

MACIEJ KLIMIUK 

Living in Bab Tuma: Two Texts in Damascene Arabic

ABSTRACT Damascene Arabic belongs to the group of Syro-Palestinian dialects. The following presents two texts in this dialect that were recorded in 2008 in Damascus, and found a few years later among other recordings from Syria from that period. The author of the stories is Maysāʾ Šanāʿa, a Maronite Christian living in the district Bab Tuma in the Syrian capital. The texts presented here are unrelated to each other. The first of them tells of Palm Sunday, as well as Easter holidays in Damascus, while the second is a fairly loose story about spending time with her sick friend.

KEYWORDS Arabic dialectology, Christians, Damascene Arabic, Damascus, field research, Syria, Syrian Arabic

1 Introduction

Damascene Arabic is one of the best-described dialects of the Arabic language at selected stages of its development over the last hundred years.¹ In recent years, successive publications have appeared, among which the most noteworthy are Berlinches (Ramos)'s articles with texts and her grammatical description in Spanish (Berlinches 2011; 2013; 2014; 2016; 2017). In addition, Viennese dialectologists, under the guidance of Stephan Procházka, have published an excellent two-volume textbook for the Damascene dialect, the first volume of which has even had its second revised edition (Aldoukhi, Procházka, and Telič 2014a; 2014b; 2016). We can only regret that this textbook is still not available to English-speakers and they have to use English textbooks of a debatable level.

1 See, for example, the description of the state of research on Damascene Arabic in Klimiuk (2013: 19–25, 127–137).

Unfortunately, in recent years, apart from the texts by Berlinches (2011; 2013; 2014; 2016; 2017) and Klimiuk (2013), no other transcriptions have been published which record natural speech and are not prepared, as is the case with dialectal textbooks or publications based on television series. This is a negativum in recent years, in which strictly dialectological conclusions are drawn on the basis of, for example, soap operas and literature in dialects. In 1964, Bloch and Grotzfeld published earlier texts from Damascus. The latter also included an extensive text in his German language grammar of Damascene Arabic a year later (Grotzfeld 1965). Alas, there are not many publicly available and previously scientifically developed recordings in the dialect of the Syrian capital either.²

The following two texts were found among my various recordings from Syria from the years 2008–2011. Both texts were recorded in 2008, and their author is Maysāʿ Šanāfa, a Maronite Christian living in the district Bab Tuma in Damascus, whose other texts were published by me in 2013. In her stories, the author focuses on everyday life. The first text may be valuable from the point of view of typically Christian lexis because it concerns Palm Sunday and to a small extent Easter holidays. In the second story, she talks about her friend and her health problems, as well as spending time together in the absence of her friend's family.

The texts are transcribed in a transcription used in the Arabic dialectology and translated into English. In addition, a short commentary on assimilation, pronunciation, diphthongs and lexical borrowings is included. Major prosodic breaks are noted each time by a vertical bar (|).

2 Texts

Text 1: *ʕīd əš-šafnīne* 'Palm Sunday'

1. *bukra ʕīd əš-šafnīne | lāzem ʔrrūh³ ʕa-lə-knīse | həlu bikūn əl-ʔəddās b-əl... knīse |*
 2. *əl-yōm lāzem ʔnkūn ʔmʔahhẓīn kəll šī mən ʔak^{əl} mən tanḏīf bēt mən kəll šī yafni*
lāzem ykūn əl-bēt kāmēl | 3. *lāzem ykūn ʔāybīn ʔgrāḏ əl-ʔak^{əl} kəlla | la-ʔənnno bukra*
ʕīd | w-kəll əl-ʕālam bətəkūn b-əl-kanāyes w-... | 4. *w-bətrūh bədzūr⁴ baʕḏa baʕdēn ʔaw*
mumken ʔənnno | ʔnrūh ʕala maʕʕam nətḡadda |

2 Only my recordings from Damascus are available in the SemArch of Heidelberg University (<http://semarch.ub.uni-heidelberg.de>). It is not clear whether anyone still has recordings from Damascus that were transcribed by Bloch and Grotzfeld (1964). Some of the cassette tapes with recordings belonging to Grotzfeld (among them probably also Michael Jiha's recordings) were submitted to the Department of Semitic Studies of Heidelberg University in 2020. However, they need to be processed and elaborated. A cursory glance at them indicates that there are no recordings from Damascus among them.

3 *nrūh* > *rrūh* 'we go.'

4 *bətzūr* > *bədzūr* 'she visits.'

5. *əl-ʕīd* | *b-sabaʕaʕʕ nīsān* | *ʕīd əš-šaʕnīne* | *bikūn əʕ-ʕaʕʕ⁵ kamān ʕktīr ʕəlu* | *yōm əl-ʕaḥad bikūn* | *w-əʕ-ʕaʕʕ⁵ | ktīr ʕktīr ʕəlu* | 6. *ḥaddarna⁶ kəll šī ḥaddarna lə-tyāb ḥaddarna l...* | *əl-ʕak⁷ naqḏafna l-bēt w-ʕahhazna⁷ kəll šī lāzem la-ḥāda l-ʕīd* | 7. *la-ʕanno baʕdo fī kamān kəllo ha-l-ʕəsbūʕ taʕrīban baʕd ʕīd əš-šaʕnīne kəllo ʕaʕyād* | 8. *hiyye hayy ʕaʕyād masīḥiyye yaʕni la-l-masīḥiyye ʕaktar šī byəḥtəflu fīyya l-masīḥiyye* | 9. *ʔē šār yōm əl-ʕaḥad sabaʕaʕʕ nīsān* | *fəʕna ʕ-ʕəb⁸ ʕ | faʕarna | ġassalna | lbəsna tyābna lə-ʕdād* | 10. *w-hallaʕ lāzem ʕnrūḥ ʕa-lə-knīse b-əl-ʕawwal* | *la-ʕanno ktīr ʕəlwe lə-knīse* | *bikūnu lə-wlād ʕktīr* | *bikūn fī ktīr ʕaʕfāl* | 11. *w-kəllon ḥāmlīn šamʕa w-məḥtəflīn bi-ha-l-munāsabe hayy* | *huwwe ʕaḥad əš-šaʕnīne biʕūlū-lo* |

12. *əs-sāʕa ʕaʕara taʕrīban ʕləʕna mn əl-bēt* | *rəḥna ʕa-lə-knīse* | *kān əl-ʕəddās ʕmballeš* | *kān fī ʕālam ʕktīr bi-lə-knīse* | 13. *kānu* | *fī wlād ʕktīr ʕzġār [b-əl-kana...]* | *bi-lə-knīse kamān* | *əl-ʕālam barra ktīr malāne b-bāḥet lə-knīse* | 14. *w-kəll əl-ʕālam ḥāmlə ha-t-taliʕonāt ha-l-mōbāylāt* | *fīyyon kēmīra w-ʕam bəʕʕawwer ʕwlāda* | 15. *kəll walad ʕzġīr masalan ʕəmro səne səntēn* | *yaʕni māksīmo la-tlāt təsnīn ʕanno l-walad byəḥmel šamʕa biḥəbb ʕanno yəḥməla l-əš-šamʕa* | 16. *ʕaḏḏēna sāʕātēn* | *bi-lə-knīse sāʕātēn w-šwayy l-əs-sāʕa ʕnaʕʕ⁹ taʕrīban la-xalaš əl-ʕəddās* | *huwwe tawwan ʕəddās kān ʕmballeš əs-sāʕa təʕʕa* | 17. *ʕəlu* | *ʕləʕna baʕd-ma xalaš əl-ʕəddās* | *la-barra ʕa-bāḥet lə-knīse* | *kānu ʕāmlīn məʕl ʕaʕle zġīre* | 18. *kān fī kaššāf* | *w-daʕʕu l-kaššāf ʕšwayy* | *w-dār əl...* | *xawārne* | *b-əl...* | *maʕ əl-ʕaʕfāl b-əš-šamʕa* | 19. *ḥatta kān fī ʕaʕfāl ʕaytām* | *bi-lə-knīse* | *ḥanne⁸ ʕanno bəʕdemon lə-knīse* | *bəʕrāʕi* | *ʕomūron⁹ bəddarrəson¹⁰ biʕaʕmuwwon yaʕni bilabbəsuwwon* | 20. *kān fī ktīr nəʕbe kbīre mən ḥadōl əl-ʕaʕfāl bi-lə-knīse* | *kamān ḥāmlīn šamʕa ḥadōl əl-ʕaʕfāl* | 21. *w-maʕon kəll wāḥed murabbīyye ʕaw* | *yaʕni məʕl-ma yʕūlu ʕanno xaddāme la-ʕəlon ʕaw šī* |

5 < *ʕaʕʕʕ ‘weather.’

6 The verb *ḥaḏḏar/yḥaḏḏer* ‘to prepare, to ready’ is realised as *ḥaddar/yḥadder*. The long emphatic consonant *ḏ* is not pronounced in this case. There is a loss of emphasis here. Cf. *ḥaḏḏar/yḥaḏḏer* ‘vorbereiten, zubereiten’ (Aldoukhi, Procházka, and Telić 2014a: 158–159, 163, 210; Aldoukhi, Procházka, and Telić 2014b: 22, 44, 46, 83, 85, 87, 166). In the recent Spanish grammar of Damascene Arabic by Berlinches (2016: 448), this verb does not appear.

7 Here pronounced with ġ instead of ž.

8 Berlinches Ramos (2020: 86) writes ‘[i]n our [Berlinches Ramos’s] research 34 informants used *ḥannen* 161 times, whereas only two informants used *ḥanne* (3 instances), and then just in combination with *ḥannen*. No informant used *ḥanne* exclusively.’ In a footnote, however, she refers to my earlier transcriptions in which the variant *ḥanne* appears (Klimiuk 2013: 100), and writes ‘[s]urprisingly, Klimiuk’s informant does [i. e., uses *ḥanne* exclusively].’ In both texts included in this article, only the variant *ḥanne* appears twice. It seems to me very appropriate to carry out detailed field research on this subject in the future, if only there is an opportunity to return to Damascus. Cf. Behnstedt (1997: map 257).

9 The plural is borrowed from Standard Arabic *ʕumūr* ‘affairs’; Damascene Arabic *ʕmūr*. Cf. *ʕumūr* ‘asunto, tema’ (Berlinches 2016: 439).

10 *bəddarrəson* > *bəddarrəson* ‘[the church] teaches them.’

22. *s-sāfa tnaʕʕāš baʕʕd-ma ḥaḍarna l-ʔaddās w-šəfna¹¹ l-kaššāf | xalset taʔriban | kəll wāhed rāʕ ʕala¹² bəto | 23. baʕʕd-ma rāhet əl-ʕālam ʕa-bəta | nās rāhet ʕa-bəta | nās rāhet ʕa-l... maʕʕam tətɡadda | nās rāhet la-ʕand ʔarāybīna yzūru baʕʕd yətɡaddu ʕand baʕʕd mumken | 24. kān yōm ʔktīr ḥəlu ʔaddəna | b-ən-nəsbe ʔəli ʔana rʔəʕt ʕa-l-bət la-ʔənni ʕāmlə ʔakʕl b-əl-bət | 25. w-mā bhəbb ʔətɡadda barrāt əl-bət | ʔrʔəʕt ʕa-l-bət ʔətɡaddət b-əl-bət | w-mbaʕaʕna ktīr | w-kān yōm ʔktīr ḥəlu | tɡaddəna | 26. nawʕan-ma | ʔrtəḥna šwayy b-əl-bət | la-ʔənnə kənnə taʕbānīn | b-lə-knīse ʔabʕan mā ʔdərna naʕʕod¹³ mən kətr əl-ʕālam | 27. əl-masa mumken ʔləʕna məšwār hək ʔzɡīr zərna | əl-ʔaqāreb w-əl... ʔazḍiqā? | bi-hayy əl-munāsabe | 28. w-hək xalaʕ hāda lə-nhār yaʕni | huwwe ʔabʕan hāda l-ʔəsbūʕ kəllə ʔaʕyād |*

29. *baʕʕd ʕīd əš-šəfnīne fī ʕənnə xamīs əl-ʔəsrār baʕʕd tlət ʔarbaʕ tiyyām xamīs əl-ʔəsrār | 30. əʒ-ʒəmfə l-ʕazīme | sabt ən-nūr | ʔaḥad əl-ʕəʕəḥ | tanən əl-bāʕūs w-hadöl kəllon ʔəyyām | ʔaʕyād | 31. w-ən-nās kəllə btəḥtəfel fiyyon | b-hadöl əl-ʔəyyām yaʕni | w-yōm kān ʔktīr ḥəlu |*

1. Tomorrow is Palm Sunday. We must go to church. The mass in the church is beautiful. 2. Today, we have to make ready everything from food to cleaning the house. That means everything. The house must be perfect. 3. All the things to eat must be brought because tomorrow is a holiday. All people are in churches. 4. They go to visit each other or maybe we will go to a restaurant where we have lunch.

5. The holiday is 17th April, Palm Sunday. The weather is also very beautiful. It is Sunday. The weather is very beautiful. 6. We have prepared everything. We have prepared the clothes. We have prepared the food. We have cleaned the house. We have made ready everything that is necessary for this holiday. 7. This is because, after that, all the holidays are also around this whole week after Palm Sunday. 8. They are Christian holidays, that is, for Christians. Christians celebrate the most during these holidays. 9. It became Sunday, the 17th of April. We got up in the morning. We ate breakfast. We washed ourselves. We dressed our new clothes. 10. And now we have to go to church first because the church is very beautiful. There will be many children. There will be a lot of children in it. 11. And all (children) hold a candle and celebrate on that occasion. This (holiday) is Palm Sunday, they call it that.

12. Around ten o'clock, we left home. We went to church. The mass began. There were a lot of people in the church. 13. There were also very young children in the church. People outside filled the churchyard. 14. All the people were holding these phones, these mobile phones. There is a camera in them and they are taking pictures

11 A vowel ə is pronounced here as u (*šufna* ‘we saw’) probably under the influence of the conjunction *w-*.

12 *rāḥ ʕala ... > rāʕ ʕala ...* ‘he went to ...’

13 *nəʔʕod > naʕʕod* ‘we sit.’

of their children. 15. Every small child, for example, one year, two years old, that is, up to a maximum of three years old, has a candle. (The child) likes to hold it, a candle. 16. We spent two hours in the church. Two hours and a little bit until around 12 o'clock, until the mass is over. Immediately at nine o'clock mass began. 17. They went out. We went out, after the mass was over, to the churchyard. They were having a sort of small party. 18. There were scouts and they were drumming a little. And priests with children with candles were walking around. 19. There were even orphans in the church. They were, because the church makes a provision for their affairs. It teaches them. They feed them. They dress them. 20. There was a very large number of these children in the church. These children also held a candle. 21. With them, every one of them, there was a nanny or—it means, as they say—she is a servant to them, or somehow so.

22. At around twelve o'clock, after we attended mass and saw the scouts, it was over. Everyone went to his home. 23. After people have gone to their homes. People went to their homes. People went to a restaurant to have lunch. People went to their relatives, to visit each other, to have dinner together perhaps. 24. We had a very beautiful day. As for me, I came home because I made the food at home. 25. I do not like eating lunch outside the house. I came home. I ate dinner at home. We enjoyed it very much and the day was very beautiful. We ate dinner. 26. Somehow or other, we rested a little at home because we were tired. Of course, we could not sit in the church because of many people. 27. In the evening, we may have gone for such a small walk. We visited relatives and friends on that occasion. 28. That is how the day ended. I mean, naturally, this whole week is a holiday.

29. After Palm Sunday we have Maundy Thursday. After three or four days, it is Maundy Thursday. 30. Good Friday, Easter, Easter Saturday, Easter Monday—these are all holidays. 31. And all the people are celebrating during them. That is, these days. And the day was very beautiful.

Text 2: *rfiṭti* 'My friend'

1. *ṭtaṣlet*¹⁴ *fiyyi mbāreh* *rfiṭti* | *w-ṭālēt-li ṭəži la-ṣanda ṭaḍḍi n-nhār* | *ṭana w-hiyye mā ṣanda ḥada b-əl-bēt* | 2. *žōza*¹⁵ | *rāyeh ṣa-mašta l-ḥalu huwwē* | *w-bānta* | *fi ṣāndon munāsabe* | *w-l-munāsabe hiyye ṭanno ṭaxū bəddo yəğḡawwaz*¹⁶ *bukra* | 3. *laṭ mū bukra yaṣni ṭanno xilāl əl-ṭəsbūf baṣṣd šī ṭarbaṣ xamṣ tiyyām w-lāzem yaṣni ṭaxū ykūn b-əl-ṣarṣ* |

14 < **ṭtaṣlet* 'she called [me].'

15 Here pronounced with *ğ* instead of *ž*.

16 *yəḍḏawwaz*/*yətḡawwaz* > *yəğḡawwaz* 'he gets married.' In this case, I leave the original pronunciation with the consonant *ğ*.

4. *fa-ṭṭaṣlet fiyyi ʔālēt-li ʔanno ʔəzi ʔaḏḏi ʔanda ši yōmēn* | *ʔəlt-əlla lēš ʔanno masalan mā bətrūhi ʔa-l-ʔərʔs* | 5. *əl-ʔərʔs bikūn ḥəlu yaʔni lāzem əl-wāḥed yšərek w-xuṣuṣan ʔanno ḥōne byəʔrabek səlfek* | *ʔaxu žōzek* | 6. *ṭəʔet ḥarām marīda* | *ʔanda mašākel b-əl-məʔde w-ʔam tətʔālaž ʔand əd-dōktōr w-ʔal-la d-dōktōr ʔanno lāzem yaʔni ʔanno* | 7. *w-halla? mū šəf əd-dənye w-ṭ-ṭaʔʔ bikūn šōb* | *lāzem mā təṭṭaʔi yaʔni b-əš-šōb w-...* | 8. *yaʔni ʔanda mašākel ʔktīr ʔanno* | *b-əl-məʔde w-ʔanda tasarroʔ b-əl-ʔaʔb w-...* | *ktīr šaḡlāt yaʔni* | 9. *fa-ṭṭaṣlet fiyyi ʔālēt-li ʔəza btəzi bətʔaḏḏi-lek ši yōmēn bēn-ma yəzi žōzi w-bənti mn əl-ʔərʔs* | 10. *ʔəlt-əlla ʔē bšūf ʔəza kənt faḏye bəzi yaʔni tāni yōm əš-šəbʔh* | *tāni yōm əš-šəbʔh walla* | *mā kazzabʔt xabar yaʔni šaḥabt w-rəḥʔt la-ʔanda* | 11. *w-ʔana bḥəbba la-ḥayy ʔrfiʔti yaʔni rfiʔti mən zamān ʔaktar mən ʔašš_ʔsnīn¹⁷* | *kənna ktīr ʔana wiyyāha ʔažḏiqāʔ yaʔni w-ʔaktar mn əl-ʔəxwāt* |

12. *rəḥʔt la-ʔanda* | *ʔaḏḏēt ən-nḥār* | *ṭabʔan* | *ʔafatt¹⁸ ʔana wiyyāha šwayy* | *ʔtsallēna kān žōza ṭələf mn əš-šəbʔh bakkīr huwwə w-əl-bənt rəyḥīn* | 13. *rəyḥīn ʔa-l-ʔərʔs yaʔni huwwə l-ʔərʔs bikūn yōm əž-žəmʔa nəḥna kān əl-ḥaki ḥāda n-nḥār ət-talāta l-ʔarbʔa* | 14. *ʔaḏḏēna ʔaḏḏēt yōm ʔanda ktīr ḥəlu* | *w-nəmʔt ʔanda w-tāni yōm əš-šəbʔh* | *yaʔni ržəʔʔt ʔa-l-bēt ʔana wiyyāha žəbta maʔi ʔana la-ʔand ʔahla ʔahla ḥōn sāknīn ʔəddāmna ʔəddām bētna yaʔni* | 15. *ʔaʔadna ʔana wiyyāha mbaṣaṭna* | *yaʔni mā kān fi šaḡlāt tasliye ktīr hiyye šaḥīḥ marīda* | 16. *bass ḥarām ʔanno sāʔatta¹⁹ šwayy bədda tʔūm ʔa-l-ḥammām* | *bədda tākol masalan la-ʔanno māna ʔadrāne yaʔni* | 17. *w-kān žōza²⁰ xādama huwwə w-bənto bass lāzem fi wəžeb ʔandon ʔanno* | *fi ʔərʔs w-lāzem ʔanno ykūnu yaʔni b-əl-ʔərʔs* | 18. *daʔʔet hiyye w-ʔtazret yaʔni l-əl-ʔarīs ʔanno hiyye mā fiyya w-marḏāne w-...* | *ʔanda ktīr mašākel yaʔni* | 19. *ṭṭaṣal žōza* | *waʔʔt waṣṣalu ʔala ...* | *mašta l-ḥəlu* | *sallam ʔalēna* | *w-ʔṭamman²¹ ʔala marto ʔanno kīfa w-šū ʔamle w-...* | 20. *w-ʔam yəzi ʔa-š-šī w-ʔəza ʔana waṣṣalt la-ʔanda walla lā ḥənnə²² bēton šwayy ʔbʔid b-ʔždaydet ʔarṭūz* |

21. *mbaṣaṭna* | *ʔē ḥaka maʔna yaʔni w-mbaṣaṭna w-ʔənnā-lo²³ l-ḥamdəlla mā fi ši w-kaza* | 22. *w-ʔaʔadna walla ʔana wiyyāha mbaṣaṭna šwayy nəʔfarraž ʔa-t-təʔzyōn šwayy nədzakkar nəʔʔod nəḥki ʔəšaṣ mn əl-ʔadīme wən kənna rrūḥ wən kənna nəži* | 23. *šū naʔmel* | *maʔ mīn masalan sāʔed ʔēmta šū wən ʔrrūḥ* | *w-ḥakēna ʔəṣša ktīr ḥəlwe w-hiyye waʔʔt rəḥʔt ʔana w-hiyye ʔa-bērūt* | 24. *b-yōm qarrarna ʔabʔl b-ən-nḥār ʔanno nəḥna bəddna rrūḥ bukra ʔa-bērūt* | *ʔālēt-li trūḥi* | *ʔəlt-əlla brūḥ* | *tāni yōm rəḥna* |

17 *ʔašr ʔsnīn* > *ʔašš_ʔsnīn* ‘ten years.’

18 *ʔaʔadʔt* > *ʔafatt* ‘I sat.’

19 *sāʔadta* > *sāʔatta* ‘I helped her.’

20 Here pronounced with *ğ* instead of *ž*.

21 < **ṭamman* ‘he calmed down.’

22 Here the variant *ḥənnə* (3 pl.) appears once again. See my earlier footnote on this issue in Damascene Arabic.

23 *ʔəlnā-lo* > *ʔənnā-lo* ‘we told him.’

25. [s...] *ʔammanna sayyāra*²⁴ *ʔabʕan sayyāra xšūši yaʕni ʔaxdātna | laʔ yaʕni mānna məḥtāzīn l-əš-ši kənna ʔənnno ġər ʔənnno masalan sayyāra*²⁵ *ʔaktar ši | 26. ʔaʕadna žəbna hayy əl-ʔəšša ʔənnno waʔta kif^əmbašaʕna w-šū rəḥna zərna | w-tfarražna ʕa-t-təlfəzyōn^əšwayy | 27. tġaddəna ʔabaxna ʔana w-hiyye | yaʕni hək^əmbašaʕna w-shərna b-əl-ləl | kən žāye ʕala bāli ʔana bass ʔəšrab ʕanda bīra | 28. bass mā šrəb^t yaʕni yā ʔālət-li təšrabi ʔəlt-əlla laʔ mā bəšrab lēs haʔʔa ʔənnno ʔəšrab la-ḥāli laʔ | law hiyye ʕam təšrab maʕi ʔē | 29. w-hək | ^əmbašaʕna | w-ʔaḏḏəna lēle ktīr ḥəlwe ʔana w-hiyye nəmna ši s-sāfa ʔarbaʕa wəšš əḏ-ḏaww | 30. əl-bēt^ə ktīr ḥəlu | kbīr | w-ʔi žnēne | w-balkōn yaʕni ʔənnno xarž əs-sahra | w-šāyer mn əl-mantīʔa mətl əḏ-ḏəʕa |*

31. *w-tāni yōm əš-šəb^əḥ fəʔna faʕarna w-^əlbəsna tyābna w-ġassalna | w-ʔəžīna | ʔana wiyyāha ʕa-bāb tūma hiyye rāḥet la-ʕand ʔahla w-ʔana bšəʔʔ ʕa-bēt ʔahli | 32. kən yōm^ə ktīr ḥəlu | w-zəkrāyātna kənet^ə ktīr ḥəlwe |*

1. A friend of mine called me yesterday and told me to come and spend the day with her. Me and she (only). There will be no one else at her house. 2. Her husband goes to Mashta al-Helu.²⁶ He and her daughter. They have an occasion, and the occasion is that his brother will be getting married tomorrow. 3. No, not tomorrow.²⁷ I mean during the week. In about four–five days. And he must—it means—his brother, be at the wedding.

4. She called me. She told me to come and spend about two days with her. I asked her, for example, ‘Why are you not going to the wedding?’ 5. The wedding is beautiful. It means that you have to participate. Especially because he is a relative to you, your brother-in-law, your husband’s brother. 6. Unfortunately, she has turned out to be ill. She has stomach problems and is undergoing medical treatment with a doctor. The doctor told her that this is necessary, it means that ... 7. And now is not the full summer? The weather is hot. ‘You cannot go out in such heat and ...’ 8. It means, she has many problems. In (her) stomach. She has tachycardia and ... It means, a lot of things. 9. And she called me, told me, ‘If you come, you will spend about two days together until my husband and daughter come back from the wedding.’ 10. I told her, ‘Yes, I will see. If I am free, I will come.’ I mean, the next morning (I will come). The next morning, of course, I did not deny the information. I mean, I was a friend and

24 Here pronounced with a vowel *i* as *siyyāra* ‘car.’ It is a phonetic realisation, perhaps resulting from the rapid pronunciation of a word and a consonant environment with a semivowel *y*. A little further, the word is pronounced as *sayyāra*.

25 Here pronounced with a vowel *i* as *siyyāra* ‘car.’

26 Mashta al-Helu (*Mašta l-Ḥəlu*) it is a town situated in north-western Syria, belonging to the Tartus Governorate. Because of its mountain location, it is a popular tourist destination. The town is inhabited mainly by Christians.

27 The speaker tries to explain herself here from the word *bukra* she used, which dictionaryly means ‘tomorrow.’ However, the expression of time with this word is too inaccurate and means more like ‘in the near future,’ ‘for days,’ ‘soon,’ but it certainly does not refer to ‘tomorrow.’

I went to her. 11. And I like this friend. I mean, she has been my friend for more than ten years. She and I were very much friends, I mean, more than siblings.

12. I went to her. I spent the day at her place. Of course, she and I sat for a while. We had fun. Her husband left very early in the morning. He and (her) daughter went. 13. They went to the wedding. I mean, the wedding is on Friday. We, this conversation was on Tuesday, Wednesday. 14. We spent. I spent a very beautiful day with her. And I slept at her place. On the second day in the morning, I mean, I came home with her. I brought her with me to her family. Her family lives here in front of us, I mean, in front of our house. 15. We sat, me and her. We were happy. I mean, there was nothing very entertaining. She was really sick. 16. But terrible! I helped her a little (because) she wanted to stand on the toilet. For example, she wanted to eat. (I helped her) because she could not. 17. Her husband has served her. He and his daughter. But they had to, they had an obligation, because there is a wedding and they had to be at the wedding. 18. She called and apologised to the bride that she could not and was ill. And that she has many problems. 19. Her husband called when they got to Mashta al-Helu. He greeted us and calmed down about his wife that how she is doing, what she is doing and ... 20. And he is now going for something. Whether I came to her or not. They, their house, is a bit far away, in Jdeidat Artouz.²⁸

21. We laughed. Yes, he talked to us, I mean, we were happy and we told him that, thank God, everything is fine, and so on. 22. Of course, she and I sat, we enjoyed watching a little TV, we remembered a little. Then we were telling a story from the old days, where we were going, where we were coming. 23. What we do, who I help, for example, when, what, where we go. And we were telling a very beautiful story and it (that story) was when she and I went to Beirut. 24. One day we decided the day before that we would go to Beirut tomorrow. She said to me, 'Are you going?' I said to her, 'I am going!' The next day we went. 25. We provided us with a car. Naturally a private car. It means, it took us. No, I mean we did not need something else, like a bigger car. 26. Then we brought the story that we enjoyed it and what we visited afterwards. We watched some television. 27. We ate dinner, we cooked together. Well, we were happy. We passed the night awake. It came to my mind that we would only drink beer at her place. 28. But I did not drink, I mean, oh, she told me, 'Drink!' I said to her, 'I do not drink.' Why, actually, because I do not drink alone. If she drank with me, yes. 29. And that is how we enjoyed it. We spent a very beautiful night, her and me. We went to sleep around four o'clock at dawn. 30. The house is very nice, big. There is a garden and a balcony, which means it is suitable for a party. It is in an area like a village.

²⁸ Jdeidat Artouz (*Ždaydet ſArtūz*) is a town situated in southern Syria, about 20 km west of Damascus, belonging to the Rif Dimashq Governorate. Druze, Christians, and Sunni Muslims inhabit the town.

31. The next morning, we got up. We ate breakfast. We put on our clothes and washed ourselves. And we arrived, me and her to Bab Tuma. She went to her family, and I am visiting my family's house. 32. It was a very nice day. Our memories were very beautiful.

3 Remarks

The following types of assimilation appear in the texts:

a. left-to-right (progressive):

nl > *nn* *ʔəlnā-lo* > *ʔənnā-lo* 'we told him,'
šr > *šš* *ʔašr ʔsnīn* > *ʔašš ʔsnīn* 'ten years.'

b. right-to-left (regressive):

nr > *rr* *nrūḥ* > *rrūḥ* 'we go,'
dt > *tt* *sāʔadta* > *sāʔatta* 'I helped her,'
 ʔaʔadʔt > *ʔaʔatt* 'I sat,'
td > *dd* *bətdarrəson* > *bəddarrəson* '[the church] teaches them,'
tǧ (dž) > *ǧǧ* *yəḏzawwaz* > *yəǧǧawwaz* 'he gets married.'
tz > *dz* *bətzūr* > *bədzūr* 'she visits,'
ʔf > *ʔf* *nəʔʔod* > *naʔʔod (nəʔʔod)* 'we sit.'

Only one example of external sandhi occurs in both texts and concerns a word ending in *ḥ* (*rāḥ* 'he went') and a word beginning in *ʔ* (*ʔala* 'to'): *rāḥ ʔala ...* > *rāḥ ʔala ...* 'he went to ...'

The issue of pronunciation of the preposition/pseudoverb *ʔand* seems interesting, which I did not pay so much attention to before. The informant pronounces this word once as *ʔand* (*ʔand*, *ʔanda*, *ʔandon*, *la-ʔand*, *la-ʔanda*) and another time as *ʔənd* (*ʔənda*, *ʔənna*, *ʔəndon*).

There are also diphthongs which appear either in monosyllable words or borrowed from standard language:

a. a diphthong *aw*:

ʔaw 'or,'
law 'if,'
nawʔan-ma 'somehow or other.'

b. a diphthong *ay* [ey]:

ʔdaydet ʔarʔūz 'Jdeidat Artouz,'
ʔaytām 'orphans.'

Three forms of plurals are worthy of note which retain a prefix *ʔa-*: *ʔaʕyād* ‘feasts,’ *ʔatfāl* ‘children’ and *ʔaytām* ‘orphans,’ instead of expected plurals such as: *ʕyād*, *ʕfāl*, and *ʕitām*. Plurals such as *ʔaʕyād* and *ʔatfāl* are also included by Berlinches (2016: 467, 471) in her grammar.

Words borrowed from Standard Arabic may retain vowels *u* or *i* in the first syllable: *munāsabe* ‘occasion,’ *murabbiyye* ‘nanny, nursemaid,’ *xuṣūṣan* ‘especially’ and *xilāl* ‘during.’ The consonant *q* is also pronounced in borrowings: *qarrarna* ‘we decided,’ *ʔaqāreb* ‘relatives’ and *ʔaḏḏiqāʔ* (< OA *ʔaṣḏiqāʔ*?) ‘friends.’²⁹

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Publication of this paper was made possible by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) under the programme ‘Kleine Fächer – Große Potenziale,’ grant no. 01UL1834X.

ORCID®

Maciej Klimiuk  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4936-350X>

References

- ALDOUKHI, RIMA, STEPHAN PROCHÁZKA, AND ANNA TELIČ. 2014a. *Lehrbuch des Syrisch-Arabischen 1: Praxisnaher Einstieg in den Dialekt von Damaskus*. 1st ed. ‘Semitica Viva – Series Didactica’ 5,1. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- . 2014b. *Lehrbuch des Syrisch-Arabischen 2: Damaszenisch für Fortgeschrittene*. ‘Semitica Viva – Series Didactica’ 5,2. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- . 2016. *Lehrbuch des Syrisch-Arabischen 1: Praxisnaher Einstieg in den Dialekt von Damaskus*. 2nd ed. ‘Semitica Viva – Series Didactica’ 5,1. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- BEHNSTEDT, PETER. 1997. *Sprachatlas von Syrien. Band I: Beiheft, Kartenband*. ‘Semitica Viva’ 17. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- BERLINCHES (RAMOS), CARMEN. 2011. ‘Dos textos en árabe dialectal de Damasco.’ *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes* 22: 127–136.
- . 2013. ‘Texts Related to Cooking in the Arabic Dialect of Damascus.’ *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 103: 25–48.
- . 2014. ‘Textos dialectales sobre la ciudad de Damasco.’ *Romano-Arabica* 14: 33–57.
- . 2016. *El dialecto árabe de Damasco (Siria): estudio gramatical y textos*. ‘Estudios de Dialectología Árabe’ 11. Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza.

29 Cf. Berlinches (2016: 464, 476) *ʔaṣḏiqāʔ*, *ʔṣḏiʔāʔ* and *qarrar biqarrer*.

- . 2017. 'Kəll səne w ʔəntu sālmin!': Five Dialectal Texts About Muslim Religious Feasts in Damascus.' *Mediterranean Language Review* 24: 175–186.
- . 2020. 'Notes on Language Change and Standardization in Damascus Arabic.' *Anaquel de Estudios Árabes* 31: 79–99.
- BLOCH, ARIEL, AND HEINZ GROTZFELD. 1964. *Damaszenisch-arabische Texte mit Übersetzung, Anmerkungen und Glossar*. 'Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes' 35,2. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- GROTZFELD, HEINZ. 1965. *Syrisch-Arabische Grammatik (Dialekt von Damaskus)*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- KLIMIUK, MACIEJ. 2013. *Phonetics and Phonology of Damascus Arabic*. 'Studia Arabistyczne i Islamistyczne. Monografie' 1. Warsaw: Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Warsaw.