

TRANSCRIPTION AND PRONUNCIATION OF THE ARABIC SCRIPT

For the transcription and pronunciation of Arabic words and names I have tried to keep to as simple and clear a system as possible. I make a distinction between colloquial Egyptian Arabic and modern standard literary Arabic. Words that occur in conversations with my conversation partners are written in accordance with colloquial language and for titles of books and personal names I follow the conventional transcription of modern standard Arabic. Generally I follow El-Said Badawi and Martin Hinds, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic* (1986) and Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (1980). I make no distinction between long and short vowels (*a, i, u*), nor between the various consonants that can be grouped under *d, h, s* and *t*. I make an exception for such words as *dhikr*, where the *dh* sounds like a soft *z*, and *hadith*, where the *t* sounds like a soft *s*, which I render as *th* and for words with a *sh* sound (as in *sheikh*). The *y* is pronounced as in “yet”, but at the end of a word it sounds like the *y* in “pony”. The Arabic letter *hamza* is given as ’ and the *‘ayn* as ‘, and the *ghain*, which has a gently rolling sound, is written as *gh*. The letter *jīm*, written as *j* in the transcription of modern standard Arabic (as in *jinn*), sounds like the *j* in “jug” but in colloquial Egyptian it is pronounced as a soft *k* and I write it as *g* (as in *gann* = demon). The hard *ch* sound (as in Scottish “loch”) is given as *kh*. Often in colloquial speech the *q* sound is not pronounced and in such cases I render it with an apostrophe, e.g. *‘arina* instead of *qarina* as in modern standard Arabic. I first give the Arabic plural (e.g. *sheikh-shuyukh*) and thereafter the English plural form, as in *sheikhs*. When I take over Arabic words or names from the literature, I use the transcription applied there. Translations from Arabic books are mine. This is also the case for conversations I have conducted with the conversation partners in Egyptian Arabic.