

Linguistics

The *Zār* Ceremony in Egypt

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ABSTRACT. The article, in which a folk ritual widespread in Egypt to the present day is analyzed, is a result of the author's immediate observation of several years in this country. The article describes the environment in which the ritual came into existence and certain related folk beliefs concerning the possibility of curing some diseases; the question is posed regarding relations of the ritual to certain oriental realia and Islam; the ritual proper, its functional participants, their verbal and kinematic actions are described; brief linguistic and artistic analyses of texts are offered. The texts are recorded by the author. © 2011 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

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Zār – the ritual which is found in Egypt to the present day implies curing of human beings of a certain group of illnesses by means of a whole series of incantations, odes devoted to *jinn* and other similar acts. The author of the present article during her stay in Egypt in 1997-2006 often attended this ritual and was acquainted with its practitioners. In the article materials obtained from Egyptian and Sudanese informers, several texts recorded by the *Zār* author are presented. Some details, including those linked with the origin and spreading of the ritual, are given relying on these informers as well as on the basis of some studies. It should be noted that the specialist literature does not contain exhaustive information about this ritual, despite the fact that Egyptian authors have dedicated two monographs to this topic (*‘Ādil al-‘Ālīmī, az-zār wa masraḥ aṭ-ṭuqūs, al-Qāhira*, 1993 and *Fāṭima al-Miṣrī, az-zār, al-Qāhira*, 1975). Only fragmentary, sometimes inaccurate, information is offered in several articles published in periodicals at different times. As any manifestation of folklore, the *Zār* ritual is also characterized by diversity. The present article describes *Zār* in the form as it appeared at the beginning of the 21st century in the processions performed in the so-called *ḥadāyiq el-ahrām-*

territory on the outskirts of Cairo, as well as in some regions of northern *Ṣa‘īdi* (Upper Egypt).

The Term. The Ritual

In Arabic the word *Zār* must be of Amharic origin, deriving from the word *jār* [1: 289; 2: 10-11]. This lexeme must have found its way into Egypt and Sudan from Ethiopia. However, at the same time, *jār* (same as *yāro, dāro* [3: 2]; was the main deity of the pantheon of the idolater Kush – the sky god, who then assumed another form and turned into an evil demon. This demon, according to the Ethiopians' belief, lives in rivers, canals and in flowing water in general, and is able to make a person ill. It can be cast out of the body with the help of amulets and incantations [1: 289]. Exactly these rituals became the form of the *Zār* ceremony which is known to us at present and which later on, from the 1860s became established in Egypt through the Sudanese and Ethiopian slave women.

Jinn and *Sayids*

The basis of *Zār* is the belief in the so-called *jinn* and *sayids* – spirits, demons, who really exist and if offended by humans, they can punish the latter by an illness or a misfortune. In the *Zār* culture the difference between *jinn*

and *sayids* is that in the Egyptian folk belief *jinn* are evil demons, whose enraging entails fatal results for a person, *sayids* are compliant and it is possible to become reconciled with them, hence, the ill person can be cured. *Umm Sāmiḥ*, a *Zār* practitioner in Cairo (at the time of my contact with her, in 2004, she was 53 years old) confirms the widespread view that the total number of *jinn* and *sayids* is 44. Here is a version of their origin [2: 18-19]: at the time of living in the Garden of Eden Biblical Eve had 30 children. When God ordered her to show her children, Eve hid fifteen children outstanding by their mind and appearance, and showed the other fifteen who were inferior by their mental qualities and appearance. God, of course, learned about this and damned the hidden children to be always invisible and live in the dark. The Ethiopians believe that the *Zār jinn* and *sayids* are descendants of exactly those children.

Sayids and *jinn* can get angry with a human being because of a specific behaviour: if a person asserts that demons do not exist, or throws something on the ground in the dark, walks in an impure place, sleeps alone, etc [2: 18]. According to another Cairo informer, *Usāma*, *jinn* can get angry with a person if he/she accidentally hits a jinnee or his child with an object thrown by him/her in the dark (it is regarded that *jinn* like to be in the dark). Therefore, before a person does something like this, he must utter a warning formula: *bismi-l-lāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm* (in the name of Allah the gracious merciful) or *a'ūzu bil-ḥawābiṭ wal-ḥābitāt* (I ask permission from male and female *jinn*). Interestingly, in the expression interdental consonants are attested, which, unlike literary Arabic, are uncommon for the dialect. Literary forms usually are uttered in a conversation when citing the Koran. This means that in the imagination of the ordinary people the belief in *jinn* and the like and the religion are closely related concepts.

The above-mentioned *Umm Sāmiḥ* related that she never liked the song devoted to Christian *sayid*, *as-sitt al-kibīra* (or the great lady, her prototype must be St. Mary). Once, when she was walking alone in the dark she saw a woman clad in black from head to toe. Immediately some power turned her upside down and stuck her with her head in the ground (*itzara 't* – “I was stuck”). When she came to her senses, the woman in black was no longer visible, but from that day *as-sitt al-kibīra* is her *sayid*, she regards her song as the most favourite ode now and often performs it in order to make her *sayid* relent.

The *Zār* practitioners believe that in the world of spirits there is a certain hierarchy, they have families as well. E.g. *as-sultān al-aḥ mar* – the red sultan and *as-sitt al-kibīra* are husband and wife and head this hierarchy. At

the same time, patriarchate characteristic of the Muslim world is violated in *sayids* – *as-sitt al-kibīra* is a more powerful spirit than her husband. Their daughter, little *rukūš* is a jinnee and her anger entails death. Each jinnee and *sayid* has certain favourite objects or offering. For example, red candles and a red hen or a cock must be offered to the red sultan. Among other *jinn* and *sayids* are: *al-'arabī* – Bedouin *sayid*, *bašīr* – Ethiopian spirit, *aš-šīnī* – i.e. Chinese, *dāyir an-našārī* – Christian said, *al-baḥarēya* – i.e. of the sea, a female *sayid*, having the appearance of a fish, inhabiting water; *abū rawāyiḥ* – fragrant, who requires an especially large quantity of fragrance, doctor *sayid ḥākimbāša* – pasha doctor, *lūliya*, *bašīr*'s sister, who asks for colour clothing, intended for wedding, *safīna* – literally, “a ship”, is a spirit of the sea, pairs of spirits: *sitt wasīdi*, i.e. lady and gentleman. It is noteworthy that first the lady is mentioned; same *fārūk* and his wife, the same king and queen, twins *ḥārūt wa mārūt* – angels known from the Koran [2: 102], who assumed the form of magician *sayids*; *al-qārīna* the jinnee who is at enmity with new-born children, kills or eats them, *abū l-gindī*, to whom a grey lamb must be sacrificed, *an-nārī* – fiery, a person obsessed by this said during *Zār* holds two sheets of paper set on fire till they burn up, *amīr al-ḥāgg* – king of pilgrims, *bandūh*, who demands from the ill person eating raw sheep testicles, *al-gamal* – a possessed person must whip himself till he loses consciousness, etc. The names of these *sayids* have been obtained from the Egyptian and Sudanese informers in different regions of Egypt, some of them are also attested in the specialist literature [3; 5: 58-59; 6: 89-108; 7: 16-20].

Zār Varieties

Three types of *Zār* are known in Egypt: Sudanese (*as-sudāni*), Egyptian (*mašri*) or *aš-ša'īdi*, i.e. Upper Egyptian and *abū l-gīṭ* or *al-ḡīṭanīyya*. Of these the latter two varieties are Egyptian proper, originating in Egypt. These three types differ from one another in nuances, but the main motivation, basis and manner of the ceremony are identical. In the past a fourth type of *Zār*, the so-called *rangū* [8: 42] occurred as well.

A distinguishing feature of Sudanese *Zār* is that together with percussion instruments (which are the main instruments of *Zār*), *ṭambūra* also sounds in it. This is a folk stringed instrument, which is not found in *Zār* of another type. Therefore Sudanese *Zār* is sometimes referred to as *ṭambūra* too.

In *Ša'īdi Zār* only women participate. In this case some musicians may be male, but it is prohibited for other men to attend such *Zār*, or to perform *Zār* of this type for a man. *Abū l-gīṭ* (a settlement of this title is in northwestern Egypt) is one of the varieties of *Zār*, it is of Egyptian

origin proper and the most theologized one. Instead of *sayids*, in *abū l-ġīt* saints (*awliyā'*) are addressed and odes dedicated to them are performed. In *Zār* these holy names have the same function as the names of *sayids*. Participants in this case are mostly men.

Zār can be one-day (*yawmīyya*) and it may also last for 5-7 days. It may be performed by the commission of one particular person (*maḥṣūṣ*), or for several ill persons (*al-gama'ēyya*).

Kōdiya and the Zār Group

The performer of the *Zār* ceremony is called *kōdiya*. More often *kōdiyas* are women, but there are male *kōdiyas* as well. *Kōdiya* is also referred to as sheikness (or sheikh, if it is a man). This is a person who inherits his profession and has adopted it in childhood naturally. *Kōdiyas* often boast of their Sudanese origin and of the fact that they were brought up in a family imbued with the *Zār* traditions, which adds special convincingness to their professionalism. *Kōdiyas* often call themselves daughters of fragrances (*banāt el-buḥūr*), as fragrance is an inseparable element of *Zār*. A *kōdiya* is a person who has direct connection with *sayids* and *jinn*, she sees and talks to them. A person is consecrated *kōdiya* as a result of a special ceremony, called *rabṭ el-ḥizām* "girding". At this time the person wishing to become a *kōdiya* takes a certain examination, sings odes dedicated to all *sayids* and performs every detail, envisaged by the *Zār* ceremony. Experienced women watch if everything has been performed properly, and then put a special girdle around the waist of the examinee, which means that from that moment this person has become a *kōdiya*.

The *Zār* payment and offering, asked by spirits through the *kōdiya*, usually depends on the material state of the family. This may be a hen or a dove and even a camel. After the *kōdiya* appoints the date of *Zār*, the family of the ill person begins to prepare for *Zār*.

The *kōdiya* is assisted in the performance of *Zār* by a group. It may consist of the following persons: 1. *ōdiya* – the main assistant, who knows by heart every ode in honour of all spirits, and may take upon herself the entire process, but unlike the *kōdiya*, she cannot get into contact with *jinn* and *sayids*. An *ōdiya* is often a maiden who herself has an angered *sayid*, or a son with homosexual inclinations, or a hermaphrodite. 2. *sanjaq* – in Sudanese *Zār* the performer of ceremonies. Like an *ōdiya*, a *sanjaq* cannot get in touch with spirits. 3. The so-called *ad-daqqaqīn* – in Egyptian *Zār*, in which men do not participate, these women beat percussion instruments with iron sticks. Beats must be strong in order to have a more powerful impact on the patient. I have witnessed how the leather, stretched over the boards, was torn by strong

beats. 4. *satri* – mangoura player. Mangoura represents goat hooves strung on leather, which are fastened to a thick leather belt. A player puts this belt around the waist and begins to move in rhythm with the movement of the hips. A sound resembling jingling is produced. 5. *btā' ṭambūra* – "ṭambūra man", player of the stringed instrument *ṭambūra*.

Zār and Doctor Illnesses

According to *Umm Sāmiḥ*, there are *Zār* illnesses and doctor illnesses. If an illness is a doctor's, *Zār* will not prove useful in its curing, and vice versa – a doctor cannot cure it. *Zār* illnesses include: nervous disorders, mental illnesses, childlessness, gastric diseases, headaches, spine diseases, limiting movement, etc. *Zār* also helps a young girl who cannot get married, a woman who constantly miscarries, or gives birth to a dead fetus or sick children.

The Zār Language

In Egypt *Zār* is mostly performed in the native Egyptian dialect of the local population, but the hymns to some *sayids* are performed in another language. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Yūnis in the Folklore Dictionary [1: 289] notes that this is the "*Zār* language", which is regarded as the secret language and no one knows it except the *Zār* group. The *Zār* practitioners known to the present author avoided talking on this topic and refused to explain some phrases which were uncertain from the position of Arabic.

Even when *Zār* is performed in Arabic, in the Egyptian dialect, there are certain expressions which are unknown to those who are not familiar with this ritual. E.g. **bēt az-zār**: *bēt* (Arab. house), as a term, in the *Zār* tradition denotes the entire *Zār* ceremony. The phrase: *bēt ez-zār talāt adwār* (lit. there are three floors in the *Zār* house) – in the *Zār* ceremony three types are singled out (i.e. there are three different types of *Zār* [10: 59-60]. **iṭḥaggab/iṭḥajjab**: it is derived from the word *ḥigāb/ḥijāb* (in *Zār* this is a variety of amulet) and denotes: "acquired an amulet, began to wear an amulet" [10: 72]. Usually in the Egyptian dialect this word denotes that a woman began to wear a head-scarf (hejab), which is a certain rule with Muslim women; **ḥaḍra**: a regular (as a rule, weekly) variety of *Zār* [10: 74] Usually, this word in Arabic means "to attend", etc.

Amulets

From time immemorial amulets had great significance and were popular in the oriental world. In Egypt, along with amulets, widespread since the Ancient Egyptian period, surviving to the present day there are also *Zār* amulets proper.

A person who has lived in Egypt will have undoubtedly noticed that Egyptians seldom wear silver jewellery.

They like gold. For an Egyptian woman gold is a means of capital investment. As regards *Zār* amulets, they are mostly made of silver, as is accepted in the tradition of some other peoples. The following are regarded as *Zār* amulets: bracelets, khulkhals (bracelet-like ornaments to be worn on shins), pendants, arm ornaments [5: 58-59]. As Schienerl [7: 16-20] notes, only hand-made amulets, and not stamped ones, are valuable and “fulfill their function” in Egypt.

Coloured, garish beads, scraps of fabric also serve as amulets, which are used for decoration of the *Zār* instrument with the motif that coloured objects attract spirits and dispose them favourably toward humans.

The Ceremony and Trance

The aim of the *Zār* ceremony is to put the ill person into a trance. If this is achieved, the *sayid* will temporarily enter his body. *Aḥmad Taha* (about 55 years old, he did not know his exact age), narrated that at that time the patient may begin to speak in a strange, unusual voice. This will be the *sayid* speaking through the ill person. The trance will be followed by curing.

If a person once resorted to *Zār*, he is obliged to “become enrolled in the guild” of *Zār* and to resort again and again to the so-called *karama*, a ritual of a lower rank than *Zār* for mollifying spirits, during which only food and different objects are offered to *sayids*, and to order *Zār* performance [2: 17] for himself repeatedly. Otherwise, spirits will get angry with him.

In the period preceding *Zār*, and especially in the *Zār* period, everybody shows affection towards the sick person and tries not to offend him/her. This is necessary for curing. *Zār* requires from a family such great expenses and efforts that, as Kenyon’s one informer notes, preparation for *Zār* is worse than preparation for a wedding [6: 89-108]. At that time close relatives and friends of the family are invited, who are treated to sweets, nuts and various dishes. In their turn, these visitors, who are called *ḥabāyib* (close friends) or *ṣuhūd* (witnesses) indulge the *Zār* patient, are affectionate and fulfill his/her every caprice.

The ritual begins with the so-called *fātiḥa*, i.e. opening address, in which some researchers see a reflection of the Fatiha (opening sura) of the Koran. *Umm Sāmiḥ* uttered the following *fātiḥa*:

*“sīd ibrahīm ad-dasū’i, sīd ‘izz ar-riggāl,
al-ḥiḍr war-riyyās wal-mursi abul-‘abbās
yiḥdu d-duḥḥān wyiddūki l-‘āfiyya wal-burhān
biḥa” gāhid an-nabī ‘alē ṣ-ṣalat wa afḍal as-salām.
bēt z-zār, bēt māmā watbā’u, rūm nagdi watbā’u,
yūsef watbā’u, abu danfa watbā’u, al-wazīr watbā’u,
al-‘arabi watbā’u, as-sulṭān al-aḥmar, dīr an-naṣūri,
bēt al-ḥabaš, as-sittāt: ṣādēyya hānim, al-baḥarēyya.*

ana ‘arīt al-fātiḥa bil-amāna.”

“Sayid ibrahim ad-dasuqi, sayid ‘izz ar-rigal, al-khidr and riyas and al-mursi abu l-‘abbas will accept fume and will give you good health and harmony, by the right granted by the prophet, to whom we pray and devote the best greetings. The Zar house is the house of mamma and his followers, rum nagdi and his followers, yusuf and his followers, abu danfa and his followers, al-gindar and his followers, al-wazir and his followers, al-‘arabi and his followers, the red sultan and his followers, dair an-nasari, the house of the Ethiopians, of ladies - sadiya hanim and al-baharea.

So, I have uttered the fātiḥa with peace!”

Of these *sayids*, e.g. *al-Ḥiḍr* is St. George, whereas imam *ibrāhīm ad-dasūqi* and some other names are known from the Islamic tradition, *mursī ‘abū l-‘abbās* mosque is a famous mosque in Alexandria, etc.

This is followed by odes dedicated to one or several *sayids*, performed by the *kōdiya* and other members of the group, with very loud accompaniment of percussion instruments (sometimes together with *ṭambūra*). These are songs intended to win the disposition of *sayids*. E.g. *Umm Sāmiḥ* in one of her odes to *al-‘arabi* sang (the hyphen at the beginning denotes the syntagma of the members of the group):

ṣallūt fil-ḥarām ‘ala l-bēt In the time of trouble I prayed to the house (implying the house of sayids, i.e. kin)

-wṣallu ‘ala l-‘arabi muḥammad. and you pray to al-‘arabi, Muhammad,

ya ‘arabi ya zīn, ya kaḥl al-‘ēn, You, Arab (in this way the Arabs themselves refer to Bedouins and al-‘arabi is a Bedouin sayid), with eyes decorated with kuhl,

-wṣallu ‘ala l-‘arabi muḥammad. and you pray to al-‘arabi, Muhammad,

ya nūr in-nūr, ya bahēyya n-nūr, Light, oh, light, endowed with beauty,

-wṣallu ‘ala l-‘arabi muḥammad. and you pray to al-‘arabi, Muhammad,

da ‘albi tawalla’ biziyārt ar-rasūl, My heart kindled by the sight of the prophet,

-wṣallu ‘ala l-‘arabi muḥammad. and you pray to al-‘arabi, Muhammad,

ya ‘arabi ‘urubān, ya ḥalāwa l-hilalēyya. You, Arab, Uruban (diminutive from “Arab”), like the moon, sweet.

da zāyir nabīna mḥammad elli yizayyin al-kufēyya, Seer of the Lord Muhammad, which decorates with kufeya,

ya ‘arabi ‘urubān, ya ḥalāwa l-hilalēyya. You, Arab, Uruban, like the moon, sweet.

ya šeyiḥ al-‘abīla ya ‘arabi, Chieftain of the tribe, you, Arab,

da zāyir nabīna l-‘abari, Seer of the Lord, al-‘arabi,

ya sīdī, waruddu ‘alēyya. My Lord, and answer me.
- ya šeyih̄ ʔl-‘abīla ya ‘arabī, Chieftain of the tribe,
you, Arab,
da zāyir nabīna l-‘abari, Seer of the Lord, al-‘arabī,
da ‘awāyidak sanawēyya ya ‘arabī, Your celebrations
are annual, you, Arab,
ya šeyih̄ ʔl-‘abīla ya ‘arabī, Chieftain of the tribe, you,
Arab,
zāyir nabīna ya badawi. Seer of the Lord, you Bedouin,
etc.

The following ode is devoted to a female *sayid* – *salma*:

ā, ya salma, ya salīma, Oh, salma, salima,
rā‘iyat ʔl-ḡanam, ya salūma, Shepherdess, saluma
(affectionate, diminutive address – N.E.),
šeyih̄ ʔl-‘arab ya salūma, Sheikh of the Arabs, saluma,
ya zīna ya ‘arabīyya Bedecked Bedouin,
šeyih̄at ʔl-‘arab ya salīma. Sheikh of the Arabs, salima,
ya ḥelwa šāyila raḥāya, You, beautiful, carry a hand-
mill,
da līki hadāya ya salīma. This is a present to you,
salima.
ya ḥelwa, miḥalli kalāmi. su’ālik ya salīma. You,
sweet, you sweeten my speech too. I shall ask you, salima,
enti salīma, danti salīma, You are salima, you are
salima,
ya ‘arabīyya, danti bidawēyya. You Bedouin, you
are a Bedouin.
labsa ḥuzām, da miḥalli ḥuzāmi. You wear rings on
the nose, you decorate my jewellery as well.
salām ‘alēki ya widdēyya, Peace to you, (our) friend,
ya marḥaban bīki ya ‘arabēyya, We greet you,
Bedouin,
ya marḥaban bīki enti l-bidawēyya, We greet you,
Bedouin,
ya salūma, d-dāya l-‘arabēyya, Saluma, Bedouin
midwife,
ya marḥaban bīki enti l-bidawēyya. We greet you, a
Bedouin.

There is a pun here, the name *salma* is derived from the same root as *salīma*, which denotes "healthy". So, *salīma*, on the one hand, is an affectionate, diminutive address to *salma*, and on the other, it has the meaning of "healthy".

Some odes are dedicated to more than one *sayid*, e.g.:

da ‘ala mām̄mā, This one is about mamma,
samāḥyā mām̄mā. I beg your pardon, mamma,
wa ‘alēk yā rūmī... and about you, oh, rumi...

dal-bāšā nagdī, etc. and this is pasha, nagdi”, etc.

The rhythm of percussion instruments is more and more accelerated, then each musician approaches the ill person, who is dancing. Usually, these are simple, symmetric movements. The musicians beat percussion instruments with iron sticks at the ears of the dancing patient. Then the rhythm is violated and each musician plays with his own rhythm. Exactly at this time the patient must fall into a trance, which is not so difficult taking into account the above-mentioned and bearing in mind the belief of these people in *Zār*.

At the same time the bird or animal for slaughter is killed. If this is a bird, it is slaughtered exactly above the head of the ill person. If it is larger in size, it is slaughtered so that blood is not spilt and the patient is bathed in this blood. *Biyāda Aḥmad Ṭilib* (48-years-old in 2005) narrates that the blood-stained clothes must not be changed. After *Zār* the sick person dressed in these clothes is locked for several days – five, seven days, as the *kōdiya* orders [9: 5]. No one is admitted to him/her except one nurse, who gives him food silently. After the expiration of this term *Zār* is regarded to be finished. The blood-stained clothes are kept specially, as precious objects.

Performance of *Zār* is prohibited in the holy month of Ramadan. As *Al-maḡrabi* noted, at that time, as well as during other religious feasts, *Zār* is not performed, in the holy days “we leave spirits alone, and we stay to ourselves” [9: 17]. If the family is in mourning or some other misfortune has befallen it, *Zār* is not performed in that case either [3: 8-9].

The question arises naturally as to whether *Zār* has any obvious results. It is attested that sometimes *Zār* indeed gives certain relief to the ill person. Behman in the work [3: 23, 24] notes correctly that *Zār* is effective in two cases: 1. if an illness is of psychological character. By way of illustration the author cites the story of a girl whose engagement failed several times. This made her think that *sayids* were angry with her, which led her to apathy. In a similar situation several procedures of *Zār* proved sufficient for curing the girl’s mental disorder. 2. When a disease is organic and its symptoms are expressed by pain. The trance as a result of *Zār* may cause hypnotic anesthesia and temporarily alleviate pain [3: 24], which may, by the way, ultimately even entail fatal results, as due to artificial suppressing of pain the patient does not consult a doctor and the illness grows progressively worse.

Attitude

The distribution of *Zār* in Egypt must be attributed to two main reasons: 1. There is a certain stratum of

population in Egypt in which superstitions have survived to the present day. One poor Egyptian, *Hamdī*, thought that in the foundations of his house ancient Egyptian treasure was buried and intended to find it. It should be noted that sometimes it happens indeed that at the time of tillage or digging the foundation of a house separate small gold objects are discovered, which are purchased by museums. *Hamdī* dug and sought much, but in vain. Then he decided that *'afarīt*, i.e. spirits, demons hindered him and spent 14 000 Egyptian Pounds on various *karamas*, fragrances and offerings. This was an incredibly large sum for the poor Egyptian. Therefore neighbours mocked him and said that he was silly: if jinn wished to cede the treasure, they would not have made him spend so much money, they would have already shown it to him. In other words, the neighbours also believed in the existence of the treasure, *jinn* and their power and superiority to humans. 2. The specific state of women in the Muslim society is well-known. *Zār* for these women became a means of introducing certain dissonance into the patriarchal structure. In *Zār* the patriarchal order is violated. A woman for whom *Zār* is performed is temporarily freed from household chores. A *kōdiya* may declare that, as it often happens, spirits ask for gold jewellery or say that the woman must not carry out one or another duty, which makes *Zār* quite attractive among the female population, not to mention the

fact that *Zār* as well as weddings and other feasts are such means of gathering and feasting of women which superstitious men cannot oppose. It is difficult to say what the basis of Egyptian *Zār* is in fact: real belief or deceiving. It is a fact that a person paying a large sum of money for *Zār* probably indeed believes in the power of these spirits, but whether a *kōdiya* in fact gets into contact with *sayids* and *jinn* and whether she really speaks to them depend on personal honesty of *kōdiyas* and this is information unavailable for us, outsiders.

Notably enough, the public condemned *Zār* from the 19th century, regarding it to the present day as a relic of “obscurity” and “ignorance”, which bewilders the people. This ritual was spreading in Egypt so rapidly that the government even set up a special commission to study this ritual and to diagnose how dangerous the phenomenon was. The family severed relationship with the Egyptian singer of the 1st half of the 20th century *‘Āyima Maṣṣūyā* only because she invited to her salon *Zār* practitioners and organized *Zār* (by the way, her grandchild attended *Zār* ceremonies at *ḥadāyiq el-ahrām* with impunity). This is the official opinion, *Biyāda Aḥmad Ṭilib* notes, *Zār* is ignorance, and our *kōdiyas* are cheaters. However, it is even said in the lobby that exactly those who condemn *Zār* so much, both men and women, secretly, incognito, turn to *kōdiyas* in order to solve their personal problems.

ენათმეცნიერება

ზარის ცერემონია ეგვიპტეში

ნ. ეჯიბაძე

ო. ჯაუახიშვილის სახ. თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

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ნაშრომი წარმოადგენს ავტორის ამ ქვეყანაში რამდენიმეწლიანი უშუალო დაკვირვების შედეგს. მასში გაანალიზებულია ეგვიპტეში დღემდე გაგრძელებული ერთი ხალხური რიტუალი; განხილულია გარემო, რომელშიც შეიქმნა ეს რიტუალი, და მასთან დაკავშირებული გარკვეული ხალხური წარმოდგენები ზოგიერთი სწეულების განკურნების შესაძლებლობის შესახებ; დასმულია საკითხი რიტუალის მიმართულებისა გარკვეულ

აღმოსავლურ რეალებთან და ისლამთან; აღწერილია საკუთრივ რიტუალი, მისი ფუნქციური მონაწილენი, მათი სიტყვიერი და კინემატიკური მოქმედებები; წარმოდგენილია ტექსტების მოკლე ლინგვისტური და მხატვრული ანალიზი. ტექსტები ავტორის მიერაა ჩაწერილი ვევიბტეში.

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