5. KITĀB HAZZ AL-QUḤŪF (1600S)\textsuperscript{1}

*Humphrey Taman Davies*

Al-Shirbīnī’s work, which he probably wrote in or soon after 1686, is perhaps unique in pre-20th-century Arabic literature, and unusual in any pre-20th-century scholarly literature, in focusing on the countryside as a cultural, social, economic, and religious site in its own right. The work, which is in two parts, surveys, in the first, the three estates of rural (effectively, north-eastern Egyptian Delta) society: the peasant (and above all the poor peasant) as cultivator or *fallāḥ*; the country pastor or *faqīh*; and the mendicant rural Sufi or *faqīr*. A further section analyses and mocks bad verse written by peasants and other marginal figures (e.g., a Mamluk emir of Ethiopian origin). The second part of the work analyses at length and with numerous digressions a forty-seven-line poem, supposedly written by a peasant called Abū Shādūf. The poem describes its supposed author’s rise and fall, evolves into an extended lament for the delicious foods that, in his decline, the poet can only dream of eating, and ends with the poet’s describing his project to restore his fortunes by going to the city and stealing slippers from outside a mosque. The book winds up with a miscellany of anecdotes, mostly about grammarians.

The thrust of the argument throughout the book is that country people are coarse (kathīf) and their natures cannot be changed; they contrast in all things with the city dweller, who is refined (laṭīf). Coarseness in this context includes physical grossness, moral turpitude, and ignorance. Of particular concern to the author are the false claims to knowledge made by ‘people of the countryside’; in a number of scenes, Azhari scholars are challenged to a battle of wits by a village man of religion, the hollowness of whose learning is exposed and ridiculed by his opponents.

There is evidence that, against the conventional notion of cultural decline, literacy increased during the Ottoman period, in part because of the spread of the kuttāb, a school in which young children memorised the Qurʾān and achieved basic literacy and numeracy. As a result, as Nelly Hanna (1998, 102–3) writes, “many more people knew how to read and write beyond those who were attached to institutions of higher education” and literacy spread, especially among artisans and tradesmen. It is possible that the traditional gatekeepers of learning became alarmed by this process and that the author, of whose career little is known beyond his having been at some point a bookseller, was commissioned to write Brains Confounded to undermine claims to knowledge by the non-scholarly non-elite. According to this interpretation, then, the ‘people of the countryside’ are but stand-ins for the great unwashed in general, and for those who threatened the scholarly hegemony over knowledge in particular.

The comic impact of Brains Confounded depends on two conceits. The first is that the Ode and other verses ascribed by
the author to peasants are indeed of rural origin and represent actual rural literary production. This is obviously untrue, and we assume that such verses were manufactured by al-Shirbīnī or others of his milieu to be the butt of their satire. The discovery of a short work dating to some forty years before *Brains Confounded* and containing some of the same poems satirised by al-Shirbīnī offers an intriguing hint that such writings may have been in fashion in the second half of the 17th century.

The second conceit is that such verse merits the deployment of the tools of etymological, grammatical, rhetorical, and historical analysis developed by Arab philologists for the elucidation of the fundamental texts of their culture, such as the Qurʾān and classical verse, even while the author is at pains to stress that the material that is the object of these critical attentions is innately ridiculous and unworthy of consideration as literature by virtue both of its ‘rural’ language and the low social status, and concomitant vices, of its creators.

Taken as a whole, al-Shirbīnī’s work provides an example of Arabic comic writing at its best, its arguments at base serious, its techniques inventive, its energy never flagging. It also provides, in its multiple digressions into subjects as diverse as fleas and farting, an intriguing window into the mind, or perhaps the mental lumber room, of an educated man of the mid-Ottoman period in Egypt.

The first two excerpts are from a passage in the first part of the work entitled ‘Accounts of What Happened to Peasants Who Went to the City’. They exemplify the presentation of the peasant as irredeemably gross, both physically and morally, and touch on
a number of frequently recurring themes: the peasant’s trip to the city (Cairo) to pay taxes to his ‘master’ (the local tax-farmer, usually a Mamluk), such trips inevitably leading to misadventure; Turkish as a shibboleth of the elite; and the peasants’ terror of forced labor. The second set of excerpts focuses on the pretensions to knowledge of the rural faqīh ‘country pastor’, and his actual ludicrous ignorance, which render him easy prey for the ‘well-instructed’.

Transcription

3.22

(وقيل طلع رجل فللاح بورد لأستاذته المال) فأنزله في محل فيه طاقة مفتوحة تشرف على حريم

الأمير فلما جاء الليل قال الفلاح في نفسه يا ترى باب معيكه الأمراء لم يتخيل بيضوانهم
كيف يفعلون ولكن انضير كيف ما يفعل استادك مع امرائه ولما تروح الكففر إنسكو لام معيكه
تعم ذلك ديك العمله مثل ما تعمل الأمراء وتحظك إن معيكه بديك العمله ولا بد ما يرطنوا
على بعضهم البعض بال거리 وانت تنضير طريقه ما يفعلون لحريمهم وتبقي تقول للجدعان أنا
بقيت مثل الأمراء واتم معيكه مثل امراء الأمير استاد البلد ثم إنه صبر حتى أقبل الليل
ودخل الأمير إلى منزله فقام الفلاح ونظر من الطاقة فرأى الأمير جالس على سرير من العاج
وعله أنواع الفرش وجلس زوجته على سرير منه ثم إن الأمير صار ياطنها ويناديجها برقق
الكلام تارة بالتركي تارة بالعربى إلى أن اشتهى منها قضاء الحاجة فأخذ من جانبه وردته ورمها
بها فأتى إليه وتملي بحسنه وجمالها على أحسم حال وأتى سرور وحبور ومنوال ثم إنه كله
واحد منهم اضطجع على سريره ونام

3.23

قال فلما أصبح الصباح أخذ الفلاح خاطر أستاذته وتوجّه إلى بلده فلما طلع الكفر لاقتته زوجه
أم معيكه وسلست عليه وجلس في ودها لأستادته مثل منادمة الفرقة أو بريرة الهوى إلى أن
سأله عن المدينة وعن أميد البلد فقال لها يا أم معيكه المدينة مليحة ولا صعب غير الشخاخ
فيها ولا مليح كماني إلا أمراء أستادنا تمش وترن وعلى عليها خلقان مليحة كيف نوار أبو النوم
اصفر واحمر وعلى رأسها قفف مثل قفف إله النبأ نهر العيد إلي شريته أيام الفرح بقصفته
وجد وفل اياضها امور صفر الله أعلم أنهم من استاد التحل ولله استاده اسمه ميخيط
مثل التركية إن نفسها فيها الفول الأخضر وفي سيقانها حجيل مثل حجيل أم دعموم إله شيرته

Handbook and Reader of Ottoman Arabic
لهما بخمسة تنصف فلسات جدد ولا يشبه نشيء خضرته الله أعلم أنها صمغتها ببرسيم ويا محسنتها في وقت دبك العملة أتى يعملها الناس مع النوسان وحاتاري يا أم معيك تعمل لي تتثبتها حتى يقولوا الناس ومشابخ الكفف أبو معيك بقا من الأمارة فقالت يابو معيك إحكي لي يا أبو معيك على أني شفته من أمراء استادك فقال لنا ما رحب النصرين وطلعت للاستاد وحاتتي في موضع في خاطر تطلِّ على الحريم وعلى الموضع أتى يbarang في الأمر يقهرت لنا دخل الليل وفتحت أنتخبت كيف الكلب الروم فضفت الأمر استادنا فقد على خنشه سوده مربوطه بشرامط بيض لها أربع جزئين كيف عرضت النبقات التي تعملها أيام الطبيخ في العري وقعتت أمراتها على خنشه كيفها مثل جرافة العري وبقا يكلمك بالكلام الجاداني يقول لها شامسة بمضت تقول له شقلب مقلب حتى اشتى منها دبك العمله فحذه من نوار أبو النوم فقامت تضمن وترن حيث جبت له وعمل فيها العملة فقالت له أم معيك وحيات شريكي أتى كيف شارب التيس لا أعمل لكل مثل عمل الأمارة وتبنيت على مشابخ الكففر أبرا لما يجي الليل تبلغ ماردك

3.24
قال فصبر الفلاح حتى دخل الليل فقال لها أعادي في مذود الحمامه ونا أقعد في معدو البلد قصصك ففعلت وقعتت في المعدو وعليها البشلات والشريعت وآثار الجلَّة وفيها النهشخ أيضًا قال فلما شعرت الطيع الناصية قضاء الحاجة بعد أن صار ينامه بكلام مثل نبض الكلاب شياط وعياط وضراط وسأل عن البقرة والملحة والضرور والجلة وغير ذلك أراد أن يوحي بشيء مثل ما فعل الأمر فحظ بده في المعدو فأقعد طيب محرق فأخذته وحذفها به فوقع في وسط رأسها ففلففها وسأل الدم فصرخت بأعلى صوتها فاقتروب الديران ومشابخ البلد ووصل الخضر إلى حامك البلد فاقترب وهو وافر وسئل عن القضية فأخبره بها فأخذته وضربه ضررا جوعا وأحضروا للمرأة جوانح تلبس رأسها وكتب يجري عليها شورا كاملا حتى رئت فانظر لهذا النحس النبض وفقة عقله الخسبي كيف ظهر من ملاءعته لروجه الهم والبكي

3.25
وانفق أن ثلاثة أرباع من هؤلاء الحقوق أرادوا طائفة المدينة فسروه حتى قربوا منها فقال كديهم وصاحب الرأي فيهم إن مدينة مصر كلها جنادي وعسكر يقمع عنها الروس واحت فلاحين ولن نعمل منهم وترحن علينا بالترك ولا يقمعروسنا فقامت بهم أصحابي يابو دعمام إحدا ما نعرف ترك ولا غيره فقال لهم أنا أعلمت الترك زمان أن كنت أقعد قد علمت والنصزياني ركب ركبهم فقامت له أصحابه علما الترك فقال لهم إذا طلعا المدينة نروح الحمام أتى يقولوا عليه نبع الدنيا نستحم له ونسل جلودنا وقولونا في نبرة غريبه يبخوا ويخرجون فيها وبعد ما نخرج من نبع الدنيا ونقف نفف في بدينا ونتم أمرنا اقول لكم قد رداش محمد قولا ليبك وواثق
نوار أقول لكم معاكم شيء يثير مثاقلكم يعني جديد قولوا يوق بوك يعني ما معنا شيء في خائف
صاحب الحمام ويقول لفعله دول جنادي عُرف يقطع الرس ويخلينا نخرج بالفروس وتهيينا
الناس ونبقى في مصر مثل الأمير ويشيع خبرنا في الكفر أما بقيت أمارا نترى بالتركي فيخفافا
منا مشاهد الكفر ولا يبقى له علينا كلام أبدا فقالوا له أصحابنا في شوره صواب يابو دعموم

3.26
قال فساروا حتى طلعوا مصر وسألوا عن الحمام فدللوه عليهم فدخلوا وشغلوا الراعيط وأرموا
البرد والشلاته وصاروا عربانين مثل ما يفعلوا في البرك والأدير قال لهم صاحب الحمام
استروا أي فاردوا أن يأخذوا البرد فسروا بها وأموا لهم صناع الحمام فوط فقدم من رجوع
الحمام فربطوها على عوراتهم غصب عنهم وصارت عوراتهم في الغالب مكشوفة وأورهم
مذلة ودخلوا الحمام مثل فحول الجاموس أو المعبر أو النبوع

3.27
حتى يقروا الداخل الحمام وغسلوا ما عليهم من الوسخ والسخان وغطسوا في الحيحاح مثل
البرد أو الجدلان وخرجوا مع بعضهم البعض وقد تزالت منهم الأرض وهم في حالة
الأثير وصور الأقمار حتى ليسوا الراعيط وتفعلوا بلك الشلاتين وسحبو النباحت
على الأكتاف وأردوا الخروج بلا خلاف قال فصال عليهم صاحب الحمام هاتوا الأجر
يا عرصات يا ليام فانتفت كيرهم وقال لأصحابه فردش مصيد فقالوا له نباك وها نوار وقال
لهم معاكم شيء يثير مثاقلكم يعني جديد فقالوا يوق بوك يعني ما معنا شيء فقال لهم صاحب
الحمام في أي وقت يا دوين اتعلمت التركي المعكور وقيمتهم أكبار وأمارا وهذا التركي الذي
يشبه النحى أقسم بالله لا يخرج منكم عرض حتى يحلل الأمر يريدان إلا كيف عرفوا البرد رهن
على الأجرة قال ثم إنه أمر أصحابهم بصحبهم وضربهم وأخذوا البرد منهم وخرجوا
ونداروا في الأجرة واقترضوها من أهالي الكفر وخلصوا بردهم وتوهجوا إلى حال سبيلهم

3.28
(وطلع رجل منهم المدينة فصدف السلاح) ينادي في الأسواق على رجل استحقاق الفنقول
يا معاشر الناس فظروا أنه ينادي العونا يا فلاحين فغره خارج حتى وصل إلى الكفر فرأى جماعة
من بلده بردوا الذهاب إلى المدينة فقال لهم لا تطلعوا المدينة فإنهم إنذروا لهم بكلمة والسخر
قال فمكنوا أهل بلده ثلاث سنين ما يطلعوا مصر خوفا من السخرة والعونا فانظر إلى قلة عقولهم
وخسارة أهالمهم
4.14
(وسأل قفه ريف بعض العلماء) وقال له مرادي أقرأ الجرموية على مذهب الإمام الشافعي
فضحك عليه من جهله وطرده

4.15
(ودخل على العامة في الجماعة، رحمه الله تعالى رجل من فقهاء الريف) وقال له عندك مختصر
القرآن وكان الحمذي شيخ الصحافين بمصر فقال الشيخ رحمه الله نعم اجلس حتى أنظره
لك فجلس عندك وإذا برجل أقبل على الشيخ وقال له عندك يا سيدي مختصر مسلم فقال له
نعم اجلس تعريص هذا فإنه مختصر مسلم لا كلام وطرده من عندك فتعجب الحاضرون منه غابة
العجب ثم إنهم سألوا فقه الريف عن حاله فقال له أنا رجل أقري الأولاد في بلدي القرآن
وقد ثقل عليهم طوله فقتل لعل أحداً اختصره فيكون سهل على الأولاد ويحفظه بالسره
فضحك عليه الحاضرون ومضى إلى حال سببه

4.16
(وعسع رجل من الأكابر عند قاضي القضاة في بعض المجاحم) ودعه عندك فقال ابني طلبتني
هل تفهم القرآن قال نعم أبد الله مولانا القاضي وعني مصحح ملحم بخط المؤلف قال فتحقق القاضي
جهله وضحاك عليه وطرده من عندك فمضى إلى حا سببه

4.17
(ودخل بعض الفقهاء الجعل على أبي حنيفة النعمان رضي الله عنه) ورجل الإمام مندوبة
لوجع أصابهما فلم أر الإمام في حيزة حسنة وثاب فاخرة لم رجله وكان الإمام يقرر في مسألة
صلاة الشمس ما حكموها إذا طلعت الشمس وآخر ذلك قال له هذا الجاهل إذا طلعت
الشمس قبل الفجر ما حكما الصلاة فقال الإمام أن لأبي حنيفة أن يمد رجله ثم مداها في
وجهه ومضى على درسه ولم بلغت إليه

4.18
(وانتفق أن أثنين اختصما في آية من كتاب الله تعالى) فقال أحدهما لعلهم يتفكرون وقال
الآخر لعلهم يشكرون فيها هم في المشاجرة إذ طلعت عليهم فقه الريف فساؤه
لاعتقادهم أنه يحفظ القرآن هن يتفكرون أو يشكرون فقال الأولان أنا أخذ من كل كلمة
جواباً ونجلعلوه لكما لعلهم يتفكران وبطل المشاجرة بينهما فقالا تعالى قاتل الله الأبعد كفر وغير
كلام الله
ودخل بعض العلماء قرية من قرى البحر بناحى الجبل. فرأي محللاً يشبه المسجد وفيه البقر والغنم. وقد اشتد به الجوع فجلس يقرأ في سورة الكهف فاجتمع عليه جماعة من تلك القرية. يسمعوا قرائه إلى أن وصل إلى قوله تعالى (سيقولون ثلاثة راجعهم كأنهم) فقالوا له يا شيخ نجست القران كلام الله ما فيه كلاب وأنت تفعل فيه كلاب اخرج من بلدنا وألا قنناك قال فقام رجل منهم وقال لا تضروبا ولا تقبلوا حتى نرسل لهن الحجاج ونحل فصل الله دينه. فإن قال لنا إن القرآن فيه كلاب تكناه وإلا قنناك قال فرسلنا خلف هذا الرجل فحضر شخص عرف بالاسم. وكان سارية الجبل من طوله أو عمود الصواري من غلظه وقُتل ذا هو رؤيته تتشعر منها الجلد وهو مغلق بجرام أبيض دنس لا غير فلما حضر وجلس أحتروبه بالقضية فنظر بعينين وشمالاً وقال لهم اصبحوا حتى أبين لكم الأمر وأكشوف لكم الحلال ثم إن انضجع على قفه وقال لهم اطرحوا علي الراحف فطرحوه عليه فسقط ساعة على هذه الحالة لا يتحرك ثم إن قام بسرعة عريان مكشوف الرأس والعضو ووقف ساعة بهذه الحالة ينظر نحو السماء وهو في وجه وركب ثم أخذ بجرام فانفف في وجب وجلس وقال لهم طلعت العشر سماوات إلى خلقها الله فرأيت أول مما فيها نور وثانيها فيها جاموس وثالثها فيها عجول ورابعها فيها عربان وخامسها فيها درهم وسادسها فيها غنم وأتمني أن أعلمهم تارك الكلاب ولا تفوقها وراعي الغنم لا بد له من كلب يحرس غنمه خلوا الراحيل يروى ولا تقبلوا واعطونى رغيفين يد فاكلهم قال فأخذ الرغيفين ومضى وهو يحمد الله الذي خلصه من هؤلاء الجهلة.

Translation

Accounts of What Happened to Peasants Who Went to the City

3.22

And it is said that a peasant came and brought his master his taxes and the latter put him up in a room that had an aperture that overlooked the private quarters of the emir. When night came the peasant said to himself, “I wonder, Abū Muʿaykah, what are the emirs doing with their women when they’re by themselves. Just as you do with your master does with his wife and when you go back to the hamlet you can tell Umm Muʿaykah to do it like the emirs
and she’ll pleasure you the very same way. I bet they spout gibberish to one another in Turkish. Just you watch the way they do it with their women and you’ll be able to tell the brave lads, ‘Now I’m just like the emirs and Umm Muʿaykah’s like the wife of the emir, the master of the village!’” So he waited patiently until night came and the emir entered his house. Then the peasant got up and, looking through the aperture, saw the emir sitting on a bed of ivory furnished with all kinds of coverings, and his wife came and sat on another just like it. The emir engaged with her in gentle talk and conversation of a refined sort, now in Turkish and now in Arabic, till, desiring to consummate the act with her, he took a rose from his side and tossed it at her, and she came to him and he luxuriated in her comeliness and beauty to his heart’s content, and with the most perfect pleasure, satisfaction, and abandonment, after which each one lay down on his own bed and went to sleep.

3.23

Come morning, the peasant took leave of his master and set off for his village. When he reached the hamlet, he was met by his wife, Umm Muʿaykah, and she greeted him and they sat down together for a conversation like the converse of apes or the jabbering of Indians, and so it went until she asked him about the city and about the master of the village, and he told her, “Umm Muʿaykah, the city’s a fine place and there’s nothing that’s hard

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2 As the language of the Ottoman élite, Turkish was the shibboleth of the military caste.
there except for pissing! And there’s nothing so fair either as our master’s wife—she jingles and jangles and wears clothes pretty as poppy flowers, red and yellow, and on her head she wears a cap just like the one that I wear at the Feast that I bought when we got married for a silver piece and a copper piece, and on her wrists she has yellow bracelets made of God only knows what—date stalks or something. She was wearing a red shift sewn like the sacks we pack fresh-picked beans in and on her legs were anklets like Umm Duʿmūm’s that I bought her for five silver-pieces-worth of coppers and she was wearing a green jacket, God only knows what she’d dyed it with—clover or something. How fine she looked when they did the thing that people do with women, and I want you, Umm Muʿaykah, to do it for me just like she did, so that the people and the shaykhs of the hamlet say, ‘Now Abū Muʿaykah’s just like the emirs!’” Said she, “Tell me, Abū Muʿaykah, what you saw your master’s wife do, Abū Muʿaykah.” He told her, “When I went to the city and went to the master’s and he put me in a room with an aperture looking down into the private quarters and the room where the emir sleeps, I waited till night came, crouched like a snarling dog. Then I saw our master the emir sit down on a black wooden thing tied together with white rags. It had four legs, just like the squash trellis

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3 The reference seems out of place because it has no equivalent in the earlier part of the story. However, jokes about peasants not being able to find a place to relieve themselves in the city are central to other stories that occur later (1.12.1, 2) and were apparently a stock element in the mockery of peasants.

4 Umm Duʿmūm: presumably a second wife.
that we put up in the fields at the watermelon harvest. His wife sat down on a wooden thing of the same sort, like the shovel-sledge they use to flatten the fields. He started talking trooper talk to her, saying, ‘Humpety-tumpety!’ and she answered, ‘Upsy-downsy!’ and so it went on till he wanted to do it with her. Then he heaved a red flower like a poppy at her and she got up jingling and jangling and went to him and he did it to her.” Said Umm Muʿaykah, “I swear by your billy-goat whiskers, I’ll do it for you like the emirs do and then you can preen yourself in front of the shaykhs of the hamlet. Be patient until nightfall and you will attain your desire!”

3.24

So the peasant waited till night and then said to her, “You sit in the donkey’s trough and I’ll sit in the cow’s in front of you!” So, she did as he said and sat down in the trough in her rags and tatters and traces of dung, not to mention the piss that was on her. When the miserable wretch decided to consummate the act—after he’d engaged with her in converse sweet as the barking of dogs, with hubbub and hullabaloo and farting and questions about the cow and the calf and the ox and the dung cakes and so forth—he wanted to toss something at her as the emir had done, so he put his hand into the trough and saw a piece of burnt brick, which he took and heaved at her. The brick hit her in the middle of her head and cracked it open and the blood ran and she screamed at the top of her lungs, and the neighbors and the shaykhs of the village came and the news reached the chief of
police of the village, who proceeded to the place with his entourage and enquired into the matter. They told him what had happened and he took the man and beat him severely; and they got the woman a surgeon, who sewed up her head and spent a whole month treating her before she recovered. Observe this wretch with luck ungraced and the stupidity of his mind debased, and how, from his clowning with his wife, sorrow, woe, and mayhem in the village grew!

3.25

And it happened once that three clods from the countryside decided to go to the city. When they were almost there, their leader and counselor said, “The city of Cairo is all troopers and foot-soldiers that cut off people’s heads, and we are peasants, and if we don’t do as they do and gabble at them in Turkish, they’ll chop off our heads.” “Abū Duʿmūm,” said his companions, “we know nothing about Turkish or anything else!” “I learnt Turkish long ago,” he answered them, “when I used to sit next to the bailiff and the Christian, knee to knee.” So his companions said to him, “Teach us Turkish!” “When we get to the city,” he said, “we’ll go to the bathhouse, which people call Heaven on Earth, and take a bath and wash our hides—they say it has a deep hole that they shit and piss in! As we’re leaving Heaven on Earth and are wrapping ourselves in our cloaks and about to be on our way, I’ll say to you, ‘Kardeş Mehmet!’ (‘Brother Mehmet!’) and you say, ‘At your command!’ and ‘Hah! Ne var?’ (‘Huh! What’s up?’).
Then I’ll ask you, ‘Do you have bir munqār?’\textsuperscript{15} meaning a copper piece, and you say, ‘Yok yok!’ meaning ‘No, we don’t.’ Then the bathhouse keeper will get scared and say to himself, ‘These are foreign troopers who chop off people’s heads!’ and he’ll let us leave without paying and everyone will stand in awe of us and we’ll be treated in Cairo like emirs. Word will spread in the hamlet that we’ve become emirs and speak Turkish, and the shaykhs of the hamlet will be afraid of us and they’ll have no more authority over us at all!” “Sound thinking, Abū Duʿmūm!” said his companions.

\textbf{3.26}

So, they proceeded until they reached Cairo and asked for the bathhouse, and the people directed them to it and they entered, shedding their woolen wraps and throwing their cloaks and the rest of their rags on the ground and leaving themselves naked, just as they do at the ponds and wells. “Make yourselves decent!” the bathhouse keeper told them, and they were about to take their cloaks and cover themselves with those when the bathhouse workers threw them some old, used towels. Like it or not, they had to tie these over their privates, though these remained for the most part exposed, and, penises wagging, they went into the bathhouse, looking like buffalo bulls or billies and bucks.

\textsuperscript{5}Munqār, i.e., mangr, an Anatolian Ottoman copper coin, the equivalent of the Egyptian copper piece jadīd; see further Pamuk (2000, 38).
3.27

Once inside, they washed off the muck and the mire, plunging into the tanks like young oxen or kids, and emerged again all together, the ground shaking beneath them as in a tremor, like oxen in condition and cattle in apparition. Then they donned their cloaks, wrapped themselves in their rags, shouldered their cudgels, and were about to leave without more ado, when the bathhouse keeper shouted after them, “Hand over the money, you pimps, you cheats!” At this the leader turned and said to his companions, “Kardeş Mehmet!” to which the others replied, “At your command!” and “Hah! Ne var?” and he said, “Do you have bir munqâr?” meaning, “a copper piece” and they answered, “Yok yok,” meaning “No, we don’t.” The bathhouse keeper said to them, “When did you bucks learn this Turkish that sucks and become big men and emirs, and what is this Turkish that sounds like shit? I swear to God, not one of you pimps leaves till he hands over the entrance fee and then some, or you leave your cloaks as pledges for it!” Then he ordered his friends to kick them and beat them and they took their cloaks from them and the peasants left and came up with the fee, which they borrowed from the people of the hamlet, and they redeemed their cloaks and went on their way.

3.28

And one of these people went to the city and arrived just as the public executioner was crying out “Oyez!” in the marketplaces apropos of a man who had been sentenced to die. The peasant thought that he must be calling, “All peasants to the corvée!” and
fled back to the hamlet. There he found a party from his village about to set off for the city, so he said to them, “Don’t go up to the city, for they’re summoning people to the corvée!” and the people of his village then went for three years without going to Cairo, for fear of the corvée. Observe their stupidity and the baseness of their thinking!

Further Anecdotes Showing the Ignorance of Country Pastors

4.14

And a country pastor asked a question of a scholar, saying to him, “It is my wish to read the Jurrūmiyyah⁶ according to the school of the Imam al-Shāfiʿī.” The man mocked him for his ignorance and threw him out.

4.15

And a country pastor visited the learned scholar al-Ḥumaydī, may the Almighty have mercy on him, and asked him, “Do you have an abridged Qurʾān?” Shaykh al-Ḥumaydī being Shaykh of the Book Traders in Cairo. The shaykh, God have mercy on him, told him, “Certainly. Sit down while I find it for you.” So, he sat down. Then another man came to the shaykh and said to him,

⁶ I.e., the al-Ājurrūmiyyah of Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Dāʾūd al-Sanhājī, known as Ibn Ājurrūm (672/1273 or 1274 to 723/1323), “the most widely known and used Arabic grammatical textbook of all time [in which] the whole of Arabic grammar is reduced to about a dozen printed pages of easily memorised rules and stereotypical examples” (Carter 1998, 308). The point of the story is that the country pastor does not know the difference between grammar and jurisprudence.
“Sir, do you have an abridged Muslim.”\(^7\) “Indeed I do,” said the shaykh: “Take this wretch, for he’s an abridged Muslim, no two ways about it!” and he threw the pastor out. Those present were utterly amazed and asked the pastor about himself and he told them, “I am one who teaches the children in my village to read the Qurʾān, but they find it boring because it’s so long, so I thought maybe someone had abridged it, which would be easier for the children and allow them to memorize it quickly.” Those present mocked him and he went his way.

4.16

And a certain grandee exerted his influence with the chief judge in Divinely Protected Cairo to get a post for a pastor as a deputy judge in one of the courts, singing the man’s praises. The judge said, “Send him to me.” When the man was before him, the judge asked, “Have you memorized the Qurʾān?” and the man replied, “Yes indeed, God aid Your Worship, and I’ve got a lovely copy in the author’s own handwriting!” The judge saw how ignorant he was and mocked him and threw him out, and he went his way.

4.17

And an ignorant country pastor paid a visit to Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nuʿmān—may God be pleased with him—at a moment when the imam had his leg stretched out in front of him because of some pain he was suffering from. When the imam saw that the man

\(^7\) I.e., an abridged version of the famous collection of Prophetic traditions entitled *The Reliable Collection (al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ)*, compiled by Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875).
was of dignified appearance and dressed in fine clothes, he drew in his leg. At the time, the imam happened to be giving instruction on the question of the morning prayer and what rule applied should the sun rise during the prayer and so on. The ignoramus asked him, “What’s the rule for the prayer, if the sun rises before dawn?” Said the imam, “It seems it’s time for Abū Ḥanīfah to stretch out his leg again!” and he did so in the man’s face and went on with his teaching and paid him no further attention.

4.18

And it happened that two men differed over a verse of God’s Word, one saying *laʿallahum yatafakkarūn* (“perhaps they will be-think themselves”), the other *laʿallahum yashkurūn* (“perhaps they will be grateful”). While they were arguing, a country pastor appeared, and, believing him to have memorized the Qurʾān, they asked him, “Is it *yatafakkarūn* or *yashkurūn*?” That ignoramus told them, “The best thing to do is for us to take a little from each word and make it *yatafashkarūn*, and put an end to your quarreling.” “God strike you dead!” they said to him. “He has blasphemed, and changed the word of God!”

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8 Prayer must not be performed at the precise moment of sunrise, noon, or sunset. Traditions deal with the validity of the dawn prayer if initiated before but completed after sunrise.

9 The occurrence of nearly identical passages in the Qurʾān increases the difficulty of memorising it. The phrase *la-ʿallahum yatafakkarūn* occurs in three places (Q Aʿrāf 7.176; Naḥl 16.44; Ḥashr 59.21), while *la-ʿallahum yashkurūn* occurs once (Q Ibrāhīm 14.37).

10 *Yatafashkarūn* has no meaning, but is reminiscent of *yatafashkalūn* ‘they are confused or disordered’.
4.22

And a scholar entered one of the villages on the banks of the river close to the desert and saw what looked like a mosque, with cattle and sheep and goats in it. He was extremely hungry, so sat down and recited from Sūrat al-Kahf,\(^{11}\) and a group of people from the village gathered around to listen. However, when he came to the words of the Almighty “Some will say, ‘They were three, their dog the fourth’,\(^{12}\)” they said to him, “Shaykh, you have defiled the Qurʾān! God’s Word has no dogs in it, and you have put dogs in it! Get out of our village before we kill you!” One of them, however, stood up and said, “Don’t beat him or kill him till we’ve sent for the pastor of our village, al-Ḥājj Mukhālif Allāh\(^{13}\) and asked him. If he tells us that the Qurʾān has dogs in it, we’ll leave him be. If not, we’ll kill him!” So they sent for this man and an individual appeared, tall as a flagpole on a mountain and bulky and heavy in physique as the Pillar of the Columns, so that just looking at him was enough to make the skin crawl. He was enveloped in a filthy white blanket and nothing else. When he came and had sat down, they informed him of the situation. He looked to the right and to the left and then said to them, “Be patient till I reveal you the truth and discover you the essence of the matter!” Then he lay down on his back and told them, “Throw the blanket over me!” which they did. He remained thus for a while without speaking or moving, then suddenly leapt up, naked, head

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\(^{11}\) Q 18, Sūrat al-Kahf.

\(^{12}\) Q Kahf 18.22.

\(^{13}\) Mukhālif Allāh literally ‘He who disagrees with God’.
and privates exposed, and stood thus for a while gazing into the sky in a state of ecstatic agony. Eventually, he called for his blanket and wrapped it about him and sat down. “I have visited the Ten Heavens that the Almighty created,” he said, “and I saw that in the First Heaven are cows and in the Second Heaven buffalos and in the Third Heaven calves and in the Fourth Heaven oxen and in the Fifth Heaven such-and-such and in the Sixth Heaven such-and-such” and he went on enumerating the various types of animals until he said, “and I saw that the Tenth Heaven was full of flocks of sheep and goats, and as you know flocks need dogs, which they are never without, and the shepherd has to have a dog to guard his flocks. Let the man go and do not kill him, and give him two loaves of corn bread to eat!” So the scholar took the two loaves and went away, praising the Almighty for saving him from those ignoramuses.