

THE METRICAL QUESTION IN ANDALUSI STANZAIC POETRY: WHICH EXTENDED KHALILEAN SYSTEM?

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The kind of metrical system used in Andalusí Stanzaic Poetry, *muwashshahāt* and *azjāl* alike, was the subject of a heated debate back in the seventies between the proponents of a Hispanic hypothesis and the supporters of the Classical Arabic scansion, i.e. the Khalilean 'arūd. The Hispanic hypothesis,¹ purporting a metrical system of counted syllables stressed at regular intervals, was not supported by any degree of phonemic coincidence with the actual texts,² on which it imposed totally aberrant stress patterns, not to speak of manipulations designed to obtain isosyllabic lines that were not such.³ Moreover, it could not explain the very high rate of coincidence of these lines with the metrical requirements of 'arūd, which necessarily implied that this system was in command of those stanzaic poems, not different in this regard from standard one-rhymed *qasā'id*.

Therefore, the adherents of the Khalilean hypothesis⁴ won the day easily, and there were left very few scholars who still clung to the Hispanic theory. Nevertheless, it could not be denied that some segments in stanzaic poems are not properly accounted for by strict 'arūd, which requires some additional licences and exceptions, unheard of in Classical Arabic poetry. This is the reason why most specialists on this subject have coined or used the expressions "modified", "extended" or "expanded" 'arūd,⁵ in Arabic, 'arūd *muḥawwar*.

However, the nature and limits of such an extension or expansion have not been wholly and clearly defined in terms agreed upon by every scholar so that any aberrant line could be explained in a systematic and regular way, which is indeed a serious failure in an otherwise absolutely convincing and logical theory.

The present writer has devoted some attention to this problem since it came about and has proposed a set of solutions, some previously known to scholars and some totally new, which have met with different degrees of acceptance, namely:

- 1) This extended version of 'arūd allows additions and suppressions of hemistichs, feet and auxiliary segments of one to three syllables, and even change of metre from the first to the second hemistichs. Such an abnormality, already described by Hartmann 1887, must be accepted by

all in view of the textual evidence, although it raises serious doubts from the viewpoint of theoretical prosody about the possible effective survival of the Classical quantitative rhythms under such conditions.

2) It also allows the interchange of prosodically different feet with the same number of syllables (e.g. **fā'itun** and **fu'ūlun**, **fā'ilātun** and **mustaf'ilun**, etc.). This discovery of ours was enthusiastically greeted by Prof. Schoeler as the solution to every case of metrical irregularity,⁶ making entirely unnecessary any further allowance in this extended version of *'arūd*. However, we could not accept our respected colleague's compliments in this case as, in our view, these instances are the strongest proof of the phonemic abandonment of the genuine *'arūd* rhythms, and besides, there are still many instances of aberrant syllabic quantity which remain unaccountable in that manner.

3) The last additional and, in our view at least, necessary principle in order to explain the sporadically aberrant syllabic quantity in stanzaic poetry is the allowance of theoretically long syllables in short slots, if they are unstressed, and of theoretically short syllables in long slots, if they are stressed.⁷ Of course, this amounts to acknowledging that the local pronunciation of Arabic, either Classical or dialectal, had forsaken phonemic quantity, and substituted phonemic stress for it, so that poets would use *'arūd* metres merely as a traditional guide, and pay heed to all its requirements in the written composition of *qasā'id*, although the actual rhythm in the recitation would have been provided only and instead by the regular periodicity of stressed syllables.⁸ In stanzaic poetry, however, such an "optical" compliance was not a requisite initially, in the Andalusī popular milieu where it appears to have been in vogue, although it would not be systematically infringed among the cultivated folklorists who soon took an interest in it, as a consequence of the learned habits and professional background of most poets. This third principle, which helped us enormously in solving textual and prosodical problems in the editions of Ibn Quzmān, Ashshushtarī, Madghallīs and the remaining *zajjāls* is, however, far from having obtained universal assent among our colleagues, even those nearest to our position in this issue, and we feel that this is an excellent occasion to launch another plea for this case.

To begin with, it should be remembered that this third principle had not been enunciated by us in an effort to solve the prosodical problems in the Khalillean scansion of Andalusī stanzaic poetry; instead, it had been discovered during the course of a previous and independent research, and included in our description of the grammar of Andalusī Arabic (Corriente 1977: 63), some years

before we concerned ourselves with stanzaic poetry and developed our “bridging hypothesis” (Corriente 1982a), i.e. that the metres of that poetry were indeed Khalilean, but phonemically converted for their use in a linguistic milieu in which stress had taken the rhythm-setting role of syllabic quantity. Later on we demonstrated that such a shift, which had also taken place much sooner in Hispanic Latin, appears to have been characteristic of all the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, regardless of the language used by them at any given time, and logically affected not only their Romance dialects, including that of the *kharajāt*, but also the traditional pronunciation of Hebrew by cultured local Jews, so that the peculiar features of the adoption of ‘*arūd*’ by Dūnash b. Labraṭ, in which only *ḥātēfs* and copulative *wāw* are reckoned as short syllables, simply answers to the fact that stress could never hit them, unlike the case of the remaining vowels which were, therefore, classified as long, i.e. stressable.⁹

The reasons beyond that rather general reluctance to accept this evolutionary principle are probably manifold.¹⁰ We once said and still believe that the very notion of an Arabic dialect without syllabic quantity sounded strange to scholars who were almost invariably more concerned with literature than with linguistics and dialectology, but we must also concede that it was not wise of us to speak of a “bridging hypothesis”, because the defendants of the strict Khalilean scansion thought that it was merely an attempt at settling that unbelievably bitter dispute by giving partial satisfaction to both sides, at the expense of admitting that poetry could simultaneously depend on more than one system, as Schoeler remarked.¹¹ This same scholar, one of our most respected colleagues and a foremost authority in Arabic literature and metrics, pointed very accurately to what was perhaps the weakest spot in our proposal,¹² namely, the relative scarcity of passages where this third principle would be at work, compared with the overwhelming majority of lines perfectly accounted for by simply assuming strict ‘*arūd*’.

On the occasion of what can be legitimately considered as a third international encounter on Arabic and Hebrew stanzaic poetry and related matters, in the aftermath of the congresses of Exeter and Madrid, it may be appropriate to revisit the various aspects of this issue and see how and whether they have evolved in the scholarly production during the last years.

The heart of the matter being whether Andalusis had kept the phonemic quantitative rhythm of Old Arabic and could therefore acoustically appreciate the matching quantitative sequences of genuine ‘*arūd*’, it is noteworthy that nobody has so far produced a convincing argument against our contention that they had actually forsaken that rhythm and shifted to phonemic expiratory stress rhythm, as demonstrated by the scribes’ spelling

deviations. That is, to the best of our knowledge, no alternative valid explanation has been given for the well-known fact that Andalusī scribes tend to represent stressed vowels with *matres lectionis* and to omit them in unstressed vowels, regardless of the Classical Arabic prosodical and spelling rules which, nevertheless, are upheld by tradition and habit in most cases, even when they were intent on reproducing dialectal utterances.¹³

Under these circumstances, it must be surmised that, in order to reach the enormous degree of success and prestige recorded by the literary history of both Al-Andalus and Sepharad, 'arūd had to be fitted to match the local prosody more or less skilfully, depending on the training and aesthetic goals of each poet. Otherwise, some or many faulty lines, incorrect from the viewpoint of strict 'arūd, were likely to appear, as in fact they did, none in the recorded successful *qaṣā'id*, some in *muwashshahāt*,¹⁴ and even more often in *azjāl*, above all those composed in the popular milieu or in imitation of the folk style. But the cleavage is not only diastatic, i.e. related to the more or less total command by the authors of the high registers of Arabic, since one can also observe that this licence disappears or becomes extremely rare in more recent authors such as Ibn Alkhaṭīb and Ibn Zamrak,¹⁵ and not only on account of their being cultured people, capable of composing perfectly correct *qaṣā'id*, but probably also because of a diachronic reason, which we have investigated, namely, that the strong stress providing the basis of rhythm in former ages might have become weaker or even disappeared from Granadan Arabic.¹⁶

Considering that the introduction of Al-Khalīl's book on metrics to Al-Andalus is historically documented at the beginning of the 9th century,¹⁷ where it did not take long to bring forth simultaneously the first group of really important local Classical Arabic poets, the sudden emergence of the Hebrew *musammaṭāt* authored by Sephardic poets¹⁸ and the first generation proto-*azjāl* in Andalusī Arabic or even Romance,¹⁹ later on quoted as *kharajāt* in the *muwashshahāt* reportedly invented at the beginning of the 10th century,²⁰ we have a reasonable chronology for what Stern called the pre-historical period of *muwashshah*, for which we have only the Hebrew *musammaṭāt* as witnesses, because of the Muslim anthologists' disdain for registering materials not living up to their ideals of Classical Arabic perfection. From such an attitude, which remained unchanged for as long as the Western Umayyad Caliphate lasted in the case of the *muwashshah*, and until the Almoravid period for the full-fledged *azjāl*, we can easily gather that the belated, slow and gradual literary recognition of stanzaic poems in Al-Andalus was pegged on the increasing degree of renouncement of their popular roots and features, linguistic and prosodical, and their reassumption of all or most Classical traits. This is what García Gómez called the process

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of reabsorption undergone by the stanzaic genres,²¹ which was completed, as far as prosody is concerned, in the Naṣrid period.

This would explain why older and more informal stanzaic poems are likely to contain more metrical irregularities, unaccountable for by strict 'arūd, and practically absent from younger and more solemn *muwashshahāt* and *azjāl*. By the same token, the burden of proof is shifted to the proponents of strict 'arūd, who can indeed count a majority of poems almost or even entirely free from such irregularities, but cannot handle the relatively few cases where they happened, not even by means of alternative scansion proposals that bear little resemblance to standard 'arūd. As an example, let us take a look at the five stanza *zajal* of a very popular style, produced by Yaḥyà b. 'Abdallāh Albaḥḥaḍah:²²

- 0 *dá'ni nashrúb qatí', ya ṣáhi,*
ma' dhúnna, sitti almiláhi.
- 1 *dá'ni nashrúb wanárkhi shúffa*
waniṣáhib man lis fih 'iffa,
ya zaghállá, shúddu+ lakiffa:
min báb aljáwz yusmá' ṣiyáhi.
- 2 *wállah+ innak saráf malhÍLLA*
wasamína bihál BACHÍLLA
wakhafifa bihál PAWLÍLLA
hin tutayyár ma' arriyáhi.
- 3 *wállah, dhúnna, aní mushákil,*
wahízami malih wakámil
hin taráni narkhí+ ssaráwil
'ala wájh+ alqúrq+ aṣṣayyáhi.
- 4 *ya zaghállat dárab azzajjáli,*
mínnu fikum zúghla biháli,
aw dalálu bihál daláli,
aw rimáhu bihál rimáhi.

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5 *ghada qálat tijni dhúnna,*
bitahánfuf mallh wahínna,
nashrúb alkás ma'ha muháanna,
hin tijni, bayád şabáhi!

- 0 Let me drink a jug, my friend,
with Donna, lady of beauties!
- 1 Let me drink with an open mouth
in the company of debauched people!
Hey, brave men, pack away,
for my shouting is being heard from Walnut Gate!²³
- 2 By God, you are so pretty,
plump like a haversack,
and light like a butterfly
when it flies in the wind.
- 3 Donna, I am handsome, by God,
and my purse will be rich and full,
when you see me drop my trousers
on my squeaky brand new shoes.
- 4 Brave men in Azzajjālī's Lane,²⁴
do you find there bravery like mine,
or is your flirting like mine,
or have you got spears²⁵ like mine?
- 5 Donna said she will come tomorrow,
well depilated²⁶ and dyed with henna:
I shall drink with her pleausrably;
when she comes, what a fine morning!

In this *zajal* it is obvious that the poet is using a shortened version of the metre *khafif*, **fā'ilātun mustaf'ilun fā'[ilātun]**, but he allows himself to substitute **mustaf'ilun** for **fā'ilātun** in *ma' dhúnna sit-* at the beginning of 0/1; to reckon *fiḥ* as short in the middle of 1/2, since a substitution of **maf'ūlātun** for **mustaf'ilun** is unlikely to take place so close to the end of the line; to reckon *min bāb aljāwz* as **mustaf'ilun** in 1/4, which is not uncommon for the unstressed article; to reckon *şaraf malhīl-* as **fā'ilātun** in 2/1, more likely than as **mafā'ilun** because of its nearness to the rhyme position; to disregard gemination in 4/1 in order to obtain **mustaf'ilun** in *dārb+ azzajjā-*; and to allow foot substitution in 5/1 where *ghada qálat* is

mafā'ilun instead of **fā'ilātun**. This means that this poem contains six major deviations from strict 'arūḍ in only 22 lines, a situation which is neither common nor exceptional, and which makes it unadvisable to dismiss a host of similar cases in many old and popular *azjāl* as mere instances of complicated alternative scansion.

No less meaningful, in our view, is the fact that the same principles are found at work, with the same relatively low but steady frequency, in the text of Romance *kharajāt* appended to Classical Arabic *muwashshahāt*, e.g.:²⁷

A 3) *wush YA TENRĀD K- indhar khāESH KĒREDH* ("what a cheek he's got: he even wants to alert my relatives!"), in the metre of *ánta+ l'iyádh/ law ajárta+ l'á'idh* ("You would be a shelter, if you gave it to those who seek it"), i.e. **mustaf'ilun fā'ilun maf'ūlun**, where the unstressed syllable *TEN* is being reckoned as short, as also is *dhár*, usually stressed, but here proclitic on account of the stressed *khá* which follows.²⁸

A 13) *NON KĒRO BÓNO ḥallÉLLO/ illá assamÉLLO* ("I want no handsome little thief, but the little dark-skinned one") in the metre of *li ádmu'un tastahillu/ múdh shahāta+ lkhillu* ("I have running tears, since my friend departed"), i.e. **mustaf'ilun fā'ilātun / mustaf'ilun fa'lun**, where the unstressed syllables *hal* and *as* are being reckoned as short in Arabic words with the Romance diminutive suffix.

A 14) *SHO+ ljumméLLA* ("under his hair"), scanned as **fā'ilātu**, reckoning *jum* as a short syllable.

A 21) *FÓYSHE EN+ E(D) NON TORNÁDE* ("he went away and never came back"), scanned as **mustaf'ilun fā'ilātun** by reckoning the unstressed syllable *TOR* as short, etc.

It is therefore our contention that considering:

- 1) That the local spelling system developed by Andalusī scribes unequivocally indicates a shift from phonemic syllabic length to phonemic stress,
- 2) That the success of the theoretically quantitative equivalences established in the local Hebrew adaptation of 'arūḍ, in total disagreement with the doctrine taught by Eastern grammarians, and even by their Sephardic colleagues, such as David Qimḥi,²⁹ can only be explained as based on a phonemically conspicuous distinction between syllables that could or could not be stressed, and
- 3) That the third licence found only in Andalusī stanzaic poetry,³⁰ is the allowance of syllables theoretically faulty in certain slots on account of their traditional consideration as long or short, if they had the

appropriate stress status, according to an equation of stress with length and the other way around,

it might be reasonable to acknowledge, within the aforementioned diastatic and diachronic limits, that the characteristic extension of the *'arūd* introduced in Andalusi Stanzaic poetry was generated by its initial adaptation to the local prosody in popular milieus, although this feature tended to disappear among cultivated people and in later periods.

NOTES

1. Developed by García Gómez 1965, 1972 and 1975, and seldom followed outside the circle of his Spanish disciples, except by Monroe 1974 and 1977 who, however, practically withdrew his formerly staunch support in Monroe 1994: 78, by writing: "Since neither quantity nor stress appear to be in control within this prosodic system, we are left with a third metrical possibility, namely that of the Romance languages, whose medieval lyrical poetry, contrary to what García Gómez maintained, was based on syllable count alone. At this stage in our analysis, we need to take into account that, in the medieval system of versification used in the Ibero-Romance lyric, to which the Quzmani system bears the closest of affinities, stress patterns also fluctuate within a poem ... It would, therefore, be more accurate to describe both the medieval Ibero-Romance and the Quzmani systems as entirely syllabic, and to apply García Gómez's table to them with total disregard for stress." This is indeed an important step forward, as those tables without their stress regulations amount to mere syllabic counting, but yet there are many cases in these poems of lines of different length, because of certain well-known features of the Khalilean system and, above all, the statistical coincidences with it can by no means be overlooked. See more on this in Schoeler 1991: 889 and Corriente 1988: 9, about the presence of the non-isosyllabic metres *khafif*, *kāmil* and *wāfir* and, in general, Corriente 1997a: 90-6.

2. See on this Corriente 1997a: 114. Symptomatically, García Gómez 1972 and 1965 never placed any stress marks in the Arabic lines he edited or quoted in support of his theory, and did it only sparsely in García Gómez 1975, which would indicate some uneasiness or, at least, subconscious hesitation about the correctness of the stress positions implied by his metric formulae. The same feature characterises also Monroe's transcriptions of Andalusi Arabic poems, even as recently as in Monroe & Pettigrew 2003: 140-2, where he has preferred our edition of Ibn Quzmān with very few changes, as he honestly acknowledges, but has reintegrated the macron on long vowels, as if quantity were compatible with the stress-based rhythm which is the core of the Hispanic theory. This compatibility was not contemplated by the very knowledgeable Jakobson 1922: 116, as quoted from the never wholly translated Russian original by Corriente 1980: 76: such a disregard not only for the linguistic aspects of this issue, but also for the general theory of metrics is bewildering in one of the world's best specialists in Comparative Literature, the author of a scholarly production for which we all have the greatest respect and admiration in every other matter.

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3. Unlike Stern, an extremely skilled paleographer, prudently aware of the importance of respecting the actual reading of the mss. whenever possible, García Gómez became known for his reckless handling of these texts, which he emended at wish, sometimes without even a warning, as decried justly by scholars such as Jones 1988: 7, Hitchcock 1980: 483, etc.

4. E.g. J. Abu-Haidar, T. Gorton, A. Jones, R. Hitchcock and G. Schoeler. For an impartial and detail account of this debate, see Zwartjes 1997: 134-43. The bibliographies of Hitchcock & López-Morillas and Zwartjes & Heijkoop are also indispensable aids.

5. Thus, Jones 1980: 26 and 54-55, and 1992: 9 and Schoeler 1993: 811.

6. In Schoeler 1991: 889.

7. We have provided brief enumerations of such cases in Corriente 1980: 77 (fn. 20), 1982a: 41, 1987: 22-3, 1988: 10-12, 1991: 64-5 and 1997a: 99-102.

8. In Corriente 1997a: 110 we have suggested some possible arrangements for this conversion which, however and necessarily, are mere conjectures but for the principle that stress should always hit “long” slots only.

9. See Corriente 1986b and 1991a. Menāḥēm ben Sāruq was the most outspoken opponent of Labraṭ’s adaptation of ‘*arūḏ*’ to Hebrew because, adhering to the Eastern classification of Hebrew vowels in long and short, which Qimḥi would support also in the Iberian Peninsula, Menāḥēm said that “long” vowels like *qāmēs* and *sērē* could not be followed by quiescent consonants, after ‘*arūḏ*’ requirements, without necessarily turning into *pātāḥ* and *seḡol*, against the rules of the Hebrew language and, above all, causing shifts in the traditionally received stress. But this did not bother Labraṭ at all, since he operated with the local traditional pronunciation of Hebrew where no phonemic quantitative feature was extant, and simply cared about stressed and unstressed vowels, in ways parallel to those of the “modified” ‘*arūḏ*’ of Andalusī stanzaic poetry, which explains his complete success and the defeat of Menāḥēm’s disciples, who defended theory against practice. See on this Sáenz-Badillos 1986.

10. See on this Corriente 1997b, where we reacted to Schoeler 1991. This is not to say that there have been no scholars who have entirely subscribed to our proposal, as did the eminent linguistic and semitologist K. Petráček (1985: 292), in his review of Corriente 1980 (“Eine solche Interpretation der linguistischen Basis des Quzmānschen Textes scheint uns völlig berechtigt und zugleich auch realistisch zu sein”), or who avowed some of its merits, such as Hoenerbach 1991: 253 who spoke of a “klärende Einsicht”, or Schoeler himself (1983: col. 332), who said that he had felt for a while that it was the definitive solution to this problem. Even a strict classicist such as Jones 1992: 9 accepts the concepts of unstressed syllables of irrelevant quantity and foot substitution, although he stops short of the inescapable phonemic consequence, i.e. that quantitative rhythm has yielded to something else.

11. In Schoeler 1983: 320. To this we replied in Corriente 1997b: 129 that a converted system is again one system, not two, and that, in fact, “extended ‘*arūḏ*’” was most likely seen by its users as just ‘*arūḏ*’ with some additional licences.

12. In Schoeler 1991: 888.
13. This feature, clearly outlined in Corriente 1977: 60-4, 1980: 20-21, 1988: 10-12 & 23-5, 1994: 42, etc., has been clearly underestimated by the adherents of strict 'arūq who, in our view, should have paid more attention to the universal principle, according to which modifications of a graphemic code, such as stress marks, wedges, cedilla, digraphs, etc., in the case of the Latin alphabet, or overlined *gāf* and three-dotted *īm* in the Persian variety of the Arabic script, Aljamiado diacritics, etc., unequivocally betray the emergence of new phonemic oppositions. Such spelling innovations usually remain hesitant and experimental for decades, as in the case of Medieval written records of Modern European languages or early Neo-Persian spelling, but their mere sporadic token presence is unequivocal proof of new phonemic nuances.
14. On this, see a limited sample in Corriente 1982a: 78-80 and 1997b: 99-101.
15. As reflected by Corriente 1990.
16. On this, see Corriente 1998.
17. According to several sources, most recently Ibn Ḥayyān's *Almuqtabis* II-1, p. 239.
18. See Stern 1974: 51.
19. According to Ibn Bassām's famous report, best translated by Monroe 1984-5. We suggest this technical name for those very short and pre-stanzaic popular poems, such as the ones quoted by Ibn Quzmān in his prologue, or the one discovered by us in *Almuqtabis* V (Corriente 1992). Those *muwashshahāt*, in turn, became the model of equally learned second generation stanzaic *azjāl*.
20. According to Monroe & Armistead 1985, a discovery which, however, had been already anticipated in Corriente 1984: 29.
21. E.g. in García Gómez 1965: 62, where he speaks only of the *muwashshah* and denies such a possibility for the *zajal*, wrongly in our view, when we consider the late Granadan *zajjāls*.
22. From Corriente 1994: 87-9. This is a piece of *mujūn* ("obscene poetry"), describing plans for an encounter with a prostitute who bears a Romance proper name, Donna, i.e. "Lady". This implies her being Christian or Jewish, not Muslim, a social convention reflected by other *zajjāls*, such as Ibn Quzmān 21/5/1 and 144/2/1 and Corriente 1997a: 185 (fn. 92). In spite of its being very colloquial, the rhymes of this poem are sometimes extended with /+/, a practice rejected by Ibn Quzmān in his famous prologue as classicising, but found sometimes in *azjāl* (see Corriente 1988: 26), even in Romance *kharajāt* (see Corriente 1997a: 345). In our transcription, Romance words are capitalised for their easier recognition. This language had already died out by the poet's epoch, but for assimilated items, which might have been piled up here in order to give the poem a low register savour.
23. One of the gates of Cordova, according to Torres Balbás 1971: 650.
24. See Torres Balbás 1971: 142.

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25. Euphemistic designation of the penis, like in the *kharjah* A22; see also Corriente 1997a: 171 (fn. 30).
26. This term is concretely applied to the depilation of pubic hair, often practised by urban Muslim women, and even men, unlike the case in countryside areas. This witness would invalidate the generalising statement found in Monroe & Pettigrew 2003: 148, to the effect that everywhere in Islamic countries, including Al-Andalus, prostitutes would not follow such a practice in order to increase their sexual attractiveness. Conversely, the depilation of pubic hair among Western prostitutes, also mentioned in that context, would more likely be related to hygienic prevention of crab lice rather than being “sexually titillating”.
27. The scansion of these quotes are the same in Ghazi 1979, Jones 1988 and Corriente 1997, which precludes any metrical tampering.
28. The spelling >*kndhr*< instead of >*ky 'ndhār*<, which had foiled all previous attempts at deciphering this text, would not be a mere scribe's blunder, but instead as in other instances it is an intentional device to tell readers that this syllable must not be counted as “long”, i.e. stressed.
29. On this, see the reasoning in Corriente 1986 and 1991a.
30. We demonstrated in Corriente 1997b that such was not the case in Egyptian *azjāl*, as had been purported by Schoeler 1991.

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