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**WOMEN'S WEDDING SONGS FROM ADANA: FORTY QUATRAINS
IN CILICIAN ARABIC**

CANCIONES DE BODA FEMENINAS DE ADANA: CUARENTA CUARTETAS
EN ÁRABE DE CILICIA

STEPHAN PROCHÁZKA*

Abstract

This article deals with special four-line songs performed exclusively by women in the Arabic dialect of the city of Adana in Southern Turkey. Following an introduction including a formal and linguistic analysis forty songs are transcribed and translated into English.

Resumen

Este artículo trata de canciones especiales cantadas exclusivamente por mujeres en el dialecto árabe de la ciudad de Adana, en el sur de Turquía. Tras una introducción, que incluye un análisis formal y lingüístico, cuarenta canciones se transcriben y traducen al inglés.

Keywords: dialectal poetry; songs; oral literature; Cilician Arabic.

Palabras clave: poesía dialectal; canciones; literatura oral; árabe de Cilicia.

All members of the Arabic speaking minority in Turkey's fourth largest city, Adana, belong to the ṢAlawī sect of Shiite Islam¹, which is also widespread in Western Syria. Although, or perhaps because, women have a somewhat inferior status in this religious community and are prohibited from initiation into its secret doctrines, in many respects they enjoy more social freedom than most of the Sunni women of the region². For one thing, at weddings ṢAlawī women are allowed to dance and sing with the men, and during the lengthy wedding celebrations, which often last several

*Stephan Procházka, Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Vienna.

E-mail: stephan.prochazka@univie.ac.at

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¹ Often also called Nuṣayrī or Nuṣayrī-ṢAlawī.

² Cf. Procházka-Eisl & Procházka 2010: chapter 2.1.2.

days, women in Adana and other Arabic speaking parts of Cilicia recite(d) short, four-line verses to both female and male participants³.

Around the turn of the 20th century, when Western Arabists first became interested in spoken Arabic dialects, they often recorded traditional songs and poems, and several of the larger collections date back to that era⁴. However, after World War I most dialectologists shifted to the research of daily speech because they had become aware that the language of oral poetry often does not reflect the pure local dialect but also contains supra-regional and Classical forms and vocabulary. In the Arab world, by contrast, until fairly recently orally transmitted poems, songs, and proverbs were the only fields in which local researchers showed any interest in the dialects. Since the 1990s, because of the rapid and lasting changes in many aspects of Arab societies, these products of local popular culture have again received more attention from Western scholars⁵. In particular, the overwhelming impact of television and other media has resulted in an ongoing decline of traditional culture which is – at least in some parts of the Arab world – in danger of being lost within the next generation or two⁶. As for wedding songs one should also mention the increasing tendency among Islamist circles to condemn wedding ceremonies in general as un-Islamic practice.

The situation in the region under research is special insofar as most aspects of Arab material and literary culture were actively suppressed by the Turkish authorities until only a few years ago. Arabic songs and Arab music were banned from public performance and thus it is not surprising that little of a once rich oral culture has survived today. Among these remnants are two very different types of songs performed exclusively by women: mourning songs and wedding songs. This paper deals exclusively with the second type. Following a short discussion of the general literary and linguistic characteristics of these songs are the original Arabic texts and English translations of forty typical examples.

The songs always consist of a series of four-line strophes, each of which is followed by the well-known *zaġārīd*-trills called *zalġīt* in the local dialect. There is evidence of songs of similar structure and content also exclusively sung by women in adjacent regions, particularly Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. These too are sometimes labelled as *zaġārīd* songs because these cries are the only thing all these quite different kinds of songs have in common⁷. In Adana the use of these quatrains has drastically decreased during the last twenty years, and today there are many weddings where they are not performed at all. They are regarded as a relic of former

³ Because usually men and women do not mix during most stages of the festivity, in many parts of the region there are also typically male songs (cf. Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 33). The rather sophisticated poetry duels of Palestine, for instance, are exclusively “performed by and for men” (Yaquub 2007: 8).

⁴ E.g. Hartmann 1897, Huxley 1902, Littmann 1902.

⁵ Cf. Caspi & Blessing 1993: 355.

⁶ This is, above all, true for urban societies. In many rural areas folk traditions continue to be practiced, although often in the frame of folk festivals and similar occasions (cf. Yaquub 2007: 8).

⁷ Cf. Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 34-36; *zalāġīt* in Jargy 1970: 116.

times, and today only sung by elderly women – and usually only during the so-called henna-night one day before the actual wedding⁸. Most modern wedding festivities are now accompanied by professional or semi-professional entertainers and bands.

A clear sign of the decline of this oral tradition is that one often hears quatrains with topics that do not fit the occasion, i.e. the henna-night. Formerly there were special strophes sung for each step on the long way from the formal request for the girl's hand to the final wedding night⁹:

- The visit of the groom's family to the bride's family to ask for the girl's hand (*b-yiḷlibu l-bitt*).
- The ring ceremony (*il-xātim*).
- The engagement ceremony (*l-^ṣxṭāb*).
- The henna-night (*laylit il-ḥinni*).
- The departure of the bride from her parents' home¹⁰.
- The procession from the bride's home to the groom's home (*iz-zaffi*).
- The arrival of the bride at her new home.
- The ceremony at the groom's home.

The address forms like *yā bitti* 'my daughter', *ya-abni* 'my son', *xayyi* 'my brother', *yammi* 'my mother', and *bayyi* 'my father' used in the first lines of the songs indicate that in former times the mothers and sisters of the couple as well as the bride herself were among the performers¹¹. As was mentioned above, today only older female relatives, in rare cases the mothers themselves, sing a few of these strophes.

Formal characteristics

Number of lines – All wedding songs presented here have four lines, hence we have called them *quatrains*. In this respect they correspond to the same category of songs in other parts of the Near East. Some researchers, however, prefer to call them *couplets* instead of *quatrains*, maintaining that they consist of two lines of containing two hemistichs each¹². It is true that in Arabic editions similar songs are often arranged in two lines instead of four¹³; but particularly the songs beginning with a

⁸ For a detail account of an ṢAlawī wedding cf. the text in Procházka 2002: 263-274.

⁹ For an overview of similar customs in Palestine and Syria see Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 31-33.

¹⁰ Traditionally this part of the ceremony took place at the home of the bride. Today both the henna-night and the actual wedding are celebrated at a 'wedding saloon' (*düğün salonu* in Turkish).

¹¹ Cf. Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 39: "Among the singing women we may find the bride's family (sisters, cousins, mother and aunts), non-family (adult) guests, and the bride's non-family girl friends from the village, as well as members of the bridegroom's family".

¹² Cf. Littmann 1902: 87; Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 35 and especially 41. On the latter page the author claims that only the wedding songs of the Jews of Damascus are arranged in quatrains. But as they are structurally exactly the same as the Druze or Muslim songs (cf. the examples p. 40), it is hard to guess why they should be regarded as formally different.

¹³ Cf. Lübānī 2009.

kind of interjection (see below) are usually written in four lines¹⁴. We also think that their dominant rhyme pattern *a a b a* suggests that they are quatrains rather than couplets¹⁵.

Rhyme patterns – Only six of the quatrains (= 15 %) in our collection are monorhymed with the structure *a a a a*. The overwhelming majority of the songs (28 = 70 %) have the rhyme pattern *a a b a*, which is frequently used in other Near Eastern quatrains, including the Turkish *mani*¹⁶. The rhyme patterns *a a a b* and *a b c b* occur in two songs each; and *a a b b* and *a b b b* are each used in one song.

Number of syllables – In many genres of popular poetry the metrical structure is mainly quantitative and not accentual as in the Classical poetry¹⁷. Thus in all hitherto published songs of the type under discussion the number of syllables is equal, or almost equal, in all four lines. Surprisingly this is not the case for many of the quatrains in our collection. The number of syllables is very inconsistent; the shortest verse has five syllables, the longest 25. Often lines 1-2 are of equal length; but lines 3-4 are in many cases much longer, and in some songs (e.g. no. 22) the fourth line is *very* long. The radical variation of syllabic patterns within one and the same song can also be seen as an indication of a certain decline. The reason for this might be that pairs of verses which originally belonged to different songs were newly combined – perhaps because the other pair of verses in each of the two songs had been forgotten.

Linguistic features – Phonologically, morphologically and syntactically the songs are pure Cilician Arabic¹⁸, which means that they are either autochthonous products of the local culture or were adjusted to the local dialect long ago. Their vocabulary is rather simple and basic¹⁹. There are practically no loans from Classical Arabic²⁰; but

¹⁴ For examples see Lūbānī 2009: 43 and 201.

¹⁵ Cf. the examples in Eilers 1942. When speaking Turkish, the Arab women of Adana call these songs *mani* because they resemble to these popular Turkish four-line stanzas. See the following footnote.

¹⁶ The same rhyme pattern predominates in the quatrains published in Huxley 1902, Littmann 1902, and Jargy 1970. The Iraqi quatrains published by Eilers 1942 have the rhyme pattern *a a a b*. For the Turkish *mani* cf. *EI*², VI, s.v. *māni*: “The *mani* is, most usually, a piece of poetry made up of heptasyllabic verses rhymed on the pattern *a a b a*; each quatrain may be sufficient to fulfil a certain function or to transmit a certain message.”

¹⁷ Jargy 1970: 30 over-generalized when he wrote “la métrique de la poésie populaire...n’est pas basée [my italics] sur l’accent rythmique, mais sur le nombre de syllabes”. Popular poetry based on accentual structures also exists, cf. the discussion in Palva 1992: 149-166.

¹⁸ Typical features are the so-called *umlaut-imāla* (e.g. *qēḥid* ‘sitting’; *nēs* ‘people’), pausal phenomena like *-a# > a^w* (*ṣadāma^w*, *Malṭa^w*) and *-i > ey* (*farfūre^y*, *dūre^y*), the way attributes are constructed (e.g. *fariḥt iḡ-ḡāy*, *bḥūr iz-zirq*), and the analytical accusative (e.g. *kiyyaftin la-msāfrīnak* “you have amused your guests”). For an overview of Cilician Arabic see Procházka 2006.

¹⁹ Cf. Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 39.

one does find typical Syrian words not used in the everyday speech of Adana, for example:

filfil il-harr 'hot pepper' instead of the local *flayfli bi-thibb*
šibbāk 'window' instead of *tāqa*
dyūf 'guests' instead of *msāfrīn*²¹
ġmāl 'beauty' instead of *ħisīn*
kama 'like' instead of *mitil*.

Another feature is the use of the relative pronoun *illīzi*²², which is otherwise restricted to traditional narratives and fairy tales. Sometimes we come across poetic licenses such as *ġhannabi* 'hell', altered from *ġhannam* to rhyme with *ʕa-n-nabi* in no. 8. The lengthening of short vowels in last syllables also occurs, e.g. in no. 3 *b-tisrāh* and *nifrāh* in lines 2 and 4. There are strikingly fewer Turkish loanwords in the songs than in normal speech, which is certainly a sign of their relatively high age²³.

Stylistic features

Introductory interjection – At the beginning of all the songs we find an interjection which by some women is pronounced *hāw*. The majority of the performers, however, prefer the word *hāy* hence these songs are called *mhāyhāy* (or *mhāha*) in Cilician Arabic²⁴. Such opening vocative syllables are common in *zagārīd*-type songs in other regions too. Interjections used are:

- *ayha/ēha/īha* in Lebanon (Huxley 1902: 190)
- *a hā* in Syria (Jargy 1970: 122)²⁵
- *hay wiyyā, ī wiyyāh; āwīha; īh, ēh, āh, yā, hē* in Palestine (Lübānī 2009: 43, 149, 201; Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 36)
- *ēh w-yā* among the Druzes (Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 36).

We find that in 80 % of the forty Adana songs published here the interjection occurs at the beginning of lines 1-3; only 10 % of the songs exhibit the *hāy* in all four lines (in the remaining 10 % the interjection is found in only one line or two). In the songs from Lebanon edited by Huxley 1902, as well as in the Palestinian examples presented by Lübānī, the interjection always occurs in all four lines. In most of the Syrian examples found in Jargy 1970: 116-117 the interjection begins all four lines.

²⁰ Except for learned ʕAlawī sheikhs, Classical Arabic is unknown to the people of Adana. However a few lines of these songs show Classical forms: e.g. no. 22 *mawġe kabīre*, which in pure dialect is *mawġe kbīre*. In some lines we find the Classical article *al-* instead of dialectal *il-*.

²¹ Actually a re-loan from Turkish where *misafir* means 'guest' and not 'traveler'.

²² In a couple of instances replaced by the Turkish word *kiši* 'person'.

²³ In the songs we find, for example, the word *ʕadūw* 'enemy', which in normal speech has been replaced by *dišmān* < Turkish *düşman*.

²⁴ In other regions *muhāhā* (Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 36).

²⁵ « ?A hā...: cris de joie lancés surtout par les femmes aux fêtes de nocés. »

Metaphors

As in other songs of this kind, rhetorical figures, particularly metaphors, are frequently used. These include comparisons of the bride and/or groom with various kinds of flowers. For example:

Hey, our bride Fāṭma is (like) a pink/and our groom is (like) the flower of the pomegranate tree. (no. 35).

The groom is once called “hot pepper” (no. 20) and once “a cup of best porcelain” (no. 23). In no. 29 the children of a family are described as “the candle of the house... who should not extinguish” (...²⁶*wlādin šamʿit id-dār/yā rabbi lā tiṭfīya*!)²⁶.

Similes like *hāy ʿxdūdik kama tiṭfāḥ* “Hey, your cheeks are like apples” (from a song not included in the collection below) are very rare and it can be taken for granted that this verse, which is also found in a collection from Palestine²⁷, is not a local product. This is also shown by its unusual preposition *kama*.

Textual features

Structural characteristics

All quatrains are semantically a self-contained unity. During my fieldwork I never came across a performance which combined two or more quatrains into a longer entity, but it cannot be ruled out that this had been sometimes done in former times. Often in line 1 or 2 the bride, the groom, or other prominent figures in the wedding ceremonies are addressed.

The first two lines of several quatrains (no.s 34-40) are more or less nonsense. One of them is the most widely known of all the songs, no. 34, which begins, “Hey, we have leek/Hey, you have leek”. These nonsense-verses may be another hint of the decay of the orally transmitted songs because they suggest that the performers knew only two lines of a certain quatrain and thus invented two others, the present first and second lines, with the appropriate rhyme²⁸. Especially in such songs, but also in many of the others, the main message is formulated in the final two lines.

A frequently used stylistic device is a conditional clause: If the protasis (often line 3) includes something positive, the apodosis (in the same line and/or line 4) is a wish or a blessing. If – as is much more frequent – the protasis is something negative, the apodosis is a curse or something similar. By far the most common verb used in the negative messages is *yibgīd* ‘to dislike, to hate’; but *mā yhibb* ‘he does not like’ also occurs a few times. Typical examples are:

Hey, the one who dislikes you, may he drop down into pieces! (no. 15)

Hey, the person who dislikes us, may God send him a bullet! (no. 22)

Hey, a person who dislikes us/May his trousers get tattered! (no. 39)

The name of the bride’s or groom’s family is sometimes mentioned in the protasis:

Hey, who dislikes the members of the Šābūn family/may God send him a bloody jail! (no. 6).

²⁶ Cf. a similar metaphor in Littmann 1902: 15/12 *wi-l-šarīs yā šamʿitnā – lā šāš min yiṭfihā* “and the groom, oh our candle – who extinguishes it should not live!”

²⁷ *wi-xdūdak kama t-tuffāḥ* (Littmann 1902: 20/54).

²⁸ I have noticed nonsense verses in no other collection of songs of this kind.

In quatrains which were originally sung during the visit of the groom's male family members to ask for the girl's hand, the hope of a positive answer is introduced by *inšalla*. For example:

Hey, if God wills, with your permission, oh ʕAlī/We shall marry the old and the young. (no. 2)

Frequent motifs²⁹

As is often the case with songs performed by women³⁰, Cilician quatrains never have religious themes. In comparison to the men's poetry, the songs presented here are not very warlike³¹ either, although there are many maledictions against assorted enemies. In two songs, nos 12 and 17, we find a "local touch" (besides the Cilician dialect) in that the city of Adana is explicitly mentioned.

The descriptions of the bride and the groom mainly mention their expensive clothes, for example:

Hey, our bride, your dress is embroidered with gold. (no. 10)

Hey, my brother, your suit is striped. (no. 17)

Another important thing is, of course, honour:

They said: 'She is gone with clear thought and honour.' (no. 10)

Hey, my son, oh you possessor of clear thought and honour. (no. 21)

The groom is, or is expected to become, a hero who will vanquish the enemies of the family:

Hey, every time the enemy comes to cut you down

If God wills, may you become stronger and greener. (no. 19a)³²

He is the "sultan of the east and the west" (no. 22) and he even "may become a ruler and a leader" that all people should be under his hand (no. 19b).

In some other songs we find common blessings for the bridal couple. For example:

Hey, may God protect our bride

Hey, the one who is your pride (no. 31)

May my Lord protect him (the groom) from the evil eye! (no. 14)

Much rarer than curses are wishes. A good example is:

Hey, my brother, I wish you a bath outside in the fields/Hey, I wish you to have four servants serving you while four (other) servants are sleeping. (no. 16).

In several songs joy (*farḥa*) in general is expressed, e.g. "We like the joy, the joy of coming together." (no. 5). There are also expressions of the wish that the joy of a wedding may be passed on to the next generation: "Hey, this joy is for my nephew/And the next joy is for my son." (no. 27). The same wish is also found in the wedding songs of other regions. Compare the above with this verse from Jerusalem: *il-yōm il-farah ʕinnā – ʕuʔbāl wlādkum* "Today the joy is with us, it may be with your children (in the future)!" (Littmann 1902: 14/6).

²⁹ For an overview of motifs in women's wedding songs cf. Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 37-39.

³⁰ Cf. Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 33.

³¹ For examples from Palestine cf. Yaqub 2007.

³² To become green also means to flourish, to get strong.

Two quatrains are songs of welcome for the guests. Song no. 1 welcomes the representatives of the suppliant groom who come to ask for the hand of a girl on his behalf:

hāy ahla w-sahla fīkin yā dyūf
hāy ^omqallbīn bi-syūf
hāy m-naṣrifkin il ḡāyīn
tā dbahnā-lkin il-xārūf

Hey, welcome to you, oh guests!

Hey, you who come with swords to ask for her hand in marriage

Hey, if we had known that you would come

We would have slaughtered a lamb for you.

This quatrain has striking parallels in Syria and Palestine. A wedding song of the Damascene Jews is almost identical:

āh ya ṣahla w-sahla ya dyūf
āh ya mšaqqalīn bis-syūf
āh ya ulaw ^oṣrifkom žāyīn
w-āh ya kunna dabahnā-lkum xarūf ³³.

Oh, welcome you guests

Oh, decorated with swords

Oh, and if we had known you were coming

We'd slaughtered for you sheep.

This last example illustrates the fact that the quatrains of our collection share not only motifs, but also many phrases and idioms with the *zagārīd*-songs of other regions. Some of these similarities may be incidental since it is natural to compare a bride with a beautiful flower; but others are certainly proof of a common origin. The fact that identical, or at least very similar, verses are found in the relatively large area from Cilicia in the north to Palestine in the south, and among such different religious communities as ṢAlawīs, Jews, Christians, Sunnis, and Druzes, suggests that some of these songs are part of an old supra-regional folk tradition. Compare, for instance:

- *hāy fī smayki b-tisbaḥ bi-tṣīr* “Hey, a fish is swimming in it” (no. 2) with Lebanon: *ēha yā semeki fī-l-baḥar tilṣab* “oh fish playing in the sea” (Huxley 1902:197).

- *hāy il-karīm karmak w-lōlō ṣanāqīdak* “This vineyard is yours and its pearls are your grapes.” (no. 19b) with Palestine: *ya lūlu ṣanāqīdeh* “whose grapes are pearls” (Spoer & Haddad 1926: 204).

- *ta-ṣṣīr ḥākīm w-miḥkim w-kill in-nās taḥt īdak* “Hey, may you become a ruler and leader that all people should be under your hand.” (no. 19b) with Palestine: *wiṣīr ḥākīm w-čill il-balad taḥt īdeh* “he will become a ruler and the whole country will be under his hand.” (Spoer & Haddad 1926: 204).

A quatrain from Lebanon goes (Littmann 1902: 62/14):

yā ṣarīs yā finžān farfūrī

³³ Rosenhouse 2000-2001: 40. On the same page there are also similar songs of the Druzes and from ṢĒn Māhel.

yā žūx aḥmar ṣa-š-šibbāk manšūrī
limmā tirkab ṣa-l-khaylā wi-tʔil-lha dūrī
is-sarž miğrā? wa-r-rikāb billawrī.

Oh bridegroom, oh cup of porcelain

Oh red shawl spread out on the window

When you are riding on your thoroughbred and tell her: Turn!

The saddle is embroidered and the stirrups are of crystal.

The first three lines of this song show a striking parallel to our song no. 23:

hāy yā-abni yā fiṅḡān farfūre^y
hāy allo ḥaqqdār ṣala šibbāk minšūre^y
hāy lammt-il tirkab ṣa-l-xaḍra w-tibṣaq-la hā dūre^y

Hey, my son, oh cup of best porcelain

Hey, who has the right (to possess) a carved window.

Hey, when you mount the brown (mare) shouting to her: hey turn!

Another very interesting parallel is found among the wedding songs of the peasants of Ḥama:

wa-in ṣiṭṣat il-xeyl wurridha ṣalā l-ṣāṣī – w-aḥši qulūb el-aṣdā b-bārūd w-rṣāṣi

“Si les chevaux ont soif, mène-les à l’Oronte ! – J’emplirai les coeurs ennemis de poudre et de plomb.” (Gaulmier 1935-45: 33).

In our song no. 24 we find:

hāy lammt tirkab ṣala l-xaḍra b-titbarram ḥadd al-ṣāṣe^y
hāy inšalla bi-tallu yā-abni qalb al-ṣada killa bārūd w-rṣāṣe^y.

Hey, when you mount the brown (mare) and turn to the River Orontes

Hey, if God wills, my son, you (and your friends) will fill the heart of the enemies with gun powder and a bullet.

These two verses must have been brought from Syria to Cilicia as the River Orontes is not known to the average ṢAlawī of the region, and none of the women of whom I inquired the meaning of *il-ṣāṣi* could explain it to me.

Edition of forty quatrains

All recordings were made in the Akkapı quarter (in Arabic Ūbt il-³kbīre) of Adana between 2001 and 2010. The majority of these songs came from Luṭfiye (born 1941), Minnāz (born 1922), and Šāmiye (born 1939), who tragically died in a car accident in 2008. I am especially grateful to the Bayraktar and Uzun families for their enthusiastic support of my research³⁴. Many of the songs I heard during weddings, or on videos of weddings. To get a better sound quality, I also recorded all of the songs at the homes of well-known performers. I heard many of the songs twice or thrice and often recorded variants, which are also presented in the following edition.

The songs are presented in transcription and English translation³⁵. They have been roughly arranged according to the following categories: Songs sung when the groom’s family comes to ask for the girl’s hand. A song for the betrothal. Songs of

³⁴ Special thanks go to Nurhan, Eylem, Gülşen, Semra, and Neslihan as well as to the head of the family, my friend Ali Bayraktar.

³⁵ I would like to thank my friend Craig Crossen who edited the whole text and to whom I owe many of the good stylistic translations.

joy and welcome at the wedding. Songs for the bride. Songs for the groom. A song for the groom's mother. A song for the father. Songs of blessing or mockery: Songs in which the first two lines are nonsense.

1

hāy ahla w-sahla fīkin yā dyūf
hāy ʾmqallbīn³⁶ bi-syūf
hāy m-naʿrifkin il ḡāyīn
tā dbahnā-lkin il-xārūf

Hey, welcome to you, oh guests!
 Hey, you who come with swords to ask for her hand in marriage
 Hey, if we had known that you would come
 We would have slaughtered a lamb for you.

2

hāy baḥirna^w ʾgbīr ʾgbīr
hāy fī smayki b-tisbah bi-tṣīr
hāy inšalla b-ʿizzak yā ʿAli
mi-nḡawwiz iz-zḡīr wi-l-ʾgbīr

Hey, our sea is wide and big
 Hey, a fish is swimming in it
 Hey, if God wills, with your permission, oh ʿAlī³⁷
 We shall marry the old and the young.

Variant line 3:

hāy inšalla b-ʿizz Alla ʿizz bayykin yā wlaydāti
 Hey, if God wills, with God's and your father's permission, oh my dears!

3

hāy baḥirna^w ʾmrāḥ ʾmrāḥ
hāy fī smayki b-tisrāḥ
hāy inšalla la-ḡāhkin yā wlāde^y
mi-ndiqq il-ʾtbūl w-nifrāḥ

Hey, our sea has overtopped the banks
 Hey, a fish is swimming around in it
 Hey, if God wills, for your sake, oh my dears
 We shall beat the drums and enjoy ourselves.

Variant lines 3-4:

hāy inšalla b-ʿizz Alla ʿizzkin yā wlaydāti
inšalla mi-ndiqq w-m-nifrāḥ

³⁶ Cf. Barthélemy 1935-1954: 674f.: *qallab* "aller voir dans sa famille (une fille à marier : parente d'un jeune homme) avant de faire la demande en mariage."

³⁷ The lady used this name because when I recorded her I was with her nephew ʿAlī. Usually the name of the bride's father (or elder brother) is put in this place.

Hey, if God wills, with God's and your permission, oh my dears!
We shall beat (the drums) and enjoy ourselves.

4a

hāy riḥna min balad la-balad
hāy ta-kinna niḫtib bitt pāšit Ḥalab
hāy mā rgidna ḥa-l-ḥisin wi-ğ-ğmāl
°rgidna la-bayt il-ḥasab wi-n-nasab.

Hey, we were going from country to country
Hey, we betrothed the girl of the Pasha of Aleppo
Hey, we did not run after attractiveness and beauty
We were looking for a family with a noble pedigree.

4b

hāy °rgidna min balad la-balad
hāy ġibna bitt pāšit Ḥalab
hāy mā rgidna la-l-ḥisin wi-ğ-ğmāl
°rgidna la-bitt il-ḥasab wi-n-nasab.

Hey, we were running from country to country
Hey, we have brought the girl of the Pasha of Aleppo
Hey, we did not run after attractiveness and beauty
We were looking for a girl with a noble pedigree.

5

hāy wardna^w °b-yinšamm
niḥna mi-nḥibb il-farah, il-farah °m-niltamm
b-yibğidna yibḥat-lu bi-ḥabs id-damm
lā yfikk-illu l-īsir lā yifriğ-lo hamm

Hey, our roses have a pleasant fragrance
We like the joy, the joy of coming together
(Who) dislikes us, may (God) send him a bloody jail!
And may He not loose his chains and not relieve his pain

6

hāy °ltammu ta-niltamm
hāy killaytna ixwe wlād il-ḥamm
hāy kill ši³⁸ b-yibğidna la-sulaylayt bayt Ṣābūn
Alla yibḥat-lu ḥabs id-damm

Hey, come together, let's come together
Hey, we are all brothers and cousins
Hey, who dislikes the members of the Ṣābūn family
May God send him a bloody jail!

³⁸ Instead of *kiši* 'person'.

7

hāy ahla w-sahla fīkin
hāy l-²mlāyke taḥmīkin
hāy w-lā markibkin ġiriq
w-lā šimit ³⁹ aḥada fīkin

Hey, you are welcome
 Hey, the angels may protect you
 Hey, your ship has not sunk
 So that nobody could be happy out of spitefulness.

8

hāy ṣalayki ṣalā an-nabi
hāy la-ġērik ²ġhannabi
hāy kiši b-yibġiḍik

Alla lā yibṣat-lu mitlik, w-lā bitt w-lā ṣabi
 Hey, the Prophet's blessing upon you!
 Hey, for the others Gehenna!
 Hey, every person who dislikes you
 May God not give him one like you, neither a girl nor a boy!

9

hāy dānāyi tliṣti ṣa-s-sillēm taktak qabqābik
hāy libbastik badli bi-ġġē la-kaṣbik
hāy dānāyi kiši b-yibġiḍik

yigṣalu yfūt min ġirbil ibri yibṣaq oḥ ma-ḍyaqo bābik
 Hey, my dear, when you went up the stairs your slippers were flip-flopping
 Hey, I have dressed you with a dress that reaches down to your ankles
 Hey, my dear, the person who dislikes you
 May (God) squeeze him through the eye of a needle that he will cry 'Oh, how narrow is your door!'

10

hāy ṣarūsna badiltik zarrābīye
hāy kill zarba ⁴⁰ ṣlēha bi-l-mīye
hāy saḥlo ṣannik ahlik w-ġṭrānik
qālo b-timši bi-l-ṣaql wi-l-ḥirriye ⁴¹

Hey, our bride, your dress is embroidered with gold
 Hey, each peace of (its embroidery) is worth a hundred pounds
 Hey, your family and your neighbours asked for you
 They said: 'She is gone with clear thought and honour.'

³⁹ Cf. Barthélemy 1935-1954: 406: *šamet* "se réjouir du mal de, triompher du malheur d'(autrui)".

⁴⁰ Cf. Barthélemy 1935-1954: 309: *zāreb* "sorte de fil de soie".

⁴¹ Cf. Barthélemy 1935-1954: 150: *ḥarra* "honnête femme".

11

hāy dārna wsīʕa
hāy šibbākna ʕāli
hāy ʕarūsna kayysi
hāy ʕarīsna gāli

Hey, our house is spacious
 Hey, our windows are high
 Hey, our bride is beautiful
 Hey, our groom is dear.

12

hāy yammi qʕidna taht is-syēḡāt
hāy yammi sarxo ʕlayna yqōnšu ʕlayna ḡ-ḡēḡāt
hāy dānāyi fariḡti fiki

bi-tsawwi Adni killa sabʕ baladāt
 Hey, mum,⁴² we were sitting under the hedges
 Hey, mum, the hens called us and were talking about us
 Hey, my dear, you are (the reason of) my joy
 You make all of Adana seven times nicer.

13

hāy yammi qʕadna^w taht šaḡrit iḡḡa^w
hāy yammi šribna^w b-²qdāhit fiḡḡa^w
hāy kiši bi-yfūt baynātna^w w-bayn baʕḡna^w
Alla yibʕat-lu il-ʕama w-fōq il-ʕama marḡa^w

Hey, my mum, we were sitting under the oleaster tree
 Hey, my mum, we were drinking from silver cups
 Hey, the person who will interfere between us
 May God send him illness like blindness and more than blindness!

14

hāy xayyi qēʕid bi-taxt il-²lwān
kaffak² mḡanna waqt-il mi-nnām
fāto šaḡlit² zḡāya qālo ha-š-šabāb minnayn
hāda xayyna z-zḡayyir rabbi tiḡrizo min ʕayn

Hey, my brother, sitting on the coloured throne
 Your hands have been painted with henna while we were sleeping
 Some girls came in and said: 'From where is this guy?'
 This is our younger brother: May my Lord protect him from the evil eye!⁴³

⁴² Although lines 1-2 are addressed to *yammi* 'my mum', it is very likely that the person actually meant is the daughter. In many Near Eastern societies reverse addressing (although only from the elder to the younger) is very common: Mothers address their sons and daughters as 'my mum', uncles their nieces and nephews as 'my uncle', etc.

⁴³ Probably this song comes from the Syrian region of the ʕAlawīs, because in those dialects the syllable *-ayn#* becomes *-ān#*, implying that all four verses had the rhyme *-ān*. This is the only quatrain in the whole collection which uses the rhyme pattern *a a b b*.

15

hāy xayyi abu zinnār ašfar
hāy °b-yibgīḍak yūqaš yitkassar
hāy yūqaš bi-ḡanb balasāni
ta-yšadḍu šaqrab ašfar

Hey, my brother with the yellow belt
 Hey, the one who dislikes you, may he drop down into pieces!
 Hey, may he fall next to an elder tree
 So that a yellow scorpion will sting him.

16

hāy xayyi b-ištihī-lak bi-l-barrī ḥimmām
hāy arbaš šabīd yixdimak arbaš šabīd ynām
hāy b-ištirī-lak šamli raqīqa šlayha marḡān
ta-tmassih šaraq xaddak hint w-ṭāliš mn-il-ḥimmām

Hey, my brother, I wish you a bath outside in the fields
 Hey, I wish you to have four servants serving you while four (other)
 servants are sleeping
 Hey, I'll buy you a fine towel with a pearl⁴⁴
 So that you can wipe the sweat off your cheeks when you come out of the bath.

17

*hāy xayyi badiltak mḡazzqa*⁴⁵
hāy ā m-našrifak w-lā bi-l-yaḍa^{w46} *w-lā bi-l-°bnām*
hāy qōmtak bi-ha-l-maydān
b-tiswa Adni šArabistān

Hey, my brother, your suit is striped
 Hey, we don't recognize you, neither being awake nor sleeping
 Your standing at this place
 Makes Adana like Arabia.

18

hāy yā xayyi šū b-tištihī min malbūs ta-tilbas?
hāy b-ištirī-lak ḥarīr atlas
ḥammt-il bi-ṭfūt bayn iš-šabāb
*bi-yfattih-lak il-ward b-yiḍḥak-lak ringas*⁴⁷

Hey, my brother, what kind of dress would you like to put on?
 Hey, I shall buy you (a dress of) satin
 And when you will be among the young people
 The roses will open for you and the daffodils will smile at you.

⁴⁴ The word *marḡān* usually means 'coral'; in Classical Arabic it can also mean 'pearl', which better suits this context.

⁴⁵ *mḡazzaq* < Turkish *çizgi* 'stripe'.

⁴⁶ Cf. Barthélemy 1935-1954: 917: *bə-l-yayḍa*, *bə-l-yaqza*.

⁴⁷ *ringas* < Turkish *nergis*.

19a

hāy yā-abni barrim xātīm bi-īdak
hāy il-karim karmak w-lōlō ʕanāqīdak
hāy kill-ma ġīyit il-ʕadūw ta-ṭhiššak
inšalla b-tizbil wi-b-tixḍarr

Hey, my son, put⁴⁸ a ring on your hand!
 This vineyard is yours and its pearls are your grapes.
 Hey, every time the enemy comes to cut you down
 If God wills, may you become stronger and greener.

19b

hāy yā-abni barrim xātmak b-īdak
hāy il-karm karmak w-lōlō ʕanāqīdak
hāy b-iṭlib min rabbi ta-yaʕīṭik w-zīdak
ta-ššīr ḥākīm w-miḥkim w-kill in-nās taḥt īdak.

Hey, my son, put⁴⁹ a ring on your hand!
 This vineyard is yours and its pearls are your grapes.
 Hey, I pray to my Lord that He may give you more
 Hey, may you become a ruler and leader that all people should be under your
 hand.

Variant line 3:

hāy b-iṭlib mi-ilāh is-sama rabbi bis-sama ta-yaʕīṭik w-yzīdak
 Hey, I ask the God of the heaven, my Lord in the sky, to give you more.

Variant line 4:

hāy šīr ḥākīm il-ḥikkām kill in-nēs taḥt īdak
 Hey, may you become the ruler of the rulers that all people should be
 under your hand.

20

hāy yā-abni yā filfil il-ḥarr
hāy allī miršūš bi-īrāḍi l-barr
hāy kill-ma ġīyit il-ʕada ta-ṭhiššna^w
inšalla m-nizbil w-m-nixḍarr

Hey, my son, oh hot pepper
 Which has been sown in the uncultivated fields
 Every time the enemy comes to cut us down
 If God wills, may we become stronger and greener.

21

ṭālṣīn la-ğabil ʕarafāte^y w-nādū-lna b-qaṭṣ ar-rūs
hāy il-xanzīr wi-t-taṣlab w-qalab ġāmūs

⁴⁸ Literally: turn a ring.

⁴⁹ Literally: turn a ring.

hāy yā-abni yā šāhib il-ṣaql yā šāhib in-nāmūs
hāy inšalla m-niqṭaṣ ṣadātna^w la-qalb il-ṣada ndūs

We went up to Jabal Arafat and they ordered us to cut the heads

Hey, the pig⁵⁰ and the fox, they beat a buffalo

Hey, my son, oh you possessor of clear thought and honour

Hey, if God wills, we shall slaughter our enemies and step on the enemies' hearts.

22

hāy yā-abni yā siltān ġarb w-šarq
hāy klāmak ṣlayye walla ana axfaḥ min il-lamiṣ wi-l-barq
hāy ik-kiši b-yibġiḍna^w Alla yibṣat-lu rṣāša tarq
Alla yibṣat-lu mawġe kabīre ta-tqaṭṭu mālṭa^w ġūwāt mālṭa^w la-sabṣ^a bhūr iz-zirq.

Hey, my son, oh sultan of the east and the west

What are you saying about me? Really I am lighter than the spark and the lightning.

Hey, the person who dislikes us, may God send him a bullet!

May God send him a huge wave that will make him cross Malta and the inside of Malta and the seven blue seas.

23

hāy yā-abni yā finġān farfūre^y
hāy allo ḥaqqdār ṣala šibbāk minšūre^y
hāy lammt-il tirkab ṣa-l-xaḍra w-tibṣaq-la hā dūre^y
hāy inšalla bi-tqim-lak is-slāṭīn wi-l-wizra wi-rbābt id-dawle^y.

Hey, my son, oh cup of best porcelain

Hey, who has the right (to possess) a carved window.

Hey, when you mount the brown (mare) shouting to her: hey turn!

Hey, if God wills, the sultans, the viziers and the masters of the state will stand up for you.

24

hāy yā-abni yā tāġ rāse^y
hāy zinnārak šiklo killo mḥaḍḍar min ḥarīr ṣāfe^y
hāy lammt tirkab ṣala l-xaḍra b-titbarram ḥadd al-ṣāše^y
hāy inšalla bi-tallu yā-abni qalb al-ṣada killa bārūd w-rṣāše^y.

Hey, my son, oh crown of my head

Hey, your belt is made of pure silk

Hey, when you mount the brown (mare) and turn to the River Orontes

Hey, if God wills, my son, you (and your friends) will fill the heart of the enemies with gun powder and a bullet.

25

hāy ana^w ana^w
hāy imm il-ṣarīs ana^w

⁵⁰ Among the ṢAlawīs the pig is a symbol for the devil.

hāy, ydiqq il-ḥadūw
w-yā farḥi ana^w
 Hey, it's me, me
 Hey, I am the groom's mother
 Hey, may He smash the enemy!
 This will be joy for me!

Variant line 2:

hāy, ixt il-ḥarīs ana^w – Hey, I am the groom's sister.

26

hāy yāsmīn² qbālo
hāy wardo² zrāro
hāy kiši bi-yrīdu la-fariḥna
raytu l-farah bi-dyāro
 Hey, jasmine is opposite to him
 Hey, his roses and his buds
 Hey, the one who wants our joy
 May there be joy in his home (too)!

27

hāy ḥlayyi ḥlayyi
w-hāy axadt qalbi ḥlayyi
w-hāy il-farḥa la-ibin xayyi
fariḥt iḡ ḡāy la-bnayyi
 Hey, on me, on me
 Hey, you have made my heart beating
 Hey, this joy is for my nephew
 And the next joy is for my son.

28

hāy² rqiši Alla yhannīke
hāy šū-ma qilna ā bi-ydīs fīke
hāy hal-farḥa la-ibnik
fariḥt iḡ ḡāy mā kēfīke.
 Hey, dance, may God make you happy!
 Hey, whatever we say you will not forget⁵¹
 Hey, this joy is for your son
 The next joy will not be enough for you⁵².

29

hāy bayyi ḥammar xaymi
hāy² xwāti qaḥdo fīya^w

⁵¹ Literally: it will not be lost in you.

⁵² Since you like dancing so much.

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hāy ʾwlādin šamšūt id-dār
yā rabbi lā tiṭṭiya^w!

Hey, my father built a hut
 Hey, my brothers lived in it
 Hey, their children are the candle of the house
 Oh my Lord, do not extinguish them!

30

hāw zayzaqt il-ḥaṣḥūr tinḥiliq⁵³
hāw bēn id-dēl wi-l-waraq
hāw Alla ybārik-lak yā bayyi
kiyyaftin la-msāfrīnak bi-širb il-ḥaraq.

Hey, the bird's singing begins (?)
 Hey, between the branches and the leaves of the vine
 Hey, may God bless you, oh my father
 For that you have amused your guests with the drinking of arak.

31

hāy ʾsmalla⁵⁴ la-awwilkin
hāy ʾsmalla la-ēxirkin
hāy ʾsmalla la-ḥarūsna
hāy illīzi zaynit-kin

Hey, may God protect your ancestors
 Hey, may God protect your descendants
 Hey, may God protect our bride
 Hey, the one who is your pride.

32

hāy hāda šū fanno
hāy hāda šū minno
hāy inšalla kanno r-rabb ḥayyašni la-ḥirsak yā dānāyi
baddi-sawwi issa aktar minno.

Hey, this one, what is his skill?
 Hey, this one, what's that to him?
 Hey, if God wills, if he let me live until you wedding, my dear
 I shall do much more than he.

Variant lines 3-4:

hāy inšalla la-waqt il-ḥirs / hāy la-farḥit l-²kbīre
mi-nsawwi šay aktar minno.

Hey, if God wills, until the wedding / until the big joy
 We shall do much more than he.

⁵³ The word is not completely clear.

⁵⁴ Cf. Barthélemy 1935-1954, 8: *sm-alla ḥalēk* "que Dieu te protège !"

33

hāy bayt il-Qādi yā fūš
hāy ʔgrayyātkin yā ʔgrayyāt ʔrfūš
hāy mā kānit timbaq-ilkin ha-l-ʕarūs
timbaq la-bayt ʔSlāmī hal ʕabbu l-ʔqrūš
 Hey, Qadi family, you are...⁵⁵
 Hey, your feet, oh your feet are (big like) shovels
 Hey, this bride has not suited you
 She suits the Slāmī family who has distributed⁵⁶ money.

34

hāy ʕinna^w prāša^w
hāy ʕindkin prāša^w
hāy illīzi b-yibḡida la-ʕarūsna^w
Alla yibʕat-lu bi-ršāša^w
 Hey, we have leek
 Hey, you have leek
 Hey, who dislikes our bride
 May God send him a bullet!

35

hāy ʕinna^w minšāra^w
hāy ʕindkin minšāra^w
hāy ʕarūsna Fāṭma qaranfili
w-ʕarīsa ʕinnāra^w
 Hey, we have a saw
 Hey, you have a saw
 Hey, our bride Fāṭma is (like) a pink
 And our groom is (like) the flower of the pomegranate tree.

36

hāy ʕinna^w patīke^y 57
hāy ʕindkin patīke^y
hāy illīzi b-yibḡidkin
Alla yibʕat-lu bi-hīke^y
 Hey, we have a bootie
 Hey, you have a bootie
 Hey, who dislikes you
 May God send him shame!

⁵⁵ My informants could not explain the word *fūš* – not even the woman who sang the song. Perhaps it is a nonsense word just used for the rhyme. Anyway it is associated with something negative – perhaps through the words *wḥūš* ‘wild beasts’ and *wiḥiš* ‘bad, dirty’.

⁵⁶ Literally: poured out.

⁵⁷ From Turkish *patik* ‘shoes for babies’.

37

hāy ūinna ḥaṣṭr
hāy ūindkin ḥaṣṭr
hāy kiṣi ā bi-yḥibbna
min nīto la-bābūḡna ha-l-qaṣṭr

Hey, we have a mat

Hey, you have a mat

Hey, the person who does not like us

He will⁵⁸ (be tucked) in our short slippers.

38

hāy ūinna laḥm mafrūme^y
hāy ūindkin laḥm mafrūme^y
hāy il-farḥa la-wlaydātna
Alla yifṣam kill maḥrūme^y

Hey, we have minced meat

Hey, you have minced meat

Hey, this joy is for our children

May God satisfy everybody who has not yet got (children)!

39

hāy ūinna fāra^w
hāy ūindkin fāra^w
hāy kiṣi b-yibḡidna^w
ḡā-lo yinqiṭiṣ sirwālo^w.

Hey, we have a mouse

Hey, you have a mouse

Hey, a person who dislikes us

May his trousers get tattered!

40

hāy ūinna zille
hāy ūindkin zille
hāy kiṣi ā bi-yḥibbna
ḡā-lo yibṣat bi-ṣille.

Hey, we have a carpet

Hey, you have a carpet

Hey, a person who does not like us

May an illness be sent to him!

⁵⁸ Literally: his intention is.

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