A Handbook and Reader of Ottoman Arabic

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6. A WEAVER’S NOTEBOOK FROM ALEPPO (10TH/16TH CENTURY)

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At the end of the 10th/16th century and the beginning of the 11th/17th century, the Aleppine Kamāl al-Dīn, a weaver by profession, kept a notebook. Only a small fragment of it seems to have survived, held since the early 19th century in the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha in Germany. The remaining folios, from the years 997 and 998, contain descriptions of political and economic events, of meetings with friends and events in the market, or the weather; obituaries; riddles and sayings; stories and excerpts from books on history, religion, and law; a multitude of poems, many of his own making; in short, anything that this weaver deemed interesting to record at any point.

Kamāl al-Dīn had a keen interest in reading, literature, and scholarship, but was not a career scholar himself. While he had studied several sciences to some degree in his youth (fol. 55v: al-maʿqūlāt wa-l-fiqh wa-ʿiddat ʿulūm), his only teacher held a minor post and remains unknown outside of Kamāl al-Dīn’s notebook.

1 The notebook, its place in Arabic literature, as well as the biography of its author are the object of an extended study that will accompany our edition of the text, to appear within the series Bibliotheca Islamica at the Orient-Institut Beirut.
Colloquial language is a feature of the poetic genre called *zajal*, in which the author works several times. He does not willingly employ it in his prose. Kamāl al-Dīn certainly makes several smaller mistakes in these passages. Yet his idiosyncrasies rarely exceed contemporary manuscript practices. These practices include the replacement of an ʾalif maqṣura with a yāʾ, of a hamza with a yāʾ, or the omission of the points on the tāʾ marbūta. Thus, the sole instance of the word *اعطيطك* in our sample probably serves as an attempt to introduce an element of spoken language into the story and to mark the speaker as an uneducated worker.

For the edition, we have adopted a set of orthographic standardisations to make the text more accessible: tāʾ marbūta with points; ʾalif maqṣura without dots; ḥamza where necessary. We have also added some modern punctuation.

**Transcription**

**Story of a hashish addict**

MS Gotha orient. A 114, fol. 7r

1. يحكى أن بيعاً زيهوةني اشترى حمصاً من الحمصاني في زبدية منه برهن كي لا يتهوان في ردها. فلما وصل إلى بيته قال لأهل الدار: "إذا أنا قمت صباحاً قولي لي: خذ الزبدية!" فلما أصبح ليس ثيابه وهم بالطويل وإذا بقائته: "خذ الزبدية!" وكان الوقت وقت لم تتعارف فيه الوجه فمد يده ليأخذ الزبدية (سعي) ان (لضعاه) مستعملة جاء لأخذ الزبدية أخذ المستعملة تحت أبطه. وكان الحمصاني بقدرة الله غفل عن عادته فلما ينظره حتى جاء. فإناه ما تخت أبطه فافذها الحمصاني وملط رأبها مستعملة جرى وراءه لحقه قال له: "عافاك! والله أين زبدتي؟" فقال: "اعطيطكها؟" فلم يزال يتضاجرا حتى أن بن الزهاوي استيقظ رأى أن أباه غلط حمل الزبدية وهو لاحق لأبيه وإذا بهم في نزعها فعلم أنها سهوة الزهاوي.

2. كذا، والصواب: أعطيطك إياها.
Translation

It is told
that a ḥashīsh swallower bought hummus from the hummus vendor in a zabdiyya bowl that he borrowed from him against collateral, so that he wouldn’t neglect to return it. When he came home, he said to the people of the house: “When I get up in the morning, say to me: Take the zabdiyya!” And when he awoke, he dressed and wanted to get out, there was a woman saying: “Take the zabdiyya!” This was at a time when one could not tell faces apart. So, he stretched out his hand to take the zabdiyya, (...) there was a chamber pot. He wanted to take the zabdiyya, but took the chamber pot under his armpit. And the hummus vendor, through God’s power, against his usual habit, waited until he came. He handed over what he had under his armpit and the hummus vendor took it. When he saw that it was a chamber pot he came after him, reached him, and said: “Please! By God, where is my zabdiyya?” He said: “I gave it to you!” They wouldn’t stop arguing until the son of the ḥashīsh addict woke up and saw that his father had erred in picking up (what he thought was) the zabdiyya. When he reached his father, there they were, fighting over it. Then he realised that the cause was the absent-mindedness of ḥashīsh addicts.

Commentary

زيهاويني. Cf. the form الزهاوي later in the same story. It is clear already from Kamāl al-Dīn’s own use of the term in several locations (see the stories on fol. 22v and the judge on ḥašīš on 58r) that it must have something to do with drug abuse. Furthermore,
a connection is apparent with زِيه، which Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1350) used to mean ‘hashish’. In his commentary on al-
Ḥillī’s verse, Bosworth (1976, II: 309) noted the following: “Zīh
‘hashish’ is a common term in the literature of hashish consump-
tion from Ayyūbid and Mamlūk times onwards, with zayyāh oc-
curring for ‘hashish addict’ (…)”

زبدية. A large bowl or deep dish.

لم تتعارف فيه الوجوه. Meaning it was too dark to discern shapes.

أعطيتك إياها. Instead of أعطيتك إياها.