

L'Arabo Anziano (The Old Arab). A Forgotten Book by Ya'qūb Ṣanū'

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Abstract

L'arabo anziano is a poem published in Cairo in 1869 and authored by Ya'qūb Ṣanū' (1839 – 1912), an Egyptian Jew of Italian origins who is considered as one of the pioneers of the Arab theatre and one of the first Egyptian nationalists. The poem is a precious testimony for the time Ṣanū' spent in Livorno, Italy, and reflects his links with Freemasonry. This article intends to focus on the role of this poem for a comprehension of the rise of nationalism in Ya'qūb Ṣanū''s ideals and tries to shed light on his Italian experience through new unpublished documents found in the Historical Archives of the Jewish community of Livorno.

Key words – Arabic Literature; Egyptian Nationalism; Jewish Communities; Freemasonry

1. Introduction

Ya'qūb Ṣanū' (Cairo, 1839 – Paris, 1912), also known as James Sanua or by his nickname *Abū Naẓẓāra* 'the man with the glasses', was a Jewish Italo-Egyptian journalist and playwright who created a national theatre in Egypt and won the sobriquet of "le Molière égyptien"¹. As a journalist, his main activity was the creation of a satirical newspaper in Egyptian Arabic named *Abū Naẓẓāra Zarqā'* ("the man with the blue glasses")².

¹ For further information on Ya'qūb Ṣanū''s drama activities, see, *inter alia*: Dina AMIN, "Ya'qūb Ṣanū'", in Roger ALLEN (ed.), *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography. 1850-1950*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010, pp. 284-292; Nağwā Ibrāhīm 'ĀNŪS, *Masraḥ Ya'qūb Ṣanū'* [Ya'qūb Ṣanū''s theatre], al-Qāhira, al-Ḥay'a al-miṣriyya al-āmma li-l-kitāb, 1984; Muhammad Mustafa BADAWI, "The Father of the Modern Egyptian Theatre: Ya'qūb Ṣanū'", «Journal of Arabic Literature», 16 (1985), pp. 132-145; Rosella DORIGO CECCATO, "Autobiographical Features in the Works of Ya'qūb Ṣanū'", in Robin OSTLE, Ed DE MOOR, Stefan WILD (eds.), *Writing the Self. Autobiographical Writing in Modern Arabic Literature*, London, Saqi Books, 1998, pp. 51-60; 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ĠUNAYM, *Ṣanū' rā'id al-masraḥ al-miṣrī* [Ṣanū', Pioneer of the Arabic Theatre], al-Qāhira, ad-Dār al-Qawmiyya li-ṭ-Ṭibā'a wa-n-Naṣr, 1966; Matti MOOSA, "Ya'qūb Ṣanū' and the rise of Arab Drama in Egypt", «International Journal of Middle East Studies», 5.4 (1974), pp. 401-433; Monica RUOCCO, *Storia del teatro arabo dalla Nahḍa a oggi*, Roma, Carocci, 2010, pp. 41-47; Philip C. SADGROVE, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century (1799-1882)*, Reading, Ithaca Press, 1996, pp. 89-100.

² For further information on Ya'qūb Ṣanū''s journalistic activities and satire, see, *inter alia*: Eliane Ursula ETTMÜLLER, *The Construct of Egypt's National-Self in James Sanua's Early Satire and Caricature*, Berlin, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2012; Liesbeth ZACK, "The use of the Egyptian dialect in the satirical newspaper

The present article aims at investigating *L'arabo anziano* ("The Old Arab")³, a book which Ya'qūb Ṣanū' published in Cairo in 1869 and which is still little known in the field of Arab studies⁴.

The objective of our research is twofold. First of all, this paper intends to show that *L'arabo anziano* represented a real experimental laboratory for the activities Ya'qūb Ṣanū' would later develop, i.e. theatrical and journalistic activities, as well as for his later political views including becoming a member of Masonic lodges. *L'arabo anziano* represented also a considerable contribution to the emergence of Egyptian nationalism⁵.

Secondly, the paper intends to highlight that this book represents an important testimony for the time Ṣanū' spent in Italy, notably in Livorno.

The article ends with three Appendixes that include: some short notes about the lexicon of the poem; two original handwritten documents concerning the Italian experience of Ya'qūb Ṣanū' which have been found in the archives of the Jewish community of Livorno; and finally, since *L'arabo anziano* can be found only in two European libraries⁶, a transcription of the whole text of the book.

2. The Style and Form of *L'Arabo anziano*

The first page of *L'Arabo Anziano* opens with a short dedication to Marco de Morpurgo di Nilma and the full work consists of twenty-two poems with the following

Abu Naḍḍāra Zar'a", in Olivier DURAND, Angela Daiana LANGONE, Giuliano MION (eds.), *Alf lahġa wa lahġa. Proceedings of the 9th Aida Conference*, Wien, Lit Verlag, 2014, pp. 465-478.

³ James SANUA, *L'Arabo anziano*, Il Cairo, Nuova Tipografia di P. Cumbo, 1869.

⁴ References to *L'arabo anziano* are very scarce. In particular, Adam Mestyan is one who gives it greater prominence. Cfr.: Adam MESTYAN, "Arabic Theater in early Khedivial Culture, 1868-72: James Sanua revisited", «International Journal Middle East Studies», 46 (2014), pp. 125-126 and the Arabic version of his article "al-Masrah al-'Arabī fi at-Taqaifa al-hidīwiyya (1868-1872). Naḍra ḡadīda 'alā Ya'qūb (Ġīms) Ṣanū'", published on the website <www.almoqtataf.tk> on 30 July, 2015. *L'Arabo anziano* is also mentioned by Wafaa Raouf El Beih who defines it as «un poemetto composto da vari brani, fra cui due in forma di brevi dialoghi, che prendono storicamente di mira costumi e credenze della società egiziana ottocentesca». Cfr.: Wafaa Raouf EL BEIH (ed.), *Il marito infedele: James Sanua e il teatro italiano in Egitto*, Bergamo, Bergamo University Press, 2015, p. 21. Finally, we can also find other references to the book in Angela Daiana LANGONE, *Molière et le théâtre arabe. Réception moliéresque et identités nationales arabes*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2016, pp. 101-103.

⁵ As to Ya'qūb Ṣanū's membership of Masonic lodges and his contribution to the genesis of an Egyptian nationalism, see: Ziad FAHMY, "Francophone Egyptian Nationalists, Anti-British Discourse, and European Public Opinion, 1885-1910: The Case of Mustafa Kamil and Ya'qūb Ṣannu'", «Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and Middle East», 28.1 (2008), pp. 170-183; Irene L. GENDZIER, "James Sanua and Egyptian Nationalism", «Middle East Journal», 15.1 (1961), pp. 16-28; K. Paul JOHNSON, *The Masters Revealed: Madame Blavatsky and the Myth of the Great White Lodge*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 52-54; Jacob M. LANDAU, "Abu Naddara, an Egyptian-Jewish Nationalist", «The Journal of Jewish Studies», 3.1 (1952), pp. 30-44; Jacob M. LANDAU, "Prolegomena to a Study of Secret Societies in Modern Egypt", «Middle Eastern Studies», 1.2 (1965), pp. 136-185; LANGONE, *Molière et le théâtre arabe*, pp.101-117. For an overview of the all above-mentioned activities of Ṣanū', the volume of Irene L. Gendzier remains indispensable: Irene L. GENDZIER, *The Practical Visions of Ya'qūb Sanu'*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University Press, 1966. The exceptionally eclectic and charismatic personality of Ya'qūb Ṣanū' has also inspired a novel by the Iraqi-born writer Shimon Ballas (Ṣam'un Ballas, Baghdad 1930-). See: Ṣam'un BALLĀS, *Solo* [Solo], Bnei Brak, Sifriat Poalim, 1998.

⁶ According to the Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog (<<https://kvk.bibliothek.kit.edu/>>), *L'arabo anziano* is cataloged by only two libraires: the Universitätsbibliothek in Ruhr-Universität Bochum, and the Biblioteca comunale Labronica Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi in Livorno.

titles: 1. *Il Suo Spirito* (His Spirit); 2. *Quel che l'Arabo Anziano non cessa di ripetere ad ogni istante. Fede* (What the Old Arab keeps repeating at every moment. Faith); 3. *Fato* (Fate); 4. *Rassegnazione* (Resignation); 5. *Amore* (Love); 6. *Libertà* (Freedom); 7. *Amor nazionale* (Love for the Nation); 8. *Religione* (Religion); 9. *La Geografia* (Geography); 10. *Armi* (Arms); 11. *Monoteismo* (Monotheism); 12. *Ammirazione* (Admiration); 13. *Garibaldi*; 14. *La Capacità degli Europei* (The ability of Europeans); 15. *Sostegno della terra* (The support of the earth); 16. *Il Discorso di Napoleone III. Dialogo fra Ali e Mustafa* (Napoleon III's speech. Dialogue between Ali and Mustafa); 17. *L'Abolizione dei Consolati* (The abolition of Consulates); 18. *La Massoneria* (Freemasonry); 19. *Il Principe di Galles. Dialogo fra Saleh e Mohammed* (The Prince of Wales. Dialogue between Saleh and Mohammed); 20. *Il Circo* (The Circus); 21. *Il Canto* (Singing); 22. *La Profanazione* (Desecration).

Each of the twenty-two poems consists of “sestine narrative” which follow the ABABCC rhyme scheme, with the first four verses in alternate rhyme (“rima alternata”) and the last two in rhyming couplets (“rima baciata”).

This stylistic choice is often used in Italian literature for light or playful topics, as proven by the Tuscan literary production – the Italian region the author knew best – that gives rise in the nineteenth century to the satire in “sestine” composed by some authors such as Antonio Guadagnoli (Arezzo, 1798 – Cortona, 1858)⁷ and Giovanni Guarducci (Livorno, 1813 – Livorno, 1863)⁸. Moreover, even the oldest goliardic episode which has been handed down to us, a satire composed in Pisa in 1820 by a group of students, was composed in “sestine”⁹.

Two poems in particular (the 16 and the 19) are composed in the form of dialogues. The two aforementioned dialogues are not complete comedies, but Adam Mestyan rightly observes «they give evidence of a budding theatrical talent. Even if Sanua's direct inspiration for Arabic theater might have arisen from watching visiting the western Europeans, he was already seasoned in dialogue writing»¹⁰. The use of the dialogue in “sestine” is quite frequent in the literature produced by authors from Livorno, as proven by Giovanni Guarducci's¹¹ satires written in *bagitto*¹².

As for the language, the book is written in Italian and all poems, except for the fifth and sixth, exhibit elements of Arabic lexicon, part of which is explained or translated into Italian by the author in his footnotes. The Appendix 1 of this article shows a list of these Arabic terms accompanied by short explanations.

⁷ See, for example, Antonio GUADAGNOLI, *Raccolta completa delle Poesie Giocose*, Firenze, Tipografia di Pietro Fraticelli, 1842.

⁸ For further information about Guarducci's works, see: Fabrizio FRANCESCHINI, *Giovanni Guarducci, il bagitto e il Risorgimento. Testi giudeo-livornesi 1842-1863 e Glossario*, Livorno, Salomone Belforte & C., 2013.

⁹ «In Pisa li Scolari clamorosi, e amanti del disordine composero una Satira contro quei compagni loro, che sdegnando di seguirli nelle sregolatezze cercavano di vivere modestamente [...]. Era questa Satira in Sestine». See: Ersilio MICHEL, *Maestri e scolari dell'Università di Pisa nel Risorgimento nazionale (1815-1870)*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1949, p. 12.

¹⁰ MESTYAN, “Arabic Theater in early Khedivial Culture”, p. 126.

¹¹ Just to give an example, the poem “Il progresso della Nazione. Di Cosetto Cosetti [1863]. Dialogo fra Mosè e Salomone”. See: FRANCESCHINI, *Giovanni Guarducci*, pp. 308-317.

¹² Judeo-Italian variety from Livorno.

3. The themes of *L'arabo anziano*

The book deals with topics which the author develops in later works. However, it is clear that the stinging criticism of religion is the common thread binding the poems together, religion which is perceived as the primary cause of the setback of the Arab world compared to the European achievements.

The leading character in all of the poems is a typical old Arab, the “*scek*”, a person who is tightly pegged to tradition and terrified by change.

Şanū‘ does not hesitate to describe him as “partito retrogrado” (“backward party”, poem 1) – the older generation hindering the wind of change which at that time was shaking Egypt: the year 1869 saw the opening of the Suez Canal, a symbol of modernity and efficiency for the whole country.

The first poem opens with a praise to the work of the khedive Ismā‘īl (Cairo 1830 - Istanbul 1895), promoter of the advancement of the country, who is described by Şanū‘ as a «worthy son of Ibrahim, who does nothing / but care about the good of the Egyptian people»¹³.

Ismā‘īl is the moderniser of Egypt and the director of colossal works of urbanisation which transformed Cairo, to the point that it could compete with Paris¹⁴. In the poem, the author mentions the flowering of the arts and sciences, the opening of schools and prestigious colleges, and finally, the boasting of its own army of indigenous people¹⁵. On the eve of the opening of the Suez Canal, the city of Cairo has almost the physical appearance of a western town, but, according to Şanū‘, this visible progress is not sustained by an improvement in Egyptian costumes which still remain traditional.

The *modus vivendi* of the old Arab is summarised in poems 2, 3 and 4: he repeatedly reiterates his faith in God and the Prophet, and lives to enjoy the future fruits of “*Ganne*”, paradise (poem 2). His approach to life is passive and fatalistic to the point that he ignores medical prescriptions: in poem 3, Osman, one of the old Arab’s sons, being sick, wants to eat a white honey cake in spite of the diet prescribed to him by his doctor. The father prefers to satisfy his son’s wish because he does not trust any human intervention but instead he relies exclusively on God¹⁶. Another typical feature of the old Arab is resignation (poem 4): the “*scek*” is almost completely bored with life and

¹³ “*D’Ibrahim degno figlio, il qual non cura / Altro che il ben del popolo Egiziano*”.

¹⁴ When Ya‘qūb Şanū‘ wrote *L’arabo anziano*, in 1869, he put great trust and hope in Khedive, hopes that will be shattered three years later: Ismā‘īl decided, in fact, in 1872, to terminate the activities of the Egyptian theatre founded by Şanū‘, as documented by Baignières: «Mais lorsque celui-ci [Şanū‘], démasquant ses batteries, fit de la scène une tribune où il critiquait et raillait les mœurs dépravées de la cour khédiviale; lorsqu’il fit représenter une tragédie de sa composition, intitulée *Patrie et Liberté* ! Lorsque les cheikhs de l’Université de l’Azhar, marchant sur les traces de Sanua, composèrent et jouèrent des pièces arabes, le vice-roi décréta la suppression du nouveau théâtre». See P. DE BAIGNIERES, *L’Egypte satirique*, Paris, Imprimerie de Lefebvre, 1886, p. 14. It is for this reason that in the preface (*muqaddima*) of the theatrical work *Mūlyūr Mişr wa-mā yuqāsīhi* («Egypt’s Molière and What He Suffers»), Şanū‘ points out that in the past he had been one of the closest friends of the Khedive, suggesting implicitly that they are no longer on good terms. In this regard, see: Ya‘qūb ŞANŪ‘, *Mūlyūr Mişr wa-mā yuqāsīhi* [Egypt’s Molière and What He Suffers], Bayrūt, al-Maṭba‘a al-Adabiyya, 1912.

¹⁵ “*Che l’esercito egizio è quasi adesso / Dagli uffiziali loro comandato*”.

¹⁶ “*Più del medico il nome maledetto / Non proferirmi, o donna: il Creatore / Di chi in lui crede è l’unico dottore; / Onde in lui solo ogni speranza metto: / Se al figlio in fronte è scritto che vivrà / Cento focaccine mangi, ei non morrà*”.

does not intervene in any way to improve it. He is, in fact, eagerly waiting for an afterlife that will be populated by beautiful and kind “*hurie*”. The old Arab criticises other religions which he considers as enemies: in poem 11, the “*scek*” comes out against a Protestant missionary who invites people to pray to the son of God.

The criticism of the old Arab merely takes up a leitmotif of disputes between Muslims and Christians in the classical period¹⁷.

He continues to believe in the ancient legends such as the one of the mythical bull that would support the world with one of its horns: in poem 15, the old Arab fears that the disease afflicting the bulls may also affect the mythical bull and therefore bring about the fall of earth and the destruction of all creation¹⁸.

According to the old Arab’s perspective, any contacts with the West represents a serious threat for religion¹⁹.

The theme of progress is also discussed in poem 14 and is associated with the intervention of Satan. In the opinion of the old Arab, it is only through a pact with the devil that Europeans came to build the telegraph, locomotives (*bagur*) and the poem 20 is entirely dedicated to the circus, held up as an artistic form embodying the devil’s intervention²⁰.

Even opera is not immune from the barbs of the old Arab who, in poem 21, compares the singing of the prima donna in Verdi’s *La Traviata* with the screams of a woman in labor. Here too Ṣanū‘ refers implicitly to another building, the Opera House, which was still under construction, when his poem was published at the end of September 1869. In April 1869 the Khedive entrusted the building project to architect Pietro Avoscani (Livorno 1816 - Alexandria 1891), a member of the *Giovine Italia*, who would hand it over completed six months later²¹.

Finally, the “*farmassun*”, the Masons, are the fierce enemies of the old Arab. In poem 18, the old Arab describes them as atheists, enemies not only of Islam but of all monotheistic religions²². It is clear that Ṣanū‘ addresses the question of Freemasonry because he himself had become a member of it, one year before the composition of *L’arabo anziano*, i.e. 25 February, 1868, he joined the Concordia Lodge, the first English Rite Masonic lodge in Egypt, achieving the title of Master on 24 December of the same year²³.

¹⁷ See: Dimitri GUTAS, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: the Graeco-Arabic translation movement in Baghdad and early ‘Abbāsid society (2nd-4th/8th-10th c.)*, London and New York, Routledge, 1998, pp. 80-83.

¹⁸ Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘ refers to Kuyūṭā’, a big mythological bull. According to the cosmography developed in the classical period, in fact, God would create an angel who carries the earth on his mighty shoulders; his feet rest on a ruby borne on the horns of a bull, that stands erect upon the fish Bahamūt which swims in the waters that cover the unknowable. See: André MIQUEL, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu’au milieu du XIe siècle*, Paris, La Haye, Mouton, 1967.

¹⁹ “*Noi dobbiamo / lontani star da loro quanto possiamo*”; “*Che questa civiltà la religione / Nostra danneggia, e della eterna morte / Ci schiude ambe le nere e triste porte*”.

²⁰ The circus had been built, at the expense of the Khedive, and it was opened on 11 February 1869. See: Philip C. SADGROVE, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 49.

²¹ The Opera House will be completed November 1, 1869 opened with *Il Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi. It was commissioned by the Khedive to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal. For further information about the Opera House, see *inter alia*: Saleh ABDOUN, *Genesi dell’Aida con documentazione inedita*, Parma, Quaderni dell’Istituto di Studi Verdiani, 4, 1971, pp. 147-151.

²² “*Lor scopo è chiaro: vogliono annullare / le religioni e Scek, Babas, Khakhami*”.

²³ His certificate of membership is published by Eliane Ursula ETMÜLLER, *The Construct of Egypt’s National-Self in James Sanua’s Early Satire and Caricature*, pp.63-64.

The battleground between the two different visions of the world represented by the old and the new generation can possibly be summarised in the following topics: education; polygamy and the role of women; the language issue; patriotism; topicality.

3.1. Education

The “*scek*” constantly regrets the loss of religious identity, particularly in education, and thus he lashes out vehemently against the “profane scuole” (secular schools) where European teachers abound and the study of the Koran is neglected (poem 1).

Poems 8 and 9 concern themselves with the education of the new generations: poem 8 deals with education in Europe, poem 9 with education provided in Egypt, and more precisely at the University of al-Azhar. In poem 8, the poet compares two generations, the old Arab and his son, who studies in Paris. Upon his return to Egypt, the old Arab no longer recognizes his own son: he has returned home as a science teacher, but he does not even recall a verse from the Koran, he no longer prays and does not perform the Ramadan fast. On the contrary, he consumes spirits and frequently attends clubs and theatres. For these reasons, his father asks himself: “What’s the use of learning without religion?”²⁴.

As regards poem 9, it illustrates a typical geography lesson that a “*shek*” delivers to a young student. The world, according to the old Arab, is divided into seven parts: Egypt watered by the Nile; Arabia, the cradle of Islam; Syria, the land of silk; Morocco, the country of the yellow shoes²⁵; Persia the producer of cashmere scarves; Frangistan, or Europe, where “*il popolo pagano/Nasce e crepa*” (“heathens / Born and kick the bucket”).

3.2. Polygamy and the role of women

Poems 5 and 6 are devoted to the theme of love that leads inevitably into the sensitive issue of polygamy, a practice which the poet does not hesitate to criticize: “*Tor quattro mogli, divorziarne cento,/Concubine acquistare a piacimento*”.

After all, the issue of polygamy will be a constant topic of Ṣanū‘’s theatrical production, as he strongly opposes this practice, especially in the pièce *aḍ-Ḍarratāni* (“The two rival wives”)²⁶.

Like many intellectuals in his time²⁷, Ṣanū‘ works for the empowerment of women and in favour of a reform of society, as his determination to have women on the stage clearly demonstrates. By the way, it is important to observe that Ṣanū‘ was the first author to coin the term “actress” (*la‘ṭba*) in Arabic and it is also relevant that the first actresses belonged to the Jewish and Christian communities.

²⁴ “*Che val dottrina senza religione?*”.

²⁵ It is a reference to the typical *bəlġa*.

²⁶ The term *ḍarra* in Arabic designates a married woman in relation to another woman married to the same husband. This term has a negative connotation because it means “loss, trouble”. The protagonist of the play, Aḥmad, who had been married for fifteen years, wants to get married a second time to a girl of sixteen. The quarrels between the two wives, however, oblige Aḥmad to divorce both. At the end of the play, in a monologue addressed to the public, the main character attacks polygamy. The representation of this play signals the first break between Ṣanū‘ and the Khedive who was as accused to be a polygamist, as indeed was most of his entourage.

²⁷ On the militancy of the precursors of *Nahḍa* in favour of women, see Maher AL-SHARIF, “Del concepto de *ciudadanía* en el pensamiento de los precursores de la “Nahḍa” o Renacimiento árabe”, «Awraq. Revista de análisis y pensamiento sobre el mundo árabe e islámico contemporáneo», 10 (2014), pp. 13-28, pp. 20-23.

3.3. The language issue

The issue of education includes the language question which is developed in poem 12, with a comparison between French and Arabic: if all the French, even the peasants, speak French, Classical Arabic is not spoken, neither by Bedouins nor by the most educated and powerful people (“*Se a Parigi favellano il francese/Perfino i contadini [...] / Parlare l’affranghi sanno; / Non come i nostri stupidi beduini, / che mille sbagli in arabo ci fanno;/Ben molti Effendi e Bey e Pascià nostri / Non sanno quanto i contadini vostri*”).

The famous intellectual Rifā‘a at-Taḥṭāwī (Ṭaḥṭa 1801-II Cairo 1873) had already compared the two languages, French and Arabic, in his seminal *riḥla Taḥlīṣ al-ibrīz ilā talḥīṣ Bārīz* (“The Extrication of Gold in Summarising Paris”), noting that the clarity of the French language was the basis of the advancement of the French people in science and arts, a clarity devoid of the typical ambiguity of the Arabic language, therefore implicitly putting out a call to the Arabs to find a solution to this dilemma²⁸.

The meta-linguistic reflection that Ṣanū‘ sketched in the poem will be developed both in his plays, and in his journalistic production, where he will mainly opt for *al-‘arabiyya al-miṣriyya*, Egyptian Arabic.

This choice is far from being neutral as it implies a leveling of the *ḥāṣṣa* (elite) and the *‘amma* (common mass of people). Using the mother tongue of Egyptians, he intends to emphasise the specificity of his country, beyond that of belonging to the *umma*, the Islamic community to which the Classical Arabic language is inevitably associated. Moreover, as he is quite explicit in his play *Mūlyūr Miṣr wa-mā yuqāsīhi*, even “the *ṣuyūḥ*, scholars and artists never speak in *qāf* and *nūn*” (« *il-maṣāyih w-aṣḥāb il-ma ‘arīf w-il-funūn ‘umr-u-hum ma b-ikallimu ba ‘d-u-hum b-il-qāf w-in-nūn* »)²⁹.

3.4. Patriotism

In poems 7 and 10, the author deals with the issue of patriotism, tying it to the key events of his time. In fact, he mentions the events in Candia: “*In Candia si combatton da leoni / I nostri prodi militi Egiziani, / Hanno già preso mille e più cannoni, / E scannato un milione di Cristiani*” (7).

His reference to the events in Candia needs a short digression in history: the Greek War of Independence of 1821 forced the Ottoman Empire to call for reinforcements to the Egyptians, and Muḥammad ‘Alī became governor of Crete in the same year. In 1830 Greece became independent, but the great powers which had helped Greece, assigned Crete to Egypt until 1840, when it returned under the full control of the Ottoman authorities. However riots in Crete did not cease: under the motto “*Enosis i Thanatos*” (Unity or Death), the rebels were not only looking for independence from the Turks, but were also trying to avoid unification with Greece. The struggle reached its climax in 1866, when nine hundred rebels took refuge in Moni Arkadiou, where they set fire to a gunpowder store causing their own death and killing the two thousand Turkish soldiers

²⁸ «Il faut compter la facilité de leur langue et tout ce qui la rend parfaite. En effet, apprendre leur langue, dit-il, n’exige pas grand effort. N’importe quel homme, normalement réceptif, pourra, une fois qu’il l’a apprise, lire n’importe quel livre, puisque toute ambiguïté est absente de cette langue, dont le principe exclut l’équivoque [...]. C’est le contraire en arabe». See: Rifā‘a AT-TAHTAWI, *L’Or de Paris : Relation de voyage 1826-1831*, Paris, Actes Sud Editions, 1988, p. 185.

²⁹ ṢANU‘, *Mūlyūr Miṣr wa-mā yuqāsīhi*, Act I, Scene II.

who were keeping them under siege. This tragic episode had a widespread international resonance and gathered plenty of support to the population. Also Giuseppe Garibaldi expressed solidarity with their patriotism and their desire for independence, and many *Garibaldini* arrived in Crete to fight in different battles alongside the rebels.

In this poem, mostly focusing on the Cretan resistance, the old Arab proves that he has not understood the true meaning of the word “homeland” and the concept of “nation-state”, which is independent of religious affiliation. Conversely, he is still firmly anchored to the dichotomy *dār al-ḥarb* / *dār al-Islām* and when he refers to Cretan rebels he still uses terms referring religious semantic category: “infidels”, “idolaters”, “rebels to your Holy Koran”.

3.5. Topicality

Poem 13 reveals the crass ignorance of the old Arab who ignores – or pretends to ignore – the most prominent characters of his time, such as Giuseppe Garibaldi (Nice 1807 - Caprera 1882), the most important personality of the Italian *Risorgimento*.

The old Arab believes that Garibaldi is a tailor and wants to go to a store to buy the red coats he made: “*Che vuoi comprar di bello, o mio Signore, / Polche, rispose, rosse di colore / Sul modello di quel sarto soprafino / Tanto famoso. Di qual sarto? io chiesi./ Di Garibaldi il sarto dei francesi*”.

The poet therefore wishes to emphasise that the “*scek*” does not feel involved in any way in the nationalist and patriotic fervor of his contemporaries living on the opposite side of the Mediterranean, he is not in possession of updated information on the most important events in the world, that is because he does not read newspapers, another medium of modernity.

In poem 16, the author presents a dialogue between two characters, Ali and Mustafa, reading a newspaper which comments on a speech by Napoleon III at the Senate. Ali asks Mustafa who is “*Nabulium*”, if he is a doctor, a teacher or an engineer. Mustafa, after a brief pause, remembers that he is the lawyer who saved them from bankruptcy. The poet implies that Napoleon III intervened with his own arbitration in 1864 to save the Suez Canal Company from financial crisis. However the ignorance of Mustafa and Ali has no limits: both believe that the Senate is a Christian colleague of “*Nabulium*”.

In poem 17, the old Arab hopes that the system of capitulations, according to which foreign residents are subject to the laws of their respective countries, can be finally abolished. Such privileges, conceded as early as the sixteenth century, were justified by the fact that the Ottoman religious laws and state institutions were so different from those of the European countries that did not offer sufficient guarantees as to the status of foreigners. It was the consuls who exercised full civil and criminal jurisdiction over the citizens of their own country towards which the police could issue expulsion orders.

The poet here is referring also to another fact of topicality: on 19 January, 1869 a law on Ottoman nationality, greatly limiting the acquisition of foreign nationality for Ottoman individuals was enacted, as evidenced by Article 9, stating that “every individual who inhabits the Ottoman territory is considered an Ottoman subject and treated as such”

unless that person proves his foreign status³⁰. In the month of July of the same year, a special commission was appointed in order to verify, through treaties, conventions, laws and regulations, the true nationality of the Ottoman individuals who would claim a nationality or foreign protection. This law was not retroactive and therefore, as Gendzier emphasises, “did not deprive him [Şanū‘] of his privileges”³¹.

Poem 20 is a dialogue between two characters, Saleh and Mohammed who discuss over a news item, the visit of Prince Albert of Wales, later King Edward VII, son of Queen Victoria, who arrives in Egypt to visit the historical sites in the winter / spring of 1869, accompanied by his wife Alexandra³². The two characters, Saleh and Mohammed, however, do not understand how one can study the antiquities and relics of a dark age such as the pre-Islamic period.

The final poem, poem 22, is called “desecration” because a *kāfir* (‘non believer’) has dared to write a book in the language of the Koran, showing an excellent command of Arabic. In a note, Şanū‘ specifies that he refers “to a speech published in Arabic on the history of the trade of the Arabs and Ottomans by the distinguished Jurisconsult and Orientalist Cav. F. A. De Marchi”.

In 1869 the book *an-Nubaḍ al-muḥtāra fī tāriḥ at-tiġāra: ḥiṭāb fīmā yaḥsunu ḍikruhu min tāriḥ at-tiġāra ‘inda l-‘arab wa-l-‘uṭmāniyyīn, idḥlan li-šarḥ qānūnāmat at-tiġāra al-‘uṭmāniyya* (“Selected passages on the history of commerce: speech about how it is right to remember the history of trade among the Arabs and Ottomans, introducing the explanation of Ottoman Commercial Law”) was published. It was written by Francesco Antonio De Marchi (Faransīs Anṭūn Dīmārki), a lawyer from Ghemme (Novara) who had long lived in Cairo where he had served as legal adviser to the Egyptian Government³³, and who was the author, *inter alia*, of a spoken Arabic grammar (Egyptian dialect)³⁴.

Establishing the network of Şanū‘’s acquaintances is essential to better understanding his works, and the fact that it is highly likely that Şanū‘ met this Italian orientalist, is relevant in this perspective. We will try to analyze this issue in the next paragraph focusing our investigation on paratextual materials.

4. The Paratextual Elements of *L’arabo anziano*

The twenty-two poems are preceded by a dedication of about fifteen lines, dated 30 September, 1869, where Şanū‘ explains that he intends to pay tribute to Marco Morpurgo de Nilma with his book *L’arabo anziano*. In his article, Adam Mestyan

³⁰ To look up the articles of the Ottoman Nationality Law of 19/01/1869, see: Grégoire ARISTARCHI BEY, *Recueil des lois, ordonnances, traités, capitulations et autres documents officiels de l’Empire ottoman*, Constantinople, Imprimerie Frères Nicolaïdes, 1873.

³¹ GENDZIER, *The Practical Visions of Ya‘qub Sanu‘*, p. 11.

³² To be precise, starting from 2 February, 1869, the Prince of Wales stays in Egypt for about two months. His stay is documented in particular by Oswald Brierly’s watercolors. The images are accessible on: <<https://royalcollection.org.uk/>>.

³³ For more bios, see in particular: Francesca BELLINO, “David Morkos frate della Custodia di Terra Santa e professore di arabo nella Torino dell’Ottocento”, in Pier Giorgio BORBONE, Alessandro MENGOSI, Mauro TOSCO (eds.), *Loquentes linguis. Studi linguistici e orientali in onore di Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2006, pp. 63-77, p. 65.

³⁴ Francesco Antonio DE MARCHI, *Guida pratica allo studio della lingua araba parlata*, Milano, Tipografia Nazionale, 1885.

briefly noted that Morpurgo was a “Jewish banker in Trieste and Alexandria”³⁵.

The Morpurgo family was actually an ancient Jewish family of Austrian origin³⁶. Carlo Marco Morpurgo (his full name), son of Moisè Samuele and Rachele Morpurgo, was born in Gorizia on January 20, 1827.

Thanks to his entrepreneurial and diplomatic skills, he obtained numerous noble titles between 1860 and 1880, among which, in February 1869, the title “de Nilma” was added to his name and he was awarded the Iron Crown for his trading activities in Egypt.

Egypt was really the hub for Carlo Marco Morpurgo. The oil painting on canvas of 1866, “Ritratto giovanile” (Youthful Portrait) by Raffaele Astolfi underlines what was the centre of his interests and business³⁷: in it Carlo Marco is portrayed in the act of browsing through an album with images of Egypt, and opened at the page illustrating the pyramids of Giza. Moreover, on his coat of arms, which also refers to the biblical story of Jonah, we can see the pyramids and the Sphinx of Giza, in memory of his commercial and financial links with Egypt³⁸.

The formation of Carlo Marco Morpurgo took place in Alexandria and he operated between Alexandria and Cairo, where he met and married Emma Mondolfo (Cairo 17/04/1839-Trieste 12/08/1920), daughter of his banking partner. In 1854, the year of his marriage, he set up the bank “Mondolfo and Morpurgo”, which, in 1861, became the bank “Fano and Morpurgo”, and later, in 1866, the bank “E. Caprara, H. et Mondolfo Comp.” was founded. In Trieste, in 1869, Morpurgo became a founding member of the Austro-Eastern Bank together with De Brucker, Salem and John William Sartorio. The headquarters of the bank were in Trieste, with branches in Vienna, Alexandria and Cairo. Thanks to his banks, Carlo Marco developed relationships with the most powerful men in Egypt at that time.

Surely, through his banks, Carlo Marco Morpurgo played an important role in the financing of the Suez Canal. He represented, along with other members of the Morpurgo family, the city elite that invested its energies and resources simultaneously in trade, industry, finance, insurance, arts and culture, and which was linked, partly, to Freemasonry.

The book *L'arabo anziano* actually presents several references to Freemasonry. A clear example of the contemporary personalities Ya'qūb Ṣanū' mentions are Napoleon III, Garibaldi, and the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII).

These three famous personalities all joined the Masons in their own time: the links of the Bonaparte family with the Masons are well known³⁹; Giuseppe Garibaldi, in 1844, entered the lodge *Les amis de la patrie* in Montevideo, and was the first Grand Master and later Honorary Grand Master, providing valuable assistance to the affirmation of the

³⁵ MESTYAN, “Arabic Theater in early Khedivial Culture”, p. 126.

³⁶ Israel Isserlin, born at the end of the fourteenth century, in Marburg, Styria, could be considered the founder of the Morpurgo family. This Styrian town was a very important centre for Ashkenazi Jews, but they were driven out of there at the end of the fifteenth century. The Marburg – thus their name has been perpetuated – divided into several branches, settling in Gorizia, Gradisca and Trieste. For further information, see the website of the Morpurgo Museum in Trieste: <www.museomorpurgo.it/home/la-storia>.

³⁷ The painting is currently housed in the headquarters of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region.

³⁸ On this subject, see: Luisa CRUSVAR, “Stampe giapponesi: un percorso a sorpresa. I Morpurgo de Nilma, dall'Egitto al Giappone”, «Atti dell'Accademia “San Marco” di Pordenone», 15 (2013), pp. 567-640, p. 577.

³⁹ See, *inter alia*: François COLLAVERI, *La franc-maçonnerie des Bonaparte*, Paris, Payot, 1982.

Rite Memphis-Misraim; the Prince of Wales, was initiated in 1868 in Stockholm by the King of Sweden⁴⁰.

As noted above, a poem of *L'arabo anziano* is entirely devoted to Freemasonry. It is therefore in that world, in the network of acquaintances related to Masonic affiliation that scholars interested in Ya'qūb Ṣanū' 's works should pay close attention, especially to the relationship between the Freemasonry in Livorno and the one in Egypt.

As evidenced by the dedication in the poem, it is highly likely that Ya'qūb Ṣanū' established relations with the Italians who had been living in Egypt for various reasons. It is, in fact, to that community, as demonstrated by the linguistic choices he made, that his book is addressed⁴¹. Many Italians immigrated to Egypt during the early nineteenth century, compelled by the events of the *Risorgimento*; in particular, after the failure of the 1848-49 uprisings, dozens of new arrivals strengthened the ranks of the Italian patriots and revolutionaries who resided in Egypt. These young Italian patriots were therefore bearers of the ideals of the *Risorgimento* and were to become “fonte di ispirazione e riferimento per le lotte per l'indipendenza e la libertà delle popolazioni egiziane”⁴².

However at the same time it should be noted that as for the birth of Freemasonry in North Africa the most important role was played precisely by the Jews of Livornese origins, exactly like Ya'qūb Ṣanū'⁴³.

The first Mason lodge was established in Livorno in 1729 upon the initiative of an English merchant community. It was the only Italian city to retain some Masonic activity in the pre-unification period with a significant number of lodges – when in fact in the rest of Italy all lodges were dissolved and banned – it was the only centre where Freemasonry was never interrupted. Nevertheless, what characterized Livornese Freemasonry is the fruitful relationship the lodges formed with religious minorities, especially with the Jewish community⁴⁴. Additionally, Fulvio Conti emphasizes that Livornese Masonic activity is closely tied to that of secret societies and to the conspiratorial plots of patriotic aggregations⁴⁵. A dynamic, open and vibrant city, in economic, political and cultural terms, Livorno introduced new ideas and supported artistic trends and the production of books. Together with Genova, it was one of the

⁴⁰ For further information on the personalities who joined the Freemasonry, see, *inter alia*: W. Kirk MACNULTY, *Freemasonry. Symbols, Secrets, Significance*, London, Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2006.

⁴¹ In Italy there is one single copy of *L'arabo anziano*, kept in the Biblioteca Labronica in Livorno. Assuming that it was just Ya'qūb Ṣanū' who donated his book to the library, I proceeded to check the old registers of inventories and acquisitions of the Biblioteca Labronica but unfortunately I couldn't track any specific information about the book's provenance. Throughout the nineteenth century the library was enriched with the legacies of important personalities, not only from Livorno. The actual position might suggest the Giuseppe Vivoli Fund or the Ersilio Michel Fund, but in the absence of stamps we cannot derive with certainty any attribution. I take this opportunity to thank Dr. Laura Colombi of the Documentation Centre of the Biblioteca Labronica for all her help during my research stay in Livorno, in July 2016.

⁴² Claudio PACIFICO, “Patrioti risorgimentali e grandi esploratori italiani in Egitto e nell'Africa nera alla scoperta delle sorgenti del Nilo”, «Il Veltro», LV, 4-6 (2011), pp. 3-17, p. 16.

⁴³ See Jacob M. LANDAU, “Farmāsūniyya”, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. XII, Leyde, Brill, 2004, pp. 296-297.

⁴⁴ As Liana Elda Funaro remarked many Jews saw an affiliation to Freemasonry as a means of expressing their opposition to the Catholic Church and to demand liberation from the minority position to which they were historically relegated. See: Liana Elda FUNARO, “Massoneria e minoranze religiose nel secolo XIX”, in Fulvio CONTI (ed.), *La massoneria a Livorno. Dal Settecento alla Repubblica*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2006, pp. 343-416.

⁴⁵ CONTI, “Introduzione”, in ID. (ed.), *La massoneria a Livorno*, pp. 14-15.

major centres of the *Giovine Italia*, a secret society founded in 1831 by the revolutionary and patriot Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872). It aimed to liberate the Italian people from foreign invaders and it mainly used educational and insurrectional means. Given his Livornese origins and his constant ties with this Italian city, Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘ had therefore, in the words of K. Paul Johnson, the “status as a bridge between Italian Carbonarism and pan-Islamic Sufism, making him the quintessential Oriental Mason”⁴⁶. His contacts with secret societies could have started as early as his first trip to Livorno, in his early youth. As Marco Sirtori explains, “poco si sa in Italia di James Sanua [...] E molto di più si vorrebbe sapere sul suo soggiorno italiano, a Livorno [...] dove, tra il 1853 e il 1855, il drammaturgo completa la sua formazione letteraria e ha modo di sviluppare, grazie al contatto con la sinistra mazziniana, un nazionalismo che si esprimerà solo dopo il suo ritorno in patria”⁴⁷.

According to the perspective adopted in this paper, it can also be of importance to consider the length of Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘’s stay in Livorno. Since from Gendzier, scholars have always maintained that Ṣanū‘ resided in the city for three years, precisely from 1853 to 1855. But during our period of research in Livorno, we retrieved two documents (reproduced in the appendix to this article) in the Historical Archives of the Jewish community which demonstrate instead a shorter stay of Ṣanū‘ in the Tuscan city. In fact, according to extant information, Ṣanū‘ remained in Livorno less than a year and a half, from May 1853 (the precise date is not known) to 17 October 1854.

The first of the two documents shows evidence of the moment when Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘ leaves Egypt for Livorno:

Document 1 (see Appendix 2, Figure 1)

Per parte di quest’imp. segr. [imperiale segreteria] viceconsolato di Toscana si dichiara a richiesta del sig. Raffaello Sanua, suddito toscano, che il di lui figlio dell’età di anni circa tredici, e di nome Giacomo, è partito da qui nel mese di maggio 1853, per trasferirsi a Livorno. Cairo 20 settembre 1854.

*L’I.R. [Imperial Regio] Vice Console G. Tomagian
Vice Consolato toscano al Cairo*

The imperial secretariat, vice-consulate of Tuscany, certifies at the request of Mr. Raffaello Sanua, Tuscan citizen, that his son, named Giacomo, who is about thirteen years old, has left Egypt in May 1853 and has moved to Livorno.

Cairo September 20, 1854.

The Imperial Royal Vice Consul G. Tomagian⁴⁸
Vice Consulate of Tuscany in Cairo

The second of the two documents refers to the day when Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘ left Livorno to return to Alexandria in Egypt:

⁴⁶ Cfr. JOHNSON, *The Masters Revealed*, p. 54.

⁴⁷ Marco SIRTORI, “Presentazione. James Sanua tra commedia, opera buffa e vaudeville”, in Wafaa Raouf EL BEIH (ed.), *Il marito infedele*, pp. 7-13, p. 8.

⁴⁸ Giacomo Tomagian, member of an important Armenian Catholic family of Constantinople and naturalized Tuscan, was appointed vice consul in Cairo on September 9, 1841. Source: Marcella AGLIETTI, *L’istituto consolare tra Sette e Ottocento. Funzioni istituzionali, profilo giuridico e percorsi professionali nella Toscana granducale*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2012, p. 413 and p. 421.

Document 2 (see Appendix 2, Figure 2)

17 ottobre 1854.

Registrato Sanua Giacomo di Raffaello di Cairo suddito toscano in ordine al certificato del signor console toscano del Cairo il 20 settembre p.p. [?] per Alessandria d'Egitto.

October 17, 1854.

Registered Sanua James son of Raffaello from Cairo, Tuscan subject, according to the certificate granted by the Vice Consul of Tuscany in Cairo on September 20 [of this year], [he leaves] for Alexandria.

5. Conclusions

Far from being a minor work by Ya'qūb Ṣanū', the book *L'arabo anziano* proves to be a linguistic, literary and political laboratory, which highlights the main interests of its author. Each interest will be developed further in the following years: theatre, journalism, caricature, but also Masonic and political activities.

It is very likely that it was meant to be published (the date mentioned in the dedication is September 30, 1869) the same day of the celebrations for the opening of the Suez Canal (November 17, 1869), an event charged with meaning because a symbol of progress, representing a promise of a prosperous future for Egypt.

In fact Ṣanū' traces in his book the most significant political events of those years, aware that Egypt had come to a turning point in its history.

In the previous year, Ya'qūb Ṣanū' had joined the Masonic Lodge Concordia: the book shows traces of this choice and presents several references to Freemasonry activities⁴⁹.

It is therefore increasingly necessary to establish the network of people Ya'qūb Ṣanū' was in contact with, both in Egypt and in Italy, and especially the Masonic circles he had joined, it is a very complex research because of the great degree of secrecy and confidentiality which is a main feature of this kind of society. Lodges are inevitably linked to revolutionary and anti-establishment activities: as recalled by Jacob M. Landau, "Prince Ḥalīm, Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Egypt in 1867-8, attempted to use the freemasons in his struggle against the Khedive Ismā'īl"⁵⁰.

As evidenced by the documents from the Archivio storico della comunità ebraica di Livorno attesting to the real dates of his first stay in Livorno, we can observe that many details of the biography of Ṣanū' remain unclear and others require further investigation, because, - to use the words of Rosella Dorigo Ceccato - "it is not always easy in these autobiographical works of the author to distinguish between reality and imagination"⁵¹.

In any case one of the few certainties is the fact that, during his stay in Livorno, the young Giacomo Sanua must have breathed the air of the *Risorgimento*, the nationalist propaganda of Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi and, in general, of the *Carboneria* and the *Giovine Italia*. The title of the book *L'arabo anziano* appears

⁴⁹ Suffice to say that the lighthouse of the Suez Canal, named "L'Egypte éclairant l'Orient", was designed between 1867 and 1869, by the French architect Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904), who had stayed in Egypt in 1855-1856 and was also affiliated with the Freemasons. Bartholdi submitted his project in April 1869 to Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894), director of the "Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez", but his plan was not then accepted by the Khedive Ismā'īl.

⁵⁰ LANDAU, "Farmāsūniyya", p. 297.

⁵¹ DORIGO CECCATO, "Autobiographical Features in the Works of Ya'qūb Ṣanū'", p. 51.

therefore as the antonym with *Giovine Italia*, and evokes somehow the importance of Italy as a model nation-state for Egypt, standing as a symbol of the struggle against foreign occupation. Through *L'arabo anziano*, Ya'qūb Ṣanū' finally intends to exalt patriotic love, a value, in his eyes, far more important than religious affiliation. In Livorno Ṣanū' observed Christians and Jews feeling like brothers in the name of national ideals; for the love of Egypt, Muslims, Jews and Christians have, likewise, to struggle together, according to his words: “*ya a‘azz iḥwānī min mu‘min wa-isrā’īlī wa-naṣrānī*” (“my dear brothers Muslims, Jews and Christians”)⁵².

⁵² ṢANŪ', *Mūlyīr Miṣr wa-mā yuqāsīhi*, p. 3.

Appendix 1. Some Linguistic Remarks

The following lines are just a sample of the Arabisms contained in the poems. After having selected all the material of Arabic origin, we divided it into the following categories: given names; toponyms; appellations, honorific styles and titles; religious terms; everyday life terms; expressions/phraseology; other. For each category, we reported the term used by Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘ between angle brackets <...>, followed by the number of the poem where the term is contained between box brackets [...], with variants, with a scientific transcription and a brief comment.

Given names

<Osmano> [3]: ‘*Uṭmān*. The name exhibits a morphological Italianisation through the insertion of a final suffix *-o* (sg.masc.). On the phonetic side, the presence of a segment *s* is the result of a pseudo-classicisation of the original interdental phoneme *ṭ* which is a stylistic phenomenon typical of Egypt.

<Alī> [4, 21], and its unaccented variant <Ali> [16]: ‘*Alī*.

<Salheddin> [15]: *Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn*.

<Mustafa> [16]: *Muṣṭafā*.

<Saleh> [19]: *Ṣāliḥ*.

<Mohammed> [19]: *Muḥammad*.

<Uarde> [20]: *Warda*.

<Nafise> [20]: *Nafīsa*. Curiously, the final segment *e* which seems to exhibit a palatalized realisation of the original suffix *-a*, a phenomenon which is typical of Levantine Arabic but is unknown to the Egyptian (Cairene) dialect.

<Zohra> [20]: *Zahra*.

<Amine> [20]: *Amīna* or *Āmina*. Like for <Nafise>, even this noun exhibits a curious palatalisation of the final *-a*.

<Farida> [20]: *Farīda*.

Toponyms

<Arafat> [2]: ‘*Arafāt*. It is the name of the mountain East of Mecca, which is one of the places visited during the Holy Pilgrimage (*ḥaǧǧ*).

<Bariz> [8]: *Bārīz*. It is the Arabicised name of ‘Paris’ which was used at Ṣanū‘’s times and which has been later substituted by the still used variant *Bārīs*.

<Frangistan> [9]: *Fraṅgīstān*. This is a word coined on the basis of *Ifranǧ*, the term used for generally indicating Europeans and conveying a religious (Christian) nuance in its meaning.

<Azhar> [9]: *Azhar*. This is the name of the famous great mosque of Cairo which, together with its annexed University, is the principal Sunni center of the Muslim world.

<Bolacco> [16]: *Būlāq*. The name exhibits a morphological Italianisation through the insertion of a final suffix *-o* (sg.masc.) preceded by a consonantal gemination of *c* (phonetically an Italian [k] corresponding to the Arabic *q*). It is the name given by Napoléon Bonaparte to a quarter of Cairo, a toponym that is in turn the Arabisation of French *beau lac* ‘beautiful lake’, in which the best typographies of the Arab world were installed.

<Stamboul> [19]: *Iṣṭanbūl*.

<Gurīa> [21]: The term is the name of a market situated in Cairo.

<Esbechià> [21]: *al-Azbakiyya*. This is the name of one of the most famous quarters of Cairo in which an important theatre was situated.

<affranghi> [12, 14]: Ethnonym, see before under <Frangistan>.

Appellations, Honorific Styles and Titles

<si> [13]: *sī*. It is the abbreviation of *sayyidī* ‘my sir’ which is characteristically used in colloquial Arabic.

<setti> [21]: *sitt-ī*. It is the term commonly used in Egyptian Arabic with the meaning of ‘my lady’.

<scek fakih> [22]: *šayḥ faqīh*. The two terms for an expert of Islamic jurisprudence.

<Pascià> [12, 19]: *bāšā*. The term, of Turkish origin (*paşa*), is commonly used in Egyptian Arabic as an honorific title.

<khoghe> [14]: *ḥōga*. The term, of Turkish origin (*hoca*), is usually used in Egyptian Arabic with the meaning of ‘teacher’.

<effendi> [12]: *’afandī*. The term, of Turkish origin (*efendi*), is usually used as a form of address or reference to an Egyptian man from the middle classes.

<bey> [12]: *bāy*. The term refers to a particular type of political authority in the Ottoman time.

<Sultan> [17]: *sulṭān*. The term refers to a general political authority.

Religious Terms

<scek> [1,15, 18, 19], and <shek> [9]: *šayḥ*.

<Alla> [2, 7, 8, 9, 10], <Alla’> [11, 22], <Allà> [14], and <Allah> [18]: *Allāh* ‘God’.

<Mahometto> [2] : *Muḥammad*.

<Ganne> [2] : *ḡanna* ‘paradise’. The term is fully Egyptianised by the phonetic passage ḡ > g.

<Hurie> [4] : *ḥūriyya* ‘hourī, virgin of the Paradise’. The term, belonging to Islamic religious vocabulary, in the poem it appears in a plural context and this is because it exhibits an Italian final suffix *-e* (pl.fem.).

<Ramadan> [8] : *Ramaḍān* ‘[holy month of] Ramadan’.

<kafer> [22], and pl. <coffar> [11] : *kāfir*, pl. *kuffār* ‘non-believer, infidel’.

<Setti Zenab> [16] : *sitt-ī Zaynab*. In the footnote, Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘ explains that the term refers to «madonna Zenab, cugina del Profeta», i.e. ‘lady Zeinab, the cousin of the Prophet [Muḥammad]’.

<Hassanen> [16] : *Ḥasanayn*, literally ‘the two Ḥasan-s’ (i.e. Ḥasan and Ḥusayn), with a dual suffix *-ēn*, with a phonetic realisation (originated from an ancient *-ayn*) which is typical of Cairo Arabic. In a footnote, Ya‘qūb Ṣanū‘ erroneously explains that the term refers to the two cousins of the Prophet Muḥammad, when in fact they are his nephews.

<babas> [18] : *babbāš, bābāš*. The term, of Turkish origin (*pāpāz*), means ‘priest’.

<khakhami> [18] : *ḥāḥām*. The term, of Hebrew origin (*ḥakam*), means ‘a wise and learned person; rabbi’.

Everyday life terms

<bagur> [14] : *bagūr* ‘locomotive’. Interestingly enough, *bagūr* is a term that in Ṣanū‘’s times must have been current but that nowadays belongs to a substandard language level and has been substituted by its more modern variant *babūr*.

<hasciascin> [15] : *ḥaššāšīn* ‘hashish smokers’.

<scira> [15] : *šīra* ‘a kind of hashish’.

<zabtia> [17] : *zabṭiyya* ‘police’. The term is of Turkish origin (*zaptiye*).

Expressions/Phraseology

<Amin ia Rab> [1] : *amīn yā rabb* ‘Amen, my Lord’.

<mascialla> [10], and <Mascialla! Mascialla!> [12]: *mā šā’a llāh*, literally ‘what God has wanted!’, is an exclamation of admiration.

Other

<Farmassun> [18], and <farmasson> [18]: *Framāsūn* ‘freemason’.

<Barlemant> [16]: *barlamān(t)* ‘parliament’. Usually, the most used term in Arabic is *barlamān* which is borrowed from European languages.

<Nabuliun> [16], and <Nabuliun Calli> [16]: *nābūliyūn* and *nābūliyūn* ‘Napoléon’.

Appendix 2. Documents

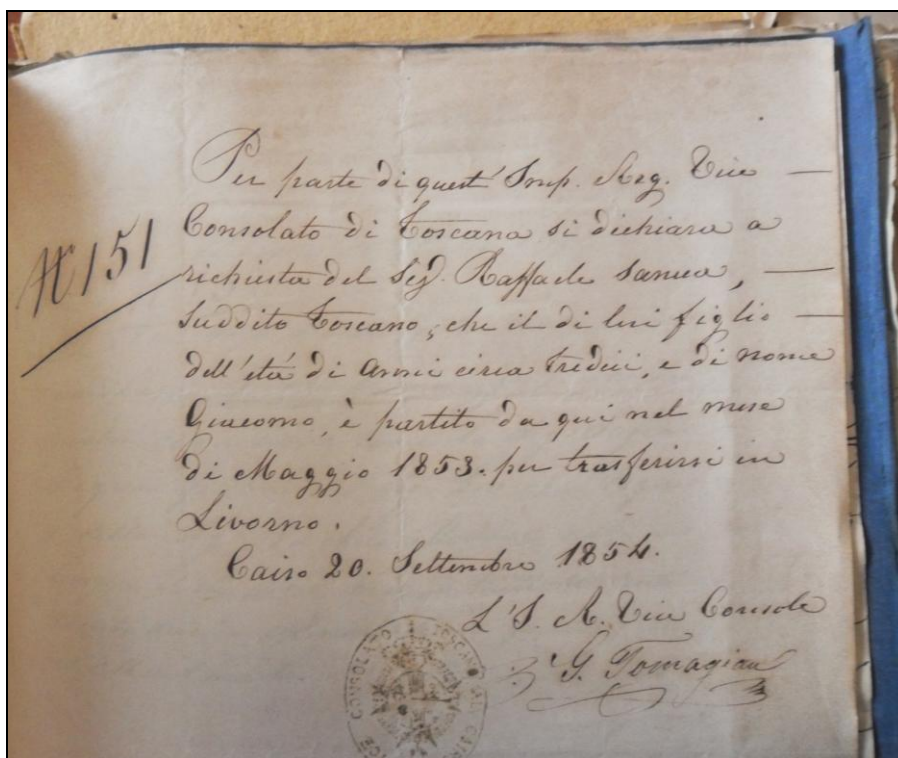


Figure 1. Archivio storico della comunità ebraica di Livorno. Sezione antica. Serie Minute, n. 28. Dal 3 gennaio 1853 al 28 dicembre 1855. Pratica n. 151.

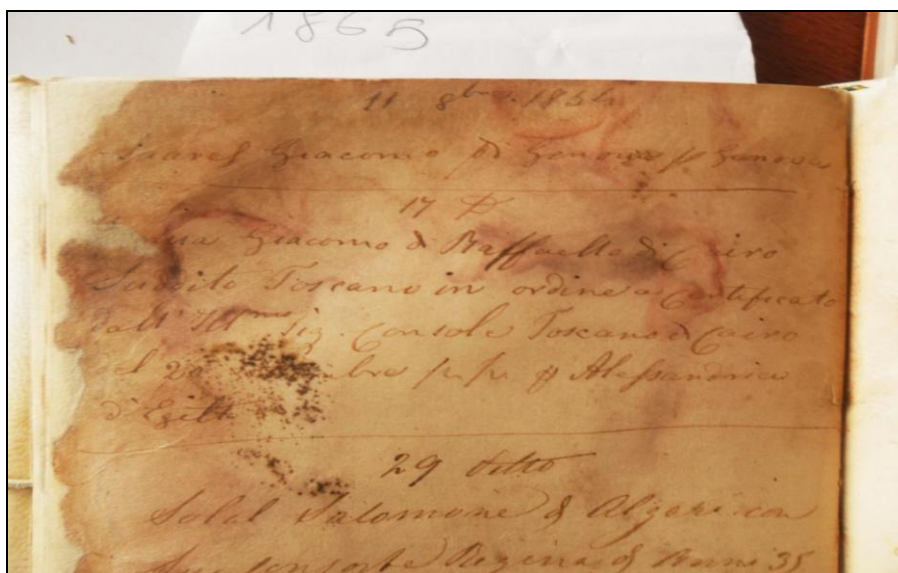


Figure 2. Archivio storico della comunità ebraica di Livorno. Sezione antica. Registro Emigrazioni. Serie 19, n. 4, anni 1854-1865.

Appendix 3. The Original Text of *L'Arabo anziano*⁵³

All'Illustrissimo Signor Commendatore
Marco de Morpurgo di Nilma
Illmo. Signore.

La S.V. Illma. Si degnò di considerare con molta indulgenza un precedente mio lavoro e d'incoraggiare i deboli miei studî talchè mi fo animo di presentarle ora il mio Arabo Anziano.

Ad altri parrebbe un personaggio creato da lepida fantasia od una caricatura fatta per ispirito di satira vana : Ella però che ben ne conosce il prototipo, lo troverà invece, ne sono certo, ritratti dal vero con tutta semplicità e fedeltà. Ella poi che conosce i miei sentimenti, e sa come veramente io ami il nostro Egitto ; Ella che pure s'interessa della vita morale e dell'avvenire di esso, saprà meglio di altri comprendere che, personificando i sentimenti ed i pensieri ancor troppo radicati nell'Arabo dell'epoca cadente, e che sono in opposizione, ed in lotta ancor pur troppo preponderante con quelli della epoca nascente, non feci che esprimere il compianto del male presente ed il desiderio e la speranza del bene avvenire.

Accetti dunque la S.V. Illma. Qualunque egli siasi, questo mio saggio tranquillamente e con quella indulgenza e benignità che Le è sì naturale ; poichè esso non Le si presenta nè come ostentazione di spirito o di ingegno, nè come lusinghiero omaggio di penna mercenaria a un Mecenate, ma come l'espressione di un animo libero e sincero, e come umile segno di verace stima e di rispettoso affetto.

Viva felice e mi creda
Della S.V. Illma.
Umilissimo e Devotissimo servo

James Sanua.

Cairo, li 30 Settembre 1869.

Il Suo Spirito

Quanto splende d'Egitto l'avvenire!
Ormai la civiltà vi fè gran passi :
Arti e scienze si veggon rifiorire
Collegi e scuole per le varie classi
Da per tutto s'apriro, e assai contenti
I professori son degli studenti.

Chiare prove del loro gran progresso
Le scuole militari ci hanno dato ;
Che l'esercito egizio è quasi adesso
Dagli uffiziali loro comandato :
L'agricoltura pur va molto avanti,

⁵³ In this *Appendix*, we transcribed the original text published in the printed version of *L'Arabo anziano* and we maintained all its original orthographic characteristics. Also the original footnotes to the text, which were written directly by Ya'qūb Ṣanū', have been maintained but have been transcribed here just after the last line of each poem; they are indicated by a number between parenthesis (...).

E gridano vittoria i commercianti.

E questo è, grazie al nostro buon sovrano,
 D'Ibrahim degno figlio, il qual non cura
 Altro che il ben del popolo Egiziano,
 Che ama e felice a rendere procura :
 Suo commercio ed industria egli protegge,
 E rispettar ne fa la sacra legge.

Che i suoi bei dì moltiplichi il Signore,
 E gli accordi salute, gioja e pace ;
 Ch'egli è del fido popol suo l'amore,
 E della gloria sua la chiara face,
Amin ia Rab [1]! Gridò il buon Scek [2] che stava
 Meco, e col quale mi congratulava.

Ma poi riprese : ascolta, o figlio mio,
 L'osservazion d'un vecchio d'esperienza :
 Nel Santo suo Coran ci diede Iddio
 Il fior d'ogni bell'arte e d'ogni scienza,
 Onde ai veri credenti molto duole
 Di veder istituir profane scuole,

In cui lo sacro studio si trascura ;
 Chè son cristiani tutti i professori,
 Sicchè la fè, per colmo di sventura,
 Non entrerà nei giovanili cori,
 Ed in pochi anni il popolo beato
 Sarà con tal proceder rinnegato.

Ma in quelle scuole insegnasi la lingua
 Dei franchi, io gl'interruppi, e loro idee,
 Onde l'Egizio popol si distingue
 Per la sua civiltà fra l'europèe
 Genti. Male, ei soggiunse ; noi dobbiamo
 Lontani star da loro quanto possiamo.

In quanto a quelle scuole che tu vanti,
 Le militari, dêi saper che i nostri
 Padri senza esse dier prove brillanti
 Del lor valore, e spesso han vinto i vostri :
 L'agricoltura poi non progredisce
 È caro il grano e il povero patisce.

E non fuvvi finora alcun che dica,
 Tra i tanti consiglier, la sua opinione
 Al buon Sovran, che il Ciel benedica,

Che questa civiltà la religione
 Nostra danneggia, e della eterna morte [5]
 Ci schiude ambe le nere e triste porte.

Di tal risposta, o mio lettor cortese,
 T'è facile a capir con qual partito
 Retrogrado il Sovran d'esto paese
 Ha da combatter pria che incivilito
 Lo renda, come ei vuole intieramente ;
 Eppur vi riesce, chè il suo zelo è ardente.

Canali e fiumi aprì, fondò città,
 A campi incolti ed aridi diè vita,
 E nell'arduo sentier di civiltà
 Incamminò il suo popolo, e ingrandita,
 E fatta bella egli ha la Capitale,
 Sì che a Parigi in breve fia rivale.

- (1) Così sia, o Signore.
- (2) Religioso.
- (3) Musulmani.
- (4) Gli Europei.
- (5) L'Inferno.

Quel che l'Arabo Anziano non cessa di ripeter ad ogni istante Fede

Non v'ha altro Dio che Alla [1], il fedele attesta,
 Ed il nostro Signore Mahometto,
 È suo profeta e messo benedetto,
 La cui presenza in *Ganne* [2] or gaudio desta,
 E nel dì del giudizio dai tormenti
 Del fuoco salverà tutti i credenti.

Sien lodi a te, Signor, che Musulmano
 Di core ed alma il Servo Tuo creasti,
 Ed agli occhi la luce gli donasti,
 Per bearsi studiando il tuo Corano,
 Che apre al fedel la via della salvezza,
 Per poi goder di *Ganne* ogni dolcezza.

Sulla dorata e splendida finestra
 Dell'urna sacra del divin Profeta,
 Pria che arrivi del viver mio alla meta,
 Fa, Dio ch'io possa stender questa destra :
 Medina Mecca ed Arafat [3] possa io

Vedere, e poi morire in pace, o Dio!

- (1) Iddio.
- (2) Paradiso.
- (3) Monte sacro che i pellegrini ascendono per divozione.

Fato

Una focaccia al dolce miele bianco,
 Che tanto mi piaceva quand'era sano,
 Anela l'alma mia, diceva Osmanò
 Già dal lungo soffrire oppresso e stanco :
 Fammene una ; ma presto, o madre mia,
 Chè già mi sento presso all'agonia!

Fagliela, o donna, disse allor suo padre ;
 Che del figlio si compia ogni desio,
 Pria che il suo volo spieghi l'alma a Dio...
 Ma il medico non vuol, disse la madre,
 Ch'ei mangi nulla : d'uopo egli ha di dieta,
 E noi non dobbiam far quel che egli vieta.

Più del medico il nome maledetto
 Non proferirmi, o donna : il Creatore
 Di chi in lui crede è l'unico dottore ;
 Onde in lui solo ogni speranza metto :
 Se al figlio in fronte è scritto che vivrà,
 Cento focaccine mangi, ei non morrà.

Rassegnazione

Lascia alle donne il pianto, o figlio mio,
 I gridi, gli urli, e il lacerar di vesti ;
 Ed al voler rassegnati d'Iddio.

A che ti valse il sangue che spargesti
 Nero in luogo di lacrime dagli occhi?
 Forse alla morte il tuo fratel togliesti?

No, lasso, or dunque cessa. Il cor mi tocchi,
 Ed a plorar me pur costringi. Frena
 Il tuo duolo, e ti getta sui ginocchi,

Pace a pregar per l'anima serena
 Del nostro amato Alì, cui fa la vita
 Quaggiù d'angoscie, affanni e duol sì piena.

Ma or di noi più felice egli è ; fiorita,
 E da limpidi rivi e bei ruscelli
 Bagnata è la dimora sua gradita.

Hurie gentili, di beltà modelli,
 Lo circondano liete e notte e giorno
 Con occhi e visi assai del sol più belli.

Dev'esser quel angelico soggiorno
 Centro d'ogni delizia e d'ogni gioja ;
 D'angeli vaghi e belle ninfe adorno.

Signor, t'imploro : fa ch'io presto muoja,
 E raggiunga così l'amato figlio ;
 Chè del mondo e sue pene ho già gran noja.

Amore

Più d'una donna l'uomo amar non puote;
 E come fate voi che tante amate?
 Non le prendete mica per la dote,
 Che invece di riceverne ne date,
 Chiesi ad un tal, che ha quattro fresche spose;
 Ed egli come segue mi rispose.

Noi non amiamo che il Profeta Santo;
 Palpita per lui solo il nostro core,
 Sue laudi a celebrar sciogliamo il canto,
 E l'alma si delizia nel suo amore :
 Egli è bello, ed amiamo in lui le belle;
 Han da lui luce e sole e luna e stelle.

Prendiam più donne per trovar fra tante
 Messe insieme l'intera sua bellezza :
 In una, per esempio, il scintillante
 D'amor occhio suo divo e la dolcezza
 Del suo sguardo; in un'altra il suo sorriso,
 In una i bei capelli, e in altra il viso.

Liberta'

Ed oserete dirmi, o degni amici,
 Che son prudenti e saggi gli Europei!
 Per me son d'opinion che gl'infelici
 Sono dal primo all'ultimo babbei:
 Ieri un d'essi saltar si fè il cervello
 Con una palla per un viso bello.

Imbecille ! alla donna, ch'infischiata
 S'era di lui, credeva far dispetto
 Col darsi una crudel pistolettata:
 Egli crepò; ma quella, un giovinetto,
 Forse più bello, avrà trovato tosto,
 Che per amore non si cuocia arrosto.

Questa mattina poi due si sfidaro
 Alla spada, perchè l'un detto avea
 All'altro che sua moglie gliel faceva:
 Intanto tutti e due si sbudellaro,
 Invece di verificar l'affare,
 Smentire, o quella indegna divorziare.

Tali pazzie, per Dio, noi non facciamo;
 Chè abbiam cervelli assai dei lor più sani:
 Non andiam presto in collera e alle mani,
 Nè per l'offeso onore ci scanniamo;
 Ci respinge una donna, al diavol vada!
 L'altra c'inganna scacciasi alla strada.

Beati noi, che bella legge Iddio
 Per mezzo del profeta suo ci diede;
 In essa libertade ci concede
 A soddisfar ogni mortal desio;
 Tor quattro mogli, divorziarne cento,
 Concubine acquistare a piacimento.

Amor nazionale

In Candia si combatton da leoni
 I nostri prodi militi Egiziani,
 Hanno già preso mille e più cannoni,
 E scannato un milione di Cristiani;
 Onde ai pochi scampati fra i ribelli
 Toccherà presto il fato dei fratelli.

Proteggi, Alla, gl'intrepidi guerrieri,
 Che del Profeta seguon gli stendardi;
 Coraggio ispira ai loro condottieri,
 Ed i lor bracci rendi più gagliardi;
 Nelle lor mani getta o vivi o morti
 L'un sovra l'altro gl'infedeli [1] insorti;

On de si compia alfine il voto ardente,
 Che il Venerdì t'innalza il Musulmano;

E in preda a noi quell'idolatra gente,
 Finor ribelle al santo tuo Corano,
 Cada co' suoi bei giovani e donzelle,
 Asini, vacche, capre e pecorelle [2].

(1) Che non sono Musulmani.

(2) Parole testuali della preghiera del Venerdì a mezzogiorno.

Religione

Perché, grand'Alla, il piede non troncasti
 A quel gran peccator del mio banchiere?
 Colla peste perché nol visitasti,
 Pria ch'ei venuto fossemi a vedere
 Quel dì fatale in cui mi diè consiglio
 Di mandare a Bariz [1] l'amato figlio?

Pur troppo lo mandai, ma contro cuore;
 Chè gli amici dicevanmi, fai male;
 Ei ritornò di scienze professore,
 Ed ebbe tosto il grado d'ufficiale;
 A spirito e talento ; ma ohime, lasso,
 Più del Coran non si rammenta un passo !

Che val dottrina senza religione?
 Ei più di Ramadan (2) non fa digiuno,
 Nè vuol pregare, come le persone
 Che temono il Signore; infin da niuno
 Vuol ascoltar consigli; Sventurato!
 Ecco quel che a Bariz gli hanno insegnato.

Nel dopo pranzo il vedo in compagnia
 D'una massa di giovani idolatri,
 Vuotando gran bicchieri in birreria
 E la notte pei circoli e i teatri;
 Se oso rimproverarlo, egli mi dice
 Pensi all'antica ancor, babbo infelice!

(1) Parigi.

(2) Digiuno dei Mussulmani.

La Geografia

Questa terra diceva un Shek sapiente,
 Che al ventesimo lustro era arrivato,
 Ad un dell'Azhar [1] giovine studente,
 A lui da un vecchio suo amico affidato,

Perchè seco apprendesse Geografia,
Quindi fisica e infine astronomia,

Questa terra è divisa in sette parti,
Pressochè di grandezza ugual fra loro;
E quali sieno desse io vò insegnarti:
Quest'Egitto cui bagna il fiume d'oro ;
Arabia, ov'è il sepolcro del Profeta;
Siria, il paese della bella seta;

Turchia, ove ha sede e regno il Gran Sultano ;
Marocco, ove si fan le gialle scarpe;
Frangistan,(2) ove il popolo pagano
Nasce e crepa; e infin Persia, ove le sciarpe
Di cascemir si fanno; ecco le sette
Parti o provincie da Alla benedette.

(1) È il nome d'una grande moschea in cui si studia la lingua classica araba e la teologia.

(2) Europa.

Armi

Dall'arenoso campo d'Abbassia
Da una rivista un giorno ritornava
Un reggimento al più d'infanteria:
Mascialla [1] disse un Scek che lo contava!
Sia il nome del Signore benedetto:
Quante spade ha la fè di Maometto:

Gl'idolatri a tal vista den tremare;
Chè quest'armata è forte e numerosa:
Sugli stendardi la vittoria appare,
Come un leone ardita e minacciosa:
Guai ! chi d'esti suoi figli un sol ne tocca,
Cadrebbe del leone entro la bocca.

Che quantità di militi il dannato
Popol Cristiano può contar ? gli chiese
Un contadino che gli stava al lato;
E quei, soffiando il naso, allor riprese :
Appena può contare la metà
Del numero di quest'armata qua.

(1) Esclamazione ammirativa.

Monoteismo

Un giorno un missionario protestante,
 Che assai corretto l'arabo parlava,
 Per la via l'evangelo predicava,
 E ben cento uditori aveva innante,
 Che a lui porgean l'orecchio attentamente
 Finchè parlò del Padre Onnipossente;

Ma quando principiò a parlar del figlio,
 Chiamandolo Divino Salvatore :
 Taci, gridaro, taci, o peccatore!
 Ed alle pietre diedero di piglio,
 E l'avrebbero certo lapidato,
 Se tosto a gambe non si fosse dato.

Nell'udirlo parlar d'Alla' si bene
 Pareami, disse allora un buon vecchietto,
 Ch'ei volesse abbracciare di Maometto
 La fede, onde salvarsi dalle pene
 Dell'inferno, a cui sono condannati
 I Coffar [1] a scontrarvi i lor peccati :

Per cui taceva, avendone piacere ;
 Ma quando l'unità del Creatore
 Moltiplicar lo intesi, fui d'orrore
 Preso, e l'avrei voluto allor vedere
 Cader colto d'un colpo d'accidente,
 Ed all'inferno andar direttamente.

(1) Eretici.

Ammirazione

Un negoziante di manifattura,
 Gentile, onesto, affabile e cortese,
 Domandommi una volta con premura
 Se a Parigi favellano il francese
 Perfino i contadini. Certamente
 Gli risposi, e lo parlano corrente.

Mascialla! Mascialla! che contadini!
 Egli esclamò, parlare l'*affranghi* sanno;
 Non come i nostri stupidi beduini,
 Che mille sbagli in arabo ci fanno;
 Ben molti Effendi e Bey e Pascià nostri
 Non sanno quanto i contadini vostri.

(1) In generale lingua Europea.

Garibaldi

Mi guida o professor da una modista
 Che vo' far qualche compra pel Harem.
 Mi disse un giorno il vecchio Si [1] Gonem
 Uom di ricchezze immense e poca vista.
 Andiamo; t'accompagno con piacere,
 Disse, ma pria desidero sapere,

Per condurti al migliore magazzino,
 Che vuoi comprar di bello, o mio Signore,
 Polche, rispose, rosse di colore
 Sul modello di quel sarto soprafino
 Tanto famoso. Di qual sarto ? io chiesi,
 Di Garibaldi il sarto dei francesi.

(1) Signore.

La Capacità degli Europei

Quante cose fan del diavolo
 Questi *affranghi*, o figlio mio!
 Giorno e notte lo fan correre,
 Già dev'essere d'Iddio
 Questo l'ordine e il voler.

In che mani, ohime terribili,
 Nero diavolo, cadesti,
 Ma castigo tal tu meriti,
 Chè ai fedeli ma tu festi ;
 Ma ora niun ti dee temer.

Schiavo lor tu sei, t'espongono
 Alle fiamme, all'acqua, e al vento,
 E in cavallo, in cane e in scimmia
 Pon cambiarti a lor talento,
 Costringendoti a ballar. [1]

Per il fil di ferro invianti
 A portar disparcci e nuove ;
 In bagur [2] intiero un popolo
 Strascinar ti fan qual bove,

E ti forzano a fischiar.

E poi dicono gli stolidi:

Fan portenti gl'infedeli ;
 Fan vie ferree, fan telegrafi.
 E quali aquile nei cieli
 Spiegar fanno il volo lor.

Insensati ! È il nero Satana

Che per lor fa queste cose:
 Quando Allà lo vorrà libero
 Dalle lor mani ingiuriose
 Perderanno il lor valor.

(1) Allude ai giuochi del Circo recentemente eretto.

(2) Vapore, locomotiva.

Sostegno della terra

Perchè vi lacerate

Gli abiti, o figli cari,
 E il volto schiaffeggiate,
 Versando pianti amari ?
 Del duolo che vi strazia
 L'alta cagion qual è ?

Lo Scek d'una moschea,

Di nome Salheddin,
 Mesto così chiedea
 A venti *hasciascin*, [1]
 Che radunati s'erano
 Di *scira* [2] in un Caffè.

Antecipatamente

Piangiam l'orribil morte
 Del Toro [3] Onnipossente,
 Che sul suo corno forte
 Sostiene il mondo e gli esseri
 Che in esso il ciel creó.

Ed a ragion piangiamo

La morte sua futura;
 Chè ogni dì qui vediamo,
 Per nostra gran sventura,
 Dei tori il morbo crescere :
 Milioni già atterrò.

E questo maladetto
 Morbo colpir potrebbe
 Il toro benedetto
 E allora crollerebbe
 La terra con noi miseri
 In fondo al bujo mar.

- (1) Fumatori di hascisce. Canapa preparata in pastiglie e confetti od in tabacco.
 (2) Scira—specie di hascicie.
 (3) Toro mitico, che secondo una credenza ancor viva tra gli arabi, sostiene il mondo con uno dei suoi corni, e che cagiona il tremuoto quando, per riposare un corno subentra a tale iucarico coll'altro.
 (4) Allude all'epizoozia.

Il Discorso di Napoleone III **Dialogo fra Ali e Mustafa**

Ali. Di quali liete nuove annunziatore
 Oggi mi sei ? Che dicono i giornali,
 Di cui fra noi sei l'unico lettore?
 Il Colèra cessò degli animali?
 Il Barlemant [1] procede con saggezza?
 Vi son nuovi anni od odi per Sua Altezza?

Must. Colla pazienza ottieni quanto brami:
 In quest'istante appunto ho ricevuto
 Di Bolacco il giornale, che tant'ami.
 Ascolta, leggerotti il contenuto.

Ali. Ed io, fratel, sarotti eternamente
 Per questo tuo favor riconoscente.

Must. Ecco di Nabuliun il gran discorso:

Ali. Per Setti Zenab [2] fermati un momento:
 Fammi sapere prima chi è quest'orso
 Di Nabuliun (3). Per me non mi rammento
 Tal nome avere inteso. Qual mestiere
 E' il suo ? Dottor, Maestro, od Ingegnere?

Must. Dammi tempo a pensare. L'ho trovato.

Ali. Da bravo: Dimmi, lo conosco anch'io ?

Must. Sicuro! è Nabuliun nostro avvocato.

Ali. Nabuliun Calli ? un galantuom, per Dio !
 E' quello che ci vinse le tre liti:
 Altrimenti saremmo fra i falliti.

Ma a chi dirige il suo discorso bello?

Must. Al Senato: Senato ! nome strano!
 Non conosco quest'uomo, o mio fratello.

Ali. Dev'essere un collega suo cristiano:

Qui trattasi di liti, allor legale,
A quel che par, diventa il tuo giornale.

Must. Pur troppo ! eppur finor pien d'importanti
Nuove egli era. Leggiam quello che resta.

Ali. Pei Hassanen (4), fratel, non ire avanti;
Getta il giornal : che rompansi la testa
Quei due; poco c'importa se il Senato
Ha perso e Nabuliun ha guadagnato.

(1) Parlamento.

(2) Madonna Zenab cugina del Profeta.

(3) Non paia strana tale ignoranza, poiché ameno Napoleone I è notissimo in Egitto ma solo sotto il nome di Bonaparte.

(4) Cugini del Profeta.

L'Abolizione dei Consolati

Infedeli Europei, vi tingete

Del cupo indaco il volto e le mani;
Chè del nostro governo dimani
Sottomessi alle leggi sarete:
Non più Consoli, non Cancellier;
Essi han perso ogni loro poter.

Core, fegato, milza e polmoni,

A gran festa v'invito; chè pieno
Per voi, cari, di giubilo ho il seno:
Oggi i re delle franche nazioni,

Che fin'ora ostinavansi in van,
Dièr lor scettri al sublime Sultan.

D'ora innanzi alla nostra *Zabtia* [1],

Non essendovi più consolati,
Come i cani verranno trascinati
Dal *cavas* [2], ch'insultavano pria,
I protetti, a gustar il sapor
Del baston che sprezzavan finor.

Giù i cappelli, di neri turbanti,

Neri al par delle vostre inumane
Vil coscienze, le teste profane
Vi cingete, infedeli arroganti:
Maledetti voi siete dal Ciel,
Che creovvi per schiavi ai fedel.

(1) Polizia.

(2) Guardia di Polizia.

La Massoneria

Se d'amor pel Profeta hai ricco il cuore,
 Dai tristi *Farmassun* tienti lontano,
 Che son nemici acerrimi al Corano,
 E negan l'esistenza del Signore,
 Pretendono ch'il caso abbia creato
 La terra, il vasto mare e il ciel stellato.

Sono follie le varie religioni,
 Inventate per freno agli ignoranti;
 Maometto, Mosè, Gesù, furfanti
 Son, che ingannàr le semplici nazioni;
 E i miracoli lor son giuochi d'arte:
 Dei *farmasson* così dicono le carte.

S'adunan, essi in sotterraneo loco,
 In mezzo a cui si veggon dei fratelli
 Che il secreto tradiro, i cupi avelli,
 E in fondo acceso un abbagliante fuoco,
 Sovra cui giuran col pugnale in mano
 Cieca obbedienza e fede al lor Sovrano.

Lor scopo è chiaro : vogliono annullare
 Le religioni e Scek, Babas [1], Khakhami [2]
 Dritti mandar di Satana ai reami,
 E al fuoco i sacri libri lor gettare:
 Ch'Allah disperda i neri lor disegni,
 E gli escluda dai suoi celesti regni.

(1) Preti.

(2) Rabbini.

Il Principe di Galles Dialogo tra Saleh e Mohammed

Saleh. Gran cannonate udii questa mattina :
 Un Pascià di Stamboul sarà arrivato.

Moh. No fratello, è il figliuol della regina
 Degl'inglesi, che giunse accompagnato
 Da sua moglie, per quì passar l'inverno
 E d'alto Egitto visitar l'interno.

Saleh. Ma non v'è nulla da veder di raro
 In quelle parti ; non vi son città.

- Moh. Ciò non importa al prence, o fratel caro,
Ch'ei vi va solo per le antichità,
Ed ha con se grandissimi sapienti,
Per istudiar le statue e i monumenti.
- Saleh. C'è poco da studiar, fratello mio :
Chiamano antichità, quei peccatori
Che cangiati in granito fùr da Dio
Pei gravi lor misfatti e neri orrori,
Se al Gran Profeta avesser dato ascolto,
Ognun d'essi sarebbe stato assolto.
- Moh. Son d'idea che se alcun dicesse questo
Al prence, ei si farebbe Mosulmano ;
E Londra, che ora è tributaria, presto
Sarebbe unita al regno del Sultano.
- Saleh. Bellissima e felice è l'idea tua ;
Ma i nostri Scek non san la lingua sua.

Il Circo

Che salto spicca, quel figliuol d'un cane !
Dodici sedie, guarda, o mio fratello;
Si direbbe che voli quale uccello ;
Ecco degli Europei le scienze arcane.
Che scienze ! è un calcio che Satán gli diede;
Robusto e forte è di Satán il piede.

Sarà così. Deh ! guarda quel cavallo;
Danza meglio di nostre ballerine;
Uarde, Nefise, Zohra, Bambe e Amine
Pon prendere da lui lezioni di ballo.
Che discorsi ! È Satàn che in forma appare
Di cavallo, per ordin del Compare.

Eh ! che dici di quel che suona il flauto
Della scala di legno in sulla cima ?
A niun muro l'appoggia quell'incauto,
Eppur non cade. Merita egli stima ?
No, tal capacità non ha quel muso ;
E' il diavolo che gliela tien daggioso.

Il Canto

Un vecchio negoziante di Gurìa (1)
Ricco, ma come tutti gli altri, avaro,
Passeggiava una sera all'Esbechia,
Con un amico suo, di luna al chiaro;
E fumando e cantando pian pianino

Giunsero entrambi a piè del Gran Casino.

La prima donna, un pezzo di Traviata
 Cantava in quel momento ; onde gli amici
 Fermaronsi ad udire. Ehi! che ne dici ?
 Che strilli a suon di musica suonata !
 Osservò l'uno : diè le stesse strida
 Nel partorirmi Alì la mia Farida.

Anche questa signora, disse l'altro,
 Dà alle tenebre un piccolo infedele,
 Che avrà il cor nero, l'anima crudele,
 Ladre le mani, e il cervello scaltro.
 Ma perchè partorire innanzi a gente
 Straniera e a suon di musica battente ?

Perchè dev'esser Console il marito,
 Che volendo mostrare ai suoi protetti,
 Come a far figli gli era riuscito,
 Invitollì ad udire i maledetti
 Urli di Setti [2], che in presenza loro
 Dee buttar giù il futuro suo tesoro.

(1) Mercato di manifattura.

(2) Signora.

La Profanazione

Khoghe [1], che libro è quello ? un gusto immenso
 Sembra che la lettura sua ti dia.
 Sarà in versi... Che dico ! or che ci penso :
 Le lingue vostre non han poesia...
 Ma, a quel che veggo, in arabo è redatto...
 Cielo ! è Kafer l'autore che l'ha fatto... [2]

Profanazione ! ei Scek Fakih [3] s'appella !
 Dio ! Scek Fakih si noma un cristiano !...
 Ma, per iscriver sì ben la favella
 Nostra, deve conoscere il Corano:
 Chè non spezzasti, Alla', la man che diede
 A quell'immondo il libro della fede ?

(1) Professore.

(2) Si allude ad un discorso pubblicato in lingua araba sulla storia del commercio degli arabi e degli Ottomani dall'Illustre Giureconsulto ed orientalista Cav. F. A. De Marchi.

(3) Equivale propriamente a *Giureconsulto*; ma gli Arabi non conoscono altra legge che la religiosa, e perciò *Scek Fakih* è per essi un dottore in materia di religione maomettana.

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