries, but the 13th- and 14th-century illustrated manuscripts of al-Ḥarīrī’s *Maqāmāt* assume an outsized

⁴⁰ Devin STEWART, “Professional Literary Mendicancy in the *Letters* and *Maqāmāt* of Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī,” in *Writers and Rulers: Perspectives on Their Relationships from Abbasid to Safavid Times*, eds. Louise Marlow and Beatrice Gruendler, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004.

⁴¹ Al-Hamadhānī, *The Maqāmāt of Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī*, trans. W. J. Prendergast, London: Madras Luzac & Co., 1915, 81–82.

importance in scholarly literature on medieval Arabic book arts and are frequently used as typical scenes of everyday life in medieval Islamdom. The 50 *maqāmāt* are structured as brief encounters between the narrator al-Ḥārith b. Ḥammām and the anti-hero Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī, who identifies as a member of the Āl Sāsān and makes his living through swindles and begging, sometimes employing his son in his tricks.⁴² Our anti-hero Abū Zayd is introduced in the first *maqāma* as “the light of *al-ghurabāʾ*, the crown of the littérateurs,” where *al-ghurabāʾ* is synonymous with Banū Sāsān.⁴³ A 13th-century commentary on the 49th *maqāma* explains that “Sāsān is the shaykh of the beggars and of the *ghurabāʾ*, who are Banū l-Ghabrāʾ. *Al-ghabrāʾ* is the Earth, and they are called Banū al-Ghabrāʾ because some of them belong to the Earth and the air, roaming through lands. They have no ancestry; their only ties are to the Earth. It is said that they called that because of their ties to the dust of the Earth.”⁴⁴ The interchangeability of *al-ghurabāʾ* (lit., “strangers”) and Banū Sāsān represents, as we shall see, a significant shift in nomenclature that has broad implications for tracing the history of this tribe into the early modern era.⁴⁵ The term *ghurabāʾ*, in spite of its broad meaning, functioned as a new ethnonym that denoted Gypsies broadly, of any origin or language group. Medieval Arabic chroniclers referred to the *ghurabāʾ* as a distinct social group; urban quarters, such as Damascus’s *ḥārat al-ghurabāʾ* (The Gypsy Quarter) and Aleppo’s *Turbat al-ghurabāʾ* (Tomb of the Gypsies) were named for them; and they may have utilized separate burial grounds.

42 Al-Ḥarīrī, *Kitāb maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, Beirut: Maṭbaʿat al-maʿārif, 1872, 35.

43 Ibid., 24 [*sirāj al-ghurabāʾ wa-tāj al-udabāʾ*].

44 Al-Sharīshī, *Sharḥ maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, 5:328. Al-Sharīshī is commenting on al-Ḥarīrī’s line “whose beacon he [Sāsān] has kindled to the Banī Ghabrāʾ.” (*Assembles of Al Ḥarīrī*, 2:171) Abū Dulaf also noted that “in the dusty roadway, there are of our company the lords of the dusty ones,” explaining that they are Sāsān beggars who sit in the road, so that the wind blows dust onto them. People give them money out of pity. (v. 48) Father Anastas, a Carmelite missionary in Syria in the early 20th century, described as many Gypsy tribes as he knew. At the end, he claimed that he had “set aside all mention of the other names of the Gypsies among the Arabs, such as are found in common current speech; as for example, *Ṣaʿālik* (beggars), *Benī Ġabrā* (sons of the dust) ... and the rest of such synonymous words.” See Father Anastas, “The Nawar or Gypsies of the East,” trans. from the Arabic by Alexander Russell, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* New Series, 74 (1913–14): 319.

45 DE GOEJE was the first modern scholar to notice that the astrologers of the Banū Sāsān called themselves *ghurabāʾ*. See DE GOEJE, *Mémoires*, 67–68; op. cit., “Gaubarī’s ‘entdeckte Geheimnisse,’” *ZDMG* 20 (1866): 508. HÖGLMEIER has perhaps been the most explicit, remarking that “innerhalb der Bettler- und Gaunerliteratur des islamischen Mittelalters werden mit *al-ghurabāʾ* oftmals ganz allgemein die Banū Sāsān bezeichnet.” (*al-Ġaubarī*, 444)

Al-Ḥarīrī played with his audience's expectations for a story about a Sāsānī. Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī practices astrology (*maqāma* 29) and cupping (*maqāma* 47). He may also have emphasized to a knowledgeable audience that father and son belonged to the Banū Sāsān by referring to the son as a *jawdhar* 'alayhi *shawdhar*, or a young gazelle wearing a short cloak. *Shawdhar* is a Persian term for "a short woman's cloak," and the Sāsānī term for beardless youth (Arabic, *amrad*).⁴⁶ The occurrence in Arabic literature of the word *shawdhar* is so rare that it would have registered doubly for an audience. As far as I know, it is only elsewhere attested in the poems of al-Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād and Abū Dulaf, where the *shawdhar/shawzar* serves as an object of sexual desire for an adult male.⁴⁷

The *maqāma* prototype of the pious narrator-hero and the Sāsānī anti-hero have been faithfully reproduced over the years, some of them even utilizing Sāsānī language. Maurice POMERANTZ has identified two Sāsānī words – *khushnī* (outsider) and *ghurash* (trick) – in one of al-Ṣafadī al-Barīdī's 14th-century *maqāmāt*.⁴⁸ In this same period Ibn Abī Ḥajalah (d. 1375) composed a *maqāma* cycle about a trickster character named Abū l-Riyāsh, who is an Egyptian member of the Banū Sāsān and speaks in the Sāsānī tongue (*bi-lisān min banī sāsān*). The final *maqāma*, entitled "The Book Maqāma, Characterized by the Return of the *Gharīb*" (al-Maqāmat al-kutubiyyat al-mawsūmat bi-'awd al-gharīb), is so named because Abū Riyāsh, the Sāsānī *gharīb*, reappears in the life of the narrator al-Sāji' b. Ḥamām.⁴⁹ Similarly, the titles of other *maqāmāt*, such as al-Āmilī al-Ḥānīnī's (d. 1626) *Farqad al-ghurabā' wa-sirāj al-udabā'* and al-Khafājī's (d. 1659) *Maqāma sāsāniyya*, suggest this genre may be useful for investigating representations of the Banū Sāsān and also for recovering samples of their dialect.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Al-Sharīshī, *Sharḥ maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, 1:207.

⁴⁷ Al-Ḥarīrī, *Kitāb maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, 52.

⁴⁸ Maurice POMERANTZ, "A *Maqāma* Collection by a Mamlūk Historian: *al-Maqāmāt al-Ġalālīyya* by al-Ḥasan b. Abī Muḥammad al-Ṣafadī (fl. First Quarter of the 8th/14th c.)," *Arabica* 61 (2014): 662–663.

⁴⁹ Ibn Abī Ḥajalah, "Manṭiq al-ṭayr," Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, (Ahlwardt 8554) Wetzstein 1803.2, fol. 104a.

⁵⁰ Jaakko HÄMEEN-ANTTILA, *Maqama: A History of a Genre*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002, 396.

Artuqid Mosul: Didactic Prose

A true breakthrough for our understanding of the language of the Banū Sāsān and in the naming of this group comes in an early 13th-century work called *Kitāb al-mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār* (The Book of the Selected Disclosure of Secrets), a 30-chapter work purporting to expose the secrets of the Banū Sāsān. The author ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jawbarī (d. fl. 619/1222) was himself a member of the Banū Sāsān, and he composed the work at the behest of Mas‘ūd Rukn al-Dīn Mawdūd, the Turkmen Artuqid leader of Mosul (r. 1222–1232). In Chapter Six of this work, al-Jawbarī enumerated the various types: confidence men (*aṣḥāb al-nawāmīs*), sufis (*fuqarā’*), *al-mudrūzīn*,⁵¹ people of affliction among the Zuṭṭ (*aṣḥāb al-balā’ min al-zuṭṭ*), those who travel with bears and monkeys, those who train cats and mice to play peaceably together, those who claim to have physical disabilities and those who make beards for women.⁵² In Chapter Twelve, al-Jawbarī claimed that the astrologers in the Banū Sāsān referred to themselves as *al-ghurabā’* and were known among the various clans (*ṭawā’if*) by this name. Furthermore, they communicated in poems or messages in *sīn* (*bi-ish‘ār al-sīn*).⁵³ Later in the book al-Jawbarī elaborated on the nature of *sīn*:

51 DE GOEJE read *al-mutadarrūzūn* and translated it as ‘dervishes.’ See his “Gaubarī’s,” 493. I wonder if it could signify the Druze.

52 HÖGLMEIER, *Al-Ġawbarī*, 141 [Arabic]. The ‘beards for women’ may signify pubic hair wigs, or merkins. In accordance with ritual purity laws, observant Muslims would have removed their pubic hair, but there is evidence that prostitutes typically did not. See James T. MONROE and Mark PETTIGREW, “The Decline of Courtly Patronage and the Appearance of New Genres in Arabic Literature: The Case of the *Zajal*, the *Maqāma*, and the Shadow Play,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 34.1/2 (2003): 148. For a 13th-century reference to a woman’s pubic hair as a beard, see *A Traveller in Thirteenth-Century Arabia: Ibn Mujawir’s Tarikh al-Mustabsir*, trans. G. Rex Smith, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, 83.

53 HÖGLMEIER, *Al-Ġawbarī*, 214 (Arabic), 441–442, 498. The text offers no explanation for the origins of the name *sīn*, but HÖGLMEIER believes that it is the first letter of the Arabic word *sīmiyā’*, or “natural magic.” That *sīn* in classical Persian meant “natural magic, alchemy” only lends support to her claim. (F. STEINGASS, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, 718.) Indeed, various *aqlām al-sīmiyā’*, or cryptographic scripts based on a 28-letter alphabet, were used in magical formulas. On *aqlām al-sīmiyā’*, see Princeton Garrett MS 52B, fols. 41a–45b. This passage partially explains a line in Ibn Dāniyāl’s shadow play wherein the astrologer advises his customer to “beware of people whose name begins with the letter *qāf*, and beware *ṣāhib al-sīn wa’l-kāf*.” (*Three Shadow Plays by Muḥammad Ibn Dāniyāl*, ed. Paul Kahle, Cambridge: Trustees of the I.J.W. Gibb Memorial, 1992, 70 [Arabic].) The *aṣḥāb al-sīn* must have been astrologers. Al-Zarkhūrī confirms that within the ranks of the Banū Sāsān the *aṣḥāb al-kāf* were alchemists (*al-kīmāwiyyūn*) and the *aṣḥāb al-mīm* were treasure-hunters (*al-muṭālibiyūn*). See al-Zarkhūrī, *Zahr al-basātīn*, fol. 86.

As for revealing the secrets of the astrologers, they have a form of communication that they call *al-sîn*. It is a manner of verbal expression (*wa-huwa l-balāgh alladhî yatakallamûna bihi*) that only they and their ilk can understand. I understand it, and in it, one can say: سَمَقُونِي كَسْحَاب بِيَهْت مَا اِبْهَلَه فِي سِينِي فَرِحَات وَمَطِي شَنْ [...] ودمخ في الظلموت يرتد في صهوتي سَعَا لِلْبِرْ كُوش فِيْه كَدِي. They express many things – countless and unlimited things! – in *al-sîn*. They hold literary gatherings not for kings, as well as strange large gatherings (*awqât ‘ajība*). And if there were no fear of making this book too long, I would recount innumerable anecdotes. They are known among the various subtribes (*bayn al-ṭawā’if*) as *al-ghurabā’*. This is an amazing language (*hiya lughā ‘ajība*). I know that they call themselves *ghurabā’* because they produce wonders (*gharā’ib*) of all sorts that amaze others.⁵⁴

In al-Jawbarī’s account only the astrologers of the Banū Sāsān and their friends speak *sîn*, and these astrologers are known as *ghurabā’*. While I can only speculate as to why al-Jawbarī limits the language and the name *ghurabā’* to the astrologers, it is clear that his *sîn* sample is the same as the *lughat Banī Sāsān* preserved in the *qaṣīdas* of both al-‘Ukbarī and Abū Dulaf. Using the two earliest of the 33 known Arabic manuscripts of *Kashf al-asrār*, I will attempt to transliterate and translate a sample of *sîn*.⁵⁵ In Leiden Or 191 (dated 715/1315), folios 91b and 92a read: *saqmūnī kasiḥāb bi-baht mā abhalahu fī nisbī f.r.ḥāt wa-maṭṭī shandālī wa-dammakha fī al-ṭ.l.mūt y.r.t.d. fī ṣahūtī sa ‘‘ā li’l-barkūsh fīhi kaddā*. (See Appendix 2.) The later manuscript Istanbul Karaçelebizade 253, dated 717/1317–8, reads: *samqūnī kasiḥāb h.b.t.r.sh bi-baht mā abhalahu*.

<i>samqūn-ī</i>	<i>kasiḥ-āb</i>	<i>bi-baht</i>	<i>Mā</i>	<i>abhalu-hu</i> ⁵⁶
my boy	handsome	with a face	Not	more beautiful than it

“My handsome boy has a face more beautiful than any other.”

The two manuscripts mostly overlap, however the scribe of the Istanbul manuscript interpolated the word *h.b.t.r.sh* between *kasiḥāb* and *bi-baht*. *Habatrā*, according to SD v. 9, means “cold wind,” but does not make much sense here.

⁵⁴ HÖGLMEIER, *Al-Ġawbarī*, 348 (Arabic), 498.

⁵⁵ On the 33 Arabic manuscripts and the single Karshūnī one, see HÖGLMEIER, *Al-Ġawbarī*, 51–3. I also consulted BnF Paris MS 4640 *Al-Mukhtār fī kashf al-asrār*, but it did not include the section about *sîn*. René Khawam’s French translation of the *sîn* text seems completely fabricated. As he did not indicate which manuscript(s) he used, I am unable to verify his source for these translations. See KHAWAM, *Le Voile arraché: l’autre visage de l’Islam*, Paris: Phébus, 1979–80, 2:206.

⁵⁶ References to the verses of Abū Dulaf and Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥilli: *samqūn* (AD v. 86) *kasiḥ* (SD v. 71), *baht* (SD v. 34, 48), *bahhala* (SD vv. 34, 48)

The grammar and syntax are Arabic, as are the prepositions (*bi*, *fī*) and the negative particle (*mā*). The pronominal suffix *-hu* is also Arabic. The morphology of comparative adjectives also follows the Arabic *aXXaX* model. The suffix *-ī* indicates personal possession, as it does in Arabic.

<i>fī nisb-ī</i>	<i>f.r.khāt wa-maṭṭ-ī</i>	<i>shandal</i>	<i>wa-dammakha fī</i>	<i>al-ṭ.l.mūt⁵⁷</i>
in my house	? and my belongings	piled up	and he slept in	the darkness(?)

“*F.r.khāt* and my belongings are piled up in my house. He slept in the darkness.”

y.r.t.d. <i>fī ṣahūt-ī</i>	<i>sa‘ā</i>	<i>li-l-barkūsh</i>	<i>fīhi</i>	<i>kaddā⁵⁸</i>
? in my desires	he went out	to the beggar feigning deafness	in which	he begged

These translations are tentative, and I am unable to translate the final line of the Leiden manuscript. But even without full translations, one sees that in al-Jawbarī’s 13th-century sample, *sīn* consisted of interspersing Sāsānī vocabulary into an Arabic syntactic and grammatical structure. It appears to be what linguists would call “a mixed language,” meaning a lexicon embedded in a borrowed host grammar. The Sāsānī/*sīn* vocabulary preserved in the Būyid poems and in al-Jawbarī’s *Kashf al-asrār* has survived as an Arabic-Sāsānī dialect among the Ḥalab and Ghajar Nile tribes and entertainers in Egypt and Sudan, and as Sāsānī-inflected Uzbek or Tajik among Gypsies and entertainers in Central Asia. Some Sāsānī lexemes also appear in Algerian and Moroccan Arabic dialects.

Sīm and *Sīn*

In 1856, Captain NEWBOLD published vocabulary samples from three Gypsy tribes in Egypt: the Ḥalab, the Ghajar an Nawar. All of them can speak Egyptian Arabic, but they also speak tribal languages. The Ḥalab speak a para-language that they call *sīm*, and it is Arabic with much *sīn* vocabulary. The Ghajar include *sīn* and

⁵⁷ Verse references: *nisb* (SD vv. 8, 38, 43, 73), *maṭṭ* (SD vv. 7, 13, 67), *mushandal* (SD v. 68), *dammakha* (SD v. 58), *ṭalīm* (SD v. 57)

⁵⁸ Verse references: *ṣahā* (SD vv. 12, 71), *sa‘ā* (SD v. 22), *barkūsh* (AD v. 75), *kaddā* (AD v. 62)

western Romani in their dialect, and the Nawar insert many Persian words into their Arabic dialect.⁵⁹ In Egypt and the Sudan, the Ḥalab speak a blend of *sīn* with Arabic modified by distinct morphological patterns. It shows significant South Arabian contact and a smattering of Indo-Aryan vocabulary words.

Some years later, the ethnographer Alfred VON KREMER erroneously observed that “[a]ll these subdivisions of the Egyptian gipsies speak the same thievish slang language, which they call *Sīm*. Nothing certain is known concerning the origin of this word. According to the opinion of the natives *Sīm* means something secret or mysterious.”⁶⁰ The *sīm* word list he produced has since been shown to represent not a single pan-Egyptian Gypsy dialect, but only the dialect of the Ḥalab.⁶¹ The list is a mixture of words derived from Arabic and words directly from *sīn*. (See comparisons of medieval and modern *sīn* terms in Appendix 1.) VON KREMER was unaware of the medieval *sīn*, but in 1903, the Dutch orientalist Michael Jan DE GOEJE made the connection between the two, calling attention to “le nom mystérieux que les Tsiganes, du moins ceux de l’Orient, donnent à leur langue. Kremer ... le prononce *sīm*, mais Djaubari, auteur du 13^e siècle, écrit plus

⁵⁹ R. A. Stewart MACALISTER, *The Language of the Nawar or Zutt, the Nomad Smiths of Palestine*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1914; Yaron MATRAS, *A Grammar of Domari*, Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2012; Bruno HERIN, “The Northern Dialects of Domari,” *ZDMG* 164.2 (2014): 407–450; Giovanni CANOVA, “Note sulle tradizioni zingare in Egitto attraverso la testimonianza di un capo Nawar,” *Lacio Drom* 17.6 (1981): 4–25. Here, I should correct a falsehood that has crept into the historiography, namely that in 1322 CE the Irish Franciscan monk Symon Simeonis recorded the presence of three Egyptian and Nubian Gypsy tribes in Crete: the Ragar (Ghajar), Elebj (Ḥalabī), and Muri (Nūri). Simeonis only described Gypsy-like nomads in Crete, without mentioning tribal names. See Symon Simeonis, *Itinerarium Symonis Semeonis ab Hybernia ad Terram Sanctam*, ed. Mario Esposito, Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1960, 44–45. Cf. C. J. POPP SERBOIANU, *Les Tsiganes*, Paris: Payot, 1930, 24; Jean-Paul CLÉBERT, *The Gypsies*, trans. Charles Duff, London: Vista, 1963, 84, and Bernhard STRECK, *Die Ḥalab: Zigeuner am Nil*, Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1996, 318.

⁶⁰ VON KREMER, “The Gipsies of Egypt,” *Anthropological Review* 2.7 (1864): 265. The German original can be found in his *Ägypten* (1863) 1:144–146. In modern Egyptian Arabic the term *sīm* signifies a code or secret language. See Martin HINDS and Al-Sa’id BADAWĪ, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic: Arabic-English*, Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1986, 446.

⁶¹ Captain NEWBOLD’s Ḥalabi word-list was published in 1856, but he did not mention that speakers referred to it as *sīm* or *sīn*. For later research on the Ḥalabi dialect, see GALTIER, “Les Tsiganes d’Égypte et de Syrie,” 1–9; Enno LITTMANN, *Zigeuner-Arabisch: Wortschatz und Grammatik der arabischen Bestandteile in den morgenländischen Zigeunersprachen*, Bonn-Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder Verlag, 1920, esp. 1–40; Hans A. WINKLER, *Ägyptische Volkskunde*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1936, 259–262, 345–381, 388–393; Werner VYICHL, “Zur Geschichte der Halab,” *Archiv für Ägyptische Archaeologie* 1.6 (June 1938): 138; op. cit., “The Slang of the Halab is-Sudan,” *Kush* 7 (1959): 222–228; STRECK, *Die Ḥalab*, 290–303; op. cit., “Über Sprache und Gewerbe der Niltalzigeuner,” *Gießener Hefte für Tsiganologie* 1.1 (1984): 26–57.

d'une fois *sîn*.”⁶² The discrepancy between the two names – *sîm* and *sîn* – was inadvertently solved 80 years later when Everett ROWSON interviewed nearly 100 Cairenes, mostly entertainers and homosexuals, who had some knowledge of *sîm*. “More educated speakers,” he reported, “say *siim* and are puzzled by *siin*, while the reverse is the case for the less educated, and particularly those of the latter who live east of Port Said Street. I recognized only one speaker who recognized both variants – a well-educated silversmith who works in the heart of the Khan al-Khalili.”⁶³ Of course, ROWSON was unaware of the medieval designation.

In the decades between DE GOEJE's and ROWSON's publications, much research was carried out on *sîm*. ENNO LITTMANN in his book *Zigeuner-arabisch* established links between the lexica of the Ḥalab and the Banū Sāsān in Abū Dulaf's poem, noting that they shared terms for bread (*mashmūl*, nos. 2, 63), father (*qarūb*, no. 3), woman/wife/mother (*kudda*, no. 4), sister/girl (*samqūna*, no. 5), brother/boy (*samqūn*, no. 6), eye (*ḥazzāra*, no. 41) and to sleep (*dammakha*, no. 92).⁶⁴ At the time of his writing, few other Banū Sāsān-themed texts, such as al-Ḥillī's and al-'Ukbarī's poems, had been edited, so based on his restricted evidence, he ultimately qualified the Ḥalabī dialect as an Arabic thieves' cant. However, with the recent edition of even more Sāsānī texts, we see additional cognates: outsider (*khushnī*), horse (*ṣuhlī*, no. 8), donkey (*zuwill*, no. 9), meat (*maḥzūza*, no. 14), region (*qawnti*, no. 27), knife (*khūsa*, no. 38), garment (*sarme/sarmel*, no. 49), Christian (*qannāwī*, no. 60), ugly (*shalaf*, no. 69), beautiful (*bahil*, no. 70), to say (*qajama*, no. 83) and to steal (*kanasha*, no. 95). The high correlation of medieval and modern terms suggests that Ḥalabī *sîm/sîn* is the modern counterpart of medieval *sîn*.

The dissemination of the modern *sîm* beyond nomadic Nile tribes only became clear through a 1926 article published by LITTMANN's colleague Paul KAHLE, who between 1908 and 1914 had investigated a dialect called *sîm* that was understood by Cairo's shadow play artists, storytellers, singers, actors and other entertainers. He produced a list of 95 terms and their variants and indicated the 32 words that had cognates with Ḥalab *sîm*. To show how *sîm* functioned syntactically and grammatically, he recorded two samples of the shadow play artists' conversational prose, alongside translations into colloquial Egyptian Arabic and German.⁶⁵ In these selections of spoken *sîm*, one sees that this para-language functions in the

⁶² DE GOEJE, *Mémoires*, 71.

⁶³ Everett ROWSON, “Cant and Argot in Cairo Colloquial Arabic,” *Newsletter of the American Research Centre in Egypt* 122 (Summer 1983): 16.

⁶⁴ LITTMANN, *Zigeuner-Arabisch*, 6–20.

⁶⁵ Paul KAHLE, “Eine Zunftsprache der ägyptischen Schattenspieler”, *Islamica* 2 (1926): 313–322.

same way that it did in 13th-century literary prose. The *sīm/sīn* lexicon is embedded in an Arabic grammatical structure, as one sees in the following sentence.

Sīm: *badāhtu qabalan li-rashfat al-sūg sawwagtu bi-arbi' ibārīm wa-rakhhaytu ma'ahli bi-ibrīmāy.*

Egyptian Arabic: *raḥtu qabalan li-qahwat al-ḥashish ḥashishtu bi-arbi'at qurūsh wa-akaltu ḥilw bi-qurushayn.*

English: Before that, I went to the coffeehouse, where I smoked marijuana that cost four coins and ate a sweet that cost two.

The *sīm* and Egyptian Arabic samples share adverbs, prepositions, and verbal forms, whereas they diverge at the vocabulary. In spite of KAHLE's work with medieval shadow plays, including an edition of Ibn Dāniyāl's trilogy, he made no strong arguments about the connectedness of the Banū Sāsān to the early 20th-century shadow play artists' speech. Still, in some of his later work he showed further occurrences of this language in shadow theatre. In the 17th-century shadow play *Li'b al-manār* (The Lighthouse Play) by Dā'ūd al-Manāwī, one of the characters cries out, "*elmeḥāzz rabaṣ!*", which one of the editors' informants identified as *sīm*.⁶⁶ *Elmeḥāzz* means "one who strangles," and *rabaṣ* is someone who is on the lookout, and the editors translated it as "Der Arbeitsgeber ist zu uns gekommen." If *sīm* existed among shadow play artists of the 13th, 17th and 20th centuries, there is no reason to imagine that it did not exist in the intervening centuries for which we do not have direct evidence. Hopefully, future studies of shadow plays will offer more historical data on this mixed language.

When ROWSON compared his own word-lists with that of KAHLE, he found a significant enough convergence to conclude that the shadow play *sīm* was simply the *sīm* of entertainers.⁶⁷ In the late 1980's Dwight REYNOLDS lived among oral

⁶⁶ Paul KAHLE and Georg JACOB, eds., *Der Leuchtturm von Alexandria. Ein arabisches Schattenspiel aus dem mittelalterlichen Ägypten* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1930), 34*–35*.

⁶⁷ ROWSON, "Cant and Argot," 13–24. The phenomenon of Middle Eastern goldsmiths' dialects merits further exploration. The Zargari dialect of northern Iran has been identified as European Romani. The Persian term "zargar" means goldsmith, but this name is an exonym. The speakers call themselves "Rom." See Gernot WINDFUHR, "European Gypsy in Iran: A First Report," *Anthropological Linguistics* 12.8 (1970): 271–292. The goldsmiths of Damascus also speak a special dialect, for which see Michel BARBOT, "Notes lexicographiques sur les orfèvres et bijoutiers de Damas (texte révisé)," *Arabica* 21.1 (1974): 72–83. Claudia WOLFER's excellent master's thesis also includes some relevant sections. See her "Arabische Geheimsprachen," Universität Bayreuth, 2007, available online at http://www.arabistik.uni-bayreuth.de/de/download/Wolfer_2007_Arabische_Geheimsprachen.pdf. An abridged English version has been published as Claudia WOLFER, "Arabic Secret Languages," *Folia Orientalia* 47.2 (2011): 8–49.

poets in the lower Delta village of al-Bakātūsh. These poets identified themselves as Ḥalab, but their fellow villagers referred to them as Ghajar. REYNOLDS identified three main components of their language: Arabic, onomatopoeic vocabulary and Ḥalabi words like *lamgūn* (boy) and *konta* (village). However, the lone onomatopoeic word he cited – *taftūfa* (cigarette) – may be related to *taftafa* (Ar., ‘to spit out’) or may even derive from the Domari term for tobacco, *dif*.⁶⁸

‘Alī ‘Īsā devoted a chapter in his 1988 book on “secret languages” to *lughat al-‘awālim*, or the language of entertainers. Many of the vocabulary words cited are *sīn*. Female dancers are known as *kūdyānah*, which likely derive from *kudda* (pl. *kidād*), defined in Abū Dulaf’s poem as “woman” or “wife.”⁶⁹ *Rāqīṣah bahīlah* means “a skillful female dancer.” *Bahīl* signifies “beautiful” in the medieval and modern *sīns*.⁷⁰ ‘Īsā translates *kūdyānah shalaf* as “tired female dancer,” but we know that *shalaf* in medieval and modern *sīns* means “ugly.”⁷¹

Between 1988 and 1990 Karin VAN NIEUWKERK conducted anthropological fieldwork among entertainers in Egypt, noting specifically that the *sīms* of entertainers in Alexandria, Tanta and Cairo were mutually intelligible.⁷² In her book she acknowledged that the entertainers’ *sīm* had ten words in common with the Ḥalab words that LITTMANN recorded, but she does not investigate this convergence.⁷³ VAN NIEUWKERK, for instance, noted that Cairene female performers considered it a bad omen to eat sunflower seeds (*libb* in Egyptian Arabic) on stage, and one woman who broke protocol was teased as “Sayyida the *libb*-eater.” VAN NIEUWKERK tied this behavior to a food taboo among entertainers. However, the embarrassment is probably related to one of the Ḥalabi words for ‘penis’–*lib*, and thus the suggestion of fellating penises before an audience.⁷⁴

The Sāsānī vocabulary has not only survived among the Ḥalab and urban Egyptian entertainers, but also among Central Asian entertainers and Gypsies. Along the margins of an anonymous Persian manuscript titled *Ketāb-e sāsīān*

68 Dwight REYNOLDS, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, 73, fn. 28; MACALISTER, *The Language of the Nawar*, 150; LITTMANN, *Zigeuner-Arabisch*, 15, no. 67; KAHLE, “Zunftsprache,” 317.

69 ‘Alī ‘Īsā, *al-Lughāt al-sirriyya* (Alexandria: self-published, 1988) yā’-yā’-alif (Cairo: ess, 1995; a chapter was devoted to *lughat al-Intisār* Press, 1988), 105; BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 2:277.

70 ‘Īsā, *al-Lughāt al-sirriyya*, 105.

71 ‘Īsā, *al-Lughāt al-sirriyya*, 105–112.

72 Karin VAN NIEUWKERK, “Secret Communication and Marginality: The Case of Egyptian Entertainers,” *Sharqiyyāt* 10 (1998): 33.

73 VAN NIEUWKERK, *A Trade Like Any Other’: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, 202.

74 VAN NIEUWKERK, “Secret,” 36; op. cit., *A Trade Like Any Other’*, 99; NEWBOLD, “The Gipsies of Egypt,” 297.

ba-kamāl (The Book of Accomplished Sāsīān) and dated 745/1344, a scribe provided Persian glosses to a number of words in what the manuscript calls *zabān-e āsīān*, or the language of the Āsīān.⁷⁵ Based on a series of verses in *zabān-e āsīān* in the fourth part of the manuscript, this language appears to have functioned as a para-language with a largely Jewish Aramaic vocabulary inserted into a Persian grammatical structure.⁷⁶

Anna TROITSKAYA compared these Persianate Sāsānī terms to two modern dialects: 1) *abdoltili* (literally, “language of itinerants”) spoken by Central Asian artists, musicians, *qalandars*, dervishes and 2) to *arabcha*, the language of the Lyuli peripatetics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. She found that nearly half of the *arabcha* vocabulary derived from *abdoltili*, which in turn has links with the language of the Banū Sāsān.⁷⁷ She found that Abū Dulaf’s lexicon matched the words in the *Ketāb-e sāsīān* for buttocks (*hurra*), warrior for the faith (*maysar*), work (*hādūr*), lazy (*tanbal*), and deaf (*barkūsh*). Furthermore, Abū Dulaf used the word *mashmūl* to mean “loaf of bread,” and in the Persian manuscript and in modern *abdoltili* and *arabcha*, *mashmūl* signifies “pilaf,” which suggests that this word applied to staple grains.⁷⁸ The anthropologist Olaf GÜNTHER has recorded *shamul* as the word for rice among the Mugati Gypsies of Central Asia.⁷⁹ The semi-nomadic Aynu tribe of northwest China uses *shamul* to mean “food” and inhabitants of 19th-century Chinese Turkestan did as well.⁸⁰ All in all, TROITSKAYA argued for a “relationship between the argot of the 14th-century Central Asian and Khurasanian Sāsānīs and the modern jargons, *Abdoltili* and *Arabcha*

75 W. IVANOW, “An Old Gypsy-Darwish Jargon,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* N.S. 18 (1922): 375–383; Martin SCHWARTZ, “Loterā’i,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2012.

76 I am grateful to Martin Schwartz for sharing this information with me.

77 Anna L. TROITSKAYA, “Abdoltili. Argo tsekha artistov i muzikantov Srednei Azii,” *Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie* 5 (1948): 251–274; Shirin AKINER, “Enduring Strangers: Mughat, Lyuli, and Other Peripatetics in the Social Fabric of Central Asia,” in Aparnu Rao and Joseph C. Berland, eds., *Customary Strangers: New Perspectives on Peripatetic Peoples in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004, 300. The Abdal of Xinjiang province in China are nomadic Shi’ites, who speak a mixed language of Turkish grammar with a Persian vocabulary. On this Abdal group, see Otto LADSTÄTTER and Andreas TIETZE, *Die Abdal (Äynu) in Xinjiang*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994.

78 TROITSKAYA, “Abdoltili,” 256, 262, 267.

79 Olaf GÜNTHER, “Im Zwischenraum – Zigeuner in Zentralasien: Ein Vergleich postsowjetischer und afghanischer *mugat*-Gruppen,” PhD dissertation, Universität Leipzig, 2015, 245.

80 Otto LADSTÄTTER and Andreas TIETZE, *Die Abdal (Äynu) in Xinjiang*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994, 83; J.-L. DUTREUIL DE RHINS and F. GRE-NARD, *Mission scientifique dans la haute Asie: 1890–1895. Deuxième partie*, Paris: E. Leroux, 1898, 313.

in Central Asia, those of the dervishes and gypsies of eastern Persia, and that of the Abdāls of eastern Turkestan.”⁸¹

In Persian, too, *sāsī* and *sāsānī* mean “beggar” and have since at least the 11th century, when the words derived from the Banū Sāsān.⁸² In contemporary Maghrebi Arabic, the term *sāsī* means “beggar.”⁸³ The westward movement of the term *sāsī* was definitely accompanied by migrations of *sīn*-speakers, seeing as some contemporary North African dialects also feature *sīn* vocabulary. In the mid-20th century the French ethnographer Jean LAPANNE-JOINVILLE recorded key terms of a Moroccan dialect called Ghawṣ that, unrecognized by him, included the Sāsānī words for woman (*lkudda*), man (*lḥedd* or *lkudi*), foot/leg (*medrāžāt*), bread (*šmūl*), money (*meṭṭūṭ*), and to speak (*iqžem*).⁸⁴ This last term is particularly suggestive, because the trilateral root *q-j-m* does not appear in classical Arabic lexicons,⁸⁵ and we know that the Sāsānī term *qajmānī* means “my sayings.” In a 19th-century Algerian dictionary the infinitive *qajama* is defined as “dire, parler, causer,”⁸⁶ and in Tunisia today *qajmi* signifies “notional and structured codes.”⁸⁷

Further studies of the dialects of North African peripatetics will shed more light on the depth and scope of language contact between Sāsānī and other nomadic groups. So far, I have only found mention that among the peripatetic Beni Addes tribe of Algeria, *techmel* means “you eat,” though this absence of data

⁸¹ BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:174.

⁸² POURSHARIATI, “Local Historiography,” 151–152. Even as late as the 1910s, “[i]n the west of Persia, in the districts bordering on the Turkish Empire, the name of the Gypsies varies between *Zōzan*, *Sōzan*, *Zayzān*, *Sayzān*, *Sōsān*, *Saysān*, and *Sasān*, which are erroneous renderings of *Sāsānīyah* or *Beni Sāsān*. This is the name of the Gypsies among the present day Arabs according to what is published in their books and histories; moreover, it is their real name, which includes all the tribes of the Gypsies in their classes, families, and divisions.” (Father Anastas, “The Nawar,” 316)

⁸³ Peter BEHNSTEDT and Manfred WOIDICH, *Wortatlas der arabischen Dialekte*, Leiden: Brill, 2011–12, 1:71, 2:498.

⁸⁴ Jean LAPANNE-JOINVILLE, “Contribution à la connaissance des argots arabes du Maroc,” *Hespéris* 42 (1955): 209–211, 213–214. All of these words were recorded in Ulad Bū ‘Aziz, a rural community 20 kilometers southwest of Casablanca, but the terms for “man” and “money” were also found in Casablanca proper.

⁸⁵ Ibn ‘Arabshāh (d. 1450) used the word *qajama* to mean “to speak,” but it seems otherwise obscure in the Middle Ages. See his *Kitāb fākihāt al-khulafā’ wa-mufākahāt al-zurafā’*, ed. Georg W. F. Freytag, Bonn: s. n., 1832, 70–71; 104 [Arabic].

⁸⁶ L. and H. HÉLOT, *Dictionnaire de poche français-arabe, arabe-français, à l’usage des militaires, des voyageurs, et des négociants en Afrique*, 6th ed., Algiers: Juillet Saint Lager, n. d., 451.

⁸⁷ Abderrahim YOUSSE, “Secret Languages,” in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, Leiden: Brill, 2009, 4:157.

may be due to lack of available language documentation.⁸⁸ Still, one can reasonably assume that the Ghawṣ-speaking population in Morocco and the Banū Sāsān were drawn together through similar lifestyles. From Marrakech to Casablanca, LAPANNE-JOINVILLE found that Ghawṣ was spoken by itinerant male and female singers, prostitutes and vagrants, but in ‘Abda and Safi no one understood this language. His main informants were residents of Casablanca and members of the Awlād Bū ‘Azīz tribe, who lived approximately 20 kilometers south of the coastal city of El Jadida.⁸⁹

Is it sheer coincidence that this para-language – alternatively called *sīm*, *sīn* or *lughat Banī Sāsān* – and its vocabulary have historically been reproduced in communities of peripatetics and entertainers? Or is it possible that we can begin to trace the formation and migrations of a Gypsy linguistic community through this ancient language?

Mamlūk Cairo: Shadow Theatre

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Dāniyāl al-Mawṣilī al-Khuzā‘ī (d. 1311) was born around 646/1248 in Mosul. His Khuzā‘a tribe originated in the Yemen, but had long been settled in Mosul. Li Guo has described Mosul in this period as an interconfessional, multilingual meeting place, where “various tongues – Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Kurdish, ancient Semitic (Aramaic, Syriac, Hebrew) – were heard all over the town.”⁹⁰ He migrated to Cairo in 660/1262, shortly after the Mongols destroyed Mosul. In this year, 1000–2000 Mongol/Tatar refugees sought shelter at the court of Sultan Baybars. They were warmly welcomed and fêted with a public banquet near Bāb al-Lūq. The sultan built homes for them to the west of Cairo near Bāb al-Lūq and to its north in the Ḥusayniyya neighborhood. Both areas subsequently became marked by high crime, neglect and poverty. (This reputation remained for centuries. In the 17th century Evliya Çelebi described the male and female prostitutes and the beggars of Bāb al-Lūq.) In Rajab 660/June 1262,

⁸⁸ GALTIER, “Les Tsiganes,” 5. The language of the Guedzāni tribal federation, to which the Bani Adde belongs, is not Arabic, but otherwise unidentified in the literature. See Paul BATAILLARD, “Recherches à faire sur les Bohémiens en Algérie,” *Bulletins de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris*, 2è série, 8 (1873): 694, 706.

⁸⁹ LAPANNE-JOINVILLE, “Contribution”, 203–215. It should be mentioned that the language described in Nasser BERJAOU, *One Moroccan Amazigh/Berber Secret Language: the “sīn” Variety*, Munich: LINCOM Europa, 2013 is unrelated to the *sīn* described above.

⁹⁰ LI GUO, *The Performing Arts in Medieval Islam: Shadow Play and Popular Poetry in Ibn Dāniyāl’s Mamluk Cairo*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, 6.

the Tatar or Mongol Sayf al-Dīn al-Salār arrived in Cairo with a group of Mamlūks, and he was promptly given a prestigious appointment in the Mamlūk army.⁹¹ This same Sayf al-Dīn became Ibn Dāniyāl's patron for a time, and the two being forced migrants, likely found much in common.

In this new metropolis, Ibn Dāniyāl plied various trades. He practiced eye medicine at the Bāb al-Futūḥ, the portal between the the Ḥusayniyya neighborhood and the interior of the walled city. He also wrote poetry, prose and a shadow play trilogy named *Ṭayf al-khayāl*. The manuscripts of these plays are the earliest scripts we have of this genre, but from these we see "that the shadow theatre, as seen in Ibn Dāniyāl's work, was a gradual development from the Arabic *maqāma* form."⁹² The prologue of the second play, *ʿAjīb wa-Gharīb* reads in part:

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Nothing occurs without Allah. This is the second shadow play of *Ṭayf al-khayāl*, and it is the shadow play of *ʿAjīb wa-Gharīb*. It includes the ways of the fraudulent *ghurabāʾ*. I have already answered your questions about whether the master is charming and the coarse speak sweetly, so that you do not think that I am concerned with uninteresting/lazy literature. ... This shadow play includes the ways of the fraudulent *ghurabāʾ* who are well versed in the language and methods of Shaykh Sasan.⁹³

The narrator himself is named Gharīb, and as his name suggests, he represents the archetypal member of the Banū Sāsān, who will introduce the audience to his brethren, the fraudulent *ghurabāʾ* who speak *luḡhat al-shaykh Sāsān*. In the midst of his opening monologue, he recites six verses in the *khafīf* metre. The first four are in *sin*. The following transcription collates four of the six known manuscripts of this shadow play: MS A = Escorial Casiri I no. 467, Derenbourg 469, written 845/1441–2; MS B = Millet Kütüphanesi, written in 828/1424; MS C = Cairo Taymuriyya no. 16; MS D = Cairo Azhar Adab 463/Abāza 7095, dated 998/1569. In 1910 George JACOB edited this poem based on MS A and noted the variants in MSS B and C.⁹⁴ Paul KAHLE, in the 1950's, used the then newly discovered MS D to revise JACOB's work. Both editors agree that MS A, though later than MS B, offers the soundest text, and an image of the poem in the Escorial manuscript is to be

⁹¹ Reuven AMITAI, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhānīd War, 1260–1281*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 108–109; Denise AIGLE, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality: Studies in Anthropological History*, Leiden: Brill, 2015, 244–247.

⁹² KAHLE, *Three Shadow Plays*, 25.

⁹³ Ibn Dāniyāl, *Three Shadow Plays*, 25 (Arabic).

⁹⁴ Georg JACOB, "Ein ägyptischer Jahrmarkt im 13. Jahrhundert," *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse*, 10 (1910): 7–8.

found in Appendix 3. Recently, two earlier manuscripts have come to light. MS E: Cairo, *Adab Ṭalʿat*, no. 2774, 1327 CE and MS F: Cairo, *Adab*, no. 186, 1370 CE.⁹⁵

1. في زقاقهم قَطَطُوا العظامي والعتل الزكادجي الزرندي

2. الكويكات والخندج وقرдах وبزباز والكبان المكدي

3. وشريميط والمفكك والقنب وبركان والمحنّ القمندي

4. هطل الكُدّ والسماقين والفيس وما إن يكيفهم شطر مردي⁹⁶

1.

fī zaqāqayhim	q.ṭ.ṭṭū	al-ʿ.ṭāmī	waʿl-ʿatal	al-r.r.d.kājī	al-z.r.n.dī
in their speech ?		the ?	and the indigent	the ?	the ?

2.

al-k.w.y.kāt	al-kh.f.n.j	wa-q.r.d.āḥ	wa-m.r.tān	waʿl-kayyān	al-mukaddī
the ?	the ?	and ?	and ?	and the ?	the male beggar

3.

wa-shirāmīṭ	waʿl-mufakkak	waʿl-q.n.b	wa-b.r.kān	waʿl-m.ḥ.nn	al-q.m.n.dī
and an amulet maker	and the escapologist	and the ?	and ?	and the captivating storyteller	the ?

⁹⁵ For an up-to-date overview of these manuscripts, see Ahmad SHAFIK, “Ibn Dāniyāl (646/1248–710/1310): Poeta y Renovador del Teatro de Sombras,” *Miscelánea de estudios árabes y hebraicos Sección Árabe-Islam* 61 (2012): 87–111, esp. 103.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 57 (Arabic). Verse references: *kubbana* (AD v. 133), *kadā* (SD v. 69), *sirmāṭ* (AD v. 76), *fakkaka* (AD v. 40), *muḥannin* (SD v. 25), *haṭala* (SD v. 9, 18) *al-kudd* (AD v. 141; SD v. 57) *samāqīn* (SD v. 11) *fays* (SD, v. 3), *mardī* (SD v. 3). I was able to define one other word through recourse to modern Ḥalabi word lists. *Yikīf* in Ḥalabi means ‘he gives’ (Vychicl, “Slang,” 228).

4.

haṭala	al-kuddu	al-samāqīn ⁹⁷	bi'l-fays	wa-mā	in	yakīfuhum	sh.ṭ.r	mardī
he saw	the male beggar	and the boys	while begging	and- NEGATION		he gives them	clever thief	coins

I am unable to reconstruct most of the *sīn* words in the first three verses, but I would provisionally translate the last verse as “The man saw the boys begging, but the clever thief did not even give them coins.” Even without a full clarification of the text, one can make some syntactical observations. As in al-Jawbarī, *sīn* prose consists of classical Arabic syntax (verb-subject-prepositional phrase), the definite article *al-*, and the use of the Arabic particles *wa-* and *bi-*. A verb is even conjugated in the masculine third-person present-tense form, in the manner of Arabic. This poem again demonstrates that *sīn* is a para-language, a lexicon embedded in the grammar of another language.

Previous editors and translators have tackled this poem, the difficulties of which stem from the manuscript variants. One must imagine that Arabic scribes were not familiar with *sīn*, so approximated some of the words. JACOB acknowledged that this poem was written in the language of al-Shaykh Sāsān, so instead of attempting a translation, he edited the Sāsānī portions, indicating all of the manuscript variants.⁹⁸ Later translators have not been so circumspect. KHAWAM produced a French translation of these verses that, like his translation of al-Jawbarī's *sīn* text, must be completely contrived.⁹⁹ Francesca CORRAO claims that JACOB's edition “non ha senso”, perhaps not realizing that he had identified it as a non-Arabic passage. She proceeds to recombine the manuscript variants to arrive at Persian or Arabic words that would fit the context. So, for instance, in the second hemistich, she reads *al-zakādajī* as *al-razkādiḥ*, which is the Persian word for “wrangler,” a dramatic move that requires the insertion of a consonant and the removal of the final letter. Her final translation produced a list of professional types.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, MAHFOUZ and CARLSON considered the language

⁹⁷ MS A reads *wa'l-samāqīn* (“and the boys”), but JACOB leaves out the conjunction *wa* (“and”). Because none of the other manuscripts include this conjunction and the syntax is more standard without it, I also leave it out here.

⁹⁸ JACOB, “Ein ägyptischer Jahrmarkt,” 7–8.

⁹⁹ Ibn Dāniyāl, *Les Comédiens de la rue*, trans. René Khawam, Paris: L'Esprit des Péninsules, 1997, 23–24.

¹⁰⁰ Francesca CORRAO, *Il riso, il comico e la festa al Cairo nel XIII secolo*, Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente C.A. Nallino, 1996, 116–117.

a form of corrupted Arabic, so they altered words to make them classical Arabic. Ultimately, they produced a list of mostly obscene nicknames.¹⁰¹

After Gharīb's opening monologue, sundry characters present their work. In order of appearance, the following types emerge: 'Aġīb al-Dīn the preacher, Ḥuwaysh the snake charmer, 'Usayla the seller of medicinal pastes, Nubāta the herbalist who sells opium, marijuana and anacardium nut [*balādhur*], Miqdām the eye surgeon,¹⁰² Ḥassūn the acrobat, Sham'ūn the juggler, Hilāl the astrologer, 'Awwādh the seller of block-printed charms and amulets, Shibl the lion tamer, Mubārak the elephant man, Abū al-'Aġab the goat trainer, Al-Ṣānī'a the tattooed phlebotomist and cupper, Abū Qīṭaṭ the cat and mouse trainer, Zagħbar the dog trainer, Abū al-Waḥsh the tamer of bears, Nātū the black clown, Shadhqam the sword-swallower, Maymūn the monkey trainer, Waththāb the rope dancer, Jarrah the beggar with self-inflicted wounds, Jammār the torch-bearing night watchman, and 'Assāf the camel driver. Many scholars have noted the similarity of individual characters to stereotypical Gypsies, though this recognition did not lead to broader questions about the group's composition.¹⁰³ Only MAHFOUZ and CARLSON have referred outright to "the gypsies of the clan Banū Sāsān."¹⁰⁴

Gypsy cultures are central not only to shadow theatre in Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Turkestan and Greece, but also to its forerunner, the *maqāma*.¹⁰⁵ In Iran,

101 Mahfouz and Carlson, eds., *Theatre*, 94.

102 KAHLE's edition of this play renders his name as Miqdām al-Mawāsī. Amila BUTUROVIĆ points out that "in the MSS. he is called Āsī, which is semantically less correct than Mawāsī", however one century later Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī claimed that *āsī* was a Sāsānī term for "physician." See BUTUROVIĆ, "Sociology of Popular Drama in Medieval Egypt: Ibn Dāniyāl and His Shadow Plays," PhD dissertation, McGill University, 1993, 129, fn. 21, and BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 2:319.

103 Li GUO titled a subchapter of his *Performing Arts* "'We Are the Banū Sāsān': The 'Gypsies' of Cairo," 24. On the group having gypsy-like characteristics, see JACOB, "Ägyptischer Jahrmarkt," 1–42, esp. 35 and 41 and KAHLE, "Muḥammad ibn Dāniyāl und sein zweites arabisches Schattenspiel," in *Miscellanea Academica Berolinensia*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1950, 151–167. On Gharīb the narrator, see JACOB, "Ein ägyptischer Jahrmarkt," 8. On 'Aġīb the preacher, see JACOB, "'Aġīb ed-dīn al-wā'iz bei Dāniyāl," *Der Islam* 4 (1913): 67–71. On al-Ṣānī'a, see KAHLE, "A Gypsy Woman of Egypt in the Thirteenth Century AD," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 29 (1959): 11–15. On Nātū, see JACOB, "Der Nātū und sein Lied bei Ibn Dāniyāl," *Der Islam* 7 (1910): 178–182. On Maymūn the monkey trainer, see E. GRAEFE, G. JACOB, P. KAHLE, and E. LITTMANN, "Der Qarrād," *Der Islam* 5 (1914): 93–106. On the torch-bearing night watchmen, see E. O. WINSTEDT, "The Masha'iliyyah of Egypt," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 2, IV, 1 (1910): 76–78 and KAHLE, "The Arabic Shadow Play," 27–32. A Fatimid Egyptian ivory depicts a lantern-bearing, short-cloaked night watchman with his dog (Walters Art Museum 71.562). See TORTEL, *L'Ascète*, 315–316, fn. 41.

104 Mahfouz and Carlson, eds., *Theatre*, xxix.

105 Erich PROKOSCH, "Zigeuner und Schattentheater: Ein vorläufiger Überblick," *Grazer Linguistische Studien* 58 (2002): 103–129.

the main figure is named Kaçal Pahlavān (Bald Athlete), and in Turkestan it is Palvan Kaçal. The Persian word *pahlavān* means “athlete” or “gymnast,” referring perhaps to the traditional Gypsy trade of acrobatism and rope dancing. The Gypsy Bahlawān tribe in Egypt still bears this name. In the Turkish shadow play tradition known as Karagöz, each play has two main characters: Karagöz, the Gypsy blacksmith, and Hacivat, the principled Turk. The Greek shadow theatre tradition derives from the Turkish one. The similarities between Ibn Dāniyāl’s Gharīb and the figure of Karagöz are unmistakable, both being Gypsies far from their homelands, performing work on the margins of society.¹⁰⁶ Notice must equally be made of the consistent use of a narrator and a Gypsy protagonist, who act as moral foils to each other, not only in *‘Ajīb wa-Gharīb*, but in nearly all of the Banū Sāsān-related *maqāmāt*. Furthermore, the Gypsy character in Arabic works always has a connection to *ghurabā’* or *gharīb*. Recall that al-Ḥarīrī’s Abū Zayd al-Sarūjī is “the light of the *ghurabā’*.”¹⁰⁷ Al-Ḥarīrī’s work inspired the Andalusian Ibn al-Ashtarkūwī (d. 1143) to write his own *maqāma* featuring the narrator Abū Ghamr al-Sā’ib b. Tammām and the hero Abū Ḥabīb al-Sadūsī, who has two sons, Ḥabīb and Gharīb. Ibn Dāniyāl abandoned innuendo and outright named his protagonist Gharīb, who closes the play by repeating the words: *gharībun gharībun gharībun gharīb*.

A *Qaṣīda* in Artuqid Mardin

The third known *qaṣīda* about the Banū Sāsān, following those by al-‘Ukbarī and Abū Dulaf, came from an itinerant Shi‘ī Iraqi peddler named Ṣafī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Saraya al-Ḥillī (d. 1350) who found literary patronage at the Artuqid court of Mardin in southern Anatolia. While not a member of this tribe, al-Ḥillī, in the prologue to his poem, claimed that “one of his friends asked him to compile for him the language of the *ghurabā’* (*luḡhat al-ghurabā’*), their professional arts and wiles.”¹⁰⁸ He pledged to elucidate in his 75-verse poem, for the benefit of outsiders, their “esoteric knowledge, their activities, their special practices and their

¹⁰⁶ JACOB, “Ägyptischer Jahrmarkt,” 8.

¹⁰⁷ KAHLE, “The Arabic Shadow Play,” 24.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Ḥillī, *Dīwān*, 423. This language is not to be confused with *al-lisān al-gharbī*, which signified Amazigh languages in medieval and early modern Arabic sources. On Amazigh, see Rachid EL HOUR, “Some Reflections about the Use of the Berber Language in the Medieval and Early Modern Maghrib: Data from Hagiographic Sources,” *Al-Masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean* 26.3 (2014): 288–298.

stratagems,” while also explaining the meaning of 277 words in their language (*aj‘alu alfāzahā bi-lughatihim*).¹⁰⁹ Like the earlier works examined in this paper, it is a poetic ethnography and didactic exercise, intended to teach the uninitiated about *ghurabā’* vocabulary and lifestyle.

Certain linguistic developments become apparent in this later work, most significantly the inclusion of Turkic, Sogdian and Indic lexemes. In verses 6 and 65, al-Ḥillī introduced the term *kazākī*, which was glossed as “governors and princes.” BOSWORTH related this term to the Turkish *gezek*, which means “guard or watchman.”¹¹⁰ At the time of al-Ḥillī’s writing, most of the Middle East was ruled by Turkic-speaking peoples, like the Mamlūks, the Artuqids and the Seljuks. The *sīn* term for village “*qantah*” probably derived the Sogdian word for village “*kanθ*.”¹¹¹

At least one Indic term appears in this 14th-century poem: *habatrā* “cold wind” (v. 9) < Hindi *havadar* “windy.” Another new development in this *qaṣīda* is the inclusion of prepositions and conjunctions, such as *hafī* ‘in’, *t.r.thā* “until,” *s.d.l* “upon, by,” and *l.b.y.ṣām* “up to, up to where.”

Ghurabā’ as an Ethnonym

The phrase “Banū Sāsān” does not appear anywhere in al-Ḥillī’s poem; the author only refers to this group as *ghurabā’*, their factions as *ṭawā’if al-ghurabā’*, and to their language as *lughat al-ghurabā’*.¹¹² Still, the language he describes is the same as *lughat Banī Sāsān*. The author’s naming of his *qaṣīda* held for many centuries, as we have a 16th-century manuscript of this poem (Vatican Library MS 583.5) that is entitled *Qaṣīda fī lughat al-ghurabā’ wa-funūnihim wa-ḥiyalihim* (A *qaṣīda* on the language of the *ghurabā’*, their arts and their wiles). It was only in the 20th century that BOSWORTH, seeking to connect Abū Dulaf’s *qaṣīda* to Ṣafī al-Dīn’s, referred to them together as *qaṣā’id sāsāniyya*. In his editions of the poems, he did not include their respective titles, and this omission has led to such

109 Al-Ḥillī, *Diwān*, 423; BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 104 ff.

110 BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 2:304–305.

111 Private communication from Martin Schwartz.

112 The Arabic root *gh-r-b* was present in much Sāsānī literature. In his *qaṣīda* al-‘Ukbarī referred to the beggar lords as presiding over *banī l-ghurba*, or the tribe of exile. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023), “the mainstay of the Banū Sāsān,” wrote at length about the concept of being *gharīb* and consorted with itinerant Sufis whom he called *al-ghurabā’*. BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 1:58, and Joel L. KRAEMER, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, Leiden: Brill, 1992, 25.

statements as “Abū Dulaf’s *Qaṣīdah Sāsāniyyah* belongs to the 4th/10th century and Ṣafīyy al-Dīn al-Hillī’s poem with the same title to about the first half to the 8th/14th century.”¹¹³ Again, as with the translation of Banū Sāsān as “the sons of Sāsān,” we lose sight of the changes that the name of this social unit and its language were undergoing. The transformation of the group’s name, as suggested in al-Hillī’s poem, is confirmed by a Cairene street performer named Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Zarkhūrī (d. ca. 1482). The tenth chapter of his *Zahr al-basātīn fī ‘ilm al-mashātīn* (Flower of the Gardens: On the Science of Mechanical Legerdemain) “is about the orders (*ṭarā’iq*) of the Banī Sāsān and their working techniques. I know that this order (*ṭariqa*) consists of various types and techniques, but they call themselves *al-ghurabā’*. Like the peasants (*al-fallāḥīn*), they are also called *al-a’wām*.”¹¹⁴ The designation of the Banū Sāsān as *al-a’wām*, which is not to be confused with *al-‘awāmm* (commoners), is useful for distinguishing the classes of the non-elites.

The term *ghurabā’* came to designate more than just Banū Sāsān in the medieval and early modern periods, as it became the classical Arabic umbrella term for Gypsy-like peoples, who were viewed wrongly as a unified cultural-linguistic group.¹¹⁵ Because *ghurabā’* literally means “strangers,” “foreigners” or “queers,” modern scholars have understandably translated it as such, but often with a coda about how the translation registers as “curious” in the given context.¹¹⁶ In this way the history of the term *ghurabā’* parallels that of the English word “queer,” which entered the English language in the 16th century, but came to signify in the 20th century a person whose sexual habits or identity lay outside of the Europe-

113 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *The Book of Misers: A Translation of al-Bukhalā’*, trans. R. Serjeant, Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1997, 36, fn. 164.

114 Al-Zarkhūrī, *Zahr al-basātīn fī ‘ilm al-basātīn: kitāb turāthī nadīr fī al-tiqānah wa-l-ṣinā’āt*, ed. Luṭfallāh Qārī, Cairo: Maktabat al-Imām al-Bukhārī li-l-nashr wa-l-tawzī’, 2012, 185. In the 19th century the Egyptian Nawar Gypsies “intermarr[ied] with the Fellahin, or Arabs of the soil, from whom, in physical appearance and dress, they can be hardly distinguished.” (NEWBOLD, “Gipsies,” 294)

115 Similarly, in the United Kingdom the term “Gypsy” is applied equally to the Roma and to Irish Travellers, the latter of whom speak English and sometimes also an Irish Gaelic-derived mixed language, such as Shelta. These communities have long histories of interactions and their members lead similar lifestyles, but their languages are distinct.

116 See, for example, Franz ROSENTHAL, “The Stranger in Medieval Islam,” *Arabica* 44.1 (1997): 35–75; Dana SAJDI, “The Dead and the City: The Limits of Hospitality in the Early Modern Levant,” 123–131, 167–168, in *Hosting the Stranger: Between Religions*, eds. Richard Kearney and James Taylor, London: Continuum Books, 2011; and Roxani Eleni MARGARITI, *Aden and the Indian Ocean Trade: 150 Years in the Life of a Medieval Arabian Port*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008, 270, fn. 54.

an-American heteronormative. A *gharīb* similarly lay outside of the Arabo-Muslim socio-cultural normative. The various significations of the term *ghurabā'* have also been obscured when researchers read all uses of the word from the 9th to the 16th century as having the same signification.¹¹⁷ This terminology also entered the Ottoman Turkish lexicon after the 1550s.

In a recent article published on the vocabularies used for Gypsies in Ottoman/Turkish lexicon and their etymologies, *gurbet* is mentioned [as] one of the names attributed [to] Gypsies. ... Similarly, in Ottoman archival prose from the second half of the sixteenth century we see terms such as *gurbet taifesi* or *cemaat-i gurbetan* (community of *gurbets*). And this community is almost exclusively mentioned together with the Gypsies.¹¹⁸

I am arguing that when the Banū Sāsān renamed themselves *al-ghurabā'* around the early 13th century, they had created a new autonym that is crucial for understanding the medieval history of Gypsy group formation in the Middle East. The *ghurabā'* spoke *sīn*, so historians now have an ethnonym (*ghurabā'*) and a para-language (*sīn*) as entry points to the history of these marginalized people, their migrations and their interactions in broader society. This new information should offer a more complex view of medieval Middle Eastern demographics. Historically, the Banū Sāsān had been ethnically and religiously mixed, counting among its ranks the Zuṭṭ (whom DE GOEJE considered the forerunners of the Domari Gypsies), Persians, Aramaic-speakers, Jews, and Nubians. All of its members shared a certain status as social outcasts.

The recognition of *ghurabā'* as the classical Arabic term for Gypsies also helps connect the history of European Roma and Middle Eastern Domari to their medieval pasts in Arab and Persian lands. Not all Roma have left the Middle East. As mentioned earlier, the Zargari of Iran still speak Romani today. And those Roma who migrated to Europe show Arabic and Persian influences in their dialects. Several Romani dialects in Italy, for instance, contain Arabic and Persian vocabulary, but they are often overlooked by Roma linguists, who may not have background in Arabic or Persian. The Sinti of Tre Venezie say *térso* “deaf” (< Arabic *aṭraṣh* “deaf”), *hángari* “soot” (< Persian *ahangar* “smith”), and *xal* “tumor,

¹¹⁷ Thomas BAUER, “Fremdheit in der klassischen arabischen Kultur und Sprache,” in *Fremdes in fremden Sprachen*, eds. Brigitte Jostes and Jürgen Trabant, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001, 86.

¹¹⁸ Faika ÇELİK, “‘Community in Motion’: Gypsies in Ottoman Imperial State Policy, Public Morality and at the Sharia Court of Üsküdar (1530s–1585s),” McGill University, PhD dissertation, 2013, 191, fn. 34. The recent article mentioned in this excerpt is Hüseyin YILDIZ, “Türkçede Çingeneler İçin Kullanılan Kelimeler ve Bunların Etimolojileri,” *Dil Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 1.1 (2007): 61–82.

cancer” (< Arabic *khāl* “mole”). In the Roma Vlach dialects of Italy, the word *filò* “ivory” probably derives from the Arabic term for elephant, *fil*. The Calabrese Roma also use *bustan* (< Arabic *bustān* “fruit garden”) to mean “fruit garden.”¹¹⁹ Furthermore, many Gypsy communities in Syria, Afghanistan, Egypt, and the Sudan still bear the name Ghurbat or Qurbat. The Kurbat of Syria speak Domari; the Ghorbati are a Shi‘ite Gypsy group in Afghanistan; and in Egypt and the Sudan “[d]ie häufigste Umschreibung der Zigeunergruppen am Nil lautet nämlich *ghuraba*’, d. h. Fremder.”¹²⁰ Significantly, so do many Gypsy communities in Serbia (e.g. the Muslim Gurbéti clan), Cyprus (e.g. the Gurbet clan who speak Gurbetçi), the Balkans, Crimea (e.g. the Gurbét clan who also call themselves Truchmén), and North America, where the Roma call the Travellers *gurbet*.¹²¹ There is also a Vlach Romani dialect family called Gurbet Romani.

Late 16th-Century Ottoman Aleppo: Private Journal

In many instances, historians can read “Gypsies” where reading “foreigners” makes little sense. For example, a heretofore unexamined Arabic manuscript indicates that the *ghurabā*’ formed a linguistic community in early Ottoman Syria. The manuscript itself is the notebook of a silk weaver named Kamāl al-Dīn, who penned a description of a street musician in Aleppo in early 998/1589:

I saw an easterner (*mashriqī*) singing in seven languages with his tambourine in his hand. First, he sang in Arabic, then in Turkish, then in Farsi, then in Kurdish, then in Gorani, then in the language of the Gypsies [*bi-lisān al-ghurabā*’], then in Hindi. I saw Indians performing in various languages with a dancing boy. They were playing a long-necked stringed instrument (*ṭanbūr*), a tambourine, and a vertical flute (*māṣūl*). Two copper bowls were in the hand of the boy as they moved around making music until the end, which was just like their

¹¹⁹ Giulio SORAVIA, *I dialetti degli zingari italiani*, Pisa: Pacini, 1977, 65–66, 83, 94. SORAVIA only remarked the connection between *filò* and *fil*, and I have posited the other etymological connections.

¹²⁰ STRECK, *Die Ḥalab*, 45.

¹²¹ On the Syrian speech pattern of substituting the Arabic letter *ghayn* with *qāf*, see Jean CANTINEAU, “Études sur quelques parlers de nomades arabes d’Orient,” *Annales de l’Institut d’Études Orientales* 2 (1936): 39. He notes specifically that the classical Arabic word *gharīb* is pronounced *qarīb*. DE GOEJE, *Mémoires*, 67–68; Aparna RAO, “Peripatetics, Insiders, and Outsiders in Southwest Asia,” in *Customary Strangers: New Perspectives on Peripatetic Peoples in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia*, eds. Joseph C. Berland and Aparna Rao, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004, 293, fn. 8; Matt T. SALO, “Gypsy Ethnicity: Implications of Native Categories and Interaction for Ethnic Classification,” *Ethnicity* 6.1 (1979): 85.

entry, except that they sang [...] of the metre. No one understood its meaning except those among them. Praise to the great Creator.¹²²

Kamāl al-Dīn classified *lisān al-ghurabā'* as one of seven specific languages that he had heard, so it would be illogical to translate this phrase as “the language of the foreigners.” He also referred to the singer vaguely as an easterner, though his performance reminds him of Indians who had also performed in multiple languages. With the evidence before us, this *lisān al-ghurabā'* could be the *lughat al-ghurabā'* linked to the Banū Sāsān, or it could refer to an Indo-Aryan Gypsy language, like Domari. The order of the seven languages sung moves from the most familiar to the most remote. Arabic was the local language in Aleppo. The Ottoman overlords spoke Turkish. Persian was the language of the empire's Safavid rivals. In the 16th century Kurdish and Gorani were spoken in Iran, and Hindi is, of course, an Indian language. If we understand the language order as moving roughly eastward from Aleppo, then it would place the origins of the *ghurabā'* language in Central Asia or India. Because the origins of the Sāsānī language are obscure, even this geographical localization does not allow me to assert that this language is meant. In this respect, the Arabic and English terms *ghurabā'* and “Gypsies” are similarly imprecise, as they could refer to various or even a single Gypsy clan and tribe.

Conclusion: Literary and Historical Implications

Throughout this paper I have made various arguments related to a particular language strand that spans the 10th century to the contemporary era, and I would like to summarize those interventions here:

1. The Banū Sāsān were a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional nomadic group. They consciously styled themselves as a tribal nation, with an eponymous founder, sub-tribes organized by profession, local shaykhs and a tribal para-language called *sīn*. *Sīn* vocabulary is of mixed etymology, notably Arabic, Persian, Aramaic, Syriac and Greek. There are also many words of unknown etymology.
2. By the 13th century the term *al-ghurabā'* had become synonymous with the Banū Sāsān conglomeration.

¹²² Kamāl al-Dīn, Untitled, Forschungsbibliothek Gotha MS orient. A114, fol. 42b.

3. *Al-ghurabā'* was the classical Arabic term for Gypsies, which encompassed tribes from at least three distinct language groups: Indo-Aryan, Persian and *sīn*. Even today, Gypsies divide themselves along these linguistic lines. In Egypt, for instance, there are still three main Gypsy language groups: the Ghajar speak Arabic with a strong Indo-Aryan vocabulary, the Nawar speak a mixed language of Arabic with a significant Persian substrate, and the Ḥalab speak a specially morphologized Arabic with *sīn* vocabulary.
4. The *sīn* para-language of the medieval *ghurabā'* has survived today in the dialects of peripatetics and entertainers in Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and China.

I have traced references to and analyzed samples of *sīn* through medieval and early modern Arabic and Persian sources, while also documenting some of the internal mutations and geographic dispersions of the social groups that spoke this mixed language. The implications of analyzing and documenting a new language extend beyond questions of linguistics, and I hope to examine other questions in a separate study. Here, I would like to close by identifying potential sources. I have no doubt that medieval and early modern samples of *lisān al-ghurabā'* are preserved in other documents, but certain literary genres will probably yield more information than others. Shadow theatre has already been proposed and discussed, but literary *mujūn*, that is, literature on obscene, profane subjects, was often inspired by “the living oral culture of the urban lower classes.”¹²³ The *mujūn* poet Abū Nuwās wrote a series of poems about *al-shuṭṭār*, or clever thieves. Of this group we know little, but they did have a distinctive form of speech, though it may not classify as a separate language. For example, *aḥnadha* is a *shuṭṭārī* verb that means “to pour increasingly less water and more wine to accelerate intoxication.”¹²⁴

Other writers used lower-class persons as informants or directly transcribed their vernacular speech into their literary works. The Iraqi judge al-Tanūkhī (d. 994) recounted anecdotes heard from clever thieves (*al-shuṭṭār*), conjurers (*al-mushaʿbadhūn*), dancers, singers and young male prostitutes (*kāghān*) in his book *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*.¹²⁵ The writings of the Baghdadi *mujūn* poet Ibn Ḥajjāj (d. 1001) “expressed obscenity and was intertwined with the languages of the

123 Zoltan SZOMBATHY, *Mujūn: Libertinism in Mediaeval Muslim Society and Literature*, Warminster: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2013, 253.

124 On *kalām al-shuṭṭār*, see Al-Ābī, *Nathr al-durr* Damascus: Manshūrāt wizārat al-thaqāfat fī al-jumhūriyya al-ʿarabiyya al-sūriyya, 1998, 2:213–218. On *aḥnadha*, see Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Thaʿlab, *Majālis Thaʿlab*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Ḥārūn, Cairo: Maʿārif bi-miṣr, 1969, 143.

125 Al-Tanūkhī, *Nishwār al-muḥāḍara*, ed. ʿAbbūd al-Shaljī, 1:2–7.

khuldiyīn, the beggars and the clever thieves.”¹²⁶ According to al-Tha‘ālibī, the *khuldiyya* were a group of beggars and members of the Banū Sāsān (*mukaddūn* and *sāsāniyyūn*),¹²⁷ and the name may also relate to the prisoners of the Khuld palace in Baghdad or residents of the Khuld quarter of the city. Al-Ṣafadī (d. 1363), writing three centuries later, explained Ibn Ḥajjāj’s methods for learning these languages:

What aided me in my style is that my father had sold plots [of land] connected to his houses. The people who bought them divided them and built lodges in which they housed beggars, the lowly *ghurabā’*, handicapped beggars [*askanūhā al-shahḥādīn wa-l-ghurabā’ al-sufl wa-dhawī al-āhāt al-mukaddīn*], every rascal and homeless from the Khuld [a district of Baghdad] and loud and foulmouthed ones. I used to hear their men and women, especially in summer nights, cursing back and forth on the roofs. I had a blank paper and a box with writing utensils and I used to write down what I heard. When I encountered what I did not understand, I wrote it down the way I heard it and the next day would summon the person from which I heard it. I could recognize their languages [*anā ‘arīf bi-lughātihim*], because they were my neighbors. So I used to ask him about the explanation and would write it. I remained [like] the Aṣma‘ī of that area for a time.¹²⁸

Al-Ṣafadī likened Ibn Ḥajjāj to al-Aṣma‘ī (d. ca. 828), the Basran grammarian and linguist, who not only recorded observations about the Arabic language, but also about the Ṣuṭṭ languages, which he described as having “the sound of small grasshoppers, jumping in the bushes of the ‘*arfaj* plant.”¹²⁹ Ibn Ḥajjāj was similarly interested in minority languages, and he spent his nights eavesdropping on his neighbors in an attempt to catalogue some of them. In at least one poem, Ibn Ḥajjāj included two lines of obscene Aramaic, so we can presume that he learned those lines from his neighbors.¹³⁰ But what else do we know about these neighbors? Al-Ṣafadī described a portion of them as *ghurabā’*, essentially employing 14th-century language to capture a 10th-century phenomenon. As we have seen, the term *ghurabā’* referred to the Banū Sāsān at the time of al-Ṣafadī’s writing, and Gypsies and their modes of begging were major themes in popular literature.

¹²⁶ Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr fī maḥāsīn ahl al-‘aṣr*, 3:35 [wa-in kānat muṣṣiḥa‘an al-sakhāfa, mashūba bi-lughāt al-khuldiyyīn wa-l-mukaddīn wa-ahl al-shaṭāra]. See also BOSWORTH, *Mediaeval*, 64.

¹²⁷ Al-Jāhīz, *The Book of Misers*, 41, fn. 194.

¹²⁸ Al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, Beirut/Berlin: In Kommission bei “Das Arabische Buch”, 2000, 12:206. Translated in Sinan ANTOON, *The Politics of the Obscene in Premodern Arabic Poetry: Ibn al-Ḥajjāj and Sukhf*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, 40–41.

¹²⁹ DE GOEJE, *Mémoires*, 72.

¹³⁰ ANTOON, *Politics*, 78, 177–178, vv. 21, 23.

Moreover, Gypsies certainly would have figured among groups of disenfranchised people who spoke different dialects or languages.¹³¹

Studies of Arabic, Persian and Turkic dialectology, both historical and contemporary, will shed more light on the history and patterns of this *ghurabā*’ para-language and its community of speakers. Methodologically, researchers may be on firmer ground with historical linguistic analyses, rather than through investigations of social categories, as the naming of ethnic groups was unstable across time and space or was too vague (e.g. *aswad*, *turk*, ‘*ajam*). Poets and grammarians, who had vested personal and professional interests in language, may have transcribed additional samples of these minority languages in their works. Literary genres like shadow plays, which have been historically associated with the *ghurabā*’, may also contain snippets of *sīn*. Lastly, more extensive documentation of the languages of peripatetic groups will allow firmer conclusions about the historical migrations of the *ghurabā*’.

Appendix 1

Table: Medieval and Modern Sīn/Sīm

	Medieval <i>sīn</i>	Arabic gloss	Etymology	Modern <i>sīm</i> / <i>sīn</i>	Definition
1	<i>amr</i> (SD 44, 57, 60, 62, 64)	self (<i>naḥs</i>)	unknown	<i>amr</i>	reflexive intensifier, self (K, L, Ro)
2	<i>bashbāshah</i> (AD 69, SD 61)	beard (<i>laḥyah</i>)	< Ar <i>bashīsh</i> “face”	<i>bishbāshah</i>	beard (K), moustache (Ro)
3	<i>baṣṣānī</i> (SD 5, 6, 8, 70)	he saw me (<i>naẓaranī</i>)	< Ar <i>baṣṣa</i> “to spy”	<i>bassasa</i>	to see (S, V)
				<i>baṣbaṣ</i>	to look (V)

131 For work on beggars as a general category in medieval Islam, see Friedrich SCHWALLY, “Ein arabisches Liber Vagatorum,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 27 (1913): 28–42; Thomas HERZOG, “Die Figuren der Bettler,” *Asiatische Studien* 65.1 (2011): 67–94; Konrad HIRSCHLER, “Konformität,” 67–105; Bożena PROCHWICZ-STUDNICKA, *Żebracy, włóczędzy, oszuści na arabsko-muzułmańskim Wschodzie X-XIV wieku* [Beggars, vagrants, and scammers of the Arab-Muslim East, X-XIV centuries], Krakow: Universitas, 2006; op. cit., “Categories of Beggars According to al-Bayhaqī’s Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa-al-masāwī,” *Studia Arabistyczne i Islamistyczne* 8 (2000): 89–100.

	Medieval <i>sīn</i>	Arabic gloss	Etymology	Modern <i>sīm</i> / <i>sīn</i>	Definition
4	<i>ballaza</i> (SD 31, 40, 50)	to sell (<i>bā'a</i>)	unknown	<i>ballaz</i>	to sell (V)
5	<i>bahhaltu</i> (SD 34, 48)	I made attractive (<i>aḥsantu</i>)	unknown	<i>behil</i>	beautiful (H, K, L, S, V, vK)
6	<i>tillāgh</i> (SD 15, ID)	speech (<i>kalām</i>)	< Ar <i>lugha</i> “language”	<i>yitlagh</i>	speech (H)
7	<i>jaffata</i> (SD 23, 50, 63)	to hide (<i>dafana</i> , <i>akhfiya</i>)	unknown	<i>gaft</i>	hide! (Ro)
8	<i>ḥazāzīr</i> (SD 48, poss. AD 75)	eye (<i>ʿuyūn</i>)	unknown	<i>hazāra</i>	eye (L, N, vK)
9	<i>ḥazūzah</i> (SD 62)	knife (<i>sakīn</i>)	< Ar <i>ḥazaza</i> “to cut, make a notch”	<i>chūsah</i>	knife (L, vK)
10	<i>khushnī</i> (AD 69, 169)	one who does not beg (<i>illadhī lā yukaddī</i>)	< Ar <i>khashina</i> “to be coarse, gross”	<i>khushni</i> , <i>hushno</i>	non-Ḥalab/outsider (S), gentile, non-Gypsy (N)
				<i>khashnī</i>	non-Ghajar (H)
11	<i>midraj</i> (SD 61)	foot, leg (<i>rijl</i>)	< Ar <i>daraja</i> “to walk”	<i>darrāga</i>	foot (K, L, vK)
12	<i>dammakha</i> (AD 150, SD 60)	to sleep in the cold (<i>nāma fī l-bard</i>)	< Aram <i>dmkh</i> “to sleep”	<i>dammakha</i>	to sleep (L, N, S, V, vK)
13	<i>tataḥaṣṣānī</i> (SD 47)	they watch me (<i>yanzurūnī</i>)	u	<i>ḥaṣṣaṣa</i>	he saw (K)
14	<i>zāl</i> (SD 7)	donkey (<i>ḥimār</i>)	< Lat <i>asellus</i> “little donkey”	<i>zuwell</i> / <i>zuwill</i>	donkey (H, L, N, S, K, vK)
15	<i>sarmal</i> (AD 86)	ragged shirt (<i>qamīs mukharraq</i>)	< Ar <i>samal</i> “worn-out garments, rags”	<i>sarme</i>	garment (L, vK)
				<i>Sarmal</i>	gown (V)
16	<i>sarmaṭa</i> (AD 76, SD 35, 39, 42)	he wrote (<i>kataba</i>)	unknown	<i>sarmat</i> , <i>sarmaṭ</i> , <i>ṣarmat</i> , <i>ṣarmaṭ</i>	he wrote (K)
17	<i>samqūn</i> / <i>sīmqūn</i> (AD 86)	boy (<i>ṣabī</i>)	unknown	<i>sumqun</i>	boy (H, N, S, V), brother (L)
				<i>sem'</i>	boy (K, vK)

	Medieval <i>sīn</i>	Arabic gloss	Etymology	Modern <i>sīm</i> / <i>sīn</i>	Definition
18	<i>shibriyyāt</i> (AD 41)	stories related span by span (<i>shibr</i> ' <i>alā shibr</i>)	< Ar <i>shibr</i> "span"	<i>shibrā'</i>	chain (K)
19	<i>mishfar</i> (SD 63)	sword (<i>sayf</i>)	< Ar <i>shafara</i> "to cut, cut off"	<i>shaffar</i>	he cut (L, vK)
20	<i>shallafa</i> (SD 44, 58, 61, 62, 64)	to destroy (<i>ahlaka</i>)	< Akk <i>šulputum</i> "to ravage"	<i>shalaf</i>	ugly (H, L, vK), dirty (K)
21	<i>shamālah</i> (SD 16)	five (<i>khamisah</i>)	< Ar <i>shamala</i> "to grasp"	<i>shammāla</i>	five (K, vK), hand (L, V, vK)
22	<i>mashāmīl</i> (AD 154)	loaves of bread (<i>rughfān</i>)	< Ar <i>shamala</i> "to grasp"	<i>meshmūl</i>	bread (L, N)
23	<i>šamī</i> (SD 11, 21)	wine (<i>khamr</i>)	< Heb <i>šāmē'</i> < Akk <i>šamûm</i> "to be thirsty"	<i>sāmia</i>	alcoholic drink (S)
24	<i>šahlī</i> (SD 6)	horse (<i>faras</i>)	< Ar <i>šahala</i> "to neigh"	<i>sohli</i>	horse (L, N)
25	<i>ṭalīm</i> (SD 57)	blind (<i>a'mā</i>)	unknown	<i>muṭallim</i>	blind (S, V)
26	<i>aṭnā</i> (SD 28, 30, 63)	to die (<i>māta</i>)	unknown	<i>entena</i>	he died (H, L, vK)
				<i>iṭṭana</i>	he died (K)
				<i>eṣṭana</i>	to beat, slay (V)
27	<i>'ukr</i> (AD 147)	unglossed	unknown	<i>al-mukn</i>	the jail, police station (K)
27a	<i>ta'kīr</i> (SD 72)	bringing an accusa- tion of wrongdoing against someone (<i>tajanna wa'l-shak- kaya 'alayyī</i>)		<i>al-'ukr</i>	
28	<i>ghashmalah</i> (SD 69)	night (<i>laylah</i>)	unknown	<i>ghalmûsa</i>	night (H, K, L, vK) ¹³²
29	<i>qārūb</i> (SD 4, 26)	master (<i>shaykh</i>)	< Ar <i>qarīb</i> "near" or < Kurdish <i>kiriv</i> "godfather"?	<i>arub</i>	father (K, L, vK), uncle (L)
				<i>garub</i>	man (N, S, V)

132 The consonants have been rearranged.

	Medieval <i>sīn</i>	Arabic gloss	Etymology	Modern <i>sīm/sīn</i>	Definition
30	<i>qujmānī/qijmānī</i> (SD 18)	my sayings (<i>aḥādīthī</i>)	unknown	<i>qajam</i>	to say (vK, V)
				<i>aggim</i>	he spoke (K, L)
31	<i>qinnā'</i> (AD 49, SD 19)	Christian (<i>naṣrānī</i>)	< Heb <i>qannā'</i> "zealot"	<i>annawi</i>	Christian (H, L, vK)
				<i>innawi</i>	Christian (K)
				<i>ginnāwi</i>	Christian (V)
32	<i>qantah/qintah</i> (SD 17)	city (<i>madīnah</i>)	< Sogd <i>kanθ</i> "city, town"	<i>gaonti</i>	city, village (N)
				<i>anta</i>	country, area (L), village (H)
				<i>konta</i>	village, people, atmosphere, surroundings (Re)
				<i>galte</i>	village (V)
33	<i>qayyafa</i> (SD 8, 57)	to beg (<i>kaddā</i>)	< Ar <i>taqayyafa</i> "to follow closely, walk in someone's steps"	<i>gayyâf</i>	beggar (S, V)
34	<i>kabbās</i> (AD 34)	brigand, footpad (<i>qāṭi' al-ṭarīq</i>)	< Ar <i>kabbasa</i> "to press; fall upon, attack suddenly"	<i>kābis</i>	shadow play anti-hero (K)
34a	<i>kabbasa</i> (AD 34)	to exact a share of some money			
35	<i>kabashtar</i> (SD 24)	camel (<i>jamal</i>)	< Pers <i>ushtar</i> "camel"	<i>kamashtar</i>	camel (K)
36	<i>kabbana</i> (AD 133)	to defecate (<i>khari'a</i>)	unknown	<i>kabban</i>	to defecate (S)
				<i>kabân</i>	excrement (K)
37	<i>kuddah</i> (AD 141, SD 57)	woman (<i>mar'ah</i>)	unknown	<i>kúdeh</i>	woman (I, N, S), mother (L)

	Medieval <i>sīn</i>	Arabic gloss	Etymology	Modern <i>sīm</i> / <i>sīn</i>	Definition
38	<i>karraza</i> (AD 32, SD 18) ¹³³	to stand (<i>qāma</i>)	unknown ¹³⁴	<i>karaz</i> <i>kerzin</i>	to sit down (L, S, V) ¹³⁵ he sat (K)
39	<i>karkā</i> (SD 10)	to lead in prayer (<i>ṣallā</i>)	unknown	<i>karka</i>	to pray (V) ¹³⁶
40	<i>kazākī</i> (SD 6, 65)	governors, emirs (<i>al-wulāh wa'l-ḥukkām</i>)	< Tur <i>gezek</i> “guard, watch- man”	<i>kasaki</i>	police officers (S), soldiers (V, W)
41	<i>kūsh</i> (SD 55)	black slave (<i>ʿabd aswad</i>)	< Heb <i>kush</i> “Nubia”	<i>kūshi</i>	black person (S, V), black slave (K)
42	<i>kannāsh</i> (SD 63) ¹³⁷	brigand, footpad (<i>qāṭī' al-ṭarīq</i>)	< Aram <i>knš</i> “to gather, assem- ble”	<i>kanash</i> <i>kanāsh</i>	to steal (I, K, L, V, vK) thief (S)
43	<i>istakāfa</i> (SD 3, 26)	to take or seize (<i>akhadha wa- salaba</i>)	< Ar <i>kaf</i> “palm”	<i>kāf, yikīf</i>	to give, he gives (L, S, V, vK)
44	<i>kīdh</i> (AD 26)	penis (<i>ayr</i>)	< Jewish Aram <i>gīd</i> “vein, tendon, penis”	<i>kid</i>	penis (W)
45	<i>malāqim</i> (SD 45)	mouths (<i>afmām</i>)	< Ar <i>laqama</i> , <i>laqima</i> “to gulp down”	<i>malgam</i> <i>melgim</i>	mouth (V) speak! (S)

133 BOSWORTH appears to have transcribed *karraza* in Abū Dulaf's poem as *kawwaza*. The word is glossed as “to stand up in an assembly.” (BOSWORTH, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld* 2:193)

134 DWIGHT REYNOLDS, in his ethnography of *sīm*-speaking epic-singers in the Nile Delta, related the modern Arabic word *kursī* (“chair”) to the *sīm* verb *karasa* (“to sit”). See his *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes*, 73, fn. 28.

135 At some point the word took on its opposite meaning.

136 Though BOSWORTH reads *karkā* in the manuscripts, he chose to transcribe it as *kazkā* in his edition, reasoning that it must be related to another Sāsānī term: *kazākī*.

137 The word *kabbās* only appears in one manuscript (BOSWORTH's C1), which he related to the verb *kabbasa* ‘to exact a share of money’ (AD 34). Four other manuscripts (BOSWORTH's B, C2, C3 and the Vatican copy) show *kannās* or *kannāsh*.

	Medieval <i>sīn</i>	Arabic gloss	Etymology	Modern <i>sīm/sīn</i>	Definition
46	<i>al-tamtīḥ</i> (SD 12)	travel (<i>al-safar</i>)	unknown	<i>mataḥ</i>	he left, he went forth (K)
47	<i>nasb</i> (SD 8, 38, 43, 73)	house (<i>bayt</i>)	unknown	<i>nīzb</i>	house (N)
48	<i>nayf</i> (SD 22)	hunger (<i>jūʿ</i>)	unknown	<i>muneyyif</i>	hungry (V)
49	<i>habj</i> (SD 72)	beating, striking (<i>ḍarb</i>)	< Ar <i>habaja</i> “to beat or batter with a stick”	<i>habag</i>	he struck (L, vK)
				<i>habbāje</i>	stick, knife, gun (V)
				<i>hebbāji</i>	war (N)
50	<i>yā banāt</i> (ID)	prostitutes or women?	< Ar <i>yā banāt</i> “O, girls”	<i>yā bitt</i>	daughter (W)

There are two additional sets of terms that seem related, but whose relationship I cannot yet demonstrate.

51	<i>maṣṭabān</i> or <i>maṣlayān</i> (SD 61)	hair (<i>shaʿar</i>)	unknown	<i>mistiyānī</i>	barber (K)
52	<i>ṣahā</i> (SD 12, 71)	to like (<i>ḥanna, hawiya</i>)	unknown	<i>ṣahā, yiṣhī</i>	to hear or notice, he hears or notices (K)

Key:

Akk = Akkadian; Ar = Arabic; Aram = Aramaic; Gr = Greek; Lat = Latin; Pers = Persian; Sogd = Sogdian; San = Sanskrit; Tur = Turkish

AD = Abū Dulaf, *Qaṣīda sāṣāniyya*

SD = Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Qaṣīda fī lughat al-ghurabāʾ*

H = N. S. HANNA, *Die Ghajar: Zigeuner am Nil*

I = ʾĪsā, *Al-lughat al-sirriyya*

ID = Ibn Dāniyāl, ‘Aǧīb wa-Gharīb, ed. Paul Kahle, 76–7 (Arabic).

K = Paul KAHLE, “Zunftsprache,” 316–320.

L = Enno LITTMANN, *Zigeuner-Arabisch*, 6–20.

N = Capt. NEWBOLD, “The Gipsies of Egypt,” 295–299.

Re = Dwight REYNOLDS, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition*

Ro = Everett ROWSON, “Cant and Argot in Cairo Colloquial Arabic,” 13–24.

S = Bernhard STRECK, *Ḥalab: Die Zigeuner am Nil*, 292–5, 387–400.

U = al-ʾUkbarī, *Qaṣīda sāṣāniyya*

V = W. VYCICHL, “The slang of the Halab is-Sudan” *Kush* 7 (1959): 222–228

vK = Alfred VON KREMER, "The Gypsies in Egypt," 265–266.

W = Hans Alexander WINKLER, *Ägyptische Volkskunde*, 345–81, 388–393.

Appendix 2

Fig. 1: Al-Jawbarī, *Kashf al-asrār*, Leiden Or. 191, fol. 91b, written 715/1315.

Fig. 2: Al-Jawbarī, *Kashf al-asrār*, Leiden Or. 191, fol. 92a, written 715/1315.

Appendix 3

Fig. 3: Ibn Dāniyāl, *Ṭayf al-khayyāl*, Escorial Casiri I no. 467, Derenbourg 469, fol. 31a, written 845/1441–2.