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From the Editors

The Doron Halpern Middle East Network Analysis Desk is happy to present the September 2018 issue of **Beehive**. The issue begins with a review of changes that have taken place in the Arabic language due to the increasing use of social networks. We then discuss the phenomenon of flourishing sex tourism in Mashhad in eastern Iran, which is presented as evidence of the worsening economic and social problems in the Islamic Republic, but which also has led users to publicly oppose the institution of temporary marriage. On the first anniversary of the global #MeToo campaign, we conclude with the stormy debate that developed on Egyptian networks after a young Egyptian woman, Mina Jubran, shared videos documenting what she considered an indecent proposal from a passerby. The debate revealed a norm of blaming women for sexual harassment, which is considered one of the worst evils in Egyptian society.

Enjoy!!

An Arabic Language Revolution

Moran Levanoni

The Arabic language has traditionally been divided into literary Arabic (*al-Fuṣḥá*), which is considered a prestige dialect subject to strict rules, and spoken Arabic, "*'Ammiyah*" which in fact is a catch-all for a loose grouping of many dialects, whose rules and vocabulary vary and develop continuously.

The accepted division identifies seven dialects based on the geographical distribution of native speakers. However, the actual number is even greater; there are dialectical differences between city-dwellers and villagers, between Bedouins and Christians, and other similar variations. This phenomenon was first conceptualized by Charles A. Ferguson in 1959 as "diglossia" or "double language," and later described by French linguists who studied North African Arabic.[1] The penetration of mass media, such as newspapers, radio and television, created a novel combination of literary Arabic and spoken Arabic. However, the real revolution in Arabic should be attributed to the expansion of the digital space, especially the use of online social networks where, for the first time in the history of spoken Arabic, the various dialects are being written rather than being limited to speech as they were in the past.

For many years, official media outlets used standard Arabic, which is similar to literary Arabic but is actually a middle language ("*Wusta*") that combines the literary and spoken languages. It is known as either "Educational Spoken Arabic – ESA" or "Modern Standard Arabic – MSA.".[2] This language was considered the official language for use by the media, because it is considered suitable for listeners throughout the Arab world. However, as number of media outlets grew, and the use of field reporters and live interviews increased, spoken Arabic often became the accepted language used by the media, including broad use of local dialects.

This phenomenon has become even more widespread with the growth of online networks, which are not subject to any of the rules or regulations that apply to establishment media. This became apparent when the popular uprisings that began in Tunis spread to the streets of Cairo, Sana'a, Tripoli, and Damascus. Young people and students were the driving force behind these uprisings, and they also transmitted news from the heart of the demonstrations. Equipped with smart phones, they broadcast live reports in spoken Arabic directly to social networks and satellite television networks. This phenomenon also spread among professional broadcasters who, over time, relinquished the official language, and began, in the heat of battle, to broadcast more frequently in spoken Arabic.

The use of a local dialect also tells something about the user's group identity. For example, users who wish to emphasize their Bedouin origin tend to use the consonantal "Ch" instead of "K", and also use the sign گ, which comes from Farsi and does not exist in Arabic.[3] Another example is the tendency of Lebanese to pronounce the letter "Q" as a consonantal "A." Thus, a user who writes "*Man bido yishrab ahwah*" (meaning, "Who wants to drink coffee"), instead of using the usual spelling "*Man bido yisrav qahwa* (قهوة)" is likely to be indicating that he is from Lebanon or from the Galilee region of Israel, where the same dialect is spoken. However, in the

An example of the character گ being used to represent the consonantal "Ch," according the usage of the Bedouin dialect

Bedouin dialect used by the residents of the southern Arabian Peninsula, the consonant "Q" becomes "G," so that the word "*qahawa*" is written as a "*gahwah*" (جهوة).[4] In addition to consonants that are unique to a particular dialect, users employ distinctive words that are specific to their dialect. For example, they might word "*shalun*" (شلون), or the more common form, "*ayash lonk*" which is generally used to ask "How are you?" (Originally, it meant "what is your color"), as common in the dialect of Syria and northern Iraq.[5]

Similar to changes that have occurred in Hebrew usage as the use of digital communications has expanded, Arabic has acquired new means for expressing emotions in writing. Comparable to the Hebrew חחח [lit. "ha ha ha"] Arabic users write "ههههههه hahaha" and use emoticons. In addition, some expressions include deliberate spelling errors, especially repeated letters for emphasis. For example, the Arabic word for "amazing" will be written in as "حلوووووو" ("aaaamazing"), and the response to a flattering selfie might be written: منوووووور (beeeautiful, literally, "illuminated").

As spoken Arabic became a written language, another unique phenomenon arose: "*Arabeezee*" (a portmanteaux combining the word "Arabic" and the Arabic name for English, "*Inglizi*," which is likely the result of using English keyboards. In this phenomenon western numerals are used to represent Arabic letters that do not have an equivalent in English. Most often the substitutes are selected

The word the word "*most2bl*" is an example of both "Arabeezee" that uses the numeral "2" for the Arabic letter "ء ," and of the Lebanese dialect, which prefers "*most2bl*" to "*mostqbl*." "

on the basis of the visual similarity between the numeral and the Arabic letter. For example,

the numeral "3" is used for the letter "*ayin - ع*" and "7" is used for "*ḥet - ح*" so that the word "*Hezbollah*" is spelled "*7zballh*."[6]

Perhaps naturally, technical terms taken from the world of digital media have been borrowed by Arabic in transliteration. For example, the word "group" is written in spoken Arabic as "قروب" or "جروب" - "*qrwb*" or "*ğrwb*," and the word "admin" is written as "ادمين" - *ādmyn*." Similar words are "clip" ("قليب" - *qlyb*"); WhatsApp ("وتصاب" - *wtṣāb*"); Skype ("سقايب" - *sqāyb*"), and mail ("مايل" - *māyl*") for e-mail. These words are used in conjunction with the appropriate Arabic possessive suffixes and other grammatical forms. For example, "مايلي - *māyly*" means "my e-mail" or the verb "وتصابنا - *wtṣābnā*" means "send us a message using WhatsApp."

"Conservative" circles consider the adoption of spoken Arabic for online correspondence a threat to Standard Arabic. In May 2013, the Arabic Language International Council convened in Beirut for the second time, under the title: "The Arabic language is endangered, we are all partners in its preservation." The invitation read "We appeal to all users of the social networks and electronic sites to recognize the problem and challenges facing the Arabic language, encourage dialogue and raise awareness of the enrichment and preservation of the Arabic language." A working paper, "The Problems of Arabic Language among Social Network Users: A Comparative Study of a Sample of Facebook Users,"[7] submitted to the conference by Nasser al-Din Abd al-Qader and Maryam Muhammad Saleh reported that 75% of social network users wrote in spoken Arabic rather than literary Arabic as generally accepted.

In recent years, all aspects of the Arabic language – pronunciation, syntax, grammar and vocabulary – have undergone rapid change. These changes are mostly the result of exposure to digital space and the increasing use of spoken Arabic for the sake of correspondence on social networks, and are a matter of concern for conservatives interested in the preservation of the Arabic language. It seems that this is but one stage in a long process that the Arabic language is undergoing, one which may blur the traditional division into literary and spoken languages, and transform them in a continuum that varies according to the register of the user's speech. It is also quite possible that the future will see the emergence of local Arabic languages that are supported by their unique grammar and characteristic spelling conventions, something that did not exist previously.

"Mashhad is the Shi'i Thailand": Discourse about Sex Tourism on Iranian Networks

Dr. Raz Zimmt

In recent weeks, Iranian newspapers have published several reports about single Iraqi men visiting Mashhad in eastern Iran, and taking advantage of their stay in order to have sex with local women. The tomb of the eighth Shi'i Imam Raza, located in the city, is a major pilgrimage site for Shi'a from the entire Muslim world. In order to comply with the requirements of Muslim religious law (*Shari'a*) prohibiting extra-marital sex, pilgrims marry single Iranian women in temporary marriages ("*mut'ah*" or "*sigheh*") which renders the relationship legal and religiously legitimate according to Shi'i Islam. The reports provoked a sharp debate on Iranian social networks, where they were presented as evidence of moral deterioration within the Islamic Republic, worsening economic and social distress, and the double standards of conservative clerics who do nothing to oppose the phenomenon, and indeed provide religious-legal justification for it.

The flourishing sex tourism in Mashhad was first described three years ago in a report published by the British newspaper, The Guardian. That report attributed the rise in the number of Iraqi tourists visiting the city to the deterioration in the security situation in their own country, and the low price of tourist packages to Iran.[8] Only now are officials in the Iranian tourism industry willing to admit the phenomenon exists, although they emphasize that it accounts for only a small percentage of Iraqi tourists. They point to the expansion of the phenomenon in recent months following the collapse of Iran's local currency (the rial) because of the country's deepening economic crisis, which has significantly reduced airfares

and the cost of lodging in Iran. Moreover, visas are no longer required for Iraqi tourists. Mohammad Qanei, head of the Hotel Association in the eastern province of Khorasan, whose capital is Mashhad, recently warned of the consequences of this phenomenon, saying it was damaging Iran's image in Iraq, which increasingly resembles how many Iranians see Thailand.[9]

"Mashhad is the Thailand of the Shi'a"
from Twitter

The social networks were flooded with thousands of responses from users, shared with the hashtag: "Mashhad is the Thailand of the Shi'a" (#مشهد_تایلندتشیع). They exploited the reports to attack and ridicule conservative clerics, especially the Friday preacher in Mashhad, Ayatollah Ahmad Alam al-Hoda. These responses appeared against the backdrop of prohibitions by senior clerics on musical performances in the city,

strict enforcement of the Islamic dress code, and severe punishment for drinking alcohol, because these allegedly endanger Mashhad's religious and moral character. Such criticism highlighted a perceived double standard, given the fact that sex tourism is seemingly unhindered: "Why is holding concerts considered a disgrace to Imam Reza, but 6,000 tourist apartments [used for sex between Iranian pilgrims and local women] isn't?" tweeted one user.[10] Another user recalled the words of Ayatollah Ahmad Alam al-Hoda, who once declared his opposition to markets and musical performances in Mashhad because they could undermine its identity as a holy city: "No one told him that he himself is the greatest enemy of its identity, and an insult to the residents of Mashhad. He opposes concerts but he has no problem with young women covertly selling their bodies to pilgrims because of poverty."[11]

Public criticism was also aired regarding the institution of temporary marriage itself. Users presented it as prostitution under religious cover, and accused Shi'i clerics of providing Islamic justification for the phenomenon and even encouraging it, despite it being used to exploit young women in dire economic distress. One user pointed out that in Iran's irrational reality it is religiously permissible for a pilgrim from Iraq to temporarily marry a woman for a few hours, yet women are banned from working as peddlers.   The latter is considered both religiously prohibited and a criminal offense.[12] Reza Daneshmandi, a professor of political science who writes a personal column on the Khabar Online website, called on the authorities to re-examine the issue of the temporary marriages that are being abused by tourists from Iraq and to restrict the entry of single, non-Iranian Muslims to Mashhad.[13]

The criticism of the institution of temporary marriage is not new. Although it is sometimes encouraged by the authorities and clerics, who consider it a solution to the ongoing rise in the average age of marriage in Iran, the Iranian public, especially in reformist circles and among women's rights activists, is increasingly critical of temporary marriage as institutionalized prostitution that harms the status of women.[14]

On the margins of the discourse surrounding sex tourism in Mashhad, there were expressions of often racist hostility towards the Arab pilgrims. Some users portrayed them as sexual predators whose only intention was to tarnish the honor of Iranian women and the Iranian people in general: "1,400 years ago, the Arabs invaded our country with the aim of raping Iranian women; 40 years ago [referring to the Iran-Iraq War], the Arabs invaded our country to rape Iranian girls, and today the Arabs are attacking our country in order to have sex with Iranian girls," tweeted one user.[15] The offensive statements targeting Iraqi pilgrims are another instance of the condescension and racism towards Arabs that is sometimes seen on Iranian social networks.[16]

The network discourse on sex tourism in Mashhad reflects a growing sensitivity among the Iranian public to distressing social phenomena that are exacerbated by the worsening of the

economic crisis, such as drug addiction, organ sales and prostitution. The reactions of users in this case also highlights Iranian citizens' growing alienation from conservative clerics. In recent years, Iranians, especially the younger generation, increasingly see the clerics as detached from the people. When the authorities and the religious establishment are unable to offer solutions to the economic and social hardships of the Islamic Republic, relatively marginal phenomena succeed in creating strident public discourse.

#MeToo: The Egyptian Version

Dr. Limor Lavie

"I support Mina Jubran" was one of the most prominent hashtags disseminated on Egyptian social networks during the 2018 Eid al-Adha holiday. It refers to the story of a young Egyptian woman who published a video on her Facebook page, which depicted a man approaching her on a prestigious Cairo avenue, and inviting her to accompany him to a nearby café after, she claimed, he followed her in his car.[17] Jubran had uploaded another video documenting a different man approaching her with a similar offer in the same area a year earlier.[18] The videos were soon viewed several hundred thousand times, and were subject to a barrage of impassioned responses, including messages of support and identification, some from other women who uploaded additional videos documenting instances of sexual harassment that occurred during the holiday. As a result, there was a heated discussion of the phenomenon, which is considered one of the worst evils in Egyptian society.[19]

In 2009, the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) estimated that 83% of Egyptian women and 98% of foreign women in Egypt had experienced sexual harassment.[20] The findings in a UN-funded report in 2013 were even more severe, stating that 99.3% of Egyptian women had been sexually harassed at least once in their lives.[21] A survey conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation (a global information distribution service operated by Reuters News Agency) in 2017 ranked Cairo as the most dangerous metropolis in the world for women, and determined that their situation was worsening since 2011.[22] The increase in the prevalence of harassment is attributed to the events of the Arab Spring in Egypt, and the chaos that prevailed in the country during the transitional period after the fall of Mubarak.

Over the years, various initiatives have been taken by civil society organizations to combat sexual harassment. Some focus on promoting relevant legislation and severe punishment, while others seek to encourage discourse, raise awareness, and promote social involvement around the topic. Among the attempts to raise awareness of the phenomenon using online networks was the #AnaKaman (#MeToo) campaign launched last year, as the Egyptian equivalent of the global campaign for sharing incidents of sexual violence on social networks. However, the Egyptian campaign was not very popular, and only 140 people joined the Facebook group,[23] apparently because they feared public exposure, which entails the risk being arrested by the authorities. For example, Egyptian activist Amal Fathi was arrested in May after criticizing the government's incompetence in dealing with sexual harassment,[24] and was sentenced, in late September, to two years in prison for "spreading false information."[25]

In the discussion that developed on social networks following publication of Jubran's film, the voices of users who rejected her claims of sexual harassment, and blamed her for her fate were conspicuous. Some of the respondents appeared to defend the alleged harasser, accusing Jubran of trying to promote herself at his expense. Others attacked her clothing, which they considered provocative, and claimed that she thereby

Dunkin' Donuts ad: "Come for coffee at DD?"

invited that kind of attention, while her claims against the boy were ridiculed. The slogan "Come for coffee?" became a meme, a humorous viral motif circulate on the Internet. The Dunkin' Donuts chain even used it briefly to advertise their cafés (see picture above), but the advertisement was quickly removed.[26]

[Instagram](#) **picture showing media personality Sally Abdelsalam with Menna Jubaran**
(on the left)

In the wake of the attacks on Jubran, the hashtag "I Support Mina Jubran" was launched, and became particularly popular after media personality Sally Abdelsalam shared an image of herself with Jubran on Instagram, as a sign of solidarity.[27] Among the responses posted using the hashtag, was one from a user who calls herself "a strong woman" and countered claims that this was not a case of sexual harassment: "Shame on a society that supports a harasser and attacks the victim. He [the harasser] approached her crudely and asked her to accompany him to a café, as if it were acceptable for someone to approach the sister [of any man] and invite her to sit with him in a café."[28] Another user tweeted: "I support Mina Jubran and the right of every woman to walk safely, even if she is not to my liking and I do think her clothes are attractive. I support her and [take a stand] against spreading the ridiculous notion that her [Jubran's] appearance justifies this attitude toward her. I support her because she has not committed any crime that justifies her being slandered in this way."[29]

The debate moved beyond the Internet and reached the Al-Azhar Institute, the most important religious university in Egypt, and which is a religious authority throughout the Sunni world more generally. At the end of August, in an unprecedented manner, Al-Azhar denounced sexual harassment in a post on its Facebook page: "Harassment is prohibited and completely indecent behavior." It also stated that Al-Azhar had followed the recent

discussion on social networks, including allegations that a young woman was a participant in or responsible for the crime because of her behavior and dress, and ruled that "harassment by implication, words or actions, is forbidden and perverted behavior, according to the *Sharia* [Islamic religious law]."[30] Within a few days, the post was viewed and shared by tens of thousands. While some reactions welcomed the statement, the bombardment of reactions from users who emphasized women's responsibility for the phenomenon continued, claiming that that in order to stop harassment women should stop using makeup, dress modestly and go out on the street only when accompanied by a relative who would protect them. In response to the Al-Azhar announcement, Egyptian user Yasser Ali wrote: "If only you would publish a post instructing young women to be modest and not dress up, in addition to scolding the young men. It's two sides of the same coin."[31]

Before the storm surrounding Jubran's videos subsided, another story of sexual harassment was revealed in early September. This time, the victim was May Elshamy, a reporter for the Egyptian newspaper al-Youm al-Sabi, who filed a complaint of sexual harassment against one of her superiors. Elshamy also filed a complaint against the presenter of a television program who broadcast the claims of her alleged harasser, and supported his statements by contending that the complaint is an attempt to take revenge on him for political reasons, without giving her, or anyone on her behalf, the possibility to present a counterargument. In this case too, the reactions in the Egyptian networks were divided between supporters of the alleged harasser, and supporters of the victim who introduced the hashtag, "I support May Elshamy."[32]

Egypt has taken a number of important steps in the struggle against sexual harassment, but they are only partly effective. The most prominent of these was amending the Penal Code in 2004, to define – for the first time – sexual harassment as a crime. However, the definition itself is quite narrow and does not cover all types of harassment. The cases described above show a change in consciousness, a willingness to be exposed, complain, resist and struggle against this disturbing phenomenon and its societal legitimation, while also revealing entrenched perceptions that blame the woman. Al-Azhar's intervention in the issue is an important landmark, but of limited influence. The success of the struggle requires further significant steps in the fields of legislation, enforcement, public relations and education in Egypt.

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