

## The History of BANI HILAL between Written Texts and Oral Performances

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the study of the various narrations for the Hilalian "epic" between written texts and contemporary oral performances; in order to identify the changes in Arab society. Folk Literature is an important key to the study of Arab society and examine the progress or decline. The Study will derive its material from the written Hilalian texts and will derive also from the oral Hilalian performances (Collected by the Researcher while conducting the field study) as performed by the Egyptian folk professional Poets and amateur narrators. This Study will depend on the Ethnographic method and will also be made to the "Comparative Method", in order to make a comparison between the written and the oral texts, as well as between "Al-Hilaliya" in Upper Egypt (Qena and Sohag) and in Lower Egypt (El-Gharbeya).

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### Introduction:

"SiratBani-Hilal" (or: Al-Hilaliya epic) seems to be the only Arabic narrative that is still narrated orally in the Arab Community. Though there are several other Arabic folklore narratives, most of them have ceased to be narrated orally, surviving only in books written before or during the Nineteenth Century and at the beginnings of the Twentieth Century. Of such narratives, reference may be made to:

"El-Zaher-Bebars", "AntaraIbnShaddad", "Al-AmirahZat Al-Himmah" (Princess of Resolute), and "BaniHilal". The first-mentioned three narratives have faded away orally, particularly as concerning professional performance; the "Bani-Hilal" narrative has been the sole survival, which is still being orally narrated, whether on the amateur or the professional levels. This has been confirmed by our field study in a number of Egyptian Governorates. Hence, the importance of this Study, as the facts revealed raise certain significant questions, which we seek here to answer, namely:

- (1) Why do Arab communities, particularly in Egypt, still keep on the oral narration of the story of Bani-Hilal?
- (2) What is the nature of such performance at the present time?
- (3) Are there differences between Upper (Southern) Egypt and Lower (Northern) Egypt as concerning the narrative of Bani-Hilal, both in terms of performance, and of the musical instruments used, as well as in respect of the text itself?
- (4) What is the difference between the history of BaniHilal in the written texts and in the oral narrations?

- (5) What is the difference between the performance of amateur narrators (reciters) and that of professional "Poets".

### Methodology:

This Study will depend on the Ethnographic method. The Researcher has conducted a field study in Qena and Sohag Governorates (Upper Egypt), and in Gharbeya Governorate (Lower Egypt), and collected oral "texts" from both Governorates. Resort will also be made to the "Comparative Method", in order to make a comparison between the written and the oral texts, as well as between "Al-Hilaliya" in Upper Egypt (Qena and Sohag) and in Lower Egypt (El-Gharbeya). We shall depend also on the 'Oral Formulaic Theory' so as to compare the written with the oral texts. Within this context, we shall benefit from the studies already conducted by foreign Writers, such as "SLYMOVICS, Susan", "CONELLEY, Bridget", and "REYNOLDS, Dwight Fletcher".

### The Study Material

The Study will derive its material from the following written texts: "TaghribatBani-Hilal", "Al-Riadah Al-Bahiya", "Al-Riwaya Al-Shamiyalil-Hilaliya" (the Syrian narration of Al-Hilaliya), and "SiratBani-Hilal". It will derive also from the following oral narrations (Collected by the Researcher while conducting the field study) as performed by the following professionals: NourMalky Hassan, and Mohamed Mahmoud Ibrahim (Abu Fahim), (amateur narrators from Qena), as well as by Hilalian Folk Poet: Ezz-El-Din Nassr-el-Din, AntarRadawan, and Sayed El-Dhawi (Upper Egypt), and by: Ahmed Hawwas (Lower Egypt).

### **IAI-Hilaliya is the only surviving Arabic Oral Narrative (Sirat)**

It may be somewhat striking that the Arab folk conscience has so far kept on the oral narration of "SiratBaniHilal"; though its narration began as early as the Tenth Century. Several social reasons seem to have contributed to such continuity of its narration, including mainly:

- I. It may be the only Arabic epic that has dealt objectively with the realities of the Arab situation. It refers to both the passive and the positive aspects of the Arab Community. It does not keep pivoting only on the positive aspects as the case is with the rest of the other Arab epics, which often speak of the Arab bravery, generosity, and victories, while the Hilaliya points out, for example, the betrayal of some Arabs to other Arabs, or their seeking help from a party of different religion or race, against co-Arabs. It also describes the disputes and conflicts over the spoils of war, as well as the struggle for Authority.

On the other hand, the epic manifests the Arabs good attributes and presents them as 'prospected social values', to the prevalence of which the narrator aspires, without the acclamation and hailing of whatsoever pertains to the Arabs. This objectivity can particularly be noticed at the end of the third 'Anthology' (Divan), i.e. "Al- Taghriba", where it touches one of the significant characteristics of the Arabs, namely: that an Arab after achieving victory in a war or a hoped - for objective, he- instead of seeking how to safeguard and maintain such achievement – would rather start a new phase based on dispersion, disunion, and conflict with the other fellow Arabs for the distribution of the 'War Spoils', or in a struggle for Authority and Leadership. At the end of "Al-Taghriba", we find that – after so long years of war and of heavy material and human losses, BaniHilal succeeds in achieving victory over the Zanatis of Tunisia and conquered their country, after the killing of their Leader Al-ZanatiKhalifa by DiabIbnGhanem - the "narrator" would not stop at the acclamation of the victory achieved by the Hilalis, but he lingers rather more on the description of the disunion and the dissection prevailing all-over the Hilali community (a miniature of the all-Arab community) after victory. Barbarianism, conflicts, and murder prevail among the heroes of BaniHilal, replacing friendly dialogues, love, and tolerance. They dispute over the division and distribution of the Tunisian lands and castles. Such clashes culminate into the murder of both Sultan Hassan and Abu-Zeid Al-Hilali by DiabIbnGhanem, who kills also most of the other Hilali heroes, and becomes the self-appointed Sultan. Being in authority, he favours his kindred's

from Zoghaba Tribes, and discriminates against the Tribes of BaniDarid; as dealt with in the fourth Anthology (Divan) of the Epic, named "the Orphans Anthology" (Diwan Al-Aytam). The folk narrator dedicates this "Divan" for elucidating those shortcomings/ realities, which reflect the destructive spirit of revenge, so deeply-rooted in the Arab community. The folk conscience has summed up this social reality in the popular proverb "As if you fought for naught-Oh, Abu Zeid!" (KaánnakYa Abu-Zeid Ma Ghazeit!"), meaning that the Arabs/ BaniHilal have gained – from the wars fought and the victories achieved – nothing but dispersion, the killing of each other, the disunion, and dissection. Thus, 'Victory' turns out to be 'Non-Victory', or rather: a 'Bitter Defeat'.

- II. SiratBaniHilal has not remained static or inanimate. It develops with the developments that take place in the social and political circumstances of the Arab Community, while the other Arab "Sirats" remained inert, reflecting the Arab conditions as they had been in the past, not as they are at present, and have thus been confined to written forms only. The Arab folk-conscience seems to have dropped them out of its memory as complete oral texts, though retaining their titles or topics, supported by tiny bits or small passages which may be sporadically recited by some amateur narrators. The Hilaliya Epic, on the other hand, still survives in the oral memory as a complete text, or rather: "a text not yet completed", as says "Abd-el-Hamid Younis"; for it is supplemented in accordance with the social context, where it is retold by the reciter (or the folk poet). That is why it is still being recited in oral performance as a full text by both professional and amateur narrators alike. For example, all of the written Arab folk (Sirat) have dealt with some Jew character, portraying his image in an objective and unbiased manner, without reflecting the recent politically-viewed image of the Jews, in the light of the Twentieth- Century conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians. It has only been 'SiratBaniHilal' that has reflected the two concepts in both its written and oral narrations. In the "Orphans Anthology" (or: 'Diwan Al-Aytam') - where "Diab" kills the heroes of BaniHilal: 'Sultan Hassan' and 'Abu-Zeid Al-Hilali' - 'Abu-Zeid advises 'Al-Jaziya' to escape with the children to the Kingdome ruled by the Jew Sham'oun, and seek his protection against 'Diab'. Al-Jaziya does as told and takes refuge in the kingdom of Sham'oun, who defends her against 'Diab', defying the terrorism exercised by Diab against both Moslem and Christian heroes. Sham'oun, the Jew, has a Moslem Minister, called" 'Aboul-Joud', without finding in that any inconvenience or religious sensitivity. A Jewish Ruler, takes a Moslem as Minister (Vizier) to

consult with him, and defends a Moslem woman with her children against the tyranny of a Moslem hero (**Al-Taghriba, p 367**). As the self-imposed political and social circumstances of the Twentieth Century have affected no Arab folk "Sirat" other than Al-Hilaliya, there has been added to its structure by oral folk reciters a number of new Hilali stories, not known before in the written texts. Such stories illustrate the new state of relationship between Arabs/Moslems, and Jews/Israelis. They include the story of "Abu-Zeid and the Jew Sarian", by the Narrator Abu-Fahim; the story of "Abu-Zeid and Mecca Conquests", and the story of "Abu-Zied and the Jew": by the two Narrators NourMalky and Abd-el-Nasser Hassān; and the story of "Diab and the Bewitched Gazelle", by the Poet Ezz-El-Din Nassr-el-Din (**Abou El-Lail, 2007, Part2**).

- III. Most of the Arab narratives (Sir) are really "Sir", pivoting around a single individual ( the Hero). 'Antara is the hero of "SiratAntara"; SeifIbnZi-Yazan, Ali El-Zeibaq, Al-Zir Salem, Hamza El-Bahlawan, and Al-AmiraZat El-Himma.... Each of them is the sole hero of the Sira bearing the same name. In rare cases, we may find a Sirat tolerating the existence of another hero alongside with the principal HERO, such as 'Mohamed Al-Battāl' in Sirat "Al-AmiraZat El-Himma". Besides, most of the events of such Sir take place at certain specific locations, in contrast with SiratBani-Hilal, which constitutes in fact a 'collective biography', encompassing the history of Bani-Hilal Tribe. It deals therefore with several heroes, all on equal-footing, and hence, its most widely circulating title is 'Al-Sira Al-Hilaliya' or "SiratBani-Hilal", meaning in both cases, "The Story of Bani-Hilal Tribe". Though its heroes: DiabIbnGhanem, Sultan Hassan, and Abu-Zeid Al-Hilali", belong to this same tribe, the Story includes alongside with them other heroes such as: " Al-ZanatiKhalifa" (from Tunisia) "Al-Khafaji 'Amer' (From Iraq) and "Zeid Al-'Ajjaj" ( from 'Andarine and Nina', i.e. present Iran) . Likewise, its events spread over vast areas and several locations, including mainly most of the Arab Countries, such as: Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, Libya and the North-West African countries; in addition to non- Arab Countries, such as: Persia, Roman Territories, Greece and Abyssinia (Ethiopia). This multiplicity of heroes and such geographical diversity account for the more interest given to the narration of the Hilali Epic, as each of its heroes has still his supporters in certain Arab Tribes, who side with him, defend him, and consider him the Champion of the Epic. Al-Ashrāf Tribes, for example, support "Abu-Zied," and "Al-Amara Tribes support "Al-ZanatiKhalifa", while the Zoghaba and the Hawwara Tribes support the knight

"DiabIbnGhanem Al-Zoghbi". The case is the same with "Sultan Hassan" and "Al-Khafajy 'Amer". Many tribal problems may arise during the narrator's performance of Sirat Al-Hilaliya, because of such tribal siding with one hero or another<sup>1</sup>.

- IV. The Gipsies seem to have specialized in the narration of "Al-Hilaliya" as professionals, taking it as a means of living (a bit of bread) and a source of sustenance. Whenever the word "Al-Sha'ir" (i.e. the Poet) is pronounced in Upper Egypt, it is taken at the first while to mean a person who performs the narration of "Sirat Al-Hilaliya", accompanied with a musical band or troupe. Such a person is usually described by the community as a "gipsy". This may be due to the fact that the "Hilali" musical band used previously to depend on the "tambourine" at the performance of "Al-Hilaliya"; thence rose the popular proverb: "He who plays the tambourine is essentially a bereft person" (masloub), a synonym of "gipsy". This confirms the actual connection between the Gipsies and the narration of "Al-Hilaliya", and explains why the Upper-Egyptian tribes- despite their firm recognition of the importance of learning "SiratBani-Hilal" by heart, and the importance of its narration within a family surrounding – stand steadfast against the tendency of any of their sons to become a professional narrator, and earn his living from that practice. For he would then be classified by the community as a Gipsy, and would so blemish the image of the entire tribe – a matter which should be rejected by the whole tribe. In case such person insists on becoming a poet (i.e. professional narrator) the Tribe would disclaim him and banish him out of the Tribe.

On the other hand, as the Hilaliya has become the source of living to the Gipsies, they are keen on its continuity among the Egyptian communities and on causing it to reflect their contemporary concerns. They have therefore made changes to its tenor in such a way that would cope with the nature of the modern Egyptian community, and induce people to invite those poets for celebrating their social and religious occasions, such as weddings, circumcision, and "Mawalid" (the anniversaries of Holy Sheikhs)

- V. SiratBani-Hilal, being an Epic, depends largely on poetry, with occasional prose passages, and that is why its narrators are called "Shu'ara" (i.e. poets), who perform their narration singing with the tunes

<sup>1</sup>For further details on the tales circulating in Upper Egypt about the tribal conflicts arising during the narration of Al-Hilaliya at weddings, and about the reaction of the poet in such cases, refer to "**Abouel-lail**" 2007, p 49 and after

of a "rebaba" (rebeck) called "Rababat Abu-Zeid" after the name of the Hero Abu-Zeid.

The poetic structure of Al-Hilaliya may be one of the main factors that account for its survival, and its continuity to be narrated in singing accompanied with the tunes of the Rebeck. Hence the significance of the differentiation made by "LANE" between the Shua'ra (poets) and the Narrators: the Formers communicate with the audience through Poetry with occasional prose, while the Latters depend on prose with sporadic poetry (Lane, 1998, pp 69, 73 and 83). Undoubtedly, the poetry in which Al-Hilaliya is recited nowadays differs in nature from that of the written texts. Likewise, while 'roundelay' (Mawwal) prevails in the recitals of Lower Egypt, quadruple "stanzas" prevail in Upper Egypt. In addition, classical forms of poetry appear at certain situations, such as the "poem" and the 'imabic poetry'.

## 2-History of BaniHilal: Between the Written Texts and the Oral Narrations:

SiratBaniHilal is a retelling of the History of the Tribe of BaniHilal as seen from the point of view of the Arab folk conscience. However, the narrated story does not differ much from the recorded history as concerning this Tribe. Mohamed FahmiAbd-el-Latif tackled the question whether Abu Zeid was a real or a fabulous personality (Abd-el-Latif, 1983, p 14) Abdel-Hamid Younis compares, in his study, the recorded history with the folk narrative, and concludes that there is strong relation between both of them. Dwight also studied the relation between the narrated Hilaliya and the historical events and described such relation as being intimate (Dwight, p 9). That is why I am not going to compare the history with the narrated "Sira" of BaniHilal, as such comparison has been adequately tackled. I would rather make a comparison between the written Hilalyia and the changes introduced thereto by its oral narrators, and which may deserve some deliberation. Tracing the differences between the written and narrated texts of "Al-Hilaliya" would provide a fertile field to discern the changes taking place in the community itself. The written text of Al-Hilaliya commences with the historical phase of BaniHilal Tribe since their grand ancestor 'Amer and his meeting with the Prophet (peace be upon him), followed by the invocation uttered by Sayeda Fatima, invoking evil upon BaniHilal that they would be scattered and disunited. However, as BaniHilalsupported the Prophet and fought on his side, the Prophet praised them, but his praise did not prevent the realization of Fatima's invocation upon them. The subsequent phase starts with the "Births". This important historical background has been excluded by all oral narrations of Al-Hilalyia. They start directly with narrating the "Births" phase, which began with Prince RizgIbnNayel longing to have a male offspring.

He was inspired to go to Mecca to perform Pilgrimage, and then he would marry there a "noble virgin". That was realized, and she begot from him Abu Zeid Al-Hilali. That birth happened to be simultaneous with the birth of the heroes of SiratBani-Hilal (Hassan IbnSarhan, BedairIbn Fayed, TaweyyIbnMalek, DiabIbnGhanam, and the slave "Abu-el-Qumšnā"). As the introductory part which has been carried on by the written texts is not of interest to the present narrator, it has dropped from his memory, and survived only in written form. This is about to take place also as concerning the most important phase of Al-Hilaliya, namely, the "Births" phase, which no longer receives the applaud it used previously to receive. The Field Study has also revealed that the most-circulating phases of Al-Hilaliya in Upper Egypt are those of "Al-Riadah" (Pioneering or Exploration), and "Al-Tagribah" (i.e. the Migration). Those two phases are very much demanded in Upper Egypt, for their nearness to the nature of the Upper Egyptian people, as they stress on the stories of fighting and revenge, while romantic stories are more common in Lower Egypt, in line with the nature of the people there.

Several reasons and factors urged BaniHilal to migrate collectively from the territory of Najd to Tunisia. First of those reasons may be that Tunisia was a salvation for BaniHilal from the barrenness and dearth that had stricken them throughout seven years, to such an extent that one would not find his own food, apart from the ability to host guests. Circumstances at Najd were hard. No pastures, meadows, or vegetations. Everywhere was starvation. There was almost nothing to eat but animals, if found. Such starvation lasted for seven years (TaghribatBani-Hilal, p2). Then the elders and chieftains of Bani-Hilal convened to consider the situation and decided to migrate to Tunisia looking for a solution to their dilemma. They were consensus that Abu-Zeid would set on a pioneering journey to explore the West, so that they would leave their ruins and move with their folk and dependents to those lands when Abu Zeid would bring to them promising news from there (Al-Taghriba, p5). The Book of "Al-Riada Al-Bahiya" describes how so badly stricken by barrenness was the Tribe of "Bani-Hilal" that Sultan Hassan, who was renowned for his generosity, had nothing to provide for his guests (Al-Riada Al-Bahiya, p57). While the Book of "Al-Taghriba" suggests "barrenness" as the sole major cause for the departure of "Bani-Hilal" to the West, "Al-Riada Al-Bahiya" gives other reasons for their migration: **First**, to rescue "Al-Ashraaf" (the noble Arabs) of Tunisia, as Prince Jabr Al-Qureishy (Abu-Zeid maternal uncle) came to "BaniHilal" asking their help against "Al-ZanatiKhalifa", the chieftain of the Zanata tribes. Those tribes, after having been expelled from Yemen were given shelter and refuge by Jabr Al-Qureishy and Al-Ashraaf in Tunisia. However,

the Zanata Tribe, under the leadership of "Khalifa Al-Zanati" went to Tunisia as conquerors. Prince Jabr Al-Qureishy had but to ask the help of Bani-Hilal. This scene is illustrated by the story-teller (the narrator) by re-telling what is assumed to have been said by Jabr Al-Quareishy addressing Al-Sultan Hassan Ibn Sarhan:

Madkour Al-Zanati came to me and said  
I have never seen a host fighting his guest  
Then he tells about their fightings with the "Zanatas",  
and about their defeat and the Zanatas dominance of  
Tunisia, concluding:

And now I have come to you, O, Hilali Abu Ali,  
Supporter of the oppressed and opponent to any wrong-  
doer **Ibid, pp 65 and 66**).

Having heard this, the hearts of Bani-Hilal became tied to the Tunisian land, and were determined to rescue Al-Ashraaf and save them from the grip of Al-Zanati Khalifa. Alongside with this reason as suggested by "Al-Riada Al-Bahiya" for the departure of the "hilalis", being to rescue Al-Ashraaf, "**Al-Riada**" gives as another reason the barrenness suffered by Bani-Hilal for seven years as mentioned by "Al-Taghriba", but attributes that barrenness itself to "divine revenge" incurred in response to an invocation uttered by a wronged person who prayed to God to destine them to barrenness and dispersion. The reason behind that invocation of evil against them was that a pious and mystery-inspired man from Bani-Hilal, had gardens and palm orchards which were trespassed and devastated by the bedwins with their horses and cattle. When the landlord saw such devastation, he wept saying: "You have harmed me. May Allah straiten the life of those who harmed me". It seems that Allah listened to his invocation and responded to it. The immediately following year, dew was stopped by God; the second year, rain ceased; the third year, their plants withered; the fourth year, date-palms dried up; the fifth, ground water fell deep; the sixth, the bedwins went astray finding no water to drink (**Al-Riyada, p 49**). The invocation of that "sheikh" may remind us with that of "Fatima Al-Zahra'a" which she invoked upon Bani-Hilal to be dispersed, because they had caused her camel to go astray into the desert – at the beginning of the written "Sira" (**Sirat Bani Hilal, 1988, Part I, pp 1 and 2**).

The matter culminated into the decision to migrate from "Najd" to Tunisia and the choice of Abu Zeid and His nephews to explore the land of Tunisia, though how such choice was decided differs. The Book of "Al- Taghriba" tells that the chieftains and leaders of Bani-Hilal decided by consensus to choose Abu-Zeid to explore the land of Tunisia (**Al-Taghriba, pp 5 and 7**). On the other hand, in the Book of "Al-Riada Al-Bahiya", the designation of the person who would explore the Tunisian land was determined through a person called "Badr Al- Huweify", who was known for his wisdom and sound judgment, and to whom the

Tribe used to resort for its crucial decisions, taking him as their "Counselor", in continuity of the role previously played by his father in the Tribe (**Al-Riyada, p 67**).

#### "Al-Riada" in the Oral Narrations

Though the oral narrations of "Al-Hilaliya" conform with the written texts in many points, there are salient and significant differences between them. The written texts, for example, have not specified the preponderant reason for the collective migration, while the oral narrations are almost consensus that the reason for the migration of Beni-Hilal to Tunisia was to rescue Al-Ashraaf, from Al-Zanati who killed many of them at the mosque on Friday. The oral narrations admit consensually that Bani Hilal were indeed severely impoverished by the barrenness when Prince Jabr Al-Qureishy came to them asking their help, and inducing them with the fertile and plentiful land of Tunisia. Bani-Hilal acceded then to his request (As narrated by "Nour Malky" on Friday, 20.8.2005. in the afternoon).

To start "Al-Riada" phase by the cry of Prince Jabr Al-Qureishy seeking the help of Al-Hilaliya, and inducing them in such a manner, represents a sort of artistic justification intended to be manifested by the "folk" narrator to his audience, as concerning the reason behind the migration of Bani-Hilal to Tunisia, in order that his audience would sympathize with them. As such, the migration was not out of covetousness as regards the land of Tunisia and its bounties, but was for the rescue of those who asked their help, and were tied to them by a strong kinship. The old oral narrations justify the collective migration by that the love of Aziza to "Younis", was the main cause behind that migration. Aziza's father, "Sultan Me'bid", had so madly loved his daughter that he decided not to let her be married to any young man who would seek her for marriage. He seated her alone in a palace which he built of gold for her, and provided her with a slave maid called "Mayy Al-Asdān" to entertain her in her solitude. The maid told Aziza much about Younis and his handsomeness, that Aziza's heart became attached to him. It happened that this event took place at the same time of the disaster afflicted upon Al-Ashraf by Al-Zanaty. So, Aziza went to Prince "Jabr Al-Qureishy" and expressed to him her sympathy with their cause, and suggested to him to seek the help of "Bani-Hilal". The narrative relates:

"Aziza went to Jabr Al-Sharif (i.e. one of Al-Ashraf), saying to him: "O, Jabr ..... "if you tolerate the oppression of Khalifa, he will not leave any of you alive". He asked her [helplessly], what can I do?" She answered, "I'll look after Al-Ashraf remaining on your side, and you go Eastward to bring "Al-Halayel" (i.e. Al-Hilaliya)"

(As narrated by Mohamed Mahmoud Ibrahim "Abu-Fahim", Sunday evening, 22.5.2005). Her

[Concealed] aim was to attempt seeing Younis and meeting with him.

Both the oral and written narrations of "Al-Hilaliya" are in agreement that the person who conducted the exploration journey was Prince Abu-Zeid Al-Hilaly with his nephews (sons of his sister). Yet, some of the oral narrations differ as regarding the Counselor of the Tribe of "Bani-Hilal. They assign this function to a female person, namely: Al-Jaziyya, who, when consulted about the choice, chose Abu-Zeid for the task, and the Tribe had to comply with her choice. She says:

Choose not, nor hesitate  
O, Hassan, in asking

Who else would travel Westward other than Abu-Zeid, Who is destined to help the wretched<sup>2</sup>.

The assignment of the consultancy role, in the oral narrations, to a female consultant instead of a man (Badr Al-Huweify and his father according to the written texts) has undoubtedly its significance as regards the social standard, especially if the female personality (Al-Jaziyya) attains such consultancy place in Bani-Hilal<sup>3</sup>. This significance is reflected in the role played by Women in the Egyptian Community.

It is worthy to mention, at the conclusion of this paper, that the folklore narrators are keen on stressing out the historical role of "SiratBani-Hilal (Al-Hilaliya)", and present it as a historical document. This may be discerned in the religious introduction with which they commence their performance, then proceed to affirm that what they narrate is the factual history of Bani-Hilal. This may be illustrated by the following prologue:

After hailing praise to the "Perfected"<sup>4</sup>,  
Ahmed, whose course is thoroughly non-obstucted.  
We narrate the story, to which you'll be listening,  
Of Arabs whose story has since long been related.  
Those Arabs of the ancient  
Who avoid any blame  
Whose leader, as a lion, was brave and patient,  
And Abu-Zeid was his name.

Still before stepping into narration, the narrator begins with a verse of poetry emphasizing the historical truthfulness of what he relates, saying:

"I ask the Almighty to forgive me any error or omission,

My Exalted God is Supreme and Omnipotent"

Furthermore, he re-emphasizes during his narration that what he tells has its historical sources from which he derives, saying:

<sup>2</sup>As narrated by NourMalky

<sup>3</sup>According to this narration, she was one of three Counselors, while the other two were Sultan Hassan and Prince Abou-Zeid.

<sup>4</sup>Referring to the Prophet Mohamed (peace be upon him).

These words we have studied

As written in books we possess

The source of the stories we have actually viewed  
And might have happened to us

On the other side, and with the same degree of historical truthfulness, the audience listens to what the narrator relates and receives it as a real historical document, not fiction. This is reflected in their tribal partiality as concerning each of the Sirat heroes, exactly as done by the supporters of football clubs. It is said that a poor person from the Princedom to which Al-ZanatiKhalifa belongs, paid all what was in his possession to the Poet of the Coffee-shop, in order to make Al-Zanati defeat Abu-Zeid in their fighting (**Abou-El-Lail, part I, p 147**). This can be more reflected in the Tales related by the public about that Abu Zeid himself met one of the Upper Egyptians and handed to him a book to narrate the "Sirat" from, so as to narrate truthfully about Bani-Hilal (**Abou-El-Lail, Part I, pp 134 and 135**).

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