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The dialect of Ḥaḍramawt in the historical and ethnolinguistical context*

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The last few decades witness a growing interest to the modern and ancient dialects of the Arabic language that can be explained not only by the practical needs, but the common development of the Arabic studies and semitology. This is true when we speak about the dialects and languages of the Arabian Peninsula, the cradle of the Arab civilization, and about Ḥaḍramawt as a part of it. Nevertheless it seems to be only the initial stage of the studies of the Ḥaḍramī dialects. One can find only a few investigations of the linguistic phenomenon of this region, primarily the books of C. de Landberg (1). Comparative historical and linguistic analysis of the dialect of Ḥaḍramawt has never been made.

When studying a certain language and a dialect it is necessary to take into consideration all the economic and historical context that affected it during the period of its existence in order to give an adequate picture of this idiom. This may be the migration of the population, foreign interventions of one kind or another, trade and economic ties with Africa, the Mediterranean, India and Indonesia as well as close coexistence of pre-Islamic religious cults and Islamic ones, and cooperation between different social strata of the society. Among the factors that affected the formation of the dialect of Ḥaḍramawt, one can also mention temporary isolation of some groups of local population from other parts of South Arabia, and difficulties in communication between different *wāḍiʿs*, though situated comparatively close to each other. Unfortunately nearly all investigations of this kind are lacking additional historic or social data, i. e. they ignore extralinguistic factors of the development of the language.

Closely connected with the extralinguistic factors is the bilingualism of the dialect speakers who can use (apart from Literary Ara-

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bic) the local dialect. The stability of the language or dialect demands constant and intensive contacts between the groups of the language speakers that may be provided by strong cultural and economic ties. For Ḥaḍramawt these are the common religious and market places, and existence of the roads, schools and hospitals that are common to several villages. The spread of education, radio, television and video recorders strongly affects the present state of the Ḥaḍramī dialect. Thus Literary Arabic introduces new morphological and phonetical forms that were not previously characteristic of the regional dialect. All of these factors were taken into consideration when the linguistic material was analyzed.

Since very ancient times, Ḥaḍramawt has been known as one of the most important agricultural regions and as a center of incense cultivation and trade with the Mediterranean area. This part of Arabia was known in Europe long ago and was mentioned in the works of ancient authors — Ptolemy, Herodotus, Strabo, Cl. Pliny, Agatharkides who give some information about South Arabia in general and Ḥaḍramawt in particular. Later on, the medieval Arabic geographers and historians also paid attention to it, but the facts provided by them are more mosaic than systematic and sometimes only added speculations and myths. Thus, until the second half of the 19-th century this region was almost completely unknown to Western scholars.

The first information, that dates back to the last century, was given by travellers who managed to penetrate the inner Ḥaḍramawt, where the very first glance at its landscape and nature (apart from the climate) impresses the European visiting this region, and where, following W. Dostal's words «the wādīs (valleys) cut deep into the tableland... Large parts of the Wādī Ḥaḍramawt and the smaller hollows leading off it are filled with sand and gravel. The little villages on the slopes along the tableland are a long way from one other and have only little arable land at their disposal» (2).

The data given by the travellers' reports contain a lot of useful information and help to throw light on the social and economical development of this region. Among them are books by A. von Wrede (3), H. von Wissmann and D. van der Meulen (4), L. Hirsch (5), F. Stark (6), H. Ingrams (7), etc. Some of these reports contain a description of wādī ʿAmd and wādī Dawʿan that is of great importance to our studies.

Another source of information about Ḥaḍramawt which helps in understanding the historical facts that probably affected the development of the language, are the results of archaeological expeditions that may also provide us with some additional linguistic data. Among the archaeological reports of this kind one can mention G. Caton-

Thompson's reports of excavations in wādī °Amd (8), works of D. B. Doe (9), A. Fakhri and G. Ryckamans (10), results of the Soviet-Yemeni archaeological mission.

The epigraphic material from Ḥaḍramawt and other parts of South Arabia also helps to solve this problem. From this point of view the works of A. F. L. Beeston (11), D. B. Doe and A. Jamme (12), E. Glaser (13), M. Höfner (14) and others are of great value. One also cannot underestimate the works of R. Serjeant, especially his «Prose and Poetry from Ḥaḍramawt» (15), which gives an ethnographical picture of this region. It is also important to pay attention to the ethnographic results due to field researches carried on by W. Dostal and, later on, by the ethnographic section of the Soviet-Yemeni complex mission in Ḥaḍramawt.

The present investigation is based on the historical and ethnolinguistic material collected in 1988—1989 in wādī °Amd and wādī Daw°an in the Western Ḥaḍramawt during the field works of the Soviet-Yemeni complex mission. These texts were recorded directly in the natural conditions in the places where the informants live, and most of these texts deal with irrigation, land cultivation and traditional handicraft.

The data of the morphology and phonetics of the Ḥaḍramī dialect was collected from a considerable number of local informants in these wādīs. All texts were recorded not only as examples of connected speech but for their anthropological and social interest as well. Thus, apart from the ethnolinguistic analysis some extralinguistic features were taken into account. The linguistic analysis also deals with the occurrence of the regional variants and with the variants found in the speech of a single informant. This is a result of variations in the pronunciation that may lead to the appearance of homonyms.

Phonetics. The consonantal system of the dialect of Ḥaḍramawt is rather restricted when compared with the Literary Arabic Language and it differs from one region to another. The system of the dialectal consonantal phonemes is given in the tableau below.

	Plosive	Fricative
Labial	b	f m w
Dental	t d	s š z n l r
Emphatic		ṣ ṭ ḏ ḍ
Palatal	k	g
Velar and Uvular	g	x y
Pharyngeal and glottal	'	h ḥ °
Affricates		ǧ

The number of the consonants in the dialect of Ḥaḍramawt is less than in Literary Arabic; the voiced affricate ḡ in the Northern Ḥaḍramawt is changed into y, sometimes g; whereas in the South — ḡ is retained. The uvular q is regularly transformed into g. Thus, when the two changes ḡ > g and q > g take place, the two phonemes ḡ, q collide into a single one — g. Realization of ḡ like y in the Northern Ḥaḍramawt results the corresponding changes in the words, for example: *tāyir* instead of *tāḡir* «trader», *yibāl* instead of *ḡibāl* «mountains» *musil* (< *musayyil*) instead of *musagḡil* «tape recorder». This also leads to the appearance of homonyms: *tāyir* «trader», «wheel». The same phenomenon may be found when ḡ > g and q > g; the homonymy may be solved with the help of the existing context.

Reduction of the number of the consonantal phonemes is compensated by the development of the vocal system of the dialect, that leads to the appearance of the new vocal phonemes. The phonological system of the dialect shows the transition from the more ancient stage of the development of the language (that was characterized by a larger number of the consonantal phonemes) to the modern one which has a restricted number of consonants. For example, the articulation of the ḍ and ḏ, ṣ and ḏ becomes closer and results in various mutual changes.

At least ten vowel phonemes are presented in the dialect: short a, i, u, o, e and long ā, ī, ū, ō, ē. Among the special features of the dialectal phonology one can mention the realization of the diphthongs ay, aw like corresponding long vowels: *bayt* > *bēt* «house»; *zawg* > *gōz* «husband» (with the metathesis g/z and articulation ḡ like g); as well as the realization of the pronominal suffix of the 3 sg. masc. hu > o like in many other Arabic dialects: *bēto* «his house» instead of *baytuhu*, *baytihi*, *baytahu*.

Changes in the position of the stress may be also found. The stress is less dependent on the length of the word and the «long» (CV, CVC) and «short» syllables than in Literary Arabic. In this case the phonological opposition of the vowels short/long has no importance and the stress may be regarded as the so called supersegmental morpheme: *mātar* «rain», *maṭār* «airport».

The hamza in most cases is omitted, more frequently in the beginning of the word and in the final position. After ā in the intervocal position it changes into w; in the postvocal position it is omitted with the appearance of the long vowel: *bi'r* > *bīr* «well».

Morphology. The nouns in the dialect almost completely lost their vowel endings; when the endings are realized they have only formal character: *fi bētuhum* instead of literary *fi baytihim* «in their

house» and the grammatical status of one word or another is due to its position in the syntactical construction.

Special interest attracts the 2 sg. fem. pronominal suffix š, that originates from the pronominal system of the ancient dialects of Hadramawt, for example: *alla yusallim ʿalēš* «God bless you (sg. fem.)». The pronominal suffix š still exists in some north Yemeni dialects, for example, in *Ṣanʿāʿ*.

The morphological models of the dialect are different from those of the Literary Arabic language because of the changes in the consonantal system and the influence of the consonants on the vowels in the word. For example, *murbaš* (instead of *marbaš*), *murkuz* (instead of *markaz*), but pl.: *marābiš*, *marākiz*.

The verbal morphology changes considerably and has some special features. Normally the following derived themes are used: I, II, III, IV, VIII and X; the VII derived theme is very rare. The verbs of the VIII derived theme have some special features: VIII *iḥarak* «to move». It seems to be the older model of this themes that precedes the modern ones. Apart from that, the «literary» derived theme is used: *iḥtašar-iḥtašar*.

The passive voice of the verbs was registered only few times, for example, *mā yukal* «it is uneatable». Normally instead of verbs, passive particles are used.

The imperative forms of the simple verbs have the biconsonantal initial: *dxul* «enter», *šbur* «wait!». The imperative of the derived themes has the same morphological model as in Literary Arabic. Sometimes the second vowel is changed: *ḍarrib* or *ḍarrab* «beat» (i > a, probably because of the influence of ḍ).

The verbal prefix b- in Hadramawt, unlike in other dialects, indicates the future tense. Almost total absence of the vowel endings results in changes in the verbal conjugation. Thus coincide the verbal forms of the 2 sg. masc. and the 2 sg. fem., as well as the imperfect forms of the 3 sg. fem., 2 sg. masc. and 2 sg.; the pronoun is used when necessary: *anta katabt* «you (sg. masc.) wrote», *anti katabt* «you (sg. fem.) wrote», *ana katabt* «I wrote»; *hiya tiktib* «she writes», *anta tiktib* «you (sg. masc.) write», *anti tiktib* «you (fem. sg.) write». Sometimes the verb 2 sg. fem. has the final ī: *anti tiktibī*.

The verbal dual forms are very rare (no more than one or two in a single text) and normally the verb in plural and the word *itnēn* are used. In the perfect tense (apart from the verbs 3 pl. masc.) the forms 3 pl. fem. are used too, but not regularly; in the preposition to the plural nouns of the feminine gender the verbs 3 pl. masc. are used: *faʿ alū dā n-nisā* «the women have done it».

As well as in the imperfect, in the perfect tense the dual forms are used very rarely and seem to be the result of the influence of the Literary Arabic language. Usually, instead of the verbal dual forms the word *itnen* and the verb in plural are used: *yīṣṭaḡalū itnēn* «they (two) are working».

The plural forms of the imperfect lose the ending *-ūna*: 3 pl. — *yifʿalū* (*yafʿalū*); 2 pl. — *tafʿalū* (*tifʿalū*): and are used with the nouns of the masculine and feminine gender. The 3 pl. fem. of the imperfect tense may be similar to that of Literary Arabic: *yifʿalna* (except the vowel of the preformative).

There is a possibility of different variants of the verbal imperfect preformatives, *ya-* *yi-* (*yu-*), as the vowel of the imperfect prefix has no correlation with the phonetical structure of the word or the type of the verb. The vowel of the imperfect of the simple verb may also alternate: *yiktib* — *yiktub* «he writes».

The geminated verbs and the verbs with the final hamza are transformed into the verbs with final *w*, *y*.

Among the vocabulary of the dialect the toponymy seems to be the most interesting because some of the place-names may be preserved unchanged for thousands of years, for example *sayūn*, *raybūn*, etc.

The reduction of the consonantal phonemes as it is seen in the example of other dialects is accompanied by the development of the vocal system. At the same time it is accompanied by the elision of vowels in the speech, that leads to the changes in the syllable structure and the possibility of the open syllable (VC) in the initial position which is similar to what happens in other Semitic languages.

The following text was recorded in the village Hureidha, situated in the outfall of wādī ʿAmd. The informant was 60 year old — Šāleḥ Abū Bakr Bā Sahl. The text was deciphered with the help of the local dialect speakers and may be regarded as an example of the dialect in this area. The long and short vowels in the transcription were noted according to the traditional spelling and after consultations with the informants. The system of the vowel phonemes may vary from one region to another and further additions or more precise definitions are possible. The syntax, some special words and expressions of the informant's speech were preserved in the translation.

Al-xayyil

[1] Al-xayyil ḡagg-l-wādī min awwal muš bi-l-warāta. [2] Maṭalan wāḥid kān xayyil, abūh xayyil. [3] Wa yirḡaʿu xayyil min

ba^cdo². [4] Mafrūd ^caleyhum³. [5] La'. [6] Al-xayyil illi yišifūno⁴ fih tigga ya^cnī min gibal il-muwātinīn, [7] Ya^cnī hum yintaxibūh, linsān⁵ illi yišifūno šālih, byiṣlah⁶, yi^cmal lišālih al-kull. [8] Yagūlūn: fulān nantaxibuh xayyil. [9] Yintaxabūh xayyil. [10] Intaxabū xayyil, gālū, hāzā xayyil ṭayyib ništī musā^cid lo. [11] Gālū: hāzā itnēn⁷-xayyil wa musā^cid lixayyil allazī⁸ ya^cnī yarwūna šālih wa yi^cmil lišālih an-nās al-kull. [12] Muš inno mafrūd ^calēhum, aw hāzā tāğir⁹, aw kān abūhu, kān ḡaddo min awwal. [13] Lā, illi yirwūnahum¹⁰ nās tigga wa-l-gānūna yibḡūnahu-n-nās. [14] ^cOmar Ben ^cAlī ^cAttās kān awwal xayyil. [15] Awwal xayyil kān fi-l-wādī Taḡrūb zamān yimkin¹¹ tagriban gabra hiwālay mi'atēn sana. [16] Kān ḡaddī Bū Bakr Ben Sālem mōlā bi ^cĀdiya xayyil. [17] Ba^cadēn, ba^cada yumkin¹² sittin sana, sab^cin sana — Sa^cad Ben Sa^cid Ben Nubḥ, illi dāro, ^cād xāl dāro, ^cād xāl ^calā ḡabal, šūfo. [18] Hāzāk raḡul šālih. [19] Ba^cad Sa^cad Ben Sa^cid — ^cOmar Ben ^cAlī Muḥammad l-^cAttās, raḡul ṭayyib. [20] Ba^cd ^cOmar Ben ^cAlī — Muḥammad Mubārak, bardō Nubḥ. [21] Āxir xayyil — Muḥammad Mubārak Ben Nubḥ. [22] Ya^cnī fi bidāyat it-tawra. [23] Wa-ntahat xeylato bi-l-liḡān. [24] Kawwanū liḡān. [24] Kawwanū liḡān, likull wādī liḡān. [25] Liḡna min xamsa anfār. [26] Ra'is liḡna w nā'ib lo, w itnēn 'a^cdā musā^cidīn w kātib, ya^cnī liḡna kawwanat min xamsat anfār li-'iṣlāḥ-l-wādī wa litaxilat-l-wādī. [27] Al-xayyil lo musā^cidīn, wa bidūn 'uḡra al-xayyil. [28] Al-xayyil bidūn 'uḡra, mā lo 'uḡra. [29] W lā al-māl ḡaggo. [30] Iz kān ^cindo maṭalan, fa sama^c fargo fi ḡayār¹³ fi-l-wādī wa xayyil bas yikūn maḥmūl as-sōg. [31] Wāḡibāt-l-xayyil nhār-s-seyl, al-yōm illi ḡā' fih seyl, wāḡib-l-xayyil yinzur ^calā-l-wādī yišūf min aš-šū^cb lumman yišūf: šī ḡiyār fih

² Ba^cdo — the pronominal suffix -hu is usually transferred into o.

³ Compare with Literary Arabic ^caleyhim. The -u- in the pronominal suffix -him is preserved.

⁴ The imperfect verbal prefixes ya- yi- (yu-), even in the same text, often alternate.

⁵ Linsān — a result of the assimilation of the definite article 'al-. Compare with Literary Arabic 'al-'insān, it seems to be one of the rather specific pronunciation features of the dialect.

⁶ The verbal b- prefix in the dialect indicates the future tense.

⁷ The interdental phonemes of the Literary Arabic ṭ, ḍ alternate in the dialect with t and d correspondingly.

⁸ The speech of the informant is highly influenced by the Literary Arabic Language that results appearance of such forms like *allazī* instead of the regular dialectal *illi*.

⁹ Tāḡir — the derived root: 'aḡara > 'ittaḡara > taḡara.

¹⁰ Yirwūna: ra'a > rawa, alternation ' > w; this phenomenon may be also found in other Arabic dialects.

¹¹ See № 3.

¹² See № 3.

¹³ Ḡayārṁ ḡiyār, alternation a — i in the same text, probably, because of the influence of ḡ.

walā lā. [32] Hāzā min wāḡibāt-l-xayyil ṣabāḥ nhār-s-seyl¹⁴. [33] Wa ṣāf-l-wādī ṣāliḥ tamām, wa huwa ḡāl: al-ḥamdu li-l-lā, māšī ṣalaḥa¹⁵ fih. [34] Šī ḡiyār fi-l-wādī, min wāḡibāt-l-xayyil tānī yōm yigarrir l-ḡayār hāzā w yifruḍ °alā aṣḥāb-l-māl mugābala-l-ḡiyār hāzā, ḥarāb illī fi-l-wādī. [35] Yifruḍ °alēhum min-ṣ-ṣabāḥ yiṣarriḥ al-māl wa ya°malūna fih. [36] Sawā awwal kān māšī fih aliyāt kān, izā inkasar fi-t-tīn — ṣurḥūna¹⁶ lo bi-l-bagar. [37] Bagar lo ḥarīr whurru °alēh. [38] Kānat fi-l-bilād hinā yumkin aktar min talātīn¹⁷ hiḡḡ bagar. [39] Law ḡā ḡayār fi-l-wādī fi yōm yiṣraḥūna, tānī yōm w gatho xālis. [40] Dalḥīn mā °ād fih, wa lā šey. [41] W awwal kān yiṣraḥūna bi-l-bagar wa yiruddūno. [42] Yaṣraḥūna ṣubḥ yaḡibūna-l-°ummāl al-ḥibāl, yi-traḥū ḥaḡar fih wa yašillūnah kataf, māšī sayārāt, wa yanḍurūna, wa yibnūna — xalās. [43] Yawmayn, talāta — kull šey °alā māho alēh w ṣallihūna — hāzā wāḡibāt-l-xayyil. [44] Wa °ummāl min ahli-l-māl willī °indo māl yiṣraḥ mugābal illī °alē wa illī mā °indo-l-māl yiṣraḥ bi 'uḡrato. [45] Lakin ayām kānat uḡra awwal raxis bas talāta šilin, ba°adēn tala° ilā xamsa šilin, bi-t-tadrīs. [46] Gabla yimkin tagrīban °iṣrīn sana fi bidāyat, bidāyat at-tawra, kān °āmil yistalim illā xamsa šilin. [47] Wāḡibāt aṣḥāb al-māl leylat-s-seyl awwal yašil ilā sāgiya ḥaḡgo bi-l-maḡrafa wa-l-marbaša ḥaḡgo. [48] Yimši mā sāgiya, fih tīn yišillhā leylat asseyl, tarāḥah. [49] W ma° al-mā yimši, fi šök fi xašab fi šigra, yimilo min sāgiya ḥaḡgo min šān yiṣrab al-māl ḥaḡgo kullo. [50] W šil lammā yusallil māl ḥaḡgo. [51] Wa yusallil māl ḥaḡgo w ḥawwala-l-mā illā-l-ḡarb at-tānī, wa ḡarb lo minkī, wa yitanakkī ilā ḡarb at-tānī, lammā yistakmil mālo kullo. [52] Šī inkasar fi ḡurūb hāzā w raddī ṣabāḥ nkisār hiḡḡ fi nafs-l-yōm, mā yuxallī yiḡlis abadan, ruddūhu, w xalās. [53] Lammā yiḡī wagt-r-ray, wa wagt-r-ray yiṣraḥ. [54] Ḡā ma° ḥimār aw bagar, wa ba°ir, w rakkar, xallih yi°mil. [55] Wa xayyil mukallaf bi iṣlāḥ al-wādī faḡad. [56] Al-māl mā yidaxxal fih. [57] As-sawāḡī-l-far°iyya mā yidaxxil fihā, bas al-umn. [58] Hāzā wādī ra'isi hunā mukallif fih.

The irrigator

[1] The [position of the] khayyil¹⁸ of the wādī in the past was not inherited. [2] For examlpe, one was khayyil, [because] his father [had been] khayyil. [3] And [he] becomes khayyil after him. [4]

¹⁴ *Nhār* the biconsonantal initial of the word whic is impossible in Literary Arabic.

¹⁵ Compare *ḥaṣala*.

¹⁶ In this case the prefix of imperfect is omitted and auxiliary vowel appears.

¹⁷ See № 6.

¹⁸ The person, who normally coordinates the construction and reconstruction works in the irrigation channels, dams and fields (16).

Obliged to them. [5] No. [6] The khayyil [is] the [man] in [whom] they feel reliability, [I] mean his fellow citizens. [7] It means that they elect him, the man who [as] they believe [is] reliable [and is] good to work for the common use. [8] They say: we elect this man as a khayyil. [9] They elect him [the] khayyil. [10] [After] they elect him [the] khayyil, they say: he is a good khayyil, we want an assistant for him. [11] They say: these two — the khayyil and the assistant of [this] khayyil, who we believe is good and [who] works for the use of all the people. [12] This does not mean that he was imposed on them, or he is applied for a job, or his father, [or] his grandfather [was khayyil] before. [13] No, those, in whom the people see reliability and justice, the people need them. [14] °Omar Ben °Alī °Attās was the first khayyil. [15] The first khayyil was in wādī Tağrūb¹⁹ [long] ago, probably some two hundred years [ago]. [16] My grandfather Bū Bakr Ben Sālem, mōlā²⁰ in [the village] °Ādiya²¹, was khayyil. [17] Later, after, probably, sixty years, [or] seventy years [was] Sa°ad Ben Sa°id Ben Nubḥ, whose house, his house is still, is still on the mountain, look at it. [18] This man [was] reliable. [19] After Sa°ad Ben Sa°id [was] °Omar Ben °Alī Muḥammad Al-°Attās, [he was] a good man. [20] After °Omar Ben °Alī [the khayyil was] Muḥammad Mubārak, also [from the family of] Ben Nubḥ. [21] The last khayyil [was] Muḥammad Mubārak Ben Nubḥ. [22] So, in the beginning of the revolution. [23] And his [work as a] khayyil was finished with [the appearance of] the committees. [24] They formed committees, in every wādī [they formed] committees. [25] The committee [was consisted] from five members. [26] Chairman of the committee, vice chairman, two assistant members, secretary; so, the committee was formed from five members — for the maintenance of the wādī and for the irrigation of the wādī. [27] The khayyil has his assistants and he [works] without payment. [28] He has not payment. [29] And he had not a field of his own. [30] If he has it, and, for example, he knew that something happened in the wādī, he was obliged to arrange the common works. [31] The duties of the khayyil in the sayl, [in] the day when the sayl comes, the khayyil must observe the wādī, to look [at it] from the mountain²², till he convinces if there are [some] changes in it or not. [32] These are the duties of the khayyil from the

¹⁹ *Wādī* in the neighborhood of Hureidha.

²⁰ The holy man; the *mōlā*'s grave becomes a place of pilgrimage (*ziḡara*) and common worship not only for his fellow citizens, but for the people in the considerable part of the *wādī*.

²¹ A village some 55 kilometers from Hureidha in the neighboring wādī Daw'an.

²² Strictly speaking the *šucb* is a pass leading to the *jöl*, the stony plateau over the valley.

morning of the day of the sayl. [33] And if he sees [that] the wādī is in order, he says: Praise be to God, no changes happened in it. [34] [If] there is a change in the wādī, [among] the duties of the khayyil [is] to determine the next day what has happened and to oblige the owners of the fields to repair the changes, the destructions in the wādī. [35] [He] obliges them from the morning to repair the changes [which happened] in the fields, and [they] do it. [36] At the [very] beginning there were no mechanisms, if there happened a destruction in the fields, they remove it with the [help] of cows. [37] The cow [drags] a plough, and [the people] plough with it. [38] There were probably more than thirty double cow gears here in the country. [39] [And] if one day the change happens the wādī, the next day they will repair it. [40] Now it is over, no more. [41] In the past they ploughed on the cows and repaired [the wādī]. [42] In the morning the workers bring ropes, knit the stone and take it away on [their] shoulders [because] there [were] no cars; it is all. [43] Two [or] there days [and] everything is in order and [the people] finish [the] repair, these are the duties of the khayyil. [44] And the workers are the owners of the fields, and those, who have the field, work for what they have; and those who have no property are paid for the repair works. [45] But in the past the payment was low — only three shillings, after that it become five shillings — according to the agreement. [46] Probably some 20 years before, in the beginning, beginning of the revolution²³ a worker earned only five shillings. [47] The duties of the owners of the fields in the night of the sayl, first of all, are to come to the sāgiya²⁴ of his own with their own maḡrafa²⁵ and marbasha²⁶. [48] The water runs through the sāgiya, there is a mud in [the water] that was brought by the sayl in the night and the mud runs with the water. [49] There are thorns and trees, [which they] take away from their own sāgiya in order their field will be watered, and they take [it away] until the water irrigates all the field. [50] And the water runs until it irrigates his field. [51] And the water irrigates his field and [than] it runs the way of its own, and the water runs into another field, and this field has minkī²⁷, and [the surplus water] runs into another field until it irrigates all his fields. [52] If there is a destruction in the fields

²³ The revolution of 1967.

²⁴ A complex of irrigation channels dams and fields, has the same meaning in Egypt and Sudan; in Syria *sāqiya* means a big irrigation wheel.

²⁵ A short mattock.

²⁶ A basket usually made from palm leaves or tarpaulin.

²⁷ A compensatory channel, which drains the surplus water from the field, usually has a door which originally was made from stone, now, more common, — from steel plates.

and he repairs the destruction in the same day beginning from the morning, it is not allowed for him to sit at all, he repairs and it is all. [53] When the time of irrigation comes, during the irrigation time he ploughs. [54] They come with donkeys and cows and camel or tractor, let it work. [55] And [the] khayyil is nominated only to repair the wādī. [56] He does not care the fields. [57] He does not interfere the secondary channels, only the main one. [58] This is the main wādī for which he is nominated.

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