King Mutton,
A curious Egyptian tale of the Mamlûk period.
Edited from a unique manuscript, with translation, notes, glossary and introduction by Joshua Finkel.

Introduction.
Some time ago Prof. DUNCAN B. MACDONALD suggested to me the editing of a Ms. which he had bought in Damascus in 1908. I gladly accepted this suggestion and found, upon perusing the Ms., that it was a curious little composition and, in great part, not at all typical of what we know of any branch of the Arabic Adab literature.
The Ms. (19 x 13 cm, 25 lines to a page), undated and anonymous, consists of twenty pages written in clear naskhi.
The title page reads: كتب حرب العشوق بين رحم الصان رحوضر السوق i. e., "The delectable war between mutton and the refreshments of the market-place". حوضر does not occur in this sense in the Arabic dictionaries, but it does so in the Persian and Turkish, as a loan-word from the Arabic. The absence of this meaning of حوضر in the Arabic lexica shows that the usage was colloquial. The signification must have been suggested to popular fancy by such expressions as انا اتاك (3) وحوضر الطعام صيف and قلّم عليه ما حضر (4). Above and below the title and on the left margin of the page there are quotations from Sa'di(1) and 'Umar b. al-Fârid(2). Immediately after the distich is not finished; after بدلستم there follows مبكرم. See Gulistân, ed. Platts, p. 5.

3) Nâlî Khoshyoi dr Ḥaţam Rûdez, ʿRâz, ed. Hâji desst Ikbârî.
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tely below the latter's distich there is a line in Turkish. Its writer, who is not named, presents the copy he had acquired to his father. On the lower third of the page there is jotted down diagonally an anecdote about Uthmân b. 'Affân¹). On the right margin of page two there is a quotation from a popular chant²). On the right margin of page three there is an owner's seal whose impress is too blurred to make out a name therein. Above the signet there is a notice of the death of a certain Muṣṭafâ al-Uṣūwâni. Some of the inscriptions are penned calligraphically and some are merely scribbled; in no case, however, have they any bearing on the composition. They were not written by the scribe and, as is often the case with oriental Mss., their appearance in the copy shows nothing more than the fascination which certain sayings or verses held for its owner or successive owners.

The story told is as follows:

King Mutton, disgruntled by the reports that had reached him about the growing power of his rival, King Honey, decides to reduce him to vassalage, on the claim that the latter is not fit for independent rule. For this purpose he dispatches an emissary to the upstart-monarch with a written demand that he acknowledge his sovereignty, or else suffer his country to be overrun by a hostile army. The envoy, a fried fat tail of a sheep, proceeds to the dominion of King Honey, alias the king of the refreshments of the market-place, to carry out the charge and bring back a reply. Evidently King Mutton must have been very skeptical about a voluntary surrender on the part of his antagonist, for a special clause unconditio-
nally enjoining the corruption of the followers of King Honey formed part of the orders received by the messenger.

Accordingly the Fat Tail, upon reaching the foreign territory, enters into secret conferences with such councilors of state as Sugar, Syrup, rendered Fat, etc., prior to conveying the message to the king; and succeeds in debauching them to the extent of exacting a promise from them to betray their sovereign on the day of battle. Having achieved this end, the emissary secures an audience with the king and delivers him the sealed letter in which his emperor prides himself on the mention of his name in the Koran and makes light of his opponent's ruling ability; and, as has been said before, calls upon him to surrender under threat of invasion. The epistle strikes King Honey as insolent and preposterous, and he immediately directs a reply in which he, too, adduces Scriptural passages extolling his race, and outdoes his antagonist by heaping insults upon him in most bitter fashion; and, as if begrudging him the challenge, turns the tables upon King Mutton by winding up the tirade with a defiant resolve to carry the offensive into his adversary's land.

Straightway King Honey issues orders for general mobilization, and various representatives of the vegetable kingdom, together with milk, cheeses and fishes from rivers and seas, rally to his call. King Mutton, learning of the enemy's advance, makes counter-preparations and musters all the carnose forces under his command. In the pitched battle that ensues the army of King Honey suffers the greater losses and, its morale broken by the traitorous activities of some of its chiefs, it flees in panic from the battlefield. Thereupon King Honey rebukes his dismayed warriors and promises them relief with the advent of the corps of fruits. These soon arrive in an imposing array and, in concerted action with the rest of the troops, engage the enemy in a lively encounter. The combat proves disastrous to the army of King Honey which is utterly routed by the superior forces of King Mutton. And now certain alleged spies report to their king named "Zähir" all they know about this curious contest; and the emperor,
greatly amused by the tale, gives a banquet to his high officials and guards, during which King Mutton's "prisoners of war" are liberated and distributed to the populace at large.

Thus ends a story strange but simple, artificial and yet naive; utterly devoid of a moral notwithstanding the Koranic allusions and citations, and so clumsily composed as to become monotonous in spite of an exciting setting. As has been remarked at the outset, the composition is not at all characteristic of the popular Adab tale. In the latter the clash between good and evil or passion contending for its consummation creates the plot. The struggle is often brought under the aegis of destiny, and among the participants those belonging to a supramundane order are not the least conspicuous. Sometimes the story is of lighter texture and aims at nothing more than humor or wit. In no case, however, are inanimate objects personified. Nor can our story be regarded as a fable, since no didactic element is discernible. To impute to it a symbolism would also be unwarranted. Symbolism in Arabic bellles-lettres is limited to phrases and words. In more extended form it exists only in philosophical and Sufi writings, of which the present tale cannot possibly be one; since, to mention only one reason, a gruel of semolina, macaroni-stew, chicken conserved in julep, and other such delectable dishes in which this book abounds cannot by any stretch of imagination be pictured as pregnant with abstract evaluations or mystical significance. As a final effort to impart to the story some emblematic quality, one might hold that the war was indeed a war, but that the foodstuffs stand for groups or individuals that opposed each other in the historic encounter. Against this possibility, however, speaks decidedly the author's postscript, the purport of which is literal throughout. From it we learn that our prisoners of war were such as could be feasted on by the flesh-and-blood subjects of a king who was the author's contemporary.

Symbolic tendencies being thus excluded, other trends in literature must next be sought with a view to fitting in the story with a known scheme of composition. Combing through
the vast Adab literature, one becomes particularly concerned with a rather inconspicuous branch of it, the Munāzara. As far as I know, Etná was the first orientalist to call attention to it as a distinct type of composition in the literature of the East. In 1881, in an article entitled Ueber persische Tenzonen\(^1\), he discusses at length the structure and chief characteristics of the Persian Munāzara poem. In the course of his analysis he also mentions some titles of Arabic Munāzara themes which, as he rightly remarks, are invariably written in prose. As we shall soon see, his remark would be more significant if he qualified the form as “rhymed prose”.

To explain the term Munāzara, otherwise Mufākhara or Mushājara, is an opusculum in the form of a dialogue wherein the principals, be they human beings, inanimate objects or mere concepts, contend for superiority over each other. Their arguments are laid before a judge who decides in favor of one side or the other, or else effects a compromise. It can be readily seen that in the case of the Arabs the motif of contention sprang from a national trait that was deeply rooted in the soul of the people. From time immemorial contests among poets as well as orators (Khatibs) of various tribes were with the Arabs a celebrated institution. Braggartism and derision elevated to a high pitch prevailed throughout these diffusive allocutions. These unseemly features, however, must not brand the race with maliciousness and conceit. The warrior-poet, who extolled his own exploits and burlesqued those of his opponent, was less prompted by a sense of individual gratification than by his concern for the welfare of the tribe. His bombastic haranguing was a patriotic function designed to instill fear into the hearts of the warriors of the rival clans. These grandiloquies, whether at the official marts or casual meeting-places, produced no shortlived effect. “Eloquence works magic” is a saying which Arab consciousness did not hesitate to attribute to the prophet himself\(^2\), inspite

\(^1\) Verh. des fünften internationalen Orientalisten-Congresses, Part II, 1, Berlin, pp. 48—185.

\(^2\) 'Iqd al-Farīd, Cairo, 1913, vol. 1, p. 220.
of its embarrassing implications. The suggestiveness of the art was immense, and it carried more conviction than one would be inclined to believe.

After the advent of Islam, the practice was no longer a vital need. The new faith had welded the tribes, and all intestine strife disappeared. However, the institution had taken hold of the imagination of the people, inasmuch as they found in it an outlet for their esthetic impulses. In imitation of the poetical contests of old, Farazdaq and Jarir composed the so-called Naqa‘id. But the Khāṭibs (orators) of the Jahiliyya had also bequeathed a literary heritage. And it is, strictly speaking, the polemics of these spokesmen that have given rise to the Munāzara-writings which, following the traditional pattern of the Khutba, were composed in rhymed prose.

The earliest Munāzara extant is that of al-Jāhiṣī (d. 15869 A.D.). It depicts a contest between autumn and spring. Two centuries later another Munāzara crops up in the fortieth Maqāma of the celebrated work of al-Ḥarīrī. Al-Khwārazmi, who flourished in the twelfth century, included nine Munāzarāt in his handy encyclopedia. Ibn al-Wardi composed 29 in the following century the Risāla of the sword and pen. In 1395 al-Qalqashandī composed his lengthy Risāla, al-Mufakhara bayna l-‘Ulüm, in which over seventy sciences contend for superiority over each another. The same writer also informs us that Risālas having sword and pen as contestants were 25 common, and goes on to quote one of his own. Also the famous polyhistor al-Suyūṭī (1445—1505) wrote several Munāzarāt, one of which is included in his collection of Maqāmāt.

In 1925 al-Khūrī published an Adab booklet in the Syrian


2) Mufid al-‘Ulüm, Cairo, 1310, pp. 65—70.
5) ibid., vol. 14, pp. 231—240.
6) Maqāmāt . . . al-Suyūṭi, Constantinople, 1298, pp. 11—24.
dialect which, among other entertaining pieces, contains a dispute between classical and colloquial Arabic\(^1\)).

The above list, while not intended to be exhaustive, sufficiently proves the persistence of the Munāzara-motif in Arabic literature. In our story the Munāzara-element is contained in the letters exchanged between the two rulers. However, not a judge but a war decides the fortunes of the contestants. This substitution, though rare in the Munāzara literature, is by no means singular; cf. the composition entitled "The battle between the grape and the sugar-cane"\(^2\). Evidently our author must have felt that the typical Munāzara-form would only make of this composition a dull and colorless diatribe, since mutton and honey were not subjects that could very well lend themselves to elegant discourse and ingenious argumentation. He therefore sought to compensate for these inherent defects by staging court-intrigue and the din of a battle royal.

This much for the dynamics of the theme. As for the choice of the topic itself, one finds that with ancient authors inordinate indulgence in descriptions of foods was not a literary taboo. To quote only one of the many gastronomic passages which Atheneaus had culled from classical writers:\(^3\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And then two slaves brought in a well-rubb'd table,} \\
\text{And then another, and another, till} \\
\text{The room was fill'd, and then the hanging lamps} \\
\text{Beamed bright and shone upon the festive crowns,} \\
\text{And herbs, and dishes of rich delicacies.} \\
\text{And then all arts were put in requisition} \\
\text{To furnish forth a most luxurious meal.} \\
\text{Barley-cakes white as snow did fill the baskets,} \\
\text{And then were served up not coarse vulgar pots,} \\
\text{But well-shaped dishes, whose well-ordered breadth} \\
\text{Fill'd the rich board, eels, and the well-stuff'd conger,} \\
\text{A dish fit for the gods. Then came a platter} \\
\text{Of equal size, with dainty sword-fish fraught,} \\
\text{And then fat cuttle-fish, and the savoury tribes}
\end{align*}
\]

\(1\) Fi miṭli ḥal-Kitāb, Beirut, part I, pp. 5—19.
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Of the long hairy polypus. After this
Another orb appeared upon the table,
Rival of that just brought from off the fire,
Fragrant with spicy odor. And on that
Again were famous cuttle-fish, and those
Fair maids the honey'd squills, and dainty cakes,
Sweet to the palate, and large buns of wheat,
Large as a partridge, sweet, and round, which you
Do know the taste of well. And if you ask
What more was there, I'd speak of luscious chine,
And loin of pork, and head of boar, all hot;
Cutlets of kid, and well-boil’d pettitoes,
And ribs of beef, and heads, and snouts, and tails.
Then kid again, and lamb, and hares, and poultry,
Partridges and the bird from Phasis’ stream.
And golden honey, and clotted cream was there,
And cheese, which I did join with all in calling
Most tender fare. And when we all had reach’d
Satiety of food and wine, the slaves
Bore off the still full tables; and some others
Brought us warm water for to wash our hands.

In China, too, inartistic expressions of hedonism were not considered unworthy of being recorded in verse. Ch’u Yüan, a poet of the fourth century B.C., thus prates about his favorite dishes:1)

"When thirty cubits high at harvest-time
The corn is stacked;
When pies are cooked of millet and bearded-maize.
Guests watch the steaming bowls
And sniff the pungency of peppered herbs.
The cunning cook adds slices of bird-flesh,
Pigeon and yellow-heron and black-crane.
They taste the badger-stew.
O Soul come back to feed on foods you love!

"Next are brought
Fresh turtle, and sweet chicken cooked in cheese
Pressed by the men of Chu.
And pickled sucking-pig
And flesh of whelps floating in liver-sauce
With salad of minced radishes in brine;
All served with that hot spice of southernwood

The land of Wu supplies.
O Soul come back to choose the meats you love!

"Roasted daw, steamed widgeon and grilled quail —
On every fowl they fare.
Boiled perch and sparrow broth,— in each preserved
The separate flavour that is most its own.
O Soul come back to where such dainties wait!

Even in Arabic literature there lived long before our
author writers who expatiated on the delights of the table.
10 Abū Muṭṭahar al-Azdi (11th century) details long lists of
luscious foods with the expertness of an epicure and the greed
of a glutton 1). And though we have no direct evidence, yet,
by way of inference, we learn that food-themes were in vogue
even before the Abbasid period. Here follows an excerpt
from a poem by Şāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Quddūs, a learned heretic
of the eighth century 2), who thus complains of the fatuity
of his age: 3)

"We have come to live among (men who like) beasts
ramble about for pasturage, but seek not under-
standing.

"If one writes of fish and vegetables, he is in their
eyes endowed with superior merit;

"But if one expounds topics of real knowledge, he is
for them heavy and dull."

25 Since, in light of the foregoing, it cannot be said that
our author introduced fresh topics or forms in Arabic literature,
it will be our next task to examine some details of the story
with a view to its further elucidation. The hosts of the
refreshments of the market-place consist of vegetable-pre-
parations, bread, fish, milk, butter, rendered fat, cheeses, cakes,
sweets and fruits; while the army of King Mutton is composed
of meat and its concoctions and of the various delicacies that
go with the flesh-pot. First advance the troops of King Honey,
then the soldiers of King Mutton make their appearance. After
35 the bloody encounter, described as a "picnic", the corps of

1) ʾHikāya, ed. Maz, pp. 38—48 and passim.
2) ʿAwaṣ al-Wafayāt, vol. 1, p. 245.
3) ʾTirās al-Majālis, p. 176.
fruits comes to the aid of the foodstuffs of the market-place. It is not difficult to see that this “delectable war” is highly suggestive of a banquet, and that the manner in which the hosts advance represents the order of the courses. Moreover, the fumes of the odoriferous wood, depicted as the smoke of battle (9 b), and the final attack of the aromatic plants (10 a) can allude to nothing else but the oriental custom of burning incense and scenting flowers at the end of a sumptuous meal1).

In the early days of Islam, not to mention the Jähiliyya, the Arab diet was simple2). Mu‘awiya (661—680) is said to have been the first caliph to introduce variety and fashions in foods3). Yet, no matter what big strides gourmandism may have made subsequent to the time of the first Umayyad ruler the number of the dishes in our story is all too vast to be intended for a single meal. Evidently it was our author’s purpose to enumerate all the varieties of foods known to experts rather than describe an actual repast. Thus instead of successive courses we get successive sets of courses, i. e. a multiple meal. But reducing that to a series of single portions there would still remain a bulky potluck upon which no glutton could frown. Excessive leisure induced the upper classes to give themselves over to the sensuous. No popular sports, athletics or sculptural standards assumed enough importance to create an esthetic sentiment against obesity. Add to that the Oriental’s eagerness to stuff his guest, and one cannot be much surprised at the richness of the table. An Egyptian writer who lived in the seventeenth century4) implies in the course of a story that a menu of vegetables, pickled preparations, sugar, honey, fish, meat, fruits and so on was a fitting ensemble for the heavy meal of the well-to-do classes5).

In modern times the good old oriental meal has lost some of its courses and attendant appurtenances. Due to religious sanction, it has survived almost intact for the celebration of

1) 1001 Nights, Cairo 1312, vol. 4, p. 107 and p. 109 (Night 874); Ḥikäya, p. 45. 2) Mustafraf, Cairo 1327, vol. 1, p. 244.
3) ibid., vol. 1, p. 244.
4) Hass al-Qalîf, Alexandria, 1289, p. 211. 5) ibid., p. 190.
the Jewish Sabbath, except that the fruits are served not immediately after the meal but several hours later (Sabbat-obst), and the passing of the box of incense is delayed till nightfall.

Cairo\(^2\) being designated as the scene of battle (6 a), it will be worth while to compare our work with other sources treating of foods enjoyed by the populace of Egypt, in the hope that they may shed light on this curious Munāzara. There are several treatises which can aid our investigation, but most of all the “Hazz al-Qu'ūf” composed by Sharbini about the end of the seventeenth century\(^3\). The author's purpose in that book is to make merry over the boorishness, ignorance and stupidity of the Egyptian peasant. The Fallāḥ is also held up to ridicule because of his coarse and meager diet, quite in line with the traditional Hijā’ which may mock without rhyme or reason. However, this form of satire, if not doomed from the outset, is bound to become boresome; and the author, to avoid a poor showing, goes off on exciting vagaries, such as food-anecdotes, fancy recipes, amusing etymologies for the names of some of the dishes, etc. One of the digressions is a sermon on edibles. Since it is the key to the correct evaluation of the tale of King Mutton, I translate it in extenso (pp. 230—232):

“Praise be to Allāh who, by all manner of scrutiny, deserves to be praised. Who relieves his creatures in accordance with their needs. Who ordered the pilgrimage to His ancient abode and made the rendered fat of cattle a companion to the honey of bees.

I shall praise Him with the praise of one who eludes hunger in uncanny fashion; whom Allāh has blessed with a

\(^1\) The term “Egyptian honey” cannot mean “Egyptian honey” by the side of the.Filipini. Moreover, the “Egyptian honey” could not be made primus inter pares, unless by Miṣr was meant the capital. Cairo was already called Miṣr as early as the 14th century (Voyages d’ibn Batoutah, vol. 1, p. 145). In the 15th century the appellation is more common; cf. Miṣr in the 15th century by Guest and Richmond in the JRAS., 1903, p. 791 et seq.

\(^2\) See pag. 130, note 4.
bowl of flour-gruel and a thin sheet of unleavened bread; and who, filling his belly thereof, in consequence thinks well of his maker, and then reclines by His grace in restful slumber. I extend to Him the thanks of a servant who has been delivered from musty edibles and moldy cheese. And I testify that there is no God, but Allāh alone. He has no associate. This is a confession of faith which saves him who professes it from anguish. And I further testify that our master Mohammed, may Allāh bless him and save him, is His servant and apostle. He ascertained the truth and proclaimed it, and was described as such. O my God! Bless and save our master Mohammed, his noble family and his companions who sought after truth and unravelled it. O bless them in abundant fashion.

O ye people! Why do I see you forgetful of yellow rice seasoned with honey and abstaining from mutton with peppered rice, from almond cakes served on trays, and from fat geese and roasted chickens? O, brethren, it behoves none but paupers to act in such wise. Exert yourselves — may Allāh be merciful to you — for the attainment of the dirham, that you may enjoy costly foods and delectable viands. Indeed the Imām 'Alī, may Allāh be pleased with him, has said: “This world's delights are three: eating of flesh, riding on flesh and inserting flesh into flesh. And upon whom Allāh has bestowed His bounty, let him be thankful; and to whomever He denied it, let him bear his lot in patience.” But (in the meanwhile) I would recommend to you rice boiled in milk. It is an exquisite dish and most blessed is the morning on which it is served. Especially so with the peasant. Just picture him milking the cow, and his wife coming with a copper-trough which she suspends and pours milk into. Then she sets it on the fire, adds rice, and it boils. Then she doles it out by spoonfuls into plates. Finally the great sheikh comes along, who seats himself on the ground and folds his legs. And while this is going on, my brethren, the vessels

1) In the text ‘وقد تُخَلَّدْ علِيهم’ perhaps a vulgarism for ‘وِقَادَتِ علِيهم’; ‘and made fire around it’.
are set in order and the crowd grows dense. And you see nothing but hands cutting (bread), and hear naught save the gulping of the gullets and the crunching of the jaws. The big lumps they swallow bring tears to their eyes, and their insatiate bellies grow yet keener (with greed). And thus each belly accosts its master: "Great is our Lord, the Most High! If your companion beats you by a morsel, beat the head off his neck."

Profit — may Allâh be merciful to you — from my exhortation. Discard such coarse foods, as lentils, beans boiled in milk, slowly boiled beans, hot broad beans, peas, groats with broad beans and cheese baked in the oven, for these produce wind and benefit no one. Turn to luscious viands, such as mutton, the lord of foods in this world and in the world to come, and drink the delectable drink about which there is a tradition.

And praise Allâh, O ye rich who lead a soft life, and bear patiently your lot, ye poverty-stricken and destitute. Let us implore Allâh that He may supply you and me with delicious foods, and grant you and me tranquility in the present and future life; that He may make you and me high living revelers and deliver us from the clutches of starvation; and that He may forgive you and me and all the Moslems. Amen. And beg pardon from him so that He may condone you; verily victory is his who asks forgiveness.

It was told on the authority of Hickory the son of Chicory the son of Timothy Gloom that an Arab upon awakening from a sweet dream finished for his breakfast a two-year old camel, then he waited till forenoon, and ate forty chickens stuffed with mutton and stewed in oxen-fat, and drank two skinfuls of wine after that, an fell asleep in the sun. And he died meeting his Lord, full of solids and liquids and drunk into the bargain.

1) To reproduce somehow the pun of لقمة and لنقمة.
2) Read التفاح for التفاح.
3) Perhaps an allusion to wine.
4) In imitation of the nonsensical names in the text.
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Praise be to Allâh who dispels grief and care and makes of milk and rice a delectable pair. I testify that mutton is the lord of all foods an benefits all who delight in him. And know that cream should not be excluded from the diet and that flour-pudding is most tasty and wholesome. And get ready for eating and drinking, for yet tomorrow you may be summoned before Allâh to give account of your works. “And they who act unjustly shall know with what a turn they shall be turned”. And be pleased with the four notables which Allâh has mentioned in the Koran, the fig, the olive, the pomegranate and the plum. And be also gratified with the remaining six of the ten luscious foods, to wit, julep preserves, flour-pudding, macaroni with young pigeons, stuffed mutton roasted with peppered rice, vermicelli pastry dressed with rendered fat and honey, almonds, sugar, sweetmeats dipped in honey and rendered fat, pumpkins filled with onions and meat, the famous Bâqlâwa, lambs fed on wheat, the crimson dish and boiled meat. May Allâh feed you and me with all these comestibles.

O my God, gather the dispersed (provisions) and make Thine help and succor lasting by preserving in his flasks the sultan, the candied Sugar, who originally hails from the cane. Aid him with the spears of the sugar-canes, with the bunches of dates, and the clusters of grapes. Bring us into his company in the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Help him and his armies in this world that we may enjoy him, O Lord of all creatures. O my God, kill the three rascals, the lentile, the pea and the bean. O ye servants of Allâh, he who wants the affluence of benignancy, let him

1) Koran, Sura 26, 228.
2) Sûra 95, 1. 3) Sûra 95, 1. 4) Sûra 6, 99.
5) The plum = لَحْمٍ is not mentioned in the Koran. The misleading reference is a gibe at the erudition of a village-parson.
6) The foods enumerated are thirteen. The author wants to imply that the preacher is so stupid that he cannot count, and that anything can be imposed on the credulity of a Fallâhin-audience.
8) In the text للمولى, perhaps for للمولى.
eat bananas with sugar in the presence of his parents⁴). Be mirthful before your meals and follow the example of him who is the best of men. Do not engage in scrambles and scuffles. Be brethren and the servants of Allāh. Behold Allāh enjoins you to enjoy all allowable delicacies and prohibits your eating the ritually forbidden foods, though they be the best of comestibles. (Remember) the she-mule may cast you off⁹), (and I apprehend) lest you tumble down and topple over⁹). In both sermon and story mutton is acclaimed the supreme comestible. In the Near East in general mutton is a very delectable viand. Large cattle is primarily used for agricultural purposes and is therefore not nurtured for table use. Consequently it is not the meat of the rich. It may also be seen that both writers advocate a mixed diet, but with meat as a base. Sugar is by the preacher termed “sultan” and by the story-teller “the grand vizier”. There are other similarities between the two compositions. The rendered fat is spoken of in the homily as the companion of honey and in the mutton-tale, instead of being associated with meats, it is surprisingly found to be an official in the kingdom of Honey. The banquet in al-Zāhir’s palace and the breakfast of the villagers are both characterized as attended by no table-talk but loud sounds of chewing and gulping. The sermon, as we shall subsequently see, is the later composition. However, it is extremely unlikely that Sharbini has borrowed from the mutton-tale. If crowning and militarization of foods were an idea adopted from a single, obscure source, it would not have been thought fit to be discussed in the popular form of a sermon, much less so merely referred to. Nor can Sharbini’s idea,  

1) In other words, such a delicious combination in so congenial an atmosphere is most conducive to promote a feeling of bliss and felicity.  
2) An allusion to sodomy of which the FALLAHIN are accused here and there in the book.  
3) Topple over = تندخترودن in the peasant-dialect, instead of تندخترودن. Dr. Riza Tawﬁk suggests that the word may have been derived from the Turkish طاقله, a somersault.
on the same ground, be accounted as original. In all probability both writers exploited a familiar notion. As early as the eleventh century Abū 1-Muṭṭahar al-Azdi speaks of an empire of fritters and an army of meats marching with banners\(^1\)). Undoubtedly the conception must have been more widespread in Arabic literature than one can now judge from the few and meager food-themes that have come to our notice.

To return to the story proper, the choice of honey as a king must next be explained. Indeed we are not a little surprised to see a viscous sort of a candy leading the hosts of such cardinal aliments as fish, dairy products and vegetables. However, to the inhabitants of Egypt honey was more than a confection. To them it was, and justly so, an important food, and they took especial pride in their home-product and its derivatives\(^2\)). Not only the physicians\(^3\)), but also Tradition\(^4\)) and the Koran\(^5\)) itself pronounced it as possessed of great healing powers. With the poor classes in the Orient sweet refreshments in general are a favorite dish, and in these honey is often the chief ingredient. These considerations I think, have guided the author in selecting honey as the crowned head of the foods of the indigent. Of course, sugar, a much more staple food, would be, to agree with the preacher, more deserving of sovereignty, but our author has evidently decided on the nectar of the beehive because the absence of the word “sugar” in the Koran would have upset the characteristic scheme of the Munāzara whereby both opponents cite Scriptural authority to uphold their prestige. Or else, to assign an occasion for the writing of the story, the popularity of honey with the masses may have, for one reason or another, grown to unparalleled magnitude at the time, so that the author thought it opportune to allot to the fashionable food the rôle of an emperor. It is also likely that the beehive so suggestive

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1) Ḥikāya, p. 101.
3) Makārim al-Akhlāq, Cairo 1800, p. 72; Isrāʿīlī, Minhāj al-Dukkān, Cairo 1329, p. 220.
5) Šūra 16, 71.
of a castle played no little part in determining the choice. Indeed, mutton's butchershop, compared with the honeycomb, is but a squalid and dingy location. Lastly, it is not at all impossible that a discussion about a sheep and a bee, dating back to Sasanid times, was momentous in the selection of the principles of the conflict.

The grandees of King Honey are treacles and molasses. Similarly the courtiers of King Mutton are all his kinsmen, meats. This shows that the essential cause of the war is the rivalry between the carnose and the saccharine families, mutton and honey being but their elegant representatives. The paupers idolized or rather had to idolize the sweets. They, as we may glean from the story and, as we may readily imagine for ourselves, had practically to deprive themselves of meat. Those in more fortunate circumstances, including the middle classes, consumed meat but sparingly. Not that they did not relish it, but outdoor occupations in a torrid heat demanded a diet of lighter foods. These were in general moderate eaters. The idle rich, however, were much given to food and used meat inordinately. Courtyards sheltered by abundant foliage and spacious halls with massive walls impenetrable to the scorching sun have considerably mitigated the inclemency of the climate and made overeating a cheerful indulgence. That the author had even a more definite and narrower leisure-circle in mind than the one just referred to will soon become apparent by inquiring into the date of the composition.

The phrase "may Allāh extend his reign" proves that the "king Zāhir" was the author's contemporary. Thus, if we establish the identity of the ruler, we obtain an approximate date for the work. But there were many Zāhirs, which is therefore the Zāhir we deal with? We find in the story that the officials of al-Zāhir distributed from the palace the

1) Al-Ḥayānūn, vol. 5, p. 139.
prisoners of the food-war to the populace of the city. This, of course, could be done only in Cairo where the battle took place. To argue that the writer intended to have King Mutton march off with his captives, say, to Bagdad or some other distant capital is preposterous. He might as well have directed him to New York. The Zāhir of the postscript is therefore an Egyptian. The Fatimid Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Zāhir (1021—1036), though an Egyptian monarch, must none the less be dismissed from consideration. The latter was a caliph, and it would be unthinkable that the author should have failed to refer to him as such in the encomium. The appellation in the postscript belongs then to one of the eight Mamlük Zāhirs who are: al-Zāhir Baybars al-Bunduqdārī (1260—1277), al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn Barqūq (1382—1399), al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn Ṭāqār (1421), al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn Jaqmaq (1438—1453), al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn Khūshqadām (1461—1467), al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn Yel-Bey (1467), al-Zāhir Timūrbūghā (1467—1468), al-Zāhir Qānsūḥ (1498—1500). The first Zāhir, Baybars al-Bunduqdārī, may be safely eliminated. Damietta, described in the story as one of the towns from which moved the procession of the fishes (5 b), was razed to the ground in 1250¹, and in several decades it could not possibly regain its industrial fame and prosperity. Moreover, the phrase “by every caliph and sultan” (1 b), coming as it does from the pen of a Mamlük subject, reveals that the author thought of their co-existence in the régime. And since the word “every” implies a traditional joint-rule, it would therefore not fit into the period of Bunduqdārī who was the first Egyptian ruler to set up a puppet-caliph in Cairo²). In view of these incompatibilities the first Zāhir of the list may be definitely ruled out. The second Zāhir must share an equal fate. His cognomen “Barqūq” happens to be used in the story in its natural signification of plum (10 a), and no writer, I believe, would have risked the insinuation of lèse-majesté by a rival or unfriendly reader. Or else, to take matters less seriously, the writer, instead of 35

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2) Ibn Iyās, vol. 1, p. 100 and other historians.
resting satisfied with a casual mention of "Barqūq", should have striven to make most of the situation. He could have managed to assign a conspicuous rôle to the plum as easily as he contrived to make an emir of tarragon, (6 b), merely because of his love for punning). The Zāhir in the story must therefore be a fifteenth century ruler. The high sounding encomium must not delude us into thinking that the Zāhir referred to could be none other but a distinguished monarch. During the Mamlük régime sycophancy was at its height. Indeed the least significant of the Zāhirs might have been the recipient of unbounded praise). The date can consequently be no further restricted with any degree of certainty.

Who was our author and what could his design be in writing this work? It seems he was of Kurdish descent, for no other nationality is complimented in connection with the foods). He evidences an intimate knowledge of court-etiquette. He must have been therefore closely associated with the Mamlük circles, and, if not employed in a military capacity, he probably held a civil post in one of the diwans. A contemporary of his, Khalil b. Shāhin al-Zāhirî (1410—1468), wrote a sort of state-almanac during the reign of Zāhir Jaqmaq) (1438—1453). While but briefly discussing the various government affairs and institutions, he dwells, to a surprising degree, on the dishes served in the castle. Thus it is strange to note that the arsenals and supply-stores are disposed of in brief order, while of the royal kitchen no less than fifty-one concoctions are mentioned). And in case it was the practice to prepare a certain item in more than one style, for the benefit of our information meticulous care is taken to attach a note to that effect. But the mutton-tale is just as puzzling. The

1) Tarragon = طرزخان, and means prince or chief.
2) Cf. the honorifics which al-Abbâs showers upon the reigning sultan al-Muṣaffar Baybars II (Āthār al-Uveal, on the margin of Suyūtī's Ta'rikh al-Khulafa', Cairo 1805, p. 137).
3) Cf. 9a.
4) Zubdat Kāshf AL-Mamālīk, Paris 1894.
5) Ibid., p. 125.
extended lists of foods contained there violate all sense of proportion. They are nothing but clumsy tumors on the body of the story, and, to do justice to the writer, one wonders if, with some hidden object in view, the plot was not used by him as a device upon which to string the pearls of his menu. The Mamlûk chieftains and their retinues, erstwhile slaves for the most part, certainly did not indulge in refined gourmandism in their native regions of Central Asia. Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh al-'Abbāsi who wrote in 1308 the Āthār al-Uwal, a combination of a government manual and a prince’s mirror, remarks that the Mamlûks like the Bedouin restricted their diet to boiled and roasted meat, milk, broths and wheat-flour and that no other food held out any temptation for them; but goes on to say that it is desirable that an exhaustive variety of dishes be served on the king’s table.

For men who have risen from low estate to the splendor of sovereignty the ceremonials of the court assumed an exaggerated importance. State functions gracefully exercised by inbred royalty bristled with impudent ostentation when performed by these adventurous parvenus, who would thus seek to compensate for their lack of hereditary dignity. The officers of the Mamlûk guard would have fain subsisted on a simple diet, but fashion demanded that they partake of sumptuous meals. However powerful were these tyrants and mighty their sway, they nevertheless craved to elicit from the populace that natural homage which unsophisticated folk pay to genuine royalty. Foreign embassies, too, had to be shown that they dealt with no Circassian rustics, but with oriental potentates who came to wield the sceptre by the bidding of destiny. Parades, jovial entertainments and all other occasions of merriment were of frequent occurrence on the court-calendar. The festivities terminated with luxurious banquets. The fifty odd dishes enumerated by Khalîl b. Shāhîn by no means constituted all the bonnes-bouches which the chef could prepare. The Zubda, as the name itself indicates, is but an abridgment as

1) Āthār al-Uwal, p. 140. 2) ibid., pp. 140—141.
of an extensive work by Khailil on the subject, and the latter expressly states that he mentions only a fraction of the large assortment of dishes offered in the royal kitchen\(^1\). In his original treatise then the courses must have been about as numerous as in the mutton-tale whose writer should now appear to have been a most clever and resourceful individual. A catalogue raisonné would be doomed to failure even if intended only for grandees who had access to the parties held at the palace. Much less so would it find appreciative readers outside the Mamlük clique. To secure interest in the subject, our author contrived a plot in which the foods are personified and arrayed in two opposing factions under the leadership of meats and sweets whose rivalry was a popular folklore theme. Add to that the Munâzara-motif, and a piece of literature is evolved worthy of circulation. Of course, the detailed lists of edibles seriously obstruct the flow of the narrative, but the author had of necessity to include them if his object was to offer a comprehensive assortment of the royal dishes. Moreover, lapsing into enumeration was not looked upon as an act of boring by the ancient public. The catalogue of ships in the Iliad and the list of jewels and attires in the second chapter of Isaiah would have been curtailed had their detailed form jarred the sensibilities of contemporary readers. The aim of such prolix insertions was to create a secondary interest. We should certainly duplicate a primitive literary expedient if, let us say, while relating to children a story in the course of which a box of candy looms up as an insignificant detail, we were to make the young listeners' mouths water by recounting to them the particular shape and flavor of each individual candy. Even eliminating infantilism and inartistic appreciation, we are still hoaxed by some novelists of today with piquant but redundant descriptions. But the author of the mutton-tale, though he has exceeded every known aberration of this kind, is yet the least to blame. On the contrary, his work should be hailed

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as the most literary food-register that ever issued from the pen of a writer. As an advertising device of the Middle Ages it is much more elegant and effective than anything modern of the sort.

It may be objected that had the author aimed at offering a list of the royal viands he would have hinted more palpably at his design and would not have risked his point being missed by the reader. But we must bear in mind that the composition was intended for contemporaries who could well read the signs of the time; and primarily perhaps for an exclusive group of persons who, moving in the same circles as the author, could divine his motives with all the intuition intimacy could breed. For these even the postscript must have been superfluous; and I am inclined to think that the final paragraph rather than purporting to clear up a mystery suggests a veiled dedication, graceful and original in touch. True to his form, the author makes of that too a secret. No wonder perhaps that the work is anonymous.

But whatever the author may have intended by the postscript, it certainly bursts the bubble of the story, much to the delight of the unwary reader. Let alone the mention of Zähir, what more helpful clue could there be for the fixing of the exact location and character of the battle than the revelation that not King Mutton's officials but Mamlük chefs and waiters were the custodians of the prisoners of war? And to top it all, the Mamlük sultan is represented as gratified with the composition. He who, like the others of his mold, has achieved an éclat for his civilized tastes by setting the fashion for colorful military accoutrement and interior decorating, yea, for the architecture of palaces and mosques, is here shown as being also the patron of the culinary art, a no mean outlet for the esthetic ebullience of a Circassian chieftain.

The Mutton Tale is to all appearances not only a unique Ms., but is also the only Arabic belles-lettres piece which treats wholly of foods. Similarly in Persian literature Ahmad Abu Ishäq Ḥallâj (the cotton carder) is the only author known
to have written systematically on the subject\(^1\)). And what is more, he devoted his talents exclusively to this topic and his set phrase was, "I shall eternally vary the theme of eating whether, reader, it delight thee or weary\(^2\)". Since each writer is thus singled out in his respective literature, one somehow suspects that either Ḥallāj has borrowed from the Anonymus or the reverse is the case.

The earliest possible date for the composition of the Mutton Tale is 1421, the year of the reign of Sayf al-Dīn Ṭaṭār, the first fifteenth century Zāhir. Since "Ḥallāj" had already indulged in his wonted pastime as early as in 1409—1415, the period of the governorship of his patron Iskandar b. ʿUmar\(^3\), borrowing on the part of the Persian from the Arabic writer or being influenced by him must be dismissed from consideration. In resorting to the contrary assumption, it is necessary, in order to probe it, to acquaint ourselves somewhat closer with the writings of Ḥallāj.

The diwān of Abū Ishāq, or as he briefly styled himself Busḥāq, is for the most part a collection of parodies on distichs of famous poets, such as Saʿdī, Ḥāfiẓ, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Firdawsī, Niẓāmī and the like. The first poem entitled "Treasure of Appetite" is divided into ten fuṣūl of which the first is herewith translated:

"Said Shaykh Saʿdī,

**Our hearts** for His beauty throb with love eternal, for His beauty is eternal, so our love will never cease'.

"Said he (Busḥāq) apropos,

**Our hearts** for the saffron-dish throb with love eternal, for forever it is garnished with the scrambled eggs of geese\(^4\).

"Since the prime of creation my gaze has fallen upon it and envisaged in its yellow hue the sallow countenance of a saint.

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1) Diwān al-ʿAṭīma, Constantinople 1303.
2) Encyclopaedia of Islam, p. 802.
4) In the text here "sugar-candy and honeyed sweets", but I have arbitrarily substituted the phrase ending with "geese" to imitate, as best as I could, the effect of the rhyme in the original.
"As often as I inquired into the merits of foods, I found that the combination of macaroni and hashed meat is like a sword on whose hilt the engraving is defective; and that to add legumes and minced meat to Syrian and Ethiopian fritters is a sign of vice and depravity.

"When you see bread and melons on the table consider it an honor to become the martyr of that meal, for death at their hands is a worthy testimonial to one's firm resolve to live.

"A string of pearls beside a cluster of grapes is like imitation pearls compared with the genuine gem.

"When the world was not yet, Bushäq had already coined the adage: Bread and meat may claim pre-existence, but hunger will forever prevail."

On p. 36 we meet with another parody on one of Sa'di's verses:

"Said Shaykh Sa'di,

'At dawn when day and night are still intertwined, the skirts of the plain in the landscape of spring are grand and resplendent to view'.

"Said he (Bushäq) apropos,

'At dawn while still tipsy from the liquor I imbibed the night before, serve me with naught else save a bowlful of stew).

"Why glorify fritters served with Tutmâj on whose every leaf a thousand secrets are inscribed?

"If I were to make allusions to the qualities of pilchards, you would not eat vermicelli, because they are unlike the dish of bread soaked in oil and syrup.

"If you find a bowl of Chüshbara on the table, pierce the roasting spit through its cheek; verily the thorn is the companion of the rose.

"If you are naturally inclined to lady rice pudding, the lady-chef will serve it for you in a ewer.

"When macaroni-pilaw steps on the table, the narcissus-shaped dish strews gold and silver under its feet.

1) In the text here "macaroni paste", but see the preceding note for the change.

2) The gold and silver allude to the yolk and white of the eggs which form a component part of the dish.
“A concoction of rice dressed with syrup and butter is unlikely to irritate the throat.”

From the above parodies which are fairly representative of the drift and substance of the rest of the poems, we can see that the mimicry of the language and the burlesquing of the sentiment, far from being ingenious, are not carried farther than the initial line of the poem. In the second line the theme is either an outgrowth of the first or else stands in no relation to it. Each succeeding line contains its own theme which is either insipid, grotesque or disgusting. It is never anything else except that in addition it may also be obscure. But for this last deficiency the author should not be held to account. Here and there a verse may be so technically involved from the culinary point of view as to render it impossible for any but contemporaries to make out its point, and perhaps only for such contemporaries as had more than a theoretical interest in the savory remarks. Indeed as Bushāq tells us in the preface, he composed the “Treasure of Appetite” to stimulate the waning appetite of a friend, just as Azraqī before him wrote the licentious work “Alfiyya Shalfiyya” to quicken the sexual desires of ʻUghānshāh the Seljūq. But even so Bushāq would not accost the bellies of his patrons without a graceful gesture. A quotation of exquisite beauty invariably adorns each parody, as if to show that he does not wallow in the mire but has fallen there ingloriously. In the end-verse of each poem Bushāq usually introduces himself in the third person and makes a serious effort to redeem himself of his twaddle and balderdash. He no longer speaks like a professional, but gives utterance to witticisms and reflections of broad human appeal.

It thus becomes clear that the author of the Mutton Tale could not possibly have taken Bushāq as a pattern for his work. If he had done so, he would not have written in prose, but in verse; and, to be sure, he would not have composed a tale, but, like his archetype, parodies or facetiae. Moreover, if anywhere, one should expect our author to have reproduced the highly wrought gourmand imagery of his predecessor in

the couplets that are wedged in between some of the paragraphs of the tale. But the couplets exhibit no such characteristic. Their metaphors are tame and suave, and the theme is not always gastronomic. Furthermore, Persian literature was barely fostered in Egypt in the fifteenth century; and, besides, Bushâq's fame, if he ever enjoyed it, could not spread so rapidly as to infiltrate a distant land within several decades. The fact that only very few manuscripts of his work are extant tends to show that his writings were not popular even in his own country. The Mutton Tale must therefore be regarded as having been in no way influenced by the Persian work. The gourmand of Egypt and the epicure of Persia were as independent phenomena as the miserable fallâh and the starving darvish.

The story is written in the Risâla-form, which is rhymed prose usually interspersed with verse. In our case the Saj is occasionally abandoned, its employment being well-nigh impossible for lists of dishes whose names are sometimes no less grotesque than their make-up. The style shows that the author, though in all probability a non-Arab, commanded a facile and spontaneous flow of language and could summon any Koranic allusion at will. Yet his ready pen was none too elegant, as we do meet occasionally with loose constructions and colloquial expressions. No doubt the writer was sufficiently resourceful to acquit himself of his task in grand classical fashion throughout, but popular rendition was the exigency of the composition. Moreover, our writer lived in an age when violation of standard usage was no longer deemed a sacrilegious act. At that time vulgarisms, might have been introduced even in verse.

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1) While Taghri Birdî (Annals, ed. by W. Popper) cites many men who knew Turkish, he makes mention of only two scholars who knew Persian as well (vol. 6, p. 824 and vol. 7, p. 344).
3) لکیا، 3b, في المعام، 4a in the meaning of "physicians"; شبابیک، 6a, والغضرة العال الكورة، 6a.
The translation is as literal as possible, and all words added are indicated by parentheses. However, some parts of the tale — and these make up about half of it — are left untranslated. These, if included would all but make a catalogue of the story. Yet, I did not attempt to eliminate all the boresome passages from the translation, but here and there I gave the reader a taste of some of the numerous delicious dishes, so as to preserve within tolerable limits the atmosphere and setting of the original. Such words as have not yet found their way into the Arabic dictionaries or would require additional explanation, are, with some exceptions, commented upon in an especially appended glossary. The copyist's mistakes, if evident, have been tacitly corrected; otherwise a note is added to show the reading in the Ms. The untranslated portions are indicated in the text by being enclosed between arrows. The orthographical peculiarities of the Ms. are such as ғلraj, ғلraj and ғلraj and ғلraj respectively. In all cases, however, I substituted the legitimate spelling. The excerpts from the works of Sharbini and Buslāq follow the text of the tale proper as an appendix.

In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Duncan B. Macdonald for the kind interest he has taken in the work and for the many valuable and helpful suggestions he has given me in both the introduction and translation. My thanks are also due to Doctor Riza Tewfik for several suggestions in the translation of Buslāq.
Ramadan-Kinderlieder aus Kairo.

Von G. Bergsträßer.

Mit einem Anhang von E. Littmann.