A NINETEENTH-CENTURY-ARABIC CONTRASTIVE SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS
BASED ON THE STORY OF ĖDAR
OF THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS (I)

BY

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Introduction

A DESCRIPTIVE syntactic analysis of mid-nineteenth-century-popular-Arabic-narrative-style of a story appended a century earlier to the original Arabic composition of 1001 Nights is an intriguing challenge.

The 1001 Nights is complex in its language, and has a complicated history of transmission. How and when stories were appended to it must await a critical edition of each of them, for there is no evidence that any of them formed part of, or were deemed worthy of being included therein. The printings Bulaq I and Calcutta II, as well as the printing Breslau were based on manuscripts whose common original was composed by a Cairene scribe in order to satisfy a widespread desire for a «complete» copy of the 1001 Nights. See Mahdi pp. v. and viii.

Mahdi’s critical edition of the 1001 Nights, Arabic text, is based on Antoine Galland’s [1704-1717] manuscript in the Bibliothèque Royale, Paris. The Cairene scribe had appended stories to the original composition, most probably in the late eighteenth century, evidenced by their Egyptian colloquialisms clad in a late post-classical written-Arabic garb. Lack of rigour in Classical Arabic grammar and vocabulary in the written popular narrative style, and adaptability to mass readership combined, urged later editors to revise the grammar and interfere with the lexicon of the appended stories towards eliminating Egyptian colloquialisms as best they could, yet with some reservation, in fear of being swept away, lest the flavour of the style be blemished. Thus, in his colophon of the printing Bulaq II (1279 H. = 1862/63), the editor of

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Dāru-l-Ṭibāʿati-l-Kubrā (the Cairo Printing Press), Muḥammad Quṭṭah al-ʿAdawī states the following:

This second edition of the *1001 Nights* has been completed in compliance with the first edition, meeting the requirements of general readership in its approach, rapport, and simplicity. No modification has been introduced regarding Classical Arabic grammatical or lexical discrepancies, except minor, necessary changes, like revising a mistaken poetic metre, or otherwise, bearing in mind the benefit of the reader.

The reservations made by the editor of Bulaq II in his revision of Bulaq I regarding Classical Arabic grammatical or lexical «discrepancies» not being modified, allowed for using Bulaq II as a basis for research when neither Bulaq I nor Calcutta II were available. The researcher was consoled at this lacuna by the availability of M. Habicht’s printing Breslau (1842) based on a manuscript of Tunis which was of an earlier date than the manuscript on which Bulaq I was based, saturated with Cairene grammatical and lexical colloquialisms of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, modified to an extent in the printing Bulaq which was most probably the source of E.W. Lane’s English translation of the *1001 Nights* quoted throughout this paper relating to Bulaq II.

With two printings of Cairene stories appended to the *1001 Nights* at hand, dated about mid-nineteenth century, and based on manuscripts differing in grammar and vocabulary, I launched my study of contrastive syntactic analysis, deliberately choosing the Story of Ġūdar (so in Lane vs. Djouder, Djauder, Gawdar in Chauvin, § 154, pp. 257-272) which, being «an unworthy appended story» was not included in Galland’s, obviously not in Mahdī’s critical edition. The selection suited my purpose best. By contrasting printing Breslau with printing Bulaq II, I focused on their grammatical «discrepancies»/deviations from Classical Arabic syntax, noticeably corrected here and there in printing Bulaq II.

Both printings being scrutinized simultaneously, line by line, in search for syntactic discrepancies, I copied 533 parallel citations contrastively analysed and drafted as descriptive «rules» with adduced Classical Arabic grammars and post-classical vocabularies, and colloquial Egyptian Arabic grammars and vocabularies.

Publishing constraints dictated the transcription of citations in italics, adding Classical Arabic vocalization for the sake of