The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature

Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period

EDITED BY
A.F.L. BEESTON, T.M. JOHNSTONE
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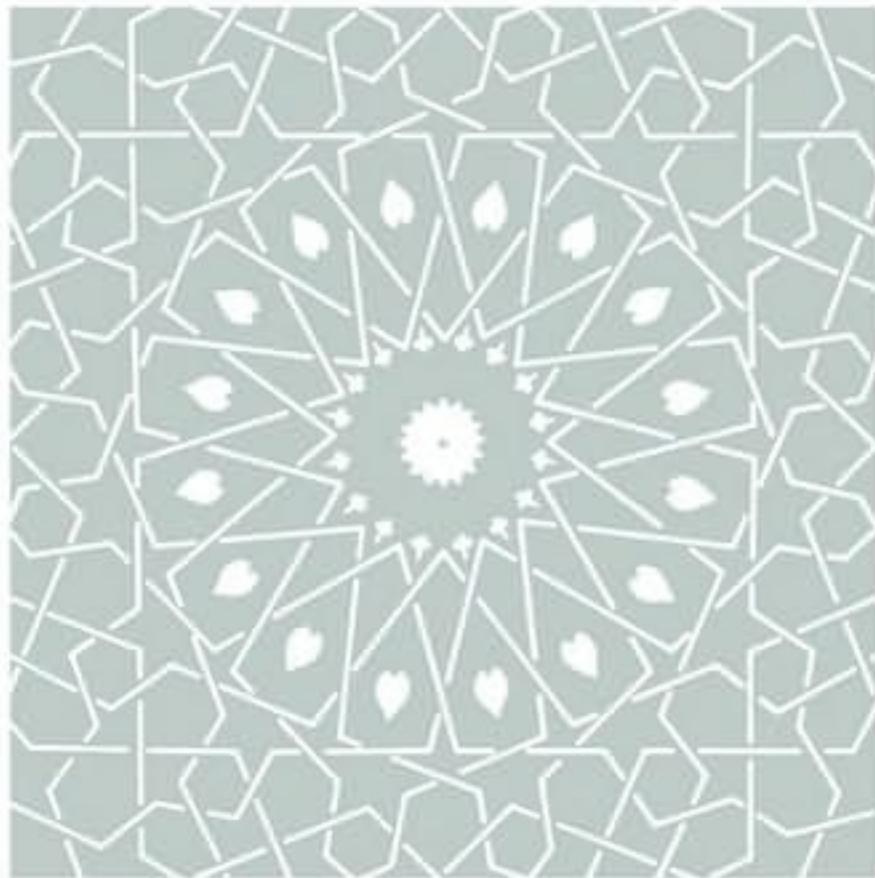
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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The standard English-language history of Arabic literature has long been *The literary history of the Arabs* by Reynold A. Nicholson, Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic in the University of Cambridge, first published as long ago as 1907, but reprinted several times. To this day it remains a sympathetic, and indeed a valuable, introduction to one of the world's great literatures, but much water has flowed under the bridge since it first appeared, and the only general survey in English to appear since then, H. A. R. Gibb's *Arabic literature* (Oxford, 1926, 2nd revised edn 1963), is very condensed and makes no pretence at covering the immense field of Arabic literature in depth. It was the need for a more extensive history, to take in new fields and survey the results of over half a century of research, that prompted the Cambridge University Press to establish, in several volumes, a new history of Arabic literature on a much larger scale.

Since the beginning of the century, an enormous number of previously unknown manuscripts has been brought to light and catalogued, while a vast range of classical, medieval and later texts has been published in editions of varying quality. The two small original volumes of Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (1898–1902) may be compared with the three bulky volumes of its *Supplement* (the last appeared in 1942), and this, in turn, with the six large volumes of Fuat Sezgin's *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* in current production, yet covering only the literature up to 430/1039, in order to comprehend the tremendous developments that have taken place. Moreover, neither work takes account of Arabic literature in Malaysia, Nigeria or Indonesia, and only sparsely does either deal with that in India, East Africa and other places, both medieval and modern.

From its slow renaissance and development in the nineteenth century, modern or contemporary Arabic literature assumed a faster tempo in the inter-war era, and mushroomed in the years after 1946. The traditional *madrasah* religious-centred education has greatly declined, though not in the case of Cairo's al-Azhar University, especially after the reforms

introduced there, which has succeeded in attracting vast numbers of students. The growth of secular education at secondary and university levels, and the more recent emergence of radio broadcasting, have created a whole new reading public in place of the relatively small élite which formerly constituted the "literary public". Contemporary Arabic writing owes much to European models, deriving especially from French and English literature, but it is gradually changing into a literature in its own right, rich in prose, verse (always highly appreciated by Arab speakers), and writing for the stage – the last generally regarded, though not quite accurately, as an entirely new literary form. Journals, magazines and newspapers all abound. In spite of this, however, the Arab world remains deeply committed to its heritage of "classical Arabic" literature. While it was in the West that the first scientifically based editions of major Arabic works were made, Arab scholars have developed the techniques of editing and engage actively in the preparation of classical texts.

Since the time of Nicholson the number of western scholars engaged in studies connected with Arabic literature has also enormously increased; moreover, western scholars are in much closer contact with their counterparts in Arab countries as well as frequently acquainted with those countries themselves in a way not possible in the early part of the century. Today there is an ever-increasing flow of critical studies and translations with which it is all but impossible to keep up – at least in the case of works in book format – though for articles in periodicals we are now fortunate in having Professor J. D. Pearson's *Index islamicus* (1906–55, and appearing annually with quinquennial cumulations). On the subject of translations a word of warning must be voiced. It is vastly more difficult than in the case of European languages, sometimes well nigh impossible, to translate from Arabic classics in a way attractive to a reader unacquainted with the original tongue and civilization associated with it. Both idiom and culture often appear strange and remote. Professional scholars and amateurs have essayed many an effort, in the domains both of prose and of verse, at rendering Arabic into English, but if the results often appear unsatisfactory to the English reader it should certainly not be assumed that the original author is at fault.

The linguistic medium still most commonly employed by Arabic writers is basically the traditional language of the "classical" age, modified by neologisms and by idioms drawn from western languages – yet there is little direct borrowing of foreign vocabulary; indeed, the use of foreign words has actually diminished during the last few decades. The neo-classical form of Arabic is established as the language of literature and the press and is also basically the form used in broadcasting. The colloquial Arabics

spoken in the regions are rejected by the educated for literary purposes, though the tendency to regard them as merely "vulgar" has diminished; but because it is felt in some quarters that they are "provincial" (*iqlīmī*) and tend to encourage political divisiveness they are regarded, for political reasons, with disapproval. Yet there has long been a literature in the "colloquial" of each Arab country and the colloquial vocabulary and phraseology is drawn upon by novelists and playwrights, especially in Egypt but also in other Arab countries, though it is unlikely to supplant the high prestige of the "standard" form of the language. The growth of "popular literature" (*al-adab al-shaʿbī*) in the colloquials over the last twenty years has given them a more respected place than formerly.

The editors feel no apology is required for adopting a broad definition of "literature" to comprehend virtually everything that has been recorded in writing, apart from inscriptions and purely archival material. In contemporary usage it has become customary to restrict the term to verse and fictional or bellettrist prose, excluding scientific, historical, religious and other genres of writing. Such a restriction imposes itself in the case of contemporary writing because of the utterly unmanageable daily flood of print, but in an historical survey such as this it would make no sense.

This volume of the *Cambridge history of Arabic literature* begins with the, initially orally transmitted, verse output of the sixth century A.D., together with a few scanty surviving remnants of prose (if, as is possible, a pre-Islamic prose literature of broader coverage existed in the Yemen, it has virtually disappeared) and it ends with the fall of the Umayyad dynasty in 132/750. As literary movements do not always coincide with political events, there is some overlap in appropriate cases into the era of the succeeding dynasty, the ʿAbbasids.

Within this period fall two major events: the founding of Islam by the Prophet Muḥammad, though it does not make a break in the Arabian tradition, and the great Arab Islamic conquests of territories outside the Peninsula that began immediately after the Prophet's death in 11/632, bringing within the Islamic fold territories stretching from the Atlantic in the west across to Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent in the Far East. The former event brought with it the revelation of the Qurʾān; the second brought the Arabians into direct contact as overlords, with the Byzantine and Sasanian worlds. Both events were to shape the future course of development of the religion of Islam, and that of Arabic literature, which is the vehicle of it.

Muḥammad b. ʿAbdullāh, a member of the noble house of ʿAbd Manāf of the Quraysh tribe, was born in the holy city of Mecca. The ʿAbd Manāf

family was closely associated with the Meccan sanctuary and its temple, the Ka'bah, of which, indeed, one of its branches kept the keys. About the year A.D. 610, Muḥammad, then aged about forty, was inspired to commence his prophetic mission, to reject idolatry and insist on the worship of Allāh alone. In Mecca his strict monotheism won him few influential converts, but on the contrary roused strong opposition. His followers, and eventually he himself, were obliged to seek the protection of the tribes of Yathrib, some 300 miles north of Mecca, a place later to become the "Prophet's Town" (Madīnat al-Nabī or Medina). The Prophet's *hijrah* or migration in A.D. 622 marks the commencement of the Muslim era and its calendar.[1] At Yathrib, later Medina, it took Muḥammad some time to establish himself and his Islamic community in the face of internal opposition from certain factions, but he soon took the initiative against the lords of his native town of Mecca. Despite some early reverses he succeeded in entering Mecca virtually unopposed in the year 8/630, and henceforth was able to extend his control under the banner of the Islamic faith to other regions of the Peninsula.

Muḥammad died in 11/632 and the leadership of the Islamic theocracy passed to his Companions and close associates, the so-called "Orthodox Caliphs" or successors, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī (at one and the same time Muḥammad's cousin *and* son-in-law) (10–40/632–61). Abū Bakr weathered the political crisis at Muḥammad's death, and under him, but, mainly under the next two caliphs, the new theocratic state enlisted the Arab tribes to launch on great territorial conquests which were to turn it into an Islamic empire.

When the third caliph 'Uthmān was murdered by disaffected tribesmen, 'Alī (who was married to the Prophet's daughter Fāṭimah) was elected to the caliphate at Medina. This led to a confrontation between the house of Hāshim, to which the Prophet and 'Alī belonged, and the house of Umayyah (both being branches of 'Abd Manāf) in the person of Mu'āwiyah, the powerful governor of Syria whose father had till late in the day been a staunch opponent of Muḥammad. 'Uthmān also belonged to the Umayyad house in the male line and Mu'āwiyah demanded retaliation for him on the murderers of his kinsman. This 'Alī was powerless to achieve and the two drifted into war, 'Alī meanwhile having left Medina to establish himself the more securely in Iraq. The failure of an attempt at arbitration between the two after the battle of Ṣiffīn left 'Alī's position much weaker, and in 40/661 he was murdered by a group hostile to both parties alike. Mu'āwiyah became caliph and the Umayyad dynasty headed

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[1] It should be noted that the Muslim calendar is lunar and that, therefore, the length of the Muslim year does not correspond to that of the Christian year.

the empire till 132/750, when it was overthrown by another branch of the
house of Hāshim, the 'Abbasids, in consequence of which the capital
province of the empire shifted from Syria to Iraq. However, 'Alī's
descendants never ceased to claim they were the legitimate heirs to the
Prophet and no others. The early dispute gave rise to the first, greatest
and most enduring schism in Islam, known as the "Dissension" (al-Fitnah),
which has affected its politics, religion and, of course, Arabic literature.

A short survey of the economic and social situation in Arabia about the
close of the sixth century A.D. should set the scene of the Prophet's mission,
the conquests and the development of a literature in Arabic which
followed.

The Arabian Peninsula, though much of it is difficult terrain, was none
the less far from isolated from the major civilizations around it. Through
the two Arab buffer states of the north, Ghassān (located in present-day
eastern Syria), and al-Ḥīrah (on the western confines of Mesopotamia), the
Arabians were in touch respectively with Byzantium and the Sasanid
empire. Both these Arab states were largely Christian, and Christianity had
in fact penetrated the pagan communities as far as the extreme south of
the Peninsula. Jewish colonies flourished in the west and south. The rulers
of al-Ḥīrah were noted as patrons of the Arabian poets, and no doubt their
courts were centres of diffusion of Aramaean and Sasanian culture.

Under a system guaranteeing security which had been established by
Quraysh of Mecca, caravans were able to ply between the Yemen and
Ḥaḍramawt through the Hijaz, past Byzantine frontier posts in present-day
Jordan to the terminus at Gaza in southern Palestine; another route ran
from east to west linking Iraq with the Hijaz, and thence to the western
bank of the Red Sea and Ethiopia. The India–Mediterranean trade had
been established for centuries via the Gulf and Red Sea: there was indeed
a seasonal movement of merchants from south of present-day Jordan,
Greek traders being included among them, to the Gulf and around Arabia
to the Red Sea and the Hijaz. Egypt was also in relatively close contact
with the Hijaz. So communication within and without the Arabian
Peninsula – if slow – was regular, and both Byzantines and Sasanians were
keenly interested in maintaining their spheres of influence there.

The high level of achievement native to western Arabia is already known
to us from the splendid dam at Mārib, and from many a site in the Yemen.
The influence of Greece and Rome is to be seen not only in the rock
architecture of Petra and Madā'in Ṣāliḥ but also in Yemeni stone carving,
coinage and bronzes, and even in the mural paintings recently brought to
light at al-Fāw in Saudi Arabia. Al-Fāw has also yielded objects and
utensils of an astonishingly high level of culture. Christian Najrān was in

contact with Byzantium, as pagan Arab notables also are known to have been. Sixth-century Arabia was not a country of rude barbarians.

The population of the Peninsula considered as a whole, with its sedentary or sedenterized communities on its northern fringes, in the heavily populated Yemen mountains, Oman, the Najd plains, and oases such as Yathrib (later Medina), far outnumbered the nomadic groups. It was the noble arms-bearing tribes and their chiefs, secular or religious, who formed the class politically and socially dominant in the settled agricultural areas containing the bulk of the inhabitants. The arms-bearing tribes may have been sedentary, sometimes even farmers, or nomadic, or have had both settled and nomadic sections. However, were they sedentary or nomadic, the noble arms-bearing tribes shared a common social code with its concepts of high chivalry; they formed, and indeed continue to form, the upper stratum in the social system, second today only to certain categories of men of religion. After the great conquests beyond the confines of Arabia it would not seem strange to these sedentary tribes to take up residence in the new territories. During the Umayyad period the tribal structure of society seems to have continued to flourish relatively unchanged; but, after the 'Abbasid take-over, although the Arab society in its tribal form did not disappear, it progressively lost its dominant position and importance. Assimilation of Arabians with the local inhabitants took place particularly in the urban centres, although well on into the 'Abbasid period the Nabaṭ or Aramaeans were despised by society. The nomadic tribal groups, when they no longer played a role as warriors of Islam, sank into insignificance and their contribution to literature was nil.

From the period of the rise and expansion of Islam, through the Umayyad age, the noble tribes of Arabian society, sedentary or nomadic, who formed the ruling class, extended the principle of "clientship" which they followed in the Peninsula and applied it to the situation created by the entry of large numbers of non-Arabs into the Islamic faith. From ancient times it had been the practice of tribal society for a strong, and therefore noble and honourable, tribe to consent to undertake the protection of a weaker group, the latter contracting an alliance with the more powerful group which bound it to support it.

In itself the contracting of such an alliance brought with it a certain lowering of status. There were, however, clients belonging to groups engaged in occupations regarded as socially demeaning by the noble tribes and whose position was lower in the social scale than the status of subordinated allies. In the situation obtaining during the early conquests non-Arab Muslims were integrated into the structure of the society dominated by the noble tribes by being given the status of clients (*mawālī*) under tribal protection.

Towards the end of the Umayyad régime, non-Arab Muslims grew openly resentful of the Arab hegemony. This was to give rise to the Shuʻūbiyyah movement, largely Iranian in composition, though with elements among circles in Syria and the Yemen. These aimed at reasserting national cultures and political influence against Arab tribal dominance.

This, then, is a brief sketch of the background to the rise of Arabic literature in its first stages. For genealogical trees showing the relationships of Muḥammad and the descent of the Umayyad caliphs, see tables I and II (from *The Cambridge history of Islam*, vol. I).

Table I. *The Umayyads, ʻAlids and ʻAbbasids*

```
                        ʻAbd Manāf
                            |
        ┌───────────────────┴───────────────────┐
     Hāshim                                 ʻAbd Shams
        |                                        |
  ʻAbd al-Muṭṭalib                           Umayyah
        |                                        |
  ┌─────┴──────────┬──────────────┐           Umayyads
ʻAbdullāh      Abū Ṭālib      al-ʻAbbās
   |               |              |
Muḥammad           |              |
   |               |              ↓
Fāṭimah    =      ʻAlī        ʻAbbasids
        |
      ʻAlids
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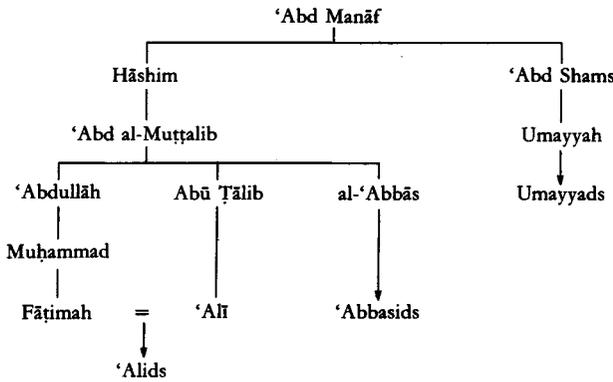
Table II. *The Umayyad caliphs*

```
                              Umayyah
                                 |
        ┌────────────────────────┴────────────────────────┐
     Abū ʼl-ʻĀṣ                                          Ḥarb
        |                                                  |
     al-Ḥakam                                          Abū Sufyān
        |                                                  |
    4. Marwān I                                      1. Muʻāwiyah I
        |                                            2. Yazīd I
  ┌─────────────┬─────────────────┬──────────────┐      |
Muḥammad   5. ʻAbd al-Malik   ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz   3. Muʻāwiyah II
   |            |                  |
14. Marwān II   |              8. ʻUmar II
   |            |                  |
┌──────────┬────┴────┐      ┌──────┴──────┐
6. al-Walīd I   7. Sulaymān   9. Yazīd II   10. Hishām
   |                             |              |
┌──────────┬──────────┐    11. al-Walīd II   Muʻāwiyah
11. Yazīd III   13. Ibrāhīm                     |
                                          Umayyads of Spain
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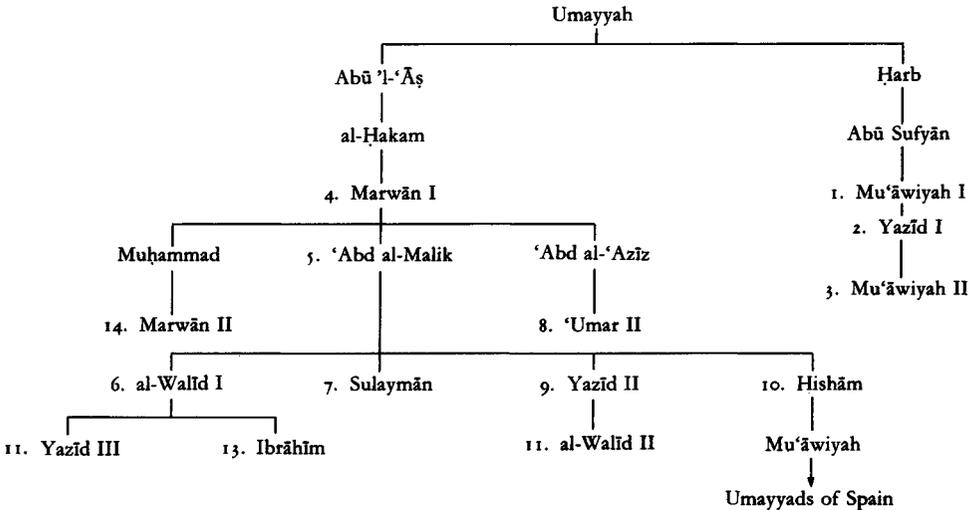
It remains for the editors to express their appreciation and thanks to all those who have partaken in the labour of planning the *Cambridge history of Arabic literature* and producing this, the first volume to be published.

Such a history was initially conceived by Professors A. J. Arberry and R. B. Serjeant, together with the Press, before Professor Arberry's illness and subsequent death in 1969. A new editorial board was formed of Professors A. F. L. Beeston of Oxford, T. M. Johnstone of London and Professor R. B. Serjeant, with Dr G. Rex Smith as Editorial Secretary. Dr Smith later became Executive Editor for this volume of the *History*, and the other editors are indebted to him for his energetic handling of the manifold editorial tasks, which has brought the present volume to the stage of production. The editors gratefully acknowledge the advice of members of the Advisory Editorial Board which was established to guide policy and assist in the planning of the *History*.

The contributors are owed the major thanks. Some have waited long to see their contributions in print; and they have co-operated in the modification, adaptation and editing of their chapters. It is regretted that illness and the other duties of the volume editors have caused some delay in completing the editing of the volume for the Press. Inclusion of contributions in the *History* does not, of course, imply that the Editors, the Advisory Board or the Press necessarily concur with views and opinions expressed by authors, who must be considered primarily responsible for the content of their own chapters.

The editors wish to thank Cambridge University Press for its forbearance and helpfulness in the preparation of the *History*. Several officers of the Press in turn have dealt with the project but the editors are particularly grateful to Dr Robin Derricourt who has seen the volume through to its final stage of production, and Dr Rosemary Morris who sub-edited the final typescript. The editors are indebted to Mr William Brice for his careful work and co-operation in drafting the maps which accompany the text, and Mrs H. Pearson for preparing the index. They wish to thank Mr Wilfrid Lockwood for services at the Cambridge University Library; the staff of the Middle East Centre in Cambridge who carried out much of the earlier secretarial arrangements and correspondence, especially Miss Parvine Jahanpour (Mrs Faroughy) and to thank Mrs Cerries Smith for her considerable and highly competent secretarial and administrative aid.

The death of Professor T. M. Johnstone, while this volume was in proof, was a sad loss to the editorial board and all associated with the *History*.
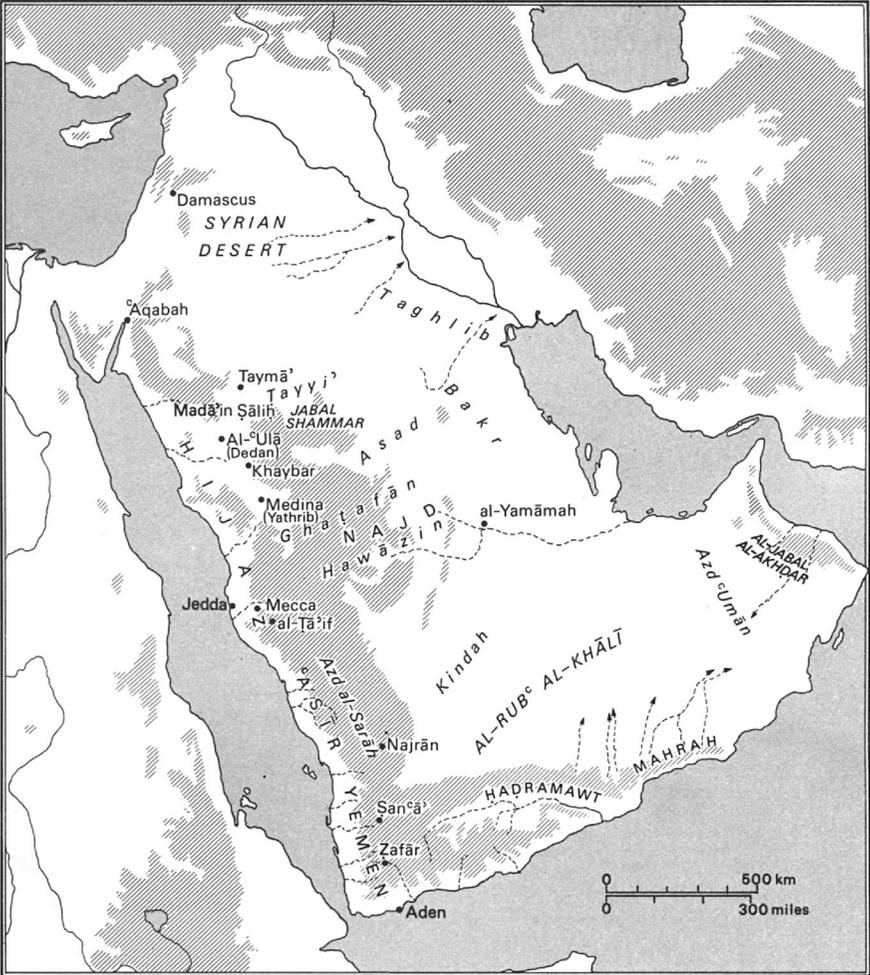
1. The tribes of pre-Islamic Arabia
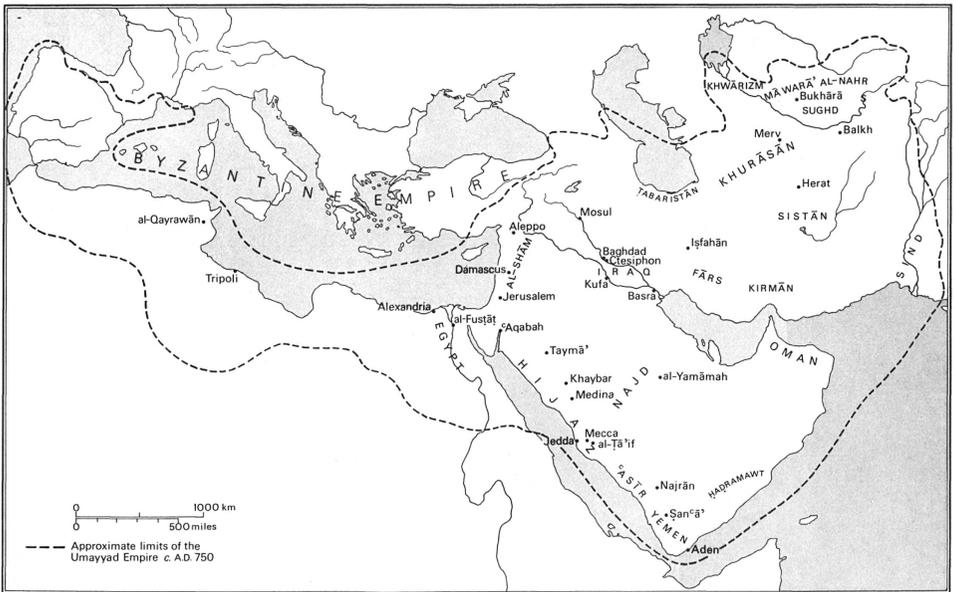
2. The Umayyad Empire, *c.* A.D. 750

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TOPICS

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE

In the first half of the first millennium A.D., the landmass bounded by the
fringes of the Anatolian highlands, the eastern Mediterranean seaboard,
the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula, and the western escarpment of the
Iranian plateau, was the home of a family of languages now commonly
termed Semitic. Intruding into the area were Greek-speaking populations
within the boundaries of the Roman–Byzantine empire, and Middle
Persian within those of the Sasanian empire; outside it, the Aksumite
kingdom of Ethiopia also used a Semitic language. While the various
members of this language-family are differentiated from each other in detail
as sharply as are European languages such as French and Spanish, they
exhibit general similarities which set them off, as a group, from languages
such as Persian, which belongs to the Indo-European language-family.

By the early centuries A.D., two of the most important members of
the Semitic language-family had virtually disappeared from the scene:
Akkadian, the ancient language of Mesopotamia, was extinct; and
Hebrew remained only as a learned and liturgical language no longer in
everyday use. But two other important languages still dominated the area
culturally. In the north, there was a cluster of Aramaic dialects, two of
which have special significance, namely Syriac (used by the Christian
populations of Syria and Mesopotamia) and Nabataean (used by pagan
populations centred on the great caravan city of Petra). In the south,
present-day Yemen was the home of an antique culture, of which the
dominant representative was the kingdom of Saba (Sheba). The Sabaic
language of pre-Christian times shows sufficient distinctive characteristics
to warrant us in treating it as an independent language within the Semitic
family. But in Christian times it shows an increasing degree of
approximation in vocabulary to the language which was later to be called
Arabic, while apparently retaining its distinctive morphology and syntax.

There must also have been present even then a group of languages
constituting the forerunners of what is now called Modern South Arabian,
spoken in the middle of the south coast of the Arabian Peninsula, to the

east of Yemen. Since these languages have never been the bearers of a literate culture, ancient testimony to their character is lacking. They do show, nevertheless, differences from Arabic, in phonology, morphology and syntax, comparable with the differences between Sabaic and Arabic; and although they have many words which are cognate with, or direct borrowings from, Arabic, large areas of their vocabulary are distinctive.

Between the northern and southern areas of civilization, the central and northern parts of the Arabian Peninsula are largely desert, populated mainly by nomads or semi-nomads, with occasional oases culturally similar to the nomadic areas. Here, there was a medley of dialects, closely related to each other, and it was from these that Arabic as we know it eventually sprang. Yet there are a number of factors severely inhibiting our attempts at assessing the overall linguistic picture.

Firstly, among the languages which have been mentioned above as dominant in the first half of the first millennium A.D., only Syriac and the Jewish variety of Aramaic have a "literature" in the strict sense. The greatest contrast is with the nomad bedouin dialects: our first-hand records of these are practically entirely graffiti – casual scribblings incorporating proper names and a few words conveying the simplest of messages (e.g. of the "A loves B" type). Even in the more civilized ambience of Nabataean and Sabaic, the material is predominantly archival in character: funerary inscriptions, building records, dedications of votive objects and so on. History, in the sense of consciously articulated and connected records (such as we have in the Assyrian annals and in the historical books of the Old Testament) is lacking, though there are occasional allusions to historical events, phrased in the baldest of language. The only exception to this is a handful of Sabaic inscriptions in which military operations are described with a certain vividness of detail showing some approach to literary skill. But of poetry, mythology and other connected writing we have nothing. It can be taken as certain that these peoples had a literature of that kind, but that it was transmitted solely by oral means.

Secondly, the Semitic scripts in which the inscriptions are drafted tend to record only consonants, with no (or only the most rudimentary) notation for vowels. Not only does this impose great limitations on linguistic analysis, it also makes even the understanding of the semantic content of the inscriptions often extremely speculative.

The script of the Nabataean inscriptions is a variety of Aramaic script; that of the South Arabian inscriptions, on the other hand, is an entirely distinctive alphabet having affinities with Ethiopic script (as nowadays used for the national language of Ethiopia, Amharic). In pre-Islamic times, the central Arabian nomads used an alphabet of the South Arabian type,

and not of the northern type. In this connection, there is one terminological pitfall which deserves mention. Until not so long ago, it used to be thought that the nomadic bedouin were entirely analphabetic. Only around the beginning of the present century were two clusters of inscriptions discovered, disproving this. One is a highly homogeneous cluster around the volcanic region of the Syrian desert called the Ṣafā, and these have on geographical grounds been denominated Safaitic. The other is in the northern Hijaz, in an area traditionally the home of the ancient tribe of Thamūd (in the classical authors Thamudeni); these have been designated Thamudic. Later discoveries have shown that similar inscriptions were widely distributed over the Peninsula; these reveal more than one dialect, and some variety of cultural background. Yet they have continued to be called Thamudic, though this must now be considered to be, strictly speaking, a misnomer, for it is clear that they cannot all emanate from the one tribe of Thamūd. The scripts they use are simply characteristic of the populations of central Arabia (nomad, semi-nomad and oasis dwellers), and have been encountered even within the South Arabian area, probably due to the presence of an admixture of bedouin among the sedentaries who were the bearers of the typical South Arabian civilization (a similar mingling of population elements is observable in that area down to the present day).

The Safaitic and the so-called Thamudic inscriptions are clearly not "Arabic", any more than Anglo-Saxon could be called English; for one thing, their definite article is *ha(n)-*. Yet we do have a tiny group of inscriptions which show a decidedly Arabic character, including the use of the typical Arabic definite article *al-*. Four of these are datable to the sixth century A.D., but before that time there is only one which can be securely dated: this is the funerary inscription of an individual who is styled "king of all the Arabs" (Arabs in the early period meant exclusively bedouin), found at Nemara in the Syrian desert and dated A.D. 328. At least one text of a similar linguistic character, from al-Fāw near Sulayyil in southern Najd, is perhaps datable slightly earlier than that, and is in South Arabian script. But the Nemara inscription, and the sixth-century ones, are not in any type of southern alphabet, but in a script of Nabataean (i.e. North Semitic) type. These thus foreshadow the shift whereby Arabic script (itself evolved from one of the Nabataean–Nemara type) was ultimately to sweep the use of the southern alphabet right out of the Peninsula and leave it confined to the Horn of Africa.

All this, meagre as it is, sums up our written evidence prior to the Islamic revelation. Although the Qur'ān itself was committed to writing during the Prophet's lifetime, and although from then on we have a thin trickle

of non-inscriptional documents on papyrus or paper (letters, contracts and so on), the main tradition still remained for a century and a half firmly oral in character. Early poetry (attributed to the beginning of the sixth century A.D.), the prose accounts of pre-Islamic tribal history, even the accounts of the Prophet's own life and sayings – everything of this nature was transmitted orally, with all that this implies in possibilities of verbal variation, and did not receive the permanent stabilization of being recorded in writing as a regular thing until the eighth century; a few scanty remains of "literary" papyri are perhaps attributable to the end of the seventh, but hardly earlier than that.

This change of attitude towards the use of writing for purposes other than those of day-to-day needs (like letters and contracts) can be associated with the 'Abbasid political revolution of A.D. 750, which transferred power from Arab leaders, governing their actions by bedouin traditions, to a new urbanized élite in which non-Arabs, inheritors of the cultural traditions of Byzantium and of Sasanian Persia, played a vital role.

From this shift flowed three consequences of the utmost importance. Firstly, it is only from this time that Arabic can be said properly to possess a *written* literature apart from the Qur'ān. Secondly, the language itself, as used in the mouths of a population which, though Arabic-speaking, was to a considerable extent non-Arab by race, underwent significant changes. Thirdly – and in consequence of those changes – scholars viewed it as their task not only to record in permanent form the oral tradition as they had received it, but also to analyse and codify the language of that tradition; and this gave rise to the science of Arabic grammar (in the widest sense).

At its inception, Arabic grammar was not normative and prescriptive, but purely descriptive. Hence, fortunately, the grammarians have preserved for us a mass of data which demonstrate that the earliest Arabic was not a standardized and unified language, but had many dialectal variations. To the modern European mind, it is a strange phenomenon that the Qur'ān itself, though regarded by Muslims as the authentic Word of God in the most literal sense, was read in a variety of ways involving not merely dialectal pronunciations but also morphological and even occasionally vocabulary variation. As time went on, there was a strong tendency towards reducing this linguistic disparity, first by restricting the accepted modes of reading to seven "canonical" varieties and rejecting others as "non-canonical", and finally by evolving a single *textus receptus* which is today standard.

The Qur'ān, however, is a book of relatively small bulk, and there are large areas of speech which simply do not happen to occur there, yet are of importance, as they constitute the linguistic matrix within which the

Quranic text operates and has to be understood. To gain such an understanding, the grammarians turned to the orally inherited traditions of the ancient poetry, and to the speech of the bedouin with whom they could come into contact. Although their original intentions had been descriptive, the fact that the linguistic corpus they were describing was in the main a closed body of material – the Qur'ān and the early poetry – contained in itself the seeds of a normative and prescriptive attitude, which soon became the order of the day. All data which conflicted with the description evolved on that basis were relegated to the status of sub-standard dialectal varieties.

The strength of this normative attitude has prevented the Arab grammarians from accepting the concept of linguistic evolution and development. The grammatical principles worked out by the eighth-century grammarians are taken to be the only "correct" ones, and form the basis of language teaching in schools throughout the Arabic-speaking world at the present day. This has resulted in certain oddities; for the language at the time when it was thus arrested was in certain respects in a transitional phase, which has become frozen at the point where it had reached in the seventh century. For example, the Quranic language has a well-developed system of case-inflection of nouns; and there is one demonstrative form which was also fully case-inflected in some of the ancient dialects, but which in the Quranic language has lost its case-inflections in the singular and plural (*alladhī, alladhīna*) while retaining them in the dual.

The selection of the poetic corpus as a linguistic criterion is due to the fact that this displays the most "elevated" *niveau de discours* available, and it is clear that in matters of morphology, syntax and lexicon the Qur'ān is in the same elevated diction. But in matters of phonology, the grammarians faced a difficult problem. The total assemblage of dialectal features which they have recorded shows a certain dichotomy between eastern dialects and those of the west, principally the Hijaz. Now the poetic material, in the form in which we have it recorded, is basically eastern in character; for the centre of early Arabic grammatical activity was in Lower Mesopotamia, and the bedouin with whom the grammarians had contact were easterners. Yet the Qur'ān was revealed in the Hijaz, and was first written down in an orthography reflecting western pronunciation. To overcome this difficulty, the grammarians did not attempt to alter the Quranic orthography as it was by then accepted, but instead added reading marks directing an eastern pronunciation. This feature, of a basically Hijazi orthography modified in this fashion, has resulted in oddities of conventional spelling which persist in Arabic to the present day.

The relationship between the elevated style of the Qur'ān and of the

poetic corpus, and the language of everyday life in early times, is still a much disputed question. That the former was understood throughout the Peninsula seems indisputable in broad terms, though particular words might be – and in fact were, as the traditions show – obscure to some of the auditors. But was it at any time or in any place congruous in morphology and syntax with the actual language of everyday life? Medieval Muslims held that it was in fact the language of the Prophet's tribe, Quraysh, and that this in itself was an eclectic synthesis of "all that was best" in the various tribal dialects. Some European scholars (notably K. Vollers) have held on the contrary that it never was a language of everyday use, but a *koine* used solely for the purposes of elevated diction and similar in status in this respect to Homeric Greek. But whatever the truth of this, we have here the first hint of a problem of diglossia that has been persistent throughout the history of Arabic – the dichotomy between elevated discourse and everyday language; for the natural evolution of the latter could not be restrained by the grammarians, whose efforts at standardization affected only literature and elevated discourse generally. Such a differentiation of course exists in every language with a literary tradition, but it is far wider in present-day Arabic than is usual in most other languages, and has caused acute anxiety to writers and educationalists.

The dialects of the sixth and early seventh century A.D. were tribal dialects of the Arabian Peninsula. But it has proved difficult to make any satisfactory correlation between these and the dialectal varieties of spoken Arabic of the more important cultural centres today. The inference commonly accepted is that with the shift from nomadism to urbanization in the mid-eighth century, the early tribal dialects fused into an urban *koine* in the principal centres of urbanization; and that each of these thereafter followed its own linguistic evolution, no doubt influenced to some extent by the former language of the area. One interesting and easily apprehended example of this is found in the Egyptian vernacular. The transformation of a statement including an ordinary pronoun into a question using an interrogative pronoun involves in most Arabic, literary and vernacular alike, a change in word order to bring the interrogative pronoun to the beginning of the sentence ("you think it" → "what do you think?"); but in the Egyptian vernacular there is no change of word order, for the interrogative pronoun retains the place in the sentence which was occupied by the non-interrogative pronoun ("you think what?"). This is a feature which it shares with the Coptic linguistic substratum.

It is probably impossible now to determine the pace of evolution of the spoken language through the centuries. For the fact that, from the later

eighth century on, the previously exclusively oral literary tradition was increasingly transformed into a written one, means that our records tend to reflect an elevated diction (*fuṣḥā*) and not the colloquial one ('*āmmah*). This, however, is perhaps an over-simplification; for between those two there was probably a third variety, namely the conversational usage of the educated classes. It is likely, in my view, that some of the works of the third/ninth-century essayist Jāḥiẓ reflect the latter; and to judge from this, its differences from the highest-style *fuṣḥā* were still relatively minor. But when we move on to the sixth/twelfth century, we find that the memoirs of Usāmah ibn Munqidh, Syrian warrior and man of letters of the crusading period, which evidently reflect the language he actually spoke, are much more sharply differentiated linguistically from the sort of prose being written in the same period by more "literary" authors.

At the same time, one must not underrate the changes which took place in the course of the second/eighth century. The shift from a bedouin to an urbanized environment had an immense effect on the lexicon. On one hand, a huge bedouin vocabulary covering in minute detail the features of desert life became strange and unusual for the urbanized Arabic speakers. On the other hand, an equally large new vocabulary was demanded by the material and intellectual outlook of the city-dwellers. This need was met in part by the adoption of Iranian loanwords, mainly in the field of material culture and many of them consequently discarded when that material culture gave way to a more modern one. In the intellectual field recourse was had to Greek, and these loanwords have largely held their ground. In part, however, the need for a new vocabulary was met by developing the inherent resources of the archaic language and its potentialities for creating new formations out of its own basic materials. This procedure has also to a considerable extent been followed in more modern times in creating a modern vocabulary. The general trend in Arabic, both in the second/eighth-century intellectual revolution and in the modern one, has been similar to that of German, where the native coinage "Sauerstoff" has been preferred to the loanword "oxygen".

Even more striking than the lexical developments was the evolution in the realm of syntax. The archaic language was intellectually unsophisticated, using parataxis extensively and with relatively little resort to hypotaxis. The 'Abbasid writers rapidly evolved a new style using elaborate and involved paragraph structure, with abundant hypotaxis and precise indications of the logical links between the parts of the paragraph. This was achieved not so much by developing new syntactic tools as by giving a greater degree of functional precision to tools which had previously been imprecise and ambivalent.

In morphology, the 'Abbasid elevated style shows virtually no changes from the system elaborated by the grammarians. Certainly, the metrical and rhyming features of 'Abbasid verse show that the archaic morphological system was there retained to the full. But there are indications that outside of verse there was a trend towards discarding the case-inflections. We cannot tell how far this was carried, because Arabic script does not normally note short vowels, which constitute the bulk of the case-ending differentiae. But it is plausible to suppose that there arrived quite early in the 'Abbasid period the situation that still obtains at the present day: the case-endings are not used in ordinary conversation, even at the educated level, but are regarded as indispensable for very formal diction. It must, indeed, be remarked that certain European scholars have held that this was the position even in pre-Islamic times.

The 'Abbasid writers of the second/eighth–sixth/twelfth century, with their expanded and refined vocabulary and the syntactic tools they had evolved for the precise expression of logical relationships, created a literature of the utmost brilliance and subtlety, making this a golden age of Arabic. Thereafter, the literary language ossified. With a few shining exceptions, the literature down to the nineteenth century is linguistically static. Diglossia had set in in full strength, and literary writing was artificial to approximately the same extent as was the use of Latin in mediaeval Western Europe, when the modern European vernaculars such as French, Spanish and Italian had already taken shape.

In the latter half of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, there was a literary revival (*nahḍah*) movement, which was a true "renaissance" in that the prime objective of its proponents was to recapture the freshness and vigour of the golden age writers. Since there was no Arabic printing in the Arabic-speaking world until the early thirteenth/nineteenth century, those writers had become almost unknown, except to a tiny minority of scholars to whom the rare manuscripts were available. Much of the labour of the protagonists of the *nahḍah* was directed to printing and publishing reliable texts of the golden age writers, and compiling dictionaries of "correct" usage.

It is in the last half-century that truly "modern" Arabic has appeared. Here, two trends can be observed, not indeed in isolation from each other, but rather present in a greater or lesser degree in all writing. On one hand, there is a continuation and development of the *nahḍah* principles, aimed at moulding the golden age language to modern uses. The artificiality and sterility of the long period of literary decline have been discarded, but the modes of thought and expression remain firmly Arab in character and within the golden age tradition. The trend is more perceptible in essayists and historians, and generally in writing expressive of abstract thought.

On the other hand, scientific and imaginative writing has been heavily influenced by European models. Calques on the usage of French and English are encountered both in the field of lexicon and in that of tournure. One of the most noticeable things about the modern vocabulary is the extent to which pure Arabic words have had their field of reference either narrowed or expanded in congruence with European semantic fields. In the former case, a word which earlier had a broad and general application has been restricted to some phenomenon specific to modern culture; thus *wāridāt*, which to a golden age reader would have conveyed only the very general concept of "things coming in", is now the specific commercial technicality for "imports", i.e. one highly special kind of "things coming in". In the second case, there has been a tendency, where one sense of an Arabic word is the equivalent of one sense of a European word, to extend the application of the Arabic word to all other senses of the European word. An example of this is *ṭābi'*: in traditional Arabic this meant a "seal-impression", which was also the meaning of English "stamp" until 1839; the invention of the adhesive postage stamp in that year led to the extension of the applicability of "stamp" to that phenomenon also, and the Arabic word has followed suit.

European influence in the field of tournure is more elusive and less easy to define. One simple example can, however, be quoted. Modern English has adopted a practice (which must from the point of view of linguistic logic be rated as deplorable) of replacing a verb by a noun accompanied by a cliché verb virtually meaningless in itself and serving only to verbalize the noun; instead of saying simply that one "agrees", "decides", and so on; the tendency now is to say that one "comes to an agreement", "takes a decision". This regrettably fluffy type of phraseology would have been abhorrent to a golden age writer, but is gradually seeping into modern Arabic.

One can hardly overestimate the influence that the radio has had on the Arabic language. The wide differences between the regional vernaculars make it essential for any broadcast which is aimed at the whole Arabic-speaking world to be in standard language. Consequently all classes have become accustomed to hear and comprehend this, even though many hearers are still incapable of using it themselves. While the spread of education is gradually eroding this incapacity, there is a long way to go, and diglossia will remain a problem for many years to come. English dialects (Yorkshire, Glasgow and so on) retain their distinctive phonology and lexicon, but hardly differ at all from standard English in morphology and syntax. This is not the case with the Arabic vernaculars vis-à-vis the standard language, and the problems are correspondingly more acute.

In a very rough and ready way, one might say that modern literary

Arabic uses the morphology of the Qur'ān and ancient poetry, the syntax of the 'Abbasid golden age, and the lexicon of that age plus very substantial modern additions; it is less differentiated from 'Abbasid language than modern English is from Chaucer's.

There have been experiments in writing in the vernacular, but these have not been greatly successful, and there has always been the fear that they would interfere with the emergence of a literature appealing equally to all parts of the Arab world. Only in drama, which is in any case not designed to be read, has there been some success; but stage drama has itself not been completely accepted within Arab culture and continues to be regarded by many as a foreign import.

THE ARABIC SCRIPT

At the beginning of the first millennium B.C., the Phoenicians were using an alphabetic script comprising twenty-two symbols, all of which were consonants; vowels were not represented and had to be inferred by the reader. A century or two later, some limited attempts appeared, intended to afford the reader a minimal aid in doing so by the use of two or three of the consonantal symbols as indications of vowels. But this was done only sporadically, not fully consistently; and these letters remained ambiguous, since they still had to be read as consonants in some contexts. It was reserved for the Greeks, when they adopted the Phoenician alphabet around 600 B.C., to take the radical step of assigning exclusively vocalic values to some of the Phoenician letters denoting consonantal sounds which did not exist in Greek. Thereby they created an alphabet divided into two groups, one exclusively consonants and one exclusively vowels. This was never imitated in Semitic scripts, and when eventually some notation for vowels was evolved, it was conveyed by other means than the alphabetic symbols.

Side by side with the north-west Semitic alphabet, of which Phoenician is a characteristic example, there had evolved in the more southern parts of the Semitic-speaking areas alphabets of up to twenty-eight or twenty-nine symbols, since these areas had a larger repertory of consonant phonemes than Phoenician. These southern alphabets derive from the same stock as the Phoenician one, and many of the symbols are closely similar in both varieties of alphabet; apart from the extra letters, only a few have markedly distinctive southern forms. The fourth-century A.D. Nemara inscription (p. 3) is in a northern type of script closely similar to Nabataean. But the southern scripts were once widely spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and some of the earliest examples even occur on the fringes of

the northern area. But, as mentioned above (p. 3), the cultural boundary gradually shifted southwards and westwards; and in the time of the Prophet, Mecca itself was using a script of the northern type.

Already several centuries previously, Nabataean, Palmyrene and Syriac had developed a "ligatured" script in which, instead of each letter being written separately, a majority of the letters (but with six exceptions) were joined on to the succeeding letter in the same word. One result of this was that many of the letter forms developed slightly differing shapes according to their position at the beginning, middle or end of the word. In addition, a tendency began to show itself for some letter forms to lose their individuality in such a way that a single letter form can be read with two different sounds – sounds which had earlier been noted by two distinct letter forms. In Syriac, this happened with only two letters, *d* and *r*; and the device was adopted of differentiating these by the addition of a dot above or below the letter. In Nemara, there are a great many more of these ambiguities, but no attempt to resolve them by the use of diacritic dots. In addition, the Nemara inscription has not expanded the north-west Semitic alphabetic repertory by adding any extra letters; hence in several cases one letter has to do duty for two Arabic sounds.

Arabic script shows certain affinities with Syriac on one hand and with Nemara on the other; but its precise genesis is uncertain, since barely two or three pre-Islamic specimens survive. Its ligaturing system resembles both Syriac and Nemara, particularly in that the same six letters resist ligaturing to a following letter in all three scripts. As in Nemara, there is a large number of ambiguous letter forms, and as in Syriac diacritic dots seem occasionally to have been used for differentiating these; yet the use of diacritic dots is to start with exceedingly rare, and has in fact never become absolutely regular practice (as it has in Syriac). Moreover, the letters which in Arabic need diacritics form a list different both from the Syriac and the Nemara lists: e.g. *r* and *χ*, both in Syriac and Nemara, are still differentiated in basic form, but in Arabic need a diacritic dot to distinguish *χ*; on the other hand, *r* and *d* are undifferentiated in Nemara but differentiated in Arabic. In some cases in Arabic the differentiation is not simply by presence or absence of a dot, but between varieties in the number and placing of dots: initial and medial *b*, *t*, *th*, *n*, *y* all have dots differing in number and placing, and in word-end position only *n* and *y* are distinctive without the aid of dots.

The use of diacritic dots eventually allowed the expansion of the Arabic alphabet to a complement of twenty-eight letters, as required by the phonemic system of the language. Yet the use of diacritics has never become universal in practice. In the first two centuries of Islam they were

hardly used at all; in medieval manuscripts they were frequently omitted, and some classes of text still used no diacritics at all – particularly scientific ones, where the reader was presumed to be sufficiently expert in the subject to recognize the words without this aid. In informal documents, such as private letters, of all periods down to the present, sporadic omission of the dots has been common.

Two outstanding features of the diacritic system are worth note. At first, *q* was distinguished from *f* by a dot above the former and a dot below the latter; this system continued in use in Morocco and Algeria down to the beginning of the present century, and is only recently tending to lapse, and to be replaced by a rival system current in the more easterly parts of the Arab world from early medieval times onwards, in which *q* has two dots above and *f* one dot above.

Secondly, there are seven letters which in standard practice are the unmarked members of pairs where the other member has over-dotting; e.g. *r* and *ẓ* as mentioned above. But throughout medieval times there are sporadic instances of the use of a convention of marking the normally unmarked letters; and where this convention is used, one may have to interpret an unmarked letter as the one which in standard usage is marked. Löfgren has given a clear account of the convention, which embraces three varieties: addition of a minuscule replica of the letter itself above or below the letter; or addition of a hook or half-circle above the letter; or dotting below the letter.

A further factor relevant to the diacritic marking is that the marks are often written at some distance above or below the letter itself. Hence it may be difficult to detect which of two adjacent letters the dotting is intended to affect.

Parallel with the problem of the diacritics distinguishing the consonants is that of marking the vowels. Inheriting the traditions of earlier Semitic alphabetic scripts, the earliest Arabic usually employed the letters *w* and *y* ambivalently, both as true consonants and as indicators of the long vowels *ū* and *ī*; but long *ā* was noted (by an originally consonantal letter) only at the end of the word, hardly ever in the middle of the word. This is the manner in which the Qur'ān was first written down, and it is still used in standard copies of the Qur'ān, while for other purposes the letter is now used regularly for *ā* in the middle of the word also (apart from half a dozen of the very commonest words). As for short vowels, these were – and still are – normally omitted altogether in writing. But already a few centuries before Islam, Syriac had evolved two alternative systems for indicating vowels: one was the use of small Greek vowel-letters placed above or below the consonantal symbol; the other was the placing of arrangements of one

or two dots similarly above or below the consonant. So far as Syriac is concerned, the second of these systems does not seriously conflict with the diacritic dotting of *d* and *r*: since these are the only diacritically marked letters, their dot is always present, and the vowel-mark, if any, is placed further away from the base-line.

In the very earliest Qur'ān codices, and in inscriptions, coins and papyri, no marking at all is found for short vowels or for *ā* in the middle of a word. By the early second/eighth century, some Qur'ān codices used coloured dots as indications of vowels, though only to a limited extent, where misreading was particularly likely. But this use of multicoloured inks was obviously inconvenient for more general purposes; so too would have been black dots of the Syriac type, since dotting was coming into use for diacritic differentiation between consonants, far more of which need such differentiation in Arabic than in Syriac. The system which ultimately prevailed towards the end of the second/eighth century may have been inspired by the Syriac system, but replaced the Syriac dots by small obliquely placed lines. This system as finally evolved permitted a complete phonemic representation of the word; yet it was virtually never used in its full scope except in copies of the Qur'ān, and to some limited extent in writing down verse. Normal usage was, and is still today, either to use no short vowel marking at all (as is the case in most modern printing), or to use it extremely sparingly and only at points of maximum ambiguity.

Yet another problem confronting anyone dealing with Arabic literature is the lack of an adequate punctuation system. Medieval Arabic scholarship concentrated more on the spoken than the written word, and the scholar normally became acquainted with a text by hearing it read aloud by a teacher, and did not have to rely solely on the written text for his understanding of how a passage was to be phrased. Medieval manuscripts in consequence usually have no punctuation at all, unless occasionally a paragraph break is marked; the written text thus does not show where a fresh sentence begins, nor how the sentence is structured. Punctuation modelled on European practice is now common in printing, but is used in such an unsystematic way that it can sometimes be positively misleading.

The implications of all this for literature will be sufficiently apparent. On top of all the usual possibilities of textual corruption, a careless copyist may misread the dots of his original; he may, if his original uses one of the older conventions described above, forget to make the transposition into his own conventions; if his original has simply omitted a diacritic, he may supply it on his own initiative, and possibly wrongly. Equally, the copy which has actually survived for us may lack reading marks, so that it is even uncertain what the copyist himself intended to write. Hence the

editing of manuscripts is exposed at times to wild uncertainties about the
correct reading of a text. And one is obliged to say that even in modern
printing, misprints are not altogether uncommon in all but the most
carefully produced work.

The earliest writing materials were papyrus, skins, potsherds (ostraka) –
even occasionally the shoulderblades of animals. These surfaces are not
very favourable to the development of a calligraphic style, and early
examples give an impression of roughness and irregularity. Vellum was
extremely expensive and used only for copying the Qur'ān; but its surface
did permit the evolution of a calligraphic style, commonly referred to as
"Kufic", though it is now believed not to have any special connection
with Kufa, but more probably to have originated in Medina. It is a solid
and fine, though rather stiff, style; its use persisted in Qur'ān codices for
several centuries, thereafter (and until the present day) being relegated to
the status of a script used for ornamental and monumental purposes only.

The introduction of paper into the Arab world in 133/751 opened the
way for a radical new development. By making possible book-production
on a large scale, it led in the course of the following century to the
development of a standardized "scribal" hand, commonly called *naskh*
("copy-hand"). Compared with Kufic, this is pre-eminently characterized
by elegantly flowing curves. Two famous calligraphers, Ibn Muqlah
(272–328/885–940) and Ibn al-Bawwāb (d. 413/1022), are credited with
having brought this style to perfection, in particular by imposing strict
mathematical canons on the proportions of the letters. Although only
professional calligraphers are capable of producing this hand in its finest
form, good medieval manuscripts use a style based on it which has its own
elegance and attractiveness. Modern printing typefaces owe their ultimate
inspiration to this medieval book hand, though few of them retain its
aesthetic attraction.

Two other developments stem from the *naskh* hand. Around the be-
ginning of the eighth/fourteenth century, its tendency to flowing curves
was carried even further by the style called *shikastah*; this, however, never
gained popularity outside Iran and India. In the Arabic-speaking lands,
informal writing developed gradually along lines which produced the
modern *ruq'ah* script, nowadays the normal handwriting style.

There is an intimate association between Arabic script and the intricate
arabesque decoration characteristic of Muslim architecture, though it
would hardly be possible to say that either one influenced the other to the
exclusion of the reverse process – the influences operated in both
directions. Elaborate intertwining of letters (somewhat in the manner of

European "monograms"), and a certain *horror vacui* which tends to fill blank spaces in the design with dots and dashes having no significance other than decorative – all this makes this kind of material exceptionally difficult to read. However, it is used for architectural decoration, monumental inscriptions, and for decorative headings in books.

ARABIC METRICS

The corpus of pre-Islamic and early Islamic verse exhibits very well-marked metrical structures, which were analysed and codified by the second/eighth-century grammarian Khalīl b. Aḥmad. As with other grammatical work of that period,[1] what had been originally designed as a descriptive analytical account rapidly became a prescriptive norm. This shows up in two interesting ways. Khalīl classified the verse with which he was dealing under the headings of thirteen different metres, but there are one or two extant fragments of pre-Islamic verse which are in none of his metres. On the other hand, the system which he devised for describing his metres is one which contains some gaps in its symmetry, where it so happened that no early verse exhibited those particular metrical structures. Later ages, adopting his *system* rather than his descriptive account as the norm, filled in those gaps by the creation of three new metres, constructed on the principle of symmetrically completing his system. Ever since then, all formal Arabic verse (with a few exceptions to be noted later) has been written in the metrical forms of the Khalilian system. Even today, in spite of many new experiments by the avant-garde, there is still a very considerable output of verse conforming to the metrical canons of that system.

There are two features of "classical" and standard Arabic phonology (as opposed to that of the vernaculars) which are fundamental to the system. Firstly, clusters of more than two consonants with no intervening vowel are not tolerated. Secondly – a feature which Arabic shares with the strict "Bühnendeutsch" pronunciation of German – no word begins with a vowel in such a way as to permit running on the final consonant of the previous word and a vowel beginning the next word as English speakers do; one must separate the two by a perceptible "vowel-onset", and this phonological feature ranks in Arabic as a consonant. Add to this the convention of treating the morpheme of vowel-length as a consonant, and the result is that there are only two possible types of syllable in formal Arabic: one constituted by a consonant with following short vowel, one constituted by consonant + short vowel + consonant. The contrast

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[1] See above, "Evolution of the Arabic language".

between these two types of syllable is fundamental for all Arabic verse rhythms.

The most distinctive unit in Arabic verse is the *bayt*, usually rendered by European scholars as "line", although it has an average length of some twenty syllables, and is thus considerably longer than the "line" of English verse. The *essential* rhythmical structure of the first *bayt* of any piece of verse is repeated unvaryingly in every subsequent *bayt* of the piece, however long. The *bayt* itself, however, is divided into two hemistichs or "half-lines" (*shaṭr*), and the rhythmical pattern of the first of these is repeated in the second, with the proviso that the last two or three syllables of the second half-line usually exhibit some minor modification of the pattern occurring at the end of the first half-line. Such modification is frequently a catalexis, i.e. the omission of one or two syllables. The boundary between the two half-lines is in the more formal and prestige-bearing metres a caesura, that is to say, it coincides with the end of a word as in the French "Alexandrine". To have one word straddling the boundary is characteristic only of the slightly less formal metres.

The essential rhythmical structures[2] depend on dissyllabic nuclei each consisting of a two-consonant syllable followed by a one-consonant syllable (see above), or vice versa. These nuclei recur unvaryingly in the same position in every *bayt* of the piece. But each of the nuclei is separated from the next by one or more syllables of an unstable character, being either one-consonant or two-consonant syllables. For readers familiar with Latin and Greek metrics, it is worth stressing that the concept of two "short" syllables (in Arabic terms, one-consonant syllables) equalling one "long" (two-consonant) syllable, is encountered in only two metres of the Khalilian system; normally there is simple variation in the nature of *one* syllable (as is the case in the Greek iambic pentameter, where e.g. the first two syllables may be short–long or long–long). Even in those two metres, the optional variation applies only to non-nuclear syllables; in no case is a nuclear syllable other than of the nature demanded by the basic rhythm. Moreover, there is a restriction on the facility of variation in the non-nuclear syllables, imposed by a strong feeling of objection to a sequence of three one-consonant syllables; such a sequence is virtually restricted to one metre, and that one of low prestige-value, employed mostly for light or occasional verse. Elsewhere, if two syllables of unstable value adjoin a one-consonant nuclear syllable, one or other of the non-nuclear syllables can be a one-consonant syllable, but not both. One example of a popular and admired metre is that called the "simple" (*basīṭ*), which is founded on repeated occurrences of the syllabic sequence x x 1 2 x 1 2,

[2] In this paragraph I am heavily indebted to G. Weil, *Grundriss*.

where 1 represents a syllable which is always one-consonantal, 2 a two-consonant syllable, and x a non-nuclear syllable of variable type.

Rhyme is an invariable accompaniment of traditional verse, *shiʿr*. In the majority of ancient verse, a single rhyme occurs unvaryingly at the end of every *bayt*, and in the formal "ode" (*qaṣīdah*) the same rhyme occurs at the end of the first half-verse of the poem. The obligation of sustaining a single rhyme prevents the development of long poems: in the early period no poem exceeds 120 lines, and most are very much shorter. There are, however, some early examples of a different rhyme scheme, in which the end of each line rhymes with the end of the preceding half-line, but not with the other lines of the piece. In ʿAbbasid and post-ʿAbbasid times, this scheme was resorted to for the composition of long pieces of verse.

There is one very interesting piece of verse in the twelfth *Maqāmah* of Ḥarīrī,[3] where in addition to the normal end-of-line monorhyme throughout the piece, there are three internal rhymes within each line at quarter-line intervals, producing the scheme

<div style="text-align:center">

a a a B

c c c B

d d d B etc.

</div>

Here, we are evidently more than half-way towards a strophic form.

However, strophic poetry in the full sense seems to have started in Muslim Spain around the end of the third/ninth century.[4] This has elaborate rhyme schemes, often a refrain, and metrical structures which do not always conform to the Khalilian system. Verse of this kind was, however, always of a light, usually amatory, character; for more formal purposes such as the panegyric, the Khalilian system still held sway.

Side by side with literary verse of the kinds described, there did flourish a tradition of popular verse diverging from both the Khalilian standards of prosody and the literary language. Of this we have very little information, since it was rarely thought worthy of being recorded in writing.

As might be expected, the present age has seen an outburst of experimentation in poetic forms, largely stimulated by European example. There have been "free verse", "prose poems", pieces in Khalilian metres but with lines of irregular length, and (perhaps most interestingly from the point of view of prosodic theory) experiments in combining more than one Khalilian metre in a single poem. It is still too early to judge what success these experiments will in the long run achieve.

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[3] See the article on *Maqāmāt* in a later volume.
[4] See Stern, *Strophic poetry*.

ARABIC NOMENCLATURE

Arabic names are apt to be puzzling to European readers. This is due as much to the intricacy of the nomenclature system itself as to linguistic factors. Among the latter, the most significant is the presence in Arabic of a number of sounds wholly unfamiliar to European ears, and hence impossible to render in Latin script otherwise than by a variety of approximations, or by a purely conventional transliteration. Although a consistent transliteration has been adopted in this work, the reader will encounter in other sources a very great diversity in the Latin-script renderings of Arabic names.

Two particular points arise in connection with the Arabic "definite article" prefixed to many names. This is in Arabic always spelt *al-*, but when it precedes a letter pronounced with the tip of the tongue, the *l* is "assimilated" in pronunciation to the initial letter following: the spelling al-Samarqandī thus conceals the pronunciation as-Samarqandī; and some European works reproduce the sound and not the spelling. Secondly, even within Arabic writing itself there is variation in practice as to the inclusion or omission of this element. Personal names such as al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and al-Qāsim, which in the early period always had the article, may be encountered in medieval and modern writing as Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Qāsim. To obviate the difficulties thereby created for indexing purposes, most indices disregard the article in their ordering of the names.

The nomenclature system itself falls into three periods: first, pre-Islamic and early Islamic down to around A.D. 700; second, the typical Islamic period; third, the modern period.

In the earliest period it was customary to address a person by his or her given name, the *ism*. But in the tribal society of early Arabia, a person's social identity was fixed by his tribal genealogy, *nasab*. If a man was asked who he was, his answer would be "I am A, son of B, son of C, son of D etc.". The term *ibn*, "son of", as occurring in such a *nasab* structure, is in works of European scholarship commonly abbreviated to "b.". The *nasab* chain always ended with the ancestor (real or legendary) of the whole tribe; it might for instance end with "son of Bakr", Bakr being the putative ancestor of one of the most prominent Arabian tribes. In referring to a third person, the essential elements for identification were his own *ism* and his tribal affiliation, though sometimes, for additional clarity, one might add his patronymic, that is, the first member of the *nasab* chain, the *ism* of his father. In this abbreviated form, it was common to replace the tribal designation as " ...son of X" by a derivational form with the ending

-ī (called a *nisbah*): thus a man whose personal *ism* was Zayd, and who belonged to the tribe claiming descent from Bakr, would be referred to as Zayd al-Bakrī, "Zayd the Bakrite", or (with the patronymic) Zayd ibn Asad al-Bakrī. For women, *ibn* is replaced by *bint*, "daughter of", and the tribal designation has the feminine form ending in -*iyyah*.

Alongside this standard form of nomenclature, some well-known individuals had a nickname, *laqab*, and this is normally used in preference to the "real" name: the poet Thābit b. Aws al-Azdī (Thābit son of Aws, the Azdite) is universally referred to by his nickname al-Shanfarā.

There is yet another type of name additional to the *ism*, and this is technically called a *kunyah*, or "allusive" name. This is a compound consisting of Abū "father of" (or Umm "mother of") followed by either an *ism* or a word describing some prominent characteristic of the bearer. One presumes that a *kunyah* embodying an *ism* as its second element originally signified, in fact, that the bearer had a son named by that *ism*. But it rapidly became a pure convention divested of that significance, for it was often bestowed at an early age before the bearer had begotten any sons at all, nor when he did get sons was it obligatory for one of them to be named in accordance with the father's *kunyah*. In formal nomenclature, the *kunyah* precedes the *ism*.

There is one curious anomaly in the system. Except in the Muslim west and in modern times, the name of the tribal ancestor Bakr has never in historical times been used as an *ism*. Yet the *kunyah* form Abū Bakr exists (but cannot imply the possession of a son named Bakr), and it is also anomalously (but very commonly) used as an *ism*: it was in fact the *ism* of the first caliph.

Besides Abū Bakr, the only type of *ism* compounded of two words is the series of which the first member is 'Abd, "servant of", followed either by Allāh or by one of the many epithets of God: 'Abd al-Raḥmān "servant of the Merciful", 'Abd al-Jabbār "servant of the Almighty", and so on; and among Christians one finds 'Abd al-Masīḥ, "servant of the Messiah".

From the second century of Islam onwards, it became impolite to address anybody directly by his or her *ism*, unless speaking to someone markedly socially inferior to the speaker. Equals or superiors were obligatorily addressed by *kunyah*.

Shortly after this, a further accretion to nomenclature came into use. This is the honorific title, also termed *laqab*, a compound in which the second element is most commonly al-Dīn, such as Fakhr al-Dīn "glory of the Faith", 'Alā' al-Dīn "loftiness of the Faith"; though, somewhat less often, the second element was something else, such as Sayf al-Mulk,

"sword of the Realm". To start with, these names were bestowed by the ruler as titles of honour; but it was not long before they became styles to which anyone with any social pretensions laid claim. These styles are conventionally placed before both *kunyah* and *ism*.

In this period there was also a large development of the *nisbah*. Beside the old tribal *nisbahs*, which by their nature were familial, one encounters *nisbahs* derived from the bearer's place of birth or residence (such as al-Qummī, "of Qumm"), or his religious rite (al-Mālikī, "adherent of the Malikite rite"), or his profession. All of these types showed some tendency towards evolving into familial names transmitted from father to son without reference to the bearer's own status; and just as the old tribal *nisbah* al-Bakrī interchanges with the form "son of Bakr", so these new-style *nisbahs* sometimes appear in the latter form, as in the case of Ibn al-Bawwāb – literally "son of the janitor", though we cannot infer from this that a person so named had in fact a father exercising that profession (the case is the same as has occurred in the West with such familial names as Smithson).

A typical medieval name is thus in its fully developed form: Fakhr al-Dīn (*laqab*) Abū 'Abd Allāh (*kunyah*) Muḥammad (*ism*) ibn 'Umar (patronymic) Ibn al-Khaṭīb (familial name based on profession, "descendant of the preacher") al-Rāzī (geographical *nisbah*, "from the town of Rayy"). In common usage, this impossibly cumbrous form is avoided by reducing it to an arbitrarily selected choice of items, which constitute the "conventional" name. The arbitrariness of the choice unfortunately gives rise to frequent uncertainties, and hence to variations in the form under which the person is quoted. Mostly, however, the choice has fallen on one of the terminal *nisbah* or familial items. When further distinctiveness is needed, this is normally achieved by prefixing the *laqab* or the *kunyah*: thus, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Baṣrī al-Bāqillānī is known simply as al-Bāqillānī; 'Imād al-Dīn Abū 'l-Fidā' Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad Ibn al-Athīr is known as Ibn al-Athīr or (since there is more than one well-known person so named) as 'Imād al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr.

It is very rare for an *ism* (or *ism* and patronymic) to be, or to form part of, the conventionally selected name. This certainly seems odd to Europeans, for whom the individual and personal name is an essential part of distinctive nomenclature, and forms such as "Sir Jones" and "Reverend Smith" are socially frowned on; but it may have its origin in the fact mentioned above, that the use of the personal *ism* was impolite. Nevertheless, there are exceptions. The most notable instances are perhaps the legist Mālik b. Anas (referred to thus or simply by his *ism* as Mālik), and the translator Thābit b. Qurrah.

Occasionally too a *kunyah* is selected as the conventional name, in preference to a *nisbah*, as with the legist Abū Ḥanīfah. In medieval times this seems to have been commoner than later, and the philosopher now universally known as Ibn Sīnā (or in its Latin form as Avicenna) was usually referred to in medieval times as "shaykh Abū 'Alī". Medieval Latin translators from Arabic also sometimes used names based on the Arabic author's *kunyah*: the medical writer Abū 'l-Qāsim Khalaf b. al-'Abbās al-Zahrāwī, now mostly referred to as al-Zahrāwī, appears in medieval Latin as Abulcasis.

From early 'Abbasid times it became a standard practice for caliphs to adopt, on their accession to the caliphate, a regnal name with a pietistic implication, always including the word Allāh; however, both Muslim historians and European scholars often omit the common element, "God". Thus caliphs whose official styles were al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh ("he who relies on God"), al-Mustanṣir billāh ("he who seeks victory in God"), al-Dā'ī ilā Allāh ("he who summons to God"), are commonly referred to as al-Mutawakkil, al-Mustanṣir, al-Dā'ī.

The Ayyubid and Mamluk sultans similarly adopted regnal titles of which the first element was al-Malik, "the king" and the second a laudatory epithet, such as al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ, "the good king", al-Malik al-Afḍal, "the very excellent king". Here too, historians usually abbreviate by omitting the common element and write simply of al-Ṣāliḥ, al-Afḍal.

Nisbah forms can be derived from the first element of a *laqab* or the variable element of a regnal title. Such *nisbahs*, based on their patron's *laqab* or title, were commonly used by slaves, freedmen or clients. The *nisbah* al-Sayfī would indicate the bearer as a client of a patron who had the *laqab* Sayf al-Dīn, Sayf al-Mulk or Sayf al-Dawlah; the famous calligrapher Yāqūt al-Musta'ṣimī takes his *nisbah* from the regnal title of the last 'Abbasid caliph al-Musta'ṣim (billāh). *Nisbahs* of this kind are also used outside the sphere of personal names, for example in book titles: *al-Fakhrī* is the title of a book dedicated to a governor of Mosul whose *laqab* was Fakhr al-Dīn.

In modern times, this excessively elaborate system of nomenclature has dropped out of use. The educated classes use names modelled on the European pattern, consisting simply of one or more given names plus surname. Along with this development, the distinctive typology of *ism*, *kunyah* and *laqab* has ceased to be meaningful; all three types function indifferently as given name or surname. The only item to retain its distinctive function is the *nisbah*, which retains its place as a familial

designation and is normally encountered only as a surname. There has
further been a tendency to develop professional pseudonyms which, like
the pre-Islamic nicknames, have become the best-known name; few people
could tell you the "real" names of the poet "Adonis" or the singer "Umm
Kulthūm".

THE ARABIC BOOK

The Arabs before Islam were by no means unacquainted with the art of
reading and writing, even if many individuals did not practise it themselves.
To the south, in the Yemen–Ḥaḍramawt area, and to the north, in the
Nabataean–Palmyrene area, there flourished vigorous epigraphic traditions
(albeit in languages other than Arabic); the Meccan traders certainly must
have made some use of writing in their commercial transactions; the
bedouin had a positive mania for scribbling their names and brief messages
on the rocks of the desert; and even the folk-tale of the "letter of
Mutalammis" has some evidential value in this connection (it is based on
a worldwide folk-tale theme, that of the man who is made the bearer of
a letter giving instructions for his own execution).

All these forms of writing have one thing in common: they are short
autonomous documents, and not "books" in the modern sense. Of the
latter, nevertheless, many Arabs must at least have heard, even if they may
never have seen a specimen. For Jews and Christians were accustomed to
chant their scriptures from a written text, either Torah scroll or Bible
codex. One intriguing passage in the introduction to Origen's *Hexapla*
states that in compiling it he had consulted Bible versions in a number
of languages including "Chaldaean and Arabian"; the former term means
what we now call Syriac, but the significance of the latter is hard to guess.
It would certainly be astonishing to have to envisage written Bible texts
in Arabic translation in the third century A.D.

The Islamic Revelation proclaims itself both as a Qur'ān, "something
to be recited aloud" (just as the Jewish and Christian scriptures were), and
as a *kitāb*. It must, however, be appreciated that in the time of the Prophet
this word still meant only "something in writing", and did not have its
later sense of "book". While the Muslims lost no time in setting down
written records of the individual revelations as and when they occurred,
these records were at first of the same character as the written documents
with which the Arabs were already familiar: short pieces set down
separately on a variety of materials which included some, such as potsherds
and the shoulderbones of sheep, which were physically not susceptible of
being made up into a "book". In medieval and modern Arabic the term
muṣḥaf, "volume" is commonly used to denote par excellence a written copy

of the Qur'ān. But when we encounter in *Ḥadīth* literature statements about an early Muslim reading from a *muṣḥaf*, we must not infer that he had a bound volume in his hands. As with *kitāb*, the word originally meant simply a piece of writing; it is most probably borrowed from South Arabia where, centuries before Islam, the term *ṣḥft* meant a proclamation engraved on stone.

While the compilation of the "verses" (*āyāt*) of the Revelation into *sūrahs* can be plausibly argued to have taken place within the lifetime of the Prophet,[5] it was not until some time after his death that the *sūrahs* were compiled into a systematic arrangement. This activity does imply the concept of the codified revelation as a "book", and the Qur'ān can with justification be called the first Arabic book. Even so, it is doubtful whether there existed at the very first any volumes containing the *whole* of the sacred text. More probably, the copies in circulation were sections, each comprising perhaps a bulk approximately equal to one of the thirty "sections" (*juz'*) into which the Qur'ān is divided for purposes of recitation on a monthly rota.

For nearly a century, these Qur'ān codices remained the only books in Arabic, though we have from the same period a fair quantity of documentary texts, such as letters and business contracts, mostly written on papyrus. But it is very unlikely that any of the surviving literary papyri are so ancient.

The crucial turning-point in the evolution of the Arabic book was the year 133/751, when the Chinese attacked Samarqand and were decisively defeated by the Arab governor. In the ensuing rout several Chinese were taken prisoner who possessed the skill of paper-making. Within a surprisingly short time, this industry spread to the main Islamic centres, and the paper-seller (*warrāq*) became an important figure. The relative cheapness of paper, as compared with papyrus and vellum, and its availability from that time on, was a central factor in the changeover whereby Arab culture switched from being founded exclusively on oral tradition to being a genuinely literary one.

Notwithstanding, the written word never, until the introduction of printing into the Arabic-speaking world in the early nineteenth century, achieved the dominance which it has in European culture. One conspicuous instance of this is that a written document is not in Islamic law the effective instrument of a contract; the effective instrument is an agreement made verbally in the presence of witnesses who will be prepared subsequently to swear to it having been made. The written document is only an aide-memoire of the terms of the agreement and of the names of the

[5] See R. Bell, *Introduction*, 82 ff.

witnesses who will, if a dispute arises, have to swear personally in the presence of a judge to the agreement having been made.

The traditions of Muslim scholarship lay equal emphasis on the spoken word. It was noted as an odd and remarkable thing if a man gained his learning solely from *reading* books. Normally, a young scholar took down the text from a teacher's dictation, then read his copy back to the teacher (*qara'a 'alā* "he read aloud to" hence means "he studied under", and not as a European might suppose "he taught"), so that mistakes could be corrected. When this had been satisfactorily done, the pupil received a licence (*ijāzah*) to transmit the text in the same manner to other pupils. Some medieval manuscripts contain at the end records of these licences, preferably tracing the orally validated transmission back to the original author. It is most probable that this system has had some effect on the style of medieval writing, for ambiguities in the written form of a work are commonly such as would not arise when it is read aloud. This factor is certainly the reason why Arabic has never evolved a full and consistent code of punctuation as an aid to understanding the sentence-structure. Most medieval manuscripts are totally devoid of punctuation devices apart from the paragraph sign. This can present, for the modern reader, considerable difficulties which did not exist for the medieval scholar, whose comprehension was guaranteed by having heard the text read aloud by a licensed teacher, with the aids provided by correct pauses and intonation.

The margins (*ḥāshiyah*, pl. *ḥawāshī*) of the main text (*matn*) in a manuscript often contain textual annotations, either corrections of errors, or records of textual variants in other manuscripts, or occasionally glosses. But systematic commentary (*sharḥ*) was normally drafted as an independent work, the original being incorporated into the comment-text, and the two elements distinguished by various devices, such as introducing at the points where original switches to comment (or vice versa) the words *matn* or *sharḥ*, or the words *qāla* ("he – the author of the original text – said") and *qultu* or *aqūlu* ("I say"), or overlining (the normal Arabic equivalent of our underlining) the original text. Quranic commentary always interweaves text and comment in this way, and here distinctive devices are hardly necessary, since every reader was thoroughly familiar with the Quranic text. In late medieval times there was a considerable output of super-commentaries – comments on commentaries – specially with the works most popular in schools and universities. These were usually consigned to the margins, and when a work is designated as a *ḥāshiyah* or *ḥawāshī*, it implies that it is a super-commentary on a *sharḥ*.

Many nineteenth-century printers imitated these manuscript conventions. In addition, they sometimes use the margins for a work wholly

different from the one occupying the centre of the pages. But this seems
to be a practice borrowed from Persia, for it is exceptionally rare, if attested
at all, in Arabic manuscripts, whereas in Persian manuscripts it is not
uncommon to find, for example, two separate epic poems included in the
same volume, one on the centre of the pages and one on the margins.

On the other hand, the technique of the author's footnote was wholly
unknown until modern times. If an author wishes to make some peripheral
remark or explanation, it is simply incorporated in the mainstream of his
text. This again can be disconcerting to the reader, though it causes no
difficulty for the hearer.

The medieval *warrāq*, like his European counterpart the "stationer",
was much more important in the role of bookseller than in that of seller
of blank paper. He purveyed manuscripts copied by professional scribes,
who worked in parallel with scholars copying works for their own use,
or by commission for a wealthy patron. Before the advent of printing,
Arabic books were never made up by the printer's technique of folding
a large sheet twice or four or six times to make a quarto, octavo or
duodecimo. Whatever its size, the Arabic manuscript is always technically
a folio, that is to say, the sheet of paper used is the size of the open book
and is folded once only down the middle. However, three, four, five or
six sheets were usually placed one on top of another, folded in one
operation, and sewn at the fold. This constitutes the "gathering"
(*kurrāsah*); and the bulk of a book was commonly spoken of in terms of
the number of gatherings, not of leaves.

The practice of "foliation" (numbering the successive leaves of a
volume) is hardly found until some time after the introduction into the
Arab world of the Indian numerical symbols, around the tenth century.[6]
The early style of sequence marking is simply to mark each gathering by
an alphabetic letter, as was the early European printing practice. However,
in manuscripts of Egyptian provenance one sometimes encounters
numbering of the leaves with Coptic numerical symbols, which are
modifications of Greek alphabetic letters.

The gatherings could be assembled into a binding cover, but this was
by no means always done. An impecunious scholar, unable to afford a
complete book, could purchase the gatherings separately as and when his
funds permitted. Binding cases are made of pasteboard (in the strict sense,

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[6] The numerical symbols which we call "Arabic" are not Arabic at all, but the Indian ones. They
reached Europe by way of Spain, and until quite recently the symbols used in the western Islamic
areas were virtually the same as the medieval European ones. But in the eastern parts of the Islamic
world, those symbols have been subjected to subsequent modification of form, which has led
to the perceptible difference between the modern European symbols and those currently used
in modern Arabic.

i.e. sheets of paper pasted together, not the modern manufactured product)
covered with a thin layer of leather. This was often blind-stamped with
designs of great intricacy and beauty.

From the earliest times, manuscripts were sometimes adorned with
simple geometric patterns derived from Coptic and Greek models. But
these rapidly developed into the distinctively Islamic arabesques, stylisti-
cally similar to architectural decoration. This art, at its high-water mark
in the Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods, resulted in the magnificent
illumination which is the great glory of the Islamic book: exquisite and
intricate designs carried out in brilliant colours and lavish gilding. Such
adornment is commonest on the front page of a volume, but sometimes
occurs in panel decoration at chapter-headings. In manuscripts made for
wealthy bibliophiles, the name of the person who commissioned the
manuscript is often incorporated in a medallion in the centre of the front
page. The value of this for dating the manuscript is, however, diminished
by the fact that the full name is not given, only the *laqab*.[7]

The Arabic-speaking world has in general decisively rejected the
illustration of books with miniature painting. There are, it is true, some
exceptions. Certain types of work demand illustration – plant-drawings in
herbals, the conventional constellation images in astronomical works,
talismanic designs in occultist works – and in northern Mesopotamia there
flourished briefly around the twelfth century a school of miniature-painting
based on Byzantine models modified by some oriental influences. And the
objection to illustrated books has given way in the modern period. But
these exceptions apart, manuscripts illustrated with miniatures are
exclusively Persian, Turkish, or Indian.

[7] See above, "Arabic nomenclature".

PRE-ISLAMIC POETRY

Poetry was the greatest mental activity of the Arabs and the summit of their artistic attainments. "It was," said Ibn Sallām[1] in the Jāhiliyyah, "the register of their learning and the final word of their wisdom (*muntahā ḥukmi-him*) which they adopted and which they followed." The poet was like a prophet: often the priest, the soothsayer and the leader of the clan. The South Arabians had an ancient settled civilization, but their kinsmen, the northern Arabs, were nomads and dwellers in oases, dependent on caravan trade routes, pastoral use of an arid expanse of parched semi-desert, and in times of drought and famine raiding other tribes for booty. The nomadic tribes had no architecture but the tent with its three hearth-stones in front of it. Their pictorial art was limited to rock drawings. Their music was the chanting of their verses; the lyre and similar sophisticated stringed instruments were mainly associated with lands outside Arabia, such as Persia, as may be elicited from the poetry of al-A'shā.[2] The flute and the tambourine seem to have been their chief instruments of music. Their wild desert life was controlled by an overwhelming awareness of concepts of renown and prestige. A man acted always to protect his pride, this being the foremost item of personal honour. This individualism was both enhanced and tempered by the interactions of a universally observed inter-tribal code of behaviour, based on concepts of honour (*sharaf*), represented by blood-feud (*thār*), jealousy (*ghayrah*) for their womenfolk, hospitality (*karam*) and succour (*najdah*) of the weak, including women, orphans and combatants outnumbered by their foes. Although many of the ancient Arabs were idol worshippers, yet they had a vague but strong belief in one supreme Deity, and the idols, both tribal and inter-tribal, were regarded not so much as gods, but more as foci of intercession with God, exercised through the guardians of shrines (*sādins*). Guardianship of a shrine was an honour, invested always in a single family, passed from father to direct descendants, and when there were no direct descendants, inherited by the nearest of kin.[3] Throughout Arabia there were families

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[1] Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 22.   [2] Saqqā, *Mukhtār*, II, 294.
[3] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, I, 52–3. Cf. Guillaume, *Life*, 36–7.

connected with shrines thought to be blessed with special supernatural powers which enabled them to communicate with the jinn, a category of spirits, invisible but liable to appear at any moment disguised in any shape, to whom the Arabs attributed marvels. The shrine of the Ka'bah at Mecca was called the House of God, Bayt Allāh, and its guardians, the People of God, Ahl Allāh. The prestige of Quraysh, Lords of the sacred enclave (ḥaram) of Mecca, was very high among the Arabs, because of this and because of their descent from Ismā'īl (Ishmael) son of Ibrāhīm (Abraham). They also consolidated their position among the Arabs by trade and alliances, mainly through marriage. At one time the Hawāzin tribes tried to wrest religious supremacy from Quraysh, but on their failure to do so, their poet 'Awf b. al-Aḥwaṣ said, "Quraysh came with their mighty host, and since the beginning of time they have had a supporter...The blade of Quraysh used to split [even] the rock."[4]

During the four sacred months in the year in which the pilgrimage to Mecca was performed a state of ritual peace was observed. The blood-feuds and tribal raiding were suspended and caravans crossed the Peninsula from east to west and north to south in pursuit of trade. There was also a flourishing sea-faring activity, and goods carried by camel across the sands and by sea from the Persian Gulf or India, or along the coasts of the Red Sea, would be on sale at the inter-tribal market gathering places of Dūmat al-Jandal, Hajr, Mushaqqar, Ḥaḍramawt, Aden, Dabā, Ṣan'ā', 'Ukāẓ and Yathrib.

Inland markets such as 'Ukāẓ and Yathrib had coastal ports associated with them, such as Jedda and Yanbu'. Some ships anchored in these ports and there is reference in ancient verse to sailors, such as the 'Adawliyyah and the fleet of Ibn Yāmin mentioned by the pre-Islamic poet Ṭarafah.[5] Some belonged to non-Arabs, as is shown by the Hudhalī[6] description of heavy clouds resembling Persian or Greek ships (safā'in a'jama) approaching a coast.

Merchants from Ḥaḍramawt figured at the markets of Dhū 'l-Majāz, Majannah and 'Ukāẓ, as indeed their descendants continued to do for many centuries until the present day. At the market gathering not only wares were on display, but also works of the mind. The Arab's poverty with regard to material culture was more than compensated by his vast wealth of eloquence and store of oral tradition.

Great orators and utterers of adages and wise sayings attended pilgrimage days, small or great. Small pilgrimages were performed to local shrines,

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[4] Lyall, al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, I, 716, 717, no. cviii, verses 4, 9.
[5] Mu'allaqah, verses 3-4, in Tibrīzī, Commentary, 30.
[6] Sukkarī, Sharḥ, I, 295, verse 3.

the great organized pilgrimages to Mecca and the shrines of the major idols
such as Wadd and al-Lāt. Aktham b. Ṣayfī of Tamīm was an orator of
renown, to whom such sayings were attributed as "The blemish of wisdom
is partiality. Partiality is awake whilst wisdom sleeps." Quss b. Sā'idah of
Iyād, said by some authorities to have been a Christian, by others a follower
of the religion of Abraham, is credited with a celebrated speech at 'Ukāẓ,
which begins "Whoever dies is gone, whatever will come will come, a
dark night and a sky with constellations" (*Man māt fāt, wa-kull mā āt āt,
layl dāj, wa-samā' dhāt abrāj*), and which was transmitted by the Prophet
Muḥammad who remembered it by heart from his young days.[7] It was
poets, however, who were the kings of the market gatherings, for poetry
was regarded as the summit of Arabic eloquence.

The *qaṣīdah* (the term is rendered here as "ode"), which was the supreme
verse form of Arabic eloquence, consisted of three sections,[8] each leading
into the next following it.[9] It appears to have been conceived of as a musical
composition as well as a logically connected verbal utterance. It was united
from the first line to the last with one terminal rhyming word (*qāfiyah*).
Mostly the listeners knew the background to the subject of which the poet
was to treat. They would listen in expectation of how he would proceed
in unfolding the well-known pattern of the *qaṣīdah*,[10] what variations he
would invent and what difficulties he would overcome. How, for example,
if his amatory prelude (*nasīb*) was charged with emotion, would he then
proceed to a theme of war and valour? How would he achieve the rhyming
word in each line and what sort of internal rhyming words and rhythmic
devices would he use?

The Arab poet was not a narrator. He was a master of brevity, a
magician of rhythm and words. His transmitter (*rāwī*) would act as a
commentator to supply detail and the necessary background. Having
already reached the hearts of his listeners through the effect of his verses,
he left the elucidation of their meaning to be dealt with by his transmitter.
Hence, from ancient times Arabic poetry required its commentators-
cum-transmitters. They attached themselves to the poet as admirers and
as diffusers of his verses, learning them by heart and declaiming them after
his manner or in accordance with his directions. Often a transmitter would
himself be a poet and, in turn, also have someone to transmit his own
verses. Zuhayr stood in this relation to his maternal uncle Bashāmah b.
al-Ghadīr and to the poet Aws b. Ḥajar, and, in his turn, he had Ḥuṭay'ah,
himself to become a poet of renown, as his transmitter.

Poetry was taken seriously to the extent that, in the gathering at the

[7] Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, Cairo, XIV, 42.   [8] See below, p. 43.
[9] See below, pp. 54ff.   [10] See below, p. 43.

market of 'Ukāẓ during the pilgrimage season, an arbiter was set up among
the poets and a tent of red leather was pitched for him for this purpose.
Al-Nābighah al-Dhubyānī was one of the last of these arbiters, and we are
told that on one occasion he decided in favour of the poetess al-Khansā'
against Ḥassān b. Thābit, who later became the poet and eulogist of the
Prophet.

The poetry which won the favour of the arbiters at 'Ukāẓ during the
season of pilgrimage was entrusted to Quraysh for safe-keeping. We are
told, for example, that 'Alqamah b. 'Abadah of Tamīm recited to the men
of Quraysh his *qaṣīdah* in praise of the Ghassānid king al-Ḥārith, and that
they admired it and said to him, "This is the necklace (*simṭ*) of all time."[11]
(The individual verses of a *qaṣīdah* are regarded as pearls and the *qaṣīdah*
as a whole is composed of these pearls strung together.) A year later he
went again to Mecca and recited his ode, the *Mīmiyyah*, i.e. the poem with
the rhyme word ending in *mīm* (the letter "m"), and again they admired
it and said, "These [alluding to his two poems] are the *two* necklaces of
all time." Some highly celebrated poems were hung on the Ka'bah in
honour of their merit and were therefore called *al-Mu'allaqāt*, that is
"suspended."[12] The most celebrated of these were seven, arranged by
some critics in the following order of their composers: Imru' al-Qays
Ṭarafah, Zuhayr, Labīd, 'Amr b. Kulthūm, 'Antarah, al-Ḥārith. Other
critics arrange them differently, but always Imru' al-Qays is given first
place. Some scholars add three other *qaṣīdahs*, by al-Nābighah, al-A'shā and
'Abīd b. al-Abraṣ al-Asadī.[13]

There is some evidence, in the poetry of the period preceding Islam,
of speculative thought (perhaps even echoes of Greek philosophy in the
Arabian Peninsula), as for example in the lines of Imru' al-Qays:

> I see that we are hastening towards a thing unknown, enchanted with food
>   and drink,
> Sparrows, flies, worms [we are] – yet more presumptuous than the boldest
>   wolves.
>   .   .   .   .
> I have wandered the far horizons and am content by way of booty that I
>   have returned.
> To all noble qualities has my purpose aspired, trying to gain my livelihood
>   thereby.[14]

Imru' al-Qays was at heart a hedonist and a sceptic, yet even he sometimes
turns to Allāh, for he says:

> Allāh is the most gracious in granting what I have besought, and dutiful
>   conduct [the best provision] for the saddle-bag.[15]

[11] Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, Leiden, xxi, 173.   [12] Cf. Ibn Rashīq, *'Umdah*, i, 96.
[13] See p. 112.   [14] Saqqā, *Mukhtār*, i, 79ff., verses 1–2, 8–9.   [15] Ibid., 136, verse 14.

Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā was deeply religious, and it is said that on his death-bed he prophesied there would come a messenger from Allāh to the Arabs. Unlike many pre-Islamic poets, Zuhayr opposed war, and in his *Mu'allaqah*, he addressed the factions of his kinsmen, Banū Ghaṭafān, in this manner:

> Ho! carry my message true to the tribesmen together leagued and
> Dhubyān – Have ye sworn all that ye took upon to swear?
>
> It boots not to hide from God aught evil within your breasts: it will not be
> hid – what men would hold back from God, He knows.
>
> . . . .
>
> And War is not aught but what ye know well and have tasted oft: not of
> her are the tales ye tell a doubtful or idle thing.
>
> When ye set her on foot, ye start her with words of little praise; but the
> mind for her grows with her growth, till she bursts into blazing flame,
>
> She will grind you as grist of the mill that falls on the skin beneath;
> year by year shall her womb conceive, and the fruit thereof shall be twins:
>
> Yea, boys she shall bear you, all of ill omen, more evil than Aḥmar of 'Ād:
> then suckling and weaning shall bring their gain.
>
> . . . .
>
> Whatso be the shaping of mind that a man is born withal, though he think
> it lies hid from men, it shall surely one day be known.
>
> (C. J. Lyall)[16]

Ideas of chivalrous behaviour were part of the inter-tribal moral code. The Arabs were great horsemen, as good breeders of horses as they were of camels, and they claimed their pedigree horses were descended from the jinn. To the domain of chivalry belonged ideas of gallantry to women, holding to pledges, avoidance of treachery in combat and refraining from fighting an unarmed opponent. 'Antarah says in his *Mu'allaqah*:

> Daughter of Mālik, why did you not ask the horsemen about what you do
> not know?
>
> Those who were present at the battle will tell you that I throw myself into
> the mêlée, but I take no part at the time of booty.[17]

Ḥātim of Ṭayyi', famous for his hospitality, addresses his wife

> My eyes are careless of the womenfolk of my tribe, who are neighbours;
> In my ears there is a deafness to their talk.
> O Māwiya, wealth comes and goes. What lasts of wealth is to be well
> spoken of and leave a good memory.[18]

According to Ibn Sallām and others, Arabic poetry first appeared as short pieces (singular *qiṭ'ah*) composed of one or two lines or a little more. Then longer poems began to appear, and by the end of the sixth century

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[16] Ibid., 231–4, 29–32, 26–7, 59, translated by Lyall, *Arabian Poetry*, 112–5.
[17] Saqqā, *Mukhtār*, I, 376, verses 48, 51.   [18] Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XVI, 105.

of the Christian era, the *qaṣīdah* was firmly established.[19] Each tribe had
at least one poet to sing its praise and represent it on occasions of
pilgrimage and at seasonal market gatherings. Poets were classified,
according to their merits, into four categories. The major poets were called
"stallions" (*fuḥūl*, singular *faḥl*). A poet of the fourth rank was called a
"poetaster" (*shuwayʿir*, the diminutive of *shāʿir*). It was said in this respect:

> The poets are four:
> One who can outrun all others,
> One who can declaim amidst the heart of a crowd,
> One who deserves to be heard,
> And one who deserves to be struck on the back.

The poetaster was also called *sukayt*, that is, the last horse in a race. The
truly great poet was called the "pedigree stallion" (*khindhīdh*); and the title
of "one who does something extraordinary" (*mufliq*) was often applied to
the second in rank, and sometimes to the first rank.

In addition to *Muʿallaqāt* authors (p. 30 above), top rank among the
Jāhiliyyah poets was accorded to al-Muhalhil, the maternal uncle of
Imruʾ al-Qays, to Abū Duʾād, Tufayl, Aws b. Ḥajar and many others.
There were poets who were considered equal with the *fuḥūl* but accorded
second rank because they did not compose many *qaṣīdahs*, as in the case
of Ṭarafah, who died young, but composed one of the most celebrated
qaṣīdahs, the second *Muʿallaqah*. The poets of the oasis-towns were
generally regarded as inferior, with the exception of those of Medina,
foremost among whom were Qays b. al-Khaṭīm, Abū Qays b. al-Aslat and
Ḥassān b. Thābit. Al-Ḥīrah also produced one great poet, ʿAdī b. Zayd,
who was a Christian.

There was a category of poets called "vagabonds" (*ṣuʿlūk*, plural *ṣaʿālīk*),
who were outlaws, unable to fit into their particular tribal organization
owing, for example, to the obscurity of their origin of birth, as in the case
of al-Shanfarā, who grew up among an enemy clan and turned against them
when he discovered this. These vagabond poets disdained riding horses
in battle and ran on foot faster then any steed! They hid water in ostrich
eggs in the heart of the desert to supply themselves on their ventures and
raided tribal camps in pursuit of personal vendettas. Their poetry tells of
their wild life and they sang defiantly of their high ideals of liberty and
exemplary conduct, as for example in al-Shanfarā's:

> Long do I tarry with hunger till I kill it, and give no heed to it till I forget
> it completely.

> And I would rather lick up the dust of earth than give the disdainful an
> opportunity to think I owe him a favour.

[19] Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 23–4; Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmdah*, 1, 189–112.

Ta'abbata Sharrā and al-Shanfarā were foremost among these outlaw poets, and the former asserted that he met a female ghoul in the wilderness and married her – symbolic of his complete disassociation from other men.

There were tribes renowned for eloquence whose poetry had its own particular characteristics, such as Banū Hudhayl, who lived in the neighbourhood of Mecca and acted as a reservoir of bedouin culture to their kinsmen of Quraysh. Much of the poetry of Hudhayl savours of deep religious feeling of a very ancient character, particularly in their laments.

There were also some women poets of very high standing. Al-Khansā' bint 'Amr b. al-Sharīd of Banū Sulaym was reckoned among the *fuḥūl*. The jinn, who were believed to be the source of inspiration of the poets, were also said to have had poetry of their own. We are told, for example, that they composed a line in lamentation over the death of Ḥarb b. Umayyah. There even existed, in the Jāhiliyyah, folklore verses attributed to animals when these used to speak in the time of al-Fiṭaḥl (that is before the Flood of Noah), like the small lizard which said to the big lizard: "Have they destroyed your house, may you be fatherless, while I run lively around you?"[20]

There was indeed a vast wealth of verses of every kind, which, after the coming of Islam, became the focus of interest and a source of study by exegetes of the Qur'ān.

THE NATURE OF ARABIC VERSE

The concept of "strength" ("jazālah") in the "qaṣīdah"

The ancient Arabs had many forms of oral expression, only one of which was recognized as poetry. *Saj'*, rhyming prose, has often such a rhythmic and rhyming regularity as should qualify it as poetry, were we to compare it with similar kinds of expression in other languages. There is indeed some evidence to show that certain types of *saj'* were regarded as verse among some bedouin tribes, for example the lament for Ta'abbata Sharrā by his mother,[21] "Alas for my son, the son of the night, no weakling he, etc.", and the war chant of the Hudhalī Abū Ḥabīb,[22] "I am Abū Ḥabīb, I am not frightened by the wolf, etc." A similar rhythmical form is still used among the Baggārah of the Sudan, as well as among some of the horse-riding bedouin of Najd. This rhythmical form is based on an attempt to imitate the gallop of the horse.

The *rajaz* metre, a far more regular form of rhythmic expresion than *saj'*, was considered as outside the orbit of verse by the famous grammarian, philologist and lexicographer Khalīl b. Aḥmad, and as an inferior form

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[20] Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, Cairo, II, 548–9. [21] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, II, 846. [22] Ibid., I, 462.

of it, second in rank, by Abū 'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī. This reservation is important, for *rajaz*, like the shanty, was mainly employed as a companion to repetitive work, as may perhaps be indicated by the etymological sense of the word. While digging the defensive Trench (*Khandaq*), the Companions of the Prophet chanted in *rajaz*, and the Prophet himself joined in the digging and singing, repeating the last word of each verse as a sort of chorus, echoing *'amrā* whenever they said *'amrā*, and *zahrā* whenever they said *zahrā*.[23] Abū Hurayrah is reported to have listened to al-'Ajjāj reciting one of his *rajaz* poems, following which he said to him that the Prophet liked this rhythmical form.[24]

The Qur'ān is not verse, but it is rhythmic. The rhythm of some verses resembles the regularity of *saj'*, and both are rhymed, while some verses have a similarity to *rajaz* in its vigour and rapidity. But it was recognized by Quraysh critics to belong to neither one nor the other category.[25] The rhythmic deviation by which it departs from *saj'*, *rajaz* and verse eludes all probing because it is a fundamental tenet of Islam that the Qur'an is by nature miraculous. (Another analogous kind of standard deviation can be discerned with regard to the pattern of the composition of the Quranic *sūrahs* as contrasted with the pattern followed by the *qaṣīdah*.) Ṭāhā Ḥusayn seems to be right in his assertion that Arabic composition should be divided into three categories, prose, verse and Qur'ān, *saj'* forming a part of prose, but the Qur'ān being a category of its own.[26]

Arabic verse is based on regularity of beat according to an intricate system, and rhyme.[27] In addition to this, pre-Islamic verse has a quality called "strength" (*jazālah*); a thing is said to be *jazl* (the adjective of *jazālah*) if it is strong, compact or robust; a log of wood is described as *jazl*; a woman is described as *jazlah* if she has a positive personality. So "strength" in style denotes an element of forthrightness coupled with a purity of diction, not laboured, but forceful and energetic, ranging from terseness and brevity, as in the case of Labīd, to spontaneous flow, as in the poems of Ṭarafah and 'Antarah. Zuhayr preferred to let his poems mature like wine for a whole year before making them public, this being regarded as meticulous craftsmanship on his part. Zuhayr and his imitators were nicknamed *'Abīd al-Shi'r* "the slaves of verse". Nevertheless Zuhayr's labouring, if any, was imperceptible, for his *jazālah* was supreme.

In their attempt to achieve *jazālah*, the Arabs of old adopted a thoroughly bedouin style and manner of versification and poetical style.

[23] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, 671; Guillaume, *Life*, 451.
[24] Ibn al-Athīr, *Nihāyah*, Cairo, 1893–4, II, 67.
[25] *Nihāyah*, III, 238.
[26] Mubārak, *Nathr*, I, 18.
[27] Cf. above cap. I, "Arabic metrics".

This bedouinism was idealistic and nostalgic. The nomads, according to Ibn Khaldūn,[28] are nearer to goodness because of their simple life and because they are nearer to the state of primeval nature, which was considered the source of all good. But nomads are mostly destined to be conquered by settled people who have more means for achieving political and economic power. In the case of the Arabs, it was the town-dwellers who ultimately controlled both the caravans and the places of worship and who became the preservers of the culture of the Arabs and the guardians of their oral tradition. Yet there existed a strong network of relationships between the settled and nomadic Arabs that led in the end to a paradoxical interweaving of their values. There is an interesting treatment of this subject by Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, from which the author concludes that the Arabs were a civilized people in their deserts.[29]

As an illustration of this interweaving of values, the fact may be cited that the people of Mecca sent their children to be suckled and brought up during their early years by bedouin foster-mothers, for it was believed that the desert air was healthy and desert speech pure. Poetry was the symbol and bond of unity between the settled and the nomadic Arab, and what the latter lacked with regard to wealth and political superiority, he gained through poetry with regard to moral issues and cultural ideals. Sincerity was and is associated with this forthrightness, directness and simplicity of the bedouin. An ideally conceived bedouin, imaginary though he be, exists forever in the Arab soul. Ibn Qutaybah's able description of the *qaṣīdah* style[30] should be read against this background, as he says that the Arab poet began his *qaṣīdah* by mentioning the camping places (so as to make this a means for alluding to the loved one) because the nomadic people were camp-dwellers, and then the mention of the loved one would bring the poet nearer the heart of his listener, because of the common bond of love that binds all men, none of whom is without an erotic tie, be it lawful or otherwise. The implication here is that inhibition is removed through the common bond of love and nostalgia, and the poet is thereby enabled to be direct and forthright like the imaginary bedouin, who does not beat about the bush, but is clear of voice and impressively truthful in speech, outspoken and bold in his directness of style. The structure of pre-Islamic society made it possible for such an approach to be effective, for social barriers between the high and low did not in everyday life show themselves in linguistic stratification, and ruggedness and bedouin appearance were common to all. Later, however, with the rise and

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[28] *Muqaddimah*, I, 252.   [29] al-Tawḥīdī, *Imtā'*, I, 81-2.
[30] Ibn Qutaybah, *Shi'r*, Leiden, I, 20. Cf. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Introduction*, 13ff.

expansion of the caliphate, the old Arab tribal solidarity (*'aṣabiyyah*) began to yield place to the notion of kingship and dynasty with their ideas of luxury, obsequiousness and intrigue and their sophisticated contempt for the manners of the desert, which appeared as savage and uncouth. Throughout the Umayyad epoch the spirit of bedouinism was held in esteem and its ideals preserved, but, with the coming of the 'Abbasids, Persian concepts of court hierarchy gained the upper hand, and polished urbanity was preferred to rugged bedouinism with its *jazālah*, which, deprived of its forthrightness and sincerity, acquired an empty artificiality. The very devices employed by the bards of older times (such as weeping at the remains of the camps of the departed inamorata, or passing the night anxiously "herding the stars") when feigned by later poets, appeared ridiculous to the 'Abbasid court poet Abū Nuwās, who, though himself an upholder of bedouin ideas of the *qaṣīdah* in his serious compositions, was also a sarcastic and subtle critic of the effeteness of his contemporaries and himself. A dichotomy of aesthetic evaluation, derived from the inherent contrast of attitudes within the Arab soul, bedevilled the notions and concepts of poetic excellence from the time of Abū Tammām (d. 231/845–6) onwards, and neo-classical *qaṣīdah*s persisted as a remedy and answer to the deterioration of styles and deviation from the standards of *jazālah*. In the Arab world of letters today, the quarrel between partisans of innovation and adherents of traditionalism is only one aspect of this.

METRE AND RHYME

With regard to metre and rhyme, pre-Islamic verse can be divided in two ways. According to metre (*wazn*), it has two sub-classifications, *rajaz* and *qaṣīd* (collective noun from *qaṣīdah*). There are rare varieties which do not, strictly speaking, fall within the scope of the accepted metrical systems, some of which can be ranged with *rajaz*, like the song of Abū Ḥabīb mentioned above,[31] or with *qaṣīd*, like the piece by Sulmī, b. Rabī'ah mentioned in the *Ḥamāsah*,[32] and like some quotations made by Abū 'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī in *Risālat al-ghufrān*.[33] According to rhyme, it has three sub-classifications: ode (*qaṣīdah*), short piece (*qiṭ'ah*), and *musammaṭah*, i.e. a type possessing a variety of rhymes. This latter class may be ignored as its authenticity is disputed, though some specimens of it are attributed to Imru' al-Qays.[34]

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[31] See above, p. 33.
[32] Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, III, 83; Freytag, *Hamasae*, II, 506.
[33] Ma'arrī, *Ghufrān*, 337–8.
[34] Ibid., 318; cf. Ibn Rashīq, *'Umdah*, I, 178–82.

Rajaz verse

The rhythm of this category is based on the foot *mus-taf-'i-lun* (––ᴗ–) repeated thrice in each hemistich. *Mus-taf-'i-lun* is an attempt at musical writing, traditionally made by Khalīl b. Aḥmad, whose main speciality was grammar. According to al-Jāḥiẓ, Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī, the musician of Hārūn al-Rashīd, benefited from this initiative of Khalīl when he in his turn invented a style of writing musical notes. The *rajaz* (*mus-taf-'i-lun*) (––ᴗ–) and shorter variants of it were used in tribal war songs and in children's games and patter, as in the bedouin girls' *rajaz* cited by Abū Tammām:

> O Lord, whoever is my father's foe
> Be his foe – on his heart two arrows throw,
> In his daily bread cause him death, eternal woe.[35]

The development of *rajaz* as an independent poetic form similar to the *qaṣīdah* came under the patronage of the early caliphate, and from pre-Islamic days only short specimens of war songs and folk-lore have been recorded, such as Labīd's challenge to al-Rabī' b. Ziyād al-'Absī who was a frequent visitor of the court of al-Nu'mān, the king of al-Ḥīrah.[36] Rabī' belonged to the tribe of 'Abs, kinsmen but rivals and enemies of the Hawāzin tribe to which Labīd belonged.[37] When he saw that Rabī' occupied a place of eminence very close to al-Nu'mān and was summoned to share his meal with him, Labīd, then a youth barely past his teens, said to the king:

> Go easy, may you refuse what brings malediction on you, do not eat with him.
> His arse is discoloured with patches of "white" leprosy
> And inside it he puts his finger,
> Until its last joint disappears,
> As if seeking something he has stored therein.[38]

Another long example is the *rajaz* of 'Amr b. Sālim of Khuzā'ah[39] urging the Prophet to act against Quraysh, who had broken the terms of the peace treaty concluded with him in the matter of his allies, Khuzā'ah.

The short piece ("qit'ah")

All pre-Islamic *rajaz* belonged to the class of *qit'ah*, the short piece, consisting of seven or ten lines at most. Some short pieces, written in the non-*rajaz* metres, occurring for example, in such celebrated anthologies

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[35] Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, IV, 173.   [36] See below, p. 93.
[37] See below, p. 110.
[38] Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, XIV, 95. Cf. Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ*, 343.
[39] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, 805–6; Guillaume, *Life*, 542–3.

as the *Ḥamāsah*, are in fact selected from longer poems. We do not really possess true examples of short pieces originally composed as such, for selection can always be assumed in these cases. According to Ibn Sallām, the *qiṭʿah* may be regarded as the earliest form of *qaṣīdah* composition, for he says that long *qaṣīdahs* started to be composed only in the time of Hāshim b. ʿAbd Manāf and ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim,[40] about the end of the sixth century A.D. The *qiṭʿah* as a literary entity may be ignored for the purpose of this chapter.

THE ODE (QAṢĪDAH)

The *qaṣīdah* is a collection of verses ranging from ten to over a hundred lines, sometimes more, as in the case of the *Muʿallaqah* of ʿAmr b. Kulthūm, which was augmented by the versifiers of the Banū Taghlib tribe until it came to a thousand verses. The Arabs said in criticism of Banū Taghlib's attachment to this poem:

> Banū Taghlib have been distracted from the pursuit of honourable deeds by a poem composed by ʿAmr b. Kulthūm.
> They have boasted of it since their first ancestor appeared. What a poem! None of them seems to tire of it.

The *Muʿallaqāt*, seven poems in number, or ten with the additional three poems of al-Nābighah, al-Aʿshā and ʿAbīd b. al-Abraṣ, represent the standard type of pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah*, usually ranging from about thirty to a hundred lines but seldom exceeding a hundred. Ṭarafah's poem has one hundred lines as set out in his *Dīwān*[41] (collection of poetical works), and one hundred and five lines in al-Tibrīzī's commentary to the "Ten *qaṣīdahs*".[42] Zuhayr's ode, the shortest of the *Muʿallaqāt*, has sixty lines as set out in his *Dīwān*[43] and fifty-nine according to al-Tibrīzī's version. The rhyming word is a strong limiting factor, against which the poet has to struggle in order to achieve brevity and clarity.

There were four main purposes for which the *qaṣīdah* was wholly or partly composed: panegyric (*madīḥ/madḥ*), lampooning (*hijāʾ*), love (*ghazal*) and lamentation (*rithāʾ*). According to some critics all the other purposes may be considered as stemming from these basic themes; for example, the poems of protest and apology composed by al-Nābighah, and addressed to Nuʿmān b. al-Mundhir, the king of al-Ḥīrah, are in essence *qaṣīdahs* of praise. Self-glory or glorification of the tribe (*fakhr*) is a branch of panegyric. Some critics regarded all poetry as consisting mainly of panegyric and lampooning. Love poetry may thus be classified as belonging

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[40] Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 23–4.
[41] Saqqā, *Mukhtār al-shiʿr*, I, 308–23.
[42] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, 53–66.
[43] *Mukhtār*, I, 227–35.

to the category of panegyric, since it is concerned with the praise of women. Al-'Ajjāj of the Umayyad period went so far as to regard the lampoon as a branch of the panegyric, the latter being constructive and the former destructive, thus implying that a eulogist is abler than a lampoonist, for he who builds can also with ease destroy. Ibn Qutaybah refused to accept this argument, as he regarded both panegyric and lampoon as constructive, each in its own way, for not every builder in a certain style is also a builder in another.[44] Description (*waṣf*) and aphorism or wise sayings (*ḥikmah*) are among the main purposes of the *qaṣīdah*. The former, however, pertains more to the nature of the stylistic approach of the poet, though sometimes it can be intended as an end in itself, as for example in the case of Aws b. Hajar's description of weapons, Ṭufayl al-Ghanawī on horses, 'Abīd b. al-Abraṣ on a thunderstorm and many of al-A'shā's descriptions of wine. *Ḥikmah* is the crystallization of the base elements of reflection on existence inseparable from true poetry, which is the ultimate aim of the poet, though here again, *ḥikmah* can be intended as an end in itself, as in the case of the opening lines of the counsel addressed by Subay'ah bint al-Aḥabb to her son Khālid:[45]

> Dear little son of mine, in Mecca, wrong not great or small;
> Preserve its sacred things, my little son – let not the Deceitful One beguile
> you!

Now if we regard self-glorification (*fakhr*) as a separate entity from panegyric (the latter being in most cases addressed to a patron from whom the poet usually expects reward), the number of the main themes to which a *qaṣīdah* can be wholly or partly devoted comes to seven, love (*ghazal*), description (*waṣf*), praise (*madīḥ/madḥ*) self-glorification (*fakhr*), lampooning (*hijā'*), lamentation (*rithā'*) and aphorism or wise sayings (*ḥikmah*), bearing in mind that all these themes, or some of them, may occur together in the same *qaṣīdah* and we shall attempt to deal with them separately only for the sake of analysis.

The union of a metre and rhyme produced three groups of rhythmic patterns, which may be classed as the "grand", the "medium" and the "inferior".[46] We are told that when Maṭrūd of Khuzā'ah composed his short *rajaz* lament on Nawfal son of 'Abd Manāf, *Yā laylatan hayyajti laylātī*, the savants of Quraysh said to him, "This is good, but a grander pattern would have been better",[47] so he composed his grand lament in *basīṭ* metre

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[44] Cf. Ibn Qutaybah, *Shi'r*, Leiden, 41.
[45] *Sīrah*, 16; Guillaume, *Life*, 9. Some authorities call her Bint al-Ajabb. Cf. Suhaylī, *Rawḍ*, 1, 179.
[46] Cf. Ṭayyib, *Murshid*, 1, 74, 205, 264, 356, 384.
[47] *Sīrah*, 89, Guillaume, *Life*, 60, *Law kāna afḍala mimmā qulta kāna aḥsana. Afḍal* means literally "more of a stallion", *faḥl*, for which term see above, p. 32.

in the same rhyme, *ātī*, which this time received more weight and cadence from the sonorous beat of the *basīṭ*. The medium pattern can sometimes attain grandeur, as in the case of al-Ḥārith's *Muʿallaqah*, the metre of which is not of the grand eight – the three patterns of *ṭawīl*, the two of *basīṭ*, the *wāfir* and the two *kāmil*. Even some of the "inferior" metres can aspire to grandeur, as in one of the poems of al-Aʿshā, in the shorter pattern of the *kāmil*.[48] The medium patterns were not commonly used by the great bards of the Jāhiliyyah, but were popular among the minor poets, particularly in the towns of Medina and al-Ḥīrah. The great al-Aʿshā is the sort of exception that proves the rule, for he was a wandering poet and a mendicant bard who said:[49]

> In quest of wealth I have roamed its horizons,
> Oman, Homs and Jerusalem;
> Visited the Negus in his land,
> The land of the Nabatean, the land of the Persian.

The "inferior" or shorter patterns were for the most part used in songs at weddings and similar occasions, as may be inferred from the text of some of the Traditions (*Ḥadīth*) of the Prophet, for example, the wedding song:

> We have come to you, we have come to you.
> So greet us and we shall greet you,[50]

and the *Ḥadīth* of al-Rubayyiʿ bint Muʿawwidh b. ʿAfrā, in which some of her girls are reported to have sung, boasting, as was, and still is, the traditional Arab way in wedding songs,

> And we have a Prophet who knows what will be tomorrow,

whereupon the Prophet Muḥammad chided them, saying that only God knows what is hidden.[51]

Some of these "inferior" patterns would seem to have been completely forgotten by the time of the prosodist Khalīl, as may be deduced from the rarity of ancient examples to illustrate their various rhythmic forms.

The *qaṣīdah*, whether of the "grand", "medium" or "inferior" patterns of rhythm and metre, must be conceived of by the poet as one unit. His length or shortness of breath determines whether it has many or few lines. Brevity, though respected, seldom reaches the summit of being truly effective. The Arabic term *nafas* (breath) is a very apt description of the sort of unity required to exist between the main component attributes of the *qaṣīdah*, the latent rhythm, the declared rhythm, the song and the meaning. The effort required of the poet to achieve all this at once is supreme; hence

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[48] *Mukhtār*, II, 177–84.
[50] Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ*, Cairo, 1378H, II, 51.
[49] al-Aʿshā, *Dīwān*, VI, 33.
[51] Ibid., XI, 108.

the belief in the Daemon of Poetry, or inspiration, as we would now term it. It was thought that the great bards of the Jāhiliyyah were directly inspired by demons. Ḥassān, before he became a Muslim, boasted that he was helped by a companion of the children of Satan: "One moment I speak, another he does". According to al-A'shā, his demon was called Jihinnām or *Jahannam* (Hell). Suwayd b. Abī Kāhil describes his companion as "[devilishly] quick".[52] With the coming of Islam, Ḥassān (we are told) was given an angel to assist him instead of his old companion of the progeny of Satan.[53] Labīd, a poet of the *Mu'allaqāt*, gave up the profession of poetry and turned to learning the Qur'ān, and Ka'b b. Zuhayr composed no poetry of significance after addressing his eulogy *Bānat Su'ād* to the Prophet – the last of the eulogies in Jāhiliyyah style.

The demons of poetry, however, re-emerged later, during the caliphate, and resumed their function of inspiring panegyrists and lampoonists, and though this time they were supposed to be serving under the banner of Islam, nevertheless they retained many of their wild tribal ideals, contrary to the spirit of Islam, but in keeping with Umayyad and Arab politics. We are told that al-Farazdaq claimed to have been assisted by his allies of the jinn in composing his long *Fā'iyyah qaṣīdah* (rhyming in *fā'*), in answer to a challenge by a young man of Medina.[54] Jarīr is said to have obtained the use of a room at the top of a house in which he used to stay in the quarter of Banū Yarbū' in Kufa, in order to be alone for the purpose of penning a lampoon against the poet al-Rā'ī of Numayr. An old woman heard him muttering, and when she peered in from the staircase, she saw that he was crawling naked on his bed, so she went down and told the inmates of the house that their guest was mad. "Leave him alone," they said, "We know him and know what he is doing." At dawn they heard him shout in triumph, *Allāhu akbar*! ("God is great!"), for he had composed eighty lines, and when he finished the *qaṣīdah* he said, "I have put him to shame, by the Lord of the Ka'bah."[55] Jarīr's demon had obviously been tamed in accordance with the precepts of Islam, though Jarīr himself was by far the most caustic lampoonist of the Umayyad period!

The form and pattern of the "qaṣīdah"

The *qaṣīdah* is, in essence, directly addressed to his listeners by the poet, using the voice of the first person, and he does not hide behind imaginary

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[52] Lyall, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 408, no. xii, verse 104; trans., II, 146.
[53] Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, IV, 6. *Rūḥ al-quds lā yazālu yu'ayyiduka ma kāfaḥta 'an Allāh...wa-Rasūl Allāh.*
[54] Ibid., XIX, 38ff.   [55] Ibid., VII, 50.

characters. What he says reflects the distillation of wisdom, clarity of thought and depth of emotional feeling elicited from incidents and particular experiences, as well as from aspects of visual and social background which he assumes to be known by his listeners, and which will be supplied to them by his *rāwī(s)*, "transmitter(s)". Long-drawn-out narrative, sometimes needed and supplied by way of commentary, does not belong to the realm of verse, but to that of prose. Narrative verse figuring in prose texts generally is regarded as the spurious fabrication of transmitters, not the genuine contribution of the poets to whom it is attributed. Because of this Ibn Sallām criticized Ibn Isḥāq, accusing him of corrupting poetry by citing such narrative verse, made up by transmitters, as if they were true *qaṣīdahs*, and he refused to accept the latter's excuse that he was not a scholar of poetry.[56]

The style and form of the *qaṣīdah* should not be labelled "lyrical poetry", as it now is by many Arabic scholars. This misconception has arisen from the accepted western classification of all poetry into three distinct categories: lyrical, dramatic and epic. Since ancient Arabic poetry has no verse plays or long narrative poems, it has been assumed that all Arabic poetry is lyrical. The relevance of the classification in relation to Arabic can itself be challenged, because it was originally based on material derived from classical Greek literary forms. The *qaṣīdah* has sometimes a polemic quality (as in the *Muʿallaqah* of al-Ḥārith), sometimes a rhetorical quality (as in that of ʿAmr), an epic quality (as in ʿAntarah's *Muʿallaqah*), or it may contain such features as the lofty address to Wisdom (as in the case of Zuhayr); but the *qaṣīdah* really stands in a class of its own.

There seem to have been many patterns to the *qaṣīdah* in its earliest history, of which one finally became supreme and generally followed. Of these early patterns some survived as rare or specialized forms. The lament is a specialized form, though some laments by poets of Hudhayl and others begin in the standard manner. Yet another specialized form is the commendatory poem which sets out advice or wisdom in aphorisms known as *waṣiyyah*. These two forms seem to have been used by some of the old poets as the vehicle for other *qaṣīdah* themes, as, for instance, in the poem by Ibn Janāb al-Kalbī cited by Ibn Sallām,[57] in which he used the *waṣiyyah* pattern to develop his theme of self-justification and self-glorification, and in some poems of ʿAdī b. Zayd, in which he used the lament or elegy (*marthāh*) to embody his themes of wisdom and mournful reflection.[58] The pattern of the shrewish woman, considered as a force dissuading men from the path of honour and manliness (*muruwwah*), seems

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[56] Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8–9.   [57] Ibid., 30–2.
[58] Cf. Maʿarrī, *Ghufrān*, 186–9; Suhaylī, *Rawḍ*, I, 332.

to have been mainly connected with *qaṣīdahs* the purpose of which was of an ethical kind. Waraqah b. Nawfal al-Qurashī has such a poem addressed to his "two wives" (though he only had one wife, by poetic convention he treated her as two because of her fits of temper!), who asked him for divorce.[59] This theme of the shrew seems to have been later absorbed into the theme of the reproachful woman which figures so much in the amatory prelude (*nasīb*) of the *qaṣīdah*.[60]

The standard pattern of the *qaṣīdah* consists of three sections, the amatory prelude (*nasīb*), the "disengagement" cast in the form of a camel journey, known as *takhalluṣ*, and the final section, the body of the poem, dealing with the motive (*gharaḍ*) of the poem. This pattern, however, has many variations. The disengagement may be omitted altogether, this being called cutting short (*iqtiḍāb*), as in some of Zuhayr's *qaṣīdahs*.[61] For the *nasīb* is sometimes substituted reflection on the themes of life and death, as in some of al-Aʿshā's panegyrics.[62] It is rarely completely omitted, as in al-Nābighah's lampoon on Zurʿah,[63] al-Aʿshā's praise of Shurayḥ b. Hiṣn[64] and al-Shanfarā's famous *Lāmiyyat al-ʿArab*.[65] Sometimes the order of the several sections of the pattern is changed or modified, as in Imru' al-Qays' *Aḥārubnu ʿAmrin*, which opens with the main theme of self-glorification, then turns to nostalgic mention of the loved one,[66] and his *Dādiyyah* (poem rhyming in the letter *ḍād*), which begins with the final theme of his *Muʿallaqah*, then turns to the theme which precedes it, concluding with aphorisms on the fate of man.[67] Yet, despite all these variations, the main pattern of the *qaṣīdah* is uniform, generally adhering to the form outlined by Ibn Qutaybah in his able analysis of the ancient eulogy.[68]

The amatory prelude ("*nasīb*")

Nasīb, tashbīb, ghazal all denote the amorous allusion to women, but *nasīb* has come to denote the formal amatory prelude to the *qaṣīdah* and similar introductory themes treating of nostalgic memories of youth, bygone times and far-distant homes. *Ghazal* is employed for all themes concerned with love and appreciation of women. *Tashbīb* is sometimes used synonymously for *nasīb*, but more often to indicate love of a particular person.

The aim of the *nasīb* is simultaneously to strike a note in the first line,

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[59] Ṭayyib, *Murshid*, III, 1106, 1124–9.
[60] Further examples in *Mukhtār*, 69, 85; *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 25, no. iv; trans., 7.
[61] *Mukhtār*, I, 258–63, 229–30.   [62] Ibid., II, 238–40, 240–1.   [63] Ibid., I, 165–9.
[64] Ibid., II, 196–9.   [65] Ibid., II, 597–609.   [66] Ibid., I, 114–21.
[67] Ibid., I, 62–5. This feature of rounding off a *qaṣīdah* by an aphoristic passage of "envoi" became very regular at the end of the sixth century A.D. (Edd.).
[68] Ibn Qutaybah, *Shiʿr*, 20–2.

to give some indication of the horizons of the *qaṣīdah* by pointing
symbolically towards its spirit and main purpose, and to evoke the closely
related element of nostalgia. The dual actions of evoking nostalgic feeling
and foreshadowing the purpose and the spirit of the *qaṣīdah* are inseparable.
That is why Ibn Rashīq says that whoever strikes the right chord of *nasīb*
"has indeed entered from the door, and placed his foot in the stirrup".[69]
For example, al-Nābighah begins one of his poems in praise of al-Nuʿmān,
king of al-Ḥīrah,[70] to whom he had returned after a long estrangement,
by apostrophizing the abode of an inamorata called Mayyah.[71] (This was
the name of the inamorata in his description of the "the Lady Divested",
al-Mutajarridah.) Mayyah is said to have been the cause of the misunder-
standing between the poet and the king in the first place. Her abode is
located in al-ʿAlyāʾ and al-Sanad. Then al-Nābighah says that this abode
"has become deserted and a long time has passed over it". Thus the first
line of the *nasīb* of this poem is symbolic of the theme of which the poet
wishes to treat. The *nasīb* of the *Muʿallaqah* of al-Ḥārith, the main theme
of which is one of defiance and rejection of the claims of Banū Taghlib,
begins:

> Asmāʾ has declared she will go away.
> Many a person who lingers on indefinitely may grow wearisome.

Asmāʾ, the inamorata here, is also a symbol for Banū Taghlib, the enemy
tribe. The inamorata is often said to belong to an enemy tribe, and thus
she serves the double role of a person sought after, but also proudly
rejected when her demands grow excessive. ʿAmr b. Kulthūm, the
opponent of al-Ḥārith and leader of Banū Taghlib, begins his *Muʿallaqah*
by calling for a draught of wine in the morning. The theme of drinking
occurs more often in the self-glorification section of the *qaṣīdah* than in
the *nasīb*, but ʿAmr here begins in the opening line of his *nasīb* with this
symbol and pointer to the main theme – that of uninhibited
self-glorification:

> Up with your cup – give us a morning draught.
> Spare nought of the wines of ʿAndarīn.

His inamorata, described later on in the *nasīb*, is given giant dimensions.
The door is too narrow for her buttocks, her legs are as marble pillars
with anklets jingling loudly. ʿAmr then sings the praise of his tribe:[72]

> Not a weanling of ours but shall win to manhood, find the world at his
> knees, its great ones kneeling.
>   .   .   .   .

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[69] Ibn Rashīq, *ʿUmdah*, I, 206.   [70] *Mukhtār*, I, 149.   [71] Ibid., I, 183; cf. below, p. 60.
[72] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, 122, verse 79, 124, verse 94, 115, verse 42, 124, verse 95.

Doughty challengers we of them, all ill-comers, girt for crossing of swords,
their sons with our sons.

. . . .

Lo, the lands we o'errun, till the plains grow narrow, lo, the seas will we
sack with our war-galleys.

. . . .

Ours the right of the wells, of the springs untroubled; theirs the dregs of
the plain, the rain-pools trampled.

(W. S. Blunt)[73]

Al-Muthaqqib al-ʿAbdī begins the *nasīb* of his celebrated *qaṣīdah* in tones
of impatience, and with the threat of rejection in the address to Fāṭimah,
his beloved:

O Fāṭimah, before thou goest grant me some delight! and thy withholding
of what I ask is as though thou wert already gone;

And cheat me not with lying promises, which the winds of summer shall
sweep from me far away.

In sooth, if my left hand were to oppose me as thou opposest, I would no
longer let it pair my right:

Instantly would I cut it off, and say to it "Begone! thus do I requite with
dislike one that likes not me."

(C. J. Lyall)

This *qaṣīdah* ends on the same note of impatience and threat, the poet
addressing his friend and patron ʿAmr b. Hind, king of al-Ḥīrah:

Be thou to me either a brother in truth, so that I may know, in respect of
thee, my lean and my fat:

Or, if not, then cast me off and hold me for an enemy, so that I may beware
of thee and thou of me.

Yea, I know not, when I make a matter the end of my action, desiring good
therefrom, which of the two will draw near to me –

Whether the Good for which I myself am seeking, or the Evil which is
looking out for me.

(C. J. Lyall)[74]

Zuhayr opens his *Muʿallaqah* with a question implying the difficulty of
recognizing the half-effaced traces of Umm Awfā's abode: "Is this dumb
trace of the camp-site all that remains of Umm Awfā?" This introduces
a subtle keynote to the main purpose of his *qaṣīdah*, namely his concern
for the unrecognizable state of Banū Ghaṭafān following their fratricidal
wars of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā'.

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[73] Blunt, *Golden odes*, 41 and 43.
[74] Lyall, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 1, 574–88, no. lxxvi; trans., 228–32, verses 1–4, 41–4.

'Antarah's *Mu'allaqah* opens with two questions:

> Have the poets left a single spot for a patch to be sewn?
> Or did you recognize the abode after long meditation?[75]

'Antarah's poem is one of protest and self-justification conveyed in a modest and dignified way. The manner in which he begins it is indicative both of his purpose and his style of approach. Examples of the adumbration of the main topic of the *qaṣīdah* in the *nasīb* are abundant.

It is proposed now to discuss certain themes of frequent recurrence in the *nasīb* which are employed to create an atmosphere of nostalgia.

The first of the *nasīb* themes is allusion to the abode (*dār*). Nostalgia and longing for his home territory are the eternal lot of the poet who is, in the Arab ideal, the ever-wandering bedouin. The mention of the abode, or indeed anything associated with it, evokes memories of the beloved and of past hours of happiness. The poet's heart is moved by anything reminiscent of it – the name of a land, its sand dunes, its hills, the stars that indicate the way to it to the traveller, the winds and breezes that blow to and from it, the camp, the fire-place, the pegs to which animals are tethered, the heap of ashes, the little mounds that protect the tent from flooding and the like. A poet may use the word *dār* as a symbol for the loved one, or as a symbol for himself. He may think of himself as the half-effaced traces of an encampment. Imru' al-Qays said in a famous opening verse:[76]

> A pleasant morning to you, O you faint traces of a dwelling.
> But can one [lost] in times gone by in truth find [life] pleasant?

We know that here Imru' al-Qays means himself, because he says later in this poem:

> O, I am worn out, on a worn-out camel,
> a worn-out man leading us, another worn-out man following us.

A poet may think of barely recognizable traces of an old encampment as representing his own bygone happiness and the days of his youth, as in Imru' al-Qays:

> You think Salmā is there still, whilst you see only wild fawns, or ostrich
>   eggs in the flood-bed where many were once encamped.
> Salmā's night, when she would reveal to you, [smiling], daintily set teeth, a
>   neck gazelle-like yet not unadorned.

[75] Arberry, *Seven odes*, 179.
[76] *Dīwān*, 27–8, 380.

A poet sometimes identifies himself and his past with the ashes of old camp-fires, as in the opening line of a *qaṣīdah* of Ṭarafah:

> Did the spring campment stir a sadness in you – or was it being so old, or
> its ashes, their coals long extinguished?

Al-Shammākh of Ghaṭafān speaks of the hearth-stones as the female neighbours of a rock, the third hearth-stone being an outcrop of a rock on the hillside, with a legacy of ashes the colour of a dove. Later poets developed the theme of ashes and hearth-stones almost to abstract dimensions, the ashes sometimes being thought of as nursed by three she-camels, or mourned by them, or as a dying chick surrounded by mother doves crooning in grief.[77]

The fire (*nār*) itself plays an important role in the nostalgia motive of the *nasīb*. Writers distinguish various fires the Arabs lit by night, camp-fires, fires of hospitality, war beacons, and so on. Camp-fires were regarded as the most important, for they were lit by the loved ones or their serving maids. As pleasing scents are usually associated with the fair sex, poets claimed these fires of their loved ones were burning with aloes, sandal and other sweet-smelling woods. 'Adī b. Zayd of al-Ḥīrah said:

> O Lubaynā, kindle the fire;
> He whom you love is bewildered.
> At how many a fire have I spent the night a-gazing,
> While it consumed Indian wood and fragrant '*ār* wood,
> And near it, kindling it, was a gazelle, a collar clasped round her neck.[78]

This fire lit by the loved one was endowed by the Arabs with mystical and spiritual qualities even during pre-Islamic days. Fire was associated in the minds of the Arabs with God and supernatural forces. There were many flame-like appearances at night, due perhaps to the volcanic nature of some parts of the Arabian Peninsula and to escaping inflammable gases, which the Arabs attributed to ghouls and jinn. In the Yemen, we are told, there was a fire which came out of a cave and was worshipped, from which people sought judgement in their disputes.[79] Al-Ḥārith speaks in his *Mu'allaqah* of the fire of his lady Hind as lit long ago on a hill for him to see,[80] and a celebrated *qaṣīdah* of al-Nābighah[81] says:

> Is it a flicker from the lightning flash my eyes see, or the radiance of Nu'm,
> or the glow of a fire?
> Nay! It is the radiance of Nu'm shining in the murky night through her
> robes and curtains.

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[77] *Dīwān*, 86.   [78] Iṣfahānī, II, 39.

[79] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, 17; Guillaume, *Life*, 10. The text seems to imply a form of *bish'ah*, ordeal by fire, as known in present-day Arabia (Edd.).

[80] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, 126, verse 6.   [81] Ṭayyib, *Murshid*, I, 390–1.

Imru' al-Qays likens the flame-like beauty of the bosom of his Salmā to burning charcoals.

> As if the light of Salmā's breast glowed like red coals a man had kindled,
>   that burned much tamarisk wood, and were piled with tree-roots,
> Which contrary winds, now east, now south, fanned on its hill crest at the
>   places where returning caravans camp.
> I pictured that fire at Adhri'āt [Jordan] when her people were in Yathrib;
>   the nearest of her land is far to descry.
> I gazed at it, and the stars were like lanterns lit by monks to guide
>   returning travellers.

The nature of the fire here described is spiritual and mystical, graduating from the physical and palpable to the remote and unapproachable. Al-Shammākh describes the fire of his Laylā saying:

> Even if they raise its glow on high, the light from it will scarce be seen but
>   by the keen of sight.[82]

A similar, conceptual image of this spiritual illumination from the direction of the beloved occurs in many *qaṣīdahs*, as in Imru' al-Qays' *Muʿallaqah*:

> Is it the lightning that illuminates the darkness at night, or the lamps of a
>   hermit lavishly pouring oil on the twisted wick?

Lightning is an important *nasīb* theme, exciting yearning and nostalgia, because it flashes, regardless of its position in the sky, from the horizons of the beloved. Lovers meet at the seasons of rains and pasture. Hunting, horse-racing and fighting also take place during this season. The war of Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā' between the Ghaṭafān clans of ʿAbs and Dhubyān arose from a quarrel over a horse-race, and the war between Taghlib and Bakr was caused by a grazing dispute. The theme of lightning, therefore, has a wide area of association and is not limited to the *nasīb* alone. In the *Muʿallaqah* of Imru' al-Qays it occurs in the last section, as also in Labīd's *Lāmiyyah* (poem rhyming in the letter *lām*), *A-lam tulmim*,[83] in Imru' al-Qays' *Dādiyyah*, *Aʿinnī ʿalā barqin*;[84] it occurs at the beginning of ʿAbīd's *Hāʾiyyah* (poem rhyming in the letter *ḥāʾ*), *Ḥabbat talūmu*,[85] and al-Nābighah's *Rāiyyah* (poem rhyming in the letter *rāʾ*), *ʿŪjū fa-ḥayyū*. The theme of lightning will be considered later among other descriptive themes.

The theme of night is linked with that of lightning, and if the latter is symbolic of hope and praise, the former symbolizes care and despair. Poems dealing with personal or tribal concerns or vendettas may start their

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[82] *Dīwān*, 34.   [83] Saqqā, *Mukhtār*, II, 462–71.
[84] Ibid., I, 62.   [85] Ibid., II, 26–9.

nasīb, or part of it, with an allusion to night, sleeplessness, stars or star-gazing. Muhalhil of Taghlib began his famous vendetta poem:

> O night of ours at Dhū Ḥusum, let us have light.
> When you are over, do not come back again![86]

Muhalhil then turns to a description of the stars, which symbolizes his anxiety for morning to come, so that he can make a raid of vengeance against his enemies. Al-Aswad b. Yaʿfur's *qaṣīdah* complaining of old age and blindness begins:

> He sleeps who has no worries, but not I.[87]

The same sentiment is to be found in al-Aʿshā's *qaṣīdah* in which he is concerned to reward al-Muḥallaq for his kind treatment of him:

> I spent a night sleepless, and what is this persistent wakefulness when I
> have no sickness, nor yet a love affair?[88]

An anecdote about al-Aʿshā relates that when he visited the king of Persia and the latter had some of his verses translated to him, among them being the above line, the king said, "Then he must be a thief, for what else keeps him awake?" al-Nābighah's panegyric of the Ghassanid king al-Ḥārith begins with the mention of stars and cares:

> O leave me, Umaymah, to a nagging care, and a night I endure, of slow
> moving stars, so long drawn out that I said:
> "Never will it end." For one who shepherds the stars will not return home.
> [Leave me] to [my breast] to which night has brought back its furthest care
> and whose grief is redoubled from every side.[89]

This opening seems strange for a eulogy, but al-Nābighah's quarrel with the king of al-Ḥīrah, for whom he now substitutes the king of Ghassān, the Syrian, is the real cause of his worry. His escape to the patronage of the latter is a form of search for consolation. The theme of night and worries again occurs in one of al-Nābighah's celebrated *qaṣīdahs* of apology to the king of al-Ḥīrah after his return to him:

> You are like night which will catch me up [inevitably], even if I think [I am
> in] a distant place far away from you.[90]

In this poem he likens his state of mind, on hearing about the anger of his patron, the king of al-Ḥīrah, to a man stung by a snake, who spends a sleepness night.[91]

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[86] Qālī, *Amālī*, II, 130–4.
[87] Lyall, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 445–57, no. xliv, trans., 161–6.
[88] *Mukhtār*, II, 225.
[89] Ibid., I, 159–60.
[90] Ibid., I, 158, verse 28.
[91] Ibid., I, 156, verse 12.

The night theme usually occurs in the beginning of the *nasīb*, as evocative of nostalgia, but it may sometimes occur in other sections of the *qasīdah*. Imru' al-Qays' famous lines about night,[92] in his *Mu'allaqah*, occur in the middle, but this has some connection with the intricate pattern of this particular *qasīdah*.

A theme closely related to night is the "apparition" of the beloved (*tayf* or *tayf al-khayāl*). It may occur at the opening of the *nasīb*, as in the lines of the younger al-Muraqqish:

> Was it of Bint 'Ajlān that the shade [*khayāl*, apparition] cast itself our way
>   by night, while my saddle lay by, where we slept a little removed?
> And when I started awake at the phantom, and terror grew, lo! t'was but
>   my saddle, nought else, and the country was white and bare.
>   (C. J. Lyall)[93]

It occurs also in the opening lines of Ta'abbata Sharrā's *qasīdah* in the *Mufaddaliyyāt*:

> O [memories] ever returning, such passionate yearning you bring, such
>   sleeplessness and such a dream phantom that comes by night despite the
>   terrors of the way,
> Travelling at night time, barefoot despite serpents and snakes,
> My soul's your ransom – for so fine a night traveller on foot![94]

The "apparition" theme may also occur in other sections of the *qasīdah*, but it is mostly associated with love poetry, though sometimes it figures in lamentation. "Departure", which forms one of the major themes of the *nasīb*, is dealt with in a variety of ways, and no variation is without some symbolic significance. The poet begins, for example, with some powerful cry such as: "Gone is Su'ād!" What follows will point to the nature of the poet's mood and purpose. He may go on to say, "her bond is severed", or "she has left me captive", or "she bade me not farewell". Each assertion will be linked to his main objective. Opening lines of this kind are mostly indicative of a heroic or dignified mood, whether the main theme be eulogy, self-glorification or lampoon. A frequent "departure" motive is the departing caravan, invariably indicative of some conflict, personal or tribal, connected with the main objective of the *qasīdah*, as exemplified in Zuhayr's and al-Hārith's *Mu'allaqahs*, the *Rā'iyyah* of Imru' al-Qays on his journey to Byzantium and al-Muthaqqib's *Nūniyyah* (poem rhyming in the letter *nūn*),[95] in which the description of the departing caravan is used as a symbol for his own energetic travel in search of the

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[92] Ibid., I, 29, verse 46.
[93] *Mufaddaliyyāt*, I, 494, no. lv; trans., 186–8, verses 3–4.
[94] Ibid., I, 2, no. I.   [95] Cf. above, p. 45.

unknown. The caravan seen from afar off resembles date-or *dawm*-palms, or ships at sea. Sometimes the poet may digress to describe ships or date-palms, as in the *Muʿallaqah* of Ṭarafah:

> The camel-litters of the Mālikiyyah seemed that morning to be great ships
>   in the valley-spaces of Dad,
> Ships of 'Adawlī build, or vessels of Ibn Yāmin, which the helmsman steers,
>   now tacking, now full ahead.
> Their bows cleaved the foam with them...[96]

and the *Rāʾiyyah* of Imru' al-Qays:

> I fancied them, when they had sped on into the mirage, to be clumps of
>   *dawm*-palms, or pitch-caulked ships.[97]

The date-palm grove, however, occurs more frequently in connection with the theme of "tears", itself often a branch of "departure" of the loved one, or the caravan. The "tears" of the *nasīb* pour down and are likened to a leaking water-skin. The water-skin leads on to the groaning irrigation camel, driving a water-wheel that irrigates a palm-grove, a symbol for the poet himself who is crushed by the fardels of departure. The palm-grove symbolizes the loved one, for a beautiful woman is often referred to as a garden. In his *Qāfiyyah* (poem rhyming in the letter *qāf*), Zuhayr gives a vivid description of a camel drawing water at the irrigation well of the palm-grove:

> A driver sings a camel-song (*hidāʾ*) behind her – when she fears a blow, she
>   stretches forward her neck and back.
> Another, singing, whenever his hands can grasp the wooden cross-pieces of
>   the irrigation bucket, rising, pours it out.
> Diverting [the water] into an irrigation runnel in which the frogs hop about
>   like girls – ripples you see on its water
> Jumping out of the trenches, green slimed from watering, onto the [palm]
>   trunks, in fear of distress and drowning.[98]

Zuhayr was criticized for speaking of drowning frogs – amphibious creatures – but his real intention is to allude to his own distress, drowning in tears.

The central theme of the *nasīb* is, of course, the inamorata herself. But the person of the inamorata is often mixed up with the themes of love and appreciation of women, discussion of which will be deferred until the *ghazal* motive is examined. It must, however, be noted that, of the *Muʿallaqāt*, the *qaṣīdah* of Imru' al-Qays is considered to have the best

[96] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, 30, verse 3.
[97] *Mukhtār*, I, 52.
[98] Ibid., I, 246–50, verses 10–16. Cf. Shaybānī, *Sharḥ*, 39–41.

nasīb, and his *Qifā nabki* is considered the finest opening line of the ancient poets:

> Stop, both of you. Let us weep for the memory of a beloved and an abode
>   in the lee of the sands of Liwā between al-Dakhūl and Hawmal.[99]

The critics admire this line, because in it Imru' al-Qays halts at the traces of a former camping place, commanding his friends to do likewise, and weeps over them, overcome by memories of the place and the beloved. Then he recalls three place-names, evoking further nostalgic memories by this device.

Disengagement (" takhalluṣ")

The disengagement (*takhalluṣ*) forms the second section of the *qaṣīdah*, in which the poet makes his way out of the *nasīb* towards the main motive of his *qaṣīdah*. This may be achieved by the device of describing the points of a riding-camel and a journey to reach the loved one in the distant place where she is, or to console himself and forget her in pursuing some other serious purpose, or to desert her just as she has done him. Of the seven *Muʿallaqāt*, only four have a *takhalluṣ* of this type. In his *Muʿallaqah* Imru' al-Qays slaughters his she-camel to feast its flesh to the maidens he encounters at the pond of Dārat Juljul. This is symbolic of his complete surrender to the fair sex; it is also a device to avoid the conventional journey. Zuhayr moves directly from describing his inamorata's travelling caravan to praise of his patrons. 'Amr's inamorata is on the threshold of departure, a symbol for his enemies, so he finds no difficulty in turning from her to addressing them:[100]

> I recalled my youth and felt a sense of longing, when before sun-set I saw
>   her laden camels, urged along with singing,
> And al-Yamāmah appeared [in the distance], long, drawn out like swords in
>   the hands unsheathed.
>
>   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·
>
> O Abū Hind, be not hasty with us but wait for us and we shall tell you the
>   truth.
> That we shall bring the banners forth [to battle] white, and take them back
>   red, their thirst quenched.[101]

'Antarah and al-Ḥārith both give a brief treatment to the conventional journey. 'Antarah is first and foremost a horseman:

> Night and morning she spends on a soft couch,
>   While my night I spend on the back of a bridled black steed.[102]

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[99] This line is highly evocative to Arab readers, but it is next to impossible to convey its full overtones to European readers (Edd.).   [100] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, 111.

[101] Ibid., 111ff., verses 15, 16, 20, 21. The metaphorical sense of this last verse is that the banners are taken to water and brought back (like camels), but it cannot be conveyed in translation (Edd.).

[102] Ibid., 95, verse 20.

The she-camel he mentions in his *qaṣīdah* is one he would like to possess, to catch up with the caravan of his beloved. 'Antarah treats this theme briefly, employing standard clichés in his description, showing true sympathy for the camel only when it is tired and black with sweat, like himself:

> My camel knelt at the pool of Ridā', knelt with groans like the broken
>   moan of the reed pipe;
> Sweat like juice or thick pitch being heated in the cauldron by blazing
>   firewood
> Oozed from her neck – mettlesome and fiery-proud as a scarred stallion.[103]

Al-Ḥārith claims that he throws off his cares through travel, not remaining their captive, like the she-camel blinded and left tethered by the grave of its deceased master to die of hunger and thirst. It was believed that the dead man would ride it in the world to come. Then al-Ḥārith turns to his main theme – the riposte to the challenge of his opponent 'Amr b. Kulthūm.

Two only of the *Mu'allaqahs* treat of the camel and journey at length, though in different ways; each is considered a model treatment of this theme. Ṭarafah begins:

> Ah, but when grief assails me, straightway I ride it off mounted on my swift
>   lean-flanked camel, night and day racing.
>
> (A. J. Arberry)

Then follows a detailed description of the animal itself, in which similes are sparingly used, and when they do occur are crisp and to the point. The curve of the camel's back is like a Roman arch of burnt brick, its tail hair like the feathers of the wings of an eagle, the graceful movements of its tail like those of a serving girl flouncing the train of her skirts before her master at a drinking party. Ṭarafah describes his she-camel grazing at pasture, trotting fast with the mirage shimmering before it, and couching or standing still. He also passes beyond simple description to anatomical detail. Its ribs are like broad planks of wood. Its neck is composed of well-ordered vertebrae. Its skull is like an anvil, its jaw-bones meet at a point like the edge of a file. Its eye sockets are like a rock in a mountain with a crevice that holds water. Of the hundred and five lines of the *qaṣīdah*, no less than twenty-eight are devoted to the camel. Ṭarafah's she-camel is as youthful, impetuous and energetic as his inamorata, whom he likens to a young gazelle pulling at the branches of an *arāk* tree, as the girl who

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[103] Ibid., 91, verse 32. Traditionally the poet is said to have had negro blood.

sings with ease and charm whenever his drinking companions ask her to
do so. Then Ṭarafah says:

> On such a mount I press forward, when my companion cries,
> "O for deliverance for us both from this wilderness." and his spirit quakes
>   with terror, though he has encountered no ambush.
> But I, when people say: "Who is the gallant lad?" think I am meant and do
>   not hesitate or feign stupidity.
> I touched her with the whip. She ran fast with the mirage over the burning
>   stony ground trotting ahead [of us].
> She pranced as a serving girl of a [drinking] party minces displaying to her
>   master the trains of her ample white dress.
> I do not camp in water courses out of fear [of being seen], but when the
>   tribe is asked to give hospitality I contribute.

Ṭarafah then continues with his main theme – personal defiance, rebellion,
self-justification and self-glorification:

> You who chide me for entering the fray and joining in pleasure, can you
>   give me eternal life?
> If you cannot withhold death from me, then let me hasten to it with all that
>   my hand holds.
> Were it not for three things, a gallant lad's life and joy, by [your] life, I care
>   not when my mourner comes:
> First, to forestall reproach of womenfolk with a draught of tawny wine
>   foaming when with water mixed;
> Then to turn back to the charge, when the fugitive calls [for aid], my mare
>   like the [fierce] wolf of the tamarisks, intent on water you have stirred.
> And to shorten the day of pleasant rain under the pillared tent with a plump
>   girl.

The second pattern of the transitional *takhalluṣ* journey occurs in Labīd's
Muʿallaqah. He severs the rope of amity with his inamorata of the *nasīb*
in retaliation for her turning away from him, and consoles himself by
travelling on a swift riding-camel in pursuit of a more serious purpose.
His camel is fast as a cloud that has shed its rain, driven by the south wind,
or swift as a wild ass. Labīd then digresses to describe the onager and his
mate, how at first they were grazing in a rich meadow, then, when the
pasture dried up and the hot summer winds began to blow, how they ran
off in search of water. Dust rose behind their steps like smoke from a fire.
They came to a pool:

> Then they plunged into the middle of a rivulet, and split through a
>   brimming pool, where the *kalam*-rods grew close together,
> Encompassed about by the reeds overshadowing it, a veritable thicket, part
>   trampled down, part upstanding.
>
> > > > > > > > > > (A. J. Arberry)[104]

[104] Arberry, *Odes*, 144.

Labīd likens his riding camel to a mother oryx that has lost her young to ravenous beasts. Night fell over her, she heard voices of men far away, and sought shelter in an old withered bush on a sand dune. Drops of rain fell on her back, shining like pearls scattered from a broken thread. In the morning came hunters with their hounds. The oryx killed two hounds and escaped, running fast:

> With [a she-camel such as] that [oryx] when the ground shimmers at high morning and the low hills are clothed in the mirage, I fulfill my yearning...[105]

Now Labīd turns to upbraiding his inamorata Nawār for thus allowing him to go away, for, as he asserts, it is she who will be the loser. He then sings in praise of himself.

The pattern of Labīd's *takhalluṣ* figures in many *qaṣīdahs*, the wild ass with its mates and the oryx being recurrent themes. So also does the ostrich, remembering her eggs and running fast to come to them before dark. Sometimes description of these desert animals seems to be the main purpose of the poem, allusion to the camel being introduced merely as a device for mentioning them. The hunter with his bow and arrows is often described in the same connection. In the *Mīmiyyah* (poem rhyming in the letter *mīm*)[106] of Rabī'ah b. Maqrūm, he is named Qays, father of 'Āmir, who takes aim at the onager and its three mates but misses. In al-Shammākh's *Zā'iyyah* (poem rhyming in the letter *ẓāy*)[107] the hunter is called 'Āmir of Banū Muḥārib.

The eagle and the dove appear in the description of the steed that often figures in themes of hunting and horsemanship. These generally form a part of the motives of the *qaṣīdah*, being seldom introduced as part of the *takhalluṣ*. All these descriptive themes, however, would seem to have some origin in pre-Islamic religion. Al-Jāḥiẓ observed that in poems of eulogy, self-glorification and the like, the hunted animals escape and the hunter fails to take them. In elegies, on the other hand, the opposite takes place. Mālik b. Khālid consoles Mayyah for the loss of her sons or brothers:

> O Mayyah, the wild beasts of the Earth must perish, gazelle, oryx, white gazelle – and people too,
>
> O Mayyah, the ibex, white-patched of leg, on mountain heights [fragrant] with wild jasmine and myrtle, will not outstrip time,
>
> On the summit of a lofty peak, its track chilly below the sky, jutting sharp into the upper air.
>
> Over it hover black eagles, ravens; below it dun female and male ibex [roam].[108]

[105] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, 81, verse 53.
[106] Lyall, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, i, 358, no. xxxiii; trans., 131–6.
[107] *Dīwān*, 46. Cf. Sam'ānī, *Ansāb*, v, 155.   [108] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, i, 439–40.

Abū Dhu'ayb of Hudhayl has a celebrated elegy commencing with a description of an onager and its four mates.[109] Taking aim at them, the hunter shot them one by one:

> So among them all he scattered bane – one fled as best
> life's last remains gave strength, another in stumbling died.
> Their legs beneath slipped where the blood from the cruel shafts
> dyed deep the ground, as if clad in striped stuff from Tazīd.
>
> (C. J. Lyall)

Then follows the description of the oryx – a strong young oryx. First the hounds coursed and attacked it, then appeared their master with bow and arrows:

> Then he shot, as if haply the remnant [of the hounds] escape: and the arrow sped
> and the bitter shaft transfixed the bull from side to side:
> Headlong he crashed, as a camel-stallion falls outworn
> in the hollow ground: but the bull was fairer and goodlier far.
>
> (C. J. Lyall)

Now come two champions, one in full armour – helmet, visor and long mail-coat – mounted on a giant horse. The other, bold, fearless, rode a light agile steed. Each had a keen sword, and a spear with a blade bright as a flame. Each dealt the other a fatal thrust.

> Each had lived the life of honour and garnered the fruits of glory – could that avail them aught?

Descriptions of Arabian fauna and flora, including wolves and lions, and of climatic phenomena are of frequent occurrence in this section of *takhalluṣ*, as also are descriptions of ships and the sea.[110]

The main theme ("*gharaḍ*")

The *takhalluṣ* journey expresses the attempt at seeking relief from the intense emotion of the *nasīb*. The "journey", pictured in terms of camel, desert and sympathetic communication with aspects and phenomena of nature, symbolizes the poet's endeavour to change from an introvert to an extrovert mood. The path of the journey leads into the main theme, with which comes the ultimate sense of relief.

First of all there comes the love theme (*ghazal*), concerned with true love, anecdotes of amorous adventures, appreciation of the beauty of

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[109] Ibid., I, 41; *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 870, no. cxxvi; trans., 355–62, verses 33–4, 46–7, 63.
[110] Cf. "Description" (*waṣf*), below pp. 93–104; Ibn Rashīq, '*Umdah*, I, 216–41.

women, and experience of love. The conventional love motive of the *nasīb*, the amatory prelude of the *qaṣīdah*, is often used as a vehicle for *ghazal*; sometimes conventional *nasīb* themes are interwoven with those of *ghazal*, as already remarked. The reason underlying this is that the Arabs were traditionally jealous about their womenfolk. Sometimes a tribal quarrel would be sparked off by the mere mention of a woman's name. Hence the resort to pseudonyms and employment of the *nasīb* as medium to convey the poet's sentiments of love, for the amorous episodes of the *nasīb* are regarded as fictitious. Thus, paradoxically, though the *nasīb* is only the introductory phase of the *qaṣīdah* leading into the main theme via the *takhalluṣ* (disengagement) journey, it is also a vehicle for the said theme, should this happen to be that of a genuine love experience. Thus a eulogy may embody two themes, one genuinely concerned with love, and the other with the patron to whom the *qaṣīdah* is addressed. Sometimes also a man supposed to have passed the age of dalliance, or for whom to appear amorous is considered unseemly, may seek to shield his feelings behind the convention of *nasīb*. Such is Zuhayr's line, " The beautiful maidens said, 'You are indeed our uncle'." Zuhayr's open mention in the *Muʿallaqah* of the name of the lady Umm Awfā, and his references to her under the pseudonym of Salmā in his *Lāmiyyah*, *Ṣaḥā 'l-qalb*,[111] are in effect an artificial pose. Al-Nābighah was a highly respected dignitary of Banū Dhubyān, whose remarkable ability as a poet, it is said, manifested itself only after he had passed his fortieth year – for which reason he was called al-Nābighah (the Gusher).[112]

In a poem composed on the occasion of the pilgrimage, at which ritual austerity and chastity were strictly observed by men of his standing and calibre, he conceals a genuine experience of a brief flirtation behind the screen of the *nasīb*.

> A woman of Balī – erringly yearns the heart for her, but foolishly, as a dream recalled.
> She is not of these revealing black heels as she turns away, nor does she sell stone pots on the two sides of Nakhlah.
> Of the fair [is she], perfection in beauty of those who walk on foot, of all with whom you bandy words most charming.
> Said she: "I see you a man of the saddle and she-camel, adventurous coming to fatal deserts – no respite for old age will they accord you. My Lord preserve you."
> Not lawful for us is it to dally with women; thus the faith commands.
> Girt up we go, mounted on camels of eye deep-set, looking sideways, bridled with nose-piece,

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[111] Saqqā, *Mukhtār*, I, 235.
[112] Nicholson, *Literary history*, 121: "The term *nābigha* is applied to a poet whose genius is slow in declaring itself but at last 'jets forth vigorously and abundantly' (*nabagha*)."

Hopeful of God, hopeful of [His] benevolence, seeking to act dutifully and
gain our living.

Why did you not ask Banū Dhubyān how I am esteemed when the smoke
[of the pot] envelops the grizzled hair of the man who, in meanness, will
not partake in the *maysir* game?

.   .   .   .

[My camel] nearly threw me, saddle and saddle-cloth at Dhū 'l-Majāz,
though she had not scented herds of camels there,

On hearing a woman say when they were departing, "Is there among your
owners of swift-riding animals someone who buys leather hides?"[113]

Many *qaṣīdahs* were, however, devoted partly or wholly to love and
amorous verse (*ghazal*), whether following immediately after the opening
lines of the *nasīb* or otherwise. Some poets also there were who made no
secret of the true names of the beloved, for certain Arabian communities
seem to have favoured such practice, regarding this as conferring prestige
upon a lovely woman. 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah and the later *ghazal* poets of
the Umayyad period seem to have been influenced by the practice of some
Yathrib poets in this respect. The types and varieties of *ghazal* poetry are
so abundant, so intermingled, that only four representative genres will be
selected here. These are poetry of true love, of amorous adventure, of erotic
pleasure, and description of feminine beauty and grace. Again all four
genres can occur in one context. Description of feminine beauty and grace
is so nearly inseparable from any theme of love and appreciation of women
that it must come first!

From the verse of al-Nābighah, al-Muthaqqib, al-Shammākh and many
others, we know that Arabian women in the pre-Islamic age wore a kind
of head-scarf or veil. On occasions of courting and flirtation, however,
the head-scarf could be moved aside; otherwise poets could not have been
able to tell us of the beauty of a girl's teeth and neck. Al-Ḥādirah's
Sumayyah seized the opportunity of the gathering, come to bid farewell
on the day of the caravan's departure, to display her beauty:

She turned her head – and you were enslaved by her smooth white throat,
like that of a gazelle with its graceful neck,

And by those bright eyes (a sleepy glance, you might think) of a beauty
ready to brim with tears;

But when she engages with you in talk, you find her smile glorious,
promising a delightful kiss.[114]

Al-Shammākh tells us it was customary for beautiful women to cast the
head-scarf aside to declare their loveliness:

She drips with saffron and with ambergris,
She has let fall her striped head-scarf because of her beauty.[115]

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[113] Nābighah, *Dīwān*, 81, verses 2–8, 14–15.
[114] Lyall, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 1, 52–3, no. viii; trans., 16–20, verses 3–5.   [115] *Dīwān*, 29.

Al-Muthaqqib in his *Nūniyyah* tells us that the young women of the departing caravan revealed some of their beautiful features but concealed others. Sometimes one could see the gold ornaments on their ivory-coloured bosoms:

> They spread an awning above, and another hung down around, pierced
>   with chinks for their eyes.
>
> . . . .
>
> And I said to one of them – and my saddle was bound on my beast to face a
>   noon-tide to which I had steadfastly set my brow –
>
> "It may be, if thou cuttest thy bond and leavest me, that even so I shall
>   endure, with my soul in my own power."[116]

Conversation with women is sweet as honey, enchanting as magical charms or hunters' ruses. The beloved is sometimes timid and coyly modest:

> She won me when as, shamefaced, no maid to let fall her veil,
> no wanton to glance behind, she walked forth with steady tread.
>
> . . . .
>
> Her eyes seek the ground, as though she had looked for a thing lost there;
> straight forward she goes: if thou speak to her, few are her words and low.
>
> Not one is Umaymah for gossip to bring to her husband shame:
> when mention is made of women, pure and unstained is she.
>
> . . . .
>
> At night after little sleep she rises to carry forth
> her supper to wives who have need, when such gifts are few enow.
>
> . . . .
>
> And slender is she where meet, and full where it so beseems,
> and tall, straight, a fairy shape, if such upon earth there be.
>
> And nightlong as we sat there, methought that the tent was roofed above us
>   with basil sprays, all fragrant with evening's dew.
>
> (C. J. Lyall, adapted)[117]

The Arabs, craftsmen and artists in words, wavered between two ideals of feminine beauty, one being aesthetic appreciation of feminine comeliness, the other sexual pleasure. The former is well exemplified in the line of Imru' al-Qays' *Muʿallaqah*:

> The gracious person gazes at her tenderly as she moves straight,
>   well-proportioned in a dress not over long or short.[118]

The second occurs in his line of the *Rāʾiyyah*, *Aḥāru bnu ʿAmrin*:

> Rippling with plumpness, tender and freshly soft,
> she is like the tender branch of the *bān*-tree with new leaves.[119]

[116] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 578–81, verses 11, 17, 18; trans., 228–9, verses 17, 18 only. (The light colouring, "ivory", is indicative of aristocratic birth (Edd.)).

[117] Ibid., I, 200, no. xx, verses 6–7, 9–10, 12–13; trans., 69–70.

[118] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, verse 40.   [119] See fn. 67.

Ka'b b. Zuhayr says of his Su'ād:

> Eyes lowered [shyly], kohl-painted.
> When she smiles teeth she discloses, shining as though they had drunk of
>   wine once, twice,
> Tempered with cool water.
>   .   .   .   .
> Fickle, her moods ever changing like the colours of a devil's garment.
> Holding to her promises only as sieves hold water.[120]

'Alqamah says of his Salmā:

> A citron fragrant with perfume, as though her/its scent ever lingers in
>   the nostrils.
>   .   .   .   .
> The fullness of her robe not taken up at the two girdles, tender, fawn-like,
>   brought up in the house.[121]

Arab poets were sometimes uninhibited about describing the female
body nude from head to foot, as in al-Nābighah's *Mutajarridah*. We are
told that his friend and patron, al-Nu'mān of Lakhm, king of al-Ḥīrah,
asked him to describe his queen unclothed – hence her nickname *al-
Mutajarridah*, "The Lady Divested":

> She stood up displaying herself, between two curtains of a howdah of red
>   wool, like the sun when it rises in Aries,
> Or like a pearl in an oyster shell for which the diver, overjoyed, praises God
>   and prostrates himself whenever he looks at it,
> Or like a statue of marble raised [on a plinth] built of baked brick,
>   plastered, and of tile.
> Her headscarf dropped unintentionally; she picked it up, shielding herself
>   from us with her hand.
>   .   .   .   .
> Should she appear to a white-haired man, a hermit worshipping God,
>   sinless, devoted,
> He would gaze long on her loveliness, [desire] sweet converse with her,
>   thinking himself guided aright, although he was not following the right
>   way.
>   .   .   .   .
> And her abundant loosed hair, dark and curling, like propped-up [vines],
>   grapes hanging down over a column.[122]

It is said that the poet al-Munakhkhal of Yashkur, a secret lover of
al-Mutajarridah, became jealous on hearing al-Nābighah's description, and
insinuated into al-Nu'man's mind that al-Nābighah must have had a love
affair with her – whereupon the poet prudently left the court of al-Ḥīrah,

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[120] Ka'b b. Zuhayr, *Dīwān*, 3ff., verses 2, 3, 4, 8, 9.
[121] Lyall, *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 1, 790, 797, no. cxx, verses 6, 13; trans., 334–5.
[122] *Mukhtār*, 1, 184–7, verses 14, 16, 17, 26, 27, 29.

later to seek favour with the rival Ghassanid king of Syria. When al-Nuʿmān discovered al-Munakhkhal's affair he had him killed and received al-Nābighah again at his court. On this occasion it was that the poet addressed to him his celebrated eulogy.

It is of *al-Mutajarridah* that al-Munakhkhal said:

> I entered upon the girl in her bower on the day of rain,
> Firm-breasted, retroussé nose, parading in damask and in silk.
> I kissed her. She gasped for breath, panting like a [hunted] gazelle.
> I thrust her from me. Back she stepped as a sand grouse walks to a pool.
> Plaintively she cried, said, "O Munakhkhal, what is this faintness in your body?"
> "Naught but love of you touches my body. Be reassured – come."
> I love her and she loves me, and my camel loves her she-camel.[123]

The poetry of amorous adventure is based on the pattern of Imru' al-Qays in the *Muʿallaqah* and the *Lāmiyyah*. In the *Muʿallaqah* poem he visits the girl in the camp of her clan, undaunted by her menfolk who would kill him without fail:

> Passed I twixt her tent-ropes – what though her near-of-kin lay in the dark to slay me, blood-shedders all of them.
> Came I at the mid-night, hour when the Pleiades showed as the links of seed-pearls binding the sky's girdle.
> Stealing in, I stood there. She had cast off from her every robe but one robe, all but her night-garment.
> Tenderly she scolded: "What is this stratagem? Speak, on thine oath, thou mad one. Stark is thy lunacy."
> Passed we out together, while she drew after us on our twin track to hide it, wise, her embroideries,
> Fled beyond the camp-lines. There in security dark in the sand we lay down far from the prying eyes.
> By her plaits I wooed her, drew her face near to me, won to her waist how frail-lined, hers of the ankle-rings.
> Fair-faced she – no redness – noble of countenance, smooth as of glass her bosom, bare with its necklaces.
>   .   .   .   .
> Coyly she withdraws her, shows us a cheek, a lip, she a gazelle of Wújra – yearling fawn with her.
>   .   .   .   .
> On her shoulders fallen thick lie the locks of hair, dark as the dark date-clusters hung from the palm-branches.
>   .   .   .   .
> Lighteneth she night's darkness, ay, as an evening lamp hung for a sign of guidance lone on a hermitage.
> Who but shall desire her, seeing her standing thus...
>   (W. S. Blunt)[124]

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[123] *Aghānī*, XVIII, 154; Abū Tammām, *Ḥamāsah*, I, 215.   [124] Blunt, *Golden odes*, 5 and 6.

In the *Lāmiyyah* Imru' al-Qays visits his beloved while the men of the clan are still awake, but her husband is fast asleep and snoring:

Said she: "God be off with you for very shame: you'll bring me to disgrace.
    Don't you see the men chatting and the people all around me?"
    .   .   .   .

"God's oath," to her I swore, a liar's oath, "They're all asleep; there's no
    talk, none warming at the fire."
Said I: "God's oath, I shall remain here with you, even should they cut my
    head off in front of you and rend me limb from limb."
    .   .   .   .

Then we came to better things, softer our talk,
        I tamed her – wayward – how submissive she became, yielding.
I wooed her. She was difficult, but at last she yielded.
I rose [from a night of] love. Her husband rose that morning, dust upon
    him, suspicious, troubled.
Snorting like a young camel, bound with a halter-rope.
He would kill me, but the man is no killer!
Would he kill me? My Mashrafī sword is my bed-fellow, and sharp-tipped
    arrows blue like teeth of ghouls.[125]

Imru' al-Qays' approach to affairs of gallantry as manifested in these examples was one of boasting and youthful rivalry with its ruthlessness in overcoming all obstacles. The easy conquest was despised and neglected. 'Urwah b. al-Ward, himself a lover and a poet, said:

My heart is repelled by one ready with her favours, but pursues her who is
    protected, shy and elusive.

Later, during the Umayyad period, *ghazal* poets such as 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah were imitators of Imru' al-Qays and the pre-Islamic poets, and their verse introduced no real innovation, but added a touch of sophistication.

The poetry of amatory delights developed as an offshoot from that of camaraderie. In the *Mu'allaqah* of Imru' al-Qays itself we read:

There was the day when I entered the litter – 'Unayzah's litter – and she
    said, "Shame on you, you'll force me to walk," adding (while the
    litter-seat swayed along carrying us both),
"You've lamed my beast, Imru' al-Qays, get down!"
But I replied, "Ride on, drop the reins loose; don't deny me enjoyment of
    you again and again;
before now I've stolen at night upon one like you – pregnant, or nursing
    mother whom I've distracted from her year-old infant,
and when he cried behind her, she only half-turned to him, half still resting
    under me unmoving."
On a day out on the sand dunes when she refused me, swearing an oath not
    to be broken.

[125] *Dīwān*, 31ff.

Imru' al-Qays, however, had in him an element of nostalgia that tinged even the licentious passages of his verse with sadness. Most of his extant poetry, particularly the celebrated long *qaṣīdahs*, appears to have been composed during his period of failure and search for support in strange lands. He sang of pleasant memories, growing ever more remote, for consolation and escape.

Al-A'shā, who had travelled widely outside Arabia, carried Imru' al-Qays' gallant adventuring even further, imbuing it with an element of sophistication and pretence to acquaintaince with civilized foreign ways of which the bedouin and oasis-dweller were ignorant. As poets boasted of buying foreign wines, giving a she-camel for a skin of wine, tossing down a gold piece for a cup and drinking it in the towns of Baalbek, Damascus or Qaṣarīn, so also he boasted of enjoying courtesans of foreign lands:

> Women have I enjoyed in wedlock and without –
> Many a fair firm-fleshed wench, her skin white as milk,
> Broad of hip as she turns away,
> Slim-waisted, slender, fine to embrace.[126]

The messenger in the conventional *nasīb*, usually by convention a serving girl of the poet, in al-A'sha's verse has acquired the character of a pander or procuress:

> A jinnī of ours sent I to her, to bring back her answer.
> Off he went not fearing human kind, visited her, alone with her
> In secret colloquy they debated. She refused. Up sprang he with her.
> He won her over.
> Glib of tongue was he, adroit, crafty in all about her;
> A wonder-worker of soft talk with her he was.
> The fastenings of her trouser-cords came down.
> Said she: "You have made out a fair case to me, acceptable."
> He wished to know from her how the entrance would be, how she would
>   be taken.
> She said: "In a tent of red leather decked out with brightly shining
>   thongs."
> I came, listening to him in what he had to say when he counselled me of
>   her.
> "The girl is young, inexperienced, no hand has put out to touch her, and
>   you must know I spoke not to such as she is of difficulties. I fear she may
>   break off parley, or that there intervene the [ill-omened] croaking of the
>   raven."
> When the watcher slept, I entered,
> Passed the night, not undressing her
> Until, when the strength [of passion was aroused] by play with her, she
>   gave way...
>   .   .   .   .

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126 A'shā, *Dīwān*, 15.

> Her innocent young neck I inclined [to me,]
> and fondled the decorated girdle of her belly
> Like a yellow casket of perfumes mixed with unguent,
> And there she had [hung up] above [us] a skin of wine to drink.[127]

Al-A'shā's aim was not simply to boast of amorous exploits, but to amuse and entertain his bedouin listeners. Yet, inevitably, though some were entertained, others were made jealous on account of his open licentiousness. Such jealous folk he also made the subject of jest:

> She has a master apprehensive of [her] associating [with a lover], for
> suspicion haunts his mind.
> When the clan dismounts to camp, he camps apart, far away, wretched,
> frustrated and jealous,
> Saying to his two slaves, "Make haste to get out of here, lower your eyes,
> do not look at us, but go!"
> But he has no care for any companion, nor does it restrain him that she
> could change from good to bad.
> Yet he cannot close her door against her – nor is he able to fly up off with
> her![128]

By contrast with the humorous playfulness of al-A'shā, and the sporting romanticism of Imru' al-Qays, there were poets of passion, some of whom love elevated to lofty heights of valour and honourable behaviour, some heart-stricken by love, others distracted utterly by it. 'Antarah b. Shaddād may be taken as an example of the first type. He was born a slave, his mother being a slave woman called Zabībah, "whose forehead was black in colour", "her hair like peppercorns". 'Antarah's love for 'Ablah made him aspire to glory and distinguish himself as a dauntless and doughty fighter. One day when raiders attacked his people, Banū 'Abs, his father (who had previously refused to accord him the status of a free-born son), called to him, "Charge!" "To charge is not for a slave; for him is only to milk the camels and look after their teats," he answered. "Charge! and you are free," was the rejoinder.[129] With freedom came recognition. Soon he distinguished himself as the doughtiest fighter of the clan, and when jealous rivals challenged him to a poetic contest, assuming, because of his servile origin, that he would be inarticulate in the *qaṣīdah* styles of self-glorification, he met their challenge with his celebrated masterpiece, his *Mu'allaqah*. 'Ablah was the source of his inspiration:

> Should you drop your veil before me, why, I am skilled to take the
> armoured knight.
> You have taken the place in my heart, never think else, of one beloved,
> honoured.
> Of a chance I fell in love with her as I slew her folk, but by your father's
> life, [these] words [of mine] are scarce opportune!

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[127] Ibid., 176, 177.   [128] Ibid., 68, verses 11–15.   [129] *Aghānī*, VII, 142.

'Urwah b. al-Ward is an example of the second type, heart-stricken by love.[130] A fellow tribesman of 'Antarah, he was renowned for his valour, poetry and idealistic support and patronage of brave vagabonds outlawed by their tribes. He armed them and fought side by side with them as one of them. Salmā of Banū Kinānah, whom he captured on one of his raids, won his love and he took her to wife. Seventeen years later, on their way to Mecca, her original home, whilst they were passing by the market-place of the Jewish Banū 'l-Naḍīr, she tricked him, one night while he was drunk, into allowing her to choose between remaining with him or joining her clan, some of whom were present in the market. He did not expect her to prefer anyone to him, but, to his chagrin, she declared next morning in the market-place that, though he was the best of men, she could not prefer him to her clan, because she hated the women of his tribe who never ceased to call her the bond-woman of 'Urwah:

> I recalled where the tents of Umm Wahb [Salmā] were pitched at the camp
>   of the tribe below Naqīr,
> And the last time with her at our halting place in the land of Banū 'l-Naḍīr
> They said: "What wish you?" Said I,
> "To sport till the morning comes, first of all,
> With a lady pleasant in conversing, her [mouth], a little after sleep,
>   sweet-tasting like juice of grapes."
> They made me oblivious with drink, then they surrounded me, enemies of
>   God! in lying and falsehood.[131]

The reference here is to the men of Salmā's clan, to whom he had stipulated that she should stay with him that night and make her declaration next morning.

Al-Muraqqish the Younger[132] is an example of the third type, utterly distracted by love. He belonged to a family of great poets which included Ṭarafah, 'Amr b. Qamī'ah, al-Mutalammis and al-Muraqqish the Elder. He was a lover of Fāṭimah, daughter of al-Mundhir of Lakhm, king of al-Ḥīrah. Al-Muraqqish was one of the most handsome of men in face and hair. Fāṭimah used to sit on the battlements of her palace scrutinizing the people, to choose a favourite for herself from among them, as was the custom of some of the noble Arabian women. She had a maid, Bint 'Ajlān (i.e. "daughter of the speedy one", probably a nickname indicative of her abilities as procuress), who used to procure for her young men who pleased her. When the attachment between Fāṭimah and al-Muraqqish grew strong, a friend of the latter called 'Amr b. Janāb, resembling him in looks and with whom he had a bond not to withhold any secret, became suspicious, and asked to be introduced to the princess so that he might

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[130] Ibid., II, 190–7. Arberry, Odes, 181. [131] Aghānī, II, 192. Dīwān, 55ff.
[132] Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, I, 498–9, no. lvi.

enjoy her like his friend. They thought that in the darkness Fāṭimah would be unable to recognize any difference between them because of their close resemblance. But the hairiness of 'Amr's body undeceived her, and al-Muraqqish was driven from the gate of his beloved, never to be readmitted. He lost his wits with despair and sought consolation in poetry and wandering. An entire *qaṣīdah* cited by the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* is devoted to this misadventure. It opens with conventional *nasīb* in the usual style, alluding to a symbolic inamorata, a bedouin woman of Bakr, not a princess,[133] and then turns to the true theme:

> Lean and hungry, I feel ashamed before Fuṭaym – when I eat, ashamed too,
> Though the broad desert lie between us, shamed lest you meet a fellow
>   [tribesman] who has broken off relations with me.
> My camel may be spent, but o Fuṭaym, I pound the stony ground with
>   it – and with myself.
>   .   .   .   .
> So, blessed be you, with a clear star, Fāṭimah, though parted by distance
>   irreconcilable we be.
> Greetings of good fortune to you, but you know my need for you, so, of
>   your bounty return me [greeting].
> O Fāṭimah were all women in one place, you in another, it is after you I
>   should follow, distraughtly wandering.
> One who is loved cuts off her lover, as the whim sways her, and, unjust
>   inevitably, is angered against him.
> Janāb swore an oath – you complied with him, so on yourself lay the blame,
>   if blame you must.
> Whoever comes on good, men will laud him;
> He who goes astray will not lack for a critic.
> Did you not see, fearing a friend's blame, a man may cut off his hand or
>   undertake burdens distasteful?
> For some dream is it you have come sadly to trace in the sand with eyes
>   downcast? Often do dreams come to those asleep.

Al-Muraqqish the Elder was also a distracted lover, as may be seen from Ṭarafah's lines:

> Salmā has bereft you utterly of your wits, are [you not] but game [by love
>   of her] ensnared?
> Just as Asmā' took the heart of Muraqqish with a love like presages of
>   lightning in far-distant clouds.
> But ['Awf] gave Asmā' in marriage to a Murādī, seeking thereby that his
>   vital spots be stricken.
> And when he saw that no rest could restore him and the love of Asmā'
>   must kill him, Muraqqish in sadness rode out from the land of Iraq, and
>   hastily mounted his riding beasts swift to bear him away.

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[133] Ibid., I, 501, no. lvi, trans., 189–90, verses 12–14, 15–19. 20–22.

He went to the Sarw [of Ḥimyar, land of the Murādī], love driving him
there, knowing not that in the Sarw death would of a sudden ravish him
away.
Indeed, by my life, to die, suffering no further punishment, assuages the
more one affected by melancholy through a passion that never leaves him.
My feeling for Salmā is like the feeling of Muraqqish for Asmā.
Muraqqish, from unrequited affection for her, ended his days, but I,
distracted to folly by the onslaught of love for Salmā, put off my end.[134]

The story of al-Muraqqish became the prototype of all subsequent Arabian
tales of frustrated love, such as that of 'Urwah and 'Afrā', or Qays and
Laylā of Umayyad times. Versions of these stories continued to be told
for centuries even among different peoples influenced by Arab traditions,
in many lands, as for example, in the story of Tajūj and Muḥallaq of the
Ḥumrān, a Sudanese Arab tribe of Hijaz origin.

Panegyric and lampoon

There were, broadly speaking, three categories of panegyric – that inspired
by genuine sentiment, another by what may be termed social vainglory,
a third by mercenary purposes of propaganda. Indeed all three categories
may sometimes figure in a single qaṣīdah, when the original sentiment is
sincere. Praise which expresses personal gratitude is the most frequent
element in the first category, as in all the panegyrics of Imru' al-Qays and
his short pieces of praise, as in his eulogy of Sa'd b. al-Ḍibāb and Banū
Taym, whom he called "lamps in the darkness", which became their name
among the Arabs.[135] Bishr b. Abī Khāzim's praise for Aws b. Lām was
of this category. When Bishr was taken captive in battle by Aws, who
wanted to kill him because he had satirized him, Aws' mother Su'dā wisely
advised him to spare his life and send him back to his people with gifts
and thus win his praise, for he was a poet of renown.[136] A third example
may be seen in the verses of Umayyah b. Abī 'l-Ṣalt of Thaqīf in praise
of the hospitality of 'Abdullāh b. Jud'ān, the pre-Islamic chief of Quraysh,
who had given the poet generous treatment.

He has a lively herald in Mecca and another who makes proclamation from
the top of his house,
summoning to large guest-bowls of [black] shīẓā-wood filled with pure heart
of wheat mixed with honey.[137]

The second category of eulogistic poetry has some resemblance to the type
of love poetry inspired by a spirit of gallantry. A poet would travel to the

[134] Mukhtār, I, 355–6, verses 13–18, 21–23.   [135] Imru' al-Qays, Dīwān, 141.
[136] Ibn Qutaybah, Shi'r, Leiden, 145–7.   [137] Schulthess, Umajja, 19.

court of a prince in Damascus, al-Ḥīrah, the Yemen, or to the camping
grounds of a famous tribal leader, and compose verses in praise of him,
collect his prize, then return to his own people to boast of his success.
This boastful poetry should not be confused with the professional
panegyric, although the latter may be said, to some extent, to have
developed from it. For example, Ḥassān b. Thābit visited the court at
Damascus of his distant tribal kinsman, Jabalah b. al-Ayham, king of
Ghassān, to consolidate his own prestige among his fellow tribesmen of
Yathrib. Legend has it that Ḥassān, al-Nābighah and 'Alqamah, all three
poets, met at the Ghassanid court and Ḥassān carried off the first prize
for his panegyric verses. Though Ḥassān is said to have been sixty years
old when the Prophet Muḥammad left Mecca for Yathrib, it is impossible
that he could have had a poetic contest with 'Alqamah, who was
contemporary with Imru' al-Qays. Ḥassān said in his eulogy of the
Ghassanid king:

> The children of Jafnah are round the tomb of their father, the tomb of the
>   son of Māriyah, the generous and bountiful.
> They give whomsoever comes to them at Barīṣ to drink of [river] Baradā
>   water poured out with choice wine, deliciously cool.
> So much are they sought out that their dogs do not [even] grumble; they
>   ask not who are the multitude [of guests] advancing [on them].
>   .   .   .   .
> Their faces are white [from honour unsullied],
>   their lineage noble, proud of bearing, of the first quality.[138]

Al-Musayyab b. 'Alas, maternal uncle of al-A'shā, in like fashion travelled
to the leader of Banū Tamīm, al-Qa'qā', to praise him in his *'Ayniyyah*
(poem rhyming in the letter *'ayn*):

> Indeed shall I send a *qaṣīdah* on the wings of the winds, a present
>   despatched from me to al-Qa'qā'.
> It will come down to the watering places, lasting ever wondrous and
>   strange, quoted and heard among the tribe.
>   .   .   .   .
> Of a truth you are more generous than a bay brimming over with wave
>   piled upon wave, surging to and fro.
> Of a truth you [are known] among your enemies, all of them, as braver than
>   a lion in [its] den, returning to the charge again and again.[139]

Professional eulogy sometimes arises from genuine personal admiration
and attachment to persons, sometimes from political motives, and some-
times it is the profession of a lifetime. Zuhayr b. Sulmā, we are told, was

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[138] Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 74–5, no. 13, verses 11–13, 15; *Aghānī*, XIV, 2.
[139] A'shā, *Dīwān*, 354, no. xi, 15–16, 20–22.

deeply impressed by the roles played by Harim b. Sinān and al-Ḥārith b.
'Awf, who undertook to pay all the blood-wits arising out of a tribal feud,
which amounted to over three thousand camels over a period of three
years. Zuhayr's eulogy of these two men is one of the *Muʿallaqāt*
collection. It is introduced by a fine *nasīb* describing the caravan of Umm
Awfā; it then turns immediately to the endeavours of Harim and al-Ḥārith.
From a formalistic aspect their journeyings in pursuit of their purpose
stand in place of the conventional *takhalluṣ* journey.[140] The eulogizing of
these leaders is, however, incidental to the main purpose of the poem,
which is to inveigh against war and urge the feuding clans of Ghaṭafān
to hold fast to their pledges and avoid treachery:

> But have you now sworn every binding oath?
> Do not conceal from Allah whatever is in your breasts,
> hoping it may be hidden. Allah knows whatever is concealed,
> and either it's postponed, and put in a book and stored away for the Day of
> Reckoning, or it's hastened and punished betimes.
>
> (A. J. Arberry)[141]

The *Muʿallaqah* concludes with a series of moralizing saws. An atmosphere
of gentle, almost languid movement prevails throughout the poem, from
the descriptions of the slow-moving caravan of red howdahs with their
lovely women, the briefer allusion to the pilgrim crowds slowly moving
round the Kaʿbah, the sight of the hundreds of camels, large and small,
appearing from the hill-paths, to the description of the ponderous
mill-stones of war that grind and crush. Then follows the incident of the
treachery of Ḥuṣayn b. Ḍamḍam, and the poet's declaration that he is
wearied of the burdens of life. All this is in keeping with the atmosphere
of long-drawn-out negotiation which finally put an end to the internecine
strife:

> Many are there whom you may admire whilst they remain silent,
> But when they speak, you discover where they excel or fall short.
> For the tongue of a lad is half of him, half is his heart.
> Naught else remains save the shape of flesh and blood.

At the end of the poem Zuhayr says to his patrons:

> We have asked and you gave, and once more we asked and you gave again.
> He who keeps asking will one day be denied.[142]

Zuhayr was an upholder of moral values, a representative of pre-Islamic
Arabian monotheism. In one of his celebrated odes addressed to Harim,

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[140] See pp. 52ff.
[141] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, 59, verses 27–8; Arberry, *Odes*, 115.
[142] These verses do not appear in Tibrīzī and at least some editions of the *Dīwān* (Edd.).

his lifelong patron, he says in praise of his clan, to which also belonged
al-Ḥārith, partner with Harim in the negotiations:

> Among them are orators handsome of face, and conclaves where word is
>   followed by deed.
> The wealthy among them have the duty [to entertain] those who come as
>   guests to them; those with little give generously, spending [according to
>   their means].
> Some folk after them have striven to match them, but could not do so, yet
>   are not to be blamed, for they spared no endeavour.
> For whatever benefits they have brought are inherited from their fathers and
>   fore-fathers.
> Is it not the bamboo root which grows the Khaṭṭī lance-shaft?
> Do palm-trees grow elsewhere than in their favourite soil?[143]

'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the second Orthodox caliph, preferred Zuhayr to all
other pre-Islamic poets, because he was truthful in his praise and noble
in diction.

Al-Nābighah is celebrated for his eulogy of the Ghassanid king and his
apologies to the king of al-Ḥīrah. Like Zuhayr, he was a protagonist of
the inter-tribal moral code, but his style has a more personal touch and
spontaneity. He says in his eulogy:

> When 'twas said his squadrons of Ghassān unmixed with others had gone
>   a-raiding, confident of victory for him was I.
>   .   .   .   .
> Whenever they go a-raiding flight upon flight of birds [vultures], by each
>   other guided, hover above them,
> Keeping them company till they raid with them, birds of prey habituated to
>   blood.
> You see them behind the tribal [warriors], watchful, their eyes askance, like
>   shaykhs wrapped in hare-fur robes.
> Leaning forward, each assured that his clan, whenever the armies clash, will
>   be the foremost victor.[144]

The apologetic poems of al-Nābighah are, for the greater part, concerned
more with praise of his patron al-Nu'mān, and with attacking his enemies,
than with simply proclaiming the poet's innocence of their accusations.
This latter theme, in spite of its importance as a major purpose in all these
qaṣīdahs, is treated almost like a continuation of the nasīb in the 'Ayniyyah[145]
and as a brief digression from panegyric in the Dāliyyah (poem rhyming
in the letter dāl):

> Nought did I say of the ill of which you have been told.
> Were it so, let not my hand raise my whip for me.
> Were it so, may my Lord punish me with a punishment which will rejoice
>   him who tells you this lie![146]

[143] Shaybānī, Sharḥ, 113–15. Al-Khaṭṭ is a district in the Gulf, still known by this name today (Edd.).
[144] Mukhtār, I, 160, verses 8, 10–13.   [145] Ibid., I, 155ff.   [146] Ibid., I, 154, verses 39, 41.

'Alqamah's *Bā'iyyah* (poem rhyming in the letter *bā'*), addressed to al-Ḥārith b. Abī Shamir of Ghassān, is an example of the political panegyric. Another example is the eulogy addressed by 'Abīd b. al-Abraṣ to Hujr, father of Imru' al-Qays, who was a tyrannical king and treated Banū Asad, the people of 'Abīd, with great cruelty. So 'Abīd sought to appease him by praise; no sooner had this been done than 'Abīd and the men of Banū Asad planned and carried out his assassination. 'Abīd said:

> Weep, o mine eye, for Asad's sons!
> Sunk are they in anguish of heart.
> . . . . . .
>
> Give pause, O King! avoid the curse!
> stay! In thy sentence ruin falls.
> . . . . . .
>
> If thou leave them, it is thy grace;
> and if thou slay them, it is no wrong:
> Thou art the Lord and Master, thou,
> and they thy slaves till the Resurrection.
>
> (C. J. Lyall)[147]

This, however, did not prevent him later from answering the challenge of Imru' al-Qays, when the latter sought to avenge his father's death on the Banū Asad:

> O thou that threatenest us, for the slaying
> of thy Father, with vile abasement and death,
> . . . . . .
>
> Yea, these are we! Gather then thy hosts –
> gather them and hurl them on us!
> . . . . . .
>
> We defend our honour: and some there be
> that fall weaklings, worthless, between this and that!
>
> (C. J. Lyall)[148]

The professional panegyrist acting as propagandist for gain is said to have appeared during the last phase of the pre-Islamic period.[149] Al-Nābighah is said to have lost some of his tribal prestige among his people, Banū Dhubyān, because he accepted gifts of kings for his eulogies, but the fact that he was honoured at 'Ukāẓ suggests the contrary. His line

> And Banū Dhubyān have criticized me for fearing him.
> But is there any stigma in fearing him?

indicates some disapproval of the motives of his eulogy, rather than of the fact of his addressing eulogistic *qaṣīdahs* to a king. Al-A'shā's prestige appears to have been due mainly to his position as a peripatetic professional

[147] Lyall, *Dīwān*, text, 77, trans., 61, no. xxix, 1, 4, 10–11.
[148] Ibid., trans., 28, no. vii, verses 1, 12, 5.   [149] Cf. Ibn Rashīq, *'Umdah*, 1, 80 seq.

propagandist and encomiast, travelling from one patron to another, offering himself as arbiter and assessor of the standing of the great Arabs of his day in the light of the inter-tribal code.

In the quarrel between the two 'Āmirī rivals, 'Alqamah b. 'Ulāthah and 'Āmir b. Ṭufayl, it was al-A'shā's siding with the latter that accorded him the greater prestige. Al-A'shā had heard of their quarrel and rivalry, so he went first to 'Alqamah and asked him, by way of a test, to give him protection, which 'Alqamah readily conceded. Al-A'shā then asked him if he would protect him even in the face of death – which 'Alqamah admitted he would not be able to do. So al-A'shā left him, went to 'Āmir and proposed the same condition to him. When 'Āmir offered him protection even in the face of death, he asked him how he would put his undertaking into execution. 'Āmir explained that he would pay al-'Ashā's blood-wit to his heirs even if his death were due to natural causes. So al-A'shā decided to support the case of 'Āmir, and praised him, but lampooned 'Alqamah. It is said that later, when 'Āmir became an enemy of the Prophet and declared his intention of fighting him whereas 'Alqamah joined Islam, this qaṣīdah of al-A'shā fell into disrepute and people avoided reciting it or quoting from it,[150] but this seems disproved by 'Alī's famous quotation when comparing his own caliphate and that of 'Umar:

> What a difference there is between my day on the saddle
> from the day of Ḥayyān, brother of Jābir![151]

Al-A'shā died unconverted in the year 6/627, a very old man. He had intended to go to Medina and offer the Prophet a eulogy in which he apostrophized him as

> A Prophet who sees what you do not see
> and, by my life, his fame has travelled everywhere.

Some of the leaders of Quraysh met him on the way, offered him a hundred camels and asked him to defer his journey to Medina until the next year. He accepted, but died before the end of that year. This anecdote is embellished with the story that the Qurashīs warned al-A'shā that Muḥammad would not allow him to drink wine; but the prohibition of wine came two years after the death of al-A'shā. The following are examples of al-A'shā's professional panegyrics. In a poem belauding the Yemeni king, Qays b. Ma'dī Karib, he says:

> My daughter said, when [she saw me] set on journeying:
> "I see it is just as if we were already orphans.
> Father of mine, may you never leave us!

[150] Baghdādī, Khizānat, III, 366.   [151] A'shā, Dīwān, 108.

for all will be well with us if you do not go.
When far lands conceal you, I see we shall be harshly treated and the ties of
kinship severed."
"Are you afraid I die in a far place?"
[said I,] "Many a one comes back [to find] his folk have not left."
To the man Qays shall I make the long night marches,
taking protection pacts from each clan on the way.
Dark foam-crested waves at the Euphrates mouth, storm-tossed together.
[Nearly] capsizing the sailing vessel, its prow all but smashed,
Its crew huddled amidships for fear, clinging to the poop,
Are not more generous than he with such as he has at all times when their
skies are without clouds.[152]

In his poem of judgement between 'Āmir and 'Alqamah, he says:

'Alqamah, nay, you cannot compare with 'Āmir,
the breaker and tier of bow-cords,
The mingler of cavalry with cavalry
who rises as the dust of the charge rises.
You are lord of [your house], Banū 'l-Aḥwaṣ,
naught more. 'Āmir is the lord of the entire clan of Banū 'Āmir.
He is lord and found his tribe lords –
from father to son they have been lord over you.
.   .   .   .
That over which you two have contended is clearly evident to him who
hears and tells.
You have made me arbiter between you.
One resplendent as the moon outshining the stars judges between you.
Who takes no bribe in his judgement and has no care for the vanquishing of
the loser.[153]

Al-A'shā's renown and reputation as an inter-tribal panegyrist and
propagandist earned him the title of "Great Cymbal-Player of the Arabs".
Later panegyrists followed in his footsteps, from al-Ḥuṭay'ah, one of his
disciples, onwards, reaching their apex during the 'Abbasid epoch in the
poetry of Abū 'l-Ṭayyib al-Mutanabbī.

The lampoon ("*hijā*")

Lampooning could be either implicit (i.e. without specifying the name of
the person lampooned) or explicit (i.e. attached to a named person). An
example of the former is a short piece of Imru' al-Qays, addressed to
a woman called Hind:

Hind, don't marry a half-wit with his baby hair still not shaven off [Arab
boys have a tuft of long hair which is shaved off on attaining puberty.]

[152] Ibid., 33, verses 51–2, 54–5.   [153] Ibid., 105, verses 15–18, 21–23.

and with white patches on his skin,
Amulets on his wrists, with a deformity in the wrist,
and who looks for a hare to tie its ankle-bone to his leg [as an amulet]
to ward off fate, [in fear] that he perish.
No garrulous fool am I, sitting in company, not ever falling into trouble, no
　　blabbing idiot,
Nor yet irresolute, weakly consulting others' advice, submitting – though
　　led against his will.[154]

Another example is 'Antarah's line:

I was told 'Amr is ungrateful of my favours.
Ingratitude vexes the soul of the benefactor.

Another example is the line of Dhū 'l-Isba':

A cousin I have, and for all the likeness between us in mood,
we are at odds – I hate him, and he in turn hates me.
What prompts our dislike is that ever between us estrangement grows,
and he thinks me beneath him, and I think the same of him.
By God! my cousin, thou art not better in stock than I,
nor art thou my ruler and judge, to order my ways at thy will.
Thou feedest not my household in days of hunger and dearth,
nor dost thou come to my help when hard things press me sore.
For me, my door (by thy life!) is never shut to a friend,
nor is aught that I expend a boon of burdensome weight;
Nor does my tongue wag freely against my nearest kin
with words unseemly, nor is my stroke not one to be feared.
Away – keep thou to thyself! my mother was not a slave
to tend the pregnant she-camels, nor canst thou cheat my wits.
Some day at last comes a man to be known for the man he is,
though long he may feign a nature that is not the truth of his life.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(C. J. Lyall)[155]

'Amr here is a pseudonym for one or more of the leaders of the dissenting
party of Banū 'Adwān, as Lyall has observed.[156] Dhū 'l-Iṣba' was chief
of Banū 'Adwān for a long time, but when he grew very old, his authority
was contested and dissension followed. Of this he said:

What excuse have the clan of 'Adwān?
They were the [very] serpent of the earth.
One of them has wronged [another], and none has spared the other.[157]

Al-Ḥārith b. Wa'lah's poem, in which he ruefully confesses his own
cowardice:

My mother and my aunt bear the ills of you twain, feet of mine,
for what ye did at Kulāb, when the heels were nigh cut off!

　．　　　．　　　．　　　．　　　．　　　．　　　．　　　．　　　．　　　．

[154] Mukhtār, I, 99, verses 1–4.　　　　[155] Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, 321, xxxi, verses 1, 2, 4–7, 9, 10.
[156] Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, 321–23, no. xxxi; trans., ii, 114.　　　　[157] Aghānī, III, 2.

> We were ostriches all in a string before a horseman's pursuit.
> Backs were slashed...
> We were as ostriches pursued by persistent horsemen...[158]

is in reality a subtle form of implicit lampoon directed against Banū 'l-Ḥārith and their chieftain 'Abd Yaghūth, who was the leader of that battle. When he was taken captive by the Taymites, he composed a lament over himself in which he said:

> May God bring shame upon my tribe for [fleeing] at al-Kulāb, both those of pure stock and the others, the allies.
> Had I wished, a tall mare had saved me...but I defend the honour of your father, when the spears reach out at the defender [of his fellows].
> . . . .
> You Servants of God, shall I in truth not hear again the herdsmen's songs as they drive the flocks, with their newly born, far away?
> An old woman of the 'Abd Shams laughs at the sight of me as if she had never before seen a Yemeni captive![159]

We know that al-Ḥārith's poem is the riposte to 'Abd Yaghūth's, because of the former's reference to the old woman of 'Abd Shams (a clan of Muḍar):

> If I can...I shall never allow myself to be the captive of a Muḍarī woman...

Al-Ḥārith cannot have dared to make an open attack on 'Abd Yaghūth, for he was killed whilst a captive by the men of Taym.[160]

In the explicit type of lampoon the identity or name of the person or persons attacked is clearly indicated, as for example in 'Antarah's lines from his *Muʿallaqah*:

> I had feared that I should die before the fortune of war turned against Damdam's two sons
> Who insult my honour though not insulted by me,
> vowing [to shed] my blood, when I have not clashed with them.
> If this they do – ['tis true] I left their father [slain],
> a carcass for the hyena and aged vulture.[161]

Another example is the short poem which one morning the people of Quraysh found written on the wall of their House of Assembly:

> Lying tales have turned Quṣayy from glory,
> And bribery like that given to brokers,
> And their eating of meat by itself unmixed with bread,
> And their saying: "A trading caravan has set off;
> a caravan has arrived."[162]

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[158] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 327, no. xxxii; trans., ii,117, verses 1 and 4.
[159] Ibid., I, 316, xxx, verses 5–7, 11–12; trans., 112.
[160] Taym is of the Tamīm tribal group, itself a Muḍar (North Arabian) ancestry.
[161] *Mukhtār*, I, 380, verses 83–5.
[162] Commerce is regarded as demeaning by most tribes-people (Edd.).

'Abdullāh b. al-Zibaʿrā of Sahm, one of the rival clans of Quṣayy, was accused of composing this lampoon, and, but for the wisdom of some Qurashī leaders, he would have been killed and a series of vendettas initiated thereby.[163]

The story of Ṭarafah b. al-ʿAbd was tragic, for, when a mere youth, he lampooned the tyrant of al-Ḥīrah, ʿAmr b. Hind, and his brother Qābūs, saying:

> Would that we had a ewe in place of King ʿAmr,
> bleating around our tent.
>
>   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·
>
> By your life, the rule of Qābūs b. Hind
> is mixed with much folly.
> He has one day for us, and another for [hunting] bustards;
> they, miserable creatures, can fly, but fly we cannot![164]

Some time later Ṭarafah, accompanied by his maternal uncle al-Mutalammis, foolishly went to the court of ʿAmr at al-Ḥīrah, after the custom of poets. ʿAmr, who neither forgot nor forgave, cunningly told them that his agent at al-Baḥrayn, nearer to their home territories than al-Ḥīrah, would give them their prizes. He gave each of them a letter which, he told them, contained orders to this effect, whilst in reality their death sentences were contained in the letters, which neither of them could read. Al-Mutalammis prudently asked a boy of al-Ḥīrah to read his letter, and on discovering its true content, warned Ṭarafah, who rejected his advice and went to al-Baḥrayn, where he met his death. Because of his untimely, tragic end Ṭarafah was called "the murdered lad".

Ṭarafah was of Banū Bakr, and destiny decreed that his death should later be avenged by the leader of the rival Banū Taghlib tribe, ʿAmr b. Kulthūm. At a tribal gathering in ʿAmr b. Hind's camp at al-Ḥīrah, the king's mother, Hind, asked Laylā, daughter of the great Taghlib leader and poet, Muhalhil, and mother of ʿAmr b. Kulthūm, to do her homage by serving her. When Hind persisted in her demand, Laylā said, "Let her who has need, see to her own need." But Hind still continued to ask her to serve her. So Laylā cried: "I am being humiliated, people of Taghlib." When ʿAmr, her son, heard her cry, he seized a sword that was hanging from the roof of the tent, drew it and cut off the head of the king. Then his men attacked the king's camp and looted it. Some lines of ʿAmr's *Muʿallaqah* seem to refer to this event:

> With what purpose in view, ʿAmr bin Hind,
> do you give heed to our traducers and despise us?

[163] Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 196–7.   [164] Shantamarī, *Dīwān*, 101ff.

> With what purpose in view, 'Amr bin Hind,
> should we be underlings to your chosen princelets?
> Threaten us then, and menace us; but gently!
> When, pray, were we your mother's domestics?
>
> (A. J. Arberry)[165]

According to Ibn Rashīq, the implicit lampoon is the more effective because it excites curiosity regarding the identity of the lampooned. This is generally true, but sometimes on the contrary, the explicit type can be the more effective, particularly when the aim is to pillory the person satirized by public mention of his identity. Indeed, the criterion of the success of a lampoon depends mainly on the substance of its theme and on the balance it strikes between the personal and universal elements of satire. The following has been quoted by Qudāmah as a model of the perfect lampoon:

> If they commit treachery, or some foul outrage,
> slay, or act miserly, they care not.
> Next day they will come to you, their hair combed,
> as if they had done naught.[166]

Lampooning may occur as part of eulogy, as well as of self-glorification, for the purpose of setting up a pattern of contrast. This may occur implicitly, that is by implying that others are not as the subject of the eulogy is, as in Zuhayr's praise of Harim b. Sinān:

> If, upon a day, you meet Harim, even be he without means,
> you will find his character is liberality
> and generosity.
> Nor is he at a loss for argument amid the assembly
> whenever a man says his say.[167]

Or as in Ṭarafah's self-glorying:

> If I die, mourn for me as I deserve.
> and for me, rend the neck of [your dress], daughter of Ma'bad,
> Regard me not as a man whose ambition is not as mine,
> unable [to face events] as I do, no veteran of battle such as I,
> A man tardy when a great cause calls, but swift turning to ignominy,
>   contemptible, buffeted by the fists of men.[168]

An example of the explicit type of hijā' (lampoon) is Imru' al-Qays'

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[165] Tibrīzī, Commentary, 117, verse 8; Arberry, Odes, 206.
[166] Qudāmah, Naqd, 56; Bonebakker, Kitāb Naqd al-Shi'r, 45. Cf. Sībawayhi, Kitāb, 1, 446.
[167] Mukhtār, 1, 250ff., verses 29 and 32.
[168] Ibid., 1, 321–2, verses 96–8.

contrasting of Sa'd b. al-Ḍibāb, whom he praised, with Hāni' b. Mas'ūd, whom he criticized:

> By my life, a people in whose camps we see
> foals a-tethered and great herds of camels,
> Are dearer to us than a people of hill-tops,
> the tracks of whose goats the leopard follows by night.
> Sa'd b. al-Ḍibāb, by my life, when he calls at morning,
> is dearer to us than you, you horse-mouth, stinking of ill-digested barley!
> Sa'd pleases us with his humour, coming to our crowd
> at morning with a couple of wine-skins full,
> and meat of slaughtered camels.[169]

This contrasting of eulogy with lampoon is regarded as among the most effective forms of satire, and is therefore frequently employed in poems of tribal battle and strife, as in the *Mu'allaqah* of al-Ḥārith:

> Whatever be the thing that you intend – set it before us and the councils [of the tribes] will see to it.
> .   .   .   .
> Know you not those days when people were pillaged by raiding [bands] and each tribe screamed [in its alarm],
> When we drove our camels hard from the date-palms of al-Baḥrayn with al-Ḥisā' as our goal?
> Then we turned [to raid] Banū Tamīm.
> When the sacred months came, some of the daughters of Murr had become servant girls among us.
> .   .   .   .
> Eighty men of Banū Tamīm, spears in their hands,
> death on their blades [raided Taghlib].
> Any Taghlibī they slew stays unavenged, covered in oblivion.[170]

The poetry of contesting tribes often led to a personal kind of contest between the spokesmen of clans. The more dignified the utterance, the more highly it was esteemed, but sometimes frayed tempers led to abusive language, as, for instance, 'Āmir al-Khaṣafī's riposte, in the same rhyme and metre, to a *qaṣīdah* of Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥumām.[171] To Imru' al-Qays' and 'Abīd's credit, despite their bitter enmity, their language did not sink to low abuse.[172]

When two poets answer each other with cut and thrust, generally in identical metre and rhyme, such a *qaṣīdah* is called a "flyting" (*naqīḍah* pl. *naqā'iḍ*). The art of *naqā'iḍ* became increasingly popular during the Islamic period, though indeed it was popular long before Islam. Nor was the coarse language of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq unknown to the pre-Islamic poets. Even Zuhayr, who was celebrated for his reserve and purity of diction, used it

[169] Ibid., I, 89–90, verses 14–17.   [170] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, 131–32, 136, verses 27, 32–4, 52.
[171] Cf. *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 100ff., no. xii, 35ff.; 624, no. xci; trans., 257.
[172] *Mukhtār*, I, 93 seq., and II, 87ff.

when al-Ḥārith b. Warqā paid no heed to his threat that he would satirize him if he did not return his servant Yasār to him.[173] Zuhayr avoided using vulgar commonplace vocabulary, substituting words of rarer usage:

> But for his phallus, you would have sent him back.
> The worst of animals borrowed for milking is a phallus.
> When your women fall over him, he erects like a rope twisted tight.[174]

Obscene language was used to damage the repute of the person satirized by laying emphasis on his essential bestial qualities through reference to the organs of his natural functions of excretion and micturition, it being assumed that he had reverted to his lower nature by his offences against the accepted moral code.

Sometimes a war of words in satirical verse between two poets would take on a comradely character, as in the *naqā'iḍ* (flytings) of Abū 'l-Muthallam and Ṣakhr al-Ghayy of Hudhayl.[175] When the latter died Abū 'l-Muthallam composed a moving elegy lamenting the death of his sparring partner, commencing:

> If every time had a treasure to save and keep, Ṣakhr assuredly would have been that treasure.[176]

Sometimes a comic element enters the lampoon with the object of amusing the listener at the expense of the person satirized. In the *hijā'* contest between himself and Ta'abbaṭa Sharrā, Qays b. 'Ayzārah, the Hudhalī,[177] employed a mock-heroic style, modelled on the famous lament of 'Abd Yaghūth al-Ḥārithī over himself (above, p. 75), telling that a woman of the enemy tribe laughed at him when she saw him a captive. Qays had been taken captive by Banū Fahm, the clan of Ta'abbaṭa Sharrā. The Banū Fahm, he declaims, called to one another, assembled and agreed they would kill him outright without delay. So he tried to buy his life with the offer of a large ransom in camels and sheep. Ta'abbaṭa Sharrā, nicknamed by the poet Sha'l (Fire-brand), and his wife Umm Jundab played a prominent part in the parleying:

> "The first thing we demand," said they, "is the she-camel al-Balhā', her mates and herd."
> May God defend me!
> My mistress [in whose custody I was], Umm Jundab, commanded I should be killed.
> May no one hear of that!
> She says: "Kill Qays. Cut out his tongue!"
> It should be enough for them if someone were to cut off my head!
> Sha'l, the fire-brand, commands I be put to certain death.

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[173] Ibid., I, 254, verse 28. [174] Ibid., I, 255, verses 2–3. [175] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, I, 262–83.
[176] Ibid., I, 284. [177] Ibid., II, 589ff.

So to Shaʻl, said I, "You're an ill pleader for my life!"
He would bestow a young she-camel from my ransom upon his wife
As if you were making presents from the leggy young she-camels of wealthy
  Ibn Jāmiʻ.

This style of mock-heroic bedouin humour persisted throughout the
Umayyad era. Jubayhāʾ, an Umayyad bedouin poet of the Hijaz, used a
similar style in his lampoon of a poet of Taym whom he alleged to have
borrowed from him a milking goat which he did not return. Jubayhāʾ
mock-heroically described his she-goat as another might have described
a pedigree milch camel:

>   She steps forth before the twain who milk her, with udders full, projecting
>   beyond her thighs, and smiting her parted legs.[178]

The first line of Jubayhāʾ's poem is:

>   Thou man of the children of Taym, wilt thou not render me back the beast
>   I lent thee – for loans are given to be repaid?

The Taymī, vexed by Jubayhāʾ's hyperbole, answered in identical metre
and rhyme:

>   Indeed I shall return her to you, the loathsome creature,
>   so that you may espouse her, if you find no women to marry you.[179]

Al-Aʻshā, who was sought after for his professional panegyrics, was
likewise dreaded for his great ability as a lampoonist. One of the three
qaṣīdahs added to the seven *Muʻallaqāt* is his *Lāmiyyah*. Its prominent themes
include an attack on Yazīd of Banū Shaybān:

>   Take Yazīd of Banū Shaybān a message:
>   Are you still chafing with wrath,
>   Abū Thubayt, will you not desist from attempting to hew down our tree,
>   for you will do it no harm as long as camels utter their yearning cry [i.e.
>   forever]?
>   You are like one who butts against a rock to split it, without harming
>   it – the ibex breaks [only] its own horn.[180]

Al-Ḥuṭayʾah of Banū ʻAbs, poet and transmitter of Zuhayr and colleague
of al-Aʻshā in supporting the cause of ʻĀmir b. al-Ṭufayl against ʻAlqamah
b. ʻUlāthah,[181] became the most dreaded lampoonist of the early caliphate,
particularly during the time of ʻUmar. To him we owe the emergence of
the *qaṣīdah* in the form later developed by Jarīr and his Umayyad
contemporaries.

   There is a form of protest and self-justification known as *ʻitāb*, which
is closely associated with the art of the lampoon. It is inspired by anger

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[178] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 331, verses 1–5; II, 119.   [179] Ibid., I, 335.
[180] *Commentary*, 149, verses 44–6.   [181] ·Cf. p. 73.

at being wronged or slighted by a kinsman, a friend or a patron. It aims at redressing the wrong done, but not at severing the links between the poet and the subject of his reproach ('itāb). Sometimes, however, it verges on the border of lampoon in the case where redress of a wrong done the poet can be obtained in no other way. An example of 'itāb is Ṭarafah's protest against his cousin Mālik, in the Mu'allaqah, verses 68, 70 and 78:

> The nearer I approach him, the further he withdraws.
>
> · · · · · · · · ·
>
> He has made me despair of any good I sought of him,
> it is as if I had buried him in the niche of a grave.
>
> · · · · · · · · ·
>
> The wrong done by kinsmen is more hurtful to a man than a blow by a
>   sword of Indian steel.

The niche (laḥd) referred to here is an oblong excavation made in the side of the grave pit at the bottom, in which the corpse is placed.

Self-glorification ("fakhr")

Self-glorification (fakhr) occurs in all the Mu'allaqāt except that of Zuhayr, which is concerned more with wisdom (ḥikmah), and in which the poet himself declares his boredom with the burden of long life. Fakhr may be personal or tribal. Personal fakhr may consist of recollections and reflections, as in the verse of Imru' al-Qays. His Mu'allaqah tells of his horsemanship and hunting exploits, as well as his experience of the hard rough life of the tribal outcasts among whom he lived for a time:

Many a water-skin have I carried on my shoulders...many a desolate wadi have I crossed wherein a wolf howled...and when it howled I replied: "We are both destitute..."[182]

In his Lāmiyyah he says:

> Did I but strive after the most meagre living,
> a little of wealth would suffice me – possessions I seek not,
> But for lasting glory do I strive and such as I may attain enduring fame.
> While even though some spirit still remains in a man
> and he fail not in striving, yet he will not attain all things he desired.[183]

In the Rā'iyyah he apostrophizes his friend, distressed by the length of the journey to Byzantium:

> My friend wept when he saw the path ahead of him
> though he was certain we should come to Caesar.
> So I said to him: "Let not your eye weep –
> we try for a throne, no less – else die vindicated."[184]

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[182] Commentary, 21, verses 49–52. [183] Mukhtār, I, 42–3, verses 52–4. [184] Ibid., I, 58, verses 34–5.

In his *Nūniyyah*, he says:

> If you see me upon the saddle of Jābir
> upon a howdah like a bier,
> my [clothes like] fluttering shrouds,
> Ah, many the man sore pressed in battle to whom I have charged again,
>   remember, many a captive have I freed from his shackles, who [in
>   gratefulness] said,
> "My soul be your ransom."[185]

Imru' al-Qays almost exhausted all the themes of *fakhr* in his autobiographical reflections and memories.

Personal *fakhr* may occur as an expression of rebellious individualism, as in Ṭarafah's *Mu'allaqah*:

> Unceasingly I tippled the wine and took my joy;
> unceasingly I sold and squandered my hoard and my patrimony
> till all my family deserted me, every one of them,
> and I sat alone like a lonely camel scabby with mange;
>   .   .   .   .
> I'm the lean, hard-bitten warrior you know of old,
> intrepid, lively as the darting head of a serpent.
>   (A. J. Arberry)[186]

And as in the *Lāmiyyah* of al-Shanfarā:

> Mount your riding beasts, sons of my mother, and be off with you,
> for I have more inclination, of a truth, to some other tribe than you.
> Kinsfolk I have, apart from you, a swift strong wolf, [sand] lord,
> ever on the move, a snake [variant "leopard"], smooth-skinned, spotted,
>   and a maned hyena prowling ceaselessly.
> Folk these are by whom is not divulged a confidence entrusted them.
> Nor is an offender because of some crime he has committed left unaided,
>   unsupported.
> Proud of his honour, dauntless is each,
> but when the first of the driven charge appears even braver am I!
> When hands reach to food, not the hastiest of the company am I.
> Haste is greed.[187]

Personal *fakhr* may be inspired by protest, as in the *Mu'allaqah* of 'Antarah:

> When I drink I dissipate my wealth, but my honour remains abounding, and
>   untarnished.
> When I am sober I do not fall short in generosity, and my good qualities
>   and generosity are what you know.
> When I see the foemen advancing in their hordes, urging one another on, I
>   charge reproachless;
> For I held to my uncle's counsel in the morning when lips snarl back from
>   the teeth.

[185] Ibid., I, 74, verses 6–7.
[186] Ibid., I, 316, verses 53–4; *Commentary*, 42, verse 51, 48, verse 82; Arberry, *Odes*, 86, 88.
[187] Shanfarā, *Lāmiyyah*, verses 1, 5, 8; *Mukhtār*, II, 597.

In the death-fray of which the heroes complain not save with battle-cry.
When they placed me at the front to ward off the spears from them
No coward was I, but there was little ground before me [to advance].

   .   .   .   .

My heart was relieved to hear the knights say:
"Bravo, 'Antarah, onward!", and cured of what ailed it.[188]

Recognition by the chief men of his tribe was the supreme moment of
'Antarah's life and it forms the central theme of his *fakhr*, uniting the
personal and tribal elements, for it was due to abnegation in battle in the
cause of the tribe that he became recognized as worthy to be ranked among
its leading warriors.

The standard pattern of personal *fakhr* is best exemplified in Labīd's
Mu'allaqah. Here the poet's sense of belonging to a noble clan underlies
his deep feeling of self-satisfaction, which inspires him to self-
glorification:[189]

When the assemblies meet together, we never fail to supply a match for the
    gravest issue, strong to shoulder it.
Granting to some their rights, denying the claims of some for the general
    good, generous, assisting liberality.
By my nobility I seek and win a precious prize, [for I am] sprung of a stock
    whose fathers laid down a code for them;
And every folk has its ways of practice and its model [or "leader"].
So be satisfied with what the Sovereign has allotted; one who knows them
    well has divided the qualities among us.

                        (A. J. Arberry, adapted)[190]

Since, therefore, the superiority of his clan is in essence a gift from God,
though justified by the clan's actions, so likewise his own superiority is
God's gift. He is elated because his actions display this superiority, since
they conform with the tribal moral code. Does he not endure the hardships
of travel and carry out his duties as a fighting man, such as keeping watch
from a dangerous lookout place to warn the men of the tribe against
raiders? He takes part in the gambling known as *maysir* organized for
feeding the poor, and dispenses hospitality to boon companions. Labīd
tells us of his horsemanship and his defence of the clan:

In full panoply, borne by a swift mare, its bridle [rein] around my waist.

   .   .   .   .

At many an affair of men, strangers all,
where booty was the hope – disgrace dreaded,

   .   .   .   .

Have I rejected the wrong and upheld the right?
No man of honour there, in glory can outdo me.[191]

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[188] Ibid., I, 375–79, verses 44–5, 72, 69–71, 78.   [189] Ibid., II, 398–9; *Commentary*, 87ff.
[190] Arberry, *Odes*, 147.   [191] *Commentary*, 83ff., verses 63, 70, 72.

Some of the virtues and practices esteemed by Labīd in accordance with the tribal code of pagan days were later to be condemned by Islam: customs such as engaging in wine-drinking and *maysir*. These distractions came to be regarded as mere vanity and ostentation. The Qur'ān criticizes man in his boasting when "He says: 'I have wasted wealth untold.' Does he think that no one has seen him?"[192]

The pattern of *fakhr* which occurs in Labīd's *Mu'allaqah* may be seen in al-Ḥādirah's *'Ayniyyah*,[193] Rabī'ah b. Maqrūm's *Mīmiyyah*,[194] Tha'labah b. Ṣu'ayr's *Rā'iyyah*[195] and many others. In all of these the tribal *fakhr* is intermingled with the personal *fakhr*.

> We shield our honour by spending the most precious of our possessions. In battle we leave our spears sticking in those we pierce, as we declaim our name and lineage.[196]

Tribal *fakhr* often occurs as a *qaṣīdah*'s single main theme, with hardly any personal praise mixed with it. The best examples are to be found in the *Mu'allaqahs* of al-Ḥārith and 'Amr b. Kulthūm. 'Amr completely identifies himself with his Banū Taghlib, his voice becomes the magnified voice of their collective personality, chanting, like a chorus, the praise of their valour and puissance:

> We were on the right when the battle was joined. The children of our father
>   were on the left.
> They charged those opposite them. We charged those opposite us.
> They returned with booty and women captives. We returned with kings in
>   fetters.
> Following us were beautiful women; we made sure that they should not be
>   shared out as booty or despised.
> They feed our steeds and say: "No husbands to us are you if you do not
>   defend us."
> If we do not protect them, may we not survive or live for aught after![197]

Unlike 'Amr b. Kulthūm, al-Ḥārith does not figure as the personification of his tribe, but rather as its spokesman, putting forward its case, refuting the arguments of its enemies unyieldingly. He says in sarcastic tone to Banū Taghlib:

> Of recent news and a thing we hear about the Arāqim [tribes of Taghlib
>   and Bakr b. Wā'il], closely concerning and displeasing us, is that our
>   brothers wildly denounce us, their words infringing the pact.
> They confuse those of us who are innocent with the culpable,
> It is of no avail to be blameless.

.   .   .   .

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[192] Qur'ān, xc, 6–7.
[194] Ibid., I, 355, no. xxxviii; trans., 131ff.
[196] Ibid., I, 57, no. viii; trans., 170.

[193] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 48, no. viii; trans., 16ff.
[195] Ibid., I, 255, no. xxiv; trans., 86ff.
[197] *Mukhtār*, II, 371–2, verses 64–6, 83, 88–9.

Remember the pact sworn at Dhū 'l-Majāz
and the pledges and persons acting as surety [for it] produced there.
.   .   .   .
If you dig up [the ground] between Milhah and al-Sāqib, you will find there
   both dead and living [avenged and unavenged].
Or if you stay silent about us we shall both be like one who closes an eye
   over motes between its lids.[198]

Then al-Hārith turned to the battles won by his people against Banū
Taghlib and other tribes.

According to the transmitters, he was a leper or afflicted with some
disfiguring skin disease, so when he stood up to speak on behalf of his
tribe before the king of al-Hīrah, seven screens were placed between them,
to protect the king from being infected by him. Al-Hārith leaned upon
his spear, filled with anger and defiance, and declaimed his celebrated
Muʻallaqah extempore. So overcome was the king by admiration for him
that he left his throne, sat upon the floor and drew ever closer to the poet.
One by one he ordered the screens to be removed until nothing stood
between them. While he was declaiming the blade of al-Hārith's spear had
penetrated his own palm without his being aware. The king was so
impressed that he gave his verdict in favour of al-Hārith and his tribe. Their
victory on that occasion was supreme.

Elegy ("*rithāʼ*")

Elegiac verse (*rithāʼ*) can claim both men and woman as its exponents.
"Women must weep" – theirs it is in all countries to mourn the dead, and
in pre-Islamic Arabia they gave expression to their grief in song and dance.
They might beat themselves rhythmically with leather thongs, as mentioned
in many Hudhalī *qasīdahs*. At times they would rend the neck of their gowns
at times they would face one another beating themselves rhythmically with
their hands, as mentioned by Kaʻb b. Zuhayr in his *Lāmiyyah*, *Bānat Suʻād*.
Certain women mourners became famous for their elegies, like the mother
of Sulayk b. Sulakah, who bewailed him:

     Would I knew what slew you. Woe to me!
     Slain he was by what slew his ancestor Sulak before him.
     Death waits in ambush for man wherever he goes.[199]

While on a raid, ʻAmr Dhū 'l-Kalb of Hudhayl was killed when asleep
by a pair of leopards. Banū Fahm claimed to have killed him as an act of

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[198] Ibid., II, 341ff., verses 15–17, 41, 28, 30.   [199] Freytag, *Hamasae*, I, 414ff.

reprisal, and supported their claim by the fact they had found his quiver
of arrows. His sister Janūb lamented him:

> Every man is deceived by [hope of] long life. Whosoever would conquer
> the days, conquered is by them.
> And there must perish every man who makes the pilgrimage to God's
> House. Youth and grey hair alike death overtakes.
> All living things, however long they may remain in safety, must one day
> take their way to ill, a much-trodden path.
> Whilst the gallant lad is yet in sweet content with life a drenching rain
> cloud of evil fortune is driving down upon him.
>
> .   .   .   .
>
> Tell Hudhayl, and tell those who will tell them, what I say (though some of
> what is said is to be dubbed a lie),
> 'Amr Dhū 'l-Kalb, best of them in esteem, lies in Sharyān valley, the wolves
> howling around him.
> Thrusting [with spear] a thrust so wide that gush upon gush of his blood
> follows it in a mighty stream.
> Playfully up walk the eagles to him, [confident], strutting like maidens in
> their gowns.
> He it was who would bring out the lovely round-breasted girl, submissive
> among the captive women, perfume diffusing from her sleeves.
> The like of 'Amr you will never see as long as foot treads earth, and camels
> moan in yearning for their homelands.[200]

Janūb had at last to believe the true story of her brother's death, that he
had not been killed in battle, but devoured by beasts of prey.

> Of 'Amr I asked his fellow company. Horror filled me when they replied to
> my questioning.
> Said they: "Asleep he was when there chanced upon him the mightiest of
> wild beasts.
> Two mountain leopards, by your life, chanced upon him, took their will of
> him,
> Chanced on him at the hour fated for his death – so they obtained their will
> of him;
> by your life, they worked their will on him."
> By God I swear, o 'Amr, had they roused you, they would have stirred up a
> mighty affair,
> A very lion from his den they would have raised, killing and destroying
> man and goods.
> A lion rending and devouring his enemies, when he encounters his
> adversary, he charges fiercely, crushing him.
> They [the leopards], and the mysterious decree of destiny, have toppled a
> firm corner-stone of the Earth.
>
> .   .   .   .

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[200] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, II, 578ff.

They [Banū Fahm] say, "We killed him in a cave," [alleging] a proof, "We
   have inherited [his quiver] of arrows."
Why then did you not [capture them] before fate's decree?
He was a man and you were men.
Fahm know, had they encountered you in battle, as booty they would have
   fallen to you.
As soon as they heard a sound of him, they were like to abandon their
   veiled women to him.
Guests and seekers after charity knew, when the sky was overcast with dust,
   the north wind blowing,
And suckling women had abandoned their babes and the eye saw no wet in
   any cloud,
That you were rain-giving spring and support to those who come seeking
   you out [as guests].
By day, you were the very sun of it – in the dark shades of night you were a
   crescent moon.[201]

Al-Khansā',[202] daughter of 'Amr b. al-Sharīd of Banū Sulaym, became
the most celebrated poetess just before Islam. She was later converted to
Islam, and went to Medina with a group of her people to meet the Prophet
and give their pledge to him. The Prophet admired her poetry and asked
her to repeat several lines again and again. 'Ā'ishah, the wife of the
Prophet, noticed that al-Khansā' was still dressed in mourning in the
pre-Islamic manner in spite of her conversion, and questioned her about
it. Thereupon she told 'Ā'ishah that she had taken a solemn oath not to
change her mourning dress as an act of devotion to the memory of her
brothers, Mu'āwiyah and Ṣakhr. Mu'āwiyah, al-Khansā's full brother, was
killed by Banū Murrah when on a tribal raid against them. She composed
fine laments upon him:

> After the death of Ibn 'Amr of Āl al-Sharīd...I swear
> I shall not condole for any other who has perished,
> nor ask a woman weeping what afflicts her.[203]

Al-Khansā' was, however, destined to weep for another son of 'Amr of
al-Sharīd, her half-brother, Ṣakhr, who succeeded Mu'āwiyah as head of
the clan and was later to die of a wound received on a tribal raid. It was
on account of her elegies for Ṣakhr that al-Khansā' became celebrated as
the greatest woman poet of the pre-Islamic period. Ṣakhr was kind to
al-Khansā', whose husband was a gambler and a wastrel, and whenever
she came to him for help he divided his flock of sheep and herd of camels
in half, giving her the better of the two halves. His wife one day chided

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[201] Ibid., II, 583.   [202] Cf. *Aghānī*, XIII, 137.
[203] Khansā', *Dīwān*, 120, verses 2–3.

him for this extravagance, saying that just a few sheep or goats would be sufficient aid to her, whereupon Ṣakhr said to her, in *rajaz* metre:

> By God, I shall not give her the worse portion.
> She is a chaste woman who has caused me no shame.
> And if I die she will tear up her veil and her blouse will be of coarse hair in mourning for me.

Al-Khansā' said in one of her laments for Ṣakhr:

> A she-camel [that has lost her calf,] [sniffing] round and round her tulchan [stuffed skin of a dead calf], moaning both loud and soft.
> Grazing for a while, until she remembers [her calf], [distractedly] runs hither and thither [in search of it].
> .   .   .   .
> Upon a day, she grieves not more than I when Ṣakhr departed from me – bitter-sweet is fate.
> O Ṣakhr, you frequenter of water-holes, against [the dangers of which] watering parties warn one another – no shame [in avoiding] watering there.
> He stalked like a tiger to the uncertain fray, his weapons fang and claw,
> Standard-bearer, eager warrior of valleys, ever present at assemblies [of the tribes], leader of armed men.
> Ṣakhr was our master and our lord, Ṣakhr, in winter-time, the slaughterer of camels [to feed the guest].
> Ṣakhr – the leaders model themselves upon him – as if he were a mountain with a beacon on its summit.[204]

Not only was al-Khansā' imitated by women poets of later periods such as Laylā al-Akhyaliyyah and Laylā bint Ṭarīf, but also some men composers of elegies followed her style of uninhibited expression of sorrow coupled with praise for the deceased. Such was Ṣakhr al-Ghayy, lamenting his son Talīd,[205] and he in turn lamented by Abū 'l-Muthallam:

> A man he, who would accept no injustice, facing calamity,
> slaughtering the noble beast [to provide food], not lagging behind [his fellows], not weak,
> Defending what it is right to defend, running in the intense heat, carrying off raided camels without being caught up, tough, second in rank to none.[206]

Most of the elegy composed by men, however, resembled the eulogistic *qaṣīdah* in general pattern. Some elegiac *qaṣīdahs* – though these were but

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[204] *Dīwān*, 48–9. The Arabians put the stuffed skin of the dead calf to the mother to console her; such a stuffed skin is called "tulchan" in Scots. Cf. *Dīwān*, 30, for another *qaṣīdah* of al-Khansā' on the same theme.
[205] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, I, 293.   [206] Ibid., I, 284.

few – even opened with the amatory prelude, as in Durayd b. al-Ṣimmah's lament for his brother[207] and some Hudhayl poetry.[208] In these the theme of grief at separation from the inamorata, regarded as the lesser calamity, prefaced the more drastic theme of separation by death from relatives, friends or patrons. In some elegiac qaṣīdahs the inamorata of the nasīb is replaced by a female relative of the poet who is concerned about his bereavement.

Elegies composed by men poets conform with conventional eulogistic verse in emphasizing that the deceased held to the moral code of Arabian society and therefore deserved to be mourned. They tend to be less concerned with the direct, uninhibited expression of grief. Aws b. Ḥajar's 'Ayniyyah, mourning his kindly patron Fuḍālah, is considered one of the best pre-Islamic elegies:

> O my soul, mourn you well, for that which you dreaded has befallen.
> He in whom were united forbearance, courage, prudence, vigour, is
>   departed,
> Of penetrating brilliance, surmising about you as if he had already seen and
>   heard [you].
>   .   .   .   .
>
> Let the drinking party, the lads and their wine, weep for you one and all,
>   and he who nursed expectations of you shall weep,
> The woman in bare rags, whose out-stretched hands stay a poorly fed boy
>   with naught but water.[209]

Mutammim b. Nuwayrah's 'Ayniyyah has the spirit and values of the pre-Islamic era:

> Among boon companions he was not one found ill-mannered over the
>   wine, selfish or proud.
> Among the gambling party, he was not the one standing over the tripes,
>   preventing the meat from being distributed.

It mourns the poet's brother, Mālik, killed in the wars of Apostasy.[210]

[207] Cf. Ibn Rashīq, 'Umdah, II, 151–2.
[208] Sukkarī, Sharḥ, II, 916.
[209] Qālī, Amālī, III, 35–6, verses 1–3, 10.
[210] Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, 529ff., lxvii, verses 7, 16; trans., 207–8.

Aphorism or wise sayings ("ḥikmah")

Elegiac verse is often replete with reflections on life and death which lead on to the utterance of words of wisdom (*ḥikmah*, the aphorism),[211] as, for instance, in Abū Dhu'ayb's '*Ayniyyah*:

> When fate puts out its claws, you find no amulet will avail against it.
> The self desires much if you let it desire, but, if restrained, it will be content
>   with little.[212]

Labīd says in a line of his elegies:

> All but God is vain.
> Every delight, inevitably, must vanish.[213]

And elsewhere:

> Wealth and kinsfolk are as borrowed things.
> All borrowed things must one day be returned.[214]

Hudhayl poets often treated of the vulnerability of all living things to death, including such apparently ageless creatures as the wild ass, mountain goat and eagle.[215] Labīd's lament on his brother Arbad opens:

> We wither away, but the stars ascendant
> wither not away. Mountains and water-cisterns
> remain after we are gone.[216]

A poet may compose a lament pitying himself in anticipation of death. Such *qaṣīdahs* were often used as vehicles for *ḥikmah* either in the narrow traditional sense or in the more profound and more truly contemplative sense. 'Abd Yaghūth's plaint, in which he claims to have adhered to the moral code, is an example of the former.[217] Examples of the latter may be seen in the *qaṣīdahs* of Imru' al-Qays, reflecting his unhappy latter days, when he was defeated, destitute, sick and almost without friends:

> Would I might die all [at once]
> but mine is a soul that withers day by day.[218]

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[211] The aphorism or *sententia* is a favourite device in all pre-modern literatures. Ancient Egypt and ancient Mesopotamia provide us with collections of such, and a specimen of a collection which will be familiar to the English public is the Old Testament "Wisdom of Solomon". The aphorism is by its nature a truism in content, and to modern taste may often seem banal; it gains its literary value from the neat and pointed form in which it is expressed, which is something that may not survive translation. Shakespeare's "loan oft loseth both itself and friend" is a banality in content, and a twentieth-century writer would tend to avoid it; but in the Shakespearian context its elegant form makes it acceptable. Some of the early Arabic aphorisms are of the same character.

[212] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 855, 857, cxxvi, verses 9, 13; trans., 356.

[213] *Mukhtār*, II, 483; Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, 243–4, Guillaume, *Life*, 169.

[214] *Mukhtār*, II, 413.

[215] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, I, 245–53, 439.

[216] Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ Dīwān Labīd*, 168.

[217] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 315–20, no. xxx, trans., 114.

[218] *Mukhtār*, I, 86, verse 11.

Also:

> After al-Ḥārith al-Mālik, son of 'Amr, sovereign from al-'Irāq to Oman,
> Can it be that I [his grandson] seek protection with Banū Shamajā b.
> Jarm? – humiliating thought!
> Banū Shamajā b. Jarm withhold from us [the very milk] from their goats.
> Have mercy, o Merciful![219]

In one of his shorter pieces he says:

> After al-Ḥārith al-Malik, son of 'Amr, has passed away,
> and Hujr the noble, Lord of tents,
> May I hope for easement from the turns of fate
> when Time is not unmindful of the great silent rocks?[220]

Al-Mumazzaq al-'Abdī, nephew of al-Muthaqqib, was among the earliest poets to disapprove of worldliness, while dwelling on the thought of death:

> What will protect man from the sallies of Time?
> Who will cast a spell to save him from death?
> They will arrange my hair and set it in order,
> not because it is unkempt, and dress me in clothes which are not worn out.
> They will raise me [on a bier] and say, "What a man was he!"
> They will wrap me in sheets like a turban twisted into tawse.
> They will send some of the best men among them to lay my frame in the
> earthy tomb.
> Go slow, show not too much concern,
> for all our wealth belongs to the Heritor Eternal [variant "the surviving
> heir"].[221]

Lamenting for oneself, with particular emphasis on how one's corpse will be prepared for burial in the grave, later became a popular theme among the poets of asceticism (zuhd) and mysticism during the Islamic period, even surviving in religious poetry composed in colloquial Arabic up to the present day.

'Adī b. Zayd of al-Ḥīrah[222] composed several poems in which he dwelt on thoughts of death and the ephemeral nature of worldly fortune, the most celebrated being his Rā'iyyah, Arawāhun muwaddi'un am bukūrū, which became a model for many later works. 'Adī belonged to a people of Banū Tamīm called al-'Ibād – the Servants of God – because they were converted to Christianity. He was a favourite of the younger Nu'mān, king of al-Ḥīrah, but later lost favour with him, and was imprisoned by him for a long period and finally ordered to be executed. 'Adī tells us how the older Nu'mān,

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[219] Ibid., I, 109.
[221] Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, I, 600ff., lxxx, trans., 238–9.
[220] Ibid., I, 80, verse 10.
[222] Cf. Aghānī, II, 18ff.

king of al-Ḥīrah, was converted to Christianity and abandoned all worldly
pomp to become a hermit:

> Consider the master of the castle Khawarnaq[223]
> when one day he looked out and reflected on truth.
> He was pleased with his rank, the abundance of his wealth,
> the river opposite and [his palace] Sadīr.
> Then his heart repented, and to himself he said:
> "What happiness has any living being on his way to death?"
> After success, royal grandeur and ease
> they will be hidden in the grave.
> All will be as dry leaves blown by winds from east and west.[224]

Qaṣīdahs of admonitions (*waṣāyā*) often treated of the approach of death
and of self-lamentation, as in ʿAbd Qays b. Khufāf's *Lāmiyyah* addressed
to his son:

> O Jubayl, the day of your father's death approaches, so when
> you are called upon to do great deeds, hasten to do so[225]

and as in Dhū 'l-Iṣbaʿ's admonition to his son Asīd:

> O Asīd, if you possess wealth, conduct yourself well therewith.
> Treat men of honour as brothers, if you find way to do so,
> And drink of the same cup as they, even if it be deadly poison.[226]

Poetry of *ḥikmah* may occur unassociated with self-lamentation (*rithāʾ*),
either scattered among the various themes of the *qaṣīdah*, as in the case of
Ṭarafah's *Muʿallaqah*, or mingled with the main theme, as in the case of
Zuhayr's *Muʿallaqah*, (in which wisdom forms the concluding part of the
poem), or as the main theme by itself, as in the case of ʿAbīd's wonderful
Bāʾiyyah, considered one of the ten golden *qaṣīdahs*. It begins with *nasīb* like
a eulogy, and ends with a camel journey followed by an equestrian theme
in which the speed of the poet's mare is likened to that of an eagle and
its doomed victim. The main theme of wisdom occurs in the middle – a
variation on the familiar pattern of the *qaṣīdah*:

> Win success by what means you will;
> it may be gained by weakness,
> and the cleverest fellow may be deceived.
> Men will never instruct the one whom Time does not;
> taking pains is no use without the inborn talent.
>
>   .   .   .   .
>
> Be helpful in any land where you are –
> do not say "I am only a stranger".
>
>   .   .   .   .

---

[223] See pp. 60–1.   [224] ʿAdī, *Dīwān*, 86–90.
[225] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, i, 750, cxvi, trans., 322.
[226] *Aghānī*, iii, 9. The allusion in the last line is, tropically, to war (Edd.).

> Petitions to men may meet refusal,
> but those to God bring no disappointment.
> It is through God that all good is gained;
> in much of talk there is only weariness.
> God has no partner; He knows what men's hearts hide.
>
> · · · · · · · · ·
>
> Man lives his life exposed to disappointment:
> too long a life is torment.[227]

'Abīd lived to be very old. King Nu'mān of al-Ḥīrah had two special days in the year, one for pleasure (the Day of Good), on which he rewarded the first person he met in the morning, and one for distress (the Day of Evil), on which he ordered the first person he met in the morning to be put to death. It was the misfortune of 'Abīd to be encountered on the evil day. The similarity of some of the views expressed in this *qasīdah* to Islamic beliefs has been regarded by some contemporary writers as indication of fabrication;[228] this the present writer does not endorse.

Description ("*waṣf*")

Waṣf denotes a variety of descriptive poetry ranging from the simple enumeration of attributes, as in Zuhayr's picture of the male ostrich:

> small of head, hollow-chested, knock-kneed, ankle-bones brushing, with small short ears as if cropped.[229]

and the simple simile as in al-A'shā's:

> slender like a lean filly...[230]

to the complex metaphor as in Zuhayr's:

> The steeds and riding beasts of youthful folly now are unharnessed.[231]

Waṣf also includes such imagery as in Labīd's description of a desert scene after rain:

> The broom shoots grew tall. On the sandy sides of the valley the deer and the ostriches were giving birth.
> The wide-eyed oryx bending over their new-born calves in peace,
> The little calves grouped in flocks over the plain.[232]

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[227] Tibrīzī, *Commentary*, 161ff., verses 21, 22, 24, 18, 29, 20, 26.
[228] Cf. 'Abīd, *Dīwān*, 13.
[229] *Mukhtār*, I, 268, verses 15, 16.
[230] Ibid., II, 168.
[231] Ibid., I, 240, verse 1.
[232] *Commentary*, 68, verses 6, 7; *Mukhtār*, II, 383–4. Arberry, *Odes*, 66.

Also in the description of the thunderstorm in the last lines of the *Muʻallaqah* of Imruʼ al-Qays:

> O Ḥārith, do you see yonder lightning? Look, there goes its glitter
> Flashing like two hands now in the heaped-up crowned stormcloud.
>
> .   .   .   .
>
> Over Qaṭan, so we guessed, hovered the right of its deluge,
> its left dropping upon al-Sitār and further Yadhbul.
> Then the cloud started loosing its torrent about Kutayfah
> turning upon their beards the boles of the tall *kanahbuls*
>
> .   .   .   .
>
> and Thabīr – why, when the first onrush of its deluge came
> Thabīr was a great chieftain wrapped in a striped *jubbah*.
> In the morning the topmost peak of al-Mujaymir
> was a spindle's whorl cluttered with all the scum of the torrent.
>
> .   .   .   .
>
> In the morning the songbirds all along the broad valley
> quaffed the choicest of sweet wines rich with spices.
>
> (A. J. Arberry)

The Arabians were much given to *waṣf*. In it they displayed their skill in verse and mastery of their language, giving expression to their genuine feeling for closeness to nature, as may be seen from their description of fauna and flora, the scenic beauty of sunsets, the glorious brightness of cloudless mornings, the formidable rocks and precipices of their mountains, the rain storms and wadis in spate

> filled with flood water, noisy, carrying
> heap upon heap of broken branches,[233]

the moon and stars, the great sea that almost surrounds the Arabian Peninsula:

> Green waves ever murmuring;[234]

ships, camels, horses, cattle with

> The swords, see! flickering like tails of calves as they rise from the pool;[235]

farms with water-wheels irrigating them, date-palm groves:

> Tall young palms, thickly crowned with branches on top of which are
> bunches of fresh red fuit,[236]

vineyards, meadows refreshed unceasingly by rain:

> Each continuous rain showering down generously upon it leaving every
> puddle [shining] like a silver coin.[237]

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[233] *Mukhtār*, I, 154, verse 46.
[235] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 205, no. xx; trans.,70.
[236] *Mukhtār*, I, 53, verse 6.

[234] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, I, 134.

[237] Ibid., I, 371, verse 20.

The *Muʿallaqah* of Imru' al-Qays contains over seventy descriptive topics. The poet begins with the description of the remains of the *dār* (abode). Then his memory gradually unfolds first the picture of the lovely Umm al-Ḥuwayrith and Umm al-Rabab, fragrant with musk, their perfumes like a gentle breeze of the east, bearing the scent of cloves. Then follow the episode of the pond when he killed his riding camel for the maidens playing there, his journey in the same howdah as 'Unayzah, the love theme and the description of the inamorata who "illumines the darkness after dusk". The thought of darkness brings Imru' al-Qays back to his present state of failure and despair. He contemplates the Pleiades, the stars, the night, dark as the waves of the sea. The thought of morning recalls the memories of his early youth, when he would rise before dawn, whilst the birds were still in their nests, and ride upon a stout and noble horse:

> That charges, retreats, advances and turns back,
> all tögether, as does a large stone broken off a rock, brought down by the
>   spate.
>
> .   .   .   .
>
> It has the flanks of a gazelle, legs of an ostrich, the trot of a wolf, the lope
>   of a fox.

Then follows a hunting theme with gazelle in the distance resembling a necklace of onyx beads adorning a well-born young woman. Reminiscences of the poet's youth and boyhood flash amid the images of horse riding, meat cooking in cauldrons and on grilling spits; the steed shakes its head, a beauty to see:

> Quivering like a boy's spinning top, which spins the more when his hands
>   pull the string.

These memories illuminate the poet's heart. He sees a flash of lightning far away. Then follows the description of the cloud-burst. In the morning of the following day, the birds sing merrily; in the evening the merriness vanishes, corpses of desert beasts are strewn here and there amidst the swift-running streams of the flood, like bulbous plants uprooted. Even the remains of the *dār* stirring up memories that make the poet stop to shed a tear, are no more. Imru' al-Qays' *Muʿallaqah* is a symphony of descriptive patterns.

Some poets specialized in certain fields of *waṣf*, such as Abū Du'ād of Iyād and Ṭufayl of Ghanī, noted for the description of horses. Aws b. Ḥajar, one of the greater poets, devoted almost all his celebrated *Lāmiyyah*, *Ṣaḥā qalbuhu*,[238] to the description of weapons; this later served as a model

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[238] *Dīwān*, 82.

for many poets. Muzarrid b. Ḍirār copied even the phraseology of its first line in the opening line of his own *Lāmiyyah* on a similar theme,[239] while his brother, al-Shammākh, used its description of the bow as model even more skilfully in treating the same subject in his *Zā'iyyah*.[240]

In their fondness for *waṣf*, the Arab poets employed digression as a device for indulging in description. Al-Shammākh's description of the bowyer is a case in point, for his main theme is the journey of the wild ass. The ass avoids the watering-place of Dhū 'l-Sharī'ah because of the formidable archer, 'Āmir, who never misses:

> As if whatever wild animal he aims at,
> were already dead, dry and stiff.

Al-Shammākh digresses in order to match the skill of the archer with that of the bowyer:

> The bowyer selected it from a branch of a lote tree
> protected by a thicket of thorn branches and scrub.
> It had grown up straight in a well-sheltered place,
> with all round it bushes thickly entwined.
> He cut away all branches dry or green,
> opening a way for himself, till he reached it and he stood clear.
> Then he applied an axe to it, the sharp edge of which
> was an implacable foe to the middle acacia branches.
> When he got it in his hands, he saw he had come upon what he wanted
> and he turned away from those he had frequented.
> He left it for two years for the sap of its bark to seep into it,
> inspecting it [from time to time] to see where it needed straightening.
> Then he fined it down with the trimmer [a wooden or iron tool used to
>   straighten the arrow-shaft] and pared it down with the chisel
> as the spurs break in the awkward horse of refractory temper.
> Then he came with it to the folk gathered at the seasons of market,
> and a good buyer accosted him, experienced, offering him a high price for
>   it.

The buyer offered the bowyer expensive goods, such as *Shar'abī* and red and green striped cloth, or eight ounces of refined gold, and ninety silver dirhams:

> He kept on talking to himself. Should [he, the bow's] lord, refuse what was
>   offered or accept?
> To him they said: "Sell to your brother. Let no obstacle come between you
>   today and a fine bargain."
> When he had sold it his eyes filled with tears...

Sometimes a poet may go further and digress even from a digression in elaboration of his *waṣf*, as in 'Antarah's description of the buzzing wasps,

[239] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 160, no. xvii; trans., 57.   [240] *Dīwān*, 46–9.

which occurs as part of his picture of the fragrant meadow, the sweet smells of which resemble the perfumed mouth of his 'Ablah:

> Gaily buzzing, sharpening one leg against another in the way
> a man whose hand has been cut off stoops over a flint
> [rubbing it in his arms to strike a light],[241]

and as in his description of the tall black slave with a cropped ear, a sheepskin over one shoulder[242] – which is a digression from his theme of ostriches, itself a digression from that of his riding camel.

The "extended" simile, in which greater attention is focussed upon its details than on the concept introducing the simile, frequently occurs as a device for descriptive digression; for example, in the case of the sand grouse, swift to escape from a bird of prey, to which Zuhayr likens his swift horse:

> Like a sand grouse at the wells,
> frightened off by those come to draw water,
> and robbed of his mate by the snare, solitary.
> .   .   .   .
> Then a falcon, reddish-black of cheek,
> the foreparts of her wings with feather closely ranged on feather,
> stooped on it, a bird for which no snare is set.
> None can surpass her in swiftness, happy of heart
> that she has the power to escape and leave.
> At times, just below the sky, at times just above the earth
> was their flight, the [falcon] hot on its tail,
> not passing or catching up with it,
> Squawking and fluttering noisily with the [falcon] on its tail,
> at one moment she nearly took it,
> but it made a desperate spurt.
> Till, when [it gave the falcon the slip],
> a boy's hand grasped at it, up it flew
> leaving bits of feather in his hand.
> Then on it flew till it came to a valley which gave it refuge...[243]

Another case is that of the pearl diver described by al-Musayyab b. 'Alas (maternal uncle of al-A'shā), whose pearl, obtained after a perilous voyage, is likened to the Malikiyyah, inamorata of the poet, in her glory and splendour:

> Stout of heart, captain of four ship-mates different in colour and race,
> They quarrelled among themselves until they agreed to deliver the keys of
>   command to him.
> A vessel of noble lines, plying [at sea] rose with them, riding the deeps of
>   the ocean,

[241] Mukhtār, I, 372, verse 23.   [242] Ibid., I, 273, verse 31.
[243] Ibid., I, 252–3, verses 13, 15–20.

Until, as their hopes were disappointed
and one month led on to another,
He cast anchor in a perilous place. The ship's anchors held firm, not moving.
A man with matted hair, tall, with a stoop,
whose two front teeth had been pulled out [by way of initiation in
fortitude] went down,
Dripping with oil, thirsty, inflamed by want.
Diving had killed his father. Said he,
"I shall follow him, else win the desired prize of all time."
Midday came – the water over him,
and his mate, apprehensive of the unknown.
He had found his heart's desire [the unique pearl which will make his
fortune]. Up he brought it,
a pearl-oyster shell shining like a glowing coal.[244]

For Abū Dhu'ayb the conversation of his loved one is like the taste of
honey.

Solid white honey – its queen bee[245] makes her hive
in a lofty mountain, which defeats all who would ascend it or descend
The very eagle dreads to skim its jutting crag –
and the outcrops below it are far beyond the reach of hawks.
Up flew the queen and settled there, returning ever to a home rich in honey.
Were [his] rope eighty fathoms even and ninety arm-spans
[the robber] would claw at it with his finger-tips.
He would let himself down to the [hive] with ropes carefully secured,
with many an instruction [to those above],
a cunning fellow, son of a cunning fellow.
When the bees sting him he heeds not their sting,
but goes beyond them [to take it]
in the hive of the industrious honey-bees.[246]

The hospitality theme sometimes offers poets opportunities to make *waṣf*
digressions on scenes of famine, as in Ibn al-Barṣā"s line:

What time the suckling mother, bent double with leanness
is pressed in the night by her babe,
with its two poor strings of [cowrie] shells around its neck...[247]

or adverse weather conditions as in Ibn al-Ahtam's lines:

Many the wanderer...
He struggles with the freezing first black
darkness of the night as the winds
make him draw his garments close, and lightnings flash
out of the depths of a raincloud...
I have entertained him well...[248]

[244] A'shā, *Dīwān*, 352, verses 4–14.
[245] The Arabs, like the Greeks and Romans, consider the queen bee a male (Edd.).
[246] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, 1, 142–4. Sukkarī, the commentator, evidently did not know that *nūb* means "bees",
and is clearly puzzled about the last verse (Edd.).
[247] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 1, 340, no. xxiv; trans., 122.   [248] Ibid., 1, 247, no. xxiii; trans., 84, verses 7–10.

or mundane spectacles drawn from everyday life, as in his description of the slaughter of a camel:

> The two butchers came to it, mounted on top of it
> to flay the skin off it...[249]

and the description of cooking:

> And when the maidens are veiled in smoke and hasten to lift off the
> cooking pots so as to roast meat on the hot coals,[250]

and the allusion to customs pertaining to the borrowing of cooking pots during times of hardship:

> Ask me not, but enquire [of others] regarding my disposition,
> at the time when those who seek the cooking pot are so many that
> they turn away him who seeks to borrow it. [It was customary for the
> owner to put some food in a pot lent by him].
> And they sit round about it watching [till it be cooked];
> and the cherished maiden of the tribe
> is among those who kindled its cooking fire.
>   (C. J. Lyall, slightly adapted)[251]

Themes of travelling may offer description of hardships, such as drinking brackish water, eating coarse and hastily prepared food, knowing comradeship even with wild beasts, as in al-Muraqqish the Elder's lines:

> When we lighted the fire to roast our meat,
> there came to us an ash-coloured [jackal or wolf – the colour indicates both
> in ancient Arabic poetry], in evil case;
> I flung to him a slice of our roast
> ashamed [simply to send him away]:
> I like not discourtesy towards one with whom I sit at meat.[252]

or perils, as in Abū Zubayd's frightful experience of the attack of a lion:

> They spent the night in journeying – with them goes a night-prowling lion,
> stealthy, seeing in the dark.
> Until [near morn] they dismounted – nearer, step by step, he drew, none
> aware
> Save their mounts – the fine horses, sensing him, shied in fright.
> And, when he saw them huddled together, proudly he stalked toward
> them – to the midst of their bivouac.
> Shouting they rose to scare him off – he but advanced the closer.
> Then there confronted him a man, heavy-built,
> With drawn blade, no shield...
> So, with his left paw, strikes he at his belly.
> Help the man had cried for – but the friends lagged behind.

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[249] Ibid., 1, 252, no. xxiii, verse 15; trans., 84.   [250] Freytag, Hamasae, 1, 276.
[251] Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, 1, 348–9, no. xxxvi, verses 3–4; trans., 127–8.
[252] Ibid., 1, 466, xlvii, verses 12–13; trans., 172.

From his hands, weaving confusedly, fell the sword,
And by the sacrifice of his soul were other souls preserved.
Hither and thither [in their panic] fled the tribesmen and their steeds – the
    stricken man abandoned on the field of battle

.   .   .   .

His chest and forearms as if smeared with red saffron that a bride
    displays.[253]

Abū Zubayd would seem to have had a taste for the macabre. In one of
his *Sīniyyahs* he describes the final moments of a wounded man thus:

> A palm of his, which, still pulsating, tries to chase off
>   the brooding bloodstained vultures...
> Soon after they mounted his corpse,
>   some licking his blood, some tearing at his flesh.[254]

By contrast, the wine theme offered opportunities for more cheerful
descriptions:

> With gallant lads like swords of India...with whom,
> reclining, I contested the sprigs of sweet basil,
> and wine, sharp-tasting, in goblets ever wet with it.[255]

Wine could be purchased for a year's wool-clip as well as for a
she-camel;[256] the higher price was for the better qualities of imported wine
from distant places, such as 'Ānah and Ṣarīfīn of Syria and Mesopotamia.
Abū Dhu'ayb tells us of wine brought from Syria to be sold during the
season of pilgrimage in such markets as 'Ukāẓ, near al-Ṭā'if:

> It comes, upon a time, with caravan folk, taking protection [from one tribe,
> then another], the arrow [carried by those bringing it as a sign of protection
> accorded them] covering it with security, and it travels on with the [caravan]
> folk till it sees Thaqīf, its tents being at the rough high land of al-Ashā'.[257]

Ibn Bujrah, a wine merchant of al-Ṭā'if, measured out so precious a
commodity in a smaller container. Abū Dhu'ayb says of his inamorata,
whose mouth is intoxicating wine:

> Were [all] the wine of Ibn Buhrah's store with her,
> she would not wet my palate with a *nāṭil* [small container].[258]

Such descriptions of riotous nights as this from Ṭarafah's *Mu'allaqah*:

> My boon companions are white as stars, and a singing wench
> comes to us in her striped garment or her saffron robe;
> wide the opening of her collar, delicate her skin
> to my companions' fingers, tender her nakedness,
>
>   (A. J. Arberry)[259]

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[253] Ṭā'ī, *Dīwān*, 61–2.   [254] Ṭā'ī, *Dīwān*, 106–7.   [255] *Mukhtār*, II, 101.
[256] Qālī, *Amālī*, I, 150–1.   [257] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, I, 46–7, verses 10–11.
[258] Ibid., I, 146, verse 21.   [259] Arberry, *Odes*, 85ff.

and of merry gatherings, as in 'Alqamah's *Mīmiyyah*,[260] were elaborated
into detailed and specialised *waṣf* of wine and wine-drinking sessions:

> A kingly cup, from grapes matured for fit seasons by many vintners,
>   real cure for a headache;
> No giddiness from it will trouble you,
> No swimming in the head goes with it;
> Vintage of 'Ānah, deliciously cool, unseen for a year
>   while it lay hidden in a well-sealed jar,
> Having gained more and more sparkle in the vat
>   as it was stirred by a Persian's linen-masked lad.
> Their wine-jug is [long-necked] like a gazelle on a hill,
>   and stoppered with a strip of linen, its nose bleeding.
> Gleaming bright when the cellarer brings it out to the sunlight,
>   decked and scented with sprigs of basil.

(It is next to impossible to convey the double entendre of the penultimate
verse, in which the "gazelle" also means the inamorata who has painted
her nose with a red cosmetic; the nose bleeding refers to this, and also
to the red wine which is poured from the jug.)

Al-A'shā later came to be recognized as the master of this theme:

> We rose before our cock had crowed,
> for a black jar from the vintner.
> He had carefully selected it from among the first vintage –
> a little blue-eyed man, sure his wares
> cannot fail to find a buyer.
>
> We said to him, "Give us this for the white she-camel
> led by its halter-rope."
> "Give me nine pieces more of silver," he said.
> "This wine is without peer among others."
> I said to our servant: "Give it him."
> When he saw those who had come for it,
> he lit up his awning with a lamp,
> its fringes still enveloped by the dark of night-time.[261]
> Good are our silver pieces, all of them;
> Delay us not by testing them.

Bedouin poets often turn to the theme of wine by way of associating
themselves with the refined sophistication of the neighbouring civilizations
of Syria, Iraq or Persia, and acquainting their listeners with some aspects
of it:

> Many a cup in Baalbec and Damascus
> And Kāsirīn I drained.

<div align="right">(R. A. Nicholson)[262]</div>

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[260] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 812ff., cxx, verses 40ff.
[261] *Mukhtār*, II, 112–13, 17.
[262] From 'Amr's *Mu'allaqah*, Nicholson, *Literary history*, 111.

The prohibition of wine by Islam closed for a time this page of poetry.
Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhalī says, as if lamenting the entire period of the
Jāhiliyyah:

> The place is not as it used to be, o Umm Thābit.
> Chains are now around [our] necks.
> The young man, like the old man,
> does naught but what is right
> And women reproachful have naught to say.[263]

The celebrated *Lāmiyyah* of 'Abdah b. al-Ṭabīb[264] contrasts the hardships
of travelling, such as drinking of dirty water:

> [Water which] looks in the buckets, when the travellers draw it,
> like the scum floating in the pot over the rendered-down fat

and eating of unappetizing meat:

> Pink or purplish, not fully cooked, the boiling of it not
> having changed it into something eatable;
> Then we rose up to our steeds that had been left to graze,
> and their manes served as napkins for our hands,

contrasting with the pleasures of drinking, such as this:

> So we reclined on couches decked with many-coloured cushions,
> finely patterned with cocks, with lurking lions –
> pictures of everything could be seen there.
>
>   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·
>
> The cups were full and brimming, froth on top;
> the joint of mutton stuck upon the spit,
> to be served by a deft waiting-slave standing behind
> the table; the condiments were in their dish.
>
>   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·   ·
>
> A charming girl with graceful neck sang the lyric of the song,
> in her voice a thrilling tone for the ears of the drinkers;
> all morning she delighted us, and we repaid her by
> throwing over her our cloaks and tunics.

This *Lāmiyyah* was historically perhaps the last *qaṣīdah* of its kind. When
it was recited to 'Umar, the caliph, he expressed admiration for one
hemistich:

> Life is avarice, anxiety and hope.

Apart from description resulting from the poet's attention being
focussed (either directly or by means of a digressional device) on a certain
subject, *waṣf* often occurs as the by-product of a simile, as in Tha'labah
b. Ṣu'ayr's likening of his riding camel to

> The castle of Ibn Ḥayyah, which he built
> with baked brick and overlaid with plaster,[265]

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[263] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, 867; Guillaume, *Life*, 779.
[264] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 268–94, no. xxvi, verses 46, 50–1, 70–1, 76–7, 80–1.
[265] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 256, no. xxiv; trans., 87, verse 8.

and as in Zuhayr'a metaphor used when addressing someone whom he accuses of being about to embark upon an act of treachery:

> You are chewing on a stinking piece of meat,
> raw, ill for the stomach.[266]

The elaborate short simile, in particular, often yields intentional or unintentional secondary descriptive details, from which we learn much about ancient Arabian everyday life. The following may be taken as examples:

Like the castle of al-Hājirī[267] when he built it of matching [stones/bricks] cut/fashioned on the same pattern...(Labīd)[268]

Like the polisher [of weapons] bent over his hands, leant over, furbishing the rust-spots on his arrow blades (Labīd).

Like the weaving loom of a Ḥārithī woman (al-Namir b. Tawlab).

Variegated like the woollen *khāl* cloths of the Yemen (Imru' al-Qays).[269]

Its prow cuts through the sea spume, as a boy, playing at *fayāl* divides the dust-heap with his hand (Ṭarafah).[270]

As the farrier slits the leg with the lancet when treating for disease (al-Nābighah).[271]

As when a scabby camel is treated by branding another [healthy] camel pasturing freely (al-Nābighah).[272]

As if [the stallion] were a holder [of the bag of *maysir*] arrows, releasing them and pushing them over [to the players to choose] (Abū Dhu'ayb)[273]

As the coming of a Yemeni merchant with his servants and bags [of rich merchandise] (Imru' al-Qays).[274]

Like an Aḥmasī woman in a veil tossed back from her head and face [to reveal her loveliness] (Tha'labah b. Ṣu'ayr).[275]

As the sun appears behind a cloud, one eye-brow showing, while it conceals the other (Ibn al-Khaṭīm).[276]

An eye like a soignée woman's mirror which she turns so as to titivate the veil around her eyes (Imru' al-Qays).[277]

A dish [set before guests] like the cistern [fed by] an Iraqi rivulet ever flowing (al-A'shā).[278]

As a scribe embellishes the title on a parchment (al-Akhnas b. Shihāb).[279]

[266] *Mukhtār*, I, 273.
[267] Ibid., II, 464. Al-Hājirī is said to be the adjective from the place-name Hajar.
[268] Ibid., II, 465.   [269] Ibid., I, 42.
[270] Ibid., I, 309. *Fayāl* is a simple game played by children of the desert Arabs. Something is hidden in a heap of dust or sand which is then divided in two. The hider says to his companion, "In which of the two is it?", and the companion has to make a guess.
[271] Ibid., I, 151.   [272] Ibid., I, 158.
[273] Sukkarī, *Sharḥ*, I, 18.   [274] *Mukhtār*, I, 33.
[275] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 259, xxiv, trans., 87. Aḥmasī is a member of the Ḥums of Quraysh.
[276] *Mukhtār*, II, 558.
[277] Ibid., I, 47.   [278] Ibid., II, 232.   [279] *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, I, 410, xli.

The pre-Islamic *wasf* abounded in vivacity and realism. At a later period these elements were replaced by fantastic and far-fetched ornamentation. Such baroque specimens as the likening of fronds of red oleanders, waving to and fro, to flags of carnelian mounted on lances of emerald, came to be preferred. Nevertheless, models of the pre-Islamic *wasf* continued to be from time to time a source of inspiration for many a great poet.

The overall unity of the "qaṣīdah"

It is proposed here to give some illustration of what may be termed the overall unity of the *qaṣīdah*. By this is meant the harmoniously integrated interaction between elements of symbolism, nostalgia and formal order, inherent in the standard pattern of the *qaṣīdah* with its varied modifications, and other important poetic elements such as rhythm, diction, prophetic vision and feeling. The *Bāʾiyyah* of ʿAlqamah[280] has been selected because it is a perfect example of the eulogistic pattern and its overall unity, although translation alone can not do justice to the genius of its language and the wonderful poetic skill of a people whose literature was mainly oral. ʿAlqamah was a (probably younger) contemporary of Imruʾ al-Qays (sixth century A.D.). He belonged to the Banū Tamīn tribe, which lived between eastern Najd, the Empty Quarter and Iraq. The *Bāʾiyyah* was composed for the purpose of obtaining the release of Shaʾs, ʿAlqamah's brother, and other Tamīm prisoners captured by al-Ḥārith, king of Ghassān, after his victory in A.D. 554 over al-Mundhir of al-Ḥīrah, whom he had defeated at the battle of ʿAyn Ubāgh. A complete translation of this *Bāʾiyyah* is set out below, divided in accordance with the three sections of the conventional pattern, indicating in each case how one section is linked to the next following it.

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[280] Ibid., I, 765; trans., 327. Cf. *Mukhtār*, I, 414, 420; *Bāʾiyyah* with commentary by ʿAbdullāh al-Ṭayyib, Beirut, 1969.

Analysis of 'Alqamah b. 'Abadah's Bā'iyyah (Mufaḍḍaliyyāt, *762–86; trans., 329–31*)

No. of Line	Translation	Theme	Comment
1	A heart quick to thrill when touched by Beauty has drawn thee far, although Youth has sped long since, and grey hairs invade thy brow.	*Nasīb*	Opening line, striking keynote, a plea for sympathy.
2	It fills all my thought with Laylā, distant though now her home, and matters of weight stand 'twixt us, obstacles manifold.		Inamorata, symbolic of unattainability.
3	In comfort she dwells – no speech with her is for me to gain: a guard waits before her door, forbidding all visitors.		
4	When as forth her husband fares, no secret of his she tells; and when he again comes home, yea, sweet is his home-coming.		
5	Nay, deem me not scant of wit, untaught in Love's mysteries – on thee may the rain-fraught clouds send down their life-giving streams!		Address to the inamorata, partly addressed to al-Ḥārith, king of Ghassān, also.
6	A mass from the south, piled up, presenting a towering side, borne north by a gentle wind, when downward the Sun inclines.		
7	But what boots the thought of her to thee who art far away? the well where she draws is dug to serve her in Tharmadā'.		Contrast between the poet's bedouin way of life and Laylā's more settled oasis life and unfailing supply of water.
8	And if ye seek lore of women, verily I am skilled in all their devices; wise to probe to the root their ails:		Humorous treatment of subject of women which lightens the mood and prepares for the disengagement *(takhalluş)* – the travel theme.
9	When grey grows a man's head, or his substance gets less and less, no share can he hope to win of friendship with womankind;		Wisdom *(ḥikmah)*

Analysis (*cont.*)

No. of Line	Translation	Theme	Comment
10	They long for abundant wealth, and look where they think to find, and freshness of youth takes chiefest place in their wondering eyes.		
11	So leave her, and cast care from thy heart with a sturdy mount – a camel that ambles tireless, carrying riders twain;		Beginning of the *takhalluṣ*.
12	To Ḥarīth, the generous Lord, I drive her unsparing on, with pantings that shake her breast and throb through her ribs and flanks:	*Takhalluṣ*	Prefatory indication of the main theme. By contrast with his inamorata, the generous king symbolizes the poet's hope of success.
13	A fleet runner, whose flesh over sides and where neck meets hump has vanished beneath noon-tide's hot breath and the onward press;		The camel symbolizes the poet's endeavour and endurance.
14	And yet, after night's long toil, the dawn breaks and finds her fresh as an antelope, young and strong, that flees from the hunters' pack:		Formal simile, usually elaborated with descriptive digression.
15	They crouched by the *arṭā*-brake, the hunters, and thought to win a safe prey: but she escaped their shafts and pursuing hounds.		The escape of the antelope, overcoming obstacles in its way, symbolizes hope of success.
16	So travels my beast, and makes her object a man far off, and little by little gains the way to his bounteous hand.		
17	Yea, thou wast her labour's end – God keep thee from curse, o king! and through all the desert's sameness sped she, beset with fears.		
18	Towards thee the Polestars led, and there where men's feet had passed, a track plain to see that wound by cairns over ridges scarred.		This verse informs of the dangers of the journey the poet made, alone and forlorn, and makes a plea for sympathy.

19   There bodies of beasts outworn lay thickly along the road,
      their bones gleaming white, their hides all shrivelled and hard and dry.

20   I bring her to drink the dregs of cisterns all mire and draff;
      and if she mislikes it, all the choice is to journey on.

21   Withhold not, I pray, thy boon from one who has come so far,
      for I am a stranger here, unused to the tents of kings;

A neat link with main theme to follow. Compare the poet's claim, as a stranger, for hospitality with his seeking favour from his inamorata (line 5).

22   And thou art a man towards whom my trust has gone out in full:
      before thee have masters lorded me, and my cause was lost!

Main themes *(Aghrāḍ)*

The opening line of the main theme.

23   The Children of Ka'b, son of 'Awf, brought safe home their nurseling Lord,
      while there lay another, left amidst his legions, dead.

King al-Ḥārith was the foster son of Banū Ka'b, the victors. King al-Mundhir was the foster son of Banū Tamīm, the poet's tribe.

24   By God! had not he that rides the black horse been one of them,
      ashamed had his troops slunk back, right glad to be home again.

King al-Ḥārith, the champion, is set in the foreground surrounded by his men – a tactful prelude to the poet's request for the release of his brother and other prisoners. Tribal pride for Tamīm and loyal memory of his dead patron al-Mundhir.

Analysis (*cont.*)

No. of Line	Translation	Theme	Comment
25	Thou pushest him onwards till the white rings are hid in blood, while ever thou rainest blows on helmets of men in mail.		The champion's valour is extolled.
26	Two hauberks of steel enwrap thy body, and from them hang two choicest of blades, well named "Keen-cutter" and "Sinker-in".		Note the repeated use of the dual for poetic effect.
27	Thou smotest them till they put before them their champion to face thee, when near had come the moment of sun-setting.		An implicit lament for his people's defeat, recalling their endurance.
28	Upon them the mail-coats rustled, steel grinding hard on steel, as when through the ripe corn-fields a southerly wind sweeps on.		Here the Arabic text uses onomatapoeic words and alliteration with consonants *sh–s–s*, to convey the rustling sound of chain mail.
29	There battled all Ghassān's best, the bravest that bear the name, and with them were Hinb and Qās, stout fighters, and bold Shabīb:		Praise of enemy tribes in order to win their sympathy and support.
30	The men of al-Aws stood serried there 'neath his charger's breast, and all the array of Jall, and with them 'Atīb their kin.		
31	The sky's camel-calf roared loud above them: one slipped and fell with arms clashing, not yet spoiled: another lay stripped and bare		The reference is to the story of Thamūd. The Prophet Ṣāliḥ miraculously produced a she-camel followed by its calf. When they killed it, despite Ṣāliḥ's warning, its calf roared thrice. Then, after three days, followed the destruction of Thamūd.

32 It seemed that a cloud o'erhead poured down mighty floods of rain,
    with crashes that shook heaven's dome, and glued to the ground the birds.

33 None 'scaped but the tall mare flying, nought but her bridle left,
    or stallions of race, outstretched in flight like a slender spear:

34 Yea, none but the warrior brave stood fast in that deadly close,
    all dyed red with blood that flowed from edges of whetted blades.

In the Arabic text here the alternation of vowels and consonants conveys the sound of the clash of weapons.

35 A man thou whose foes know well the marks that thy impact leaves:
    on these, scars of deadly wounds, but traces of bounty too.

The poet skilfully reveals the main purpose of his *qaṣīdah* at the end. King al-Ḥārith was so pleased with the praise that when he heard the poet ask him for one share (*dhanūb*, a bucketful of water) for Sha's, he exclaimed spontaneously, "*Na'am wa-adhnibah!*", "Yea, and many buckets more!".

36 Thy favours on every tribe thou sendest in shower of boons:
    I pray thee, let Sha's be one to draw from the flood his share!

37 Among men is none thy like, save only thy prisoner:
    yea, near is he, but none else of kindred can claim his place.

APPENDIX

The poets and the pre-Islamic tribes

A few words are desirable about the tribal divisions and distribution of the
pre-Islamic bedouin, since a poet's habitat is to some extent reflected in his poetry.

The core of the Arabian Peninsula is the high plateau of Najd. This is bounded
on the west by Hijaz, the lofty mountain range[281] which runs down the west
side of the Peninsula, and of which the southern continuation as far as the border
of Yemen constitutes 'Asīr. On the south, Najd is separated from Ḥaḍramawt by
the huge expanse of the almost uninhabited sand desert known as the "Empty
Quarter" (al-Rub' al-khālī). On the east, the Jabal Ṭuwayq range of mountains
marks Najd off from the eastern coastland. Northward, the great plains stretch
out into the Syrian desert, but the area of the isolated mountainous outcrop, today
called Jabal Shammar, can be taken in a rough way as the borderland of Najd.
Some of the most important tribes in these lands were:

'Abs: see Ghaṭafān.

'Āmir: see Hawāzin.

Asad: in north-eastern Najd, and south east of the Jabal Shammar. Imru' al-Qays
was son of the king of Asad, though he is normally referred to as a Kindite (see
below). Another well-known Asadite poet was 'Abīd b. al-Abraṣ.

Azd: located in 'Asīr; to them belonged Shanfarā, whose famous poem the
Lāmiyyah reflects a mountainous scenery quite unlike that of the plains of Najd.

Bakr: a large tribal group situated in what is today north-eastern Saudi Arabia,
i.e. north east of Riyadh. Famous Bakrite poets are Ṭarafah, al-A'shā and al-Ḥārith
b. Ḥillizah.

Dhubyān: see Ghaṭafān.

Ghaṭafān: a tribal confederation stretching across Najd to the east of Medina. It
included 'Abs, of whom 'Antarah was a member; Dhubyān, to whom belonged
the best known of the three poets called al-Nābighah; and Muzaynah (gentilic
Muzanī), of whom Zuhayr was a member.

Hawāzin: a tribal confederation stretching across Najd southward of Ghaṭafān.
It included the 'Āmir, of whom Labīd was a member.

Hudhayl (gentilic Hudhalī): in southern Hijaz; well known for a collection of their
tribal poetry, though no individual poet is reckoned of the first rank.

Kindah: a tribal confederation which at the height of its powers in the third and
fourth centuries A.D. seems to have embraced most of the Najdite tribes, from
Asad in the north down to the Yemen border; but already a century or so before
Islam its influence had begun to crumble.

Muḍar: the collectivity of the North Arabian tribes.

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[281] The word *ḥijāz* itself means "barrier", and must originally have been applied to the mountain
chain, although for geographers Hijaz has always included also the Red Sea coastal plain.

Muzaynah: see Ghaṭafān.

Rabī'ah: the collectivity of the tribes of southern origin.

Taghlib: closely associated with Bakr, and living to the north of the latter, in the desert bordering the Mesopotamian lands on the south west. 'Amr b. Kulthūm was a Taghlibite.

Ṭayyi' (gentilic Ṭā'ī): in the area of the Jabal Shammar.

The "Mu'allaqāt" problem

The group of pre-Islamic qaṣīdahs collectively known by the above designation (sing. Mu'allaqah), presents two problems, one relating to the name itself, the other to the extent and contents of the group.

Every Arab schoolboy is taught that this name (which in everyday language means "suspended") was applied to these poems because there was a custom in pre-Islamic Mecca for the prize-winning poems in poetical competitions held at the fair of 'Ukāẓ to be written down and hung up in the Ka'bah. This tale is certainly a fable, invented in order to explain the name on the basis of the commonest sense of the word. As Nöldeke[282] and others have pointed out, there are many early authorities who have provided us with an extremely detailed description of life in Mecca during the Prophet's youth, yet not one of them contains the slightest allusion to a custom of this sort.

Furthermore, the name itself is wholly unattested before the turn of the 3rd–4th/9th–10th century, when it makes its appearance for the first time in an anthology entitled Jamharat ash'ār al-'Arab, containing forty-nine qaṣīdahs arranged in seven groups. The first group is designated al-Mu'allaqāt and is the one under consideration; others are given names such as al-Mujamharāt "the Assembled", al-Muntaqayāt "the Choice", al-Mudhahhabāt "the Gilded". It is shortly after this that the commentator 'Alī b. Muḥammad al-Naḥḥās (d. 337/949) provides us with the earliest allusion to the story of these poems being "suspended" in the Ka'bah: yet at the same time he adds that the story is a fabrication devoid of ancient authority. In the light of this, no credence can be given to a much later writer, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī (d. 1093/1682), who puts into the mouth of the first Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiyah (41–60/661–80) the observation, with regard to two of the poems, that they "had been hanging in the Ka'bah for a long while".[283]

This popular explanation of the name being discarded, there remains, as the most likely of several explanations which have been put forward,

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[282] Beiträge, introd., xvii–xxiii.
[283] Cited by Asad, Maṣādir, 171, but prefaced with the cautious words "if it is true".

the one supported by C. J. Lyall[284] and R. A. Nicholson[285] that the word means "esteemed precious", and is a derivative of the noun *'ilq*, "a precious commodity". It may even be that the name was invented by the compiler of the *Jamharat* as part of his overall scheme for designating his sections.

Writers earlier than the *Jamharat* refer to this group of poems simply as "the Seven"; but there was evidently some uncertainty about the precise poems included in the group. The list usually accepted as standard comprises poems by Imru' al-Qays, Ṭarafah, Zuhayr, Labīd, 'Antarah, 'Amr b. Kulthūm and al-Ḥārith b. Ḥillizah. Yet the *Jamharat* cites Abū 'Ubaydah (d. 210/825) as saying that the greatest poets of the ancient period were the above-mentioned, with the omission of 'Antarah and al-Ḥārith and the addition of al-Nābighah and al-A'shā instead, with the rider that "anyone who says that the 'Seven Poems' are by anyone else than these goes against the consensus of scholarly opinion". Nevertheless, the *Jamharat* adopts an ambiguous stance, since its first section omits the poem of al-Ḥārith but includes all eight of the others mentioned. Naḥḥās commented on all nine. Somewhat later, Abū Zakariyyā' Yaḥyā al-Tibrīzī (d. 503/1109) produced a commentary on ten poems,[286] namely the above nine together with a poem by 'Abīd b. al-Abraṣ, which figures in the *Jamharat* as the first poem in the second section entitled *al-Mujamharāt*, although the very famous critic Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889) had remarked[287] that it is "one of the Seven". Yet Tibrīzī himself acknowledges only the now accepted list as constituting "the Seven", since he writes in his introduction that he will deal with "the 'Seven Qaṣīdahs', together with two *qaṣīdahs* by al-Nābighah and al-A'shā, which were added to the seven by Abū Ja'far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Naḥwī b. Ismā'īl al-Naḥwī, and one by 'Abīd in order to make up a round ten". Some modern editions print all ten under the title "the Ten *Mu'allaqāt*", although it is clear from what has been said that no ancient authority accepted all ten as belonging to the privileged group: they simply had different individual lists of poems to be comprised in it. A further complication is a puzzling reference by Ibn Khaldūn[288] to Imru' al-Qays, al-Nābighah, Zuhayr, 'Antarah, Ṭarafah, 'Alqamah, al-A'shā and "others among the authors of the nine *Mu'allaqāt* (*ghayruhum min aṣḥāb al-Mu'allaqāt al-tis'*)"; what he meant by the last phrase is obscure, especially as nowhere else does there seem to be any reference to 'Alqamah as the author of a *Mu'allaqah*.

The initiative in assembling seven of the finest Jāhiliyyah poems is

[284] *Ancient Arabian poetry*, introd., xliv.   [285] *Literary history*, Cambridge 1930, 101.
[286] *Commentary on ten ancient Arabic poems*, ed. Lyall, Calcutta 1894, repr. 1965.
[287] *Shi'r*, 144.   [288] *Muqaddimah*, VI, §58.

attributed by Naḥḥās to the collector Ḥammād al-Rāwiyah (d. 155/772), and most literary historians accept this. However, M. J. Kister[289] has produced evidence from an unpublished manuscript of *K. al-Manthūr wa-'l-manẓūm*, by Aḥmad b. Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfur (d. 280/893), tending to suggest that some kind of similar collection had already been made by the caliph Mu'āwiyah and then revised by 'Abd al-Mālik (65–86/685–705); Kister concludes as follows: "The merit of Ḥammād seems to have been that he transmitted the Seven Jāhilī Odes derived from the collection of Mu'āwiyah and that he discarded the collection of 'Abd al-Mālik. Later literary tradition attributed the selection to Ḥammād."

[289] "Odes", 27–36.

CHAPTER 3

EARLY ARABIC PROSE

THE WRITING OF DOCUMENTS IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC AGE

The Arabian civilization into which the Prophet Muḥammad was born had long been a literate and highly organized society. For some time before Islam Arabians were writing in the Arabic language, though the question of the scripts they employed is a complicated matter. Letters in the language of Najrān, probably Arabic, are mentioned in the Letter of Simeon of Bêth Arshâm, recently brought to light, and the Najrān chiefs used to inherit writings or books from one another.[1] At Ḥuṣn Mabraq of Wādī am-Naqaʿ, in the territory of the Nakhaʿī tribe of the southern Yemen, "Ḥimyarī" and Kufic rock inscriptions figure side by side, and very early Arabic rock inscriptions or graffiti are to be found in many parts of western Arabia. The people who scribbled on these rocks cannot but have belonged to a society with a high degree of literacy.

The conventional forms and phraseology of written political documents, already well established when Muḥammad came upon the scene, were generally followed by him. Indeed the doctrine, formulated in the later development of Islam, that Muḥammad could neither read nor write is hardly tenable. To Richard Bell's[2] advocacy of his literacy must be joined the fact of the Prophet's social standing. How could the scion of the aristocratic religious house,[3] who reckoned famous arbiters like ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib among his close ancestors, and who took charge of trading caravans to Syria, lack so essential an accomplishment? If the Thaqīf merchants of al-Ṭaʾif kept "sheets" (ṣaḥīfah, pl. ṣuḥuf) recording loans plus interest, surely the Prophet would keep written accounts? That in Medina he employed secretaries is no argument that he was illiterate, and the term ummī[4] the Qurʾān applied to him probably relates to the Confederation

[1] Shahîd, Martyrs, 242ff.
[2] Introduction, 17ff.; cf. also Suhaylī, Rawḍ, II, 230; also Ḥamīdullāh, "Arabic inscriptions", 435–6.
[3] Ibn al-Nadīm, Fihrist, Cairo, 14, with a reference to the handwriting of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.
[4] Bukhārī says the Prophet could write but not well. Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, VI, 522, explains Ummiyyūn as "ʿArab"; cf. Goldfeld, "Illiterate Prophet", 58–67: "None of the scholars of the first century referred to the illiteracy...of the Prophet at all." The concept seems to have evolved in the early second/eighth century.

(*Ummah*) he founded, the sense of "illiterate" developing up to two centuries later.

It is possible that poetry collections in writing, such as the Book of Quraysh and Book of Thaqīf, known in Umayyad times, were compiled and entrusted to writing even before Islam. In the Yemen Hamdānī speaks of the record of writing (*sijill*) of Khawlān and Ḥimyar at Ṣaʿdah; and of the record of Muḥammad b. Abān of Khanfar, handed down from one person to another from the Jāhiliyyah. These records contained their history (*akhbār*), genealogy, and material which entered into the "Ayyām" – the battles of pre-Islamic Arabia. Today even, Khawlān is said to maintain something like a *sijill*. Upper Khawlān, called Khawlān b. ʿAmr or Khawlān Ṣadʿah, wrote its pacts on the soft red leather for which the province was renowned. I have seen this red leather at Sarārah of Jabal ʿIyāl Yazīd, and Hebrew scriptures written on red leather in the ʿUrḍī at Taʿizz. Hamdānī says,[5] "I saw most of the deeds/contracts of Khawlān were upon *marāʿiṭ* of red leather." Possibly this survives in the custom of the Zaydī imams of sprinkling their letters with red powder. Most early documents appear to have been written on a *ṣaḥīfah* or sheet. Nabia Abbott, with her extensive experience of early papyri, can assure us of the widespread use of writing in early Islam, not merely for documents, but (from about the mid-first century onwards) in the developing fields of Quranic studies, Tradition (*Ḥadīth*) and history.

THE LITERATURE OF PROVERBS

While, even before Islam, writing was widely used for these purposes, oral transmission was concurrently a necessary means for remembering and preserving knowledge. Verse, which to this day plays an essential and often utilitarian role in the social life of the countryside, was in ancient Arabia a most important vehicle for transmitting information, but rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) was used also. One of the earliest forms of "oral literature" is the proverb or saw. It is to be found in the so-called testaments (*waṣāyā*) of famous men – really little more than unconnected wisdom sayings – and the aphorisms of the closing lines of classical *qaṣīdahs*. The Prophet's oration at the Farewell Pilgrimage is not unlike the *waṣāyā*. The oration often uses proverbial sayings, or perhaps some phrase of the orator catches the imagination and becomes a proverb.

The grammarian Ibn al-Sikkīt defines the proverb as "an expression, antithetic to the proverb coined, but concurring with it in sense". The

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[5] Hamdānī, *Iklīl*, I, 118. The Prophet himself wrote on a *ṣaḥīfah* of Khawlān leather.

possibly pre-Islamic Book of Tamīm contained verse and saws (*ḥikmah*,
pl. *ḥikam*), and *Khizānat al-adab*, glossing the word *majallah* as "Gospel",
adds, "Thus every writing which collects saws and proverbs is, for the
Arabs, a *majallah*."[6] Hence Abū 'Ubaydah called this book, in which he
collected the proverbs of the Arabs, *majallah*. All existing collections were
made after the period this chapter covers, the oldest being that of
Muḥammad al-Ḍabbī (d. 170/786), the best known the *Amthāl al-'Arab*
of al-Maydānī of Nīshāpūr (d. 518/1124). Naturally early Arabic proverbs
share much in common with proverbs in any language, so, although there
are numerous correspondences with biblical and post-biblical Hebrew as
well as Aramaic, it is difficult to distinguish and assess what is native to
Arabic and what is borrowed. It is possible that Aramaic proverbs may
have entered Arabic before Islam, and the old collections contain some
Christian proverbs, but rarely any from the Old Testament.

In his encyclopaedia, *Nihāyat al-arab*, Nuwayrī commences with the
sayings of the Prophet, the Rāshidūn caliphs, and 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās.
Some of these may be ancient, such as "Beware of the green one of the
dung-hills", i.e. "Beware of marrying a pretty girl of low origins." This
could have been fathered on the Prophet. Doubtless, also, proverbs have
crept into *Ḥadīth* literature (the sayings and doings of the Prophet), but
the dictum attributed to the Prophet, "Verily there is a kind of verse that
is a wise saying, and a kind of eloquence that is enchantment", is at least
consonant with his personality. The late Imam Aḥmad of the Yemen
followed his ancestor's dictum in frequently giving a legal decision in a
line of verse! Of the early caliphs, Abū Bakr is credited with saying that
a people who entrust their rule to a woman will become humiliated.
'Umar's political saw "Make snakes fear before they make you fear", seems
apposite at any time. Little is attributed to 'Uthmān, but the many dicta
attributed to 'Alī may be consulted in *Nahj al-balāghah*. The pronounce-
ments of famous rulers like Mu'āwiyah also found currency, and are cited
in later authors. Proverbs in verse are arranged by Nuwayrī according to
eras and under the names of the poets who coined them: the pre-Islamic
poets, the *Mukhaḍramūn* poets who lived on into Islam, the "Moderns".

Some ancient proverbs appear indescribably far-fetched and remote,
notably those deriving from the unfamiliar circumstances of tribal life,
pastoral or otherwise. A Ḥaḍramī tribal saying, current today, illustrates
a train of thought strange even to the local community: "On the nose,
the dripping of the wood". A settled man correspondingly would say, "I
am ready to do you any service, even be it at midnight." The tribal speaker
crooks his index finger over his nose to show he accepts something and

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[6] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, 285, "the *majallah* of Luqmān".

is prepared to do it even when "the sap exudes from the '*ilb*-tree" – which is said to happen at midnight only. The existence of expressions of this type today confirms that proverbs and sayings of similar obscurity in ancient Arabic are not to be regarded as mere inventions of philologists.

To the pre-Islamic saint Qudam b. Qādim of Hamdān, called a *ḥanīf*, whose tomb is on the summit of Jabal Dīn, the qiblah of Ṣanʿāʾ, are ascribed verses obviously very ancient in sentiment, though they might belong to any age, for similar verse is attributed to the semi-legendary Ḥumayd b. Manṣūr and is often quoted today. These are maxims embodying Arabian tribal ethics:

> A man under your protection – defend him from any attack.
> There's no good in a defender who from the defenceless holds back.

"Keep to your covenant", "do no eat while your protected person's children are hungry", "do not divulge secrets entrusted to you" – these are maxims one finds paralleled in the whole chapter on "*al-Adab wa-'l-ḥikmah*" in Abū Tammām the anthologist's *Ḥamāsah*. The quintessence of tribalism is expressed in the well-known maxim quoted in the *Fākhir* of al-Mufaḍḍal b. Salamah,[7] "Support your fellow, be he wronging or wronged."

Of folklore crystallized in the shape of proverbs none is more widespread than the saws of stellar lore, mostly in *sajʿ*, relating to the weather, seasons, crops or other aspects of the cycle of agricultural activities. "When Cancer rises the climate is temperate"; "When al-Nathrah rises ripening dates turn reddish." These saws were carried by the Arabs all over the Islamic world – in the west even as far as al-Andalus – and remain in Arabia and elsewhere on the tongues of the peasant and shepherd to this day; they are also quoted in printed almanacs, following a tradition that undoubtedly extends back to long before Islam. Many of these popular wisdom sayings are quoted by Ibn Qutaybah in verse form and usually *rajaz* metre. Ancient proverbs one may hear today, or see quoted by contemporary Arab writers, are such as "Bad dates and short measure", "Keep your dog hungry and it will follow you"; "Neither my she-camel nor my male camel is in this", i.e. "I've nothing to do with it!"

ORATORY, SERMONS, ADDRESSES

The earliest known form of prose in Arabic, the *khuṭbah* (oration, address, speech), is extant in such classical anthologies as al-Qālī's *Amālī*, the *Aghānī*, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, *Kāmil al-Mubarrad*, and in the writings of Jāḥiẓ, Ibn Qutaybah and others. Declamation and repartee in ancient tribal

[7] *Fākhir*, 119.

Arabia developed into drama and may be regarded as the source of the *mufākharah*, a war of words that constitutes a literary genre, not in classical Arabic alone, but also in the colloquials, continuing to our own times. These speeches are not, of course, to be taken as the *verbatim* utterance of the great orators of ancient days: many can only be invention of what *ought* to have been said on some famous occasion, yet the prodigiously retentive Arab memory may well have preserved the gist and even some of the language of historic orations.

A professional orator (*khaṭīb*), perhaps a preacher, had, like the poet, certain political and social functions; but, Jāḥiẓ says, his standing was less than that of the poet. In 1964 the present writer had a vivid glimpse of how the scene would have been in early Islam when he saw professional *khaṭībs* standing on huge rocks to harangue Imam al-Badr's tribal soldiers on the virtues and rights of the imamic house.

Arab legend attributes a few sermons to the shadowy figure of Quss b. Sā'idah al-Iyādī, bishop of Najrān; to Arethas (Ḥārith b. Ka'b), the celebrated sixth-century martyr of Najrān, is attributed a speech of great interest, one of the few speeches from pre-Islamic Arabia. Insofar as can be judged from the English rendering of the extant version in Syriac it cannot be said to resemble the Islamic *khuṭbah* very closely in style, but it does combine Arabian sentiment with Christianity in a way that probably was familiar to the Prophet Muḥammad.

The Islamic *khuṭbah* commences with praise and glorification of Allāh, conventional pious phrases, such as, in fact, one may hear from persons entering a room today in more conservative Arabian society. *Saj'*, rhymed prose, is an ordinary feature of it, as also is parallelism,[8] so familiar to us from the Old Testament. Epithetical phrases are heaped one on the other. Antithesis figures often, as also clichés (*ḥāl wa-māl, kasal wa-fashal*), proverbs, verses of poetry. Most orations that have come down to us are political, but the *khuṭbah* in the sense of homily or sermon, whether delivered at the Friday prayer in the mosque or other occasions, is of the very fabric of Islamic worship. It is, of course, not uncommon to find addresses of welcome or congratulation and the like in the literature, and during the Umayyad period women sometimes made speeches which have been preserved by later writers.

The extant utterances of the first three caliphs are mostly limited to some brief sentences, but the harangues of 'Alī and Mu'āwiyah to each other and to their followers during the political interchange that culminated in the confrontation at Ṣiffīn have been preserved in considerable detail. 'Alī

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[8] Cf. below, ch. 5, "The role of parallelism" and Beeston, "Parallelism", which considers rhyme in pre-Islamic *khuṭbahs* as "largely unintentional"; cf. Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, 1375, III, 3–4.

is also credited, by the Shī'ah above all, with numerous pronouncements on a wide range of subjects; to accept all as truly his words strains credulity. The politico-religious cut and thrust of the Umayyad period can be followed in the speechifying centred on such notable events as Ḥusayn's rebellion and subsequent martyrdom at Karbalā', the Mukhtār revolt, the incessant struggles of the Khawārij, and the political exchanges of 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās with the caliph and his supporters.

Most famous of all speeches of the Umayyad age is the excoriating *khuṭbah* pronounced at Kufa by the new governor of Iraq, al-Ḥajjāj. Hearing a cry of "God is great" (*Allāhu akbar*) in the *sūq*, he ascended the *minbar* of the Jāmi' Mosque and, after praising God and blessing the Prophet, he began: "*Yā ahl al-'Irāq yā ahl al-shiqāq wa-'l-nifāq wa-masāwī 'l-akhlāq wa-banī 'l-lakī' ah wa-'abīd al-'aṣā wa-awlād al-imā' wa-'l-faq' bi'l-qarqar, innī sami'tu takbīr-an lā yurād Allāh bi-hi, wa-innamā yurādu bi-hi 'l-Shayṭān.*" ("You people of Iraq, people of dissension and hypocrisy, evil by nature, sons of a slut, slaves [to be punished with] the stick, sons of [black?] slave women, meaner than fungus in dank earth, I have heard an *Allāhu akbar* which meant not God, but which meant only Satan!") To this day Iraqis recall with slightly rueful amusement that they are a "people of dissension and hypocrisy"!

Semi-legendary is Ṭāriq b. Ziyād's heroic exhortation, a little reminiscent of historic speeches in Livy, when, after landing on the Spanish coast with his small force, he was faced by the great army of Roderic the Goth and deliberately burned his transports:

Men! Where to flee with sea behind you and the enemy before you? By God, what have you but your courage and endurance? In this peninsula you must be aware that you will go shorter than orphans at mean men's feasts. Your foe confronts you with his armies. He has vast quantities of arms, ample supplies of provisions. You have naught but your swords, no provisions but what you wrest from the hands of your foes.[9]

Umayyad Iraq and Spain are a far cry from the Arabia of Muḥammad and the oration attributed to him at his "Farewell Pilgrimage" to Mecca. Presenting serious problems, yet notable for its categorical rulings on various legal and other issues, this oration has been studied by R. Blachère.[10]

MUḤAMMAD'S ADDRESS AT THE "FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE"

Though dissimilar to pre-Islamic oratory, the Prophet's Farewell address is lent an air of drama by the rhetorical question, "Have I then delivered

[9] Maqqarī, *Nafḥ*, I, 240.   [10] "L'allocution".

[Allāh's] message? Testify o Allāh!", with which it is punctuated, and the chorus of rejoinder from the pilgrims. In reality it is a collection of regulations and maxims. Those which are concerned with the Pilgrimage may be neglected here; but, as Blachère says, it deals with certain general problems "déjà posés et résolus dans le Coran". Whether these were actual, though paraphrased, sayings of Muḥammad is often doubtful and the sources assign some to various other occasions. Blachère distinguishes seventeen main themes and indicates the Quranic verses one is given to think the Prophet paraphrased. The versions of Ibn Isḥāq (prior to 159/767), Wāqidī and Ṭabarī are substantially consistent in content, though Ibn Isḥāq gives eleven, but Wāqidī only seven, themes. Jāḥiẓ, on the contrary, adds themes figuring in none of those three, some of which, however, they include in Muḥammad's address on his triumphant entry into Mecca.

Muḥammad's victory speech on the latter occasion set out to humilitate Quraysh of Mecca by stripping them of their hereditary privileges and glories, save the custodianship of the Ka'bah and provision of water for the pilgrims. The Meccan *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān (never the Medinan *sūrahs*)[11] commonly condemn human pride by pointing out that man is made of earth, and Muḥammad repeated on the same occasion that "People are of Adam and Adam was of earth." The Jāḥiẓ version, however, transfers these statements, which the Prophet made on the specific occasion and in the flush of success in 8/629, to the Farewell Pilgrimage of 10/632, with significant accretions: "Your father [or: ancestor] is one: all of you are of Adam and Adam was of earth. The noblest of you with Allāh is the most pious of you. Allāh is knowing, omniscient, and no Arab has superiority over a non-Arab except through piety." The last sentence is not found in the other sources at all.

Whereas Quranic allusion to the fashioning of Adam's mortal body from earth underlines man's dependence on God, it has here been subtly turned to promote egalitarian ideas foreign to Arabian society and which may not have been held by the Prophet either. The specific attack on Meccan Quraysh pride has been converted into an assault on Arab superiority in general. These ideas are clearly of later date than the lifetime of the Prophet, and are of markedly Shu'ūbī, anti-Arab and egalitarian trend, the Shu'ūbīs being known as the "Levellers", though Jāḥiẓ was no Shu'ūbī.

If the rejection in the address of spurious paternity claims was not made by Muḥammad, and it does seem inconsistent with other maxims, it might be directed against Mu'āwiyah's recognition of Ziyād b. Abīhi as his half-brother, and the Quranic regulation prohibiting usurious practices

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[11] Except iii.55, stating that Jesus, like Adam, is of earth.

may have been emphasized later with the specific intention of singling out the usury of 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and *ergo* the 'Abbasids. Should this be so it rather presupposes the work of a Shi'ite hand. These two themes occur in the pre-Jāḥiẓ versions as well as in *al-Bayān*.

With the later evolution of the Islamic *sharī'ah* in mind, the injunction, in all the sources, on sexual conduct for womenfolk is quite startling. This runs, "You have a right over your women. [The right] is yours that they should not cause anyone you dislike to tread your beds (*lā yūṭi'na furusha-kum*)[12] and that they should not commit an open immoral act (*fāḥishah mubayyinah*).[13] If they do, God permits you to [Jāḥiẓ's text inserts "prevent them from marriage and"] break off relations with them in beds and to beat them, but not severely. If they finally desist they shall have their maintenance and clothing in accordance with custom (*bi-'l-ma'rūf*)."[14] Recommendations to treat women kindly follow. The aforegoing is the plain unequivocal sense of this astonishing passage as it appears in Ibn Isḥāq, Wāqidī and Ṭabarī, but the Jāḥiẓ version (150–255/767–869) is cleverly emended to suit the attitudes of his time: "They should not cause any but you to tread your beds nor let anyone you dislike enter your houses except by your permission, nor should they commit an immoral act (*lā yūṭi'na furusha-kum ghayra-kum wa-lā yudkhilna aḥad-an takrahūna-hu buyūta-kum illā bi-idhni-kum wa-la ya'tīna bi-fāḥishat-in*)." Unfortunately for such discretion, Ṭabarī quotes[15] Ibn 'Abbās as saying of the pre-Islamic Arabs, "They used to forbid such adultery (*zinā'*) as appeared, but to allow what was hidden, saying, 'Concerning that which appears – it is disgrace but as for what is hidden, that does not matter.'" The verse upon which he is commenting prohibits both *musāfaḥāt*, whom he describes as open adultresses, and those who take secret lovers.

This is not the place to expand on the topic, but the Prophet prohibited a man long absent from his home to come to his family at night, and one of his followers, foolish enough to disobey his command, discovered a man with his wife.[16] At a much later time, Ibn al-Mujāwir states[17] that in the Sarw a woman, when her husband goes on a journey, takes a lover until such time as he returns. Before reaching his house the husband shouts to warn any lover to leave. This custom obtains today among the 'Awāliq

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[12] Cf. Qur'ān, iv.38. *Firāsh*, literally "bed", also means "wife".

[13] Qur'ān xxxiii.30; Blachère has "turpitude éclatante", but Ṭabarī *et al.* leave us in no doubt that *fāḥishah* means "adultery", "fornication".

[14] Baydāwī, *Commentarius*, 121, defines the phrase *bi-'l-ma'rūf* as "what the law recognizes" and in the following verse, states that women are to obtain their maintenance "in accordance with the opinion of the judge".

[15] Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VIII, 193, on Qur'ān iv.25.

[16] Cf. Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, II, 439, 712; III, 1115, in which cases there is no suggestion of stoning the parties!   [17] Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Descriptio*, I, 26.

and possibly other southern tribes, but it is evidently very ancient and may safely be assumed to be pre-Islamic.

What can be made of the justification of a pre- and post-Islamic practice in a human situation, attributed to the Prophet yet contradicting a clear prohibition of that very practice in Qur'ān iv.25? If the simple answer, not necessarily correct, is that it has been falsely fathered on Muḥammad, how did it come to be included in the oration at all?

A further complication arises over the maxim, "The child belongs to the bed and stoning[18] is for the adulterer [or: fornicator]."[19] This figures in the Ibn Isḥāq and Jāḥiẓ versions, but not in Wāqidī or Ṭabarī. From early times to the present day the maxim has been a subject of debate. Firstly it is inconsistent with the preceding regulation for a woman's conduct; second, the Qur'ān does not prescribe stoning as the punishment for adultery. Schacht[20] suggests that stoning was introduced from Jewish law as a punishment for the adulterer, and suspects the authenticity of Traditions alleging it had the Prophet's sanction. Indeed, the Prophet's legislation on sexual matters strikes one as mild and moderate in the climate of his time. A native of Mecca, a pilgrim centre, Muḥammad must have been familiar with the existence of such temporary liaisons as *mut'ah* marriage. Islam in its formulative phase seems to have attempted to tighten the laws on sexual conduct.

No reason has appeared to doubt that Muḥammad even delivered a "Farewell" oration during the Pilgrimage, but patently signs of political ideas of a later age, coupled with internal and external contradictions, largely discredit the attribution of much of the extant versions to the Prophet.

LAW AND CUSTOM; THE *KĀHINS* AS ORATORS AND ARBITERS IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

No person acquainted with Arabia, ancient or modern, can be unaware how deeply law affects lives and minds; this is reflected in the paramount

[18] Schacht, "The Law", derives the maxim *al-walad li-'l-firāsh* from Roman law, but even if this is correct – an open question – it is probably an ancient Arabian principle. Hamdānī, *Iklīl*, I, 154, discussing the disputed descent of Quḍā'ah from Mālik b. Ḥimyar or Ma'add, says that Quḍā'ah, when they fear shameful exposure, say, "He [Quḍā'ah] was born on his [Ma'add's] bed", the mother of Quḍā'ah, divorced while pregnant, having then married Ma'add. Ḥusayn b. 'Alī accused Mu'āwiyah of contravention of this maxim in recognizing Ziyād b. Abīhi as his half-brother (Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV A, 102). The ancient Nakha'ī tribe today, hardly affected by *sharī'ah*, follow this principle, the child being called *ibn al-salqah = ibn al-firāsh* (Cf. Serjeant, "White Dune", 82).

[19] The stone, *al-ḥajar*, is interpreted by some authorities quite differently – as by Ibn al-Athīr, *Nihāyah*, III, 142, 203, who says that it means the child belongs to the woman's husband, and "the fornicator has no share in the child". Nakha'ī custom today provides some support for this interpretation.

[20] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, I (hereafter *EI*¹), "*zinā*" and cf. Burton, "*Iḥsān*" and *Collection*, 77 *passim*.

position the *sharī'ah* holds in Islam and in Arabic literature. Legal clichés and maxims of the Jāhiliyyah were inherited by early Islam; some are even embodied in the corpus of *Ḥadīth*. Procedures for adjudication of a dispute are succinctly recorded in verses of the pre-Islamic poet Zuhayr:

> Three are the ways whereby a case is decided (*maqāṭi'*):
> Oath-taking, summoning before a judge (*nifār*), or proof.
> To decide any case these ways lie before you,
> Three [in all], each of them bringing you appeasement.[21]

Nifār, says al-Najīramī, means the proceeding to judgement (*muḥākamah*) of judges, and *jilā'* is proof enabling one to dispense with oath-taking and taking one another to judgement. Muḥammad pronounced against certain aspects of *nifār*, but in Islamic Arabia the plaintiff still has the onus of proof, and he who denies a charge against him takes the oath. Judicial functions were hereditary in certain family groups and Ibn Ḥabīb's list[22] of pre-Islamic judges may be held to imply that the function was hereditary in their houses. Muḥammad set his face against recourse for judgement to tribes and families rather than to Allāh – in practice, recourse to himself, as Document B of the "Eight Documents" shows (see below, p. 136). He also forbade judgements involving a magic element, but this Islam has never succeeded in eradicating.

Pre-Islamic law in the Arabian Peninsula was based on a series of written and/or remembered precedents known as *sunnah*. The celebrated Arabian poet Labīd b. Rabī'ah[23] describes his tribe as

> Of a company for whom their ancestors laid a way [or: custom],
> For every tribe has a way/custom and its example [paragon].
> (*Min ma'shar-in sannat lahum ābā'u-hum*
> *Wa-li-kulli qawm-in sunnat-un wa-imāmu-hā.*)

"Innovations" (sing. *bid'ah*) are eschewed by Islam, and most probably were by the Jāhiliyyah also. It seems axiomatic that cases brought before a judge–arbiter or *kāhin* would be settled according to the appropriate *sunnah*. Many judges were also *kāhins*, and there is a verse alluding to a judgement by *al-kāhin al-ṭāghūt*, but with *kāhins* magic always seems to be involved in arriving at a judgement. The *kāhins* proclaimed their decisions in rhymed prose *saj'* of lofty style and cryptic oracular diction, but far from being mere rhetoric or a high-sounding nonsensical jumble, their utterances in set patterns would clothe verdicts concluded with professional skill. Those preserved for us are among the earliest examples of Arabic prose, rich in tribal vocabulary and expression.

There are eight Quranic allusions to a term parallel to *kāhin*, the Ṭāghūt. The *Mu'minūn* are prohibited from seeking judgement from the Ṭāghūt,

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[21] *Dīwān*, 75. [22] *Munammaq*, 132. [23] Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ*, 320.

but must refer their disputes to Allāh and his Apostle (cf. p. 136 below); Qur'ān iv.51 alludes also to "those who were brought a portion of the Book, believing [trusting] in the Jibt and the Ṭāghūt". Ṭabarī[24] explains al-Ṭāghūt as "him whom they venerate...agreeing to his judgement, apart from the judgement of Allāh". The term survives in the northern Yemen, the Ṭāghūt al-Ṭawāghīt of the early nineteenth-century poet al-Ānisī[25] being explained as "head of the tribes judging by customary laws". Perhaps the ancient *ḥukm al-Ṭāghūt* means a law based upon a whole body of precedents. Often the Ṭāghūt judge is called a *shayṭān* or magician because of his association with a familiar spirit. The Yathrib Jews appear to have fitted into the system, for the Aslamī *kāhin* Abū Burdah was invited by the Jewish tribes of Naḍīr and Qurayẓah to judge between them,[26] and the half-Jewish Ka'b b. al-Ashraf is identified with the Ṭāghūt. How the Ṭāghūt was associated with the ancient Arabian cults is revealed in the description of them as "interpreters of the idols, speaking with the people with their tongues". Juhaynah is said to have had a Ṭāghūt (elsewhere a *kāhin*), and "there was one in every tribe, they being *kāhins* upon whom the *shayṭāns* were caused to descend (*tunazzalū*)". There was a *kāhin* at Ṣa'dah of the Yemen and northerners seem to have repaired to Yemeni *kuhhān*.[27] The latter were to be consulted in the matter of the honour of a lady who later gave birth to the Caliph Mu'āwiyah, and she was duly exonerated of the suspicion. The tale hints at trial by ordeal with a hot iron. A curious verse of a *mukhaḍram*, 'Abbās b. Mirdās, would perhaps imply that the Ṭāghūt judges were eventually absorbed into Islam.[28]

Ṭāghūt tends to be confused with Jibt, but this latter is most often considered to be magic or a magician, frequently identified with augury by birds, geomancy, drawing lines on sand (prohibited by Muḥammad). Certain features of Ṭāghūt procedure resemble present-day trial by ordeal when the tongue of the accused is flicked with the red-hot knife blade (*bish'ah*), while magic practices akin to Jibt are not uncommon.

At first sight the *munāfarah*, portrayed as a contest of honour between two rivals of noble rank, brought before a *kāhin* or Ṭāghūt who

[24] *Tafsīr*, VIII, 460–5, 507.   [25] Ānisī, *Tarjī'*, 252.

[26] Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, VIII, 510; Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, II, 500.

[27] Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥammaq*, 113. The Yemeni prophet al-Aswad al-'Ansī was a *kāhin* with a *shayṭān* and a follower (*tābi'*) of his (Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1864).

[28] I am indebted to Professor M. J. Kister for this reference to *Jāmi'*, I, 101: "Through you the Ṭāghūt has accepted Islam, / and followed (true) guidance, / And from us, through you, the dark shades / have been dispelled." Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, III, 1095, says of the *naqīb* Sa'd b. 'Ubādah, "The people of Sa'd's house in the Jāhiliyyah were our lords (*sādah*) and those from among us who provided food in time of drought. The Apostle said, 'People are of various origins; the noblest of them in the Jāhiliyyah are the noblest in Islam if they be instructed (*faquhū*).'" I understand this to indicate that the houses of nobility and power before Islam continued to play the same role in Islam.

pronounced his judgement in rhetorical rhymed prose, appears semi-legendary in quality. A closer scrutiny of cases in point reveals that sometimes a quite material issue is at stake, not merely sensitive tribal honour.

The contestants select an arbiter (who can decline to act), but first they test his powers by asking him to divine what object they picked up on their way in. To this the arbiter replies, prefacing his answer with high-sounding oaths, identifying the object. For example, the Khuzāʿī *kāhin* of ʿUsfān, answering the question of two Quraysh litigants as to why they had sought him out, commences: "*Ḥalaftu bi-rabbi 'l-samāʾ, wa-mursil al-ʿamāʾ, fa-yanbaʿin bi-'l-māʾ in jiʾtumūnī illā li-ṭalabi 'l-sana'*", "I swear by the Lord of the Heavens and Sender of pouring rainclouds (and let them pour with water!), you are come to me for naught else but to ask about noble rank!"[29] The god-names employed at once recall the pre-Islamic Dhū Samāwī and al-Raḥmān, "provider of rain" (*raḥmah*). The contestants then go on to ask the *kāhin* what they have hidden; this he guesses correctly in picturesque diction (which, let it be said, reminds the present writer of the sounding Arabic he has heard among the Mashriq tribes of the Yemen). Once satisfied about the *kāhin*'s powers, the contestants deposit a pledge with a third party as an indication of their serious intent to proceed to judgement (in the cases cited, usually about ten camels apiece), and lay their case before him. The Khuzāʿī *kāhin* in pronouncing his decision introduced it with an oath "by the Lord of Mecca and Yamāmah" and "by dust-coloured gazelles", perhaps to be considered as symbolic of a pagan god, and the winner took and slaughtered the camels on the spot to make a banquet. It is worth noting that when Naḍīr and Qurayẓah went to submit their case to Abū Burdah he demanded a fee (*luqmah*) which was to be paid in dates; but Muḥammad prohibited the fee of Ḥulwān the *kāhin* because he used supernatural methods. It is interesting that the Prophet himself was asked by a bedouin to prove he was the Apostle of God, as his Companions maintained, by telling him what was in the belly of his she-camel, in the same way as the *kāhins* were tested, the bedouin of course meaning that the Prophet should tell him whether the foetus was male or female. His request brought him a coarse rejoinder from the Companions![30]

The testing of the *kāhin* was authenticated to the present writer in an astonishing way, for when he was enquiring about trial by ordeal in Abyan in 1964, informants told him that two parties repairing to the *mubashshiʿ* judge in Upper Yāfiʿ would ask him to guess the secret of what they had brought – *for example, a locust in a leather bag*. This is to be compared with

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[29] Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥammaq*, 107.   [30] *Muḥammaq*, 100; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 1, 74–5.

the account of a *munāfarah* related by several authorities. "'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had water at a place called Dhū 'l-Harim, and Jundub b. al-Ḥārith al-Thaqafī, tribesfolk of Thaqīf, took it from him by superior force, so 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib challenged them to appear before the Quḍā'ah *kāhin*, Salamah b. Abī Ḥayyah...a member of 'Udhrah b. Sa'd. He was the familiar of 'Uzzā, [one of the best-known ancient Arabian goddesses] of [the] Salamah [tribe], 'Uzzā being his *shayṭān* (as they aver), and he lived in al-Sha'm...When they arrived at the *kāhin* they hid, for him [to guess], the head of a locust in the opening loop of a water-skin." The story naturally ends with a decision in favour of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, couched in rhymed prose:[31] "*Aḥlifu bi-'l-ḍiyā'i wa-'l-ẓulami, wa-'l-Bayti Dhī'l-Ḥarami, anna'l-mā'a Dhā 'l-Ḥarami li-'l-Qurashī dhī 'l-karami*", "I swear by light and darkness, and the Temple Inviolate, that the water Dhū 'l-Haram belongs to the noble Qurashī."

In another contest referred to Salamah al-'Udhrī, the parties concerned picked up a dead vulture which they hid in a saddle-cloth and brought concealed for him to make his guess. His answer is typical of the rhetoric of the *kāhins*:[32]

Khaba'tum lī dhā janāḥ-in a'naq, tawīla 'l rijli abraq, idhā taghalghala ḥallaq, wa-idhā 'nqaḍḍa fattaq, dhā mikhlab-in mudhallaq, ya'īshu ḥattā yukhlaq....Aḥlifu bi-'l-nūri wa-'l-qamar, wa-'l-sanā wa-'l-dahr, wa-'l-riyāḥi wa-'l-faṭr, la-qad khaba'tum lī juththata nasr, fī 'ikm-in min sha'r, ma'a 'l-fatā min Banī Naṣr!

You have concealed for me the owner of a wing with a long neck, lengthy of leg, black mixed with white, when it hastens it soars and circles in its flight, when it stoops from the height of the sky it splits [its prey?] from end to end, owner of a keen-pointed claw, living until worn out. I swear by the light and the moon, thunder and fate, the winds and the creation, you have concealed for me a vulture's corpse, in a saddle-cloth of hair, with the gallant lad of Banū Naṣr!

Of these *kāhin* oaths al-Najīramī says, "The *kāhins* of the Arabs used to swear by the heavens, water, air, wind, light and darkness." Ibn Ḥabīb[33] includes also the moon, lightning, time or fate (*dahr*), the Bayt Allāh, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Ka'bah, Marwah and the Rites, the place where sacrificial beasts are immolated, and so on. Obliquely or directly, the judge-arbiters are swearing by the gods of paganism; sometimes, however, by God himself. To this one should compare the oath by a deity which terminates certain pre-Islamic inscriptions, and also, though these are not in the form of an oath, the terminal clauses of four out of the "Eight Documents".

The short Meccan *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān commence in Jāhilī fashion with a series of oaths, as in *sūrah* lxxxv, "By the Heavens with their zodiacal

[31] *Munammaq*, 112ff.   [32] Ibid., 110.   [33] Ibid, 114.

signs and the Promised Day", or (lxxxvi) "By the Heavens and the Night-Star", or again (xciii) "By the forenoon and the night when it darkens". There are even oaths by the winds (lxxvii), as some commentators interpret this *sūrah*'s opening verses. The message of the Prophet was conveyed in terms his pagan hearers could understand, but as Quraysh (for instance, al-Aswad al-Makhzūmī) saw it,[34] what Muḥammad brought "is only rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) like the rhyming prose of the *kāhins*". So Quraysh dubbed him magician. *Sūrah* xc almost looks like a disclaimer of their attitude with its opening words, "I need not swear by the Lord of this Town [*balad*]" – interpreted as the sacred enclave of Mecca.

THE ORATIONS OF MUSAYLIMAH

In reconstructing the history of Arabic literature one can only regret that little is preserved of the utterances of Musaylimah – "the Liar" as Muslim writers call him. Only a few fragments out of context remain. Sir William Muir's assumption that his religion was "a wretched travesty of Islam" is unacceptable, for such scant indications as survive give the impression of a cult in the same Arabian tradition as that of Muḥammad, with adventitious Christian elements. Musaylimah (his real name was Maslamah, of which "Musaylimah" is a diminutive) was theocratic lord of a sacred enclave (*ḥaram*), which one report, possibly to be preferred on historical grounds, would show he had set up in Yamāmah *before* Muḥammad's *hijrah* to Yathrib. He controlled, indeed, more extensive territories and properties than Muḥammad: a large bloc, on his flank, of the eastern heart of Arabia. He is said to have proposed sharing power over Arabia, and only after Muḥammad's death was he destroyed.

Musaylimah looked to the Heavens (*al-Samāʾ*) for revelation, which was transmitted by Gabriel. He preached in the name of al-Raḥmān, to whom, after his death, he consigned the tribe of Tamīm that he "protected". (*Nujāwiru-hum mā ḥayaynā bi-iḥsān, wa namnaʿu-hum min kulli insān, wa-idhā mitnā fa-amru-hum ilā 'l-Raḥmān*: "We protect them well [or: are good neighbours to them] while we live and defend them from everyone, and when we die their ordering is to the Merciful [*Raḥmān*]."*) Intercession was sought of him, as of Muḥammad, for water or rain. He followed the *kāhin* style of rhymed prose, and of the pronouncing of oaths. One such, swearing by the mountain goat, the black smooth-skinned wolf and dark night, is suggestive of animals symbolic of the pagan gods. Another oath, by (female) sowers, harvesters, grinders and bakers looks as if it has been

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[34] Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 150.

maliciously distorted for ridicule; the oath by "the black ewe and its white milk" might also be mere travesty. Because out of context, "God has bestowed favour on the pregnant woman. He brought forth from her a living being between the navel and the bowels"[35] may seem absurd at first sight.

When Musaylimah met the Prophetess Sajāḥ they parleyed in rhymed prose, Musaylimah being credited with the use of "Islamic" turns of phrase such as "'*Alay-nā min ṣalawāti maʿshari abrār,...yaqūmūna 'l-layla wa-yaṣūmūna 'l-nahār, li-rabbi-kumuʾl-kubbār, rabbi 'l-ghuyūmi wa-'l-amṭār.*" ("Upon us are blessings from a company of dutiful men...The night they spend in vigil; during the day they fast for your great Lord, Lord of the clouds and rains." It is difficult to convey in translation all the implications and meanings of this passage as that in the previous paragraph. Musaylimah prohibited wine-drinking, and enjoined sexual abstention after a male was born. A highly suspect tradition makes him legalize fornication (*zinā'*), but if there be any truth in it, the reference may simply be to a different sexual ethic from that of Islam.

The *kāhins* did not die out with Islam – there is a reference to one in the second Muslim century – and their practices, as we have seen, survive today. An unusual verse in an early poet perhaps implies that the Ṭāghūt judges were eventually absorbed into Islam.

The parlance of the ancient *kāhins* still flourishes among the bedouin tribes of Jordan, and probably other parts of the Arabian Peninsula, for Aḥmad ʿUwaydī al-ʿAbbādī remarks that a tribal judge, pronouncing a decision in a customary law case, would employ a special diction known as a "culling of flowers". Milk, for example, would be spoken of as "the quencher, nourisher and satisfier" – its qualities in the order in which the bedouin esteem it. Of a skin of milk they would use the circumlocution *Allī fī fami-hā tubukhkhu-h, wa-ʿalā rubkbit-hā tutukhkhu-h, wa-fī yad-hājabdat mukhkh-uh*, "That in the mouth of which she blows and which [the woman, as she sits], moves from one side of her [left] knee to the other and from which she takes out the choicest part [i.e. butter] in her hand."

PACTS AND TREATIES IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

As in Arabian society of our own days, serious transactions concluded with an oath to observe them. "The basis of the oath is that, when they contracted an alliance with one another, they struck their right hands together...They called the alliance a 'right hand' (*yamīn*) after this

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[35] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, 946.

sense,...and they said, 'He swore a true or false oath' (*ḥalafa yamīn-an barrat-an wa-yamīn-an fājirat-an*)."[36] In pre-Islamic Mecca, alliances used to be made on 10 Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah, the parties clapping hands together in ratification, like buyer and seller. How integral to the contract the oath was may be deduced from a tradition that the Jews refused to pay what they owed to certain men in pagan times after the latter accepted Islam, on the grounds that they had changed their religion – so presumably they regarded the contract as void.

Covenants, treaties and engagements are broadly classified as security, protection (*dhimmah*), (armed) support (*nuṣrah*), marriage, sale, partnership, alliance, and so on. To these may be added *ḥabl*, said to mean "'*ahd* and security (*amān*)". The word is found in pre-Islamic inscriptions on the basis of which Professor Beeston accords it two aspects: a peaceful treaty between two nations, but also an offensive alliance directed against a third nation. One took an '*ahd* from the lord of a tribe through whose territory one wished to travel. Quraysh, in fact, had a series of security pacts over much of Arabia. The converse of any contract is the *barā'ah*, by which one declares oneself quit of it, which is sometimes tantamount to an act of war, since pacts ought properly to be dissolved by mutual agreement, as in the case of Abū Bakr and Ibn Dughunnah.[37] All the above are drawn up in accordance with recognized patterns, and the treaty of alliance figures among the earliest Arabic documents preserved to us.

Quṣayy, eponymous ancestor of Quraysh, established a confederation dominated by Quraysh in the sacred enclave of Mecca, thus acquiring for himself the title *Mujammi'*, "Assembler", "Uniter". When his descendant, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, fell out with near relatives over certain properties, he summoned his maternal uncles from Yathrib (Medina) to his aid. The Khuzā'ah tribe of the neighbourhood of Mecca, whom Quṣayy had expelled from the custody of Mecca, now proposed to contract an alliance with 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib – presumably disliking the idea of outside intervention. At the Council House of Mecca, used for entertainment, "they wrote a writing between them", and published it abroad by suspending it on the Ka'bah. This treaty, extant in several versions, runs:[38]

In your name, o God. This is that upon which 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the chiefs of Banū 'Amr of Khuzā'ah, along with those of them of Aslam and Mālik, contracted a mutual alliance. They contracted an alliance for mutual support and partnership – a pact that unites, not one which dissolves (*ḥilf jāmi' ghayr mufarriq*) [an alliance]. The shaykhs (chiefs) are responsible for the shaykhs, and the lesser men for the lesser. He who is present stands responsible for him who is absent. They contracted and covenanted together for as long as the sun rises over

[36] Najīramī, *Aymān*, 34.   [37] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, 245ff.   [38] Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 88–91.

[Mount] Thabīr, as long as camels cry yearning in a desert, as long as the two Akhshabān [mountains] stand, and as long as a man performs the lesser pilgrimage to Mecca, an alliance for time without end, for all time, which sunrise will further confirm, and night-darkness add to its terms. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim and the men of Banū 'Amr have ratified it and become a single hand, as apart from Banū 'l-Naḍr, [all Quraysh are Banū 'l-Naḍr] against any pursuer of vengeance by land or sea, mountain or plain. Banū 'Amr owe support to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and his sons against all the Arabs of east or west, rugged highland or smooth flat plain. They make God guarantor for this, and God suffices as surety.

While there are significant divergencies in the reportage of this treaty, indicating tampering or "improving", the text for political reasons during the early Islamic era, its general tenor, language and circumstances furnish no cause to believe that it is not basically authentic. The document, partly in *saj'*, has established clichés, and the last sentence may be considered a form of oath – it is used in Islamic documents up to the present day. On the occasion of Muḥammad's successful treaty at al-Ḥudaybiyah Khuzā'ah came to join him with the "writing" made with his grandfather 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib – of which Muḥammad was already aware.

In the Yemen shortly before Islam a treaty[39] was concluded between Hamdān and the Persian Abnā' when Bādhān b. Sāsān was satrap (*marzubān*) during the reign of Khusraw Parwīz son of Hurmazd IV (A.D. 590–627). In face of an attack threatened by the Mashriq tribes, the chief of Bakīl and the chief of Ḥāshid proposed to Bādhān mutual support and alliance. At the assembly to decide on the alliance the spokesmen–orators of both sides commended a pact and union (*al-ḥilf wa-'l-ulfah*) and the avoidance of disunion and discord. Al-Rāzī says that the Arabs used to commence a document with the phrase "In your name, o God (*Bismi-ka Allāhumma*)", but the Persians with "In the name of God, Lord of mercy and guidance" (*Bismillāh Walī 'l-raḥmah wa-'l-hudā*). So they combined the two headings in a single phrase and wrote out an Arabic and a Persian text of the treaty, which describes itself as "concluded according to the pact and bond of God". The continuing nature of the alliance is confirmed in its latter part in many picturesque phrases after the pattern of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's treaty with Khuzā'ah. Though our early documents often seem over-heavily embroidered with such imagery, the same type of phraseology, evidently in the identical ancient tradition, figures in an oath required in a tribal judgement (*ḥukm*) of 1947,[40] so even if these pre-Islamic documents have been "improved", this does not in itself militate against their authenticity. Al-Rāzī read this treaty in the Ṣan'ā' Jāmi' Mosque with a shaykh, but he does not state that it was the original copy. That such

[39] Rāzī, *Ṣan'ā*, 37ff.
[40] Serjeant, "Two tribal law cases", 160.

an alliance took place could quite well be the case; the authenticity of the document itself seems dubious – and the question must be asked as to the script in which it was written.

DOCUMENTS OF MUHAMMAD'S LIFETIME

The Qur'ān is of course the document par excellence of Muḥammad's lifetime, both in its literary and in its historical aspects. To it must be adjoined the corpus of his letters and treaties, the majority to be considered authentic notwithstanding inconsistencies in the reportage of some and the possibility of occasional tampering or "improvement". Grammatical "faults" occurring in some are to be regarded as supporting authenticity rather than the converse. Their possible reflection in the Qur'ān itself should be studied.

At Mecca, when Quraysh reached the peak of exasperation with Muḥammad, yet were inhibited from dealing with him because of the protection the two 'Abd Manāf clans accorded him, they cut off relations with him and them. A declaration was written on a sheet, which was hung up inside the Ka'bah, to the effect that Quraysh undertook "not to intermarry with them, do business with them, enter with them into their affairs or speak to them".[41] This looks like a kind of quittance (barā'ah), and Quraysh action shows certain procedural similarities to the Sabaean penal law[42] declaring a man an outlaw in territory under the protection of Almaqah and stripping him of civil protection – an act which was then proclaimed in the sanctuary (maḥram).

However, one Quraysh group pronounced itself disassociated from what it called "an unjust document which disunites" (ṣaḥīfah qāṭi'ah ẓālimah)[43] – the converse indeed of such documents as the pact of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (quoted above) "which unites". On inspection the document was found to have been eaten by white ant grubs, except for the introductory formula, "In your name, o God, accord us forgiveness" (Bismi-ka Allāhumma, ighfir la-nā)!

When Muḥammad ultimately persuaded a faction of the tribal Aws and Khazraj of Yathrib to grant him protection, pacts ratifying the two stages of their negotiations were concluded between them at the 'Aqabah of Mecca. The first, known by the strange name of Bay'āt al-Nisā', "the Allegiance of Women", simply deals with certain moral issues. The second is a protection pact known technically as Bay'āt al-Ḥarb, "the Allegiance of War". It commences with the oath, "By Him who sent you with the

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[41] Ibn Isḥāq, Sīrah, 230–1; Balādhurī, Ansāb, I, 234.
[42] Beeston, "Sabaean penal law", 306. [43] Ibn Isḥāq, Sīrah, 247–9.

truth, we will protect you indeed as we protect our wives (*uzur*—literally 'women's wrappers')." In discussing the conditions of the allegiance Muhammad defines them in a rhyming technical cliché, "*Al-dam al-dam wa-'l-hadam al-hadam*", denoting that the parties will support each other in the event of aggression. The pact was on the basis of war against all and sundry, allegiance to Muhammad, "responding to summons for aid and providing armed support", "in weal or in woe, what one likes and dislikes", and so on.[44] I am much inclined to consider that these stipulations were clauses embodied in a document that may have been rendered obsolete by the treaties A and B of the "Eight Documents" (see pp. 135ff. below). The 'Aqabah pacts were agreed with the twelve chiefs of tribal sections (*naqībs*) who played so prominent a part in Muhammad's years at Medina. One of them, Sa'd b. Mu'ādh, at the time of Badr, told Muhammad: "We have given you our bonds to respond with aid and armed support (*'alā 'l-sam' wa-'l-ṭā'ah*), so put into execution whatever you wish, for we are with you."[45]

The second 'Aqabah pact does seem to imply the transfer of protection of Muhammad from his own kin to that of strangers, so there is nothing inherently improbable in the role attributed to his uncle al-'Abbās, that of attending and holding a watching brief for the house of Hāshim and defending Muhammad's interests. The act of *hijrah* whereby Muhammad abandoned protection by Quraysh to take up that of the Supporters (Anṣār) at Yathrib was not, of course, a hostile action in itself.

In Medina, says Schacht,[46] "the Prophet became the ruler and law-giver of a new society on a religious basis which was meant to, and at once began to, supersede Arabian tribal society. This new society called for a new legal organization, and the seed out of which Islamic legal organization grew can be seen germinating in the Koran." This theory would doubtless conform with that of Muslim writers, but unfortunately it is inconsistent with the clear evidence of the early sources.

Arabian law is basically case law dependent on a series of decisions or judgements, each of which may be regarded as a *sunnah*. The Prophet himself, in assenting to what is recognized (*ma'rūf*', equivalent to customary law (*'urf*), in Document A of the "Eight Documents" (see p. 135 below), as indeed also in the first 'Aqabah treaty, is giving sanction to existing custom. He is credited with saying, "Whatever alliance there was in the Jāhiliyyah, Islam but adds to its strength."[47] Ibn Ḥabīb in fact entitles one of his chapters "The *Sunan* which the Jāhiliyyah established, some of which Islam preserved and some of which it dropped".[48] Surely

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[44] Ibid., 304-5.   [45] Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd*, ii, 299.   [46] "The Law", 68.
[47] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrah*, 86.   [48] Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 309.

there must have been preserved many more than those he cites? Instead of regarding Muḥammad as bent on a policy of innovation, one has to conceive of a continuous body of *sunnahs* stretching back beyond Islam into the remote past, subject to slow modification. The Prophet kept to the existing body of *sunnahs* that formed the law, adapting some ancient *sunnahs* and adding a few new ones, justified on occasion by Quranic revelation. An example of change is the amendment made to the proportion of war booty that was allotted to the victorious leader. "In Islam one fifth of the booty was set aside 'for God' before the general shareout was made; but as the Arabic lexicographers tell us, pre-Islamic practice was to allot one quarter to the leader."[49] From inscriptional evidence it is confirmed that the Sabaean practice was to allot one quarter to the king as commander-in-chief. Where Muḥammad follows existing *sunnahs* he is naturally regarded as giving them Islamic sanction.

After the Prophet's decease there was no break, and Abū Bakr, 'Umar, doubtless also 'Uthmān, as heritors of his office of supreme arbiter, formed *sunnahs* to meet the need of an occasion which were regarded as valid precedents. 'Alī and his descendants, the Ahl al-Bayt, who apply the principle of "exerting oneself to form an opinion" (*ijtihād*) in their pronouncements, are in a living tradition that goes back to a remote past. To 'Uthmān himself is attributed the celebrated maxim, "What God restrains by the ruler is more that what the Qur'an restrains."[50] Even *qāḍīs* acting for the Umayyads, and drawn in all probability from families of hereditary judge–arbiters, likely followed, for the most part, the *sunnah* known to them, and this certainly varied in detail according to the political and geographical entities in the Arabian Peninsula.

Muḥammad can in no way be regarded as setting out to supersede the old tribal society, but in Quraysh eyes Muḥammad, in contradistinction to his noble ancestor Quṣayy – the Mujammi' who united the tribes of Fihr (Quraysh) – became the "Cutter" of the bonds of relationship and unity of Quraysh, the "Divider of the collective group" (*Mufarriq al-jamāʿah*), introducing what is not recognized (or customary), and a foolish, irresponsible, perverse person. At Yathrib, however, he played a role like that of Quṣayy in uniting its tribes into a confederation or *ummah*, a word which later takes on the sense of "community". It took him several years of astute political manoeuvre to bind the *Ummah* together and make it the nucleus of an even larger confederation into which he succeeded in bringing Quraysh of Mecca.

The process by which the new community, the Ummat Allāh, was

[49] Beeston, "Warfare", 14, 64.
[50] Ṣafwat, *Jamharat*, I, 271.

founded is closely parallel with the ancient classical pattern outlined by
Jacques Ryckmans as that of the pre-Islamic South Arabian kingdoms:

La tribu sud-arabe réunissait, sous la direction d'un clan privilégié, divers groupes
ethniques ou économico-sociaux en vue de l'exploitation du territoire au profit
du dieu national ou du patron tribal, par l'intermédiaire du temple.... Dans le
royaume sabéen, la notion de l'État était exprimée par la formule "Almaqah (le
dieu national), Karibi'l (le souverain), et Saba".

This has a certain resemblance to the Islamic concept which a
Tradition expresses as "La terre est...à Dieu, à son Envoyé, et aux
Musulmans."[51]

The most vital and outstanding document of Muḥammad's Medinan
period, historically no less important than the Qur'ān itself, is the group
of treaties known collectively, but incorrectly, in Europe as the "Consti-
tution of Medina", preserved in two versions, the fuller in Ibn Isḥāq's
Sīrah, and an abbreviated version in Abū 'Ubayd's K. al-Amwāl. A more
accurate and non-committal title for these documents, which have been
lumped together as one, is the "Eight Documents", which has been
adopted in this chapter. The Sīrah version is clearly authentic and shows
no sign of tampering. There is no reason to suspect the Tradition which
says that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, in his capacity as Muhammad's secretary, wrote
the original document and kept it in his sword-case, but the version we
have can only be a transcript of the original "Eight Documents", omitting
seals and signatures. That the signatures are missing is a great loss to early
Islamic history. The document was probably kept by one of 'Alī's
descendants and copied by Ibn Isḥāq; probably only the transcript has been
preserved.

Many Qur'ān passages undoubtedly allude to one or other of the "Eight
Documents", but the most obvious is Qur'ān, iii.101ff.: "Wa-'taṣimū
bi-ḥabli 'llāhi jamī'-an wa-lā tafarraqū" ("Have recourse to the pact of God
as a collective group and do not split apart"). This refers to the first treaty
or pact made after Muḥammad's arrival in Yathrib. Since the "Eight
Documents" have already been analysed elsewhere,[52] only their salient
features need be distinguished. They are:

A. The Confederation (Ummah) Treaty.
B. Supplement to the Confederation Treaty (A).
C. Treaty defining the status of the Jewish tribes in the Confederation.
D. Supplement to the Treaty defining the status of the Jewish tribes (C).
E. Reaffirmation of the status of the Jews.
F. The proclamation of Yathrib as a sacred enclave (ḥaram).

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[51] Personal communication and "Inscriptions sud-arabes", 447; also "Inscriptions anciennes", 95.
[52] Serjeant, "Constitution" and "Sunnah Jāmi'ah."

G. The Treaty concluded prior to Khandaq among the Arabs of Yathrib and with the Jewish Qurayẓah to defend it from Quraysh of Mecca and their allies.

H. Codicil to the proclamation of Yathrib as a sacred enclave (F).

The two Confederation documents A and B are identified with the two pacts of alliance made in the house of Anas b. Mālik between the Muhājirūn, the Meccan refugees, and Anṣār, Muhammad's supporters in Medina. They are to be assigned to year 1 of the *hijrah* and probably to be identified with al-Sunnat al-Jāmiʿah. Document A, the text of which follows, is a simple federal alliance between the Muhājirūn and Aws and Khazraj tribes, but each tribe retains control over blood-money arrangements, the central issue in all Arabian tribal affairs. As remarked earlier, this is "in accordance with what is customary".

Document A: the Confederation ("Ummah") Treaty

1. This is a writing from Muhammad the Prophet, Allāh bless and honour him, between the Believers (*Muʾminūn*) and Muslims (*Muslimūn*) of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who follow them, and join with them, and strive along with them.

2a. They are a single confederation (*Ummah*) set apart from the people.

2b. The Muhājirūn of Quraysh are in charge of the management of their affairs, paying jointly among themselves their blood-money, and they will ransom a prisoner of them in accordance with what is customary and by fair sharing among the *Muʾminūn*.

2c. Banū ʿAwf are in charge of the management of their affairs, paying jointly among themselves their previous blood-monies, and each group [or: section] will ransom a prisoner of them in accordance with what is customary and by fair sharing among the *Muʾminūn*.

(Clauses 2d–2j reiterate this stipulation for the other Aws and Khazraj tribes.)

3a. A *Muʾmin* will not leave one turned Muslim among a people to whom he does not belong (*mufraj*) without giving him what is established by custom for ransom or blood-money.

3b. A *Muʾmin* will not make an alliance with the client [or: ally] of a *Muʾmin*, intervening between him [or: the latter].

4a. The *Muʾminūn* who keep free of dishonourable acts and offences are against [any] one of them who acts oppressively or [or: and] [any one of them who] demands an unjust [i.e. forced] gift, or commits crime [or: treachery], or an act of aggression, or stirs dissension among the *Muʾminūn*.

4b. Their hands are against him as a whole group, even if he be the son of one of them.

5. A *Mu'min* will not slay a *Mu'min* in [retaliation for] a *Kāfir* (disacknowledger, one who declares himself quit or free of), nor will he support a *Kāfir* against a *Mu'min*.

6. The security of Allāh [for life and property] is one – the lowliest/least of them [the *Mu'minūn* etc.] being [competent] to give protection on behalf of them [all].

7. The *Mu'minūn*: some are allies [or: clients] of others to the exclusion of the people [i.e., other people].

8. Whosoever of Jews follows us shall have support [or: what is customary] and parity, not undergoing injustice and no mutual support being given against them.

9. The peace that the *Mu'minūn* make is one. No *Mu'min* will make peace to the exclusion of [or: separately from] a *Mu'min* fighting in the path of Allāh, if it be not on the basis of equity and justice [or: fair dealing] between them.

10. Each raiding party which raids along with us – one shall succeed another.

11. The *Mu'minūn* – one of them will slay on behalf of another in retaliation for what harms their blood in the path of Allāh.

12. The *Mu'minūn* who keep free from dishonourable acts and offences are [following] the best and truest guidance.

Document B. Supplement to the Confederation Treaty A

1. No Polytheist will grant protection to property belonging to Quraysh, or person; nor will he intervene between him against a *Mu'min*.

2a. Whosoever kills a *Mu'min* without any transgression on the part of the latter, proof [against the murderer] being shown, shall be slain in retaliation for him, unless the next of kin to the murdered man consent to [accept] the blood-money.

2b. The *Mu'minūn* will be altogether against him, any other course than rising against him being unlawful to them.

3a. It is not lawful to [any] *Mu'min* who has affirmed what is on this sheet and/or trusts in Allāh and the Last Day, to support or shelter an aggressor [or: innovator].

3b. Whosoever supports him and shelters him shall have upon him the curse of Allāh and His wrath on the Day of Resurrection. No intercession or propitiatory gift will be accepted from him.

4. In whatever thing you are at variance, its reference back (*maradd*) is to Allāh, Great and Glorious, and to Muḥammad, Allāh bless and honour him.

There is clear reference to the Confederation Treaty, Document A, in Qur'ān, viii.74: "Those who have believed [or: trusted] and migrated [or: taken refuge] and striven with their monies and persons in the way of

Allāh, and those who have given shelter and supported – those – some of them are allies of others; and those who believed [or: trusted] but did not migrate [or: take refuge] have nothing of their alliance with you until they migrate [take refuge], and if they ask your support in religion it is your duty to give support, except against a tribe with whom you have a pact." To enable the *Ummah* to incorporate fresh adherents, verse 72 adds: "And whosoever believe [trust] later and migrate and strive along with you – those are of you."

Documents C to H

Document C, also dated to year 1, incorporates the Jews into the Confederation (*Ummah*), specifying by name each tribe with Jewish client groups attached to it, and stipulates that they, like the *Mu'mins*, must pay the contribution (*nafaqah*) in time of war.

Document D is a codicil to Document C, defining more precisely certain client relationships. One or both of these documents must be regarded as the initial pact with the Prophet. Document E seems to be a reaffirmation of the pact with the Jews after a Hārithī tribesman murdered his Jewish ally – a crime from which the Prophet exonerates himself.

The "Eight Documents" have each a terminal formula; in the case of C to H, it is "observation of one's undertakings eliminates treachery [or: breaking of treaties]" ("*al-birr dūna 'l-ithm*"), or a variant of this expression. This enables one to perceive that there has been some confusion in the transcription of Documents F to H, and they appear to be slightly out of chronological order. This is easy to comprehend if the pacts were written on sheets as small as the extremely early Hadramī Qur'ān in the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

Document F, to be assigned to late year 6 or early year 7, declares Yathrib a sacred enclave (*haram*), and reads:

1. The Jawf of Yathrib is inviolate [or: a sacred enclave] for the people of this sheet.

2. The protected person (*jār*) is like [one's] self, neither molested nor committing an unlawful act.

3. A woman shall not be accorded protection except by permission of her people.

4. Whatsoever aggression [or: misdemeanour] or quarrel there is between the people of this sheet, which it is feared may cause dissension, will be referred to God, great and glorious, and to Muhammad the Apostle of God, God bless and honour him.

5. God is surety for what is most avoided of covenant-breaking and what is most honoured in the observance of what is contained in this sheet.

With Document F must be taken the codicil, Document H. These regulations of Document H are closely similar to rules quoted by Yāqūt for the Meccan Ḥaram, and incidentally resemble in essence what applies in the sacred enclave (ḥawṭah) of Ḥaḍramawt in our own day. The codicil reads:

1. This writing does not intervene between a wrongdoer and one committing a criminal act.

2. He who goes out is secure, and he who stays is secure in Medina, except one who does wrong or commits a criminal act.

3. God is protector for him who observes undertakings and keeps free from dishonourable acts and offences, and Muḥammad, Allāh bless and honour him, is the Apostle of Allāh.

Document G is evidently misplaced and ought chronologically to precede Document F. It is the text of the treaty which bound the Mu'minūn and Jewish Qurayẓah tribe to defend Yathrib against the assault of Meccan Quraysh and their allies at the so-called "battle" of the Trench. It lays down the severest penalties for any party breaking faith – which Qurayẓah were reluctantly induced to do, with dire consequences to themselves.

The tribal pattern of these treaties is immediately obvious and there is nothing particularly novel about them. An oath was almost certainly taken by the parties to observe the stipulations they embody. Documents A and B, which are the legal basis of the Confederation (Ummah), are reflected now and then in the Ḥadīth collections, usually in slightly garbled form, and excerpts are sometimes stated to have come from the sheet 'Alī kept in his sword-case. These could well have been transmitted by persons aware of the content of 'Alī's "sheet", but without access to it. Those excerpts cited by Ibn Ḥanbal's Musnad,[53] to take a case in point, seem angled to show 'Alī as explicitly denying that he had a proof or ordinance (naṣṣ) nominating him Muḥammad's successor. The relation of all "Eight Documents" to the Qur'ān, where and if it alludes to them, has yet to be worked out in full.

There is a persistent Tradition that "The Apostle of God wrote the blood-monies".[54] In fact, the document 'Alī kept in his sword-case is said to have contained a jumble of topics including ordinances of the ṣadaqah tax, pasture of camels, (penalties) for woundings, and so on. These of course do not figure in the "Eight Documents", but, writing to his governor at Najrān, the Prophet sent him a list of penalties for woundings,

[53] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Musnad, 1313, I, 79, 81, 100, 118–9, 151–2.
[54] Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, I, III, 1367, ascribes this to the year 2/624.

directed to the Banū 'l-Hārith b. Ka'b.[55] One sees not dissimilar lists of offences and penalties in tribal Hadramawt – which of course have no connection with *sharī'ah*, being purely local custom (*'urf*). Letters about *sadaqah* ordinances were also sent to the Banū 'l-Hārith and others. It is remarkable how simple were the requirements of early Islam for the tribes and territories adhering to Allāh and Muhammad.

MUHAMMAD'S LETTERS TO THE ARAB TRIBES; DOCUMENTS ASCRIBED TO 'UMAR I

The correspondence of the Prophet with the Arabian tribes may be consulted in the collection made by M. Hamīdullah. This includes treaties of mutual support and guarantees of security by Muhammad. The important agreement with Thaqīf of al-Tā'if, clearly genuine, is a compromise in that it puts a termination to usury there, but recognizes the *himā*, really a sort of sacred enclave not unlike a *haram*, which Thaqīf had in Wadi Wajj. As the Prophet's power grew, his letters contained ever more detailed instructions on taxation. There are even claims to land, and of course the well-known share-cropping arrangement with the Jews of Khaybar – which cannot but reflect long-established practice. *Iqtā'*, which in the Islamic Middle Ages comes to mean a fief, is used by Muhammad simply to mean grants or assignments of land, water, even mines. Muhammad's letter to Tamīm al-Dārī,[56] granting him land in Hebron, Martūm and Bayt Ibrāhīm is couched in antique Arabian language – which speaks in favour of its authenticity. It is considered an early forgery, but it is not impossible that Arab tribes settled in Byzantine Palestine sent to Muhammad as an arbiter and this was his decision. The celebrated Quraysh north–south caravan route ran to Gaza, but one of its offshoots might well have lain through Hebron.

The quite detailed negotiations with the Christians of Najrān reveal the existence of a sophisticated type of hierarchy in this ancient centre of civilization. A letter to the bishop of Aylah in the Gulf of 'Aqabah extends protection to its sea and land convoys and mixed population. These documents and the treaties of the early caliphs with the Christians of Jerusalem, Damascus, al-Madā'in and other places are regarded as a base of the corpus of law that came to be applied to the Dhimmī groups (see p. 140 below).

As Muhammad drew near supreme power in the Peninsula his letters sometimes took a threatening tone. Naturally he insisted or commended

[55] Hamīdullāh, *Majmū'at*, 39, 177. Cf. al-Shāfi'ī, *al-Umm*, VI, 66.
[56] Hamīdullāh, *Majmū'at*, 102; Krenkow, "Grant of land", 529–32.

that Islam be accepted – this had a political as well as a religious aspect and, as suggested, might include adoption of such things as his scale of penalties for injuries to persons. The letters to al-Baḥrayn, Oman, Ḥaḍramawt, the Yemen, and tribes of the borderlands of Syria and Iraq are indicative of the expansion of his political influence.

Since these letters were regarded by writers like Abū ʿUbayd, some two hundred years later, as a source of *sharīʿah*, they are preserved in legal as well as historical literature. Critical study of these documents still remains far from complete. When a document is presented in several versions, it sometimes seems to have been "improved", either because of a change in epistolary style at a later date, or to make it sound more consequential. There may be deliberate "tampering" for other reasons. Often the transmission seems to have been imperfect – sometimes this can be perceived to have arisen from the ambiguities of the early Arabic script. Forgery by Christian and Jewish communities of documents guaranteeing them certain rights is highly probable in, for example, the two "Covenants of the Prophet" of St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai – but they have been accepted by Muslim rulers.[57]

With regard to the "Covenant of ʿUmar" which is a sort of codification of Islamic law in relation to the Christian Dhimmīs, Tritton says:[58]

Reference to the Covenant does not become common till quite late. In the first century it is ignored. In the second some of its provisions are sometimes observed. By 200 it existed in the traditional form, but with many minor variations. The agreements made by Muslim commanders with conquered towns are not modelled on it. Some of its provisions seem to have been first enacted by ʿUmar II, which may have helped the attribution of it to his greater namesake. The covenant mentioned by Abū Yūsuf [*Kitāb al-Kharāj*] may have been an early form of this document, but probably he had in mind some special treaty or a general claim of rights made by the *Dhimmīs*. The Covenant was drawn up in the schools of law, and came to be ascribed, like so much else, to ʿUmar I.

ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's wise letter to Abū ʿUbaydah,[59] instructing him not to divide up the Iraqi cities and their inhabitants and treat them and the land like ordinary booty, laying down also regulations for the taxation of Jews and Christians along with other ordinances, must come under suspicion with regard to its authenticity. Its pattern and explicit, uncomplicated style recall the Fiscal Rescript of ʿUmar II (see p. 151 below), but it could be a remodelled paraphrase.

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[57] Atiya, *Arabic manuscripts*, 25, nos 695, 696.
[58] Tritton, *Caliphs*, 233.
[59] Ḥamīdullāh, *Majmūʿat*, 376–8.

MUḤAMMAD'S LETTERS TO FOREIGN MONARCHS AND GOVERNORS

Early historians have preserved texts of letters[60] purporting to be written by the Prophet to Heraclius, the Muqawqis of Alexandria and Egypt, the Negus (Najāshī) of Abyssinia – with whom he had quite a little correspondence – to Chosroes, the Ghassanid governor of Damascus, the Christian governor of Yamāmah allied to the Persians, and others. Their authenticity has been much debated. Curiously enough, these are the sole early Islamic documents of which forgeries, or at best ancient copies, exist today. The Prophet's letter to Musaylimah and that to the Muqawqis, as well as a pact of the Christians attributed to him, are, for example, in Istanbul.

That Muḥammad actually wrote to Byzantine or Sasanian officials or rulers of Arabian provinces allied to them is not impossible; Quraysh of Mecca had direct commercial relations with both empires. Yet it seems improbable that he would send provocative letters to Qayṣar or Chosroes when, even by the time of his death, he had still not mastered a large part of Arabia. Moreover, the more or less standardized pattern and ideology of the letters arouse suspicion. There are patently anachronistic items, such as the demand that Heraclius, if he will not embrace Islam, should pay the *jizyah* tax – by which is clearly intended the poll-tax charged to Dhimmīs (persons belonging to the protected faiths of Christianity and Judaism), though the term *jizyah* was not confined in Muḥammad's lifetime to the Dhimmī poll-tax. Another letter has an obscure allusion to the "sin of the Arisiyyūn", or "*fallāḥīn*" (peasants), presumably the heresy of Arius. Finally, Qayṣar's acknowledgement that Muḥammad is the Apostle of God foretold in the New Testament (*Injīl*) is clearly of that category of legends that attempts to establish the foretelling of Muḥammad in Christian and Jewish scriptures.

The correspondence with the Negus is even more palpably forged – it is not likely that he would acknowledge Muḥammad as the Apostle of God. Nor does the correspondence with Chosroes and the Arab allies of the Sasanians, or Chosroes' hostile reception of Muḥammad's letter, carry more conviction of authenticity.

It is true that the letters contain conventional phrases found in Muḥammad's letters to Arabians, but their style is of a sophistication not

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[60] Hamīdullāh, "Lettre du Prophète"; Hamīdullāh, "Original"; *EI²*, "Muqawqis". A curiosity among forgeries, seemingly modern, is a transcription on parchment in "Himyaritic" characters of an Arabic letter of Muḥammad to the kings of Ḥimyar, "discovered" in Beirut. Cohen, "Un manuscrit".

found in the Prophet's writing. They give the impression that in composing them phrases were culled from genuine material, so that in point of language they cannot be faulted.

In seeking a date and motive for forgery one may look to somewhere about the age of 'Umar II (99–101/717–20). 'Umar is credited with writing to the princes of Transoxiana inviting them to embrace Islam, and sending a rescript to the kings of Sindh, to whom he promised the same privileges and immunities as the Arabs if they would become Muslims. There is a further tradition that he corresponded with the Byzantine Leo II, the Isaurian, to whom he put the stock points of controversy between Christians and Muslims – this in a letter preserved, along with Leo's reply, in an Armenian history, both being of credible authenticity.[61]

The forgeries, for as such one is obliged to consider them, seem designed to promote the notion that Muḥammad conceived of Islam as a universal religion, not a mere Arabian heresy (as John of Damascus would have it), and that the coming of Muḥammad, like that of Moses and Jesus, was anticipated and foretold in Scripture. John of Damascus, a Christian Umayyad official who probably left government service not earlier than 102/720, asks, for example, after describing the foretelling of their coming, "How is it that your prophet did not come this way, by having others bear witness to him?"[62] In presenting the episode of Muḥammad's letter to Heraclius, Ṭabarī[63] supplies what can only be a fictitious setting for its arrival at the Byzantine court. This lends support to the argument that the letters were concocted to strengthen Islamic defences against Christian polemic.

THE ṢIFFĪN ARBITRATION TREATY AND THE PROPHET'S
SUNNAH

A perusal of Muhammad's treaties subsequent to Documents A and B of the "Eight Documents" reveals no additional uniting, but only extensions of security, through which other groups are attached to the Ummah. At first new adherents had to make the hijrah to Yathrib (Mecca) to pay allegiance and disassociate themselves from their existing alliances. Often they represented dissident factions from a tribal confederation, who joined Muḥammad.

It is appropriate at this point to look a little ahead and consider the instrument of arbitration agreed to, albeit unwillingly, by 'Alī and

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[61] Jeffery, "Ghevond's text", but with no final view on the attribution of the letters.
[62] Sahas, John of Damascus, 134–5.
[63] Ṭabarī, Tārīkh, I, III, 1560ff.; cf. Guillaume, Life, 653.

Muʿāwiyah, after their confrontation at Ṣiffīn, because of its relation to the previous documents. The troubles and dissension (*fitnah*) ensuing on the murder of the caliph ʿUthmān created a schism that to this day has not been closed, but it is the treaty and its implications that concern us here. The written agreement concluded at this crucial episode of Islamic history does not express itself as to what the arbitration was about – but the issues seem plain enough. Was the caliph ʿUthmān murdered "as an oppressor [or: unjust tyrant] or as the victim of oppression [or: wrongful treatment]"? Should the latter be the case, then, by not acting against his assassins, ʿAlī had broken the law as laid down in the "Eight Documents", B, 2a–3b (see p. 136 above).

Unlike the text of the "Eight", over which there is no controversy, there are variations in the wording of the several versions of the instrument of arbitration. An examination of the fuller versions of the treaty inclines me to consider, partly on internal evidence, that the version with ostensibly the best claim to represent the original is that of Abū Mikhnaf (70–157/689(?)–774), preserved in Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh*,[64] but it is not an unattractive idea to regard it as an expanded version of a simpler treaty as cited in Ibn Aʿtham. The composite version Jāḥiẓ presents[65] merits his own strictures on it; but Jāḥiẓ has not proved an accurate or critical transmitter in other respects.

Al-Minqarī provides a version on the authority of al-Shaybānī, who claimed to have actually seen the original in the hands of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, one of the arbiters. His assertion that the document bore two seals or imprints, one at the top (ʿAlī's?) and one at the foot (Muʿāwiyah's?) is slightly suspicious, for early tradition was to put the seal at the top; but this may not have been invariable. Shaybānī's version is, in fact, clumsily drafted in places, and sometimes repetitive, but this in itself does not mean that it is to be counted less likely to be original than Abū Mikhnaf's tidier version.[66]

The Abū Mikhnaf version comprises three sections:
1. ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah, with their followers, agree to proceed to arbitration. This will be made in accordance with the judgement of Allāh and His Book, which, and none other, is to unite us. The Book of Allāh is between us from its opening to its closing chapters; we

[64] Sezgin, *Abū Miḥnaf*.

[65] "*Risālah*", 417–9.

[66] A marginal annotation to the text of al-Minqarī's *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn* calls Zayd b. Ḥasan's commentary the "instrument (*wathīqah*) of arbitration" and al-Shaybānī's text "another version of the instrument". This note may be original to the MS copy or added by the Egyptian editor, but al-Minqarī's informants do not say that Zayd dictated the *text* to them, and the reference is to the *comment* he dictated. Marginal annotations are notoriously unreliable and misleading.

shall [re]vivify what it [re]vivifies and put to death what it puts to death.[67]

2. Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī and 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ are designated arbiters to act in accordance with what they find in the Book of God and the just and unifying *sunnah* (*al-sunnat al-'ādilah al-jāmi'ah ghayr al-mufarriqah*). They receive the pacts of 'Alī, Mu'āwiyah and the two armies, for their personal safety and that of their relations. The *Ummah* is to act as their Supporters (*Anṣār*) in the verdict at which they jointly arrive. The Mu'minūn and Muslimūn of both parties subscribe to the pact of God to observe what is in this sheet.

3. [This section contains administrative arrangements and provisions for the ensuing truce and arbitration. The arbiters are to arbitrate between this *Ummah*, and not to turn it back to dissolution; they must write their attestation to the contents of this sheet. It concludes:] O Allāh, we ask you for support against anyone who abandons what is in this sheet!

These divisions of the document coincide with what look like terminal formulae parallel to those of the "Eight Documents", to certain of which they are not dissimilar, but it is suggested that they also represent three agreements concluded at different times, then run into one, or embodied in a final comprehensive treaty. Indeed, al-Minqarī, in several of his narratives, indicates that a hiatus occurred before the nomination of the arbiters in section 2; obviously the briefing in section 3 is likely to have followed after the arbiters were commissioned, along with the actual administrative details.

There is a clear contradiction, never ironed out, between sections 1 and 2, in that the former specifies that solely the Book of God is to be consulted by the arbiters (unless indeed the judgement (*ḥukm*) of Allāh in section 1 above is to be interpreted as the *sunnah* of Muḥammad acting as God's earthly representative), whereas the latter adds "the just *sunnah* which unites, not that which separates". This phrase is of great significance with regard both to law and to the history of early Islamic documents.

Regarding *al-sunnat al-jāmi'ah* I proposed in 1967 that "Il est même possible que dans l'acte d'arbitration dressé entre 'Alī et Mu'āwiyah, quand il est déclaré que l'arbitration doit être faite selon le Qur'ān et *al-Sunnat al-Jāmi'ah*, cette dernière expression soit une allusion aux pactes A et B du Prophète."[68] This identification I now believe to be correct. It is corroborated by Hassān b. Thābit's elegy on 'Uthmān,[69] in which he

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[67] Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, VI, 3279.

[68] Unpublished lecture, "The constitution of Medina", at the Sorbonne.

[69] Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, I, 320. The poet al-'Abbās b. Mirdās, *Dīwān*, 59, 73, 88, 95, also alluded to oaths taken to Muḥammad and pacts to be observed.

demands why 'Uthmān's murderers did not observe God's security or compact (*dhimmat Allāh*) and keep faith with the pact of Muḥammad. It is in the phraseology of Documents A and B and Qur'ān xvii.33 that Mu'āwiyah himself accuses 'Uthmān's assassins: "And do not slay the soul that God has forbidden except for just cause; for whosoever is wrongfully slain, we have assigned his next of kin authority [to avenge him], yet let him not slay extravagantly." "Just" seems to qualify a pact that unites as contrasted with one which separates or dissolves a unity, the latter being called "cutting", "unjust". It was essential to specify that the *sunnah* was not "that which separates", since Document A, while "uniting" the "*Ummah* set apart from the people", from the viewpoint of the Muhājirūn and Anṣār, "separated" Meccan Quraysh from them initially, until they were linked to the Prophet's *Ummah*. This emerges in the appeal of al-Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith of Banū 'Abd al-Dār, when taken prisoner at Badr, to his 'Abd al-Dār fellow tribesman, Muṣ'ab b. 'Umayr, to save him from Muḥammad's vengeance, as he would do for Muṣ'ab in like circumstance. Muṣ'ab's rejoinder was that Islam had "cut the pacts between me and you".[70]

An interesting commentary on the treaty made by the 'Alawī Zayd b. Ḥasan, an associate of Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68 or 70) is provided by al-Minqarī[71] from his informant Jābir. Zayd "discussed (*dhakara*) the writing of the two arbiters, and, concerning it, added something to what Muḥammad b. 'Alī and al-Sha'bī discussed (mentioned) by way of abundance of witnesses, additions to and subtractions from the expressions which he dictated to me from a writing he had with him". Regarding this glossed, expanded and paraphrased account, it becomes clear that Zayd was making a running commentary, neglecting or suppressing certain details; this is specially noticeable in section three, where he jumbles together certain points of the basic provisions of the Abū Mikhnaf/Shaybānī version, sometimes repetitively, as if returning to them for emphasis. Significantly, Zayd's qualifications insist that the arbiters arrive at their decision in accordance with the Book of Allāh and *sunnah* of his Prophet or of the Apostle of Allāh, adding that if they fail to do so then they will have no pact or security.

Accepting that these are references to *al-Sunnat al-Jāmi'ah*, identified with A and B of the "Eight Documents", why should an 'Alawī insist upon this? 'Alī's political fate would thereby turn on the issue of whether 'Uthmān was murdered "wronging or wronged" – at best an open question, even for 'Alī himself, who at one stage declared he would not say whether 'Uthmān was wronging or wronged.

[70] Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 143.
[71] Ibid., I, 504. Al-Minqarī's reporter, Jābir, knew another source for the treaty, al-Sha'bī: doubtless an oral report, since the latter claimed that "I never wrote black on white" (Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat*, 1955–8, I, 84).

The answer is curiously simple. Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī, who, despite strictures on him, emerges as a man of principle and honest intention, considered ʿUthmān wrongfully slain, and at an early stage in the arbitration proceedings offered to ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ "to revive the *sunnah* of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb".[72] This, in the context of the arbitration, can be nothing other than the Council (*Shūrā*) of electors convened by ʿUmar – at which ʿAlī lost to ʿUthmān. In no sense can it be regarded as a *sunnah jāmiʿah*. Hashimites and Umayyads alike considered Abū Bakr's succession to the Prophet as improvisation or opportunism, not as a precedent. It was in no way relevant or applicable to the situation after Ṣiffīn; nor was the *sunnah* of ʿUmar's succession to Abū Bakr. By Zayd b. Ḥasan's time, ʿUmar's *sunnah*, that had resulted in the rejection of ʿAlī's claims to the caliphate, was a far worse alternative for ʿAlawīs, than resort to *al-Sunnat al-Jāmiʿah*, the *Sunnat Rasūl Allāh* (*sunnah* of the Apostle of Allāh – i.e. Muḥammad) – hence Zayd's eagerness to promote the latter. This indirectly supports Ṭabarī's statement that the arbiters decided upon a council. Abū Mūsā agreed that ʿUthmān was wrongfully slain, and it looks as if they may have agreed that ʿAlī had contravened the *Sunnah Jāmiʿah*.

Whatever their verdict was, ʿAlī rejected the arbitration on the grounds that it was not a "binding and effective custom"[73] – to which he added that Allāh "was quit" of both arbiters. Zayd b. ʿAlī's insistence that the arbiters should not go beyond the Prophet's *sunnah*, avoiding the application of ʿUmar's *sunnah* in appointing the Council, would reflect ʿAlī's own attitude. Indeed, ʿAlī's failure to achieve the caliphate earlier is attributed to his unwillingness to accept the "action" of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar.

The mutual cursing of ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah (37–8/657–9), follow, in accordance with the "Eight Documents", clause B3b, and Qurʾān iv.92 (see p. 136 above). The *Ḥadīth* maintains that the Prophet cursed certain opponents at the ritual prayer, so, if this is taken in conjunction with the aforesaid document, it is evidently improbable that the cursing at the prayer was an innovation of ʿAlī or Muʿāwiyah, and much more like that it was an ancient pre-Islamic practice. Al-Mughīrah b. Shuʿbah used to say, "Allāh, curse so-and-so (meaning ʿAlī) for he disobeyed what is in Your Book and abandoned the *sunnah* of Your Prophet, divided unity, shed blood and was slain as an oppressor."[74] A moderate attitude was taken by Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), who used to bless ʿUthmān thrice and curse his murderers thrice, saying, "Were we not to curse them we should

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[72] Minqarī, *Waqʿat*, 541, 544.

[73] Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, VI, 3368, *sunnah māḍiyah*. It was also against the Qurʾān. ʿAlī can only have meant the Prophet's *sunnah*. I concur with Bravmann, in opposition to Schacht, on this sense of *māḍiyah*.

[74] Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IVA, 211–2, 19.

certainly be cursed." Apostrophizing 'Alī, he would say, "Why did you go to arbitration when right was on your side?"[75]

Bravmann has convincingly demolished Schacht's theory that *sunnah* was originally applied to the practice of the first two caliphs and only later to that of the Prophet.[76] The weakness of the theory is manifest in that Schacht has to resort to the suggestion that the "Prophet's *Sunnah*", to which historians refer when reporting the selection of 'Uthmān for the office of caliph, is the insertion of a later generation. Bravmann also rejects the Margoliouth–Schact thesis that the Prophet's practice (*sunnah*), which 'Uthmān undertook to follow, "was not anything quite definite, but merely what was customary". This rather naive theory misunderstands the basis of customary law in Arabian society, which rests upon decisions upon disputes, not infrequently recorded in writing. Moreover, for South Arabia at least, Jacques Ryckmans[77] has pointed to the existence of "quelques textes juridiques, dont des fragments de codes". As Bravmann's dictum expresses it, "At the time of the election of 'Umar's successor, which led to the appointment of 'Uthmān, the adherence to the practice (*sīrah* or *sunnah*) of the Prophet had developed into an unalterable basic principle of Islam."[78] 'Uthmān, in his address, spoke of following the Qur'ān, the Prophet's *sunnah*, then that of "those before me to which you agreed and made a *sunnah*". It is not irrelevant to recall that the earliest groups that broke away from what has since become orthodox Islam, and who most nearly represent, in a number of ways, the pristine stages of the faith, the Ibāḍīs and Zaydīs, even make *Sunnah* abrogate Qur'ān should the two conflict.

'UMAR AL-KHAṬṬĀB'S LETTERS ON LEGAL PROCEDURE

The celebrated letter of 'Umar to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī,[79] then governor of Basra, laying down the principles for judicial procedure, is of prime importance in the history of Islamic law. It is a well-constructed piece of writing embodying, *inter alia*, three of the recognized sources of the legal system of Islam, the Qur'ān, *sunnah*, analogy (*qiyās*), in accordance with which personal opinion (*ra'y*) is to be exercised. Its opening clause states that "Pronouncing judgement (*qaḍā'*) is an unequivocal ordinance and a followed custom." It will at once be perceived that the function of the

[75] Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, Leipzig, 562.
[76] Bravmann, *Spiritual background*, 139ff.
[77] "Inscriptions anciennes", 80.
[78] Ibid., 133.
[79] Ḥamīdullāh, *Majmū'at*, 343ff.; Margoliouth, "Omar's instructions", gives an unsatisfactory rendering but still useful commentary. A better rendering is given by Levy, *Ma'ālim*, 79.

pronouncing of judgement and making of decisions by a *qāḍī* is not part of tribal legal procedure as revealed in the verses of Zuhayr and followed to our present age in tribal Arabia. Three verses by al-Aʿshā Maymūn (d. *c.* 8/629 without ever becoming a Muslim) do include the term *qaḍāʾ*, but not in the meaning of a decision of a *qāḍī* in the Islamic sense. There certainly is no indication of its existence in pre-Islamic Mecca and Medina, and Professor Beeston writes: "a root *qḍy* is totally unattested in any inscriptions of either south or north Arabia in pre-Islamic times". Perhaps ʿUmar is here to be regarded as giving voice to the new *sunnah* of *qaḍāʾ*, but Ibn Qutaybah says ʿUmar approved the traditional procedure Zuhayr describes.

ʿUmar commands that equal treatment be given to the people "in your *majlis* and before you" whether noble (*sharīf*) or *ḍaʿīf*, the latter word probably meaning not free tribesmen. This differs from the system of arbitration between peers obtaining in Arabia, in which a *ḍaʿīf* would be represented by his tribal protector.[80]

The letter then introduces two ancient principles of Arabian law: "On the plaintiff is the onus of the proof, and on him who denies the charge the onus of taking the oath", and "conciliation is permissible". These have remained customary practice until today.

What may be an accretion of the post-Umayyad era reflecting the egalitarian sentiment of the client (*mawālī*) class is the statement that the Muslims, moral offenders excluded, are all persons whose testimony is allowable (*ʿudūl*). Later law-books are far more stringent about the social qualifications of such persons – in which they probably reflect attitudes of pre-Islamic society. The rest of the letter to Abū Mūsā contains just such precepts as any judge would be expected to observe.

A much briefer letter on *qaḍāʾ*, addressed by ʿUmar to Muʿāwiyah in Syria,[81] lays down five practices to which he should adhere. These stipulations are also embodied in the Abū Mūsā letter: they require "fair proof" or "decisive oath". Care is to be taken of the *ḍaʿīf* and the stranger. What cannot clearly be decided by *qaḍāʾ* is to be settled by conciliation.

In their discussion of the Abū Mūsā letter, written by ʿUmar to this experienced leader of the notable ancient tribe, the Ashʿarīs of Wadi Rimaʿ of the Yemen, scholars have taken no account of the Muʿāwiyah letter, nor yet of another letter from ʿUmar to Abū Mūsā which Ibn Abī ʾl-Ḥadīd has preserved.[82] The latter opens with the curious injunction to Abū Mūsā to receive persons of nobility and religion first, then the common folk;

[80] Serjeant, "Housedeed", 119.
[81] Ḥamīdullah, *Majmūʿat*, 357; Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, II, 171–2.
[82] Quoted by Sandūbī in his note to Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, on the authority of Ibn Abī ʾl-Ḥadīd.

a few prosaic moralizing injunctions follow, then comes the order to adhere to *four* practices, in wording next to identical with that of the Mu'āwiyah letter. To the traditional procedure of adducing proof or applying the oath is added conciliation when a case cannot be resolved by *qaḍā'* (though of course conciliation as a possibility must always have existed). Comparing this with Zuhayr's three procedures for deciding cases, it will be perceived that decision by a *qāḍī* stands in place of voluntary resort by tribesmen to an arbiter (*nifār*), the latter being, presumably, both obsolete and, in several aspects, un-Islamic in relation to conditions in Syria and Iraq.

In point of language, social and historical circumstance, the Mu'āwiyah letter has all the signs of authenticity. Where Abū Mūsā's second letter (ignoring the preamble, be it genuine or the contrary) is concerned, there are several possibilities. Of these it seems reasonable to prefer the idea that both Mu'āwiyah and Abū Mūsā received from 'Umar instructions in more or less identical terms. 'Umar's celebrated letter, Abū Mūsā 1, contains basically the same components as the two others, the tenor of which it incorporates, but it has been rewritten, "doctored" and "improved" at some later date, especially in the direction of giving it an egalitarian twist.

Though three of the conventional bases of Islamic law, the Qur'ān, *sunnah* (some sources add "of His Prophet") and analogy (*qiyās*) figure in the letter, direct or oblique allusion to consensus (*ijmā'*) is conspicuously lacking. Yet a "binding and effective" custom (*sunnah māḍiyah*), which it mentions, is surely to be envisaged as being approved by consensus? In establishing that consensus has its origins in the pre-Islamic era, Bravmann demonstrates that it is to be traced back to the "formal consensus of the tribal assembly".[83] In Arabian practice this usually resolves itself into chiefs representing the tribe as a whole. Mu'āwiyah's accusation, levelled against 'Alī, that he was responsible for breaking up the Assembly (*Mala'*) would thus apply to the body of leading men who gave the *Ummah* its common direction.[84] However, the rewriting of 'Umar's original letter must be assigned to the 'Abbasid age, and whatever views are held on the formulation of Islamic law, *sunnah*, *ijmā'*, and *qiyās*, the latter being applied every day in any legal system, are to be traced back to their Arabian origin.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GOVERNMENT REGISTRY; UMAYYAD ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS

As to whether Muḥammad had any system, however primitive, for preserving official papers, history is silent. Since there was, at the time of his death, some confusion over the pieces of writing material upon which

[83] Maydānī, *al-Amthāl*, 194–8.   [84] Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV, 101.

the very Quranic verses had been set down, it is highly unlikely that any archive was maintained. It may not be irrelevant to compare the practice of the Mutawakkilite imams and princes of the Yemen, who, as late as the 1960s, summarily dispatched business with a scribbled or dictated note or by annotating a written petition in a scrawled phrase without diacritical points. No copies were kept, but, far more important, copies of documents such as treaties with foreign powers were not preserved in any sort of archive. One sees business transacted in this way today in the reception rooms of persons of authority in Arabia. It is probably very much the way in which the Prophet conducted his affairs. At a later time 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib told his supporters to raise their requests to him in writing so as to preserve their faces from begging; 'Alī, one surmises, would probably endorse them with his decision.

In underlining the prevalence of writing in early Islam Dr M. M. A'ẓamī has assembled the sparse evidence on archives that exists.[85] 'Umar is known to have set up the *Dīwān* or Register of the Arab tribes – to which must be linked the genealogical writings of the first Islamic century. "'Umar had a chest in which was every pact between him and anyone with whom he made a pact, but in it was found no pact with the people of Egypt."[86] "There was a room (*bayt*) attached to the caliph 'Uthmān's house for the preservation of papyrus (*qirṭās*)".[87] It is not known if the papyrus included correspondence and treaties. As we have seen, the transcript of major internal treaties in Yathrib up to 7/628 was kept by 'Alī in his sword-case. In Muḥammad's day, conditions perhaps resembled what obtained in the Yemen up to 1962: as there was no archive, important state documents were frequently to be found in the hands of former officials or their families.

Mu'āwiyah is credited with founding a sort of Registry, called *Dīwān al-Khātam*, that ran on well into 'Abbasid times. When the caliph issued a decree or decision it went to the aforesaid *Dīwān* to be registered; it was sealed with wax and stamped with the seal of the official in charge of that *Dīwān*, then dispatched. The Umayyad 'Abd al-Malik (65–86/685–705), who had a kind of muniment room which looks as if it were attached to the *Dīwān*, ordered his governor in Egypt (where the papyrus was manufactured) to change the stamp on the verso side from a Greek to an Arabic formula. At first a bilingual Greek–Arabic, later an Arabic–Greek, stamp was used, the Greek being finally dropped only in the caliph Hishām's reign. From 'Abd al-Malik's reign also, the public accounts were rendered in Arabic.

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[85] *Studies*, I, 15–6.   [86] Maqrīzī, *Mawā'iẓ*, I, 295.   [87] Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 22.

For the near-century of Umayyad rule correspondence, and some official edicts, are preserved and incorporated into the histories, belles-lettres, anthologies, and in a few cases into treatises on taxation. Whether any such material, provided with a chain of authorities (*isnād*) or quoted without one, was ultimately drawn from archives we cannot yet say. The fiscal treatises, being compiled in the 'Abbasid era, acknowledge overtly of the Umayyads only 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz ('Umar II) as establishing lawful precedents (though quoting Mu'āwiyah's practice). His "Fiscal Rescript" has been the subject of an initial study by H. A. R. Gibb, but there are difficulties as yet unresolved about it.[88]

'Umar's Rescript opens with a lengthy preamble of Qur'ān quotations, as authority for its provisions; though it does not allude to the Prophet's *sunnah*, this can be regarded as mentioned implicitly in the special Quranic passages cited, and the Prophet's dicta on *ṣadaqah* and intoxicants are quoted. In the main, 'Umar is concerned with taxation on Muslims, converts and the protected faiths. Regulations for using the protected pasture (*ḥimā*), sacred or tribal, appear to alter the basic nature of this institution. If, as is possible, 'Umar II considered some of his Umayyad predecessors' precedents as injust (*sunnat jawr*) and avoided reference to them, it may be remarked that an elegist of Mu'āwiyah's governor of Iraq, Ziyād b. Abīhi, lauds his knowledge of custom and says: "Since you were taken away people have not known what their *sunnah* is."[89]

To revert once more to the question of the authenticity of first-century documents, what must be the first case of archaeology supporting the case of a treaty known from late literary sources (and therefore suspect to historians in spite of its being *narrated* by an early authority) is the discovery of a letter of 141/758-9 by Professor J. M. Plumley at Qaṣr Ibrīm.[90] In this second/eighth-century letter, the Pact (*Baqṭ*, from Latin *pactus* or Greek πακτόν) concluded between the Muslims and Nubians in 31/652 for truce, security and the supply of slaves, conceivably a renewal of an earlier agreement with the Byzantines, is referred to *en passant*, as past precedent.

SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed and attempted a critical assessment of pre-Islamic and Islamic oratory and written documents, in particular those relating to certain crucial developments in Islamic law. Since they are embodied in the literature of a later period, the question of their authenticity arises, and

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[88] "Fiscal rescript".
[89] Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, IV, 245.
[90] "Arabic letter", 242ff.; cf. Maqrīzī, *Mawā'iẓ*, I, 200, and Hasan, *Arabs*, 20ff.

they are seen to range from the patently genuine to the "doctored", the dubious, and the palpably false or forged.

Islam made no break with the Arabian past – the Jāhiliyyah – in the broad cultural sense, and even in the religious field its prime tenet, the unity of Allāh, was a concept already known in the Peninsula. As vital data from the pre-Islamic inscriptions, now being scientifically interpreted, become available, the unbroken continuity with the centuries preceding Muḥammad grows ever more apparent. A closer acquaintance with the Arabian Peninsula brings light and reason to what formerly seemed the quaint obscurities of antiquity; this applies to the language as well as the culture. Against this relatively new background it is becoming easier to set these reported orations and documents in their true perspective, and to comprehend the institutions of which they were a manifestation.

When the simple Arabian religion of pristine Islam extended beyond the confines of the Peninsula it was exposed to a host of influences that had only been felt relatively faintly in the Hijaz. The formulation of Islam as it is today was the creation of the period extending from the latter part of the first/seventh century to the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries. Along with the Qur'ān, the prime material used in the formulation was *Ḥadīth* (see pp. 271–88 below), which was written down from a very early stage, and of which the oral and written elements we have discussed were a part. Doctrinal considerations apart, there were material, social and political motives for tampering with existing documents, and sometimes outright forgery.

It has been suggested that the letters to foreign monarchs attributed to the Prophet were invented to combat Christian polemic against Islam; Christians and others may have forged documents to secure themselves specific advantages. We cannot yet say when the "doctoring" of, for instance, the 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib/Khuzā'ah treaty commenced, but the mind turns to the possibility that it might be the work of the 'Abbasids at al-Ḥumaymah between 'Ammān and 'Aqabah, near the forking of the northern end of the Arabian highway. The rewriting of 'Umar's instructions for procedures in the courts looks like the work of schoolmen elaborating judicial theory on the basis of Arabian material. The egalitarian intrusions here and there one surmises to be by influence of the client class, especially the Shu'ūbiyyah.

Turning to the criteria of language and style, the corpus of letters and treaties of the Prophet's lifetime can be characterized as generally brief, laconic and succinct: this is Arabian Arabic. Official letters of the Umayyad administration, on the other hand, seem looser in style and simpler in diction; at any rate, they are distinctly different.

When all is said that must be said about tampering with early documents, quite a substantial amount of what appears to be genuine early material has survived, and there is genuine material in "doctored" documents – enough certainly to contribute reliably to early Islamic history and literature.

THE BEGINNINGS OF ARABIC PROSE
LITERATURE: THE EPISTOLARY GENRE

In the domain of artistic prose it is the spoken, rather than the written word that we primarily associate with the Umayyads. In the various sectors of Umayyad public life it was necessary for a man, whether preacher, governor or general, to declaim in clear and vigorous language the views he commanded or recommended. *Khaṭābah* (not *kitābah*) was the strategic instrument of practical politics, and its essential nature is known to us even if we cannot accept as genuine all specimens of the genre that are attributed to the period. We can, in short, be sure that the political and religious leaders of the Umayyad period, of whatever persuasion or affiliation, struck out a vein of strong native rhetoric and afforded the raw material for the development of an artistic prose literature. But while preachers, governors and generals cultivated the practice of pulpit oratory and martial rhetoric, the Arabic tongue was being subjected to a process of growth in a different direction and expanding, under the hands of the secretarial class, into a language of written prose composition suited to the needs of the court and the administration.

The precise point at which the process began is difficult to ascertain, but it is axiomatic that 'Abd al-Malik's substitution of Arabic for Greek and Persian in the imperial bureaux from 78/697 onwards contained within it the seeds of all future developments in the field of Arabic secretarial literature. The fertile ground on which such seeds were to germinate, take root and flourish was the *dīwān al-rasā'il*, or chancery, where, from the very inception of the institution the caliph would receive and hear all correspondence, make appropriate observations and have his secretary (*kātib*) indite whatever missives he deemed necessary and prepare such other documents as the occasion might demand. Drawn as they were from the ranks of the protected religious minorities and converts to Islam, chancery secretaries were frequently conversant with regional problems of the empire in a way that their masters were not. It is easy to imagine how, under such circumstances, the amanuensis of any acumen or astuteness, having the ear of the caliph, could transcend the strict station of his office and, by invitation or suggestion, function as adviser.

The era inaugurated by Hishām, the Umayyad caliph (reigned

105–25/724–43), was in the highest degree favourable to the position of the secretarial class. The state of the empire called for the adoption of policies aimed at centralization and increased administrative efficiency. To this task Hishām – the ruler destined to complete the Arabization of the *dīwāns* initiated by his father – addressed himself with such vigour that he laid the very foundations on which the structure of the 'Abbasid administrative edifice was to rise. From our present point of view the most momentous step taken by the tenth caliph was what we may conveniently term his "translation programme". Prompted by an awareness, either spontaneous or subtly induced by his secretariat, of the need to profit from the heritage of the older civilizations now within the orbit of Islam, the caliph made it his business to familiarize himself with those aspects of antecedent civilizations which seemed most suited to his needs. In particular, he appears to have taken a keen interest in the fund of ancient administrative experience on which he might draw. We have al-Mas'ūdī's (d. 345–6/956) own testimony that he had seen histories of Persian kings and other Persian works which had been done into Arabic for Hishām. Moreover, we are informed by Ibn al-Nadīm (fourth/tenth century) that this caliph's secretary, Abū 'l-'Alā' Sālim, both translated and had others translate for him what the *Fihrist* describes as "the epistles (*rasā'il*) of Aristotle to Alexander".

In the past Ibn al-Nadīm's entry on Sālim has been ignored by the general run of Arabists and writers on the history of Arabic literature. One notable exception to the rule was Gibb, who with his usual insight grasped the importance of Sālim and hazarded the hypothesis that the influence of his translations had left their mark on the epistles of his successor, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, the last principal secretary of the Umayyad *dīwān al-rasā'il*.[1] There the matter rested until 1967, when Mario Grignaschi published two papers which must be regarded as constituting a well-argued and largely convincing case for the revision of all previous ideas on the origins of Arabic prose literature properly so called. Originally engaged in tracing the history of the only Arabic *siyāsat-nāmah* – if one may be forgiven the use of a convenient Persian term – known to the medieval Western world, viz. the *Sirr al-asrār*, or *Secretum secretorum*, Grignaschi[2] went far beyond the *Sirr*'s immediate source of inspiration and was led by the paths of his investigation to what his evidence convinced him was the *fons et origo* of a long metamorphic process. This was a discourse entitled *Kitāb fī 'l-siyāsati 'l-'āmmiyyah mufaṣṣalan* ("Policy toward the commonalty set forth in detail").

Of the various copies of the *Siyāsah* which are so far known to us, two

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[1] H. A. R. Gibb, "Social significance", 63.

[2] My presentation of the picture (cf. also Shaban, '*Abbāsid Revolution*, 110, 117–18) differs somewhat from that of Grignaschi.

form part of a collection of sixteen items purporting to derive from a corpus of correspondence between Aristotle and Alexander the Great. This collection, which is contained in two early fourteenth-century manuscripts preserved in Istanbul and both copied from a corpus of "Aristotle" correspondence dated 471/1078, carries no specific title, nor is there any indication of the person who must necessarily be presumed to have rendered the subject matter into Arabic. Long and careful scrutiny of form and content based on exacting standards of scholarship led Grignaschi to two primary conclusions, one of which was that in these writings we have, not, as one might be only too ready to assume, a straightforward collection of Arabic Aristotelian pseudepigrapha, but a work of Hellenistic epistolary fiction adapted by an Arab translator of the Umayyad period. The second of these conclusions was that there are very cogent reasons for connecting this work of translation and adaptation with Abū 'l-'Alā' Sālim. Ordinarily it would scarcely be justifiable, in presenting the general history of a literature, to concern oneself with the details of theses which have not been thoroughly aired, debated and accepted by a majority of scholars competent to give a reasoned judgement. In Grignaschi's case, however, his conclusions are so crucial to our purpose that we must look at them closely. For, if we accept them – and many of the arguments he adduces in support of them seem hard to refute – we must make *tabula rasa* of all previous accounts of the beginnings of a written artistic prose tradition in Arabic. In short, however eminent the position accorded to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (102–*c.* 139/ 720–56) in the literary annals of the Arab world, his reputation as a master of Arabic prose and luminary of the secretarial school of artistic prose writers must not be allowed to steal all the limelight for a genre of writing whose history goes back even beyond 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib and dates from a time in the reign of Hishām (105–25/724–43) when Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ must only have been serving his literary apprenticeship. Such must be our position if the case upon which Grignaschi relies can be taken as proven.

Before we go further the contents of the work studied by Grignaschi need to be stated. The titles given to the items in the Istanbul manuscripts are as follows: i. "The study of philosophy encouraged"; ii. "Aristotle's proposal that he become Alexander's mentor"; iii. "The reply to the proposal"; iv. "An epistle on ethics"; v. "Aristotle's counsel to Alexander"; vi. "[Aristotle's] congratulations on [Alexander's] conquest of Scythia, a country in the West"; vii. "Congratulations on the conquest of Anfīsan, the land of Babylon"; viii. "The *Siyāsah*" (see above); ix. "Alexander's request for general advice on the administration of the kingdom"; x. "The reply and congratulations on the conquest of Persia"; xi. "[Alexander's] request for advice on the execution of the Persian

nobility"; xii. "The reply opposing the measure"; xiii. "Congratulations on the conquest of the provinces of Khurāsān"; xiv. "The Golden [epistle] on the quality of the world: it is fairer than the Golden Palace seen [by Alexander] in India"; xv. "An intercessory epistle"; xvi. "Select funerary pronouncements".

Together these sixteen pieces account for 109 folios in one manuscript and 122 in the other, items iii, v, viii, ix, x and xiii constituting two-thirds of the whole. The introduction to the collection is short – consisting, in Grignaschi's presentation, of three paragraphs – and is headed "Section from the biography of Alexander (*khabar al-Iskandar*) telling how he acceded to the kingdom." Individual pieces are prefaced with explanatory comments.

Of all the items in the list, by far the most important from our point of view is the *Siyāsah*, and that for a number of reasons, not least of which is that, in the absence of direct and irrefutable testimony, it affords the most compelling evidence for its dating and attribution. As its title suggests, we have here an epistle offering political guidance to a ruler – ostensibly Aristotle's counsel to Alexander. That the greater part – in precise terms three-quarters or nearly so – derives from a Greek original, however much remodelled and adapted, would seem almost indisputable. Particularly striking in this respect is the incorporation of hermetic concepts in two distinct contexts. These *logoi*, we may note in passing, could be the oldest known specimens of Arabic *hermetica*, if the dating and non-contamination of the *Siyāsah* are admitted. Be that as it may, in the present context the most basic and arresting part of the *Siyāsah* is that which, by reason of content and treatment, forcibly suggests that it is the work of an Arab writer of the Umayyad period treating of a contemporary political situation in the reign of Hishām.

In the administrative and political spheres the counsels urged upon the ruler are certainly in keeping with the spirit and practice of Umayyad times. With the voice of an exclusive aristocrat, the author speaks out against clients and slaves and men of humble birth: he would deny positions of trust to clients and slaves and avoid the recruitment for military service of clients and men of unknown paternity. To commanders-in-chief and governors (*'ummāl*), on the other hand, the ruler should permit sole responsibility for the appointment of their own lieutenants; if unwilling to allow them freedom of action in this matter, he should relieve them of their duties. More decisive than the general tone of the foregoing recommendations is the absence of any mention of the *wazīr* in connection with the hierarchy on which our counsellor considers the life of the ruler and the safety of his empire to depend. Where we would expect the *wazīr*

to be, we find in his stead the *ḥājib*, or, in loose translation, the chamberlain or mayor of the palace. The importance of the *ḥājib* in Umayyad administration is well known, and is, one might add, strikingly reflected at a later date in Muslim Spain, where his style and title were always superior to those of the *waẓīrs* who served the Umayyad caliphs of Córdoba as a purely advisory body. In our epistle, then, the *waẓīr*, is not the sovereign's chief minister or a minister plenipotentiary; he is, on the contrary, but one of seven to whom the author would have the ruler delegate responsibility for the divisions of his administration. The phraseology "assign to each division a *waẓīr* or supervisor (*nāẓir*)" is, in my view, particularly significant in that it seems to imply that neither the technical sense of the term "*waẓīr*" nor the exact functions of the wazirate were firmly established. Certainly their numbers were still a matter of some debate, since the writer is prepared to stand for seven in the face of opposition. From the context their suggested role is fairly clear: they were to supervise their subordinates in the branch of administration to which they were assigned and individually, but never corporately, to advise and consult with the sovereign.

As well in his military as in his civil counsels, "Aristotle" proffers advice that savours of counsel from an Umayyad courtier to his caliph. The old custom of challenge by champions (*mubāriẓūn*) has a place in his method of warfare, and the battle order with which he is familiar at home is the line formation. But what is perhaps most significant is that the use of squadrons as tactical units is something he associates with the Turks. Since it is generally conceded that it was the Umayyad caliph Marwān II (127–32/744–50) who abandoned the old Arab line formation in favour of the squadron, it is a reasonable assumption that our epistle, if accepted as Umayyad, antedated Marwān's reform – a measure inspired, in all likelihood, by his long experience of Turkish tactics on the Ādharbāyjān frontier. The assumption becomes all the more reasonable if we consider, first, the evident importance which the squadron has in the epistle addressed in Marwān's name to the Crown prince ʿAbdullāh by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (of whom more presently), and, secondly, the historical situation which our own author's counsels seem to reflect. For reasons which will emerge, the second of these two points – the historical situation – requires elaboration. It is difficult to believe it coincidental that "Aristotle" should advise "Alexander" on the policies to be adopted towards the Khurasanians, Soghdians and Turks, especially since the circumstances to which his treatment of these policies relates evoke in a most striking manner the true state of affairs in the eastern caliphate during part of Hishām's reign. The Khurasanians are presented as a powerful

people who are potentially firm friends or stubborn enemies and should therefore be won over by tact and diplomacy. "Alexander" should request from them the dispatch of a diplomatic mission to him selected from the ranks of their élite, and have his own ambassador seek out their leaders and woo them in their own homes on their estates. If, in the light of recent research on the origins of the 'Abbasid movement, Grignaschi's interpretation of certain details is open to question, there seems, on the other hand, to be no good reason to reject his suggestion that at the time our *risālah* was written Khurāsān posed a serious problem to the central authority.

Grignaschi's general thesis, that the author of the epistle is in reality offering veiled guidance to Hishām, seems all the more plausible as soon as we read what is said apropos of the Soghdians and Turks. Once "Alexander" is in Khurāsān, he is to make for Soghdiana and treat its people with the utmost kindness. His first concern should be to lighten their burdens, erase the memory of old grievances and accord them special privileges. He should then make it his business to maintain the strength of their frontiers. To secure his position with the Soghdians is vital, since he will require their military experience as well as their support as front-line troops in an impending struggle with the Turks – a struggle which will gain him, among other things, the goodwill of the Khurasanians. The space and attention devoted to plans for the defeat and pacification of the Turks throw into sharp relief the author's most immediate concern. For him the Turks are the arch enemy.

When we stand back from the canvas and survey the picture as a whole, the scene is uncommonly like that which faced Hishām prior to the defeat of the Turgesh in 119/737. The Turgesh tribes led by the Khan Sü-Lü (A.D. 716–38) attained to the hegemony of the western Turks and, having established themselves as an independent power, wrestled with the Arabs in Transoxiana for nearly twenty years. By 109/727 the threat had become so serious that Ashras al-Sulamī was dispatched to Khurāsān to take appropriate measures to meet it. His first move was in fact an attempt to win over the Soghdians by inviting them to embrace Islam in return for remission of the poll-tax (*jizyah*). Advised that the measure was impracticable, he rashly went back on his word and precipitated a mass revolt involving not only the Soghdians themselves, but also those Arabs who favoured better relations with them. The rebels were easily suppressed, but the matter did not end there, since their pleas for Turgesh assistance ended in a confrontation between Ashras and the Turgesh in which Ashras was worsted. To conciliate the Soghdians must have remained a point of Umayyad policy, for after the eventual and decisive defeat of the Turgesh

even those Soghdians who had defected and fought on their side fared well
at the hands of Naṣr b. Sayyār. That operations against the Turks would
earn the goodwill of the Khurasanians is understandable on more than
one account. For one thing the *dihqāns* of Khurāsān had a vested interest
in keeping Arab tribesmen in the field; for another, Khurāsān needed
protection against the mounting Turgesh menace, and this Hishām well
realized when, after drafting some 20,000 tribesmen to Merv from Basra
and Kufa, he transferred the half-settled tribesmen of Merv to advance
positions in operational zones.

If, on the evidence submitted, it may be conceded that the *Siyāsah* is the
work of an Umayyad author who lived and wrote in the reign of Hishām,
it remains only to return to Grignaschi's identification of the writer. As
already explained, we do have external evidence, namely the testimony of
Ibn al-Nadīm, that Hishām's *kātib*, Sālim, translated or was responsible
for the translation of literary material described as epistles from Aristotle
to Alexander. Since the general description fits our sixteen epistles, which
are said in the preamble to be select pieces and may therefore be extracted
from some larger work, there is no real need to look further than Sālim.
As Grignaschi argues or implies, who else with this kind of cultural
background would have been so highly placed as to propose administrative
reforms, and indeed involve himself in political polemic?

Because of the obvious need for a clear exposition of arguments for
dating and ascription, attention has so far been narrowly focussed not
merely on a single epistle, but on barely a quarter of it. It is now time
to take a wider view first of the *Siyāsah* and then of the collection as a whole,
and in so doing to take careful note of their sources of inspiration as
identified by Grignaschi. The portion of the *Siyāsah* already discussed is
not in fact characteristic of the whole, much less of the collection to which
it belongs. The informed reader will readily recognize that it derives from
a Greek political treatise. In the Arabic some parts are, as they now stand,
the translator's own work, while others are adaptations of the original.
Of special interest are recurrent Iranian touches. Apart from maxims,
morals and musings evidently drawn from old Persian literature, certain
events in the life of Alexander take on a somewhat Sasanian garb. Thus,
for instance, the list of charges hurled at Darius (d. 330 B.C.) by
Alexander's ambassador are redolent of those hurled at Chosroes Parvīz
by his son more than eight centuries later. Again, Porus, the Indian king
defeated by Alexander in 326 B.C., is accused of the murder of his bosom
friends, the very crime of which the Sasanian Shirūyah (Shurawayh) was
held guilty. Nor is this all. A number of passages, it would seem, put one
in mind of King Ardashīr's testament to his son Shāpūr – the so-called

"Testament of Ardashīr". Lastly, it is noteworthy that "Aristotle" would have "Alexander" introduce certain institutions known to pre-Islamic Iran. Over his courts of justice he should set men reputed for their piety and indifference to worldly things, and, through judges of such character, redress the grievances of the people. He should be sparing with his public appearances in the sense that he should appear before the mass of his subjects only at the New Year, though he should sit daily in his court of justice. In his army the hierarchy should consist of seven ranks – "a practice much praised by the Persians". While it is true that not everything recommended by "Aristotle" derives from recognizable Sasanian practice or is even attributed to the Persians, the influence that guides the writer's pen is clear enough. It also prompts the question: what was the latter's background? Here the most we can say is that if he is correctly identified as Abū 'l-'Alā' Sālim, the likelihood is that his origins were Persian, since we know for certain that Hishām's *kātib* was a *mawlā* (non-Arab).

The disproportionate amount of space which, for sound and obvious reasons, Grignaschi has devoted to the *Siyāsah* should not obscure the fact that it is as a whole that he would have us view the collection to which it belongs. For it is his carefully argued contention that the sixteen epistles with which we are concerned do not purely and simply represent a collection of Arabic Aristotelian pseudepigrapha, but rather form part of that corpus of literature of late antiquity which centres upon the career and personality of Alexander. What this corpus of literature is or was requires a word or two of explanation for the benefit of those not conversant with it.

As with most giants of history, a host of legends grew up around Alexander and his astonishing exploits. As the legends circulated, different aspects of the conqueror's life and personality were stressed by different peoples for different ends. In the process of telling, retelling and translation into many languages the stories about him acquired new emphases and interpretations and so gave rise to what we now term the Alexander Romances. The first romance, the original form of which is no longer extant, was produced around 200 B.C. by a Hellenized Egyptian writing in Greek. The folk epic so created was elaborated and crystallized, probably in the third century A.D., in a Greek narrative. Quite impossibly, this narrative was attributed to Callisthenes, Alexander's personal historian, who was put to death by his master for treason in 327 B.C. Because of the ascription, it is often called the pseudo-Callisthenes. In Grignaschi's researches into our Arabic epistles the pseudo-Callisthenes plays a vital part: it is the principal witness for his case that the collection derives from a Greek Alexander romance in epistolary form which would seem to have

been penned by one of the last adherents of hermetism around the middle of the sixth century A.D. Here is not the place even to summarize, much less spell out, the lengthy intricate arguments – some of them most plausible, others less so – which he has adduced in defence of his case. Suffice it to say that, even if his submission that *all* the *rasā'il* have been drawn exclusively from this *one* putative romance is in due course shown to be untenable, his thesis, at this stage at least, certainly merits the benefit of the doubt where any doubt may be cast. In any case this question is, from our point of view, far less important than that of being able to date even a single *risālah*, and this, as we have seen, can be done with as much certainty as we can hope for in the present state of our knowledge.

If we can accept the *Siyāsah* as an Umayyad translation and adaptation of a Hellenistic original, we can be reasonably sure, on the grounds of family likeness, that two-thirds of the collection – speaking in terms of space rather than of the number of epistles – fall into the same category. One distinctive feature in this respect is the use of pseudo-Homeric quotations borrowed, to all appearances, from a genre of literature peculiar to the late Hellenistic period. That such quotations are not found throughout the entire collection is not, according to Grignaschi, as significant as one might suppose, since our Arab writer is not always consistent. To be more specific, there is evidence that at times he will quote long passages of an original *in extenso* and at others make significant cuts. This much emerges from close examination of the "Golden" epistle (item xiv above, p. 157) – a résumé of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Peri kosmou (De mundo)*. As regards the last *risālah* – a selection of apophthegms supposedly uttered at Alexander's funeral – this poses problems peculiar to itself, not least of which is the question whether it is connected with, and in particular antedates, later works, or parts of works, on a similar theme, notably the *Nawādir al-falāsifah* of Ḥunayn (d. 260/873). There is much to suggest that in fact it does, and that it is extracted from the archetype of all such works. This archetype is identified by Grignaschi with the epistolary romance which he discerns behind the *rasā'il* as a whole.

As noted earlier, explanatory prefaces introduce the reader to each of the *rasā'il*. Neither in length nor in character are these prefaces uniform. At times they are obvious insertions by our Arab author from what certainly seems to have been an Arabic version of the pseudo-Callisthenes; at others, they are evidently an integral part of the epistolary romance, since they contain subject matter crucial to the understanding of the epistle which could not have been deduced from the epistle itself. To illustrate, we need only cite two examples. In the first epistle the introduction – a biographical note on Alexander consisting, as we have already seen, of

three paragraphs – is composite. In the first two paragraphs one may detect the hand of our Arab writer, drawing, it would seem, on an Arabic pseudo-Callisthenes, while the third leaves the impression that its origins lie in the archetypal epistolary romance. In the fourteenth item – the "Golden" – the introductory matter can be shown to derive from the description of the Temple of Dionysus at Nysa to be found in the Syriac and Arabic versions of the pseudo-Callisthenes. In at least one instance the preface is supplied independently of any known source: in "Congratulations on the conquest of the provinces of Khurāsān" there is no mention whatever of Khurāsān, and in fact reference to two recensions of the pseudo-Callisthenes reveals that the true subject is an expedition said to have been made by Alexander to the end of the world on the morrow of the conquest of Persia.

Of the epistles themselves little more need be said here than what has been said already. It is worth noting, however, that there are certain points of resemblance between the *Epistle of Tansar*, which, translated, is generally attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, and our two epistles dealing with the question of the Persian nobility (xi, xii). Did these two *rasāʾil* draw on the work of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ? Grignaschi's detailed examination of all the available evidence leads him to conclude that they did not. Moreover, he argues against the possibility of a Pahlavi original either in the case of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ or in the case of the *rasāʾil*, for in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's work the correspondence between Alexander and Aristotle occurs in a context deriving from an Arabic adaptation of the Alexander story – a story which, he suspects, has been amalgamated with Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's Pahlavi source material. The *rasāʾil*, he submits, are earlier than Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's epistle and indeed seem to have been the source of inspiration of the latter. By way of comment one might add that this need not surprise: Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, although normally classified as an ʿAbbasid writer, began his career under the Umayyads as a pupil of, or of the school of, ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, who in turn had served his *dīwān* apprenticeship under Sālim.

Taking a comprehensive view of Grignaschi's position, let us now, as we sum up, concentrate on the major points of his thesis, leaving aside certain objections to details which might well be raised. Endorsement of his thesis will entail acceptance of the following propositions: that his sixteen Arabic epistles are Umayyad; they are substantially the "epistles from Aristotle to Alexander" attributed in precisely those terms by Ibn al-Nadīm to the initiative of Hishām's *kātib*, Abū ʾl-ʿAlāʾ Sālim; that the *rasāʾil* are adapted translations of Hellenistic originals by an informed and interested admirer of Sasanian values and institutions eager to promote an interest in the Greek, and especially the Iranian, heritage; that Sālim

exerted a certain influence on Ibn al-Muqaffaʻ; that, finally and most importantly, the *rasāʾil* are the oldest examples of secretarial prose literature.

Because they bear crucially on the writing of any history of Arabic prose literature, these propositions merit further enquiry and debate, especially since they prompt certain questions. Of these one of the most obvious is this: if we do in fact owe these epistles, in the form in which we have them, to Sālim, how did they come to pass unnoticed for so long? Why were they not accorded a place alongside the epistles of his pupil ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd and his successor Ibn al- Muqaffaʻ? Among other matters needing close attention are those of diction and phraseology, both in those portions of the collection which are translations or adaptations and in those which are the author's own. In general the Arabic is what we would expect of a competent translator and early prose writer – relatively simple and un-adorned. Yet, on the other hand, there are certain junctures at which some rehandling may be suspected. Finally, there is the problem of stylistic consistency to be looked into, though it should not perhaps be accorded undue weight in view of Ibn al-Nadīm's assertion that Sālim not only translated himself, but also had others translate for him. To none of these or other kindred problems is a satisfactory solution possible until a critical edition of the complete text becomes available for systematic analysis.

Whether or not we accept Sālim as the translator and adaptor of our pseudo-Aristotelian epistles, we must at least bear in mind evidence as to his competence and influence as head of Hishām's chancery. It is not for nothing that he is included in Ibn al-Nadīm's short-list of men of eloquence. Moreover, we must acknowledge that he had both the capacity and the opportunity to set epistolary standards, and that because he lived and functioned at a time when the caliph no longer dictated his own letters in the first person, but had them indited by his *kātib*, who would write of "the Commander of the Faithful" in the third person singular. Specimens of epistolography said to have emanated from Hishām's secretariat, including a short piece attributed to Sālim and a longish epistle ascribed to his son ʻAbdullāh, have been preserved in the works of Muslim authors, and there is indeed a certain stylistic unity about them that is suggestive. If genuine, these survivals may be regarded as preluding the compositions of the writer of whom we shall now speak.

ʻABD AL-ḤAMĪD AL-KĀTIB

Formal perfection of the Umayyad epistle was achieved not by Sālim but by a graduate of his school, namely the same ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd to whom

passing references have already been made. It is with his name, therefore, that we most commonly associate the beginnings of Arabic prose as a written art – an art, that is to say, inspired by a conscious literary purpose and a desire to display the imaginative and creative talents of the writer. He it was, proclaims Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (246–328/860–940), who first "burst open the buds of eloquence and smoothed its paths". He it is of whom the modern Egyptian writer Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, himself a celebrated master of style, has said, "there has perhaps never been any writer to equal 'Abd al-Ḥamīd in purity and euphony of language, clarity of concept and aptness of style." Yet for all the distinction of the place traditionally assigned to him in the history of Arabic literature, and despite his standing as principal secretary to the last Syrian Umayyad caliph, surprisingly little is known of the man. His full name is given by Ibn Khallikān as Abū Ghālib 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā b. Sa'd, and he is said to have been a *mawlā* of the Qurayshite clan of 'Āmir b. Lu'ayy. His exact date of birth is unknown, and the most we can do is to place it somewhere in the last twenty years of the first/seventh century. Moreover, neither his origins nor his place of birth are beyond dispute: for some he was a native of al-Raqqah in Syria, for others a native of al-Anbār in Iraq domiciled in al-Raqqah. With Iraq he certainly seems to have had some connection, since he is said to have spent part of his youth in Kufa, where he doubtless absorbed all that the philologists could teach him. To resolve the conflict of evidence on the basis of probability, we may hazard the conjecture that he was a *mawlā* of Persian descent who had emigrated from Iraq in the hope of finding opportunity for advancement closer to the heart of the empire.

After an early career as an itinerant pedagogue, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd entered the Umayyad chancery through the good offices of Hishām's principal secretary, Sālim, with whom at that stage he could claim a close connection by marriage. It is as *kātib* to Marwān b. Muḥammad, commander of Hishām's campaigns in Ādharbāyjān (114–19/732–7) that we next hear of him. During this period he forged a strong bond of friendship with the man destined to rule, from 127/744, as Marwān II. The bond was to earn him the post of his caliph's principal secretary, an office in which he served his master faithfully right to the latter's disastrous end at Būṣīr in 132/750. The precise fate of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd is not entirely certain, since it is differently reported in the various sources. Of the two main versions of what happened, one has it that he died by the side of Marwān in his last stand in Egypt, while the other reports that he succeeded in escaping to the Jazīrah where, according to some, he went into hiding in the house of Ibn al-Muqaffa' and remained there until finally betrayed. On the basis of the evidence Gabrieli conjectures that he may have stayed with Marwān

to the end and then, having made good his escape to Mesopotamia, gone into hiding and ultimately been captured by the 'Abbasids, at whose hands he perished shortly after 132/750.

"Epistolography begins with 'Abd al-Ḥamīd and closes with Ibn al-'Amīd." So writes Ibn Khallikān, and despite the rhyme and balance of his dictum, which might make for a half-truth, the judgement is not too wide of the mark. The fame of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd does in fact rest on his "formal" *rasāʾil*, or "ornate epistles", and it is evident that these marked the dawn of a new epoch in the art of writing. Out of the vast corpus of epistles with which he is credited – Ibn al-Nadīm speaks of a tome of a thousand folios – only a handful survive, and that solely because they have been included or quoted in the works of others. In this respect our greatest debt is to Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (204–80/819–93), author of a *Kitāb al-Manthūr wa-'l-manẓūm* ("Prose and poetry"); for it is in the extant parts of this anthology that we find the core of all that is known to survive of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's work, the nucleus of which comprises his best-known compositions, viz. the *Risālah ilā 'l-kuttāb* ("Epistle to the secretaries") and an epistolary manual of guidance addressed to Marwān's son and heir. In addition this same source has preserved for us epistles on friendship, the legality of chess and a hunting scene.

The content of his extant epistles

(i) *The Epistle to the secretaries*

By far the most famous of his *rasāʾil* is that addressed to the chancery secretaries. It is so, perhaps, not only because the text is contained in that widely read and much studied work of universal interest, the *Muqaddimah* ("Prolegomena") of Ibn Khaldūn, but also because it can be read in several European languages.[3] In essence this *risālah* is a code of conduct delineating the qualities and duties required of a man of position and honour. It opens with a passage explaining the author's motivation. The content of this exordium is illuminating in that it reflects the rank and dignity to which 'Abd al-Ḥamīd himself had attained, and to which the chancery secretaries as a class were being encouraged to aspire. God, he declares, has created men in their various kinds and has granted them a diversity of occupations whereby they may earn their daily bread. He continues:

He has set you as a body of secretaries in the noblest of stations as being persons of culture and manliness, of learning and deliberation. On you depends the good

[3] E.g. that of F. Rosenthal, New York, 1958.

order of all that graces the office of caliph and the rectitude of all that attends it. Through your counsels God prospers for His creatures the power that governs them, and their lands thrive. The sovereign cannot dispense with you, and there is none who can effectively function without you. You are to sovereigns what their ears, through which they hear, are to them, and what their eyes, through which they see, are to them, and what their tongues, wherewith they speak, are to them, and what their hands, through which they grasp, are to them...

As he goes on to enumerate the qualities that will make secretaries worthy of their calling, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd lays particular stress on adaptability, initiative, sense of occasion, modesty, impartiality and a sense of justice, reticence and discretion, devotion to duty, unswerving loyalty, and foresight acquired by a combination of intelligence, liberal education and experience. Their culture, he continues, must begin with a knowledge of the Qur'ān and religious obligations. Next they must perfect their Arabic and, in their writing, cultivate a good hand. Poetry, literary virtuosity, close acquaintance with the battle sagas of the Arabs and non-Arabs must go hand in hand with a knowledge of mathematical calculation, the *sine qua non* of fiscal training. Turning to vices, the author exhorts his secretaries to eschew inordinate ambition, backbiting, calumny, haughtiness and all that is liable to antagonize one's fellow men. To colleagues loyalty and devotion must be shown at all times: members of the profession must respect and consult the old and retired and help and guide the young. Kindness and consideration for colleagues entails mutual support and co-operation. In high office the secretary should be ever mindful of God and remember that all men are His creatures, deserving of compassion and understanding. The epistle's closing paragraphs are dominated by three main themes: first, the secretary must avoid extravagance, luxury and excess in the material aspects of his daily life; secondly, he must be able and ready to learn from experience, from listening, not talking; last but not least, he must recognize his utter dependence on God and in all humility acknowledge his own fallibility.

(ii) The Epistle to the Crown prince

Of the all too few surviving epistles of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, much the longest and most elaborate is that addressed to Marwān's son and heir, 'Abdullāh. The situation to which its content relates is precisely known. During the year 127/745 the militant Kharijite movement under the leadership of al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays made spectacular progress, thereby constituting the gravest and most immediate threat to the caliphate. Already otherwise preoccupied at Ḥimṣ, Marwān had no option but to turn to his son, whom he had left behind in Ḥarrān. It was in such circumstances that it fell to

'Abd al-Ḥamīd to pen in the name of Marwān an epistle designed to encourage, guide and advise the Crown prince.

The body of the epistle falls into two main parts, the first an ethico-political homily, occupying slightly less than one-third of the whole and accounting for some 3,000 words or so of the Arabic text, and the second a studied discourse falling naturally into two main subdivisions and dealing with tactics and military organization. The length of the entire composition is not commensurate with its import, which is such that one cannot but wonder why it has made so small an impact on Western students of Arabic literature. Certainly the percipient reader cannot fail to detect a marked generic relationship to the *Fürstenspiegel*, or "Mirror for princes" types of literature, which by the fifth/eleventh century had crystallized into a well-developed and clearly defined genre through a fusion of the ornate epistle and literary testament (*waṣiyyah*) with belles-lettres (*adab*). Since 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's composition stands at the head of an "epistolary mirror" tradition and in so many other ways preludes the shape of things to come in the story of Arabic literature, it merits detailed treatment. If, in certain respects, its pattern differs from that of the "mirror" to which we are accustomed in the later stages of its development, it must be remembered that the circumstances under which the author writes are those of war, not peace. In short, it will be seen that the differences are rather more apparent than real.

The epistle opens with a statement of the situation which has motivated its composition:

The Commander of the Faithful, upon deciding to dispatch you against the enemy of God, that uncouth and brutish Arab of the desert who obdurately acts at random in the perplexity of ignorance and the outrage of sedition... and likewise against his riffraff who have wrought great mischief in the land... and have bartered God's bounties for unbelief... is pleased to lay upon you an injunction regarding the niceties of your doings, the generalities of your affairs, the details of your private behaviour and the manner of your movements – an injunction wherein he imposes upon you his rule of conduct (*adab*) and whereby he ordains for you his admonition, even though, praise be to God, your position in relation to His religion and His caliphate is such that you have been chosen by God for the heirdom, thereby being set apart by Him from your kin and sons of your father.

The Crown prince is then charged to be mindful of man's dependence on God for whatever knowledge or understanding he may possess. To direct his son to virtue is a paternal duty imposed by God on the Commander of the Faithful, who fervently hopes that He will preserve his heir from all vice and, of His bounty, raise him to the peak of nobility to "shine forth in the brightest heights of propriety and inherit the most precious treasures of power and glory". The prince must strive to hold

and augment his store of wisdom by true fear of God and grateful obedience to Him. Each morning he should reserve a part of himself for God in gratitude for his soundness of life and limb and regularly spend this part of his day reading a portion of the Qur'ān. By so doing he will exercise his mind on its teaching and content and enhance his tongue by recital of the text. Above all the exercise will give him moral strength. Warming to the ethical theme, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd pitches his exhortations in a highly rhetorical key. Human passions, he warns, are man's natural foe, "the deceits of Satan, the success of his cunning and the pitfalls of his guile". The prince must seek refuge in God and resolutely war against them. The challenge is a crushing burden, but noble is only as noble does. Pride, he thunders, is "the source of passion, the beginning of error and the leading rein of destruction". Affairs must be conducted with moderation, reticence, benevolence, justice and fair dealing. With all the style and fervour of the preacher, the *kātib* exploits all the devices of oratory and pulpit eloquence as he continues in the following vein:

Your chariness protect against impatience and the loss of chance for action; your verve clothe with the armour of the deliberation of reflection and shelter it with the chariness of self-restraint; your moments of privacy guard against heedlessness and pursuit of comfort; your silence remove beyond the reach of impediments of speech, and fear the ill report it may entail; your listening turn to perfect comprehension, and strengthen it by making thought its witness; your giving keep for houses of nobility and men of worth, but avoid therein extravagance, excess of haughtiness and condescension with the favour granted; your modesty defend from diffidence and the silliness of hesitance; your forbearance cause to turn from complaisance, and supply it with a sturdy curb; your punishment hold back from excess, and retain it for those who merit it; your pardon permit not to entail impairment of others' rights, but impose upon it the obligation of a duty and straighten therewith any twist in the stem of religion...

In his choice of entourage and associates the prince must exercise great care and look discriminatingly for judgement, sincerity and loyal obedience. To gain respect, he must preserve his dignity, but be sociable to win affection. He should avoid exposing himself to criticism by eschewal on the one hand of frivolity, and on the other of the vainglory of rank, which makes for exhibitionism entailing loss of dignity in public.

Sycophantic tale-bearers promote dissension and should be denied direct access to the prince, lest he act unjustly on false witness. Their reports should therefore be received and investigated by the captain of the guard or another senior officer, who must not, however, act arbitrarily, but only on a directive from his master after due consultation. Similarly, direct and unexpected requests must be disallowed: all petitions should be made through the *kātib* to permit time for a considered reply. This procedure

will, among other things, spare the prince the embarrassment of having
to refuse requests. Likewise, envoys and delegations should first communi-
cate the purpose of their missions and their precise business to the *kātib*
lest the prince be exploited in an unguarded moment. In audience nothing
extra must be introduced. Yet, if someone does speak out of turn, the
prince is to restrain him calmly and courteously and afterwards instruct
his chamberlain to deal with him.

Dignity and composure at all times are *de rigueur*. Thus the prince is
urged to allow neither pleasure nor anger to disturb him, and instructed
to permit no altercation, squabbling or backbiting in his presence. Hearty
laughter, guffaws and scowls are unseemly: a smile, gentle or broad as the
occasion demands, is the appropriate expression of feeling. The behaviour
of the prince in council and audience is also stressed. The main rules
require him to listen attentively to a speaker without glancing at anyone
else; to know his councillors and the places they occupy in session; to note
absences and require explanations; to avoid complete reliance on one man,
no matter how able or trustworthy; to avoid asking too many questions
or interrupting or cutting a speaker short; to show no sign of boredom
or temper; to eschew the use of idle phrases such as "Listen", "Don't
you see?" and so forth.

In kings the habits of the commons are reprehensible, and so the prince
is warned against "hawking, spitting, expectorating, yawning, belching,
stretching himself, wagging his foot, cracking his fingers, fiddling with
his face, beard, moustache, sceptre, or sword tassel, winking, motioning
to a courtier, whispering in council and gobbling food and drink".
Likewise, vulgar abuse and obscenities are unbecoming.

On the positive side the prince is urged to look to the state of the
commons, to uplift the needy, restore the fallen, instruct the ignorant and
reform the corrupt, for on all these things hang reputation, good name,
and reward in the world to come. Stressing again the need to select one's
entourage with care, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ends this first part of his missive with
the caliph's prayers for his son's safety and success.

The transition from ethics, protocol and etiquette to military organiz-
ation, tactics and logistics is abrupt, but apt, since the threat of war is
immediate. Within its terms of reference, and for the period to which it
relates, this second section is, as Gabrieli says, a *unicum*. After reminding
the prince of his duty to God and his utter dependence on Him, the caliph's
kātib instructs him to discipline his forces, ensuring that they molest
neither Muslim nor non-Muslim. He should then resolutely face the foe
in the faith and fear of God. Victory, it is pointed out, can be won by
peaceful means, and such means are better, for they not only put the army

beyond risk, prevent loss of life and needless suffering, but they also enhance a prince's good name and earn him a rich reward from God. The first step, then, is to approach the enemy with offers of friendship and prospects of amnesty; to make promises which must be seen to be kept; to convince those who return to the fold of the justice of one's cause and right to obedience by improving their lot with honours and largesse; to excite in others the desire for like treatment by letting one's bounty be seen.

The writer now turns to the subject of espionage and the functions and uses of an intelligence service. He warns against the uncritical acceptance of agents' information; it must be scrutinized by the prince and his experienced advisers. Forewarned is forearmed, and here the keynote is prudence and shrewdness. It is better to overestimate than underestimate the enemy as false confidence can be fatal. Great emphasis is laid on the need to combine caution with tact in dealings with spies and reconnoiterers; they may not be what they seem. Whether their advice has been accepted or not is a matter for concealment. To ensure maximum security and efficiency, all agents should be controlled by the prince's principal secretary and confidant, and the identity of spies must be strictly concealed even from one another.

The organization of the army comes next. Here the principal figure is the captain of the guard (ṣāḥib al-shurṭah). His position calls for a man of religion, honour, wisdom and experience, who is at the same time acceptable to the troops and can maintain rigid, but not cruel, discipline. The organization of the camp and the posting of sentries through an officer of his choice are in his hands. The administration of justice, however, is the business of the qāḍī, who must be sober, incorruptible, impartial, dignified, unambitious, patient and humble. So that he might have dignity and honour in this world and the favour of God in the next, he must be paid an ample stipend to administer what, the prince is reminded, is *his* justice.

Reverting to purely military matters, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd devotes much space to such things as the deployment of troops, inspections, camp regulations, weapons, armour and the like. From the wealth of detail he supplies it is enough to pick out the salient features. The spearhead of the army – clearly the *khamīs* (a force with van, centre, rear and two wings) – must be the advance guards, a hand-picked élite selected solely on merit, paid at a special rate, and captained by a well-tried and renowned commander. Almost equal importance is attached to the patrols commanded by noblemen, whose duties include reconnaissance and protection of the main body of the army. No indiscipline must be tolerated, yet punishment

entailing loss of life or blood as well as sequestration and certain other penalties should only be meted out by the prince or the captain of the guard acting on the prince's orders.

In an outline of procedures for the repulse of night attacks there is much of interest. Entrenchment of the camp and constituent companies, orderly resistance with spears and arrows, methods of locating the sector under attack, and finally, pursuit of the enemy with drawn swords, are among the subjects treated. After a detailed discussion of the cavalry – to be organized in centuries consisting of numbered companies – there follows a passage advising the prince to have his coffers under the control of some pious officer protected by a detachment of horse, and travelling apart from the main body of the army so as to diminish the risk of depredations in times of crisis.

At this point we are again reminded that the avoidance of bloodshed is the best policy: propaganda, subversion and the incitement of enemy troops to assassinate their leader are the best tactics. But if it comes to the battlefield, constant invocation of God must be the prelude. To maintain and boost morale, men should be specially detailed to shout "God is great!" and to exhort the troops with descriptions of Paradise. Personal inspection by the prince will also contribute to cohesion and efficiency.

(iii) The Epistle on chess

This *risālah* is a directive from the caliph to a provincial governor, ordering him to impose a ban on playing chess, which as an old Indo-Iranian game must have enjoyed immense popularity throughout the Muslim East. In substance the first half is doxological, in the sense that the addressee is reminded at some length of God's good works and enactments and their nature and purpose. In the second half we see chess as an obsession distracting even jurists and imams from their ritual prayers and other religious duties and encouraging the use of foul language. It must be banned, and offenders punished by imprisonment and erasure of their names from the pay and rations register. The missive is on the short side, amounting to less than a thousand words in the Arabic.

(iv) The Epistle on a hunt

Of similar length, but of a different kind, is the graphic description of a hunt. Addressed to the caliph, it captures for us the spirit of a favourite Umayyad sport. Recounting how he and his party set out on thoroughbred mounts with hounds and hawks, the author tells of a heavy torrent of earth-revivifying rain, then of shimmering trees and laughing blossoms as the sun came up again in a cloudless sky, and finally of a blinding mist. Sweeping blindly through terrain thick with game, the hunters are seen

next plunging into a wood, and, as the mist clears, spotting a herd of gazelles and white antelopes. The encounter, the changing landscape and the various phases of the hunt, with hounds unleashed and falcons in the air, are unfolded before our eyes. Caught up in the fray, we feel ourselves part of the chase until at last we return with the hunters loaded with game. Here we have a veritable *ṭardiyyah* ("hunting poem") in elegant prose.

(v) The Epistle on friendship

From internal evidence this epistle can be dated to the period of Marwān's governorship of Armenia and Ādharbāyjān (from 114/732); it is therefore an early composition. Of slightly more than five hundred words in the original, it is not the most interesting of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's writings. As Gabrieli rightly observes, it merely contains generalizations on the theme of friendship, and the content soon becomes subordinate to form.

(vi) Other actual or possible compositions: letters, fragments and lost works

If authentic, a letter of some twelve lines or so addressed to Yūsuf b. 'Umar, Hishām's governor in the Yemen, to reassure him of the caliph's well-being would appear to be the earliest specimen (prior to 119/737) of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's developing chancery style. Probably the shortest of the *kātib's* writings, on the other hand, is his blunt, pithy and unadorned note to an *'āmil* (governor) who had made a present of a single black slave to Marwān: "Had you found a colour worse than black and a number less than one, you would have made such a gift. Yours, etc." His longest is said to have been an enormous missive to Abū Muslim, leader of the 'Abbasid revolutionary movement, who burned it without even reading it. The only sentence it is known to have contained is, however, proverbial to this day: "When God wishes to destroy an ant, He lets it sprout wings." On the same theme we have a fragment of two and a half lines warning pro-'Abbasid Arabs against putting "the forelock of the dynasty into the hands of the Persian brigade". Another extant fragment comprises part of a letter to a rebellious *'āmil*. Two shortish but stylistically polished compositions bearing on the political troubles of the time also seem likely to have been penned by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd. The first is a letter from Marwān to a Kharijite insurgent, which has been preserved by Ibn Ṭayfūr, and the second an "Epistle on sedition" (*Risālah fī'l-fitnah*) attributed to the *kātib* by Kurd 'Alī. Among extant pieces of official correspondence we may also classify a number of congratulatory "Te Deums" in which the author gives thanks and praise to God for some victory won for Islam by the addressee. In this connection it should be noted that 'Abd al-Ḥamīd is traditionally said to have been the originator of the extended doxology which is the essence of this kind of composition.

Examples of personal, but scarcely less ornate, correspondence may be found, first, in a letter to a brother announcing the birth of the author's first son, and, second, in a letter to his family announcing the plight of himself and his sovereign in the Egyptian catastrophe. Both are quite short, neither exceeding more than about half a page of Arabic text. In the same category we may also include two short letters of five or six lines each addressed to the caliph. One is a petition for personal assistance in his private affairs, while the other is a note of condolence on the death of a royal concubine.

For the sake of completeness it is necessary to add that there are one or two more odds and ends which have survived whatever accident befell the vast corpus of compositions attributed to 'Abd al-Ḥamīd. They are not, however, of sufficient importance to merit further comment here.

'Abd al-Ḥamīd's style, characteristics and sources of inspiration

From the foregoing section it will be seen that the extant writings of our author are quite disparate. As regards length, we have at the one extreme his tersely cogent censure of the niggard and, at the other, his lengthy preceptive epistle to the prince. As for content, the themes and topics treated are, like the writer's moods that match them, as various as one is entitled to expect from the slender corpus of his surviving work. And so, within the narrow confines of this corpus, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd plays many parts: courtier, adviser and chancery tutor; Muslim moralist, admonitory preacher and jurist; exponent of the techniques of propaganda, subversion and the art of war; doxologist and epideictic orator; hunter and lyrical prose-poet; author of personal and familial correspondence. Behind variety of theme and mood, however, there lies a certain unity of form or style characterizing all those compositions in which he aims at something more than the straightforward communication of a laconic message in one or two tightly drawn and rightly nuanced sentences. Tautness and sententious brevity are not his ideal; his manner of writing is loose, and at times diffuse. Varying his style according to the theme, he modifies the grammatical order of words for the sake of euphony or emphasis, and as he accommodates his method to the subject, he makes his prose expand or contract, rise or fall, strike hard or softly as he sees fit. It is the prose of the speaker rather than the writer that he has in view, and he seems to aim at arresting the ear of a listener rather than at capturing the thought of a reader. It is as though he intended his epistles to be read aloud, and one readily envisions a recipient's private secretary standing before him and declaiming the *kātib*'s words. Understandably, then,

harmony of sound is as important to him as clarity of expression or arrangement. Stylistic effects are of the essence of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's writings, and of this we need no further proof than that he thought his brother and his family as worthy as the caliph or the prince of well-weighed expressions and careful symmetry.

'Abd al-Ḥamīd's stylistic impact depends mainly on his exploitation of the possibilities of parallelism, whether of sound, sense or structure. His acoustic effects are achieved by balance of sentences and phrases, a well-ordered recurrence of accents and pauses, repetition of words, alliteration, assonance, the use of metrical rhythms familiar to the Arab ear, notably in the closing words of a period, and correct distribution of strong and weak beats and syllables. Here we need not, and indeed cannot, treat each of those points in detail. But just one example – which should not, however, be regarded as a standard formula – will perhaps convey to the reader some idea of the feeling for balance and rhythm of which 'Abd al-Ḥamīd was capable. In the following five members, which are arranged vertically for the sake of illustrative convenience, it will be seen that each falls naturally into three quantitative units, of which the penultimate (∪–∪) provides the foundation of a pattern with familiar metrical rhythms:

(Min dhālika)	an tamlika // umūra/ka bi-'l-qaṣ(i)d /	A
	wa-tudāri // ya junda/ka bi'l-iḥsān /	B
	wa-tasūn // a sirra/ka bi'l-kitmān /	B
	wa-tudāwi // ya ḥiqda/ka bi-'l-inṣāf /	B
	wa-tudhalli // la nafsa/ka bi-'l-'ad(i)l /	A

Among the instruments of his acoustic technique 'Abd al-Ḥamīd includes *saj'*, or end-rhyme in the component members of balanced couplets, triplets or whatever other arrangement he selects. It is important to note, however, that the device is accorded a place only if it is felt to be peculiarly appropriate; *saj'* is not an ornament which he habitually extends to the manifestations of his literary genius. We do, of course, frequently encounter sentences of the following kind: "*Thumma li-takun bitānatu-ka wa-julasā'u-ka fī khalawāti-k | wa-dukhalā'u-ka fī sirri-k | ahla 'l-fiqhi wa-'l-wara'i min khāṣṣati ahli bayti-k*" ("Next, let *your* intimates and *your* associates in *your* moments of seclusion and those with access to *you* in *your* privacy be of such members of the élite of *your* house as are persons of religious sagacity and piety"). But here, as often elsewhere, the rhyme derives from the pronominal terminations (in bold print) and is therefore more natural than that found in this example for his description of the hunt: "*kharajnā ilā 'l-ṣayd bi-a'dā 'l-jawāriḥ | wa-athqafi 'l-dawārī | akrami-hā ajnāsā |wa-a'ẓami-hā ajsāmā|wa-aḥsani-hā alwānā|wa-aḥaddi-hā aṭrāfā|wa-aṭwali-ha a'ḍā*". It is, in fact, precisely in this hunting *risālah*, which we may regard

as something of a prose-poem, and in his doxologies, which are in essence hymns of praise and thanksgiving, that 'Abd al-Ḥamīd finds *saj'* a most suitable ornament. Yet even in these compositions he by no means creates an inflexible rule whereby he binds himself to consistency or uniformity. Indeed, he clearly abstains from taking full advantage of the opportunities for *saj'*, which, in both these types of composition, his later 'Abbasid successors would have readily seized. This being so, it is scarcely surprising that the use of *saj'* in the epistle to Marwān's son should be restricted and, in his directive to the secretaries, minimal.

While it is true that 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, knowing the Arabs' delight in the sound of words, strove for aesthetic effectiveness on the acoustic level by careful utilization of rhythm, sonority and, to some extent, end-rhyme, he was nevertheless not unmindful of the appeal to the mind's eye of the vivid image and, above all, of the appeal to the intelligence of conceptual conciseness. But if his concepts are uncomplicated and concise, he does not hesitate to drive them home by verbal expansion of his ideas if he feels the theme or occasion demands it. In his epistle to 'Abdullāh b. Marwān he makes full use of semantic and grammatical parallelism, often expanding the contrasting, synonymous or synthetic members of his parallels through long circumstantial clauses. Here again it is impracticable to quote lengthy passages and to analyse the subtlety and variety of the author's parallelism, but readers acquainted with the literature of the biblical and ancient Near East will readily recognize the pattern from this warning against the dangers of unwholesome pleasure:

Pledge yourself to war against your inclinations, for such is the bar that locks in good works and the key that lets out evil deeds and the adversary of reason. Know that each of your passions is for you a foe, striving after your destruction and lying in wait for your unguarded moment; for they are the deceits of Satan, the snares of his cunning and the pitfalls of his guile. Beware of them, avoiding them; be on your guard against them, protecting yourself from them...

As regards 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's vocabulary and diction, we need only note that in the main he presents us with relatively few rare or *recherché* terms and expressions, and if we run into words that are strange, the chances are that they are legitimate archaisms. The proportion of unfamiliar words seems to be comparatively higher in his sketch of the hunt than elsewhere; but this is scarcely surprising, and indeed, in view of the nature of the piece, what is remarkable, perhaps, is the incidence of truly commonplace words and phrases.

To sum up: 'Abd al-Ḥamīd is a master of Arabic style. He is guided by desire for artistic effects, but he does not allow it to run away with his pen, and thus he achieves variety both within and between his compositions.

Of his two classic epistles, that to the secretaries is the lighter, less complex, less elaborate and the more easily digested, while that to the prince is the more solemn and imposing. Yet beneath them both we detect the very same hand. Finally, if he is aware of the morphological and lexical potential of Arabic for the generation of the conceits and rhetorical figures which we shall come to know as the art of badīʿ ("invented"), he certainly shows little sign of his awareness.

Because the epistles of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd seem to loom suddenly and sharply out of the somewhat misty landscape of early Arabic literature, the tracks of which are often hard to chart with precision because of the uncertainties of oral transmission, it is only too easy to view them in isolation from the terrain of which they are in fact a part. A tendency to isolate them may to some extent gain strength from the interest which has centred on the question of outside influences. For the most part, such influences are seen as grafts or transplantations from the culture of the old Iranian world. In particular, close attention has been paid to those portions of the kātib's works which treat of royal and court ethics, administrative practice, etiquette, protocol and ceremonial. That the substance of his exposition of such topics derives from pre-Islamic Persian traditions of kingship and government seems to be beyond question. In stressing, as he does in his epistle to the prince, noble birth as a prerequisite of membership of the royal entourage and positions of leadership in the army as well as a criterion for the bestowal of favours, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd is not pressing the values of the Arab aristocracy, but rather restating the attitudes of the Sasanian hierarchy. It is also to Iranian sources, so it seems, that he turns for his worldly wisdom – wisdom born of experience, prudence and observation and preserved in the gnomic collections in which Middle Persian was so rich.

That there are signs of Greek influence in the epistle to the Crown prince is a suggestion which has not found wide acceptance despite the fact of its having been proposed by the eminent Ṭāhā Ḥusayn and underwritten by so distinguished a scholar as the late Sir Hamilton Gibb. In support of his hypothesis the former argues that the kātib's reliance on long, circumstantial clauses to define, clarify and qualify his ideas is a Greek trait, as is the division of his thought into neat compartments; that treatises on the art of war and military organization were common in the Greco-Roman world and that some found their way into Arabic; that the notion of the century as a military unit is classical; that 'Abd al-Ḥamīd was in touch with the currents of Hellenistic thought at first hand and could have derived his moral precepts direct from Greek sources. It is, of course, possible to counter each of these arguments with others that cannot lightly be

dismissed, and objections have indeed been raised. Of these, not the least
cogent, *prima facie* at least, is that, as far as content is concerned, such Greek
ideas as are discernible in 'Abd al-Ḥamīd could, and most likely did, filter
through from Persian sources. But in the light of what we know of
Hishām's *kātib* Sālim – even without taking account of Grignaschi's
hypothesis – can we really be certain that at this period the Persians were
the only transmitters of Greek philosophical ideas? Moreover, in a Muslim
world conditioned to accept its civilization as a "Perso-Islamic synthesis"
can a historico-literary tradition be taken as wholly reliable when it relates
to so early a period as that under consideration? Such questions are not
rhetorical but actual and, as such, await reasoned answers.

The diversity of informed opinion on the sources of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd's
inspiration extends even to his hunting epistle: one Arab scholar sees its
presentation as quite distinct from anything in the Arab tradition and
inspired, rather, by Persian practice, while another is put in mind of the
poetry of such pre-Islamic masters as Zuhayr and Imru' al-Qays.
Whatever the truth of the matter, preoccupation with extraneous influences
must not blind us to the element which in all the *kātib*'s compositions
appeals more than any to the Arab personality, namely that of language
and style. To many an Arabic-speaking man of letters with a discriminating
ear the impact is immediate: unless he is reading the description of the
hunt (which is in some ways *sui generis*) his mind flies not so much to visions
of Sasanian kings, and the *Epistle of Tansar* or the *Testament of Aradshīr*,
as to the Qur'ān and the rhetoric of preachers or of men of politics such
as al-Ḥajjāj, Umayyad governor of Iraq. In other words, there is every
indication that Arabic rhetoric inspired both the form and the function
of our author's work and that in this respect he was no innovator, but
rather the greatest exponent of an art already well practised. In his most
solemn, stately and elevated moods echoes of the Quranic style are
unmistakable. Moreover, at all levels of feeling devices familiar to the
rhetorician are everywhere in evidence. To stir the imagination he will turn
to vivid metaphor; to arouse emotions he will play the music of sonorous
and persuasive words; to win the mind he will mix subtlety of expression
with concision and compression of thought and word; to arouse and hold
attention he will give the emphatic position to emphatic words and resort
to skilful means of repetition; to avoid monotony he will develop and
diversify his themes and images by that well-known feature of ancient
Semitic literatures – parallelism. There is nothing here that is alien to the
Arab tradition, and not without reason has a passage from the epistle to
the prince been compared to some famous lines of al-Ḥajjāj in order to
demonstrate that the manner is fundamentally the same in both. Only the

long, circumstantial clauses of the former, to which we have already
referred, seem unusual. Attempts have been made to explain them in terms
of a development of natural tendencies observable in the Qur'ān. It must,
however, be said that the classical scholar cannot help but think of Greek
rhetoric, notably that of Demosthenes, who is much given to the use of
long infinitive phrases and participial clauses and who, it might be added,
loves to point contrasts and enforce parallels, and looks to symmetry,
assonance and variety of expansion in much the same way as 'Abd
al-Ḥamīd. This is *not*, of course, to say that the latter was in fact exposed
to any such influence.

   Whatever the truth of the matter may be, this much at least may be said:
those writings which we associate with the name of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd carry
in embryo certain distinctive features which found favour with succeeding
generations of chancery belletrists and *littérateurs*, who developed and
elaborated them. If in the worst hands such features came to be exaggerated
beyond a point consistent with the highest standards of literary taste and
quality, the fault was not that of the Umayyad *kātib*. There is nothing to
suggest that he would have approved of the subordination of subject to
style and sound to sense.

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF PARALLELISM IN ARABIC PROSE

In any fully evolved literary culture – and this includes both Arabic and English – one tends to think of the prose–verse antithesis as a primary and fundamental dichotomy. Yet on a broader view, and taking into account the pre-literate antecedents of the literary culture, an even more fundamental dichotomy is that between everyday discourse on one hand, and on the other hand elevated styles of diction, no matter whether they be verse or formal prose. Within the domain of the elevated style, there is a gradation to be observed. One may have straighforward narrative, or utterances which seek to arouse the hearers' emotions by the use of linguistic devices. These devices are not necessarily those of rhythmical regularity (i.e. metre) which constitute, in Arab and European thought alike, the essential feature of "verse". Ancient Near Eastern literatures, and above all the Hebrew Old Testament, employ for this purpose a style of elevated diction which European scholars have not hesitated to call "poetry".

The fundamental appeal of that style lies not in acoustic effect but in a semantic patterning, which has been described by Eissfeld[1] as follows:

The poetic texts consist of verses [here the conventional divisions of the biblical text, not anything to do with the prose–verse antithesis] formed from two – or more rarely three – stichoi combined, in which the stichoi or members are in some way "parallel" to each other, in that they offer variations on the same idea. This may come about by the second member repeating the content of the first in different words (synonymous parallelism), or it may be that it sets it off sharply with contrasted thought (antithetic parallelism), or it may be that it simply takes the thought further and completes it (synthetic parallelism).

And a couple of pages later he adds, "It is open to question whether...it is also possible to go further and recognise metrical regularity as well." Yet although *strict* metrical regularity may be difficult to detect (and those Old Testament scholars who defend it are sometimes obliged to resort to emendation of the text in order to achieve such regularity), there can be

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[1] *Old Testament*, 57.

no doubt that rhythmical echoes between the stichoi of each couplet do play a role in the parallelism, albeit only a secondary one, and although such rhythmical patterns as there may be are not characterized by the strict recurrences characteristic of European and Arabic "verse". One thing that has to be stressed is that the acoustic adornment of rhyme is not in principle a part of this style.

One simple example of this style is found in Genesis 49.17, where Dan is described as "a viper on the road, a horned snake on the path, who bites the horse's fetlock so that the rider tumbles backward" (*N.E.B.* version). The relative diffuseness of this English rendering obscures the taut forcefulness of the original, which runs literally "viper upon road, snake upon path, biting heels-of horse, falls his-rider backward". In the first part of this we have straight synonymous parallelism, but in the second a more complex pattern. The parallelism of the second and third words is chiasmic: "rider" echoes "horse", "backward" echoes "heels" (this example shows that Eissfeld's "synonymous" parallelism has to be understood in a broad sense, for "backward" is not strictly speaking a synonym of "heel", but they both share the common semantic element of "back-part"). In the first word of each stichos, any purely semantic parallelism between "bite" and "fall" is not very evident, but is reinforced by two aspects of grammatical parallelism – which also has its part to play in the style – one corresponding to semantic synonymousness, one to semantic antithesis: for both words are verbal concepts expressed in a verbal derivative, but the participle contrasts with the finite verb form.

The English reader might wonder why the apparently intrusive "his" is introduced, when "rider" alone might seem to offer a neater parallelism. Here an acoustic factor intervenes. The pronoun morpheme -*o* in *rokĕbo* "his rider" echoes rhythmically the plural morpheme -*e* in *'iqqĕbe* "heels".

In pre-'Abbasid Arabic we encounter two distinct varieties of elevated style. In the first place there is verse (*shi'r*), characterized by rhyme and by a very strictly recurring pattern of identical rhythms. Secondly, there is the "oration" (*khuṭbah*), which has no rhyme but exhibits precisely the features which have been described above as characteristic of Old Testament poetry. Quite evidently, this style is of great antiquity, as opposed to Arabic *shi'r*, which is relatively speaking an innovation in the Semitic language domain.

It must be said, too, that the fundamental nature of this style is by no means confined to Semitic-speaking peoples, but corresponds to some inherent tendency in the human mind. In English it is quite well attested. John Lyly and his followers in the Tudor age developed a similar style of high elaboration; one simple but telling example is Robert Greene's "I

then changed the court for the country, and the wars for a wife; but I found the craft of swains more vile than the knavery of courtiers, the charge of children more heavy than servants, and wives' tongue worse than the wars itself."[2] Apart from Greene's use of the additional adornment of alliteration (wholly unknown in Arabic), this is completely in the style of the early Arabic *khutbah*. The same trends are conspicuous in English eighteenth-century formal prose, especially sermons; and persist sporadically even into the nineteenth-century novel, Louise de la Ramée ("Ouida") showing a special partiality for them.

One early Arabic example may suffice here; others are cited in an article of mine on this subject.[3] It is the oration delivered by 'Uthmān on his appointment as successor-designate to the caliphate:

1. You live in a transient world, with but a brief span of life.
2. So anticipate your latter end, with the best deeds you can accomplish.
3. You will surely be overtaken [by death], some morn or eve.
4a. Truly this world is wrapped round deception,
4b. but be ye not deceived by the life of this world,
4c. nor deceived about God by any deception.
5a. Consider the men who are bygone,
5b. strive and be not heedless,
5c. for no heedlessness will be shown towards you.
6a. Where are the children of this world,
6b. those who clung to it, lived in it,
6c. and were vouchsafed long enjoyment of it?
7a. Has it not spewed them forth?
7b. Cast away this world
7c. where God has cast it,
7d. and seek the world to come.

The patterning here is highly complex. Sentence 1 shows straight grammatical parallelism, since it runs literally "in an abode of transience and in a brief-remnant of lives", though the semantic parallelism is chiasmic, with "lives" echoing "abode" and "brief-remnant" echoing "transience". Sentence 2 is chiasmic in sense and grammar: "anticipate" is antithetic to "accomplish", and "good deeds" has a semantic association with "latter end", while the grammatical structure is verb-noun and then noun-verb. Sentence 3 is acoustically a triplet of three passive verbs (for the literal formulation is "being-taken-in-the-morning or being-taken-in-the-evening"), though grammatically the two last verbs are subordinate to the first. In 4 the first and third words of each stichos show a neat

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[2] Prologue to *The Scottish Historie of James IV*, first acted in 1592.
[3] "Parallelism".

patterning of the verbal repetitions, "world": "deception", "deceived":
"world", "deceived": " deception", and close semantic association, since
the deceptiveness of the allurements of this world is a typical theme of
Muslim thought. In the second word of each stichos, "God" (the eternal)
is in antithetic parallelism to "life" (which in this context is the transient
life of this world), and there is probably a semantic association between
"life" and "wrapped" because the verb employed (*ṭawā*) is also used with
reference to "coming to the end of a period of time". Sentence 5 is an
evolving triplet, where 5a and b show grammatical (two pairs of verbs)
and semantic parallelism ("consider": "strive", "bygone": "heedless"),
and 5c is developed by repetition in passive form of the verb "be heedless
of". 6a and b are rhythmically parallel, with three main stresses in each,
and 6c echoes semantically the last two words of 6b, for "cling to" and
"vouchsafe" are antithetical aspects of the enjoyment of a benefit, either
by one's own efforts or by someone else's favour, and there is in Arabic
a closer association between "long" and "lived" than appears in English,
for the verb here used for "live in" has a derivative *muʿammar* which means
specifically "long-lived". Sentence 7 has a more complex interlocking
pattern: 7a and b constitute a rhythmical doublet with dissyllable followed
by trisyllable in each member; 7c echoes 7b by the repetition of the verb
"cast" followed by the semantically antithetical terms "God" and
"world"; 7d echoes 7b in a different way, with antithetical parallelism in
both words, "cast-away":"seek", "this world":"world to come".

The greater elaboration of this terminal segment is an instance of a very
pervasive tendency in Arabic. In quite simple writing, there is a habit of
making the part of a sentence which comes after the maximal pause in the
sentence slightly longer than the part which comes before it – even at the
expense of inserting additional verbiage, not requisite for the substantial
message but serving to make the sentence more acceptable rhythmically.
There would be a strong reluctance on the part of an Arab writer to phrase
the sentence "That the king was disinclined to enter a major war at that
moment, is certain" in that form, because of the rhythmical inadequacy
of "is certain" compared with the first part of the sentence. In the
parallelistic style, the second member of a couplet (or third of a triplet)
is sometimes rhythmically longer than the preceding one(s), never shorter.
And at the paragraph level, the occurrence of a segment noticeably more
elaborate than the preceding ones is a pretty sure indication that we are
coming up to the major pause of a paragraph ending.

Whereas the early *khuṭbah* style uses, in order to create its effect, these
devices which are those of ancient Near Eastern poetry, the earliest *shiʿr*
knows practically nothing of them, but relies (apart from the deeply

poetical nature of its language and imagery) on close metrical structure
and rhyme. The two earliest poems of any length that have been
preserved – Shanfarā's *Lāmiyyah* and the *Muʻallaqah* of Imru' al-Qays –
show, in just under 150 lines, barely half a dozen exhibiting parallelistic
devices other than of the simplest kind, namely, enumerations such as
Shanfarā's "swift wolf, and spotted pard, and lame hyena" and "bold
heart, and trenchant sword, and long bow".

The ʻAbbasid age produced in some respects a curious reversal of roles
between *shiʻr* and the *khuṭbah*. The ornamental rhetorical style (*badīʻ*) of
ʻAbbasid and post-ʻAbbasid *shiʻr* has taken on all the complex rhetorical
devices of the early *khuṭbah*. Conversely, in the hands of Ibn Nubātah the
khuṭbah becomes couplet-rhymed, and the adoption of this new ornament
led to some diminution in the complexity of the parallelism, as compared
with that of the early *khuṭbah* (chiasmus, for instance, being more seldom
employed). The style thus developed became practically *de rigueur* in
subsequent prose wherever the author wishes to raise his writing to the
level of solemn or elevated diction. In particular, prefaces were invariably
so drafted, even when the main work is severely scientific. Moreover, a
parallelistic passage (whether with or without the added adornment of
rhyme) is very frequently resorted to as a device to mark the clausula at
the end of a paragraph, rather as in Shakespeare's early plays a rhymed
couplet often signifies the end of a scene.

These habits have become deeply engrained in Arabic writing, and even
today historical and "reflective" writing still uses the parallelistic style in
moderation. One contemporary example, although much more elaborate
than would normally be encountered, is worth quoting for the clarity with
which it illustrates the stylistic traits in question. A lecturer at the
University of Riyadh, ʻAlī al-Qāsimī, writing in 1970 in a literary journal
about the theme of grey hair in poetry,[4] devotes a paragraph to the
physiological causes of grey hair, and this is written in a wholly modern
style modelled on European scientific writing and utterly without linguistic
adornment. But in the next paragraph but one, on the very same page,
he turns to the psychological impact of the appearance of grey hair, and
in dealing with this emotionally charged topic he instinctively reverts to
parallelism of the most traditional kind, though the passage is rhymed only
in two places (marked R[1] and R[2] below), thus:

> Youth is a glorious phase of man's life,
>> dear to his heart,
>> close to his soul,
>> abounding in every sort of delight and joy,

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[4] *Al-ʻArabī*, no. 139, January 1970, 140.

> full of all kinds of happiness and healthiness,
> replete with moments of high spirits and adventurousness,
> afire with various emotions and passions.
> But when this period comes to an end it is succeeded
> by anguish in the heart,
> and grief in the soul,
> and sorrow in the spirit.
> The first grey hair is
> a warning of the departure of youth
> and the end of its joys (R^1)
> and a harbinger of the advance of old age
> and the beginning of its sorrows (R^1).
> Nobody feels this more subtly
> or expresses it more truly
> than the poet who
> mentions the days of his youth and laments them (R^2),
> and talks of the nights of his boyhood and mourns them (R^2),
> after witnessing the snows of old age creep over his head,
> announcing the arrival of the winter of his life
> and the departure of spring never to return.

I have hitherto avoided using the somewhat ambiguous technical term *saj'*. In its earliest application, this described the mode of utterance of the pre-Islamic soothsayers (and the Prophet warned his followers against "the *saj'* of the soothsayers"). Such utterances of this kind as have been recorded for us are in an extremely primitive style unlike anything that has been described above, but it has often been remarked by European scholars that they bear a close resemblance to the style of the earliest revelations of the Qur'ān. These pieces are always quite short, and broken up into members of uneven length, with a single monorhyme which is invariable at the end of every member; they are thus distinguished both from the unrhymed early *khuṭbah*, and from the later couplet-rhymed form. Nevertheless, the term *saj'* came in 'Abbasid times to be applied also to the couplet-rhymed *khuṭbah* form as practised by Ibn Nubātah, and in consequence of this European scholars have conventionally rendered the term as "rhymed prose". From the point of view of literary categorization, this is a singularly infelicitous rendering, for it is manifest that the parallelistic style, even when unrhymed, has vastly more in common with the couplet-rhymed form than either of them have with the "*saj'* of the soothsayers".

CHAPTER 6

THE QUR'ĀN – I

CONTENTS

The Qur'ān consists of pronouncements which Muḥammad
(c. A.D. 570–632) delivered to his people as revelation during the period
of his prophecy, i.e. from about 610 to shortly before his death. These
include an introductory prayer for guidance along the right path and two
short rhymes at the end of the collection to ward off evil. In general,
therefore, the Qur'ān has a unified subject matter. But as soon as one begins
to look at it in detail, it becomes problematic. The texts collected in the
Qur'ān are not on the whole thematically arranged, but put together more
or less arbitrarily. This is particularly true of the longer chapters (*sūrahs*).
Nor were chronological factors taken into account in the compilation of
the texts. The sequence of the *sūrahs* was determined quite mechanically
on the principle of diminishing length. Short *sūrahs* containing pronounce-
ments from the early years of Muḥammad's prophecy were placed towards
the end of the collection, while longer texts from his later years were
collected into extensive *sūrahs* and so were placed at the beginning. In short,
no meaningful order can be discerned. In order to discuss the subject
matter of the Qur'ān I have therefore pursued the most important themes
wherever they occur in the book, using statements found in the text for
the purpose of my argument, but rearranging them in my own order. A
similar qualification applies to certain changes brought about in the
Prophet's message after he had migrated with his small band of followers
from Mecca to Medina and there taken over the leadership of a large
politico-religious community. For these changes are not explicitly recorded
in the Qur'ān. They can be assessed only on the basis of a historical
evaluation of the relevant passages in the text.

Muḥammad's message to the heathens of Mecca

In Muḥammad's message to his heathen compatriots the core of his
teaching, the belief in one God, is naturally predominant. In many
variations and repetitions, the omnipotence and loving kindness of this

one God are praised. He is the creator and preserver of the world and the benefactor of mankind. For that reason men are duty bound to believe in Him alone and to be thankful to Him. Repeatedly signs (which might also be translated as "miracles", *āyāt*) are enumerated which reveal God's beneficent influence in nature: the regular alternation of day and night; winds that drive rainclouds before them and thus make growth possible; gardens with palms and vines, olive trees and pomegranates; corn-fields; cattle; riding- and pack-animals. Similarly, products and skills which we should be inclined to attribute to mankind itself testify according to the Qur'ān to God's power and love: houses; tents from animal hides which can be carried about easily; objects made of wool, fur and hair for everyday use; shirts for protection against the sun; the art of writing; the ability to sail over the sea in ships. All this and much more besides serves the well-being of man.

God's omnipotence also shows itself in the fact that He is the creator of Heaven and Earth, and that He fashioned the first man and the first woman and since then has caused generations without number to be born and grow to maturity. The Quranic accounts of the creation of Heaven and Earth often mention a period of six days, clearly influenced by the biblical story of creation. Yet the detail is very different. God raised the Heavens like a roof or ceiling though one cannot see any supports; He spread out the Earth like a camp or a carpet and attached firmly rooted mountains to it so that it should not begin to sway, and also rivers (or streams), passes and paths. As far as the creation of man is concerned, the earliest passages confine themselves to the biological evolution which begins with procreation through the sperm and leads via the interim stages of embryo and foetus to the birth of the child. Subsequent passages, drawing on the biblical myth of creation, include the fashioning of the first man (Adam) out of clay. It is further pointed out that God made two sexes out of the first man, so that the human race might thereafter increase out of its own substance.

The creation of man not only demonstrates God's omnipotence; it also shows that He has the power to awaken men after death to a new life hereafter. Another token of God's control over nature is often interpreted in the same way: the reviving of the parched earth by God's rain. Here we have a further theme of Muḥammad's message to his heathen compatriots: the prophecy of the Last Judgement, the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead. It is precisely in the earliest *sūrahs* that the terrors of the impending apocalypse are frequently and forcefully depicted, though they cannot be dated exactly. The destruction of the world is not the ultimate end but a prelude to a universal Day of Judgement when

every man will be called to account for his earthly deeds and will then be punished or rewarded as the case may be. The character of the Judge remains initially in the background, and only in the later passages are the joys of Paradise and the torments of Hell described in realistic detail. But the notion of individual reward and punishment is a fundamental motif of Muḥammad's prophecies to his fellow citizens in Mecca.

Not only Muḥammad's message but also the way it was received can be deduced from the Qur'ān. The overwhelming majority of his people refused to heed the summons to believe in one God. They conceded that God created Heaven and Earth and even prayed to Him in peril on the sea, but they set up other gods at His side. They claimed that their female divinities al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt were His daughters. They turned angels into female beings and worshipped them in the same way. Moreover, they established a kinship between God and the jinn and made the latter into partners of God. Instead of seeing the error of their ways, they felt obliged to remain loyal to the polytheism of their fathers. The notion of a resurrection of the dead they rejected scornfully. They declared the message that Muḥammad preached to be false, they called him a liar, occasionally too a poet or a soothsayer, but more often a man possessed (*majnūn*).

Unlike the religious beliefs of the heathen citizens of Mecca, their pagan rituals are scarcely ever a target of criticism. On the other hand, there is frequent criticism of certain characteristics and social conventions: their pride, their prosperity, their avarice and their callousness. They already enjoy adequate wealth, but they always want more, and fail to procure justice for the orphan and to feed the poor. The faithful, most of whom belong to the lower strata of the population, are powerless against them and are sorely oppressed by them, being sometimes even forced to renounce their faith.

Jews and Christians

Muḥammad adopted a predominantly receptive attitude towards Jews and Christians prior to the *hijrah*. The fact that they appealed to a written tradition of revelatory knowledge became a model for him. The Arabs too were to have their Holy Writ – through the Prophet's own mediation. Whatever detail he could glean of the doctrine of revelation and other traditional legends of the Jews and Christians became part and parcel of his own ideas. He reproduced them in his own pronouncements in Arabic and integrated them into his large-scale design for a doctrine of salvation. The final result of this development is seen in the Qur'ān. In the sections that relate events from earlier times the biblical accounts (in a broad sense)

occupy pride of place, if only by virtue of the space allotted to them. They are mixed up with ancient Arab legends and fragments from the legend of the Seven Sleepers and the Alexander romance, and they are repeated in different variations. For the most part the material dates from the period prior to the *hijrah*, but some things were not added until the Medinan period.

The stories of the following Old Testament figures are told: Adam (how he was moulded out of earth, the Fall and expulsion from Paradise; the refusal of Satan to obey God's summons to the angels and prostrate himself before Adam); Cain and Abel (though the names are omitted); Noah (the Flood); Abraham with Ishmael and Isaac (also Abraham's fight against idolatry and the building of the Ka'bah by Abraham and Ishmael, see below); Lot (the destruction of his city); Joseph and his brothers; Moses with Aaron and Pharaoh (the story of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt up to their entry into the Promised Land). Others include Saul (Ṭālūt), David and Solomon, Jonah and Job. The Old Testament prophets as such are not mentioned. Although Old Testament characters are mentioned in the Qur'ān their stories are in part described very briefly. Some, however, are described at greater length. Elisha occurs as no more than a name (in its Arabic form al-Yasa'), but there is a relatively detailed account of David and Solomon. The story of Joseph and his brothers is narrated at length and consecutively in one *sūrah* (xii). In contrast, the stories of the Fall and the explusion from Paradise, of Noah and the Flood, and of Lot and the judgement on the inhabitants of his city are related on several occasions as parts of different *sūrahs* (with variations). The most detailed treatment, likewise spread over different *sūrahs*, is reserved for the stories of Abraham and Moses. Abraham plays a special role (see below) in Islamic teaching as the so-called Ḥanīf and ostensible founder of the Ka'bah in Mecca, while Moses enjoys prominence as the leader who freed the Israelites from captivity in Egypt and founded the Jewish nation. The New Testament is represented by the following: the story of Zacharias and the birth of John the Baptist (as told in Luke 1), of the birth and childhood of Mary, and of the Annunciation and the birth of Jesus (as told in apocryphal childhood-gospels). Jesus himself is said to have spoken to people while still a baby in his cradle, and to have fashioned birds out of clay and breathed life into them. We read too that he healed the blind and the lepers and brought the dead back to life, and at the request of his disciples prayed to God to send down a table decked with a meal. The crucifixion is disputed but there is mention of Jesus ascending to Heaven. The Qur'ān makes no allusion to Paul or Peter or John.

After the *hijrah* Muhammad felt increasingly disillusioned in his hopes

of being acknowledged by the Jews of Medina as the Prophet of the Arabs. In the end he turned hostile towards them, becoming aggressive not only physically but also in his pronouncements. The polemic against the Jews takes up large parts of the Qur'ān. They are accused of a whole catalogue of vices. They are obdurate and malicious. They have broken the covenant which they swore with God, they have slain their own prophets and traduce the word of God. They practise usury even though it is forbidden, and cheat people of what is theirs. Even in this life they are punished for their rebelliousness with disgrace and humiliation. The Christians, too, are in due course included in the polemic, although (unlike the Jews') their numbers in Medina were small, if indeed they were represented there at all. The main bone of contention is the christological doctrine. The teaching that Christ, as the Son of God, partakes of His divinity is branded as an offence against the postulate of monotheism and equated with heathen polytheism, while the doctrine of the Trinity is interpreted as tritheism (with Mary as the third "person" instead of the Holy Spirit).

In this polemic Jews and Christians (who are both termed "People of the Book" because they have each been given their own written revelation, the Torah and the Gospel, *Injīl*) are often named in the same breath. In his dispute with them the Prophet finally realizes the autonomy of the religion which he himself has been proclaiming. In prayer he no longer turns towards Jerusalem as in the first period after the *hijrah*, but faces in the direction of Mecca. The Ka'bah is acknowledged as the focal point of the faith, the originally pagan ritual of pilgrimage is taken over into Islam and in connection with this the biblical story of Abraham is expanded into an Islamic legend. According to this tradition Abraham, together with his son Ishmael, built the Ka'bah and rid the pilgrimage ceremonies at Mecca of their idolatrous trappings. Islam is thereby elevated above Judaism and Christianity. "O you People of the Book! Why do you quarrel over Abraham, since the Torah and the Gospel were handed down after him? Have you no understanding? ... Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian. He was a monotheist obedient to God, not a heathen. The people who stand next to Abraham are those who followed him (and his message in days gone by) and this Prophet [i.e. Muḥammad] and those who believe (with him)" (iii.65–8). The most damning formulation of the polemic against the "People of the Book" is at the same time the culminating indictment, and can be found in *sūrah* ix. It reads: "Fight against those who do not believe in God or the Day of Judgement and do not forbid what God and His messenger have forbidden, and do not belong to the true religion – of those who have received the Scripture – [fight against them] until they meekly offer tribute with their hands [?]!

The Jews say: 'Uzayr [Ezra] is the son of God. And the Christians say:
Christ is the son of God. They merely say this...These accursed people!
How can they be so perverse! They have set up their own [Jewish] scholars
and [Christian] monks and Christ, the son of Mary, as lords in God's place.
Whereas they were commanded to serve one God, for there is no other
God but Him (v.29–31).

Legends of divine retribution and eschatology

In some *sūrahs* various biblical figures are juxtaposed in a row as types of
devout men from earlier ages. The repeated sequence of stories ending with
a judgement is worth noting. They follow the same pattern each time. A
people, a tribe or a city transgresses and the majority fall victim to a
devastating catastrophe, while one just man, usually called an envoy of
God, is saved along with his few followers. These include the stories of
Noah and the Flood, of Lot and the destruction of his city, and similar Arab
legends about Hūd, the envoy sent by God to 'Ād, Ṣāliḥ, the envoy sent
to Thamūd who heinously destroy his camel, and Shu'ayb, the envoy sent
to Madyan whom he admonishes in vain to give full weight and measure.
The ruin of 'Ād is brought about by a fearful storm, the destruction of
Thamūd and Madyan by an earthquake, a shout or a thunderclap. To these
may be added the story of Moses who (with Aaron) is considered to have
been God's envoy to Pharaoh and his people; the Israelites are saved as
the minority who adhere to him, while Pharaoh and his people perish
trying to cross the sea.

The legends of divine wrath alluded to here were of particular interest
to Muḥammad as long as he himself and a small band of believers faced
a majority of unbelievers in Mecca. But after he had fled and acquired a
position of political power in Medina, they lost their peculiar relevance
for him. Instead, the idea of a universal judgement at the end of the world
came to preoccupy his mind. Individual legends of retribution were woven
into sections with an eschatological theme or otherwise endowed with
eschatological additions. This could be done all the more easily since the
notion of punishment and reward in the life to come, of Hell and Paradise,
belonged to the core of Muḥammad's message. Details about the torments
of Hell and the joys of Paradise can be found in many *sūrahs* even from
the period prior to the *hijrah*.

The torments of Hell are depicted very realistically. The unbelievers and
sinners are exposed above all to scorching heat. They eat the fruit of the
hell-tree (*zaqqūm*) which look like the heads of devils, and are given
scalding water to drink which tears at their vitals, and also pus and other

nauseating potions. What is more, boiling water is poured over their heads. They roast in the fire and as soon as their skin is burnt to a cinder, it is replaced by a new one. If they try to escape from the flames of Hell they are beaten back. Angels serving as ruthless myrmidons keep them imprisoned. Sometimes Hell itself is personified. When the infidels are thrown into it, it howls out loud and almost bursts with sheer rage.

Like the torments of Hell, the joys of Paradise are principally of a sensuous kind. The blessed enter gardens in whose hollows waters flow, they are adorned with pearls and golden bracelets and clothed in silk and brocade. On their arrival they are greeted by the angels with the word "Hail!". They lie comfortably in the shade on beds of ease and enjoy their heart's desire: fruit and meats of all kinds, washed down with cool water and wine which is proffered them by immaculate young slaves and which neither intoxicates nor causes headaches. Wide-eyed virgins with swelling breasts, with their gaze modestly cast down, transported into a state of eternal purity, are their companions. This does not preclude their former wives from joining them in Paradise, provided they led a devout life on earth. However, the joys of Paradise are not all sensuous: God enjoys the presence of the blessed and they are privileged to enjoy the vision of their Lord.

The theocracy of Medina

The migration from Mecca to Medina did not lead to any fundamental change in Muḥammad's mission. The message of salvation that he had proclaimed to his fellow citizens at Mecca retained its validity in the new sphere. But the leadership of a large political community brought with it additional burdens. The Prophet found himself at odds not only with the Jews of Medina. Even within his own religious brotherhood, which had expanded considerably in a short space of time, there was a noticeably greater need to make rulings, to deliver admonishments and rebukes. Furthermore there were the disputes with Mecca and the Arab tribes in the immediate vicinity and further afield. All this is attested in numerous Quranic texts dating back to the period after the *hijrah*.

Alongside the convinced and committed disciples there are those who have joined him out of sheer opportunism or even with reluctance, and who prove unreliable supporters in moments of crisis. The polemic against them occupies large parts of the Qur'ān. At the bottom of their hearts they are opposed to the Prophet and his teaching and are called *munāfiqūn*, usually translated as "hypocrites". Bitter reproaches are heaped on them for their duplicity and cunning. Often they are placed on a level with the infidels and threatened with damnation. Bedouins, too, sometimes come

under attack. They are accused of hypocrisy and avoiding their duties. Their own assessment of themselves as believers is refuted inasmuch as it is pointed out that they are not truly of the faith but have only adopted the external forms of Islam.

A large proportion of the Medinan pronouncements, however, are aimed at the "average" faithful, so to speak, to instruct them in the duties arising out of their membership of the Islamic brotherhood. There are already the beginnings of an Islamic creed (iv.136; ii.177, 285). In some places a whole catalogue of acts of piety is drawn up on the pattern of the Ten Commandments (and inspired by them), among them the instruction to take good care of one's (ageing) parents. Obligations of a new kind ensue from the introduction of fasting (*ṣawm*), from the mounting of armed expeditions against the forces of Mecca and other political foes, which are declared a "holy war" (*jihād fī sabīl Allāh*), from the introduction of an alms-tax (*ẓakāh*) and the adoption of ancient Meccan pilgrimage rites for the purposes of Islam (*ḥajj*). All these things are covered by special exhortations and rules. In addition there is a great number of detailed instructions governing marital relations and inherit-ances, and various other stipulations, for example about the care of (female) orphans, about usury and the drinking of wine (both are forbidden), and about calculating the calendar according to the lunar year. It is not always easy to distinguish between legal rules and moral precepts. The significance of Quranic texts for Islamic doctrine, Islamic law and Islamic ethics is discussed below in a separate section.

Finally, a whole series of pronouncements from the Medinan period refer to events and episodes from the last decade of Muḥammad's life (622–32). They allude – often merely by a brief reference, rarely in more detail – to such things as the *hijrah*, the expedition to Nakhlah, the battle of Badr, the obligation to pray in the direction of Mecca, the battle of the Uḥud, the expulsion of the Qaynuqāʿ and B. al-Naḍīr, the Trench war, the savage settling of accounts with the Qurayẓah, the truce of al-Ḥudaybiyah, the expedition to Khaybar, the conquest of Mecca, the battle of Ḥunayn, the expedition to Tabūk and the pilgrimage of 631. The historian may well hope for valuable information from these pronouncements about the course and circumstances of the events in question, for they are the only definitely attested documents from that early period. But if he studies them closely he will discover that they are extremely difficult to evaluate and contain little that is suitable for his purpose. In each case the situation is assumed to be familiar to the reader. But only contemporaries and eye witnesses could have possessed the necessary knowledge. Often it is uncertain which event is being referred to. Richard Bell in his translation

of the Qur'ān considers it possible that allusions to earlier events are taken
up again in a context dealing with situations from a later period and have
thus been endowed with an additional significance. And even if the initial
questions concerning such uncertainties could be cleared up, the
information gleaned would sometimes be difficult to reconcile with what
we are told about the same events by the Arab historians. The point is
that the accounts in the Qur'ān were not compiled as an objective record,
but rather have a didactic purpose. They refer to certain events and
situations which represent elements of a divine plan for the salvation of
mankind, and are meant to be interpreted as such by contemporaries who
have witnessed them. Religious and moral considerations determine the
choice of material. As an example of an evocation of this kind, let us take
the first verses of a section referring to the battle of Badr (viii.5–9). The
words in square brackets are not in the original but are inserted by the
translator for the sake of clarification.

[You remember] how your Lord bade you go forth out of your house with the
truth, while some of the faithful were against it, and quarrelled with you over
the truth, [even] after it had been made manifest. [They behaved] as if they were
being driven to their deaths with their eyes open. And [then] when God promised
you that one group would fall to your lot, and you desired that the group without
armed escort [the allusion is to the Meccan caravan] should be yours! But God
wanted through His words to hasten the victory of truth and to extirpate the
infidels [literally: to cut off the last of the infidels] in order to hasten the victory
of truth and to defeat lies and treachery, even though it was [or: is] contrary to
the wishes of the sinners. [Then] when you called upon your Lord for succour,
He heard you [and promised]: I will sustain you with a thousand angels in your
rear [or: one close behind the other?], [ready to do battle]. And God proclaimed
this [i.e. the promise to help you in this way] for the sole purpose of sending [you]
glad tidings, that you should thereby feel secure. Victory comes from God alone.
He is powerful and wise.

Muḥammad's personality and mission

Details of Muḥammad's personal development are infrequent in the
Qur'ān, and even when they do occur, they are not meant as autobio-
graphical notes but are in each case an integral part of a religious or didactic
argument. The principal passages that come to mind here are the early
sūrahs xciii, xciv and cviii, in which the prophet is addressed in person
and reminded of the love and succour shown to him by God in days gone
by. "Did He not find you as an orphan and grant you shelter, ... find you
needy and make you rich?" (xciii.6–8).

There is more material about the mission which the Prophet felt
incumbent upon him, and about the protests and threats voiced against

him by the heathen citizens of Mecca. This can be supplemented by certain pieces of information in the legends of divine retribution (see p. 191 above). For Muḥammad did not only seek comfort in the stories of men of God in times past who with a minority of faithful disciples had been confronted by a hostile majority of unbelievers. He identified wholeheartedly with them, more or less equated the story of his own age with theirs and transferred details of his own experience to these earlier figure. Thus, if we treat them with due caution, we can utilize these legends as an indirect source of information about.Muḥammad's life.

From a statement attributed to Thamūd when they were confronted by God's envoy Ṣāliḥ (xi.62), we may conclude that before his call, Muḥammad's compatriots were of the opinion that he would one day play a leading role in Meccan society. As far as the call itself is concerned, it appears to have been connected with a vision (liii.1–18; lxxxi.19–26). But on the whole visions are not very significant in the Qur'ān. Muḥammad is a prophet of the aural, not of the visionary kind. He hears "in a clear Arabic tongue" what he is bidden to proclaim and the words are later recorded in writing, giving rise to the Qur'ān. Accordingly we read at one point, when he looks back on his call, that he did not (earlier) consider it possible that he would be allowed Scripture as a means of spreading the Word (xxviii.86). His personality disappears behind his religion. As he repeatedly emphasizes, he is an ordinary mortal and has no miracles to prove his special mission, only his message itself. The accusation of his enemies that he is a man possessed (i.e. that his words were inspired by a jinn), or that he is quite simply a liar, is firmly denied. Nor does he wish to be identified with a soothsayer (*kāhin*) or poet. Nor will he concede that what he proclaims as revelation has been dictated to him (by an alien source) (xliv.14; xvi.103; xxv.4f.). On the other hand, he is fully aware of the supreme importance of his mission and believes that his coming as a messenger and a "prophet to the heathen" was already announced in the Torah and in the Gospel (vii.157; lxi.6). Towards the end of his life he does not hesitate to claim certain privileges with regard to the marriage of women precisely by virtue of his special position (xxxiii.50).

It is comforting to discover that Muḥammad was also conscious of his human weaknesses and expresses these clearly in several Quranic passages in a kind of self-criticism. In two places (xx.114; lxxv.16–18) he is warned against proclaiming revelatory texts too precipitately, before they have been unequivocally articulated. Another passage (xvii.73f.) suggests that he was once almost tempted by the infidels to make a pronouncement which deviated from the actual words of the revelation. According to *sūrah* xxii.52, the earlier messengers of God likewise had to fight against such

temptations: "We sent no messenger or prophet [to any nation] before you, but when he desired something Satan implanted [something of his own] in his desire. But God erases [each time] that which Satan insinuates [to the messenger or prophet]. On this God sets down His verses with the utmost clarity."

LANGUAGE AND STYLE

The language of the Qur'ān is essentially identical with the standard Arabic high language which in Muḥammad's day had already been developed by the ancient Arabic poets and was subsequently to live on through the centuries as the language of classical Arabic literature. In its detail it displays certain peculiarities, not only in vocabulary, verbal forms and syntax, but also in pronunciation. C. Rabin even goes so far as to say that "the language of the Qur'ān stands somewhere between the poetical standard *koine* and the Ḥijāzī dialect". K. Vollers once tried to prove that the inflectional endings of the *i'rāb*, which survived in classical Arabic as the remnant of an earlier stage in the development of the language, were no longer usual in Mecca during Muḥammad's time and must therefore have been mistakenly inserted in the text at a later date. This thesis has, however, been called into question by Rudolf Geyer, Theodor Nöldeke and others – and with good reason. On the other hand we can certainly conclude from the state of the consonants in the Quranic text (the vowel signs were not added until later) that in Mecca at the time of the Prophet the hard consonantal sound before vowels had already softened to a considerable degree. Through the insertion of the *hamz* in the later Quranic manuscripts, which now had their vowels supplied, the pronunciation of the text was retroactively assimilated to the sounds of classical Arabic, which in this respect was more archaic. The defective writing of the final-*i* that is so common in the Qur'ān is perhaps also a peculiarity of the Meccan dialect. Linguistic deviations of this kind need not be discussed any further here. The following account will comment on the rhetorical and didactic features of the Quranic style; on the characteristic rhyming prose (*saj'*) of the Qur'ān; on the wording of oaths, sentence constructions and dialogues which serve to give forceful expression to the text; on images, similes and parables and other stylistic devices; on the modifications in style as the work progressed. In this context we must also discuss briefly the doctrine of the inimitability (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān.

Rhyming prose

The Qur'ān is written throughout in rhyming prose (*saj'*), and appears therefore, to a greater or lesser extent, artistically constructed and strongly

rhetorical in comparison with ordinary prose. The individual parts of a
sentence, the sentence or combination of sentences which end with a rhyme
and are called verses (*āyah*, plural *āyāt*) follow the rhyme scheme a–a, b–b,
c–c. The same rhyme is repeated not only once but as often as the author
pleases, e.g. a–a–a, b–b, c–c–c–c (*sūrah* ci). Short *sūrahs* sometimes have
only one rhyme. Ideally, as in the ealiest *sūrahs*, the rhymes follow in rapid
succession at fairly equal intervals; this also seems to have been the case
with the rhymes of the ancient Arabic soothsayers. (Presumably the
Prophet in fact adopted the alternation of short rhyme sequences from the
practice of these soothsayers; see the section on "the Qur'ān as literature".)
In the *sūrahs* from the latter years of Muḥammad's career the verses
lengthen increasingly, and the rhymes no longer have the effect of
rhetorically enlivening elements, but sound monotonous and often forced,
as though they have been added later.

　　As far as the rhymes themselves are concerned, they are handled with
great freedom. Short end-vowels are normally ignored (unlike the usage
in poetry, where they are lengthened). Thus in *sūrah* cxii, for example, we
find the words *aḥad(un)*, *al-ṣamad(u)*, *yūlad*, *aḥad(un)* all rhyming with each
other. But on occasion a final *a* is lengthened to *ā* because of the exigencies
of the rhyme (e.g. *sūrah* xxxiii.4 *al-sabīlā*), while in *sūrah* xc.6, for the same
reason, the reverse happens, and the accusative ending *an*, which should
be pronounced *ā* in pause, is omitted altogether (*lubbad* instead of *lubbadan*
or rather *lubbadā*). The consonants in the rhyme are generously selected.
Thus in *sūrah* cvi, the words *Quraysh(in)*, *wa-'l-ṣayf(i)* and *al-bayt(i)*, and
perhaps even *ḥawf(in)*, all rhyme with each other. In a few later *sūrahs* the
rhyme is reduced to *ā* with whatever consonant happens to be available
to complete the syllable (e.g. *sūrah* xxxviii *shiqāq(in)*, *manāṣ(in)*, *kadhdhāb(un)*,
'ujāb(un), *yurād(u)* etc.). The later *sūrahs* likewise make frequent use of the
rhyme on *ūn*, *īn*, partly combined with *īm*. It suggests itself almost
automatically because of the common use of verbal and nominal forms.
In *sūrah* cx the first verse ends without a rhyme at all, in *sūrah* xciv the
(identical) rhyming word of the two verses 5 and 6 is produced solely by
virtue of the fact that the first verse (5) is repeated word for word in verse
6 (though this may also occur for reasons of emphasis). In *sūrah* cix no
systematic rhyme scheme can be discerned (*al-kāfirūna*, *ta'budūna*, *a'budu*,
'abadtum, *a'budu*, *dīni*). This may be because here the exact articulation of
the thematic content was more important than acoustic harmony.

　　Frequently the opposite is the case: the demands of the rhyme scheme
determine the choice of word or construction. Let us consider one or two
particularly instructive examples. In *sūrah* xcviii.5 we find, because of the
rhyme, *dīn al-qayyimah* instead of the more usual *al-dīn al-qayyim* ("the right
religion"), in *sūrah* xcv.3 and xliv.51 *amīn* instead of the more usual *āmin*

(certain). *Ilyās* (Elias) becomes *Il Yāsīn* (xxxvii.130), *Saynā'* (Sinai) becomes *Sīnīn* (xcv.2). In *sūrah* liii.43f. the perfect forms are used instead of the imperfect: *wa-'annahu huwa aḍḥaka wa-abkā wa-annahu huwa amāta wa-aḥyā* ("and that He it is who makes [men] laugh and cry, and who causes [them] to die and makes [them] live"). A similar example occurs in verse 48 of the same *sūrah*. At the end of *sūrah* v.70, on the other hand, we find the imperfect form instead of the perfect: *farīqan kadhdhabū wa-farīqan yaqtulūna* ("they declared them partly to be liars and in part they slew them"). In *sūrah* lv the systematic rhyme on *ān* (we find *ām* seven times, *ār* twice, *ūn* once) in verses 17, 35 and 50, together with the refrain that begins with verse 13, decrees the use of the dual instead of the plural. In verse 17 of the same *sūrah*, for the same reason, *rabb al-mashriq wa-'l-maghrib* or *rabb al-mashāriq wa-'l-maghārib* ("the lord of east and west") becomes through the use of the dual *rabb al-mashriqayn wa-'l-maghribayn*. The expression *fa-'ntaṣir* ("help yourself") at the end of *sūrah* liv.10 is positively misleading. Again, form VIII of the verb *naṣara* is presumably chosen because of the rhyme. In fact, the transitive form I with the first-person suffix: *fa-'nṣurnī* or *fa-'nṣurni* ("help me") would be far more appropriate.

In a few *sūrahs* the same verse occurs again and again at the end of individual sections, retaining the same rhyme and thus forming a kind of refrain. The sections identified in this way as being similar are not, however, proper stanzas. In *sūrahs* liv and xxvi it is above all sections referring to earlier prophets and their incredulous contemporaries which close with this sort of verse. In *sūrah* lxxvii, in another context, the refrain *waylun yawma-'idhin li-'l-mukadhdhibīna* ("Woe on that day to those who declare [our message] to be a lie!") occurs ten times. *Sūrah* lv reveals the same refrain repeated as many as thirty-one times. It runs thus: *fa-bi-ayyi ālā'i rabbi-kumā tukadhdhibāni* ("which of the good deeds of your Lord do you want to deny?"), and through the use of the dual it fits in at least superficially with the rhyme scheme of this *sūrah*. At the beginning the refrain also suits the context, which praises the creative power of God. But by the end it is being repeated mechanically without any real connection, even after verses depicting the torment of sinners in Hell. The whole thing is an ill-judged attempt to endow an already spirited text with even more rhetorical artistry through the constant repetition of a refrain.

Forcefulness and dramatic impact

A large number of early pronouncements in the Qur'ān are introduced by strange oaths, or rather asseverations, a stylistic device which Muḥammad in all probability copied from the old Arab soothsayers. These declarations,

some of which are difficult to comprehend, are designed to prepare the way for the subsequent statement with rhetorical, if not magical, pathos. As an example let us take the opening of *sūrah* lxxxix. "By the dawn, by [a certain period of] ten nights, by the even and uneven [of number] and by the night when it runs its course! Is this not for the man of understanding a [powerful] oath?" The Prophet made extensive use of this device, but related it more and more closely to the content of his message, and eventually abandoned it altogether. The process whereby the incantations were gradually assimilated to Islamic doctrine cannot be demonstrated in detail here. But let us look at three more quotations to illustrate the development in question. Sūrah lxxvii.1ff.: "By those who are sent one after the other [in bands?] surge onwards, breach [?] and scatter [?) [everything] and exhort [men] to forgiveness or as a warning! Whatever threats are made against you will certainly come to pass." *Sūrah* lxxv.1–2: "No, in truth! I swear by the day of resurrection and by [each] one who [will then?] reproach himself bitterly." *Sūrah* xxxvi.2–4: "By the wise Qur'ān! Your are truly one of [God's] messengers and [your foot is] upon a straight path."

The formulation of the early pronouncements makes a forceful, even inspiring impression without any preceding asseveration, especially in the texts dealing with the impending apocalypse and the threat of judgement, one of the main themes of Muḥammad's message. Since the event as such is unimaginable, it is symbolized by its omens and attendant phenomena, and thus impressed upon the heat of the listener through an accumulation of terrifying occurrences. Often this happens through temporal clauses introduced by the particles *idhā*, "[one day] when" or *yawma* "on the day when". Sometimes the balancing clause is missing. To complete the sense we then have to add something like "then the fateful moment will have arrived" or "then you must be prepared for the worst". *Sūrah* lxxiv.1–5: "When the heavens are rent, hearken to the Lord and it is meet for them [to obey His will?], when the earth is spread out [and brought low], casts forth all [the dead] concealed within it, empties itself [completely], hearkens to the Lord and it is meet for it [to obey His will?]! *Sūrah* ci.1–4: "The castrophe! What does it signify? How can you know what it should signify? On the day when men will be as [singed] moths, scattered about [on the ground], and the mountains like tangled wool!"

Abbreviated temporal clauses with *idh* ("in those days past when") occur even more frequently. They are found in texts which point back in time and recall episodes from the story of salvation, or events which happened not long before. We can best understand them in their truncated form as exclamations, and should supply the missing clause in our own

minds with something like "that was indeed a noteworthy event". Two
examples referring to the battle of Badr can be found above in the section
on the subject matter of the Qur'ān (p. 194). We can add to these another
example from a section about the story of Abraham. *Sūrah* ii.127: "And
[in those days] when Abraham erected the foundations – those of the house
[the Ka'bah] – [he] and Ishmael [and prayed to God]: 'Lord! Accept this
our gift! You are He who hears and knows [all].'" (The preceding verses
124, 125 and 126 are similarly introduced by *wa-idh*.) In so far as the
abbreviated temporal clauses like the last example refer back to episodes
from the history of religion, rather than to familiar events in living
memory, they have become a purely stylistic device. They inform about
episodes from the dim and distant past by adopting a formulation which
purports to remind the listeners of something that, as a rule, they did not
know before. Only Muḥammad enjoys such knowledge. For his part he
believes that through revelation he has access to knowledge denied to
ordinary mortals. *Sūrah* ii.133: "Or were you [perhaps] witnesses, when
Jacob reached the point of death [so that you could give an authentic
account of it]? When he spoke to his sons 'Whom will you serve when
I am no longer with you?'?" *Sūrah* iii.2–4 (preceded by a section about
Zacharias and Mary): "And when the angels said: 'Mary! God has chosen
you and made you pure!... Be a humble servant of the Lord...!' This
[i.e. the story of Mary] is one of the stories which remain concealed [from
ordinary mortals]. We impart it to you [as revelation]. You were not of
their number [i.e. among Mary's companions] when they drew lots [to
decide] which one should attend Mary. And you were not of their number
when they quarrelled among themselves [over this]."

When reading the Qur'ān one must always bear in mind that the text
was originally meant to be spoken out loud and presupposes an audience.
As the mouthpiece of God Muḥammad is often bidden by the word *qul*
("speak") to proclaim something orally. The vocatives "O you believers!"
or "O you people!" sometimes allude to the listeners. Sometimes the
audience or the Prophet himself is directed by an introductory *a-ra'aytum*,
a-ra'ayta ("What do you think about this?") to adopt a critical attitude
to a particular subject. Everything is couched in a living, spoken language.
Only later was the Qur'ān turned into a book that silently bears its message
within itself and only when read aloud – and even then only to a limited
extent – makes a lively and spirited impression. In the narrative passages
direct speech is used freely and we sometimes even find statements and
replies. There are positively dramatic eschatological scenes with regular
dialogues, some between the damned in Hell and the blessed in Paradise,
others between the damned and their previous seducers. God, too, appears

in person at the Last Judgement and speaks, as does even Hell itself: "On the Day [of Judgement], when we shall say to Hell: 'Are you [now] full?', whereupon it will reply: 'Are there still more [for me to swallow up]?'" (*sūrah* l.30). When we read these passages (lxxiv.38–48; l.19–30; xxxvii.19–33, 50–60; xxxviii.59–64) it is not always clear who exactly is speaking or being addressed. We also find impersonal phrases before direct speech ("Then it is said, 'And they are told, the Angels of the Judgement are told'"). In the original oral delivery the identity of the speaker could easily be indicated by a change of voice or gesture.

Images, similes and parables

The language of the Qur'ān is rich in images, though not as extensively so as the *logia* of Jesus in the Gospels. Now and then the image has already become a metaphor. It then denotes directly the object or event which it originally served to paraphrase and elucidate. Thus, for instance, the performing of moral actions is indicated by *kasaba*, a word taken from commercial life and meaning in fact "acquire". Words from the sphere of nomadic life such as *ḍalla*, "lose one's way" and *hadā*, "lead along the right path" become expressions of religious conduct. Terms denoting the behaviour of birds such as *khafaḍa 'l-janāḥa* ("[the bird] folded up the wing [signifying compliance, gentleness]") are applied without demur to human beings (xv.88; xvii.24; xx.22; xxviii.32). But as a rule the image is used only for purposes of comparison and not identified with the object or event in question. In this context we must distinguish carefully between a mere simile and the aesthetically more ambitious parable, which has a didactic function. The distinction, it is true, is not always easy to preserve.

Similes are to be found, for example, in *sūrah* ci.4–5, where we read during a description of the apocalypse that men "will be as [singed] moths, scattered about [on the ground], and the mountains like tangled wool", or in *sūrah* lxxiv.50–1, where it is said of the infidels who shut their ears to the tidings of salvation that they turn away "like startled [wild] asses fleeing from a lion" (incidentally, the word for lion – "powerful" – is itself a metaphor). The following two examples can also be regarded as ordinary similes. *Sūrah* lxii.5: "Those who are laden with the Torah are like an ass carrying books." *Sūrah* vii.176, where we read of one who could not be won over to Islam: "He is like a dog. His tongue hangs out, you may beat him or leave him alone."

The parables proper are impressed upon men by God, so that they may perhaps take heed (xiv.25; xxxix.27; lix.21). The peculiar "light-verse", "God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth; the likeness of His light

is as a niche wherein is a lamp...", (xxiv.35), which undoubtedly belongs
to this category, has been the object of much speculation and debate. But
impressive too are the parables of the mirage and of the darkness in the
depths of the ocean (xxiv.39–40) that follow shortly afterwards. The
material of the other twenty or more Quranic parables is drawn from
various spheres: natural phenomena such as thunderstorms, gales, cold,
rain, flood, growth and drought; from agriculture and horticulture, from
the institution of slavery. Even a spider's web provides the starting point
for an edifying reflection (xxix.41): "God is not ashamed to coin any
parable, even one involving a gnat. Those who believe know that it is the
truth [and comes] from their Lord. Those, however, who do not believe
say 'What does God intend with such a parable?' He leads many astray
thereby. But He [also] thereby leads many along the right path. And only
the evil-doers are thus led astray" (ii.26). It is very often the case that the
short life of plants gives rise to edifying reflections. Sometimes, as in *sūrah*
xxxix.21, the emphasis is then placed on the natural phenomenon itself,
so that one cannot, strictly speaking, call it a parable any longer. In other
cases strange hybrids are formed. Thus, for instance, in *sūrah* iii.117: "That
which they [i.e. the infidels] expend in this life is like an ice-cold wind which
blew over the corn-fields of men who [with their sinful ways] had
transgressed against themselves, and destroyed it [i.e. the seed or corn].
God did not transgress against them, but they transgressed against
themselves." Here the parable merges into a reference to an earlier event
(somewhat like the story of the gardens of the Sabaeans in *sūrah*
xxxiv.15–17). A theme such as that of the transitoriness of earthly life can
be seen from many different points of view. It is, after all, inexhaustible.

Modifications of style

The Qur'ān was not written all at once. Certain of Muhammad's opponents
reproached him for this (xxv.32). But no book has ever materialized out
of the blue. And even if it did, what purpose would this serve? "If we
had sent down to you a scripture [written] on parchment [or papyrus?
qirṭās] and they [i.e. your people] were able to lay their hands upon it, those
who do not believe would [still] say: 'That is clearly witchcraft'" (vi.7).
In reality the individual revelations were proclaimed over a period of
twenty years or more and in separate sections (xvii.106), which were
presumably fairly short but were later for the most part combined into
longer chapters. Later still the chapters, called *sūrahs*, were collected into
a book, the Qur'ān. Thereby they were arranged on the purely mechanical
basis of diminishing length, though exceptions were made for the short

prayer-like prefatory *sūrah* and the two apotropaic concluding *sūrahs*. This is not the place to discuss in detail the composition of individual *sūrahs*. What we can justifiably discuss here, however, is the problem of changes in the style of individual chapters and at the same time the question of how far it is possible to date the chapters concerned on the basis of stylistic features.

When one tries to put a date to particular *sūrahs*, either in part or as a whole, one naturally pays due attention to references to historical events such as the battle of Badr, the Trench war or the expedition to al-Ḥudaybiyah. This has already been done by Muslim historians and commentators. But such allusions are in fact relatively rare. A more significant basis for the dating of the texts is provided by stylistic traits. Changes of style in the Qur'ān are accounted for by the mere fact that Muḥammad grew considerably older in the course of his activity as a prophet and accordingly moved away from a more dynamic to a calmer mode of expression. At the same time we must not fall into the trap of denying the Prophet all rhetorical sweep in his later years. The more measured tone of the later *sūrahs* is also determined by their purpose and content. Rules governing matters of family law, and especially the laws of inheritance, could scarcely be formulated in as spirited a fashion as the prophecies of impending doom with which Muḥammad had first addressed the citizens of Mecca. However that may be, Muslim scholars tried many centuries ago to divide up the *sūrahs* according to their subject matter into those dating from the Meccan period and those from the Medinan period, and to establish their chronological sequence. They also considered the possibility that small sections of a *sūrah* might date from a later period than the bulk of its verses. Utilizing these preliminary studies and taking into account stylistic features, the European orientalists Gustav Weil, Richard Bell and (in particular) Theodor Nöldeke[1] worked out a more precise chronological arrangement of the *sūrahs*, whereby they subdivided the Meccan *sūrahs* into three groups. The results of their research into modifications of style may be summed up as follows.

Of the three groups belonging to the Meccan period, the first and oldest group amounts, according to Nöldeke's reckoning, to forty-eight mostly short *sūrahs*, and is distinguished by its passionate and forceful style. "The diction is grand, noble and full of bold images, the rhetorical sweep is still tinged with poetry. The impassioned verve, which is not infrequently interrupted by simple but powerful, measured maxims and colourful descriptions, is reflected in the short verses, the whole manner of speaking is rhythmical and often of considerable, though completely artless euphony.

[1] See Weil, *Einleitung*; Bell, *Introduction*; Nöldeke, *Geschichte*.

The emotions and intuitions of the Prophet are sometimes expressed with a certain obscurity of meaning; the meaning indeed is intimated rather than fully articulated." (Thus Nöldeke's classic formulation of 1860.)

In the twenty-one *sūrahs* comprising each of the other two Meccan periods we witness a gradual transition to a more serene reflection. Examples from nature and history that are meant to serve the unbelievers as a warning and the faithful as edification and comfort are depicted in detail and arranged in sequence. The descriptions grow more expansive, the verses longer. The *sūrahs*, too, increase in length. The similarity between the accounts of various men of God from earlier times makes for a somewhat monotonous effect. The angry tone of the polemic against the incorrigible representatives of polytheism and their worldly philosophy makes itself clearly felt. All these characteristics develop slowly in the *sūrahs* of the second Meccan period, to emerge fully fledged, as it were, in those of the third period.

The twenty-four *sūrahs* originating in Medina are for the most part lengthy because they comprise many different individual sections. Here the new set of tasks confronting the Prophet after his migration makes relatively little impact on the style. The polemic rumbles on, though it acquires rather more specific forms vis-à-vis the Jews of Medina and the "hypocrites". References to past historical events are enlivened in the same way as the references to earlier religious situations, through the occasional use of abbreviated temporal clauses. As is to be expected, the requisite legal rulings and other instructions sound truly prosaic. The rhymes still customary at the end of the long verses are here redundant and give an impression of having been stuck on arbitrarily.

Linguistic defects and the doctrine of "i'jāz"

The language of the Qur'ān is often terse, sometimes even abrupt, and the line of thought not always a straight one. If we read it to grasp its meaning, or if we attempt to translate it, we must supply a fair number of things that are hidden between the lines. This need not be a disadvantage. The reader must concentrate and make an intellectual effort in order to comprehend. Thus, for instance, the conditional clauses "with dislocations" (H. Reckendorf) or "a logical break" (Renate Jacobi) compel the listener or reader each time to perform some mental acrobatics. An example can be found in xxii "If they [i.e. your sceptical contemporaries] accuse you of falsehood, the people of Noah, 'Ād and Thamūd before them [likewise] accused [their envoys] of falsehood" (verse 42). In order to spell out the logical connection between the subordinate and the main clause,

we must supply the following bridge: "If they accuse you of lying [that is not unusual, or: you need not be surprised]. [After all] the people of Noah, 'Ād and Thamūd [likewise] accused [their envoys] of falsehood." Now, Theodor Nöldeke in his *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg, 1910) discussed in detail the "stylistic and syntactical peculiarities of the language of the Koran" (pp. 5–23), thereby collecting together everything that had occurred to him in this respect during his protracted and intensive study of the Holy Book of the Muslims. Many things are simply recorded as a peculiarity of the Quranic style, some traits are also explained and approved, while others are criticized and described as clumsy, inappropriate, ugly, very unusual, very hard, rough, and so forth. Let us quote as an example a passage which is not adduced by Nöldeke, but which could also be called "rough", ii.217: *yas'alūnaka 'ani 'l-shahri 'l-ḥarāmi qitālin fīhi qul qitālun fīhi kabīrun wa-ṣaddun 'an sabīli 'llāhi wa-kufrun bihi wa-'l-masjidi 'l-ḥarāmi wa-ikhrāju ahlihi minhu akbaru 'inda 'llāhi*, "People ask you about the holy month [to wit, whether it is permitted] to fight during it. Tell them: to fight during it is a grave offence. But keeping [one's fellow men] from the path of God – and not believing in Him – and [keeping the faithful] from the holy shrine, and driving its inhabitants out, [all this] is a worse offence in God's eyes." Nöldeke sums up his impression of the style and syntax of the Qur'ān in the somewhat hyperbolic verdict: "Mohammed may have meditated long over the contents of his revelation before he gave it to the world, but he paid scant attention to its form." Can this sort of criticism be reconciled with doctrine of *i'jāz*, commonly held throughout Islam, according to which the Qur'ān is a true miracle not only in subject matter but also as a work of art? The answer must surely be "no".

This is not the place to study the dogma of *i'jāz* systematically or in its historical implications. It was the result of an argument which evolved in the light of xvii.88 and similar passages, but it did not come to the fore until the third/ninth century and was still subject to debate as late as the fifth/eleventh century. Furthermore, it is not intended here to widen still further the gulf between the Quranic scholarship of European orientalists and that of oriental Muslims. But the subject itself decrees that we should not merely ignore the discrepancy between the two schools of thought, but rather face up to it honestly. Muslims, to whom the Qur'ān is understandably a matter of far more intimate concern than to such as we, may rest assured that European orientalists who judge certain formulations in the Qur'ān perhaps rather too harshly are none the less fully prepared to acknowledge the Qur'ān as a whole to be a unique linguistic and artistic achievement.

THE QUR'ĀN AS LITERATURE

If one undertakes the rather questionable task of distinguishing between sacred and profane Arabic literature, the Qur'ān must at all events be reckoned among the former. But this does not take us very far. As a collection of texts that were proclaimed as divine revelation, the Qur'ān is unique even among Arabic religious writing and cannot be subsumed under any particular category. Taken as a whole it bears comparison only with non-Arabic works, with the scriptures of other religions: the Old and New Testaments (or to be more precise, the prophetic books and psalms of the Old Testament and the *logia* from the Gospels of the New), the Avesta, especially the Gathas, the Veda, the pronouncements and sermons of Buddha, etc. The Qur'ān can also be studied as a source book for the definition of the prophetic experience. The historian Eduard Meyer once adduced Muḥammad and the Qur'ān in a monograph study of the founder of the Mormon sect, Joseph Smith. All this, however, belongs to the sphere of comparative religion. In the context of a history of Arabic literature we must confine ourselves to ascertaining how far traces of rhetorical forms and didactic subjects from the pre-Quranic period can be detected in the Qur'ān itself, whether any attempts were made to imitate it, and what influence the Qur'ān had in general on the rise and development of Arabic literature. Finally, mention will also be made of the bitter disputes over the Qur'ān in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries.

The idiom of ancient Arabic soothsayers

As has been stated, the Qur'ān is a unique work within Arabic religious literature. It is the only collection of revelatory texts binding upon all Muslims, far more important than any other Arabic works. As soon as one gets down to details, however, one sees that these texts are not completely original creations, but rather display certain elements dating from the pre-Islamic period. To that extent the Qur'ān, at least in part, has its place in a wider literary tradition. The elements involved spring from two different sources, the sphere of ancient Arab paganism and the Judeo-Christian heritage. They are both assimilated and sublimated in the Qur'ān, but remain more or less discernible to the historian.

As far as the old pagan world is concerned, the primary influences are the idiom and conceptions of the soothsayers (*kāhin*, plural *kuhhān*). This is attested in the peculiar form of oath which introduces some of the early sayings. An example has been quoted above (p. 199) in the section on the language and style of the Qur'ān. The wording of these oaths is often

difficult, if not impossible, to understand, and their only connection with the text which follows is that they prepare the ground for it with rhetorical or even magical pathos. It appears that this stylistic device was customary among the ancient soothsayers. Muḥammad borrowed it from them and pressed it into the service of his own message. It is probable that the use of rhyming prose with the alternation of short series of rhymes so characteristic of the earliest *sūrahs* also derives from the practice of the soothsayers. This was, after all, why his people declared him to be a *kāhin*. If we can lend credence to a *ḥadīth* which Ibn Saʻd traces back to ʻUrwah b. al-Zubayr in its earliest form, Muḥammad himself once thought that he might be a soothsayer. But he rightly shook off this suspicion and rejected the reproaches of his opponents. His task, unlike that of a *kāhin*, was not to comment on issues of the moment and a passing situation. He felt himself called upon to fulfil a redemptory purpose, to direct his people along the path of the true faith. For the same reason he refused to be identified with poets "who say one thing and do another" (xxvi.226). He derived his higher knowledge not from a jinn or evil spirit, as was presumed to be the case with soothsayers and poets, but – through the mediation of the Holy Spirit or an Angel – from God Himself, the sole creator and preserver of the world. The clearer he became about this, the less prominent became the echoes of the soothsayers' rhetoric in the wording of his pronouncements. In the *sūrahs* of the second Meccan period the archaic and obscure oaths are superseded by short asseverations alluding to his own prophetic mission and to the scripture which it is incumbent upon him to transmit. Hence "By the clear Book!" (xliii.1); "By the glorious Qur'ān!" (l.1); "By the wise Qur'ān!" (xxxiii.1); "By the Qur'ān, containing the Remembrance!" (xxxviii.1). At the same time, such solemn declarations are now disappearing altogether. Their place is taken by sober statements of fact, for example: "These are the verses of the scripture and of a clear Qur'ān" (xv). And here the matter rests, both in the *sūrahs* of the third Meccan period and in those of the Medinan period. Similarly, the rhetorical sweep of the rhyming prose with its short sections is confined to the early pronouncements. In time the rhymes drift further and further apart and end up as little more than the final signatures of individual sentence periods.

Narrative material from the Bible, the Haggadah and apocryphal sources

The elements which Muḥammad borrowed from the Judeo-Christian tradition are recognizable less by their form than by their subject matter. They are mostly stories of biblical, Haggaditic and apocryphal origin

which he was able to integrate into his message because of their edifying
and instructive character. Particular sources are difficult to determine. Only
two passages are readily identifiable, since they are designated as quotations.
"We wrote in the psalter in conjunction with the warning [?] that my
righteous servants shall inherit the earth" (xxi.105; Psalm 37.29). "We
prescribed to them [i.e. the Israelites] therein [i.e. in the Torah]: life for
life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wounds
[likewise. In all cases] retaliation [must be exacted]..." (v.45); Exodus
21.23–5; Leviticus 24.17–20; Deuteronomy 19.21). Biblical stories from
the Old Testament, among them the detailed story of Joseph and his
brothers (xii) are in part expanded by additions from sources outside the
Bible. The stories of the childhood of Mary, of the Annunciation and the
birth of Jesus go back to apocryphal childhood-gospels. Some of the
parables in the Qur'ān are derived from parables in the New Testament.
However, many a detail is changed beyond recognition. The resulting
problem for the literary historian has many aspects to it. Of course,
scholars have tried in one case or another to establish the original source
and to elucidate whether the material became known to the Prophet via
Jewish or Christian intermediaries. But in identifying the sources, one
merely solves the problem of where the borrowing originated.

What would be interesting would be to learn more about the route taken
by these texts before they acquired their final formulation in the Qur'ān.
Investigations into individual Quranic words and concepts, as carried out
for instance by Thomas O'Shaughnessy, may yield further insight on this
point. But it is inevitable that much will remain unexplained, particularly
since one cannot rely on finding any answers by strictly logical analyses
and combinations of the text. Whoever Muḥammad's authorities may have
been, one thing is certain: the material was translated into Arabic from
another language. This translation was in all probability carried out in an
oral form and during Muḥammad's lifetime, perhaps especially for him.
This is what the following passages suggest. "And they say: "That [i.e.
the message of the Qur'ān] is nothing but a swindle which he has
concocted and in which other people have helped him." "But they commit
a sin [with such statements] and [are guilty of] mendacity. And they say:
'[They are] the writings of earlier [generations] which he has copied down.
They are dictated to him at sunrise and at sunset" (xxv.4–5). "What
should the admonition signify to them, when a clear messenger came to
them, whereupon they turned away from him and said, 'Things are
imparted to him [by another authority which he then proclaims as
revelation] and he is possessed?'" (xiv.14–15). "And previously [i.e.
before the Qur'ān was inspired in you] you had read no scripture and had

not copied anything down with your hand..." (xxix.48). Muḥammad was fully aware that the bone of contention was his use of texts originally written in a foreign language. That he should have proclaimed their subject matter in the Qur'ān in Arabic constituted to his mind an original creation inspired by revelation: "We know that they say: 'A man teaches him [what he announces as divine revelation]! [Yet] the language of him to whom they allude is not Arabic. This on the contrary is clear Arabic tongue'" (xvi.103) – a psychologically fascinating process of assimilation.

The difference between the original source and the Quranic version is often great. We must not simply dismiss this as a distortion and dilution of the basic text. The Prophet was not concerned to translate a foreign text into Arabic as it stood. Rather he exploited it in the interests of the religious mission to which he personally was committed. The events of a biblical story are sometimes only alluded to briefly in the Qur'ān, or recalled to mind with an abbreviated temporal clause as though they were common knowledge (see the section on the language and style of the Qur'ān). From a criticism which the infidels often level at Muḥammad in the Qur'ān, we might perhaps deduce that the Prophet could indeed assume the subject matter of his prophetic utterances to be familiar. The criticism runs as follows: "Those are the writings [or stories, or fantasies] of the earlier [generations] (asāṭīr al-awwalīn)." In the passage from xxv.4–5 cited above it is even claimed that Muḥammad copied the asāṭīr al-awwalīn and that they were dictated to him in the morning and in the evening. Nevertheless, we should do well to tread carefully in the light of the continuing debate about the meaning of the phrase asāṭīr al-awwalīn. It is always used pejoratively, not with the intention of objectively tracing Muḥammad's prophecy back to some written or oral source. We might paraphrase it thus: "People may well have told such tales long ago. For us nowadays they have no significance." And if the Prophet introduces a biblical story with an abbreviated temporal clause, this does not mean that he was simply recounting familiar material, but rather that his statements are intended to be understood and taken to heart in the context of an age-old design for the redemption of mankind.

The legend of the Seven Sleepers, the Alexander Romance and proverbs

In addition to the narrative material drawn from biblical, Haggaditic and apocryphal sources, the Prophet was also conversant to a limited extent with other material from the largely Christianized cultures bordering on Arabia: the so-called legend of the Seven Sleepers, and two excerpts from the widely known Alexander Romance. This supplementary material all

left its literary precipitate in *sūrah* xviii: the legend in verses 9–26, the two parts of the romance in verses 60–4 and 83–98. It is fragmentary, unharmonious in composition and unclear in several details.

The story of the "Men of the Cave" (*Aṣḥāb al-Kahf*, as the Seven Sleepers are called in the Qur'ān) goes back to the legend of the seven young Christians who escaped the persecutions of the Emperor Decius (A.D. 249–51) by seeking refuge in a cave, where they fell into a wondrously protracted sleep. In the Qur'ān the length of their sleep is given as 309 years. In the discussion about the number of sleepers involved their dog is included for some strange reason. The details of the building which was supposed to have been erected later over the sleepers' heads are difficult to understand. The two excerpts from the Alexander Romance are separated by an intervening story. The first section (verses 60–4) is based on the story of Alexander's quest for the spring of life. Here, strange to say, it is applied to Moses. The second section (verses 83–98) tells of the expedition of Alexander (called "he with the two horns", *Dhū 'l-Qarnayn*) that ends with the construction of a protective wall against the nations of Gog and Magog. The intervening story (verses 65–82), a theodicy legend (according to H. Schwarzbaum), relates the apparently absurd and unjust actions of a devout man in the company of Moses, actions which subsequently turn out to be meaningful and just. The complicated questions of literary history and of the history of particular motifs that are raised by the Quranic version of these stories cannot be pursued here. But three conclusions can be drawn. First, Muḥammad did not hesitate to include the fragments of the Seven Sleepers legend or the Alexander Romance in his revelatory scriptures even though they were not of biblical origin. Secondly, these borrowings from contemporary (Jewish and) Christian literature became part and parcel of Arabic–Islamic literature precisely because they had been taken over into the Qur'ān, and they lived on in the Arabic literary tradition. Thirdly, Muḥammad utilized stories only from Jewish and Christian sources, in contrast to his fellow citizen al-Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith, who according to Ibn Isḥāq related stories about the ancient Persian kings to the people of Mecca and thereby entered into competition with the Prophet and his legends of divine retribution.

The narrative material from biblical and other sources which is used in the Qur'ān was transmitted to the Prophet by "People of the Book". Similarly, a number of shorter texts, belonging to the literary genre known as "gnomes", was probably brought to Muḥammad's attention via Jewish or Christian intermediaries. At first sight, admittedly, it looks as if his borrowings were taken from the ancient Arab world. In order to clarify this point we must go back somewhat further than the relatively small space occupied by these texts seems to warrant.

Evidence of the adoption of the old proverbial wisdom is found in *sūrah* xxxi. In verse 12 it is reported that God once "gave wisdom" to Luqmān. And the following verses reproduce utterances which Luqmān commended to his son. They are introduced by the vocative "My son!" (*yā bunayya*), as is customary in works of oracular literature from the pre-Quranic period (for instance, in the Proverbs of Solomon and in the proverbs of Aḥīqār, who is called a "wise man" in the papyri of Elephantine as early as the fifth century B.C.). Examples of proverbs from the Qur'ān are quoted below (p. 227) at the end of the section on the Qur'ān as a source of doctrine, law and ethics. The thorny problem of the identity of the ancient Arab magus Luqmān and of his relationship with Aḥīqār need not trouble us here. We should, however, consider briefly the importance attached to wisdom (*ḥikmah*) throughout the Qur'ān. This far transcends those of Luqmān's sayings which are handed down in xxxi.

For wisdom is mentioned elsewhere, not just in connection with Luqmān. In xvii.39 we find at the end of a long series of admonitions: "This is [a proportion] of the wisdom which your Lord has imparted to you." If one looks more closely, one realizes that some of the preceding exhortations (and perhaps other imperatives of the second person singular as well?) are not addressed to Muḥammad personally, but rather placed in his mouth as oracular utterances to be proclaimed to his fellow men. In a whole number of places the word "wisdom" is explicitly associated with the scripture (*al-kitāb wa-'l-ḥikmah*). The recipients of these two divine gifts are the tribe of Abraham (iv.54), Jesus (iii.48; v.110 – both times expanded to include the Torah and the Gospel), the prophets (iii.81) and Muḥammad himself (iv.113; ii.129; ii.151; iii.164; lxii.2). The Prophet is directed to recite the verses (literally: the signs) of God to his contemporaries and teach them the Scripture and wisdom, admonishing them thereby (thus ii.231). He must lead men along the way of the Lord "with wisdom and hearty exhortation" xvi.125). His women are summoned to take note of which of God's verses and which elements of His wisdom are recited in their house (xxxiii.34). We must be wary of overinterpreting these formulations. But we can at least conclude from this that Muḥammad saw an important part of his prophetic activity to lie in transmitting wisdom to his people. Moreover, since he names "the tribe of Abraham", Jesus and the prophets as other recipients of this divine gift, we may assume that he came to know the oracular sayings which he took over from a much earlier age in conjunction with the traditional material of the "People of the Book". Proverbs had, after all, long since become an integral part of the canonical and apocryphal writings of the Jews and Christians: hence the Proverbs of Solomon, the sayings of Jesus, the son of Sirach, and the Book of Tobit (Chapter 4).

Imitations of the Qur'ān?[2]

The Qur'ān makes itself out to be a book of revelation which can have
no equal, even if men and jinn were to join forces in an attempt to produce
something comparable (xvii.88). Muḥammad's opponents could not write
ten *sūrahs* (xi.13) or even one (x.38; ii.23) that might contend with it. Upon
this idea is based the doctrine of *i'jāz*, the inimitability of the Qur'ān (see
pp. 204–6 above.) On the other hand these very same opponents are made
to assert: "If we so desired, we could deliver ourselves of its equal"
(viii.31). And subsequently we learn of isolated and unsuccessful attempts
to imitate the Qur'ān. Is there any tangible evidence on this score?

    We have revelatory pronouncements attributed to the "false prophet"
Musaylimah who allegedly wished to share dominion over Arabia with
Muḥammad and who was killed fighting against Khālid b. al-Walīd in 633,
after Muḥammad's death. The form of these sayings corresponds to a large
extent with that of the earliest *sūrahs*, and they are in part prefaced by
strange oaths, just like the *sūrahs*. It is however questionable whether
Musaylimah was in fact the source of any of these sayings. Perhaps they
were all invented at a later date and ascribed to him in an attempt to stamp
him as a clumsy imitator of Muḥammad. One of the sayings is modelled in
a particularly obvious fashion on the mode of expression of the Qur'ān.
It runs: "The elephant. What is the elephant? And who shall tell you what
is the elephant? He has a ropy tail, and a long trunk. This is a [mere] trifle
of our Lord's [multiple] creations." (*al-fīl mā 'l-fīl wa-mā adrāka mā 'l-fīl
lah dhanabun wathīl wa-mishfarun (khurṭūmun) ṭawīl inna dhālika min khalqi
rabbinā la-qalīl*), cf. lxix.1–3; ci.1–3.

    Ibn al-Muqaffa', the prominent Arabic prose writer of Iranian descent
who was cruelly put to death in 139/756, is said to have tried to imitate
the Qur'ān at the behest of a group of heretics, but he had to abandon
this endeavour because it proved too difficult. This is of course a legend.
But Ibn al-Muqaffa' did compose a polemic in which he took issue with
Islam, and especially with the Qur'ān from a Manichaean standpoint.
Fragments of this polemic have come down to us in a refutation written
by the Zaydī Imām, al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm (d. 246/860). The first four words
of this polemic – and they alone – are obviously modelled on the first four
words of the Qur'ān. They read: "In the name of the compassionate and
merciful light" (*bi-smi 'l-nūri 'l-raḥmāni 'l-raḥīm*) – a Manichaean variation
of the familiar Islamic *basmalah* which must strike any Muslim as
blasphemy.

    It was also reported of a sceptic and writer of the fifth/eleventh century,

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[2] On this subject and on the Qur'ān's influence on later literature, see further below, pp. 261–70.

the blind Abū 'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī who died in 449/1057, that he tried to produce an imitation of the Qur'ān. The accusation refers to his compendious work *al-Fuṣūl wa-'l-ghāyāt*, only the first seventh of which has survived, a supreme example of the art of poetry and rhyme that was based on the classical Arabic literary language, and of which the author was a master. It is written in elaborate rhyming prose, and individual sections of stanzas occasionally open with archaic oaths such as: "I swear by him who created horses and the yellowish-white [camels] who lope along in al-Ruḥayl..." (*uqsimu bi-khāliqi 'l-khayl, wa-'l-'īsi 'l-wājifāti bi-'l-ruḥayl...*). These incantations are reminiscent of early Quranic texts (e.g. lxxv.1–2) which in turn go back to ancient Arab oracles (see above); presumably they are indeed modelled on the Quranic texts. But this is not to say that al-Ma'arrī intended his work as a whole to be an imitation of the Qur'ān, let alone to surpass it. Furthermore, by the time al-Ma'arrī was writing, rhyming prose had long since been accepted as a stylistic device characteristic of elevated language, so that it could be employed without second thoughts. If we look beyond the elaborate torrent of words and try to establish the theme of the work, the subject matter amounts to little more than songs of praise to God and religious and ethical admonitions (with a pessimistic undercurrent). This is borne out also by the sub-title of the work: *Fī tamjīd Allāh wa-'l-mawā'iẓ*. ("On the glorification of God, and spiritual exhortations").

A work from the middle of the nineteenth century deserves at least a mention as a kind of imitation of the Qur'ān – namely the Arabic *Bayān* of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad from Shīrāz, known as Bāb, the founder of the Bābī sect (which survives to this day in the Bahā'ī sect). Bāb felt that he had been called upon to replace Muḥammad as the Prophet and to replace the outmoded Islam with a new religion. In the *Bayān* he summed up his doctrine. The mode of expression is prosaic, the arrangement of the material unsystematic despite the division into eleven units (*wāḥid*) of nineteen chapters (*bāb*) each. The work was designed not to outdo the Qur'ān in rhetorical power but to supersede it as a sober statement of the new faith. Yet it accords with the Qur'ān in one respect – that the revelations derive from God Himself. Moreover, there are several points, both in the subject matter and in the formulation, which are not only inspired by the Qur'ān but modelled on it, consciously or unconsciously. We cannot study this in detail here.

The Qur'ān and the development of Arabic literature

In due course the Qur'ān became the object of an extensive secondary literature. Exegetics and philologists strove to elucidate difficult passages.

The material was collected more or less systematically: in special sections of the *Ḥadīth* works of Bukhārī and Tirmidhī, in the books *Ta'wīl mushkil al-Qur'ān* and *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān* by Ibn Qutaybah, and in full-scale commentaries by Mujāhid, Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī, Rāzī and others. Special studies were devoted to the legal principles enshrined in the Qur'ān (*aḥkām al-Qur'ān*). We do not intend to discuss these here. It is instructive, however, to reflect on the general significance of the Qur'ān for the emergence and development of Arabic literature. We may surmise at the outset that, just as the Arabs owed their nationhood and their world-historical importance to Islam, so too the Arabic tongue owed its literary development to the Qur'ān.

No one, of course, will dispute that there were poems in Arabic before the Qur'ān. This can be seen even from Muḥammad's polemic against the poets in *sūrah* xxvi. The theory that the ostensibly ancient Arabic poems were constructed at a later date on the basis of the allusions in the Qur'ān is untenable. But the process of recording the old Arabic poetry in a written form had, it is claimed, ground to a halt, if indeed it had ever got seriously under way, and the products of this poetry had been forgotten after a few generations. It was left to the Qur'ān as the Holy Scripture revealed to the Arabs in their own language to provide the impetus for the development of an Arabic literary language. The already existing alphabet, taken over from Nabataean, was employed to reproduce the Arabic dialect of Mecca in which the Qur'ān had been proclaimed, and it ossified with its consonantal skeleton in these early stages of development. An assimilation to the common Arabic poetic and high language, which then became obligatory for the reading of the Qur'ān as well, did not take place until later through the insertion of additional characters, particularly the *hamz*. The customary characters of classical and modern Arabic accordingly still betray traces of the time when the Qur'ān was first written down in Mecca.

Of greater importance, however, is the nature of what was recorded and handed down to posterity with the aid of the Arabic script that had been forged in this manner. In the first place we must mention the achievements of Arab philology. Soon after Muḥammad's death scholars felt a need to elucidate obscure words and formulations in the Qur'ān. For this purpose examples were required from linguistic sources other than the Qur'ān itself, and these could most readily be found in the older Arabic poetry which had hitherto remained a mainly oral tradition. This evidence in turn provided the material for the dictionaries and grammars of later philologists. Of course an immediate interest in the poems themselves was a factor in all this. But the real impetus came from the exegesis of the Qur'ān.

In the theological (the word is used in its broadest sense) as in the secular disciplines the Muslims employed Arabic almost exclusively from the start. (Not until centuries later was Persian or Turkish used too, particularly in historical writing.) The principal reason for this was that the Islamic empire was a creation of the Arab nation. They held sole sway in the crucial first decades. In time they secured an appropriate status for their language even in the conquered lands. They were able to achieve this all the more easily since the scripture of Islam, which they championed and propagated, was written in this same language. All those who were converted to the new religion were compelled as a matter of principle to learn at least enough Arabic to be able to recite in the original those Quranic texts which were required in their public worship. Translations of Quranic texts, or of the whole Qur'ān, were forbidden, or only tolerated with reservation, even until quite recently. Thus the Qur'ān contributed at least indirectly to the spread of the Arabic language. For many centuries Arabic remained the language of scholarship throughout the Islamic world. Countless Arabic books were penned by Persian, Turkish and other non-Arab authors. In the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries a fair number of medical, scientific and philosophical works, among them some which had originally been written in Greek, were translated from Arabic, the hallowed language of Muslim scholarship, into Latin, the *lingua franca* of Christendom.

Disputes surrounding the Qur'ān

The challenge to Muḥammad's opponents to produce at least ten *sūrahs* (xvii.88), or even one sole chapter, that would rival his achievement (x.38; ii.23) was not meant seriously but as a rhetorical device. They could not take up this challenge (*taḥaddī*) because they were no match for the Prophet in the power and beauty of his language. This at any rate was how later commentators saw the matter. The doctrine of *i'jāz*, the inimitability of the Qur'ān, was the logical consequence of this view. Nevertheless the issuing of this challenge made it sound conceivable that those at whom it was directed could in fact have expressed themselves in a similar manner, because they had the same Arabic language at their disposal as Muḥammad himself. What they lacked – according to Muslim opinion – was the ultimate mastery over this common linguistic instrument.

In the context of another argument, this time an overtly theological one, the Qur'ān as a whole was subsequently elevated to a level transcending the merely human. This was in the speculation about the attributes of God. Among the many characteristics attributed to God in the Qur'ān is the attribute of speech (*kalām*). In *sūrah* ix.6 we read: "If one of the heathen

implores you for protection, then grant him protection, that he may hear
the word of God [literally, the speech of God, *kalām Allāh*]". It was
tempting to identify this phrase with the Qur'ān itself. But there were
differences of opinion among theologians about the relationship between
the divine attributes and God as the bearer of these attributes. The
precursors of the orthodox theologians of a later period, among whom
figured prominently the founder of the Ḥanbalī school of law, Aḥmad b.
Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), considered it self-evident that these attributes reach
back into eternity with and in God, since God would not have been perfect
from all eternity if His attributes had only been acquired in course of time.
The Mu'tazilites (from the end of the second/eighth century) took the
contrary view that the attributes could not stretch back into eternity like
God Himself, since in that case the uniqueness of God (*tawḥīd*) – an axiom
by which they set particular store – would no longer be a given fact.
Applied to the Qur'ān as the attribute of *kalām*, this meant that according
to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his supporters it had always existed from all
eternity; while in the opinion of the Mu'tazilites it had been added in due
course, in other words, created. The dispute about whether the Qur'ān
was or was not a created work reached its climax in the first half of the
third/ninth century. After the Mu'tazilite theory had acquired the status
of established dogma and been propagated for many years by inquisitorial
methods, the counter-thesis eventually won the day and became the
orthodox doctrine. It has remained fundamentally valid to this day.

   The philosophical problems that arose out of the doctrine of the
"non-createdness" of the Qur'ān, and still posed grave difficulties for a
theologian such as Bāqillānī (d. 404/1013), need not be discussed here. But
we must mention a corollary of this doctrine whose effects continue to
make themselves felt to this day. Since Muslims believe the Qur'ān to have
been verbally inspired by God and to have always existed in Heaven in
its original, ideal form (this is how the passages in iii.7, xiii.39 and xliii.4
are interpreted), the Qur'ān is not really a literary work at all, and cannot
therefore be an object of study by literary historians. The Egyptian
Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalaf Allāh had personal experience of this when
in 1947 he submitted a dissertation on the subject "The narrative art of
the Koran" (*al-Fann al-qaṣaṣī fī 'l-qur'ān al-karīm*) to the then Fu'ād
University in Cairo (cf. below, p. 267). Although he explicitly
acknowledged the doctrine of *i'jāz* and accepted the orthodox view that
God was the sole author of the Qur'ān, his attempt to link the scattered
references to earlier events in the story of salvation with the relevant
political situation in Muḥammad's career, and thus to make them compre-
hensible in psychological terms, aroused energetic public opposition,

particularly among the strongly traditionalist theologians. In the opinion of a group of Azhar scholars the standpoint he had adopted implied that "the Qur'ān is the word of Muḥammad, the highly gifted narrator, not the word of God, transcending all analogy and all contingency". Khalaf Allāh had to resign from his post as a tutor at the University and become a school teacher instead.

THE QUR'ĀN AS A SOURCE OF RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE, LAW AND ETHICS

The influence which the Qur'ān exerted on the religious and cultural community of the Muslims throughout the Middle Ages, and which it continues to exert to the present day, is immeasurable. Short excerpts that include the opening *sūrah* (*al-Fātiḥah*) and a few other verses are repeated daily in the original Arabic by all the faithful wherever they may be as they perform the prescribed prayer ritual. Hundreds of thousands have learnt to read and write with the aid of the Qur'ān. Countless others have learnt it by heart. It is still considered a work of piety to recite the whole book, or to have it recited, observing all the rules of the art – for example, during the month of Ramaḍān. In Muslim scholarship familiarity with the text is presupposed to such an extent that literal quotations from the Qur'ān are often cited in an extremely abbreviated form. Quotations are frequently found in works of many different disciplines, and also in epigraphics, especially in inscriptions in mosques and other religious buildings, and on miniatures. Sayings from the Qur'ān are also very popular and common in everyday life. Thus, to quote just one example, one often uses as an expression of condolence *sūrah* ii.156: "We belong to God, and to Him we must return." As proof that terms of Quranic origin are utilized – indeed, occasionally revived – not only in conservative theological circles but also among modern political groups even in our own day, we may note that the name of the well-known Palestinian guerilla organization "al-Fatah" (more correctly "al-Fatḥ") goes back to the Quranic *fatḥ* which originally meant "[a divine] decision [bringing success to the faithful]" and appears to have taken on the sense of "conquest" only after the capture of Mecca at the beginning of A.D. 630. The choice of *al-Fatḥ* as a name might have been occasioned by *sūrah* lxi.13 in particular: "Help from God and a swift [-ly ensuing and successful] decision" (*naṣrun mina 'llāhi wa-fatḥun qarībun*).

But let us return to the Qur'ān itself. If we leave aside the fact – or rather take it for granted – that the Qur'ān has always been a source of edification for the faithful and has remained one to the present day, we can ascertain

that its contents acquired historical importance in two or three different respects: as a source of Islamic religious doctrine, of Islamic law and Islamic ethics. ("Ethics" is used in the broadest sense of the word – the Qur'ān contains a whole series of precepts about good manners.)

Doctrine; specific injunctions

In two places in the Qur'ān the core of the Islamic faith is condensed into a kind of creed. *Sūrah* iv.136: "O you faithful ones! Believe in God and His messenger and the Scripture which He handed down to His messenger and the Scripture which He [had already] handed down in earlier times. Whoever does not believe in God, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers and the Day of Judgement has [thereby] strayed far [from the way of the Lord]." *Sūrah* ii.285: "[God's] messenger believes in that which was handed down to him by his Lord [as revelation], [as do] the faithful. All believe in God, His angels, His scriptures and His messengers..." In a third passage (ii.177) some of the most important duties are enumerated: "Piety does not consist in turning your face towards east or west [in prayer]. It consists rather in believing in God, the Day of Judgement, the Angels, the Scripture and the prophets, and in giving away your money – however dear it may be to you – to your kinsfolk, the orphans, the poor, the traveller, the beggars and for [buying the freedom of] slaves, and in saying your prayers and in the giving of alms. And [piety is shown by] those who, when they have entered into an obligation, meet it in full and are patient in distress and hardship and in times of war. They [alone] are true and God-fearing." Here are the beginnings of a definition of the Islamic faith. However, the Qur'ān contains no more of a systematic religious doctrine than it does of a compendium of Islamic law. The individual utterances proclaimed by Muḥammad as revelations are arranged arbitrarily, and issue in each case from a given concrete situation. The full Islamic doctrine and Islamic law were not formulated until many decades after Muḥammad's death. The Qur'ān was, of course, of prime importance among the sources utilized in this process of systematization.

The most prominent themes of Muḥammad's message to his heathen people – belief in one God and in the resurrection of the dead, in the Day of Judgement and reward or punishment in the life hereafter – have already been duly examined in the section on the subject matter of the Qur'ān (pp. 186–96) and there viewed in their proper perspective. The same applies to the idea of a Holy Scripture, written in Arabic, which Muḥammad felt himself called upon to spread abroad as an envoy of the Lord. These and other principles of the faith outlined in the Qur'ān

naturally remained valid even after the Prophet's death. They continued to form the foundation of Islamic religion. The doctrine of the unity of God (*tawḥīd*) subsequently acquired a fresh importance when the Muʿtazilites, the precursors and founders of Islamic theology, drew the ultimate consequences from it in their struggle against the champions of a dualistic world-view towards the end of the second/eighth century and early in the third/ninth. In time, however, the emphasis shifted. The elements that had become an integral and self-evident part of the whole Muslim outlook ceased to be of pressing importance. Instead, hitherto unresolved questions of detail became the focus of attention. Men tried to elucidate these matters through theological speculation, and naturally consulted the Qur'ān to this end. This can be illustrated by two examples. (A further example concerning the debate about the attributes of God has already been mentioned, pp. 215–16 above, in connection with the disputes surrounding the Qur'ān.) An additional important result of these disputes may be briefly noted here. Muḥammad recedes in theological significance in comparison with the Qur'ān itself; although he is named in the creed alongside God, he is referred to as His envoy, that is, as the proclaimer of the divine message. Not the Prophet but the message he brings, the Qur'ān, is – to use an expression from Christian theology – of one substance with God.

Theological conclusions

In the twelve years during which Muḥammad strove to persuade his fellow citizens in Mecca to believe in one God and in the life hereafter, only a minority heeded his message. The majority rejected it. The Prophet was deeply affected by this failure, yet had no choice but to come to terms with it. And since he saw God's will in all things, he assumed that the incomprehensible refusal of so many people to join him was also part of God's design. This can be seen in many passages in the Qur'ān. They all reveal the same purport. The infidels are afflicted by blindness, God has sealed their ears and their hearts. It is impossible for the Prophet to lead them out of the error of their ways on to the right path. For God leads astray and leads aright whomsoever He wills. Directly after this assertion there sometimes follows the remark that those who cannot find their way to the true faith because they have been led astray will one day be called to account and punished for their misconduct. Thus, for instance, *sūrah* ii.6–7: "To those who do not believe, it matters little whether you admonish them or not. They do not believe [one way or the other]. God has sealed their hearts and their ears, and their faces are veiled. They must expect dire punishment [one day]."

Thereby the doctrine of predestination was intimated, but not yet brought to the fore with all its attendant problems. It was left for the generations after Muhammad's death to reflect upon it at greater length and to seek a solution. To begin with, opinions were utterly divided. Those who believed in the predetermination of human action based their arguments on a whole series of passages where the Qur'ān makes statements of this kind and adduced other, more explicit material from the *Hadīth*. Those who believed in the freedom of the will were able to produce passages of a different tenor for their purpose, above all putting forward the view (later raised to a cardinal principle by the Mu'tazilites) that God was a champion of justice, and could therefore never condemn anyone who was not responsible for his actions in this life. In orthodox theology the determinist viewpoint finally prevailed, but in a less rigorous form. According to this, God does determine men's actions, but men make these actions their own each time they perform them and thus become personally responsible for them. The term for this "appropriation", *kasb* or *iktisāb*, literally "acquisition", was taken from the vocabulary of the Qur'ān. In the Qur'ān human conduct, insofar as it occurs *sub specie aeternitatis*, is often described as *kasb*. And in *sūrah* ii.286 we are told: "[One day] what each man has done [literally: acquired, in the way of good deeds on earth] will stand him in good stead and [each man will have] to answer for what [evil deeds] he has committed [acquired]."

The second example of a subsequent theological discussion concerns the subject "faith and works". The Qur'ān itself draws a distinction between true faith and a merely superficial conversion to Islam (xlix.14). It is stressed in diverse formulations that faith must be accompanied by conduct pleasing to God. There are moreover frequent references to "transgressors" (*fāsiqūn*). These are quite simply identified with unbelievers (e.g. xxxii.18). Furthermore, the concept of "grievous sins" (*kabā'ir*) emerges (iv.31; xlii.37; liii.32). But the various statements and evaluations are not yet arranged in a systematic pattern. This can be seen from a comparison of the two passages iv.31 and iv.48, 116. One offers the prospect of forgiveness for less serious misdeeds and an honourable welcome into Paradise, provided that there is a general avoidance of grievous sins. The other declares allegiance to polytheism to be the only sin which cannot be forgiven.

From the middle of the first/seventh century supporters of the Kharijite movement drew the ultimate conclusions from the relevant Quranic statements and applied them with terrifying rigour. According to them, not only polytheists, but all those who commit a grievous sin, deprive themselves of the quality of faith and thus become infidels; in fact, since

they were once believers, they become apostates and must be punished by death. The movement was not content to let matters rest on a point of theory, but practised what it preached. The representatives of a more tolerant attitude based their arguments on (among other things) *sūrah* ix.106, where it is said of a certain group of Muslims of questionable character: "They must be tolerated patiently until God decides their fate [literally: they are delayed for God's decision, *murjawan li-'amri 'llāhi*]. Either He will punish them or He will turn [His gracious countenance] upon them once again." From the key word *murjawna* these opponents of the Kharijites became known as Murjiites. By and large the orthodox theologians later adopted the standpoint of the Murjiites. He who professes Islam does not cease to be a Muslim even after committing a grievous sin.

Law

Although Islam may be called a legalistic religion, the information in the Qur'ān about points of law is very confused and fragmentary – especially if one includes under "law" not only rules governing relationships between people (*mu'āmalāt*) but also religious duties (*'ibādāt*), as in fact happens in Muslim scholarship. Thus for instance the two obligations of prayer (*salāh*) and the giving of alms (*zakāh*) are repeatedly emphasized as particularly important, indeed essential. Yet we learn scarcely anything about the ways in which prayer is to be offered or the alms are to be raised. This can be explained in part by the fact that in the early years of his career Muḥammad was able himself to instruct his few disciples in the ritual of prayer and did not therefore need to make any *ex cathedra* pronouncements on the subject; another reason may well be that the religious duties took some time to crystallize into a precise form. In the case of the giving of alms this is indeed highly probable. Only after an interval of time did this become a regular tax. What is certain, however, is that Muḥammad was not faced with legislative tasks proper until after the *hijrah*. Where they were of a political nature and also affected the non-Muslim sections of the population, as in the case of the so-called constitution of Medina, they could be disposed of in the form of a mere agreed ruling. Where religious factors were crucial or at least involved in some way, they produced a literary precipitate in the Qur'ān.

Specific injunctions

As far as religious duties are concerned, certain special rules from the period after the *hijrah* must be mentioned here: short instructions about

washing ready for prayer (v.6: iv.43), the introduction of the obligation to pray in the direction of Mecca (ii.142–50), the curtailment of the prayer ritual when in proximity of a foe (ii.239; iv.101–3) and the suspension of commerce during prayer on a Friday (lxii.9–10), but above all rules governing the new duty to fast (ii.183–5, 187) and the obligation to go on a pilgrimage (especially ii.196–200, 203), a custom borrowed from pagan practice. Mention must also be made of instructions about holy and profane months (with the abolition of the leap-month, ix.36–7), about what could and what could not be eaten (xvi.114–19; vi.118–21, 136–46; ii.168–73; v.1–5, 93–6, 103), the ban on wine (v.90–1), details of the right of retaliation in kind (xvii.33; xlii.39–43; ii.178–9; iv.92–3), regulations about making one's last will and testament (ii.180–2, v.106–8) and the assigning of debts (ii.282–4), the prohibition on usury (iii.130; ii.275–80), and the demand that theft be punished by chopping off the culprit's hand (v.38). There are extremely numerous, and in part detailed instructions about one's obligation to fight against non-Muslims (xxii.38–40, 58–9; ii.190–5, 216, 244; viii.15–16, 55–62, 65–6; xlvii.4–6; iii.139–48, 157–8, 169–71; iv.71–8, 84, 90, 94–6, 104; ix.5–16, 29, 38–49; v.33–4) and the right to booty (viii.1, 41, 67–9; iii.161; lix.6–10), about the provisions of marriage law (ii.221–37, 240–2; iv.2–6, 15, 19–28, 32–5, 127–30; lxv.1–7; xxxiii.4, 6, 28–40, 49–59; lviii.1–4; lxvi.1–5; v.5) and the laws of inheritance (iv.7–14, 176, 33). On the other hand the Qur'ān contains no reference to the imamate, the core of Islamic constitutional law. The practical preconditions for this institution did not arise until after the Prophet's death.

Of the precepts about fighting the infidels we must make special mention of *sūrah* xxii.39: "Those who fight [against the infidels] have been given leave [to fight] because they have [previously] suffered injustice"; *sūrah* ii.190: "Fight for God's sake [literally: on the path of God] against those who fight against you! But do not commit any infringements [by fighting in an unlawful manner]. God does not love those who commit breaches of the law" (recently it was held on the basis of these passages that Islam countenanced only defensive wars); *sūrah* ix.5: "When the holy months are over, then kill the heathen where[ever] you can find them, grasp them, surround them and lie in wait for them in all places. But if they are converted, offer prayers and give alms, then let them depart in peace. God is merciful and ready to forgive"; ix.29 (quoted on this page). These last two passages form the basis of the stipulation that polytheists should be compelled to profess Islam by force of arms, but that the "People of the Book", on the other hand, be made merely to pay a tribute. Of the sections on women some refer in particular to the wives of the Prophet (xxxiii.6, 28–34, 37–40, 50–5; lxvi.1–5). These were no longer relevant

to subsequent legislation. The other passages concern mainly marriage, and, to an even greater extent, the various ways of putting aside or divorcing wives, the support of divorced women, the suckling of children, remarriage, and questions of menstruation, clothing and propriety. Despite the fact that the faithful are repeatedly admonished not to deprive women of their rights (least of all when they are being put aside and divorced) and to be well disposed towards them, it must be admitted that the relevant stipulations presuppose a patriarchal society. The right to put aside and divorce is reserved unilaterally for men. These "stand over women" (iv.34; ii.228). "If you [men] fear that a woman is becoming mutinous, then reprove her, avoid her in the marital bed and beat her" (iv.34). About the text of iv.3, according to which Islamic law permits a man to have up to four wives at once, more will be said below. Special note should also be taken of v.5. This permits Muslim men to marry the women of the "People of the Book" (but not vice versa).

Juridical application

Under the circumstances it was extremely difficult and complicated for the generations who followed Muḥammad and his contemporaries to draw up a legal code which satisfied the practical needs of the Muslim community. It is certain that many a point of local prescriptive law was adopted in the process. But as far as possible the lawyers tried to utilize the Qur'ān as the basis of their law. Here the relevant material had not only to be systematically arranged, and if necessary supplemented by recourse to the *Ḥadīth* and to analogy (*qiyās*). If the text revealed contradictory (or ostensibly contradictory) statements, it also had to be decided which of the passages concerned should be taken as the basis for a legal ruling. Thus, for example, there were different judgements on the imbibing of wine. In *sūrah* xvi.7 wine is unreservedly declared to be one of God's gifts; ii.219 tells us that it leads to sin more often than it is beneficial; in iv.43 the faithful are forbidden to come to prayer drunk; and in v.90–1 wine, along with gambling (*maysir*), sacrifical stones (*anṣāb*) and arrows for casting lots (*azlām*), is described as an abomination and a work of the devil which the faithful should shun at all costs. It was assumed (probably correctly) that the last passage was proclaimed later than the others, and it was concluded that these earlier ones were therefore superseded, "abrogated" (*mansūkh*). In interpretations of the Qur'ān the art of distinguishing between "abrogating" (*nāsikh*) and "abrogated" developed into a specialized branch of knowledge. More precise investigations into the chronology of the various utterances in the Qur'ān were essential for this purpose.

Occasionally a small correction could be made in the text by the

insertion of vowels (which had been missing in the original consonantal skeleton). The word order in *sūrah* v.6 therefore suggests that it originally ran: "When you present yourselves for prayer, wash your faces [first] and your arms up to the elbows and pass your hands over your heads and [over] your feet [*wa-arjulikum*, genitive] up to the ankle." But apparently it had become a widespread custom to wash (and not merely to stroke) the feet in the same way as the face and hands. For this reason vowels were inserted in such a fashion as to produce an accusative (*wa-arjulakum*) so that it now reads: "...wash your face and hands up to the elbows and pass your hand over your head and [wash your] feet up to the ankle". The question of whether the feet should be washed or stroked became one of the bones of contention between the Sunnīs and the Shīʿīs.

Even without changes in the text misinterpretations were possible. Thus, for example, the text of *sūrah* iv.3 gave rise to a fateful misunderstanding. It runs: "And if you fear to do wrong in the matter of orphans, then marry whichever women suit you [or: you please], [each man] two, three, four. And if you fear that you cannot act justly [towards so many], then [only] one, or whichever [slaves] you possess. Thus you may most readily avoid doing injustice [or: begetting (too large) a family (and having to feed them)]." On the basis of this verse it may be assumed that the summons to marry two or more wives refers in particular to the (female) orphans who existed in quite large numbers after the battle of the Uḥud (4/625) and had to be taken care of. It is however questionable whether the sequence "each man two, three, four" was meant to indicate the upper limit of permissible polygamy (as was later generally understood). At all events, the wrong conclusion was certainly drawn from the alternative possibility of marrying slaves – namely that a man could have an unlimited number of concubines in addition to the legal limit of up to four wives. The theme of *sūrah* iv.3 is taken up again in verse 129 of the same *sūrah*, and now suggests a dilution of the precept that a man can have only one wife if he does not think he can treat two, three or four justly. The verse reads: "You will not [really] be able to treat the women [whom you support simultaneously as wives] justly, however hard you try. But do not neglect [one of them] completely, so that you leave her, so to speak, in the balance..." Modernist interpreters of the Qur'ān have wrongly concluded from these words (in conjunction with verse 3) that monogamy is already prescribed in the Qur'ān.

Muslim lawyers and theologians were naturally glad of any Quranic passage which could be adduced to resolve legal issues. They carefully collated all such material when constructing their comprehensive legal system. But when we consider that over the centuries circumstances have

changed in many a respect, even in the Islamic world, and that in recent times all sorts of reforms have become due, we cannot but recognize that the governing of human relationships by texts drafted over 1,300 years ago has its disadvantages. Certain legal stipulations in the Qur'ān were designed to meet the needs of a particular patriarchal society of an archaic kind, and are not easily reconciled with the rights and duties of women earning their own living (and others) in a modern society. Similarly, the prohibition on the earning of interest seems to be outmoded in as much as it conflicts with modern economic thinking. Many conservative Muslims of course refuse to contemplate this. But the legislative authorities in various countries have courageously, if cautiously, begun to tread the path of gradual reform. In Tunisia, to say nothing of Turkey, a law of the land has abolished polygamy altogether. Although we cannot discuss this subject further, it deserves at least to be mentioned in the current context.

Ethics

The rules contained in the Qur'ān seldom bear a strongly juridical stamp. The faithful are, of course, bound by certain rules of conduct, but they are also bidden to let themselves be guided at all times by moral and religious considerations. There is no sharp differentiation between law and ethics. Thus, to cite one example only, we read in *sūrah* xlii.40 with regard to the right of retaliation: "An evil deed is requited in kind. But if a man forgives and is prepared to be reconciled, it is in God's power to reward him." This interweaving of juridical and religious or moral thinking later became characteristic of Islamic law. On the other hand, there is a whole series of passages in the Qur'ān which do not contain any legal implications as such but merely appeal to the conscience of the faithful, and there are others which demand obedience to what are in effect rules of etiquette and good manners. The appeals to conscience and the summons to observe certain rules of polite behaviour are again difficult to keep apart. A consciously religious and moral attitude is taken for granted in all cases. On this assumption even the advice of the legendary poet Luqmān to his son (xxxi.12–19) could be included in the Qur'ān.

Islamic virtues; good manners; proverbs of wisdom

At many points, which we need not list here, the Qur'ān demands a display of those virtues that are characteristic of the faithful: integrity in administering the assets of orphans; charity towards poor relations, orphans, beggars and other people in distress, also towards slaves and

prisoners. The faithful are bidden to observe due proportion when making gifts. The true servants of mercy are men "who when they bestow gifts are neither extravagant nor miserly; [that which lies] in between is right" (xxv.67). If one cannot offer any money, then one can at least say a kind word (xvii.28). In various places there is a summons to honour father and mother. "If one of them or both have grown advanced in years under your roof [and are afflicted with the weaknesses of age], do not say 'fie!' to them or speak to them roughly, but address them respectfully" (vii.23). Patience is frequently commended as a special virtue. "Be patient" had been the motto of Joseph's father (xii.18, 83). The faithful are also repeatedly exhorted to fulfil obligations that they have undertaken, never to perjure themselves as witnesses, to give full measure in their commercial dealings and not to misappropriate the property entrusted to them.

In *sūrah* xlix.2–5 the faithful are admonished not to speak as loudly in the Prophet's presence as they are accustomed to do in coversation among themselves, and not to call to him from outside his dwelling place. A demand of this kind was, of course, pertinent only while Muḥammad was still alive. But the rules about conduct when entering the house of strangers in *sūrah* xxiv.27–9 are valid (so to speak) for all time: "O you faithful ones! Do not step foot inside the houses of strangers until you have first ensured that your visit is not troublesome to them or [until] you have pronounced the greeting on the occupants...And if you find nobody within, do not enter. [You must not enter] until you are given leave. If they say to you, depart, you must depart...But it is no sin for you to enter houses which are not [in fact] occupied and in which there is something that you need..." Characteristic of the ethical (not juridical) nature of these rules are the remarks at the end of the verses: "This is better for you. Perhaps you would let yourself be warned", or "Thus it is more proper for you. God knows what you do." Phrases of this kind round off the two following verses (30–1), in which first men and then women are bidden to cast down their gaze (rather than stare at someone), and to see to it that their nakedness is covered, with further particulars about what is seemly for women, their clothing and their jewellery. Three other examples of rules for everyday living which have become an integral part of the Islamic moral code and are still observed to this day are: xviii.23; "Say not in respect of something [which you intend doing], 'I will do it tomorrow' without [adding] 'God willing!'"; iv.86. "If a greeting is proffered to you, then respond with an even more gracious one or return it [in the same manner as it was proffered to you]." The greeting which one of the faithful proffers to another runs: "Peace upon you (*salāmun 'alaika*)!". And it is regularly returned with the "more gracious"

response: "To you too, peace and the mercy of God and His blessings (*wa-'alaika 'l-salām wa-raḥmatu 'llāh wa-barakātuh*)!" And finally xxxiii.56: "God and His angels pronounce their blessing on the Prophet. O you faithful ones! [You too] pronounce a blessing on him and greet him (*ṣallū 'alayhi wa-sallimū taslīman*)!" Every time Muḥammad's name occurs in conversation or in a text, it is customary to add the formula *ṣalla 'llāhu 'alayhi wa-sallama* ("God bless him and grant him peace "); in written texts this is usually abbreviated to *ṣl'm* because of the frequency with which it is used.

Finally, we should mention some exhortations which might be called proverbs (see p. 211 above, the remarks in the section on the Qur'ān as literature). Their purport can be condensed into the motto "Be shrewd and exercise discretion." As a model taken from the ancient proverbs, let us first consider the advice of Luqmān to his son. "Do not treat men in an aloof or unfriendly fashion [literally: do not turn your cheek away from them] and do not stride boisterously [and arrogantly] over the earth. God does not love him who is conceited and boastful. Walk calmly and lower your voice. The most raucous voice is, after all, that of the ass " (xxxi.18–19).

"Do not stride boisterously [and arrogantly] over the earth. [For] you can neither make a hole in the ground [?] nor rival the mountains in height" (xvii.37; cf. xl.75). "Do not behave as if your hand were tied to your throat [i.e. do not be miserly with your gifts]. But neither [should you] stretch it out completely [by giving things away extravagantly], lest you [in the end] be rebuked and sit there stripped [of all your wealth]" (xvii.29). "Do not pursue a matter of which you are ignorant" (xvii.36). The following utterances are already aimed at a religious context determined by Islam, and yet their content, if not their form, has the character of general ethical precepts. "God is not pleased when one speaks ill [of somebody] in a loud voice, except when one has been wronged" (iv.148). "O you faithful ones! Men should not mock [other] men. Perhaps these are better than they [themselves]. And do not carp at one another and do not call each other names...Do not indulge so much in conjectures. To make conjectures is sometimes a sin. And do not spy and do not speak ill of each other behind your backs. Would any of you devour his brother's corpse [like a vulture]? You would surely find that repugnant" (xlix.11–12). "The [true] servants of mercy are those who tread lightly on the earth [i.e. who do not hold themselves in high regard] and who, when foolish men address them, greet them [in a friendly manner] [literally: say 'Peace!']" (xxv.63; cf. xxviii.55; xxv.72; xxiii.3).

CHAPTER 7

THE QUR'ĀN – II

DEVELOPMENT OF MUḤAMMAD'S MESSAGE

The chronology of the material contained in the Qur'ān on which any attempt to follow the development of Muḥammad's teaching must rest, has been the subject of intense study both by Muslim scholars and by orientalists. Yet it cannot be said their studies take us very far. The main obstacles are formidable: the largely composite nature of the *sūrahs*: the neutral order of the *sūrahs* in the *textus receptus*; and the relative lack of distinct reference to events for which there is reasonably firm evidence elsewhere.

Muslim studies of the chronology centre on the reasons for revelations, the *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Wherever reasons for a revelation were thought to exist, they were treated not only in the *Sīrah*, *Ḥadīth* and *Tafsīr*, but also in specialized works dealing only with the *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Muslim scholars were aware of, but did not follow up, other criteria, such as those of style. It was noted, for example, that the earliest *sūrahs* had short verses and that the length of the verses tended to increase as time went on. On a more detailed level, the use of the phrase "O people", mainly a Meccan usage, was contrasted with that of "O you who believe", used only at Medina.

Judgement based on the *asbāb al-nuzūl* is a useful approach, for proper identification of a passage with something external provides the only sound evidence for dating it. Weakness lay in execution rather than in method. Whilst there were good practical reasons for wanting to know when a passage was revealed, much of the effect was due to pious zeal and to horror of not being able to explain the *mubhamāt*, the obscurities of the Qur'ān. This is particularly the case with Meccan material where there are few historical references. One example will illustrate this tendency. In xcvi. 6–7 we read, "No indeed, man is insolent because he thinks himself independent [or: sees himself become rich]." The verses are taken by commentators as a reference to Abū Jahl, one of Muḥammad's leading opponents at Mecca, and as an indication of the early date at which his opposition to the Prophet began. That may be the lore of the community, but there is really no evidence for it.

This approach is much more successful when it comes to the Medinan period. There are many references in the material revealed at Medina to external events well attested in other sources. These have been enough to establish some sort of agreement on which *sūrahs* are to be considered as Medinan because their contents were wholly or predominantly revealed there. Reflecting one prominent arrangement, the standard Egyptian edition classifies twenty-eight *sūrahs* as Medinan. They are: ii–v, viii–ix, xiii, xxii, xxiv, xxxiii, xlvii–xlix, lvii–lxvi, lxxvi, xcviii–xcix, cx. The only surprising inclusions are lv, lxxvi and xcix, which all appear to be early Meccan and are recognized as such in other Muslim sources. Attempts to put the Medinan *sūrahs* into detailed chronological order are much less convincing, because they depend in part on recourse to evidence from other sources which is itself based on Medinan material in the Qur'ān.

There are equally detailed lists of the order of the Meccan *sūrahs*. As they are almost entirely based on popular tradition, the details carry no conviction. The difficulties with such traditions are exemplified by the information given about the passages most commonly said to be the first two revelations, xcvi.1–5 and lxxiv.1–7. In both cases we have numerous and extensive accounts (some of which conflict with one another) in a variety of sources of how the passages came to be revealed.[1] It is quite conceivable that the essentials of these accounts are true. Yet they tell us nothing that cannot be interpreted as anything other than an elaboration of the passages themselves.

However, it is possible to perceive in the traditional sources the basis for a more general classification, and if the Meccan *sūrahs* are divided into three or four broad groups, the *sūrahs* within the divisions fall for the most part into groupings that do not appear to be wholly without foundation. As with the classification of the Medinan *sūrahs*, there are some oddities. For instance, the early dates given to *sūrahs* xix and xx, based on very dubious *asbāb al-nuzūl*, cannot be sustained. Nor are there good reasons for treating *sūrahs* xxxiv and xxxv as early. If allowances are made for these anomalies, it is instructive to look at the broad division into four Meccan sub-groups and one Medinan group to be found in the translation of a convert to Islam, Pickthall (*The meaning of the glorious Koran*), who used a wide range of traditional Muslim sources in making his assessments. His groupings are:

Very early Meccan: i, lxviii, lxxiii–lxxiv, lxxxix–xcii, xcv–xcvii, xcix–ciii, cv–cvi, cix.   19 *sūrahs*

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[1] For these two passages see Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, I, 78–88, where there are many references to the sources concerned.

Early Meccan:	xix–xx, xxxiv–xxxv, li–lvi, lxx–lxxi, lxxv–lxxxviii, xciii–xciv, cvii–cviii, cxi–cxiv.
	35 *sūrahs*
Middle Meccan:	xv, xvii–xviii, xxi, xxv–xxvii, xxx, xxxii, xxxvi–xlvi, l, lxvii, lxix. 23 *sūrahs*
Late Meccan.	vi–vii, x–xiv, xvi, xxiii, xxviii–xxix, xxxi, lxiv, lxxii. 14 *sūrahs*
Medinan:	ii–v, viii–ix, xxii, xxiv, xxxiii, xlvii–xlix, lvii–lxiii, lxv–lxvi, xcviii, cx. 23 *sūrahs*

It will be noted that Pickthall has five fewer Medinan *sūrahs* than the standard Egyptian text. He classes lxiv as late Meccan or possibly Medinan, xiii as late Meccan, lv and lxxvi as early Meccan and xcix as very early Meccan.

The first scholarly attempt by an orientalist to arrange the *sūrahs* in order was that of the German scholar Weil.[2] Using as his basic criteria the references in the Qur'ān to known events, the contents of the *sūrahs* and their style, he not only made the traditional and fundamental division between Meccan and Medinan *sūrahs*, but was the first to divide the Meccan *sūrahs* into early, middle and late groups. His methods were applied with greater perceptiveness and learning by Nöldeke,[3] whose order has been most widely accepted among orientalists.

According to Nöldeke's assessment, the chief characteristic of the early Meccan *sūrahs* is their powerful language, with short rhythmic and rhyming verses, vivid imagery based on nature and frequent introductory oaths, in a style that is very close to that of the *kāhins*. The middle Meccan *sūrahs* form a transition from those of the early period to those of the late one. Discussions of dogma begin to appear. These are illustrated by examples of the signs of God's power in nature and by stories of the earlier prophets. Passages are frequently introduced by the command "Say", and a number of *sūrahs* have a formal introduction, such as, "These are the revelations of the Writing...". Nöldeke also considers that the use of *al-Rahmān* as a name for God is special to this period. He goes on to suggest that the late Meccan *sūrahs* show an accentuation of the more prosaic tendencies of the middle Meccan period and that stories of the prophets are repeated to saturation point.

The weakness of the methods of Weil and Nöldeke is that where judgements have to be based solely on style and content, their criteria are fairly crude and involve no little subjectivity. In addition, they follow the Muslim practice of treating Meccan *sūrahs* as if they were unified pieces

[2] Weil, *Einleitung*.   [3] Nöldeke, *Geschichte*.

unless passages that are clearly Medinan are involved. (Thus the *whole* of *sūrah* xcv is considered to be the first revelation.) Once again, the detailed order must be regarded as highly dubious, but the division into groups has some validity. With the *sūrahs* in each group put into numerical order, Nöldeke's divisions are:

Early Meccan: i, li–liii, lv–lvi, lxviii–lxx, lxxiii–lxxv, lxxvii–xcvii, xcix–cix, cxi–cxiv.   48 *sūrahs*

Middle Meccan: xv, xvii–xxi, xxiii, xxv–xxvii, xxxvi–xxxviii, xliii–xliv, l, liv, lxvii, lxxi–lxxii, lxvi.   21 *sūrahs*

Late Meccan: vi–vii, x–xiv, xvi, xxviii–xxxii, xxxiv–xxxv, xxxix–xlii, xlv–xlvi.   21 *sūrahs*

Medinan: ii–v, viii–ix, xxii, xxiv, xxxiii, xlvii–xlix, lvii–lxvi, xcviii, cx.   24 *sūrahs*

A comparison with Pickthall's groupings shows a good deal of similarity. Thus Pickthall's "Very early" and "Early" groups correspond reasonably closely with Nöldeke's "Early" group. They include seven *sūrahs* (xix, xx, xxxiv, xxxv, liv, lxxi and lxxvi) which Nöldeke puts into his later groups and exclude only one (lxix) placed in Nöldeke's first group. There is a wider variation in the next two groups, but the Medinan *sūrahs* show only one variation: Pickthall classes lxiv as late Meccan or possibly Medinan, against a clear Medinan classification by Nöldeke.

Of the further attempts by orientalists to deal with the chronological problems of the text, three deserve mention: Grimme,[4] who placed special emphasis on thematic criteria; Bell,[5] whose translation includes a dismemberment of the *sūrahs* into hundreds of small pieces – a *tour de force* that tells us more about Bell's logic than it does about the Qur'ān; and Blachère,[6] whose arrangement is a modification of that of Nöldeke, with greater emphasis given to reaction to opposition to Muhammad and to the development of worship. Blachère makes considerable changes in the order of the Meccan *sūrahs*, and, influenced by Bell, splits a few of them up. His Medinan order is the same as Nöldeke's.

All these attempts point only one way: that it is far too ambitious to put the *sūrahs*, particularly the Meccan *sūrahs*, into detailed order. Moreover, in such an uncertain situation there is very little point in our being able to say that *sūrah* xc is eleventh in Nöldeke's arrangement, but eighteenth in Grimme's and thirty-fifth in the Egyptian; or that *sūrah* c is thirtieth in Nöldeke and thirteenth in Blachère. It is, however, helpful to be able to say that xc and c are both early Meccan, or that xxxvii is considered to be one of the earlier of the middle Meccan *sūrahs*. There are of course,

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[4] Grimme, *Mohammed.*   [5] Bell, *Qur'ān.*   [6] Blachère, *Coran.*

caveats: there can be no definite lines of division between groupings; criteria for divisions are subjective; the number of divisions vary according to the views of the person drawing up the groupings. Nevertheless, the groupings do give us some indication of the general development of the Meccan material and, provided that care is exercised, give us a limited framework for the discussion of the Meccan material.

We are on firmer ground at Medina with the availability of some datable material. Yet uncertainties persist here, and it is again unwise to seek to be too definite. Where dating at Medina is crucial, however, it is much more likely to be on a specific point, for example the abrogation of a verse (see p. 223), than on general developments. In these circumstances, one can do little but have cautious recourse to traditional Muslim authorities.

THE QUR'ĀN IN MUHAMMAD'S LIFETIME

Development and compilation

The revelations which together make up the Qur'ān were produced over a period of approximately twenty-three years, first in Mecca and later in Medina. It was about A.D. 610 that Muhammad became convinced that he had been chosen as the Messenger of God, At irregular intervals from then until his death in 10/632 he made the revelations which Muslims hold to be the Word of God. The revelations varied in length from one or two verses to quite long pieces. As the years passed they changed in style. The forceful, highly charged delivery of the early passages became more diffuse and didactic, particularly during the Prophet's years at Medina, though use of assonance remained constant.

For the most part these early revelations did not retain their individual identity as separate pieces. Instead they took their place in larger units. The larger unit was the *sūrah*, a word of uncertain origin now generally translated as "chapter". That the *sūrah* had an important role to play from an early stage is clearly shown by the challenge to Muhammad's opponents to produce ten *sūrahs* like his (xi. 18). It is recognized that most *sūrahs* are composite pieces containing varying numbers of early revelations, but we have no precise information on how the merging took place. A well-known tradition purporting to describe the practice in Muhammad's later years perhaps gives us some indication of what happened: "When he received a revelation, he would summon one of those who acted as his scribes and say, 'Put this passage in the *sūrah* in which so-and-so is mentioned', or 'Put it in such-and-such a place'."[7]

The tradition just quoted mirrors the general assumption in the *Hadīth*

[7] See, for example, Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 141.

and *Tafsīr* that the arrangement of material into *sūrahs* was the work of Muḥammad, possibly with one or two minor exceptions. There is no cogent reason to dispute this assumption, and the evidence we can deduce from the Qur'ān itself is overwhelmingly in its favour. In particular, many *sūrahs* contain substantial revisions that can scarcely have been made without the authority of the Prophet. There are, for instance, a number of passages where phrases that fit the rhyme of the *sūrah* appear to have been added to verses that make good sense without them, and where an original rhyme, or rhymes, can be discerned.[8] Even more striking are the many passages where pieces from different periods have been put together. Three typical examples will give an indication of the varied ways in which this was done. *Sūrah* lxxiii starts with nineteen short verses, acknowledged by all authorities to have been revealed very early at Mecca, rounded off by a very long final verse agreed to be a Medinan piece. In xxix it is the beginning (verses 1–11) that is Medinan; whilst in xiv three Medinan verses (28–30) are found in the middle of what is otherwise Meccan material. There may be further pointers of Muḥammad's role in the widely disparate lengths of the *sūrahs*, the variations in which are due to neither content, form nor rhyme; in the affixing of the *basmalah* formula ("In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate") found at the beginning of all *sūrahs* except ix; and in the insertion of the mystical letters which follow the *basmalah* in twenty-nine of the *sūrahs*.

The process of compilation was not a consistent one, and the *sūrahs* are not necessarily put together in a way that is easy to follow. There is a minority of *sūrahs*, including some long ones, that are carefully moulded together; in the rest not only do abrupt and often bewildering changes of construction, content and situation abound, but there are also numerous repetitions, modifications and even contradictions of arguments. These features, frequently criticized by Western writers, give rise to many intractable problems. We should neither ignore nor minimize these problems, but we should always bear it in mind that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Preservation and transmission

Unless we place very heavy reliance on Tradition, we have little information about the preservation and transmission of the text of the Qur'ān during Muḥammad's lifetime, and what we have is neither surprising nor particularly illuminating. The picture that emerges is that both oral and written means were involved, the latter gradually increasing in importance

[8] Cf. e.g. xvi.10–14.

in Muḥammad's later years with the accumulation and growing complexity of material.

As with many aspects of the Qur'ān, we have a clearer impression about what happened at Medina than we have about what happened at Mecca. In this case indications about the Meccan period are even more scanty than usual. The only tradition in which a written text forms an integral part of the story is one concerning the conversion to Islam of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the future caliph. It tells how 'Umar demanded to read a sheet in the possession of his sister and her husband, whom he had discovered to be Muslims, "so that he could see what it was that Muḥammad had brought". He was eventually given the sheet, which contained *sūrah* xx, and after reading it he asked to be taken to Muḥammad to become a convert. Two problems make it difficult to accept this tradition: there are conflicting accounts about 'Umar's conversion, and in them drama seems to loom much larger than fact; and the suggestion that *sūrah* xx was in written circulation as early as 'Umar's conversion would appear to be an anachronism.

We have therefore to see what the Qur'ān itself might tell us. Unfortunately, despite frequent references to writing in the Meccan *sūrahs*, only a few verses are relevant. Two appear to point to a lack of written scripture. In xvii.93 we read, "[They say,] 'We shall not believe...until you bring down to us a Writing that we may read'", and in vi.7, "Were We to send down to you a Writing on papyrus and they were to touch it with their hands, the unbelievers would say, 'This is naught but a manifest sorcery.'" Against this we have to set the phrase repeated several times in xix[9]: "Mention, [Muḥammad], in the Writing", and a passage in lxxx: "It is a Reminder...on honoured leaves, exalted, purified, by the hands of scribes, noble, pious." Whilst none of these passages provides conclusive evidence, it is not unreasonable to take them as offering indications of both oral and written transmission.

For the Medinan period we have ample evidence, which we have no grounds for rejecting, that the Prophet used scribes and that their number increased with the passing of time. We are further told that some of the scribes had special responsibility for writing down the Qur'ān. This might be dismissed as uncorroborated tradition, but for the remarkable story concerning one of their number, 'Abdullāh b. Sa'd b. Abī Sarḥ. The commentator al-Zamakhsharī[10] tells us that 'Abdullāh not only tampered with at least two verse endings, but also felt that it was a suggestion of

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[9] See verses 16, 41, 51, 54 and 56.

[10] Al-Zamakhsharī gives his account in his comments on vi.93 with a brief reference on xxiii.14 itself.

his that was used to round off xxiii.14.[11] Apparently Muḥammad was
dictating to him a passage that began at xxiii.12. Towards the end of verse
14 he paused and 'Abdullāh added aloud the phrase "Blessed be Allāh,
best of creators." The Prophet told him to write the phrase, as those were
the actual words of the revelation. Muḥammad's apparently uncertain
grasp of the revelation shattered 'Abdullāh's confidence in him, and he
returned to Mecca as an apostate. We know from many sources that he was
one of the few proscribed at the capture of Mecca and was only spared
through the intercession of 'Uthmān. One may argue that as 'Abdullāh
was an Umayyad the story is an anti-Umayyad fabrication. However, the
story does not show the Prophet in a favourable light, and it is unlikely
that anti-Umayyad material would be fabricated at his expense. On the
whole, therefore, it seems reasonable to accept the story and to infer that
the information that a small number of others were specially concerned
with the writing of the text is, in essence, correct.

There remain several important problems on which no view can be
formed, simply through lack of evidence. We do not know how much of
the Qur'ān was committed to writing during the Prophet's lifetime, what
were the responsibilities of the scribes for the material they took down
or what happened to that material on the death of Muḥammad. All we
can note is the large part played by some of them, in particular Zayd b.
Thābit, Ubayy b. Ka'b and 'Uthmān, in the subsequent history of the text.

THE HISTORY OF THE TEXT OF THE QUR'ĀN AFTER THE DEATH
OF MUḤAMMAD

Pre-'Uthmanic texts

The history of the text of the Qur'ān after the death of Muḥammad is
dominated by the recension produced for the caliph 'Uthmān by Zayd b.
Thābit and his co-editors. This is natural and proper, for 'Uthmān's
successful attempt to produce an agreed exemplar was a move of vital
importance for the Muslim community. With the issue of the 'Uthmanic
text earlier versions quickly fell into disuse, and their contents then became
merely a matter of academic interest for scholars of the text. The variant
readings they contained were classed as non-canonical, and less and less
attention was paid to them. The result is that the evidence we possess for
the versions of the text before the 'Uthmanic recension is scanty and
somewhat controversial.

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[11] 'Abdullāh is said to have substituted *'alīman ḥakīman* for *samī'an 'alīman*, which occurs only in
iv.148; and *ghafāran raḥīman* for *'alīman ḥakīman*, which occurs twelve times (iv.4, 11, 17, 24, 92,
104, 111, 130, 170; xxxiii.1; xlviii.4; and lxxvi.30.

The most significant point to emerge, however, is not connected with any one version. It is the fact that the Qur'ān had to be collected after Muḥammad's death. This is a matter with considerable doctrinal implications. The dogma that the Qur'ān is eternal and the uncreated word of Allāh, which has been the key factor in the progressive reduction in number of the accepted variants in the text, has never been extended to cover the present order and arrangement. This would surely have been done if the Muslim community had not accepted that the text had to be collected and arranged in order after the death of the Prophet.

In these early years the collection of written material was on a comparatively small scale. It would appear to have been considered supplementary to oral tradition, hitherto the normal way of transmitting Arabic custom and culture. As far as one can tell, it was occasioned by the desire to have the scripture written and by imitation of the Prophet's practice in having pieces committed to writing.

One of the early versions is considered to be special and very different in nature from the rest. It is a collection said to have been made by Zayd b. Thābit for the caliph Abū Bakr. The strange thing is that we have no direct knowledge of its contents, because it is assumed that it contained no variants from the 'Uthmanic text. The Arabic sources carry many accounts of how this collection came to be made.[12] These accounts differ in the amount of detail they give and contain a fair number of discrepancies, but the general outline is clear. They may be summarized as follows:

In the battle of Yamāmah, a year or so after the death of the Prophet, many reciters of the revelation (qurrā') were killed. This led 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb to fear that if there were similar casualties in other battles parts of the revelation might be lost. Convinced that immediate steps were necessary, he urged Abū Bakr to ensure that the Qur'ān was properly preserved by having it collected and written down. At first Abū Bakr was reluctant, but 'Umar persuaded him to act. He summoned Zayd b. Thābit, who had acted as one of the Prophet's secretaries, and asked him to collect from the members of the community all that any of them had of the revelation and to commit it to writing. Zayd did as he was asked, assembling the collection from "pieces of leather, leafless palm-branches, the shoulderblades of camels, thin white stones, pieces of papyrus, and the bosoms of men".[13] When he had finished, he deposited his codex (ṣuḥuf/muṣḥaf) with Abū Bakr, from whom it passed to 'Umar. On the death of 'Umar the collection passed into the possession of his daughter Ḥafṣah, who retained it even after the election of the new caliph.

There are some problems about this account, but these are scarcely

¹² Cf. Nöldeke, Geschichte, II, 11–12n.   ¹³ Cf. Suyūṭī, Itqān, 137.

enough to justify the sceptical view of it taken by some orientalists. Particularly doubtful is the view of those who go so far as to deny the existence of a collection made by Zayd for Abū Bakr. They maintain that this is a fiction designed to rob the unpopular 'Uthmān of the honour of having ordered the first recension. This view is tenable only at the cost of raising insoluble difficulties about the provenance and even the existence of Ḥafṣah's text, and to deny that Ḥafṣah did have a text is to fly in the face of the strong evidence to the contrary.

A more frequently found view is that Abū Bakr did have a recension made but it was not an official one, and had it been so it would not have finished up with Ḥafṣah. On this three points should be borne in mind:

(a) regardless of any problems that might have arisen after the battle of Yamāmah, it was not unreasonable for the caliph to want a written copy of the scripture revealed to the Prophet;

(b) whether one views it as official or not, any collection made for Abū Bakr was bound to have a special status;

(c) the fact that this text passed to Ḥafṣah can be plausibly explained. When 'Umar was fatally wounded, he had time to make some hasty arrangements as to what was to happen next, as we know from the setting up of the *Shūrā* (Council) to elect his successor. It is not unreasonable to conjecture that he had the text which he had received from Abū Bakr passed to Ḥafṣah for safe-keeping. She was, after all, an important member of the community, being not only his own daughter, but also a widow of the Prophet.

The most dubious part of the account is the reason given for the collection being made: the slaughter of the *qurrā'* at the battle of Yamāmah. It has been pointed out[14] that there are only two recognized *qurrā'* in the lists of casualties at Yamāmah. Clearly this is an inexplicable discrepancy, yet it should be noted that one of the two was Sālim b. Mu'qib, who according to tradition was the first person to attempt to set down all his material in codex form.[15]

Against these not very cogent objections to the tradition there are two pieces of evidence which offer some backing for the belief that Zayd did undertake a recension for Abū Bakr.

The first of these is rather indirect. Tradition has preserved claims made by some of the Companions of the Prophet that various pieces were missing from the text of the Qur'ān.[16] The most famous of these is the verse stipulating stoning as the punishment for fornicators of mature years,

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14 Cf. Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, II, 20.
16 Cf. Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, I, 234–61.   15 Cf. Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 135.

which 'Umar himself claimed was missing (either from *sūrah* xxiv or from xxiii, according to those who comment on the tradition). Now complaints about missing material can be made only if there is reasonable agreement about the contents of the work concerned, and any charge of this kind by 'Umar must be pre-'Uthmanic – and presumably made in Medina.

Secondly, the existence of other early comprehensive collections is not disputed, least of all by those who doubt the traditions about the Abū Bakr recension. These early collections include not only those that became famous metropolitan codices, but also some made by residents of Medina, among them 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās and Anas b. Mālik. Despite the undoubted existence of these collections, there is no evidence that any of them were used in the preparation of the 'Uthmanic recension.

Given this overall picture, it would appear to be unreasonable to deny the existence of the recension made by Zayd for Abū Bakr and to refuse to accept that it formed the nucleus of the 'Uthmanic text. We may, in fact, feel that it represents an important stage in the history of the text.

We must now turn to the other major collections of this early period. These are the metropolitan codices. Apart from where they impinge on the story of the 'Uthmanic recension, our evidence about them is limited, coming very largely from commentaries on the Qur'ān and from the sole surviving *K. al-Maṣāḥif* ("Book of Qur'ān codices") that of Ibn Abī Dā'ūd. Some of the *qurrā'* who possessed comprehensive collections migrated to centres outside Arabia and their readings soon became established as the local text. Thus the people of Kufa adopted the codex of Ibn Mas'ūd as their own recension; the people of Basra adopted the codex of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī; those of Homs that of al-Miqdād b. 'Amr (or Mu'ādh b. Jabal); and other Syrians that of Ubayy b. Ka'b. There are clear indications that these codices were written down: the supporters of Ibn Mas'ūd backed him in his refusal to hand over what he had collected to be burned when ordered to do so by 'Uthmān, whilst the collection of Abū Mūsā was given the title *Lubāb al-qulūb*.

Most of the major differences between these versions concern five short pieces which are prayers or chants. Three of these are in the 'Uthmanic text (*sūrahs* i, cxiii and cxiv) and two, known as *al-Khal'* and *al-Ḥafd*, are not. Ibn Mas'ūd omitted all five, whilst Ubayy and Abū Mūsā included them. In addition, there is an interesting tradition in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim.[17] In it Abū Mūsā is reported as referring to a *sūrah* of the length and rigour of *al-Barā'ah* (ix), which he had forgotten apart from a single verse, and another resembling the *Musabbiḥāt* (lvii, lix, lxi, lxii, lxiv), likewise

[17] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, I, 386.

forgotten apart from a single verse. Neither of the two verses occurs in the 'Uthmanic text. That quoted as coming from the longer *sūrah* is known to us from other sources as an abrogated verse and even as a tradition. This makes it even more difficult than usual to assess the worth of the report, but if we take it seriously we must assume that Abū Mūsā's codex contained something in the order of 150 verses, presumably material thought to have been revealed at Medina, which were not incorporated into 'Uthmān's recension. This would be a very much greater difference than any other we know of.

The minor variants, most often confined to a single word, are by their nature less spectacular. They are also in some cases fraught with difficulty. For example, one sometimes suspects that readings invented by later theologians and grammarians have been foisted upon these early authorities to give them greater weight. Yet even with the cautious handling that such possibilities require, one can reasonably deduce at least one feature of special interest. One can find a type of variant that was later deemed impossible because it deviated from the consonantal text: the synonym. Such variants are, of course, frequently found in oral tradition or material based on oral tradition. Typical examples are Ibn Mas'ūd's *arshidnā* for *ihdinā* in *sūrah* i.6 and Ubayy's *bisāt* for *firāsh* in ii.22. Many Muslim scholars dismiss such variants as glosses, but this is far too naive an assessment.

We also have reports that the order of *sūrahs*, at least in the codices of Ibn Mas'ūd and Ubayy, differed considerably from the order in the 'Uthmanic text. We have two lists for each of these collections, but they show discrepancies and are in any case incomplete. All we can glean from them is that neither Ibn Mas'ūd nor Ubayy attempted to arrange the *sūrahs* in chronological order. Even more disappointingly, the lists are given on the assumption that the material in each *sūrah* was in general that found in the corresponding *sūrah* in the 'Uthmanic recension; and there is simply no evidence to support or disprove this assumption.

The information recorded about other pre-'Uthmanic collections is so fragmentary as to be virtually worthless. One can perhaps discern a gradual growth in the number of collections, but that is all.

The 'Uthmanic text

It was because the differences between the metropolitan codices were becoming a matter of partisanship that 'Uthmān was prevailed on to have another recension made. The story, which is widely told, is again clear in outline despite differences in detail:

In the year 30/651 the general Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān took part in an

expedition to Ādharbāyjān and Armenia. The troops were drawn partly from
Syria and partly from Iraq, and disputes broke out among them about the
correct reading of Qur'ān, with those from Damascus, Homs, Kufa and
Basra each supporting their own codex. This horrified and angered
Ḥudhayfah, and after consulting Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ he reported the matter to
ʿUthmān asking him to "overtake this people before they differ over the
Scripture in the way that the Jews and the Christians differ".ʿUthmān
agreed to act. He asked Zayd b. Thābit, Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ, ʿAbdullāh b.
al-Zubayr and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith to undertake a new written
recension and instructed them to use the dialect of Quraysh if they were
in any doubt.

The recension produced by the editors would appear to have done three
things: it fixed finally the contents of each *sūrah*; it placed the *sūrahs* in
an order; and it provided a written consonantal outline of what the editors
had agreed to be the complete text.

It is not clear how the recension was made or how long it took. The
sources all tell us that Ḥafṣah was asked to lend the *ṣuḥuf* she had received
from ʿUmar. Most of them go on to say that the editors copied the *ṣuḥuf*
into *maṣāḥif*, implying that this was the extent of the recension. However,
there are accounts[18] that indicate a general consultation in Medina, and
it seems intrinsically more likely that a general revision was undertaken.

Questions are asked by non-Muslims about the recension that are
answered for a Sunnī Muslim by his faith. The two on which there is
greatest speculation are whether the Qur'ān, as we have it in ʿUthmān's
recension, is complete, and how much the editors were responsible for the
arrangement of material within the *sūrahs*. In each case the frank answer is
that we do not know; the varying views of orientalists are a mixture of
prejudice and speculation. As far as completeness is concerned, there is no
reason to think that anything important has gone astray, unless one accepts
the story of Abū Mūsā at its face value. Bell[19] states the position very
reasonably when he says that the fact that varying, and sometimes even
contradictory, deliverances have been preserved is strong proof that there
was no deliberate suppression, and that the editors acted in good faith.

The Shīʿīs, however, take a different view of the ʿUthmanic recension.
It is clear that their objections are coloured by both political and doctrinal
considerations. They hold that the text originally contained material
referring to ʿAlī and the Prophet's family, but that this was altered or
suppressed. Their charges are made principally against ʿUthmān, but Abū
Bakr and ʿUmar are also accused, presumably on account of Zayd's
recension for Abū Bakr. At first the charges related to small amounts of

18 Cf. e.g. Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, 139.   19 Bell, *Introduction*, 49.

material, but as time passed they were widened to cover the suppression of larger pieces and even whole *sūrahs*.

Discounting as partisan the allegations of the Shī'īs, the good faith of the editors, in its fullest sense, is a factor that should not be overlooked. They were god-fearing men who had known the inspiration of the Prophet. There can be little doubt that their desire in preparing the recension would have been to serve Allāh before all else. Such an attitude would be a strong incentive to them to exercise care and caution in their revision.

Indeed, it is possible that this may be the reason for the order of the *sūrahs*, which is commonly thought to be without good reason. In the absence of certainty about chronological order, two neutral orders based on length come readily to mind: shortest to longest, and longest to shortest. Of these two, longest to shortest, with the social legislation at the beginnings, would have been more attractive. This suggestion is, however, mere speculation.

When the recension was finished, 'Uthmān sent *maṣāḥif* to the principal cities of the empire and ordered all other versions to be burned. There was strong opposition to this from Ibn Mas'ūd and his supporters in Kufa, where the existing ill feeling towards 'Uthmān was much exacerbated. Elsewhere there seems to have been no difficulty. Within a short time the consonantal outline provided by the recension was generally acknowledged as the *textus receptus* throughout the empire.

The imposition of basic uniformity in the text was a notable achievement. The extent of this uniformity is most clearly shown by the known variants in the consonantal outline in the canonical readings. There are some forty places where a variation in the consonantal text subsequently occurred. All but two of these concern one letter only (e.g. the addition of *wa*, "and", the most common example, with eight occurrences). In the other two cases we have the addition of small words (*min*, ix.100; *huwa*, lvi.24). When it is noted that the text of one centre, Damascus, contains more than half of these variants, one can see how rigorously the 'Uthmanic outline has been adhered to. In fact, had the *maṣāḥif* been written in a script in which the consonants and vowels were clearly marked, there would have been no further significant history of the text.

The period of "*ikhtiyār*"

It was largely because of the highly defective state of the Arabic script current at the time of the 'Uthmanic recension that nothing more than basic uniformity was achieved, but there was also the complication of the

relative importance of oral tradition. Between them they left scope for considerable argument about detail, and from the publication of the 'Uthmanic recension to the year 322/934 there was a period of *ikhtiyār*, "choice", when scholars of the text were able to choose their own reading (*qirā'ah*) in passages where the consonantal outline had originally been ambiguous.

The defects of the script were of a nature that would be intolerable for a people relying strongly on the written word and placing little importance on oral tradition. First and foremost, there was little or no use of dots to distinguish between letters. The same basic outline might represent up to five consonants. There were no signs to indicate short vowels, and the weak letters were only intermittently used to indicate long vowels. Clearly a *muṣḥaf* written in such a script could provide the reader with guidance only, and for additional information he had to have recourse to oral transmission. Nevertheless the acceptance of an agreed written version greatly limited the range of acceptable alternatives in the oral tradition. Variants had to fall within the possibilities allowed by the textual outline, otherwise they were *shādhdh*, "peculiar". Oral tradition thus became subordinate to the written text, despite the latter's imperfections.

Within this narrower framework we find *qurrā'* of high reputation coming to occupy dominant positions as authorities on the text, as Ubayy, Ibn Mas'ūd and Abū Mūsā had done in the earlier period. Medina, Mecca, Damascus, Basra and Kufa remained the chief centres where the text was studied, and each of them began to evolve its own tradition of the correct way to vocalize the *muṣḥaf*.

During the evolution of these metropolitan schools of reading, three criteria emerged to govern the reader's choice. They were *muṣḥaf*, *'arabiyyah*, and *isnād*. The overriding importance of the *muṣḥaf* (consonantal text) has already been mentioned. Next came *'arabiyyah*, the consideration of whether a reading was good Arabic or not. In view of the lack of agreed rules this was, and had been from the time of the earliest collections, a problematical subject. It eventually led to the growth of grammar as one of the Islamic sciences, though whether this solved the problems is another matter. In places where recourse to the *muṣḥaf* and to *'arabiyyah* still left room for doubt, there was some scope for the use of the *isnād*, tracing the chain of authorities for a reading. Unlike the *isnād* in *Ḥadīth*, it was a secondary consideration. Moreover, it tended to be viewed largely in local terms, though the boundaries were sometimes breached by peripatetic students.

Some of the authorities on readings became dissatisfied with the situation where the details of how the *muṣḥaf* should be read depended solely on

oral tradition. They sought instead to record their readings in the written text. The impetus for this change seems to have come from Basra and is usually associated with Abū 'l-Aswad al-Du'alī (d, 69/688), Naṣr b. 'Āṣim (d. 89/707) or Yaḥyā b. Ya'mar (d. before 90/708). Dots or strokes were introduced to mark readings, a method apparently copied from that used in Syriac texts.[20] From the limited information we have, it seems that these markings were used at first simply to indicate variants, with those parts of the text that were not in dispute being left unmarked. This practice was frowned upon in many quarters as a dangerous innovation. However, with the strong support of the governor of Iraq, the famous al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, it was developed into a consistent system which could be applied to the whole text. This allowed not only for letters of the same basic form to be distinguished from one another, but also for short vowels to be added. In addition the use of the weak letters to mark long vowels became more systematic, and the marking of *hamz* was introduced.

It is difficult to assess the role of al-Ḥajjāj. We may ignore the arguments of the Christian 'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Kindī[21] that al-Ḥajjāj was very much responsible for our text, as these have a polemical rather than a factual basis. The account most widely found[22] has him ordering Naṣr b. 'Āṣim to introduce the markings to safeguard the pronunciation of the text. This is a plausible reason for the innovation, and the story is not challenged, despite the strong hostility of the sources towards al-Ḥajjāj.

However, this seems to be only a partial explanation of what happened. On the one hand, we have a tradition in Ibn Abī Dā'ūd[23] that al-Ḥajjāj was responsible for eleven changes in the consonantal text. If this is so, he is responsible for a minor recension at least. Against this we must set the evidence of early copies of the Qur'ān that have survived. These show that for some considerable time the new system was used sparingly and mainly in connection with variants.

Apart from this, we do not have a great deal of information about what went on in the period of *ikhtiyār*. Some is provided by the readings themselves, and some by manuals on orthography and pronunciation. Two divergent trends are noticeable. One is conservatism as regards the written text, as evidenced above. The other is the acceptance of changes in pronunciation that manifested themselves, particularly in Iraq. These were not significant, but they did mark a trend away from the pronunciation of the Hijaz towards the more dominant eastern dialects. The most obvious feature was the widespread introduction of *hamzah* in places where, in fact, a glottal stop was not found in the Hijazi dialects.

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[20] Cf. "Arabic script" above.
[22] Cf. e.g. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 220–1.

[21] *Risālah*, 78ff.
[23] *Maṣāḥif*, 118–9.

The orthodox readings

The period of *ikhtiyār* ended in 322/934 when the highly esteemed scholar Ibn Mujāhid persuaded the authorities in Baghdad to declare seven readings of the text (*qirā'āt*) canonical, other readings being treated as *shādhdh*. There were some attempts to extend the number of canonical readings to ten and even fourteen, but these additional readings did not receive much support. In the course of time there came to be a general consensus recognizing the *riwāyahs* (recensions) of two transmitters of each of the seven readings as authoritative. The full list of authorities and transmitters is shown in the table.

Authorities and transmitters of the Qur'ān

Place	Authority	Transmitters
Medina	Nāfi' (d. 169/785–6)	Warsh (d. 197/813)
		Qālūn (d. 220/835)
Mecca	Ibn Kathīr (d. 120/738)	al-Bazzī (d. 250/864)
		Qunbul (d. 291/904)
Damascus	Ibn 'Āmir (d. 118/736)	Hishām (d. 242/856–7)
		Ibn Dhakwān (d. 245/859)
Basra	Abū 'Amr (d. 154/771)	al-Dūrī (d. 246/860)
		al-Sūsī (d. 261/875)
Kufa	'Āṣim (d. 128/746)	Ḥafṣ (d. 190/806)
		Ibn 'Ayyāsh (d. 194/810)
Kufa	Ḥamzah (d. 158/775)	Khalaf (d. 229/844)
		Khallād (d. 220/835)
Kufa	al-Kisā'ī (d. 189/805)	al-Dūrī (d. 240/854–5)
		Abū'l-Ḥārith (d. 246/860)

In most cases the variants in the canonical readings are of relatively little import, and even cumulatively their effect is not great. Occasionally, however, they are crucial. The most vivid example of this is in the last word of *sūrah* lxxxv (*al-Burūj*). The last two verses read: (21) *huwa qur'ānun majīdun*; (22) *fī lawḥin maḥfūẓun/in*. The last syllable is in doubt: it is either the nominative *-un* or the genitive *-in*. Six of the canonical readings have *-in*. This gives the meaning, "It is a glorious Qur'ān on a preserved tablet" – the only direct reference in the text to the Preserved Tablet of Muslim dogma. The seventh reading, that of the Medinan authority Nāfi', has *-un*, giving "It is a glorious Qur'ān preserved on a tablet." Other cruces of a similar type are sometimes found in passages dealing with social legislation.

There is little to be said about the text after the establishment of the canonical readings. The passing of time and the pressure for conformity

have led to the majority of the accepted *riwāyahs* dropping into disuse. Only three of them ever gained any wide acceptance: al-Dūrī's *riwāyah* of the reading of Abū 'Amr; Warsh's *riwāyah* of the reading of Nāfi'; and Ḥafṣ' *riwāyah* of the reading of 'Āṣim. The first of these has remained in limited vogue in the Sudan. Warsh's *riwāyah* of Nāfi', with its very long association with the Mālikī school of law, is now by and large confined to the Maghrib, and even there it is giving some ground to by far the most widely accepted *riwāyah*, that of Ḥafṣ from 'Āṣim. This latter is the basis of the standard Egyptian text first published in 1342/1923 and of most other eastern editions. The reasons for the success of this *riwāyah* appear to be in its links with the Ḥanafīs and the royal favour it has received from time to time. It is perhaps of some significance, too, that it contains fewer deviations from majority readings than the others. This position, reinforced by the wide dissemination of lithographed copies, has given it a standing that approaches that of a definitive text. However, it is to be hoped that the more conservative and very valuable *riwāyah* of Warsh from Nāfi' will not entirely be superseded.

CHAPTER 8

QIṢAṢ ELEMENTS IN THE QUR'ĀN

The imaginative power of symbolism in ritual and literature is well known. Among the religions of the ancient world, Robertson Smith argued, mythology took the place of dogma; "the sacred lore of priests and people, so far as it does not consist of mere rules for the performance of religious acts, assumes the form of stories about the gods; and these stories afford the only explanation that is offered of the precepts of religion and the prescribed rules of ritual".[1] There seems little doubt that pre-Islamic Arabia typified this general pattern, but Islam, as a statement of mono-theistic belief overriding ritualistic symbols, radically challenged, then radically altered, this pattern.

Yet, viewed in perspective, the Quranic message is not as marked a break with the past as it first appears. The retention of the pilgrimage and the ceremonies at the Ka'bah, Minā and 'Arafāt provided rituals around which pre-Islamic stories were told and post-Islamic legends woven. One might enquire which came first – a ritual running (sa'y) between the hills of al-Ṣafā' and al-Marwah, or the story of the running of Hagar (Hājar) seeking water for her abandoned son Ishmael (Ismā'īl), the accepted Islamic explanation for this ritual?

The text of the Qur'ān introduced complex and interchangeable characters who were no ordinary mortals and were of symbolic potential. Some were Arabian, others biblical, a few of indeterminate origin. The Prophet and those persons, human or supernatural, who preceded him in God's disclosure are never absent from the verses (āyāt) of Holy Writ. The latter, with its vivid etching and stark understatement, assumed in its readers an awareness of stories or myths, or memories of natural events, which were the setting for new revelation or reinterpretation. If these stories were insufficiently known, then it was the commentators' task to furnish clarifications. The more widely the Qur'ān was read, and the more cosmopolitan the public who reverently explored its text, the richer was the elaboration and presentation of Quranic narrative.

Quranic narrative tales (qiṣaṣ) appear in three different contexts. The first is the corpus of folk-tales of religious and ethical potential in pre-Islamic

[1] *Lectures*, 17.

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Arabia. They were alluded to by the Prophet, and they were familiar to his fellow countrymen. It is difficult to define the repertoire of these stories because several are only known by references to them in the Qur'ān itself. The second context is the Quranic text. The tales and stories in it are presented with a particular aim in view. Furthermore, the style of its prose and circumstances of its revelation have drastically determined the presentation, length and detail of the stories. The third context is that of the manifold elaborations by later commentators, following the recording of the definitive Quranic text. Often the elaborations are far longer than the Quranic reference, and it is very difficult to judge whether the interpretations have any relevance to the tales in the original.

A general survey of "the narrative tale" (*qiṣṣah*) in the Qur'ān is a useful *rappel à l'ordre* to those who seek to relate its contents to one exclusive stream of inspiration. The stories of pre-Islamic prophets and biblical men and women, although reshaped or chronologically adapted, are recognizably Semitic and Hellenistic. It is sometimes impossible to be wholly certain of the provenance of the germinal ideas. In one case the *qiṣṣah* may seem Rabbinical, in another Syriac Christianity is the most obvious reference. Several appear to be wholly Arabian, rooted in traumatic events or cherished story-cycles of the Jāhiliyyah, and well known to the varied peoples of the Arabian Peninsula.

Arabia is the setting for supernatural disaster stories in the Qur'ān: cities are destroyed by God for disbelief, the divine acting through natural calamities. Reminiscent of biblical Sodom and Gomorrah, the flood of 'Arim and the depopulation of Iram are representative examples. The first event forms the centrepiece of *sūrah* xxxiv.15–16. It is apparently a reference to the Mārib dam and dyke complex in the Yemen, which was subject to a series of disasters brought about by climatic, social or political causes. The last bursting of the dam was virtually contemporary with the Prophet's lifetime.[2] Presumably it is the flood referred to in this verse:

Saba' had in their habitation a sign: two gardens, on the right hand and on the left. Eat from the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him. A good country and a most forgiving Lord! – but they turned away and we sent against them the flood of the dyke, and we changed for them their two gardens into two gardens that grew bitter fruit of the *arāk* and tamarisk and a few lote trees.[3]

Among the non-Quranic stories which explain this calamity, probably the most famous is the premonition of Ẓarīfah, who warned her royal spouse that a rat was undermining the dam.[4] 'Amr b. 'Āmir Mā' al-Samā'

[2] Regarding the chronology of the Quranic flood, see Lane, *Selections*, 19–21, and Watt, *Islam*, 78–83.
[3] Cf. Hamdānī, *Antiquities*, 34–8.
[4] See Nicholson, *Literary history*, 15–17, and the notes of Ibn Hishām in A. Guillaume's translation of the *Sīrah* by Ibn Isḥāq, *Life*, 693–4.

went to discover whether his wife's dream was true, and was shocked to see a rat moving a huge rock which would have defied fifty men. Convinced of impending doom, 'Amr planned to flee. To allay suspicions of his intentions, he prearranged a violent squabble with his son, or adopted orphan, at a banquet in the presence of Mārib's chief men. Complaining of the indignity he had suffered, he vowed to sell his lands and leave the city. Before doing this he warned of an impending flood. This was sufficient to persuade a large number of Himyarite families to keep him company.

Iram is a very different tale. In fact, one wonders whether the Quranic text is detailed enough to attach it to any specific story. Some disaster is clearly indicated by *sūrah* lxxxix.6–8: "Hast thou not seen how thy Lord did with 'Ād – with Iram of the columns, the like of which has not been created in the land?"

Commentators and historians were to argue hotly about whom, or where, Iram might signify and how the disaster came about. Iram occurs as a tribal name of 'Adites, who were in Northern Arabia as well as the Yemen.[5] A sober reappraisal by Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) suggested that a disaster which befell an affluent urban society, or even a nomadic group who lived in tents,[6] was the true subject of this lesson of scripture, not a specific folly.

But, correct or incorrect, his reinterpretation was already too late. As early as Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī[7] (d. 114/732), the verse was seen as an allusion to the exploits of Shaddād b. 'Ād, a mythical conqueror of lands between Morocco and Tibet. In Mārib "he built the noble palace which is named by some storytellers 'Iram of the columns'". The fabulous abode was a storehouse of riches. Its floors were of red and white marble.[8] "Beneath it he placed cisterns and conduits down which poured the water of the [Mārib] dam."[9] Curiously, this account omits to mention the clamour from Heaven which, it was believed, destroyed Shaddād and his people and transformed his terrestrial place into a city hidden from human sight. On the contrary, Shaddād b. 'Ād died after having lived five hundred years. "A cave was dug for him in Jabal Shimām [Shibām?]. He was buried there, and all his wealth was placed there."[10] This lacuna,

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[5] See Musil, *Northern Heǧaz*, 273–5, and Lyall, *Ancient Arabian poetry*, 120–1.

[6] Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, I, 26–8, and *EI²*, "Iram".

[7] *Tījān*, 65–9. Nonetheless it should be added that on 34 *'imād* ("columns") is specifically interpreted as "spinal columns" or "loins" (*aṣlāb*), alluding thereby to the giant stature of the Iramites, not to a structure.

[8] Red or white foam was believed by the Semites to exist on the spot where the foundations of the earth were to be laid.

[9] Basset, *Loqmân*, xiii–xxiii.

[10] Cf. Hamdānī, *Antiquities*, 71.

together with the omission of Shaddād b. ʿĀd by name in the *sūrah*, makes
it highly doubtful that the brief Quranic reference indicates the fantasy
which probably evolved later.

The Prophet, throughout the *sūrah* in question, was recalling stories
which had a wide circulation and which doomed the pride of man. It is
perhaps noteworthy that Pharaoh "of the stakes" (referring to the tortures
he inflicted, or to the stability of his realm? – many interpretations are
possible) is called *Firʿawn dhū ʾl-awtād* ("tent pegs"), only three verses later
in the *sūrah*. If Ibn Khaldūn's "tent theory" had been intended, then surely
the attachment of *awtād* to the Iram "nomads" would have avoided
ambiguity. The rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) of the Qurʾān dictated the choice of
words and influenced the imagery. Since tales of ʿĀd, Thamūd and
Pharaonic Egypt were legion, albeit confused, probably some general
reference to the puniness of human nature displayed in grandeur is the
essential message. However, the commentator or the romancer had
innumerable answers to the question of locality posed by the curious or
perplexed.

If these two tales are typical examples of Quranic concision, the
missions of Hūd and Ṣāliḥ to ʿĀd and Thamūd are revealed in slightly more
extensive narrative which seems specifically to introduce selected Arabian
stories of "prophets"[11] in Arabia prior to Muḥammad. Superficially they
seem to lie outside the mainstream of revelation from Abraham through
Moses and Jesus to Muḥammad himself. Both Hūd and Ṣāliḥ are described
as "messengers". They were sent to communities of giants or semi-
troglodytes. It is by no means certain how genuinely "Arab" – at least
linguistically – either were regarded by Muḥammad's fellow countrymen.
In the case of Hūd, lineal links with ʿEber (ʿĀbir) of Genesis (see *sūrah*
x) are alleged, but it is above all with the pre-historic Ḥaḍramawt,[12] more
especially Hūd's sepulchre at Qabr Hūd, that Quranic reference and
genuinely Arabian story are most closely inter-related.

Hūd, whose name gives its title to *sūrah* xi, also appears in vii, x, xxvi,
xlvi, xlix. He was sent to the giants of ʿĀd, proud and unbelieving, who
rejected him and were punished by a three-year drought. According to
Arabian fables, some pre-Islamic, others clearly later, the ʿAdites sent a
delegation to pray at Mecca. Three clouds appeared, one red, one white
and one black. A certain Qayl,[13] a member of the delegation, had to choose
a cloud. He picked the last, and a storm destroyed the ʿAdites, save for
Hūd.

[11] For the relationship of "prophets" to "messengers", cf. Watt, *Islam*, 62–71.
[12] See Serjeant, "Hūd", 121–79.
[13] *EI²*, "Ḳayl", and Basset, *Loqmân*, xi–xxiii.

Ṣāliḥ appears in *sūrahs* vii, xi and xxvi. He was sent by God to Thamūd, who succeeded 'Ād. Tent dwellers in summer and rock-house dwellers in winter, Thamūd likewise rejected his counsel. His proof of divine calling was a she-camel which came out of a rock. It was unfed, unwatered and lamed by these unbelievers. The camel died; then Ṣāliḥ, in wrath, told them to hide three days in their houses (xi.65). According to the commentators Ṣāliḥ said that their faces would change colour each day, first yellow, then red, then black. A storm or earthquake occurred. The following morning they all lay dead. Ṣāliḥ escaped destruction by transportation to Palestine. Sinai bedouin tradition connects him with a tomb located in the Peninsula.

The triple repetition of days, clouds and colours in the stories of Hūd and Ṣāliḥ provide a certain unity of detail, besides the obvious unity of theme. Yet the underlying unity is far greater, hinting at a "prophetic" prototype, Hūd and Ṣāliḥ being variants of the same. At Qabr Hūd is a rock " of the she-camel " which properly belongs to the story of Ṣāliḥ, whose tomb is said by the Ḥaḍramīs to be situated near Shibām.[14] E. H. Palmer suggested Moses as the archetypal prophet. But perhaps the archetype is more ancient still.[15]

Whatever the truth about Ṣāliḥ, episodes in the life of Moses are typical of several Quranic biographies. In Suranic *qiṣaṣ* a prophetic seer is sometimes pitted against a Babylonian or Pharaonic tyrant aided by magic arts. Pre-Islamic Arabia knew many stories of heroes who outwitted their opponents for the supernatural. This confrontation provided an excuse for later commentators to introduce bizarre narrative and extra-Arabian exoticism. The conflict between godliness and tyranny is, for example, first brought out in the story of the young Abraham,[16] who, because he rejected idolatry, was cast into a burning fiery furnace. Seeing him miraculously saved, the ruler, Nimrod (Namrūd),[17] who had persecuted him, believed. Later commentaries expanded the story further. In his pride, Nimrod built a tower to climb to Heaven. His plans were thwarted, but he still persisted in his design by an aerial ascent in a chest borne by four monster birds.[18] Eventually his "aircraft" fell upon a mountain. This, said the commentators, was why, according to the Qur'ān, it shook to its foundations.[19]

In the Quranic account of Moses and the Israelites the tyrant was Pharaoh. Later commentators argued that he was an Amalekite, possibly

[14] Serjeant, "Hūd", 129.
[15] *The Koran*, tr. Palmer, 132, note 1, and Lane, *Selections*, 14–15; Musil, *Northern Heǧāz*, 291–2, and Lyall, *Ancient Arabian poetry*, 120–1.
[16] See *EI²*, "Ibrahim".   [17] See *EI¹*, "Namrūd".
[18] In pseudo-Callisthenes, such an "aircraft" was used by Alexander when he wished to "measure the earth".   [19] Qur'ān, xiv.46.

of 'Adite stock.[20] This ethnic link was important for their dove-tailing of most of the Arabian punishment stories into non-Arabian, more particularly Egyptian, "historical" romance. There is, for example, a cross-reference to Nimrod, while the chief minister Hāmān,[21] Pharaoh's evil adviser, pairs Aaron (Hārūn), the *wazīr* of Moses, and also Āṣaf, the wise minister of Solomon who, despite human feelings, is the Quranic epitome of beneficent pomp and majesty. Despite much substance common to both Bible and Qur'ān, there was particular scope for commentators to highlight intrinsic Arabian ideas.

The rod of Moses, for example, became an object of unlimited fascination to commentators. When changed into a *jinnī* in the shape of a serpent it was able to swallow stones and trees. When it was cast before Pharaoh, no ordinary serpent was made manifest.[22] It was hairy, and when it opened its mouth its jaws were four score cubits asunder. When it laid its lower jaw on the ground, its upper jaw reached to the top of the palace or Pharaoh's throne.

In *sūrah* xi.31 Pharaoh's plans to kill Moses are condemned by a believing man of the people: "I fear for you as on the day of the 'confederates',[23] like the wont of the people of Noah and 'Ād and Thamūd and those who came after them." Here the Prophet either had the warning of his contemporary Arabian audience solely in his mind, in which case this verse, as occurs elsewhere in the Qur'ān, underlines the entirely subordinate importance of chronology in Quranic narrative, or, alternatively, the Prophet and his contemporaries genuinely believed that the destruction of 'Ād and Thamūd predated the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and that Hūd and Ṣāliḥ preceded both Abraham and Moses.

As the struggle between Moses and Pharaoh unfolds, so references to *qiṣaṣ* about earlier or later characters predict the inevitable outcome. The ambition of Nimrod to build a tower to Heaven in the story of Abraham is repeated in the encounter between Moses and Pharaoh. In xi.38–40, "Pharaoh said, 'O Hāmān, build for me a tower, that I may reach the avenues, the avenues of the Heavens, and ascend into the God of Moses, for verily I think him a liar.'" The artifice of Pharaoh ended in predictable ruin. Pharaoh's tower, like that of Nimrod – the biblical tower of Babel – was expanded into a fantasy by the commentators. Hāmān is accredited with the employment of 50,000 men in the tower building,

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[20] For the relationship between the Pharaoh in the story of Abraham and the Pharoah in the story of Moses, see Vaux, *Abrege,* 320–7 and 388–402.

[21] See *EI*², "Hāmān".

[22] Cf. the threat of the serpent of Pharaoh cited in Vaux, *Abrégé,* 395 with the Egyptian myth of Apophis, the enemy of Re.　　　　　　　　[23] On "confederates", cf. Watt, *Islam,* 72–5.

which reached such heights that workmen could no longer stand on it. Pharaoh ascended the tower and threw a javelin towards Heaven. Upon seeing this javelin stained with blood he boasted that he had killed the God of Moses, but, at sunset, God sent the angel Gabriel who, with a brush of his wing, demolished the tower. It destroyed a million men in the king's army.

The recurrence of symbols, such as palaces, towers, ladders, dams, rivers, caves of treasure, ways on earth, in sky and sea, ropes, measuring devices and struggles between dragons and men, serpents and magicians, show that Quranic narratives, as they are extant in its text and without regard to later elaboration, are grounded in the whole corpus of Semitic and oriental cosmological literature, exemplified for example in pseudo-Callisthenes, the Book of Enoch and other Syriac or Persian texts.[24]

So it does not seem incongruous that Moses should appear in *sūrah* xviii – the chapter of the "Cave of Seven Sleepers". It is among the richest in its introduction of *qiṣaṣ* and colourful episodes. One stimulus may have been the enmity between Muḥammad and the storyteller Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith. This allegedly motivated the revelation of this *sūrah*. According to the *Sīrah* (biography of the Prophet) of Ibn Isḥāq,[25] Rabbinical circles in Medina disclosed that the test of Muḥammad's prophethood could be found in his knowledge of the story of the "Seven Sleepers" and about "the mighty traveller who reached the confines of East and West". The latter may have suggested the association of Moses, his youthful servant (Joshua or Alexander's cook),[26] and a servant of God (al-Khaḍir) in an otherwise obscure relationship.

At the world's end, where two seas met (perhaps to be interpreted as the Gulf of Suez, al-Baḥrayn or the Straits of Gibraltar) the young servant of Moses lost a fish. This act of forgetfulness led to a meeting between Moses and God's servant, usually said by commentators to be al-Khaḍir.[27] The latter tested the patience of Moses, who persisted in seeking to fathom his knowledge. Three inexplicable acts by al-Khaḍir followed. First he sank a boat with its crew, next he slew a boy, and lastly – with the help of Moses – he raised a wall about to collapse. Moses was rebuked for his

[24] Watt, *Islam*, 78–83, *sūrah* xxii.45, and Serjeant, "Hūd", 147. A link between the Quranic reference to al-Qaṣr al-Mashīd and al-Bi'r al-Mu'aṭṭal and the 'Abbasid versions of the "tale of the Copper City" is provided in Zuhrī, *Jughrāfiyyah*, 266–7. The Quranic verse is explained by the (Maydūm?) pyramid.

[25] Cf. Guillaume, *Life*, 136–40. If Rabbinical circles are the primary source of themes it is curious that no reference is made to the meeting with the Brahmins/Rabbis. None of the Quranic passages has any especially Jewish connections. Ibn Isḥaq's reference to Egyptian/Greek sources (*Life*, 139) and Ibn Hishām's frank identification with Alexander of Macedon (*Life*, 719) underline Muslim difficulties in agreeing upon a definitive identification.

[26] See *EI²*, "al-Khaḍir".

[27] See Tha'labī, *Qiṣaṣ*, 125, 190ff.

insistent demands for rational explanations. Answers were eventually provided by al-Khaḍir:

As for the boat, it belonged to [ten] poor folk who toiled in the sea. I wished to damage it, since a pirate king [who was an unbeliever][28] was behind it. He seized every sound ship and forcibly acquired it. As for the boy, his parents were true believers. But I was afraid lest he grieve them by a [predestined] rebellious nature and by unbelief [which would punish him with hell-fire]. I desired their Lord to give them in exchange a better son than he, [or a daughter who would be a wife of a prophet] closer to them in filial affection. As for the wall, it was the property of two orphan lads in the city. Beneath it was treasure [of gold and silver] which belonged to them both. Their father was a righteous man. The Lord wished them to reach puberty and then take out their treasure as a mercy from their Lord. I did not act according to my own whim and fancy. Such is the interpretation of those things which shocked you and strained your patience.[29]

The same *sūrah* offers an abbreviated version of the epic of the "two-horned" (Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, that is to say Alexander), "the measurer of the earth". The introduction of elements apparently derived from pseudo-Callisthenes into scripture is unique to the Qur'ān. There is little doubt that despite the widespread use of this title in the Ancient East, and in indigenous names and local tales of pre-Islamic Arabia,[30] the essential framework of the Quranic *qiṣṣah* – sketchy though it be – was drawn from a Syriac or Greek version of the Alexander Romance (see above, pp. 161–3). The juxtaposition of the tale of Moses and al-Khaḍir in the same *sūrah* may, to a degree, be coincidental. Yet as the pattern of this classical hero's exploits was transferred *en bloc* to kings of the Yemen by later romancers, so al-Khaḍir became identified with Philemon, the counsellor of the "two-horned". Hence two stories, which in the Qur'ān share one *sūrah*, became inseparably paired in profane literature.

The Romance of Alexander in Arabic has an obscure history. Its presumed author, 'Umārah b. Zayd,[31] lived in the second half of the second century of the *hijrah* (*c.* A.D. 767–815). But the *Tījān* of Wahb b. Munabbih is to a considerable extent based on it. The Romance of Alexander was widely quoted by storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*) and by commentators. Many of the *quṣṣāṣ* were also traditionists. Islamic and non-Islamic written Arabic sources for this story-cycle, and others dating from this period, are confirmed, for example, by the Shī'ite Ibn Bābūyah (d. 381/991). Among his authorities he cites one 'Abdullāh b. Sulaymān, who lived early in the

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[28] Usually named Julandā (b. Karkar?), perhaps a king of Oman and the Gulf, but apparently located later in Algeciras. See Al-Hajji, *Jughrāfiyyah*, 118.

[29] Cf. *sūrah* xviii.78–81.

[30] See Nicholson, *Literary history*, 18, and *EI²*, "Dhū 'l-Karnayn".

[31] See Anderson, *Alexander's gate*, 28–31 and 68.

second/eighth century, and who asserted that he had read of al-Khaḍir and Dhū 'l-Qarnayn in "God's books" – the Qur'ān and the sacred scriptures of the "People of the Book" (*Ahl al-Kitāb*). Iraq was probably a key centre for exchange of ideas and translations. It is noteworthy that Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith, the Prophet's rival in this context, learnt his legends in al-Ḥīrah.

The Umayyads had an archaeologist's obsession in trying to locate the sites of Alexander's campaigns, despite the fact that the Qur'ān does not categorically mention him by this name. He is a warrior king, a "measurer of the earth"[32] who arrives in the far west, where the sun sets in a hot and muddy spring. His steps take him to troglodytes in the east, and north to the realm of Gog and Magog, where he erects a barrier of iron and brass between two mountains.[33] These few points of reference were enough to induce the Umayyad prince and general Maslamah b. 'Abd al-Malik (d. 122/740) to explore regions adjacent to the province of al-Jazīrah (northern Iraq) and Ādharbāyjān. He reputedly visited Alexander's fortifications against Gog and Magog (as mentioned in *sūrah* xviii.91–7) and the Cave of Darkness of the Seven Sleepers (xviii.5–20).

All this activity, both literary and exploratory, is indicative of the dynamic spell Quranic *qiṣaṣ* cast upon Mu'āwiyah and his Umayyad successors. The researches of Nabia Abbott, and study of Arabic literary papyri, show a rapid cultural adaptation and evolution in early Islam. Nabia Abbott provisionally concludes that "The much favoured ninth century must yield to the comparatively obscure and much neglected eighth the first Arabic literary versions of the Syriac *Book of Adam and Eve*, the Greek *Romance of Alexander*, and the Pahlavi *Haẓār Afsānah*, better known under the titles *Thousand Nights* and Arabian Nights."[34] As for the Quranic text itself and the source of its narratives, debate continues regarding the existence of pre-Islamic Arabic versions of Old Syriac prototypes of these tales. Hellenism as a force for pictorial ideas in Umayyad times is shown in the paintings of Quṣayr 'Amrah castle in Jordan, where the foes of Islam are portrayed amid the sensuality of the personification of Poetry, History,

[32] See Guillaume, *Life*, 139; "Thaur b. Yazīd from Khālid b. Mad'an al-Kalā'ī, who was a man who reached Islamic times, told me that the Apostle was asked about Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, and said, 'He is an angel who measured the earth beneath by ropes.'" Compare the image of this person with references throughout the Book of Ezekiel, and in particular with the "measurer" in chapter 40.

[33] See *EI*¹, "Yādjudj and Mādjūdj".

[34] See Abbott, *Studies*, where the Romance of Alexander, the "Cave of Treasure", the Syriac *Book of Adam and Eve* and the whole problem of transmission are fully discussed. The importance of Lakhmid al-Ḥīrah – the haunt of Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith and other Meccan colleagues – may have been crucial. It can hardly be coincidental that King al-Mundhir b. Mā' al-Sama' al-Lakhmī was called "Dhū 'l-Qarnayn" and that court life was open to Hellenistic influences.

Philosophy and Victory, Andromeda and Cassiopeia. Even a winged cupid shares a place. The tale of Adam's burial in a "Cave of Treasures" reflects the cosmopolitan influences on the burgeoning Arabic mind.

Quranic *qiṣṣah* thus covers a much wider range of topics than traumatic disasters or epics. There are gentler tales and romances which are prominent in the stories of Jesus, son of Mary, or Joseph and his adventures in Egypt. The former, the *Masīḥ*, as well as being a prophet (*nabī*), being born of a virgin, being rescued from his crucifixion by the execution of his likeness, and being declared the herald of the last judgement and slayer of the false Messiah, spoke in his cradle (xix.29), raised the dead, healed the sick and breathed life into clay birds, with God's permission (iii.46ff. and 110ff.). The pre-eminent figure of Jesus as a healer who lived between two thickets is brought out in a reference attributed to the Prophet in a passage of the *Sīrah* of Ibn Isḥāq.[35] Jesus was the prophet who requested God to send down a table from Heaven (v.112–15).

Here in the Qur'ān there is clear evidence to suggest that the Prophet was aware of the importance, if not the exact function, of the rites of the Eucharist in Eastern Christianity. The Messianic table recalls the outspread table of the twenty-third psalm and hints at the manifold legends of Christendom about the quest for the Holy Grail and the select company of the Round Table. The Quranic table was said to be the colour of wine or blood. It descended between two clouds, akin to the setting for Christ's Transfiguration. Later commentators further expanded this table miracle. Reports varied as to the provisions laid upon it. There were either nine cakes of bread and nine fishes, or bread and flesh, or fruits of Paradise. A woven fabric of miracles derived from the feeding of the five thousand and the destruction of the Gadarene swine was affixed to this single episode. Certain commentators, however, were more academically discerning and were not attracted by the pictorial or fanciful. In their view the table did not descend. The Quranic passage was only a parable.

The Apostles were sent to Antioch, and one of their converts, Ḥabīb the Carpenter, was stoned there (xxxvi.12–28), but the *Sīrah* of Ibn Isḥāq[36] credits the Prophet with the disclosure of a far wider propagation of the Messiah's teaching by his Apostles. Those who had to go on a short journey were pleased and accepted, those who had a long journey before them were displeased and refused to go. Jesus complained of them to God. Fortified with the gift of tongues, Peter and Paul went to Rome, Andrew and Matthew to the land of the cannibals, Thomas to the land of Babel, Philip to Carthage, John to Ephesus, the city of "the young men of the

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[35] See Guillaume, *Life*, 98 and 272–7.   [36] *Life*, 653.

cave", James to Jerusalem, Bartholemew to Arabia, and Simon to the land of the Berbers.

Sūrah xii is not only a tapestry of *qiṣaṣ*, but is also arguably the most beautiful of all Quranic chapters. Contained within its span is the whole biblical story of Joseph, and in addition, a wealth of colourful touches which give extra point, and highlight the tale. There is, for example, the temptress, wife of Joseph's Egyptian buyer, whose lady friends, dazzled by Joseph's beauty, cut their fingers instead of the food they were eating at a banquet. Certain of these additions have been traced to Haggadic origins, for example the conflict of emotion in Joseph's heart in regard to the temptress and the sign of his innocence. If this *sūrah* ignores names and times, except those of Joseph and his father Jacob (Ya'qūb), Arabic legends which evolved, based upon the *sūrah*, supplied them.

Certain of these legends seem to have grown independent of the Qur'ān of Haggada. Near Jacob's house is a tree which sprouts a twig whenever a son is born, but does not do so at the birth of Joseph. Gabriel, in answer to Jacob's prayer, brings a fruit-bearing twig from Paradise. Joseph, ill treated by his brothers and with his cloak torn, is given another by Gabriel, the very cloak by which Abraham was protected from the heat of the furnace. A wolf brought to Jacob by Joseph's brothers miraculously speaks and declares its innocence. Other accounts tell of Joseph's mistrust of love, which from all and sundry has heaped misfortune upon him. Joseph's sarcophagus is sunk in the Nile.[37]

Among the most colourful of all Quranic stories is the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. The latter, with his uncountable wealth, his horses, his knowledge of the speech of ants and other creatures, his control of the jinn and the winds, was a figure of fantasy and great appeal to the atavistic Umayyad imagination. The Queen of Sheba – Bilqīs in Arabian fable, though left unnamed in the Qur'ān – at once established a link between biblical story and semi-nomad taste, and in all likelihood was indigenous to Ethiopia. Offered to early Yemenite or Syrian romancers, her affair was ideal for pictorial embellishment.

Ancient Eastern myth knew of many a seduction or erotic relationship brought about through water and divestment, whether it be by bathing, as in the Sumerian myth of Enlil and Ninlil,[38] or by the unclothing of Ishtar (Ninlil), or by washing, as in the biblical story of David and Bathsheba, or by drinking, as in the Ethiopic version of the story of Solomon's seduction of Mâkĕdâ. The test of the faith of Bilqīs, her entry into Solomon's presence, was above a sheet of water, covered with glass. In

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[37] See *EI¹*, "Yūsuf b. Ya'qūb".   [38] See Kramer, *Sumer*, 127–52.

Arabian myth, Bilqīs was not only a queen in a patrilineal succession, but the daughter of a Himyarite father, al-Hadhād,[39] and a mother who was a *jinnī*, once a gazelle rescued by her father.

Sūrah xxxvii.41–5 briefly introduces the royal pair. Her existence is disclosed to Solomon by a hoopoe.[40] Misguided by Satan, the queen worships the sun. Solomon's summons to her she rejects, but her throne is instantaneously transported to Solomon, not by a demonic *jinnī* (who volunteers), but by the action of Āsaf, Solomon's *wazīr*. The queen is tested. She enters Solomon's court, reckons it to be a watery abyss and uncovers her hairy legs. She repents of her disbelief and resigns herself to God.

The Qur'ān does not confirm popular belief that the queen married Solomon, and later Muslim commentators denied that she did. Compared with many oriental versions, reference to the episode is brief and brings moral lessons to the fore. But the fact that space is devoted to the encounter, and that both figures do meet, stimulated the expansion of this *qiṣṣah* into cycles, and from cycles eventually into the substance of literary works wherein major importance was attached to the relationship of this biblical potentate with an Arabian queen.

This relationship is elaborated considerably by Wahb b. Munabbih, for example.[41] As a wife, mother of David (Menyelik) and Jeroboam, separated from her lord, it was reported that she dwelt in Mārib, the irrigation city in much Arabian storytelling. There Solomon used to visit Bilqīs once a month and stay with her for seven nights. Irrigation and virility are symbolically linked. Then Solomon used to journey in the earth. He appointed demons to work for Bilqīs. They taught arts and crafts to the people of the Yemen who carried them with them on their wanderings. Solomon commanded the wind, and it bore him to al-Aḥqāf, the burial site of the "prophet" Hūd. He entered the tomb and saluted him, then he departed and passed over the sea, propelled by supernatural powers at his command.

Thus Hūd – who long predated Solomon – was a superior to the wise king, himself genealogically related to biblical patriarchs of old. Both in these later stories and in the text of the Qur'ān there is, as has been noted, constant correlation, both selective and subtle, of certain key figures who foreshadow the Prophet himself.

Events in the Qur'ān which refer to portents of the Prophet's birth, or

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[39] See Nashwān, *Shams*, 109; cf. Jurhumī, *Tījān*, 135–7 for a variant.

[40] *Hudhud*. It is curious that in all these cycles there is a recurrence of *hudhud*. The root letters are found in al-Hadhād (father of Bilqīs), Hūd (the "prophet") and Hādūn b. Hūd. Is this simply a coincidence?   [41] Jurhumī, *Tījān*, 137–69.

are pertinent to his mission, have peculiar significance and potential. The early *Sīrah* literature was to introduce relevant tales of prophecies by seers like Shiqq and Saṭīḥ as an intrinsic part of its content. The Qur'ān was a key source. *Sūrah* cv, one of the shortest chapters in the Qur'ān, was believed to relate to the story of the Ethiopian "masters of the elephant" who on their way to destroy the Ka'bah were thwarted by God, who sent down successive flocks of birds[42] which bombarded the enemy with baked clay pellets like peas and lentils, and made the Ethiopian force resemble devoured blades of corn. The episode in question, "the year of the elephant" (*'ām al-fīl*) is, by tradition, A.D. 570/571, the year of the Prophet's birth. The Ethiopian ruler and invader, Abrahah, was compelled to abandon his destructive enterprise, and divine intervention was given at the behest of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Prophet's grandfather. In the *Sīrah* it is said that Abrahah's elephant, called Maḥmūd, knelt when facing Mecca, but advanced when facing other directions.[43]

Another creature is also prominent in the story of the Prophet's *hijrah* from Mecca to Medina (A.D. 622). *Sūrah* xxix introduces the parable of the spider's house, its web weak and fragile, the weaver being compared to those who take other patrons but God. Muslim folk-tale nonetheless tells that, while Muḥammad was hiding from his pursuers in a cave, a spider covered its mouth with her web, recalling Jewish traditions concerning David when he fled from Saul. Such local elaborations were to be attached more and more to Muḥammad, as Islamic theology and cosmology pursued the debate about his ultimate status.

This debate in particular gave the story of the night journey (*isrā'*) of Muḥammad a pre-eminence among the narratives. *Sūrah* xvii, which proclaims the Prophet's journey by night from the Ka'bah and Ḥaram in Mecca to the remotest sanctuary (by tradition the al-Aqṣā mosque in Jerusalem), is not a *qiṣṣah*, as, for example, is the story of the "Seven Sleepers" in the Ephesus cave, or that of Esdras or al-Khaḍir who, according to *sūrah* ii.259–60, slept for a century. A *qiṣṣah* which is barely potential in xvii was to expand into the transcendental *Mi'rāj*[44] of the Prophet, his heavenly ascent. In countless ways, at a later date, this episode emerged as the supreme topic for narrative and cosmology with regard to the Prophet's person. Yet elements of the story had already been foreshadowed in the text of the Qur'ān. An ascent to Heaven to reach the

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[42] Regarding the myth and history of this episode, see Moburg, *Himyarites*, O'Leary, *Arabia*, 1927, 146–8, and Guillaume, *Life*, 696.

[43] See Guillaume, *Life*, 21–30. Later this episode was interpreted as a pestilence and much of the imagery was rationally explained.

[44] See *EI²*, "Isrā'" and "Mi'rādj", and Guillaume, *Life*, 181–7.

god of Moses was the ambition of Pharaoh, or those who desired to hear the heavenly voice (vi.35 and lii.38). The *qiṣaṣ* in the Qur'ān were not only of didactic value or a spiritual solace for the early Muslims. They were a rich store of ideas which had a dynamic potential for Muslim thinkers in every age and in all parts of the Muslim world.

CHAPTER 9

ASPECTS OF THE QUR'ĀN TODAY

At the present time, the influence of the Qur'ān on Arabic literature is unobtrusive, yet at the same time considerable. It is unobtrusive because no Arab writer would think of reproducing the style of the Qur'ān, even though for many it remains their most important model. It must be concluded that the dogma of *i'jāz*[1] explains such an attitude: one cannot imitate the Qur'ān. In this respect it can be said that most modern novels and poems in free verse, not to mention scientific treatises, are closer to similar Western works than to the sacred book of Islam.

However, the influence of the Qur'ān on Arabic literature remains considerable. Through the ideas it contains, it acts as a guiding light and as a code of faith and knowledge in the whole area of religious works. Its supremacy, where form is concerned, is manifested by the delight of authors in alluding frequently to the Qur'ān and in quoting liberally from its verses in their writings.

The fact that social life in the Islamic world and the personal life of much of the population is so profoundly affected by the Qur'ān is clearly reflected in literature. How can one describe everyday life, be it in reality or in fiction, how can one approach legal, moral or theological problems without being obliged to look for support in the Qur'ān? Even those who claim non-religious or anti-religious tendencies cannot escape its supremacy, in that they quote it or refer to it in order to challenge it.

As for textual quotations (following a well-established tradition in the Islamic world, that of the *taḍmīn* or "insertion"), these can be made with two aims. Sometimes writers wish to show their admiration for the Qur'ān by expressing their own ideas through celebrated verses. This is the procedure so many preachers adopt in their Friday sermons, which are laced with Quranic texts and *Ḥadīth*. At other times they may play upon the sensitivity of a cultured milieu in which the merest reference to the Quranic text strikes up extraordinary reverberations. They thus take advantage of the extremely widespread knowledge of the Quranic text and

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[1] The Qur'ān defies all creatures, man and jinn, to compose a text which can compare with a single *sūrah* (cf. ii.23, xvii.88).

of the fact that everyone is familiar with and respects it. In his novel *al-Saqqā' māt*, Cairo, 1952 ("The water-carrier is dead "),[2] Yūsuf al-Sibā'ī describes a working-class area of Cairo, where people are poor and resigned to their lot, but full of gentleness and humour and where the simple joys of life are to the fore. And in order to create atmosphere, he places on the walls of one of these simple houses a significant verse of the Qur'ān which is far more telling than any detailed description would be: "The patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress, it is they who are the sincere; they are the God-fearing" (ii.177). Long and continuous association with the Qur'ān has created responses amongst the masses as in cultured circles; writers have experience of these responses and so are able to derive psychological and literary effects from them.

A more detailed examination will enable us to distinguish clearly the different aspects of the question.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE QUR'ĀN ON CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

First and foremost, the Qur'ān, by its very existence, has preserved classical Arabic. Would it have continued as it has for fourteen centuries, despite the natural tendency of languages to develop and divide and despite the efforts of foreign powers bent on imposing their own culture, if it had not been bound up with the Qur'ān?

The existence and expansion of Islam rest upon a knowledge of the Qur'ān; they therefore need an environment favourable to its study and to the study of the Quranic sciences. The Arabs, and even Muslim Turks from simple backgrounds, resisted the programmes of anti-Arab Turkization which took place in the Ottoman empire after the success of the Young Turks (1908–10). Similarly in Algeria, between 1930 and 1955, the ulema struggled in defence of Arabic, the very existence of which was threatened by the encroachment of French.

And one must remember that, all over the world, Muslim missionary organizations consider the spread of Arabic as one of the essential bases for their work. Hence the importance given to the creation of Arabic language schools, to the training and sending out of Arabic teachers and to the printing and distribution of Arabic school books. The existence of literary Arabic as a language owes much to the Qur'ān.

There are even cases where religious zeal, inspired by devoted attachment to the Qur'ān, has aided rejuvenation of the language and made it more

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[2] For a review of this work, cf. *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientales du Caire*, I, 1954, 143–9.

attractive. Consider the present-day style of typical works of religious instruction in the Arab world: the works of Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966) are an example of this genre. We have here the product of a long labour of simplification undertaken by certain writers, including Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) in Egypt and continued by the Muslim Brothers. In their faithfulness to the Qur'ān, they were resolved to preserve an Arabic which was classical and, in a sense, Quranic. Moreover, their anxiety to be understood compelled them to write clearly and simply in order to reach as many readers as possible. This twofold concern broke down the affected embellishments of the older rhymed prose, which disappeared towards the end of the nineteenth century.

So then, when the question of the influence of the Qur'ān on literature arises, a much more delicate matter claims our attention. The Qur'ān seeks above all to guide the faithful on the straight path. It does not relate past history for its own sake, as would a historical document, but it seeks primarily to extract precise lessons from the events of the past. Many passages expound themes which preach the greatness of God, the Judgement Day, etc. The mundane values have little importance, and an account like that of the birth of Jesus, in *sūrah* xix, is told as though it took place outside the realms of time and space, being set in the East, far from Mary's family, under a palm tree, beside a stream. We are outside history; the only things that count are God's gifts, His blessings and His miracles. And it can be asked how much the attitude of mind that such a style supposes has affected the mentality of Arab writers. Has there been a direct influence? Or is it on the other hand a certain cast of mind which has predisposed writers to feel at ease when they employ the Quranic style?

Likewise, how much has showing one's admiration for the text of the Qur'ān by endless quotations encouraged the practice of referring constantly to authorities? It is not easy to say.

One may also wonder if the thought of the Qur'ān preoccupies Arab writers. The answer varies according to specific cases.

Certainly those responsible for the teaching of Arabic literature consider knowledge of the Qur'ān as an indispensable element in students' education. Literature classes intended for all students, be they Muslim or non-Muslim, require the study of Quranic texts.

But apart from this concern with general culture, preoccupation with the Qur'ān appears above all in writings which deal directly or indirectly with religion. A few examples, taken from amongst numerous others, will show this. Several of the works of the Egyptian 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād (d. 1964)[3] can be placed in this category. In particular he has given us a

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[3] On al-'Aqqād, cf. Dayf, *Ma' al-'Aqqād*.

series of works on Muslim religious thought, namely *al-Falsafah al-qur'āniyyah* ("Quranic philosophy"). Other essays describe some great figures of religious history, as Islam, and particularly the Qur'ān, see them: for instance, *'Abqariyyat al-Masīḥ* ("The spirit of Christ"), or *'Abqariyyat Muḥammad* ("The spirit of Muḥammad").

In the realm of historical novels, the Egyptian 'Abd al-Hamīd Gūdah al-Saḥḥār has undertaken to present a series of great figures of Islam, from Abraham to Muḥammad. His *al-Masiḥ 'Isā b. Maryam* ("Life of Christ"), for example, conforms to the information which the Qur'ān gives us about Jesus, even if he fills in the blanks with the help of Gospel details and even if he finally sees the Passion through the vicissitudes contained in the spurious gospel of Barnabas.[4]

Present-day transformation of society is a theme upon which several modern authors have dwelt. So it is that Maḥmūd Diyāb, an Egyptian novelist and dramatist, published in 1971 (when he was about forty years old) the first volume of an intended series, *Aḥzān madīnah* ("A town's sadness"). This remarkable, delightful and fine novel, one of the best which has appeared in recent years, uses the town of Ismailiya, on the Suez Canal, where the author spent his childhood, as a symbol of the dramatic events into which modern Egypt has been drawn against her will: urbanization, with the transition of village solidarity to an attitude of every man for himself on the part of the townspeople, the 1939–45 war, bombings, British soldiers' money ruining the economy, the black market, prostitution...In such a panorama the Qur'ān appears as one of the constituent elements of a society which is gradually to be replaced by another. The hero of the novel, a child, is seen in his family setting. On one occasion his mother is teaching him the *fātiḥah*, the first chapter of the Qur'ān, and smiles at him when he recites a verse without a mistake. For him, the author stresses, the *fātiḥah* was, and has remained, his mother's smile. The Qur'ān school also has a position of foremost importance in this traditional landscape.

Within ideologically committed literature, we again find the Qur'ān, but this time, it serves to describe a past which science is destined to supplant. In what is ostensibly a novel, *Awlād ḥāratnā* ("The children of our district"),[5] Najīb Maḥfūẓ in fact wanted to present a religious history of humanity. A number of characters who, in his work, appear to be inhabitants of Cairo, in fact represent the great prophets of the past: Adam, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad. The novel describes them in part from characteristics to be found in the Qur'ān, but only in part. The theme of

[4] Cf. Jomier, "Quatre ouvrages".
[5] The novel was first serialized in the daily *al-Ahrām* in Cairo. Its publication in one volume was vetoed by al-Azhar and the author turned to Beirut for publication in 1967. Cf. *MIDEO*, xi, 1972, 265–72.

the work is that the prophets have failed in their attempts to bring happiness to men. The latter continue to be exploited by their leaders, with the complicity of religious heads and the clergy. Only science is really able to free them. However, the work ends with a statement of failure; for science too has been used by tyrants to further their domination – an allusion to the atomic bomb, an instrument of oppression in the hands of capitalist powers.

This type of use of Quranic material is exceptional in the Islamic world. There is no point in dwelling here upon an early work by 'Izz al-Dīn Madanī published in Tunisia in the revue *al-Fikr* in about 1968, *al-Insān al-sifr*, which adheres to the very style of the Qur'ān in a way that a Muslim should never allow!

On the other hand, the transformation of present-day society prompts a good many orthodox writers to take up the pen in defence of the cause of Islam in the face of those who would too readily declare it outmoded. Their aim is to show how the Qu'rān answers the questions of the modern world. Sayyid Qutb was a thinker who wrote profusely and greatly influenced the Muslim Brothers, whose theologian and polemist he to some extent was. Towards the end of his life he wrote a work in which his whole philosophy is summed up. It is entitled *Ma'ālim fī 'l-tarīq* ("Landmarks on the way"). In it, one long chapter on the Qur'ān is addressed to man *qua* man, to unchanging man, whether he be from East or West, and offers the solution to the great problems of life. The theme of this uncompromising book is that of Islam as the third course, between the West in complete cultural and moral failure and Marxist socialism. In the name of the Qur'ān it condemns all nationalism. One could enumerate many works of this kind in the modern Muslim world, besides articles in journals.

REINTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'ĀN

The preceding examples will have shown the direction in which use of the Qur'ān by modern writers is moving. One may wonder whether these authors continue to regard the Qur'ān as did their ancestors or whether modern criticism has modified their position.

It seems in the first place that problems of historical criticism have not yet (in 1983) arisen in the Islamic world where the Qur'ān is concerned. The situation may well change rapidly, but at the moment commentators still confine themselves to external criticism by examining the chain of authorities (*isnād*). So far Islam has not yet known a crisis like the modernist crisis through which Catholicism passed at the beginning of the twentieth century, when historical method began to be applied to the deeds

related in the Bible. Religious writers continue to hold the traditional, very rigid concept of the revelation, conceived as the descent from Heaven of a pre-existing text, as a work dictated by the angel Gabriel to the Prophet, who receives it passively and is content to transmit it without adding anything of his own to the text. It is possible that the position may one day be relaxed.

In the meantime the senior secondary school pupils in Egypt will continue to learn that the text of the Qur'ān was taught to Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. Every year, during the month of Ramaḍān, Muhammad had his pieces of knowledge supervised by the angel Gabriel before whom he recited all that had been imparted to him up to that time. In the year of Muhammad's death, Gabriel set out the Qur'ān twice.[6]

At present, when a historical fact seems to be opposed to the text of the Qur'ān, it is not taken into account and the arguments of the sceptics about the relativity of human knowledge are put forward to refute it.

And yet, in December 1970, a special number of the Cairo monthly *al-Hilāl*, devoted to the Qur'ān, grouped together the Quranic texts in which the *wahy* (inspiration), was applied to people other than the prophets. This fact seemed to be an invitation to re-examine the theological standpoints on the question, and particularly the distinction between revelation and inspiration. But more progressive stands are very rare, or rather absolutely exceptional. There are only a few who think the notion that the Qur'ān was revealed by descending into the "heart" of Muhammad could allow a wider interpretation.[7]

A manifesto composed by Muhammad Arkoun, a Muslim intellectual of Algerian stock, and published as the preface to a French translation of the Qur'ān, is the most important text of any size that I know which tackles the problem of modern Quranic exegesis. Many points of view it contains still remain highly theoretical; they are clearly influenced by present-day tendencies of hermeneutics in the West.[8]

In fact the problem of the reinterpretation of the Qur'ān has rested above all on one or two particular points. At the root of everything is to be found the notion of the *i'jāz*, or the miraculous inimitability of the Qur'ān. In order to go beyond the level of a literary miracle and to bring forward arguments which might affect even those who do not speak Arabic, a certain number of Muslim thinkers have tried to show that the Qur'ān

[6] Cf. Barāniq, *al-Tarbiyah*, 108.

[7] Cf. Qur'ān, xxvi.192–6; also Rahmān, *Islam*, 25–9, where the author notes that the Qur'ān is entirely the word of God and equally entirely the word of Muhammad, a view arousing strong reactions.

[8] "Comment lire". Cf. also Hanafī, *Methodes*.

contains unsuspected riches. These thinkers hold that this fact, if inexplicable in human terms, ought to prove the divine origin of the Qur'ān.

One of the aspects of this apologetic presents what has been called the scientific exegesis of the Qur'ān, *al-tafsīr al-'ilmī*. This attitude of mind is not new and one of its most determined opponents in recent years, Professor Shaykh Amīn al-Khūlī (d. 1965) drew attention to its existence already in the works of the great mystic al-Ghazālī. It is based on a particular interpretation of the Quranic verse: "We have not neglected anything in the Book" (vi.38), in which it is assumed that the words "not anything" ought to have an absolute sense. If everything is contained in the Qur'ān, science, philosophy and modern discoveries ought also to be found there. For Amīn al-Khūlī, on the contrary, the comparison of this verse and another, "Verily we have brought them a Scripture which we expound with [full] knowledge [in order that it might be] a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe" (VII.52), shows that the Qur'ān has left nothing out in the realm of the religious truths destined to guide men. It is therefore absolutely out of the question to look in the Qur'ān for an indication of modern scientific discoveries.

The matter of this so-called scientific exegesis comes under consideration regularly.[9] It is taught seriously by the majority of primary school teachers and by Muslim teachers at the secondary level. It is taught in religious works and in manuals of religious instruction in schools. It has appeal and most people do not see its superficial nature. It has been used for finding in the Qur'ān Darwin's idea of evolution (explained by xiii.17). It was debated after the launching of the first Russian Sputnik in the autumn of 1957, when certain people wished to read into lv.33 the possibility of interplanetary journeys. It was debated again in Egypt around 1970 when Dr Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd, a doctor and man of letters who returned to the faith after a period of doubt, wrote a series of extremely vivid works which affected a large public, although in it he upheld this scientific exegesis. He was then taken to task by Bint al-Shāṭi' ('Ā'ishah 'Abd al-Raḥmān). Up till now those supporting the scientific exegesis do not seem to see that the allusions contained in the texts put forward are extremely general and vague. On the other hand they admit of a remarkable religious sense which deserves more limelight.

Following the same line and proceeding from the assumption that everything is contained in the Qur'ān, a great many writers have also wished to find in it all the values on which modern societies are based.

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[9] Cf. Arabic translation of *EI*[1], "Tafsīr"; *Liwā' al-Islām*, Cairo, XI, 1957, 518–23; *MIDEO*, IV, 1957, 269–79; Bint al-Shāṭi', *al-Qur'ān*; Ḥusayn, *al-Dhikr*, especially 59 and 182–90; Ṭabbārah, *Rūḥ*; Maḥmūd, *Muḥāwalah*.

Democracy has been linked with the so called "Verse of the Counsel", which is about men who perform the prayer and "whose affairs are a matter of counsel" (xlii. 38). Libertyi equality, justice etc. have been discussed with the aim of showing that twelve centuries before the French Revolution the Qur'ān was preaching the most modern principles. For the past fifteen years or so, the same procedure has been adopted with regard to socialism: it too is linked with verses of the Qur'ān.

One of the most significant crises took place in 1947 in Egypt, and concerned the interpretation of the Quranic narrations (al-qaṣaṣ). Muslims admit that in their traditions not all accounts of the past have the same value. And a reaction arose particularly against what are called the Isrā'īliyyāt, or Jewish legends which have found their way into Muslim works. On the other hand, the accounts in the Qur'ān itself have never been challenged outright, though in a doctoral thesis at the University of Cairo an assistant to the teacher of Quranic exegesis, Muḥammad Ahmad Khalaf Allāh, wished to evaluate the various Quranic accounts (see p. 216 above). That was in 1947. He submitted his thesis to the board of examiners beforehand; and after a very lively exchange of views, the examiners judged the work unacceptable and the examination did not take place. The matter made quite a stir: it was mentioned in the press and in magazines. The author acknowledged certain remarks orientalists had made concerning the accounts: for example, the fact that Hāmān in the Bible is not Pharaoh's minister, but a minister in a Persian court. He acknowledged there a clash of facts. But he explained this phenomenon as a concern for more striking literary expression. He made a distinction between the material truth and psychological or literary truth. In short, he was introducing into exegesis the idea that all texts were to be read, not with a concern for material exactitude, but rather with concern for superior truth. His work seemed to make necessary the introduction of the idea of literary genres into Quranic exegesis. In fact he had to withdraw. His book, published four years later, was sold regularly and unobtrusively. Several successive editions have been sold out.[10]

But these matters which arouse heated discussion must not allow us to forget the humbler and more vital role exegesis plays. The characteristic feature of Muslim thought in the past hundred years has been the watchword of reference to sources. It was a question of going beyond the medieval commentaries and glosses to rediscover the spirit of the early Muslims and the authenticity of the sources. Modern commentaries have favoured this return to the text of the Qur'ān itself. Journals have explained passages of the Qur'ān in an attempt to help readers to a better

[10] al-Fann. Cf. also MIDEO, 1, 1954, 39–72.

understanding of them in order that they might use them in meditation and prayer. Let us not have our vision clouded by the curious side of so-called scientific exegesis. By reminding Muslims that God was the creator of all things, this exegesis also invited a ceaseless praise of his works. And when Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd commentated on films about the beauty of nature or about the fishes of the deep what he presented to viewers was a hymn to the glory of God the Creator, rather than a scientific lesson.

LITERATURE CONCERNING THE QUR'ĀN

Just as the Qur'ān exercises a wide influence on society, Quranic literature takes on very diverse aspects. First and foremost there are the commentaries which explain it. These commentaries are extremely varied. Some are fragmentary, put together from articles which have appeared in series in theological journals or in magazines of popular education. Others may be great treatises. Finally, innumerable details in life serve to reveal the sense in which various verses are taken. In May 1967 all the Quranic verses concerning holy war (*jihād*) which were to be seen on walls in Cairo took on a striking relief in the light of the tense political situation.

The Quranic commentaries often reveal the demands of the society for which they were written. Thus in about 1820, 'Abdullāh b. Fūdī, brother of the founder of the Sokoto empire in the north of present-day Nigeria, composed a very traditional commentary on the Qur'ān entitled *Ḍiyā' al-ta'wīl*. At that time, a whole literary production in Arabic displayed in that area the demands of an uncompromising Islam, which was opposed to unorthodox practices, inherited from a pagan past. This campaign in favour of orthodoxy supported and justified the martial aspect of the question, since 'Abdullāh's brother, Sulṭān 'Uthmān b. Fūdī, had undertaken to combat the neighbouring local emirs, whom he accused of professing a corrupt Islam.

On the whole, modern Quranic commentaries try to answer the problems to which the transformation of society gives rise, and to underline the message which the Qur'ān can bring to the modern world.

Quranic exegesis would be worthy of close study. Was it there that the great ideas of reform took shape for the first time? Could it be that Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, the well-known nineteenth-century Islamic reformer, formulated these ideas during his travels? The great thinker Shāh Walī Allāh (1703–63) left several works of exegesis and of exegetic methodology in Arabic and in Urdu (in this area commentaries were written in Urdu more often than in Arabic).[11]

In the Arab world the most important modern Quranic commentary

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[11] Cf. Baljon, *Interprétation*. Cf. also Ahmad, *Contribution*.

was that of *al-Manār*. A joint work by Imam Muḥammad 'Abduh and Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā, it first appeared in the *al-Manār* review in Cairo between 1898 and 1935, and was reprinted separately almost immediately afterwards. The commentary is from the beginning of the Qur'ān to *sūrah* xii.107; it took the opportunity to examine all the great themes which preoccupy Muslim reform. The authors aim, in fact, within the framework of a return to the Qur'ān, is to show that the Qur'ān contains all the directives necessary to modern man and to the organization of a model society. The authors put much trust in reason to establish the credibility of the Qur'ān.[12]

Still in the same vein, one may mention in Syria the complete *tafsīr* of Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, entitled *Maḥāsin al-ta'wīl*, published in Cairo in seventeen volumes.

In Tunisia, Shaykh al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, one of the leaders of the Tunisian Muslim intelligentsia, who was acquainted with Muḥammad 'Abduh, wrote a lengthy commentary which was first printed in Cairo in 1964. This commentary depends greatly on traditional commentaries, which he uses and quotes.

In Algeria, Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ibn Bādīs (1889–1940), reformist leader and one of the founders of the Algerian Ulema Movement, wrote a commentary in the review *al-Shihāb* on a certain number of passages from the Qur'ān.[13] He intended to give his fellow citizens basic Quranic instruction with all necessary religious, cultural and political dimensions. Whilst adhering to the tendency of the *Manār*, he was able to find an original way, opposing in particular a certain type of marabout piety.

Other commentaries are to be found with more particular preoccupations. Sayyid Quṭb, in his commentary (*Fī ẓilāl al-Qur'ān*, Cairo), gives special consideration to religious and political action. Farīd Wajdī (d. 1954) and Shaykh Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī (d. 1940), in his *Jawāhir*, pay particular attention to finding all the sciences in the Qur'ān.[14]

In countries where Islam is predominantly Shī'ī, the Qur'ān is equally studied, scrutinized and commentated. This is the case in the Arabic works of Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, who published *al-Mīzān*.

There exists, too, a certain number of simpler commentaries, published by individuals or by organizations (e.g. the al-Azhar Research Council in Cairo) aimed at elementary education, for example, that of Barāniq, *al-Tarbiyah*. Other commentaries seek to revive the subject by paying particular attention to some new aspect. For example, Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah, a Muslim well known for his activity in Palestine and born in

[12] Cf. Jomier, *Commentaire*. [13] Cf. Merad, *Ibn Bādīs*, especially 253.
[14] Cf. *MIDEO*, v, 1958, 115–74.

Nablus, produced a commentary in which the *sūrahs* are regrouped according to the chronological order in which they were traditionally revealed. The work is entitled *al-Tafsīr al-ḥadīth*.

Alongside the literature of the commentaries stand the books which present the Qur'ān itself and the Quranic sciences.[15] The above-mentioned works of Dr Kāmil Ḥusayn and of Dr Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd are an example of this. One must also mention all the chapters contained in more general works, all the special numbers in journals in which the Qur'ān is discussed. There are all the monographs devoted to various aspects of the Qur'ān and doctoral theses which deal with its style or its content. Suffice it to say that the field is immense and that literature on this subject is abundant. abundant.

[15] E.g. Bennabi, *Phénomène*.

ḤADĪTH LITERATURE – I: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCIENCE OF *ḤADĪTH*

Ḥadīth literature is exceedingly abundant. The subject lends itself to many possibilities; and the religious value attached to the pursuit inspired scholars of all ages to take up the challenge enthusiastically. Moreover, absence of an official undertaking to compile *ḥadīth* from the surviving Companions of the Prophet left the door open to uncontrolled individual initiatives, thus giving rise to numerous studies on the subject.

The collection and arrangement of the *Ḥadīth*, i.e. words, deeds and tacit approvals attributed to the Prophet, as well as descriptions of his person, developed through a number of stages. These are designated here as the *ṣaḥīfah*, *muṣannaf*, *musnad*, *ṣaḥīḥ* and the analytical stages.

THE AGE OF *ṢAḤĪFAH* (FIRST/SEVENTH AND EARLY SECOND/EIGHTH CENTURIES)

For most of the first century, there was apparently an ambivalent attitude on the part of the Companions and their early Followers (*Tābiʿūn*) concerning the writing of *ḥadīth*. There was both the desire to write it down for obvious benefits, and the fear that written *ḥadīth* might later be confused with the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, some fifty Companions and almost as many early Followers are said to have possessed manuscripts, then called *ṣuḥuf* (sing. *ṣaḥīfah*), i.e., some material in which *ḥadīth* were included.

Toward the end of the first/seventh century, however, certain factors jointly stimulated the undertaking of compiling *ḥadīth* without further hesitation. Fears about the purity of the Qur'ān had subsided. The text was then memorized and uniformly recited by countless numbers of Muslims, and its copies were widely circulated. Moreover, leading *Ḥadīth* teachers were gradually disappearing, and corruption began to threaten its integrity. Civil strife, starting with the third caliph's murder in 35/656, gave rise to political and theological divisions and disputes involving quotations and misquotations of *ḥadīth* in support of partisan causes and doctrines.

Thus the need became urgent to provide a measure whereby distinction could be made between legitimate and other material and which could also serve the function of corroborating and sustaining, but not replacing, the essential method of oral transmission. This same need led the Umayyad governor of Egypt, 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān (65–85/684–704), and his son, the caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (97–101/715–19) to instruct certain renowned theologians to commit ḥadīth to writing. Numerous statements were also attributed to leading theologians warning against unscrupulous narrators and their unreliable material. Such statements were the early seeds of the science of Ḥadīth criticism.

The original ṣuḥuf of this age unfortunately have been lost, although a few secondary copies survived. An example is the ṣaḥīfah of Hammām b. Munabbih, (d. 110/719), a Yemenite follower and a disciple of Companion Abū Hurayrah, (d. 58/677), from whom Hammām learned and wrote this ṣaḥīfah, which comprises 138 ḥadīth and is believed to have been written around the mid-first/seventh century.

It is significant that Hammām introduces his text with the words: "Abū Hurayrah told us in the course of what he related from the Prophet", thus giving the source of his information in the manner which became known as sanad or isnād, i.e. the teacher or chain of teachers through whom an author reaches the Prophet, a practice invariably and systematically followed in Ḥadīth compilations.

THE MUṢANNAF MOVEMENT (MID-SECOND/EIGHTH CENTURY)

During the first/seventh century and early part of the second/eighth century compilation was limited to writing down those ḥadīth in oral circulation. Later scholars started grouping ḥadīth under titles indicating their subject matter. This type was called muṣannaf, i.e. classified or systemized compilation.

Although Ibn Jurayj, (d. 150/767), and Ma'mar b. Rāshid, (d. 153/770), were the first compilers of muṣannaf, yet the best-known work of this type is al-Muwaṭṭa' of Mālik b. Anas, founder of the second major law school, which also contains opinions and legal decisions.

The Muwaṭṭa' was revised several times over forty years by its author, who flourished in Medina, having studied earlier with renowned scholars there, and in turn taught those revised works to his disciples. Mālik's revised work survived in some different versions through his disciples, notably Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā al-Laythī of Cordoba (d. 232/848), and of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189/804), the well known Ḥanafī authority. Yaḥyā's version is the more popular.

The *Muwaṭṭa*''s sixty-one chapters, here called "books" (sing. *kitāb*), are arranged according to the categories of the religious law, each dealing with one topic such as purity, prayers, *zakāh* (alms-tax), fasting and so on. Chapters are divided into sub-chapters (sing. *bāb*). A *bāb* may begin with a relevant *ḥadīth* followed by comments, or with a question addressed to Mālik followed by his answer, either alone or supported by a *ḥadīth* or a Quranic verse, or by an opinion of a Companion or a Follower, or by the custom prevailing among the people of Medina.

Among the 1,720 *ḥadīth* existing in Yaḥyā's version, which include 613 statements attributed to Companions and another 285 attributed to Followers, there are 61 without an *isnād*, some with interrupted *isnāds* and 222 in which the narrating Companion is not mentioned. Some scholars later discovered complete *isnāds* for those *ḥadīth*.

Alarmed by the increasing circulation of spurious *ḥadīth*, Mālik and many other theologians of this period denounced, like those before them, the promoters of such falsehood, thus enlarging the foundations of the science of *Ḥadīth* criticism and adding to its terminology. Mālik himself is credited with the following statement, which approaches a classification of *muḥaddiths* (transmitters of *Ḥadīth*):

Knowledge should not be accepted from four categories [of transmitters], but may be received from others. It should not be accepted from persons advocating heretical views, or from idiots, no matter what they may claim to know, or from those who lie to people, even if they may not be expected to lie about the Prophet, or from persons of integrity and righteousness who are not sufficiently accurate.[1]

THE *MUSNAD* MOVEMENT (FROM THE LATE SECOND/EIGHTH CENTURY ONWARD)

The *muṣannaf*, though systematic and academically useful, diluted by legal additions the literature of *Ḥadīth* proper and made its study subservient to legal discussions. Therefore, a movement started to compile *musnads*, i.e. works devoted to *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet himself, arranged in groups under the names of the transmitting Companions, often arranged according to their seniority in Islam. *Ḥadīth* within each group do not usually follow any plan. Forty-four *musnads* appeared within the third/ninth century, and about twenty more during the succeeding two centuries.

The *Musnad* of Sulaymān b. Dā'ūd al-Ṭayālisī (d. 204/818), which contains 2,767 *ḥadīth*, is believed to be the first *musnad*. Critics say that it includes some errors.

The *Musnad* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, (d. 241/855), founder of the fourth

[1] Al-Baghdādī, 116.

law school, is the best known of this category. It was transmitted through
Ibn Ḥanbal's own son, 'Abdullāh (d. 290/903), and then through
'Abdullāh's disciple, Abū Bakr al-Qaṭī'ī, (d. 368–979), both of whom made
a few additions. It relates on the authority of 700 male and almost 100
female Companions whose names are arranged according to their seniority,
beginning with the first four caliphs (the "Rāshidūn"). It contains 30,000
ḥadīths, excluding 10,000 repetitions, filling six large volumes in small type
in its Cairo edition (1312–13H). Although the claim that the Musnad
contains a few discredited ḥadīth was rejected by later scholars, it is
admitted that some are "weak" (ḍa'īf). However, to some jurists, like Ibn
Ḥanbal himself, this type of ḥadīth was useful in making legal decisions.

It was in fact Ibn Ḥanbal and his contemporaries who started the
practice of devoting separate volumes to Ḥadīth criticism under such titles
as al-'Ilal ("Defects"), al-Ḍu'afā' ("Weak narrators") and al-Rijāl (literally
"Men", but in this context "Trustworthy authorities"), thus laying the
foundations of this science, establishing and augmenting the critical
terminology which denotes the degree of reliability of transmitters and the
authenticity of the text. Ibn Ḥanbal is credited with a work entitled al-'Ilal
wa-'l-rijāl.

THE ṢAḤĪḤ MOVEMENT (THIRD AND FOURTH/NINTH AND
TENTH CENTURIES)

Compilation

The musnad movement did not discriminate between authentic and ḍa'īf
material; and it is difficult to use, since its ḥadīth on common themes are
scattered in various sections. Therefore another movement started almost
simultaneously, aiming at compiling conveniently arranged works devoted
to the category of ṣaḥīḥ, i.e. authentic ḥadīth. Some authors working in this
movement, however, included ḥadīth of lesser credibility for their legal and
religious uses, but then they indicated their quality.

Leading works of compilation produced under the movement, which
received universal recognition and are presumed to have completed the
process of committing to writing the remaining ḥadīth in oral circulation,
are as follows.

Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh (d. 256/870)

Al-Bukhārī, regarded as founder of the ṣaḥīḥ movement and its first author,
began memorizing ḥadīth at an early age and started compiling al-Jāmi'
al-ṣaḥīḥ, which took him sixteen years after establishing himself in Ḥadīth
criticism, to which he contributed significantly, and thus was able to

extract from his material 6,000 reliable *ḥadīth*. He divided his work into 97 *kitābs*, and each *kitāb* into *bābs* (3,450 altogether), leaving unfilled those divisions for which he could not find satisfactory material. Titles of divisions cover the themes of revelation, *īmān*, knowledge, law, eschatology, biography, exegesis and doctrine. The work includes *ḥadīth* without *isnād* or with broken *isnāds*, quoted not as integral parts of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* but for clarification or corroboration. To criticize al-Bukhārī for his apparent incompleteness is therefore unfair. The number of *ḥadīth* in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, excluding those without complete *isnād*, amounts to 7,397, of which about 4,000 are repetitions.

Occasionally, al-Bukhārī adds some explanatory notes, but to avoid confusion, he introduces them with the words: "Abū 'Abdullāh says...". Yet *ḥadīth* are sometimes found under unlikely titles, parts of some *ḥadīth* are scattered in different chapters, and versions of repeated *ḥadīth* are not put together. Nevertheless, the book was almost immediately and universally acknowledged as the most authentic work in view of the author's stringent authentication requirements.

Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875)

Following al-Bukhārī's steps, Muslim recorded only authentic material in his work *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*. It contains 12,000 *ḥadīth* including 4,000 repetitions, and is dedicated to *ḥadīth* alone, unburdened with legal notes, and divided into 54 *kitābs* with titles such as *īmān*, purity, prayer, *zakāh*, *ḥajj* (pilgrimage). Divisions within *kitābs* are without titles, although sub-titles are added in commentaries. Each *ḥadīth* appears where it should be, and all versions of a *ḥadīth* and its available *isnāds* are put together, thus making the book easier to use.

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim are referred to as *al-Shaykhān*, i.e. the two leading authorities on *ḥadīth*; and the *ḥadīth* which exist in both works, said to number 2,326, are the most respected. Both al-Bukhārī and Muslim phrase their reports in honest and careful terms. When two or more authorities narrate the same text, they add the words: "all say", or "both say"; but when the given version belongs to one of them they say: "and the text is his". When a teacher's name is obscure, they explain it by such words as: "and he is the son of so and so".

In terms of comparison, the majority prefer al-Bukhārī who insists on an *isnād muʿanʿan*, i.e. a chain of authorities in which the disciple is known actually to have met his teacher. Muslim is satisfied if they were contemporaries. Some, however, prefer Muslim for his better punctuation and easier order.

Abū Dā'ūd; Sulaymān b. al-Ash'ath (d. 275/888)

The work compiled by Abū Dā'ūd, *Kitāb al-Sunan*, contains 4,800 *ḥadīth* pertaining mainly to devotional and ceremonial topics, which the author selected from half a million *ḥadīth* he had learned, distributing them over 40 *kitābs*. Each *kitāb* is divided into *bābs*, 1,870 altogether, arranged in the legal categories. The work includes weak and very weak *ḥadīth*, but then their quality is indicated. The absence of such indication means that the *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ* or nearly so.

Al-Tirmidhī, Muḥammad b. 'Īsā (d. 279/892)

Al-Tirmidhī's significant compilation, called *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ* ("The Comprehensive") and also *al-Sunan*, covers in its 46 *kitābs*, which are divided into *bābs*, legal, ethical, doctrinal, Quranic and eschatological topics. Chapters on the Qur'ān and the *manāqib*, i.e. the virtues of some Companions, lacking in other *sunan*, are extensive here.

The author enters each of his 4,000 *ḥadīths* where it appears it should be, giving the variants, if any, at the same time.

The importance of this compilation, confined to *ḥadīth* acceptable in legal circles, is that the author follows each *ḥadīth* with notes on its use by the jurists, thus making a valuable comparative legal study, and makes analytical remarks on the degree of the authenticity of a *ḥadīth*, introducing the term *ḥadīth*, meaning a grade between *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḍaʿīf*. Thus, for him, a *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan* or *ḍaʿīf*; but the combinations *ḥasan–ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan–gharīb*, which he used in describing some *ḥadīth*, are difficult to interpret. The author's interest in *ḥadīth* criticism is further displayed by his adding a valuable supplement to his work, called *Kitāb al-'Ilal* (see above, "The *Musnad* movement").

Al-Nasā'ī, Aḥmad b. Shu'ayb (d. 303/915)

Al-Nasā'ī's *Kitāb al-Sunan* contains over 5,000 *ḥadīth* listed in 51 chapters, divided into sub-chapters, arranged in the familiar legal order. It treats mainly ceremonial topics and details of prayer formulae. The original work, which contained many *ḍaʿīf* and even more discredited *ḥadīth*, has never been published, but was condensed by the author's disciple, Ibn al-Sanī (d. 364/974) under the title *al-Mujtabā*, with the discredited categories deleted.

Ibn Mājah, Muḥammad b. Yazīd (d. 273/886)

Ibn Mājah also produced a *Kitāb al-Sunan* which comprises 37 *kitābs* divided into 1515 *bābs*, and contains 4,341 *ḥadīth* of which 3,002 exist in the aforementioned five works. It includes also *ḍaʿīf* and discredited *ḥadīth*.

The above six compilations gradually won universal recognition, and are usually referred to as the Six Books.

Al-Dārimī, 'Abdullāh b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 225/869)

This author had a work entitled *Kitāb al-Sunan*, or *al-Musnad al-jāmiʿ*, which was *muṣannaf*, not *musnad*, though its author so named it. It consists of 1,363 *ḥadīth* distributed over 23 *kitābs*, each divided into *bābs*, arranged in the legal order. The author examines the credibility of narrators and discusses legal points in an original, independent manner, but the book lacks consistency and many of its *isnāds* are of the interrupted categories. Some, however, grade it higher than Ibn Mājah's book and include it among the Six Works instead of the latter's work.

Muḥammad Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965)

This author's compilation, *al-Musnad al-ṣaḥīḥ ʿalā 'l-taqāsīm wa-'l-anwāʿ*, is said to follow closely the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim in authenticity; but its arrangement is neither that of *muṣannaf* nor that of *musnad*. Hence it is difficult to use as a reference. It was rearranged into chapters by 'Alī b. Balbān (d. 739/1339), who called it *al-Iḥsān fī taqrīb Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*. Moreover, Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Haythamī (d. 807/1405), in his book *Mawārid al-ẓamʾān ilā ẓawāʾid Ibn Ḥibbān*, comprising several chapters arranged in the legal order, lists 2,647 *ḥadīths* included in Ibn Ḥibbān's *Musnad* but not existing in the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Criticism

The *ṣaḥīḥ* movement was partly a reaction to the wide increase of unauthentic *ḥadīths*. The honour conferred upon *muḥaddiths* attracted unqualified persons to claim this privilege. To justify their claim they resorted to various deceptive measures. Moreover, some honest *muḥaddiths* were inaccurate or unduly credulous, a combination of factors that affected the credibility of both *ḥadīth* text and *isnād*.

Third/ninth-century *ḥadīth* authors undertook a systematic critical study of the *muḥaddiths* and their material, beginning with the Prophet's Companions, although they did not subject that generation to criticism. The analysis often covered the narrator's date and place of birth, family connections, schooling, teachers, disciples, journeys, social and business contacts, reputation, moral and religious behaviour, accuracy, literary work and date of death. Often an assessment in short terms was given such as *thiqah* "trustworthy", *thabt* "firm", *ḥujjah* "evidence", *hayyin* "of little consideration", *layyin* "lax", *matrūk* "[preferably] left out", *munkar*

"objectionable", and *kadhdhāb* "lying". The words became gradually crystallized with special meanings, giving rise to *ḥadīth* classification and terminology describing the quality of *ḥadīth*. Use was made of earlier critical statements attributed to authorities of the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries.

The critical study which so developed was called *'Ilm al-jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*, "the science of impugning or confirming [the credibility of *muḥaddiths*]"; and it became a fashion with *ḥadīth* compilers from the third/ninth century onward to contribute one work or more in this field. Some mixed their critical contribution with their works of compilation, as did al-Dārimī and al-Tirmidhī. Others, like Muslim, put it as an introduction. The greatest contributions, however, took the shape of separate volumes under such titles as *al-Ḍu'afā'* "The Weak", *al-'Ilal* "Defects", *al-Thiqāt* "The Reliable", *al-Rijāl* "Trustworthy authorities", *al-Ṭabaqāt* "Classes of men" and *al-Jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*. Some wrote on a special generation, such as *al-Ṣaḥābah* "the Companions", while others wrote on the authorities of individual compilers such as the "Men" of Mālik (al-Bukhārī and Muslim), often quoting illustrative *ḥadīth*. With their thorough knowledge of the narrators and the large numbers of *ḥadīth* they had trusted to memory, the authors developed a keen sense which detected any subtle deception in *isnāds* or weakness in *matn* (narrative content).

Special mention must go to the following two authors and their contribution.

Muḥammad b. Sa'd (d. 230/844)

The author's *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* ("The Great Book on the classes of men") begins with the biography of the Prophet and then treats the Companions, Followers and succeeding generations down to the author's time, taking them regionally, then chronologically and sometimes genealogically. The author often uses *isnāds* and evaluates the narrator's credibility, drawing on the authorities of the first two centuries.

Al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870)

Al-Bukhārī's *Kitāb al-Rijāl al-kabīr* ("The Great Book on trustworthy authorities" is another large work consisting of four parts, published in eight volumes (Hyderabad, 1361 H). It is the corner-stone of criticism, treating 40,000 men, arranged alphabetically except that, in honour of the Prophet, it begins with those whose name is Muḥammad. The author is credited with two other works on *Rijāl* and two more on *Ḍu'afā'*. In assessing the narrator's credibility al-Bukhārī prefers to use polite terms such as *layyin* or *hayyin* ("lax"). When the term has to be harsh, like

kadhdhāb "liar") he introduces it with the words: "they say he is..." or "he is said to be such and such".

Although al-Bukhārī was preceded by other authors who contributed immensely to the critical study of the *Ḥadīth*, yet he absorbed, sifted, organized and developed earlier writings, and cleared the path for further achievements by succeeding scholars.

THE ANALYTICAL AGE (MID-FOURTH/TENTH CENTURY ONWARDS)

The third/ninth century produced the greatest and largest number of *musnads*, the most authoritative *ṣaḥīḥs* and *sunans*, and solidly laid the foundations of the *ḥadīth* sciences. From the fourth/tenth century onward, allowing for some overlapping, contributions were based upon this literary wealth, taking the form of augmenting, criticizing, summarizing, amalgamating, commenting, revising and making selections or indexes for easy reference. The following are illustrations under appropriate headings.

Supplementary works ("Istidrākāt")

Al-Dāraquṭnī, 'Alī b. 'Umar (d. 385/955)

In *al-Ilzāmāt 'alā 'l-Bukhārī wa-Muslim* the author compiles *ḥadīth* which fulfil the prerequisites of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and therefore could have been included in their *Ṣaḥīḥs*. This type is known as *istidrāk* (plural, *istidrākāt*), i.e. readjustment by additions. Al-Dāraquṭnī chose the term *ilzāmāt*, i.e. "those which must be accepted", for emphasis. Unlike our author's larger compilation, *al-Sunan*, in which he treats only legal points, *al-Ilzāmāt* ranks high among *ṣaḥīḥ* compilations.

Al-Ḥākim, Muḥammad b. 'Alī (d. 404/1014)

Like al-Dāraquṭnī, al-Ḥākim in his *al-Mustadrak 'alā 'l-Ṣaḥīḥayn* compiles *ḥadīth* which he believes to fulfil the requirements stipulated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, but which are nevertheless absent from their *Ṣaḥīḥs*. The author also adds other *ḥadīth* which he feels are deserving of *ṣaḥīḥ* status. Critics assert that only the first half of al-Ḥākim's work rises to the standard of the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, while the second half, which al-Ḥākim dictated after suffering weakness of memory, contains *ḥadīth* of the *ḥasan* and *ḍaʿīf* categories. The book is arranged in the legal order.

Commentaries

These were either in the form of short notes on the *gharīb* "uncommon words") in *ḥadīths*, or full commentaries, especially on the leading compilations. The following are some significant samples.

Al-Khaṭṭābī, Ḥamad b. Muḥammad (d. 386/996)

His two works are *Ma'ālim al-sunan*, a commentary on Abū Dā'ūd's *Sunan*, and the first commentary on *ḥadīth*; and *I'lām al-Sunan*, a commentary on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the writing of which was suggested to the author after he had completed the earlier work.

Abū 'Ubayd al-Harawī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (d. 401/1011)

His *Kitāb al-Gharībayn, gharībay al-Qur'ān wa-'l-Ḥadīth* ("Book on the uncommon words of the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*", Cairo 1970) was the first in the field to be arranged alphabetically. It mixes treatment of Quranic and *ḥadīth* vocabularies, omitting *isnāds* and references but giving major *ḥadīth* narrators' names. The author often quotes from philologists and earlier writers on *gharīb*, incorporating their achievements, particularly those of Ma'mar al-Taghlibī (d. 210/825) and Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889).

Al-Ḥamīdī, Muḥammad b. Abī Naṣr (d. 488/1095)

He wrote *Tafsīr gharīb al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* ("On the *gharīb* of the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* [al-Bukhārī and Muslim])".

Al-Bājī, Sulaymān b. Khalaf (d. 494/1101)

Kitāb al-Muntaqā fī sharḥ Muwaṭṭa' Imām Dār al-Hijrah, (Cairo, 1331 H, 7 vols) is a shortened version by the author of his original, much larger, commentary on the *Muwaṭṭa'*, called *al-Istīfā'*, which, unlike this, also treats the *isnāds*.

Ibn al-Athīr, Majd al-Dīn al-Mubārak b. Muḥammad (d. 606/1208)

His *al-Nihāyah fī gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa-'l-āthār* (Cairo, 1963, 5 vols) is perhaps the best-known commentary on *gharīb al-Ḥadīth*. The author incorporates and improves the contributions made by earlier writers, particularly that of al-Harawī, described above, and that of al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1143) in his work *al-Fā'iq fī gharīb al-Ḥadīth*. The book is arranged alphabetically, treats the words linguistically, discusses legal points, and harmonizes inconsistent texts.

Al-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā b. Sharaf (d. 676/1278)

Al-Minhāj fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (Cairo 1930, 18 vols) is a great scholarly work written by this eminent scholar, containing many useful points.

Ibn al-Mulqin, Sirāj al-Dīn, 'Umar b. 'Alī (d. 805/1403)

Sharḥ ẓawā'id Muslim 'alā 'l-Bukhārī ("Commentary on Muslim's *ḥadīth* which are not found in al-Bukhārī") is said to be twice as large as al-Nawawī's commentary on the full book of Muslim.

This author also wrote separate commentaries on: *ḥadīth* absent from al-Bukhārī and Muslim, but existing in al-Tirmidhī; those existing in Abū Dā'ūd, but not found in the other three; the matter in al-Nasā'ī supplementary to al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dā'ūd and al-Tirmidhī; and the additions in Ibn Mājah to those in the first five compilations, which he called *Mā tamassu ilayhi 'l-ḥājah 'alā ẓawā'id Ibn Mājah* (8 vols).

Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, Aḥmad b. Nūr al-Dīn (d. 852/1449)

His *Fatḥ al-Bārī 'alā Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Cairo 1321–2 H, 13 vols) is an encyclopaedic, and probably the greatest, commentary on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, incorporating valuable information, biographical data on narrators, useful linguistic details and interesting anecdotes. Attempts are made here to account for al-Bukhārī's action in placing *ḥadīth* or parts thereof where they seem to be misplaced, and references are made to locations of scattered versions of an individual *ḥadīth*.

Summaries of particular works

Al-Qābisī, 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Khalaf (d. 403/1012)

His *al-Mulakhkhiṣ li-mā fī 'l-Muwaṭṭa' min al-ḥadīth al-musnad* contains 525 *ḥadīth* with complete *isnāds*.

Al-Zubaydī, Abū 'l-'Abbās, Aḥmad b. Aḥmad (d. 893/1488)

Al-Tajrīd al-ṣarīḥ (Būlāq 1287 H, 2 vols) is a popular work in which the texts of al-Bukhārī's *ḥadīth* are compiled, but from which both *isnāds* and repetitions are removed. Only narrating Companions are mentioned.

Special selections from various works: I, Legal

Al-Bayhaqī, Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 458/1066)

His *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Hyderabad 1344 H, 10 vols) is arranged according to the legal order. Each *ḥadīth* is followed by all of its versions, its *isnāds*

and analytic notes. The author, a great writer and compiler of *ḥadīth*, avoids quoting weak ones except for further clarification, but indicates weakness in such cases. An advantage of his works is that they contain *ḥadīth* from lost earlier compilations.

Ibn Taymiyyah, 'Abd al-Salām b. 'Abdullāh (d. 728/1327)

Muntaqā'l-akhbār min aḥādīth Sayyid al-Abrār is a large collection of *ḥadīth* from the six canonical compilations and the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, arranged in the legal order. Al-Shawkānī (d. 1255/1800), in his commentary (Cairo n.d., 8 vols) pays attention to the *isnāds* and the quality of the *ḥadīth*.

II, *Ethical*

Al-Nawawī, Abū Zakariyyā (d. 676/1278)

His *al-Adhkār al-muntakhabah min kalām Sayyid al-Abrār* (Cairo, 1370 H), is a large collection of *ḥadīth* containing prayer formulae (*du'ā'*) that are to accompany, precede or follow human actions, such as eating, drinking, travelling, and so on. The *ḥadīth*, quoted without *isnāds*, are distributed over more than 350 chapters, and followed by notes explaining their sources and standing. There are some of the *ḍa'īf* category, which are usable in recommended acts of piety.

   Another work by him, *Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn min kalām Sayyid al-Mursalīn* (Cairo 1960), is a collection of *ḥadīth* exalting moral conduct and devotional practices.

Al-Mundhirī, 'Abd al-'Aẓīm b. 'Abd al-Qawī (d. 656/1258)

In *Kitāb al-Targhīb wa-'l-tarhīb* ("Good Tidings and Warnings", Cairo, 1934, 5 vols), the author, who also condensed Abū Dā'ūd's *Sunan*, brings together all the *ḥadīth* he believes to be relevant to the title, quoting them without *isnād* from the Six Books (excluding Ibn Mājah's *Sunan*, but including *al-Muwaṭṭa'*), and from the *Musnads* of Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Mawṣilī and al-Bazzāz, the three *Mu'jams* of al-Ṭabarānī, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Ibn Ḥibbān and *al-Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim. He indicates the quality of each *ḥadīth* and its sources, and adds an appendix on the questionable narrators mentioned in the work.

III, *General*

Al-Baghawī, Abū Muḥammad, al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ūd al-Farrā' (d. 516/1121)

Maṣābīḥ al-sunnah (Cairo, 1935, 2 vols) is a collection of 4,434 *ḥadīth* taken from the Six and other compilations, distributed over a number of chapters

arranged according to legal order. Most chapters are divided into two sections. The first consists of *ḥadīth* from al-Bukhārī or Muslim, or from both. The second comprises *ḥadīth* from other sources. *Isnāds* and references are not indicated.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī, Walī 'l-Dīn, Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh (8th/14th century)

Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ (Cairo 1309 H, 5 vols, with a commentary by 'Alī b. Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Qāri', (d. 1014/1605) is a revision of *Maṣābīḥ al-sunnah* which adds 1,511 *ḥadīth*, provides notes on rating and sources and mentions the names of the narrating Companions.

Compilation of ḥadīths with special features: I, Qudsī

A *ḥadīth qudsī* is introduced with such words as "The Prophet said in what he relates from God." It has the same value as other *ḥadīth*, and thus does not rise to the Quranic status or authenticity. It is not used in prayers, and can be read and carried without ablution.

Ibn 'Arabī, Muḥyī, 'l-Dīn (d. 638/1240)

Kitāb Mishkāt al-anwār is a collection of 101 *ḥadīth* quoted from various compilations with their *isnāds*.

Muḥammad al-Madaṇī (d. 881/1470)

Al-Itḥāfāt al-saniyyah fī 'l-aḥādīth al-qudsiyyah comprises 858 *ḥadīth* without *isnād*, but their sources are indicated.

II, Documents dictated by the Prophet

Ibn Ṭūlūn, Shams al-Dīn, Muḥammad b. 'Alī (d. 953/1546)

I'lām al-sāʾilīn 'an kutub Sayyid al-Mursalīn is a collection of documents ordered to be written or dictated by the Prophet, reproduced from historical and canonical works, such as letters sent to the Prophet's deputies or to rulers in different lands, and covenants concluded with other parties.

Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh

Majmū' al-wathāʾiq al-siyāsiyyah li-'l-'ahd al-nabawī (Cairo, 1956) is a comprehensive and systematically arranged collection of diplomatic messages dictated by the Prophet or written by his own order, divided into a few pre-*Hijrah* pieces, over 200 post-*Hijrah* documents, and scores of others belonging to the age of the Rāshidūn caliphs. Sources are given without *isnāds*.

Criticism

The literary criticism of the age after the fourth/tenth century was perhaps its greatest original contribution. Writers sifted, organized, developed and systematized earlier material, putting forward theories, expanding biographical works of all generations, making full and well-defined classification of narrators and *ḥadīth*, and subjecting works of leading compilers to vigorous scrutiny, sparing not even al-Bukhārī or Muslim. Some examples follow.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim, 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 327/939)

The introductory first volume of his *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-'l-taʿdīl* (Hyderabad, 1371–3 H, 9 vols) is devoted to general and theoretical discussion of topics such as the value of Traditions, the need to examine the credibility of *muḥaddiths*, and their grades, which for the first time were divided by him into eight categories described by special terms, as follows:

1. *thiqah*, "trustworthy" or *mutqin*, "perfectly accurate"
2. *sadūq*, "truthful", *maḥalluhu 'l-ṣidq*, "graded as truthful"
3. *shaykh*, "a leading narrator"
4. *ṣaliḥ al-ḥadīth*, "sound in Tradition"
5. *layyin al-ḥadīth*, "lax in Tradition"
6. *laysa bi-qawī*, "not strong"
7. *ḍaʿīf al-ḥadīth*, "weak in Tradition"
8. *matrūk al-ḥadīth*, "his *ḥadīth* is to be rejected"; *dhāhib al-ḥadīth*, "his *ḥadīth* goes for nothing"; *kadhdhāb*, "lying"

Only the first four of these grades, all listed on a decreasing scale, are acceptable. The last is irrevocably rejected; the seventh is also so unless it is strengthened by other Traditions; the fifth and sixth may be recorded as supporting evidence.

This became the basis for later classifications and critical terminology, though authors occasionally differ in use of these terms, and also in evaluating the credibility of specific *muḥaddiths*. It is agreed, however, that a claim of *jarḥ*, unlike *taʿdīl*, has to be justified. The author devotes another eight volumes to biographies of *muḥaddiths* down to his time, arranged alphabetically, drawing on material of earlier and contemporary authors, especially al-Bukhārī, of whom he was not sparing in his criticism.

Al-Rāmahurmuzī, al-Ḥasan b. 'Abd al-Raḥman (d. 360/970)

His *Kitāb al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil*, consisting of seven parts, covers a wide range, especially the classification of *ḥadīth*. The author is therefore said

to be the founder of *'ilm muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* ("the science of *Ḥadīth* technical terms").

Al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385/995)

In *Kitāb al-Tatabbu'*, al-Dāraquṭnī scrutinizes the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and reveals weaknesses in 78 *ḥadīth* in al-Bukhārī, 100 in Muslim and 32 listed in both, on account of adverse points in the *matn* or *isnād*. Nevertheless, the popularity and prestige of the two works continued to grow so greatly that Ibn Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) promoted the theory that since the *Ummah* had received them with acceptance, the authenticity of their contents had become decisive and unquestionable. He exempted, however, those 210 *ḥadīth* criticized by al-Dāraquṭnī. After that no more criticism could be tolerated; and even rational remarks about these books and certain revered narrators made by a modern author, Maḥmūd Abū Rayyā, in *Aḍwā' 'alā 'l-sunnah al-muḥammadiyya* (Cairo, 1958), brought down on him the wrath of numerous essayists and journalists, and no less than two separate disparaging volumes.

Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 404/1014)

Kitāb Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-Ḥadīth (Hyderabad, 1935) with 52 chapters, each dealing with one topic of *ḥadīth* sciences, combines the contributions of earlier writers on *muṣṭalaḥ* and on *jarḥ* and *ta'dīl*. This work is regarded as the first systematic, comprehensive book on *ḥadīth* sciences, and has brought its author distinction as the one who polished the science of *Ḥadīth*.

The same author's *al-Madkhal fī 'ilm al-Ḥadīth* (ed. James Robson, London, 1935) is an interesting and richly informative classification of *ḥadīth*, according to which there are five undisputed authentic classes of narrators, five authentic but disputed categories and ten unauthentic divisions. The classification is based upon the character of transmitters, their number in each generation, and their mutual relationship.

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī (d. 463/1071)

Kitāb al-Kifāyah fī 'ilm al-dirāyah (Cairo, 1972) is another comprehensive work covering *ḥadīth* sciences, with greater details on the concept of *jarḥ* and *'adālah* (= *ta'dīl*) and their characteristics. It fully discusses critical terminology and uses, and the proper qualifications of the *muḥaddith*.

Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200)

In *Kitāb al-Mawḍū'āt*, Ibn al-Jawzī scrutinizes the contents of the major compilations, and extracts from them the *ḥadīth* he thinks were invented,

not sparing such giants as al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Mālik and Ibn Ḥanbal. The work is an important achievement in this field, although some of its conclusions were criticized by later writers.

Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 'Uthmān b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 643/1245)

Kitāb 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth, (Medina 1966; earlier published in Lucknow, 1304 H, under the title *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*), is modelled on al-Hākim's book *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, but with great improvement, consisting of 65 chapters, each treating one theme. Its merit lies in its full coverage, clarity, brevity and precision. It overshadowed almost all earlier works on *ḥadīth* sciences, and all subsequent works were based upon it.

Al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Uthmān (d. 748/1348)

Mīzān al-i'tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl (Hyderabad, 1911–13, 3 vols) treats all controversial *muḥaddiths* up to the author's own time (excluding the Companions and the founders of the legal schools), 10,907 in all arranging them alphabetically; and he makes his own assessment. He adopts and improves Ibn Alī Ḥātim's classification of *muḥaddiths*, adding four more classes.

    Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ (Hyderabad, 1914–15, 5 vols) is a biographical work on *muḥaddiths* extracted from the author's great historical work, *Ta'rīkh al-islām*, reaching the year 700/1300. It was improved and continued by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), in a work which he calls *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāẓ*. The names of each class are arranged alphabetically.

Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqālanī (d. 852/1449)

Lisān al-mīzān (Hyderabad, 1329–31) is said to constitute the final summation of the science of *ḥadīth*; Ibn Ḥajar based this work upon al-Dhahabī's *Mīzān*, but improved it and added more biographies of *muḥaddiths*. He is credited with some other significant works on *ḥadīth* sciences, including *Nukhbat al-fikar fī muṣṭalaḥ ahl al-naẓar*, with a commentary on it which he calls *Nuzhat al-naẓar fī tawḍīḥ Nukhbat al-fikar*.

Ibn al-Wazīr al-Ṣan'ānī, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm (d. 840/1436)

Tanqīḥ al-anẓār fī 'ulūm al-āthār is a short manual on *ḥadīth* sciences, which may represent the trend in various fields towards writing a compressed summary of the subject to meet the need arising from the declining quality of scholarship. A commentary on the book, by Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Ṣan'ānī (d. 1182/1768), called *Tawḍīḥ al-afkār li-ma'ānī Tanqīḥ al-anẓār*, was published in Cairo, 1366 H, in two volumes, with editorial notes by M. M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd.

Thus Muslim criticism of *ḥadīth* assumed the form of an examination of the moral, religious and academic character of *ḥadīth* narrators, the accuracy of their memory and the criteria which determine the relationship between disciples and teachers, as well as consistency or lack of it between mutually related texts of *ḥadīth*. It all started in the angry reactions of late Companions and early Followers to unscrupulous and careless circulators of illegitimate information about the Prophet. The volume of the statements of condemnation and warning by the Companions and succeeding theologians increased with the passage of time, but were transmitted and circulated mainly orally until the writing of critical works began late in the second/eighth century, and grew in scope in the third/ninth. Contributions then went in three directions. One dealt with the characteristic of credibility (*'adl*), contrasted with the allegation of lack of credibility (*jarḥ*), with the theorizing, analysing and classifying of transmitters. This became known as *'ilm al-jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*. Another area was the classification of *ḥadīth* themselves, *isnād* and *matn*, and the terminology relative to their status. This became known as *muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth*. The third was the biographical area, which was the richest.

Index works

Al-Dimashqī, Abū Mas'ūd, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad (d. 401/1011)

In *Aṭrāf al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, the author quotes a *ṭaraf* (pl. *aṭrāf*: part of a *ḥadīth* which reminds the reader of the rest of it), then proceeds to explain its references in al-Bukhārī or Muslim. Hence this type of index work is called *aṭrāf*. It is said of the above work, however, that it contains many errors.

Al-Wāsiṭī, Abū Muḥammad, Khalaf b. Muḥammad (d. 401/1011)

Aṭrāf al-Ṣaḥīḥayn, a four-volume work, also treats the *ḥadīth* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, but is more reliable and better arranged.

Al-Maqdisī, Abū 'l-Faḍl, Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir (d. 507/1112)

He compiled *Aṭrāf al-kutub al-sittah* ("The *aṭrāf* of the Six Books"), in which, for the first time, Ibn Mājah's work is added to the five other canonical compilations – an honour which the book earned from scholars in the Islamic East. This work, however, contains many mistakes.

Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1449)

Itḥāf al-maharah bi-aṭrāf al-'asharah treats ten compilations: *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, the *Musnads* of al-Shāfi'ī, Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Dārimī, the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Ibn Khuzaynah and Ibn Ḥibbān, the *Muntaqā* of Ibn al-Jārūd, the *Mustakhraj* of Abū 'Awānah, *al-Mustadrak* of al-Ḥākim and the *Sunan* of al-Dāraquṭnī.

Al-Būṣīrī, Abū 'l-'Abbās, Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr (d. 840/1435)
He is the author of *Aṭrāf al-masānid al-'asharah* ("the *aṭrāf* of the ten *musnads*"), which means those of al-Ṭayālisī, al-Ḥumaydī, Musaddad, al-'Adanī, Ibn Rahawayh, Abū Bakr b. Abī Shaybah, Ibn Māni', Ibn Ḥumayd, Ibn Abī Usāmah and Abū Ya'lā.

'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī (d. 1143/1730)
Dhakhā'ir al-mawārīth fī 'l-dalālah 'alā mawāḍi' al-Ḥadīth (Cairo, 1934, 4 vols) treats the Six Books and *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, arranges in alphabetical order the names of the Companions through whom *ḥadīth* are traced, and quotes, under the name of each Companion, the *aṭrāf* of his *ḥadīth*, also arranged alphabetically, followed by their references. The total of *ḥadīth* quoted in this work is 12,302, derived from 1,131 Companions including 129 women.

Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī
Miftāḥ kunūz al-sunnah (Cairo, 1934) is an alphabetical index of the subjects of *ḥadīth* quoted in the following works: the Six Books, *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, the *Musnads* of Zayd al-Ṭayālisī, Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Dārimī, the *Ṭabaqāt* of Ibn Sa'd, the *Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām and *al-Maghāzī* of al-Wāqidī. Under each heading, relevant quotations and their sources are given. This work is actually a translation into Arabic of A. J. Wensinck's *A Handbook of Muhammadan traditions*, with some improvements.

A. J. Wensinck, J. P. Mensing and J. B. Brugman
Al-Mu'jam al-mufahras li-alfāẓ al-Ḥadīth al-nabawī (Leiden, 1936–69, 7 vols) is the most helpful index work based on the vocabularies of the *ḥadīths* of the Six Books and those of *al-Muwaṭṭa'* and al-Dārimī's *Musnad*.

HADĪTH LITERATURE – II: COLLECTION AND TRANSMISSION OF HADĪTH

Collection of *Hadīth* was begun in Muḥammad's lifetime by members of his family, clients, and close Companions. While several of his secretaries recorded his recitation of the Qur'ān, others attended to his state correspondence. His administrators preserved the documents.

After Muḥammad's death, an increasing number of Companions collected and disseminated his *Hadīth* and *sunnah* for personal and public guidance. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (13–24/634–44), credited with a preliminary edition of the Qur'ān, considered the advisability of a formal *Hadīth* collection. He rejected the idea, fearing the potentially dangerous competition of such an edition with the Qur'ān. He warned the Companions against relating too many of the Prophet's traditions. His strong measures against those who ignored his warning served to deter others. Abū Hurayrah (d. 58/678) reported later that, so long as 'Umar lived, the people dared not say "the apostle of Allāh said" for fear he would have them flogged, imprisoned, or otherwise severely punished.[1]

'Umar's son 'Abdullāh and Zayd b. Thābit al-Anṣārī were among the few who opposed written Tradition. Many more intensified their search for the *Hadīth* of the Prophet, both oral and written. Eventually, even 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar dictated his growing collection. The first professional transmitters were Muḥammad's illiterate follower Abū Jurayrah and his client Anas b. Mālik al-Anṣārī (d. 94/712). When questioned about his numerous traditions, Abū Hurayrah explained that he was poor, had been long with Muḥammad, and had devoted his life to memorizing his *Hadīth*, while the Meccans were preoccupied with the market and Medinans with their lands.[2] Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, twice governor of Medina, had his secretary Abū 'l-Za'za'ah write a great number of traditions from Abū Hurayrah's recitation.[3] Abū Hurayrah dictated *Hadīth* to many, especially to his son-in-law Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib (d. 94/712), who became concerned when one of his pupils relied only on his memory.

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[1] Abbott, *Studies*, II, 7 and note 24. [2] Abbott, *Studies*, I, 28 and II, 133 and 240.
[3] Ibid., II, 19–20.

The literate Anas b. Mālik was a staunch defender of written *Ḥadīth*. He transmitted mostly from Muḥammad and his family and from a few leading Companions. He exhorted his sons and pupils to "chain down knowledge through writing" from his dictation or copying his manuscripts. 'Ubādah b. al-Ṣāmit al-Anṣārī (d. 34/654 or 655), teacher of the Qur'ān and of writing, transmitted from Abū Hurayrah and Anas. He established a family of three generations of *Ḥadīth* scholars. His son and grandson aimed at collecting knowledge from the Anṣār. They transmitted from Ka'b b. 'Amr (d. 55/675), who was accompanied by a servant carrying a container full of manuscripts.[4]

Anas and his family migrated about mid-century to Basra, where they found a large following. They received strong support from the client family of Sīrīn and his six sons, one of whom, Muḥammad, became Anas' secretary. Anas himself functioned as a stationer, copyist and/or bookseller, *warrāq*.[5] His outlook, associations and literary activities over a long period of time account for his reputation as the leading transmitter and preserver of *Ḥadīth*.

In the meantime, an increasing number of Companions and Successors collected and transmitted *Ḥadīth*. The leaders were known as men of knowledge and understanding, ulema and *fuqahā'*, terms used at first interchangeably. Recognition of outstanding religious scholars began early and continued to increase. Masrūq b. al-Ajda' (d. 63/682), traditionist, judge and poet, travelled far in search of knowledge. He credited Abū Bakr, 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Mu'ādh b. Jabal, Abū 'l-Dardā', Zayd b. Thābit and 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās (d. 68/688) with having acquired among them all the religious knowledge possessed by the Companions. The second half of the first century saw increased specialization within the major religious disciplines of Quranic studies, Tradition and law, although scholars of the period did not limit themselves to one field. Many of the scholars of the first rank received recognition from their peers and support from those in power. They came first from Mecca and Medina, cities known as the home of Tradition.

Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 103/721), traditionist and Quranic commentator, expressed the Meccans' pride in their four leading scholars, 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās, Abū Maḥdūrah, 'Abdullāh b. al-Sā'ib and 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr, characterized as an all-round scholar, teacher, Quranic commentator, and judge, respectively. 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās heads the list of the Medinan scholars as well. He dictated Quranic commentary and Tradition and held sessions on the campaigns of Muḥammad and on law, on "the battle days of the Arabs" and on poetry. 'Abdullāh b. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ (d. after 65/684)

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[4] Ibid., I, 48, note 6.   [5] Ibid., II, 46.

was sought out by Basran scholars for his written collection of some thousand Traditions of Muḥammad. ʿAbdullāh b. ʿUmar (d. 74/673) dictated *Ḥadīth* to two of his sons and two of his clients, Sālim and especially Nāfiʿ b. Hurmuz (d. 117/735), all four of whom were major traditionists. The Medinan Jābir b. ʿAbdullāh al-Anṣārī (d. 78/697) had a written collection of Tradition that was used by Mujāhid b. Jabr of Mecca. Abū Salāmah ʿAbdullāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 94/712), one of the "seven scholars" of Medina, dictated some of his written collections even to schoolboys.

ʿUrwah b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/712), active first in his native Hijaz, travelled to Egypt and Syria to the court of ʿAbd al-Malik. His interests included Traditions, campaigns, the life of Muḥammad, law and reports (*Ḥadīth, maghāzī, sīrah, fiqh* and *akhbār*). He dictated from his manuscripts and handed his campaign collection to his son Hishām for collation. He burned his law manuscripts in 63/683, an act he later regretted.

Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, where many Companions and Successors had settled, produced their own ranking scholars. The Yemenite Ibn Maymūn al-Awdī (d. 74/693) settled in Kufa and transmitted his collections of *Ḥadīth* from ʿUmar, ʿAlī and ʿAbdullāh b. Masʿūd. He wrote on historical subjects on which Ibn Isḥāq drew later. The Kufan critic of Tradition, Ibrāhīm b. Yazīd al-Nakhaʿī (d. 95/714), preferred transmission from memory. He nevertheless permitted the use of manuscripts and commended them to those of weak memories "on whose clothes and lips were ink stains".[6] The Kufan Saʿīd b. Jubayr (d. 95/714), *Ḥadīth* scholar and Quranic commentator, wrote and dictated his *Tafsīr* to his fellow citizen and scholar Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (d. 105/723). His *Ḥadīth* collection was later drawn on by Ibn Isḥāq. The encyclopaedic Kufan scholar and courtier Abū ʿAmr ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī (d. *c.* 110/728), though proud of his memory, conceded that "the best traditionist was the *daftar*" (or manuscript) and "the book was the register of knowledge".[7] Basra's leading scholars of the period included Anas b. Mālik, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Abū Qilābah (d. 105/724). Syria was proud of Khālid b. Maʿdān (d. 104/722) and Makḥūl al-Shāmī (d. *c.* 112/730). Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī's early listing of ranking scholars consists of Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib of Medina, Abū ʿAmr ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī of Kufa, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Makḥūl al-Shāmī of Syria.

Many of the above-mentioned scholars and *Ḥadīth* scholars found favour with Umayyad caliphs and their governors. ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (24–35/644–56) used *Ḥadīth* sparingly, but is listed as a *Ḥadīth* scholar. Muʿāwiyah (40–60/660–80) wrote some Traditions from Muḥammad and

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[6] Ibid., II, 74, note 3, 157, note 7.   [7] Ibid., II, 228.

added a few more by correspondence with his governor of Iraq. He cited Tradition in his mosque speeches and court sessions and is also listed as a *Hadīth* scholar. Large collections of written *Hadīth* appeared in his reign, such as that of his cousin Marwān b. al-Hakam, mentioned above. Marwān's son, 'Abd al-'Azīz, took an active interest in Tradition and *Hadīth* scholars. During his governorship of Egypt (65–85/684–704) he commissioned the Syrian Kathīr b. Marrah to make a written collection for him of the *hadīth* of several Companions except that of Abū Hurayrah, for he had that already. His son 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz transmitted from both his father and his grandfather. The family's interest centred on the campaigns and biography of Muhammad, other historical events and laws.

The youthful 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān was appointed chief of the Bureau of Administration. His early interest centred chiefly on law and the campaigns of Muhammad. As caliph (65–86/685–705) he was patron of outstanding scholars who as a group covered the several branches of the religious sciences. The list of his court scholars included Sa'īd b. al-Musayyib, 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr, Abū Bakr b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. al-Hārith, and Abū 'Amr 'Āmir al-Sha'bī. He commissioned Sa'īd b. Jubayr to write his commentary on the Qur'ān and Hasan al-Basrī to compose the *Risālah fī 'l-qadr*. Copies of both works, and manuscripts of Tradition covering the campaigns of Muhammad and law, were in use in 'Abd al-Malik's library. Among the scholars he rescued from the wrath of al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf, his effective but high-handed governor of Iraq, were the aged Anas b. Mālik, 'Abdullāh b. 'Umar, Hasan al-Basrī and Sahl b. Sa'd, the last Medinan Companion.

The scholar–courtier Qatādah b. Di'āmah served 'Abd al-Malik in several capacities. He induced the caliph to overlook the earlier political opposition of the young Medinan scholar and student of *Hadīth* Ibn Shihāb Muhammad b. Muslim al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742; hereafter Zuhrī). 'Abd al-Malik appointed him tutor for the princes. His other duties were participation in scholarly sessions at court and consultation on historical and legal questions. Zuhrī's sources of Tradition were exclusively Quraysh until 'Abd al-Malik influenced him to seek Tradition from the knowledgeable Ansār. Caliph and scholar were motivated partly by a growing suspicion of Traditions transmitted by foreign clients in the provinces of Iraq and Khurāsān, where political factions, heterodoxies and racism were rife.

'Abd al-Malik himself transmitted few Traditions. Zuhrī bore witness to his urging of the public to spread such religious knowledge as they had before death overtook all the Companions. His support of scholarship, religious and secular, led critics to list him among the most knowledgeable men of early Islam.

'Abd al-Malik's son and successor, Walīd I (86–96/705–15), followed his father's political and religious policies. He retained many of his father's appointees, including 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr and Zuhrī, and added Ṭāwūs b. Kaysān, leading *Hadīth* scholar and Quranic commentator of the Yemen. He invited Saʿīd b. al-Musayyib to his court, but that aged scholar excused himself. He instituted state pensions for Quranic readers and mosque attendants – a controversial move that raised the question of payment for religious functions, including the sale of religious works. Sale of copies of the Qurʾān and other religious manuscripts was current in Iraq, where it was sanctioned by Abū 'Amr ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, but only to cover the cost of materials used.

Walīd I appointed 'Umar b. 'Abd al-ʿAzīz governor of Mecca and Medina, where he associated with the traditionists of the Ḥijāz and others from the provinces during the pilgrimage season. Some even of the mature scholars considered themselves 'Umar's pupils. He is listed as a *Hadīth* scholar. His removal from the governorship in 93/711 was instigated by al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, whom 'Umar had criticized for the severity of his rule in Iraq and his persecution of scholars.

Back in Damascus, 'Umar associated with resident and visiting scholars. Among the latter was Abū Qilābah b. Yazīd al-Jarmī, who fled Basra in 95/713 to avoid service as judge. 'Umar invited him to address the people and honoured him as a *Hadīth* scholar. Shortly before his death Abū Qilābah sent back his books to Basra in the care of the Khurāsānī client Abū Rajāʾ Maṭr b. Tahmān al-Warrāq. The books filled two side-loads of a camel. One load, containing the *Hadīth* of Muḥammad and some reports or tales of the Arabs, was sent to his tribesman Bayhas al-Jarmī. The second load, containing the *Hadīth* of Muḥammad and the *Hadīth* and *sunnah* of the Companions, was delivered to his pupil Ayyūb al-Sikhtiyānī (d. 131/748). Ayyūb was known as a dedicated *Hadīth* scholar, with forty pilgrimages and four hundred Traditions to his credit.

Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik, as prince and caliph (96–9/715–17), is listed among the *Hadīth* scholars. His associates included 'Umar b. 'Abd al-ʿAzīz, Zuhrī and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Hurmuz al-Aʿraj (d. 117/735). The scholar–politician who influenced Sulaymān most was Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywah (d. 112/730). He persuaded him to declare 'Umar his heir. Zuhrī, having first praised Rajāʾ and Makhūl al-Shāmī, read the deed of succession to the people.

'Umar b. 'Abd al-ʿAzīz (99–101/717–19) retained Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. 'Amr b. al-Ḥazm al-Anṣārī during his governorship of Medina. He subsidized mature scholars to spread religious knowledge, and younger students so they could devote their time to studying the Qurʾān and Tradition. He wished to record and stabilize the *Hadīth* and *sunnah* of

the Prophet. He turned to Abū Bakr al-Anṣārī and Zuhrī for initial action
on his project. He wrote to Abū Bakr to send him all the state documents
in the family's possession, beginning with Muḥammad's instructions to
Abū Bakr's grandfather on his appointment to the Yemen in 10/631 as
instructor in the new faith and administrator of the alms-taxes. He required
copies of the *Hadīth* and *sunnah* transmitted by this family of three
generations of judges and jurists. Similar orders were sent to the families
of the caliphs Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Alī, and to those of Anas b. Mālik
and 'Abdullāh b. al-'Āṣ. The materials received were given to Zuhrī for
initial study and co-ordination.

Examination of the sources relative to this project leads one to conclude
first that the materials received included documents that had been issued
by Muḥammad, Abū Bakr, and 'Umar; and second that they dealt
specifically with legal alms-taxes, charity, blood price, law of inheritance
and canon law. It should be noted further that 'Umar, shortly before his
death, claimed credit for having established the law of inheritance and
canon law.[8]

Zuhrī reported the completion of the task to his fellow tribesman Sa'd
b. Ibrāhīm al-Zuhrī (d. *c.* 125/743), *Hadīth* scholar and judge. He informed
his pupil 'Uqayl b. Khālid when copies of the finished product were sent
by 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz to the provinces. No record is known of any
reaction from the provinces. Knowledge of the project was later reported
by Mālik b. Anas, on the authority of his teacher Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṣārī,
on the authority of 'Abdullāh b. Dīnār (d. 127/745), a client of 'Abdullāh
b. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.[9]

Yazīd II (101–5/720–4) removed 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz's appointees
from office, yet appointed Zuhrī judge in Medina. His indifference to
uniform laws for the empire probably encouraged the provinces to by-pass
'Umar's regulations. Zuhrī himself realized the futility of any effort to force
uniformity on all the provinces.

The Umayyad caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (105–25/724–42) entrusted
Zuhrī with the education of his sons and consulted him on historical events
and legal questions. On the whole, Zuhrī was left free to follow his
scholarly objectives. His abiding interest in Tradition was reinforced by
his and this caliph's concern for this body of religious knowledge. Court
secretaries and Zuhrī's pupils made copies of his collections for the court
library and for themselves. Khālid al-Qasrī, Hishām's governor of Basra
and Kufa, was so impressed with Zuhrī's versatility that he requested
written information from him on genealogical and historical subjects.
Zuhrī's accomplishments were envied by his court rival Abū 'l-Zinād

[8] Ibid., II, 24, note 187.   [9] Ibid., II, 31, notes 254–5.

'Abdullāh b. Dhakwān (d. 131/748). His admirers included Ṣāliḥ b. Kaysān, tutor to the sons of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz and Zuhrī's companion on their search for *Ḥadīth*, which both wrote down. Another of his admiring friends was Sa'd b. Ibrāhīm, member of a three-generation family of traditionists, jurists and judges. His son Ibrāhīm once asked him why Zuhrī's reputation was greater than his, and was told that "Zuhrī went everywhere and collected information from all – men and women, old and young – who had it to give".[10]

The increasing activities in the religious sciences of the client class in Iraq and farther east continued to disturb Zuhrī. When a copy of the *ḥadīth* collection of Ismā'īl b. Mihrān al-A'mash (60–148/680–765), a leading *Ḥadīth* scholar of Iraq, was shown to Zuhrī, he expressed surprise that Iraq could produce so good a *Ḥadīth* scholar. He nevertheless continued to give priority to transmission of Tradition from Quraysh and the Anṣār. When he finally retired from Hishām's court, he settled in Aylah rather than return to his native Medina, which city, he declared, had been spoiled for him by the presence of the clients Abū 'l-Zinād and Rabī'ah al-Ra'ī.

Hishām's nephew and vengeful successor to the caliphate, Walīd II, had the court copies of Zuhrī's works removed. The collection was large, representing some forty years of scholarship. Zuhrī's pupil Ma'mar b. Rāshid witnessed the removal of several loads of manuscripts. There is no record of their immediate or final destination. The probability is that Ma'mar and others of Zuhrī's pupils acquired most of the manuscripts. Mālik b. Anas, for instance, had seven boxes of Zuhrī's manuscripts that he had not transmitted directly to him. The boxes were discovered after Mālik's death and the people blessed him for their preservation. Some of Zuhrī's manuscripts were in the possession of his nephew Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh b. Muslim (d. 159/776) and in that of his host 'Ubayd Allāh b. Abī Ziyād, both of whom were minor *Ḥadīth* scholars. The latter's grandson, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf b. 'Ubayd Allāh (d. 216/831), was sought after for his collection of Zuhrī's manuscripts.

Written transmission of Tradition spread as family and non-family *isnāds* were established and grew longer by the turn of the first century. The teacher's dictation and the pupil's recitation from memory gave way to dictation and recitation from manuscripts. Zuhrī considered attendance at a scholarly session without one's manuscript a professional weakness. He at times handed his copy to a trusted pupil for copying or collation with permission (*ijāzah*) to transmit the content on his authority. He and his pupils became known as "the people of the books". And because of their

[10] Ibid., II, 180.

devotion to Tradition they were known also as *ahl al-Ḥadīth*, in contradistinction to a group of jurists known as *ahl al-ra'y*, "people of reasoned opinion" – forerunners of Abū Ḥanīfah and the Ḥanafī school of law.

Some of Zuhrī's pupils remained in Syria and the Hijaz. Others settled in Iraq, Egypt and the Yemen. The leaders among them were sought by local and itinerant scholars for their transmission from Zuhrī. The list (death dates 141–98/758–814) includes Ma'mar b. Rāshid, who preserved Zuhrī's collection on Muḥammad's campaigns; Mūsā b. 'Uqbah, who wrote the first formal campaign work, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*; Ibn Isḥāq, who wrote the first formal biography of Muḥammad, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, and the first history of the caliphs, *Ta'rīkh al-khulafā'*; Shu'ayb b. Dīnār, court secretary for Zuhrī's works in Hishām's library; 'Uqayl b. Khālid and Yūnus b. Yazīd al-Aylī, *Ḥadīth* scholars who scrutinized the "chains of authority"; Muḥammad b. al-Walīd al-Zubaydī, *Ḥadīth* scholar and judge in Syria; Mālik b. Anas; and Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah (107–98/725–814), ranking *Ḥadīth* scholars and jurists of the Hijaz. 'Abd al-Malik b. Qurayb al-Aṣma'ī, in his eulogy of Sufyān as the preserver of religious knowledge, lamented the loss of this last direct transmitter from Zuhrī.

Zuhrī and his pupils and their contemporaries in the provinces were studied and appraised by critics of *Ḥadīth* of the second and third centuries. 'Alī b. al-Madīnī (161–234/777–848) summed up the progress of *Ḥadīth* studies down to his time. He listed three successive series of ranking scholars whose cumulative knowledge passed on from one group to the next. Zuhrī heads the first list of six – two each from Medina, Basra and Kufa. His second list of twelve organizers includes six of Zuhrī's pupils and three who transmitted from his pupils. Of the remaining three, two were from Iraq and one from Syria. His third list names six of his contemporaries, five from Iraq and the Khurāsānī 'Abdullāh b. al-Murbārak (118–81/736–97), who alone transmitted from one of Zuhrī's pupils.

Ibn al-Madīnī himself had two thousand Traditions traceable back to Zuhrī. His lists reflect the progressive shift of religious scholarship from the Hijaz to the imperial province of Iraq, where several of Zuhrī's pupils had settled. His contemporary, Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Anṣārī, served the first two 'Abbasid caliphs as judge in Kufa. He wrote to his former pupil, Mālik b. Anas, asking him to send him a copy of some of Zuhrī's legal collection, and Mālik sent him a copy of one hundred Traditions. The caliphs at Manṣūr and al-Mahdī considered establishing Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa'* as the legal norm throughout the empire, but abandoned the idea as impractical. Suspicion of clients from the East was moderating by the time of Hārūn

al-Rashīd. He once declared that he had at court two critics of the Traditions capable of detecting the cleverest forgeries: the above-mentioned 'Abdullāh b. al-Mubārak al-Khurāsānī and his close associate Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Fazārī.

The Khurāsānī Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī (172–258/788–872) was a pupil of Ibn Ḥanbal and teacher of Muslim and Bukhārī. He was best known for his *Zuhriyyāt*, materials collected during his travels in Iraq, Syria, the Hijaz and the Yemen. Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d. 354/965) wrote a critical study of Zuhrī's *ḥadīth*. The extensive coverage of Zuhrī's *ḥadīth* in *al-Musnad al-kabīr* of Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Nīsābūrī (d. 356/967) won him the name of "Zuhrī the Younger".

The migration of Companions, the scholars' open sessions (*majālis*) in Mecca and Medina, especially during the annual pilgrimage season, and the journeys in search of knowledge speeded the transmission of Tradition. Evidence of continuous written transmission of Tradition from the second quarter of the first century onward is available in early and late Islamic sources. Zuhrī, Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Anṣārī and 'Abd al-Malik b. Jurayj were considered the three leading *Ḥadīth* scholars of the Hijaz because they wrote down *ḥadīth* collections in their entirety. Acquisition of several such collections resulted in the rapid increase of the total number of Traditions available and in circulation. The increase was due partly to new and duplicate content, but mostly to the proliferation of the *isnāds* or chains of authority. *Isnād* terminology went through several stages of development, all aimed at indicating the method of transmission, oral or written or a combination of both. Second- and third-century scholars and critics of Traditions worked at evolving a uniform and stable system that would differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable *isnāds*. They produced a cumbersome system that fell somewhat short of their aim.

Final grading of an *isnād* called for some knowledge of the religious views of each of its transmitters and of his moral and intellectual endowments and activities. The most scrutinized *isnāds* were those for the *Ḥadīth* and *sunnah* of Muḥammad. The least scrutinized were those of eschatological and exhortive content considered good for the moral and religious fibre of the Islamic community. Though some critics found fault with some of Zuhrī's early *isnāds*, especially those for the *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet, many more accepted them on the strength of his faith, character and scholarly activities. It was for such qualities that scholars accepted Mālik b. Anas' use of *balaghanī*, "it reached me", and *'an*, "on the authority of" – suspect terms that usually indicated the source but not the method of transmission.

First-century *Hadīth* scholars used gifted pupils as part-time secretaries. Leading scholars of the second/eighth century and after employed one or more secretaries, or hired professional copyists for a given work. Still later, qualified copyist–booksellers, *warrāqūn*, were permitted to transmit or sell a traditionist's authorized copy in the open market. Libraries grew in size and numbers from the mid-first/seventh century onward.

Second- and third-century *Hadīth* scholars, historians and jurists were faced with the task of sorting, selecting, editing and organizing a large body of Tradition prior to writing works in their chosen fields. The formal *maghāzī* works of Mūsā b. ʿUqbah and Maʿmar b. Rāshid, the *Sīrah* and the *Taʾrīkh al-khulafāʾ* of Ibn Ishāq drew heavily on Zuhrī's collections and were supplemented from the collections of the *Hadīth*-writing families mentioned earlier.

Zuhrī was able to accomplish as much as he did partly through his purposeful drive and partly through the recognition and support accorded him by several of the Umayyad caliphs. Scholars in the several provinces, but less in the limelight than Zuhrī, worked diligently in one or more Tradition-related fields and used much the same methods of transmission as he and his pupils did. By the turn of the first/seventh century, working alone or in groups throughout the empire, these scholars had collected and committed to writing the basic sources of the *Hadīth* and *sunnah* of the Prophet and supplemented it with the *Hadīth* of the Companions.

Second- and third-century papyrus manuscripts of Tradition attest to early and progressive transition from oral to written transmission. They represent Quranic commentary, law, biography, and military and political history. They yield evidence of the existence and circulation of sizeable manuscripts of Tradition in the second half of the first century. They provide, for the most part, stronger chains of authorities for the *Hadīth* and *sunnah* of the Prophet than for those of the Companions. Finally, the contents of the Traditions about the Companions have few or no parallels in the pertinent sources. In marked contrast, the *Hadīth* and *sunnah* of the Prophet find a high rate of survival in the extant corpus of Tradition.

SHĪʿĪ ḤADĪTH

COLLECTION AND TRANSMISSION

The emergence of an independent body of Shīʿī *Ḥadīth* can be traced back
to the first half of the second/eighth century. By that time the rift between
Shīʿīs and non-Shīʿīs, which had originated in a politico-religious
controversy regarding the succession to Muḥammad, had resulted in
bloody battles and merciless persecutions. Almost all Shīʿīs shared an
unbounded admiration for ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, a conviction that he was the
legitimate ruler after the death of the Prophet, and a belief that all
legitimate rulers after ʿAlī were to be found among his descendants. These
legitimist claims received an additional impetus with the martyrdom at
Karbalāʾ of ʿAlī's son Ḥusayn and his entourage (Muḥarram 61/October
680). But beyond such unifying factors, Shiʿism was beset from the outset
by numerous splits and schisms. Some Shīʿīs, including the forerunners
of the Zaydī sect, believed in an armed struggle against the ruling
Umayyads. They united behind the person of Zayd b. ʿAlī, a grandson of
Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, who was soon defeated and killed (122/740).
Shīʿīs were also recruited by the ʿAbbasids, and contributed significantly
to the overthrow of the Umayyads. There were, furthermore, assorted Shīʿī
groups, disparagingly referred to as "Extremists" (*ghulāh*) by later
generations, who tended to deify ʿAlī, and who sometimes entertained
notions such as incarnation and metempsychosis. Yet the Shīʿī branch
which eventually constituted the largest and most significant sect within
Shiʿism was also, during the Umayyad and most of the ʿAbbasid periods,
the most quiescent. This sect is known today as the Imāmī, Jaʿfarī or
Ithnā-ʿasharī ("Twelver") Shīʿah (henceforth referred to simply as the
Shīʿah). Its first outstanding leaders were the fifth Shīʿī imam, Muḥammad
b. ʿAlī al-Bāqir (d. 114/732 or 117/735), and his son, the sixth imam Jaʿfar
al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), who were surrounded by a devoted circle of
disciples. While the Islamic world was being rent by major political and
military upheavals, these men, in the relative seclusion of Medina, were
evolving their particular brand of Shīʿī doctrine, which was to last, with
some modifications, to the present day.

Shīʿī doctrine differs from Sunnī beliefs mainly as regards the source of authority in Islam after the death of the Prophet. This has a direct bearing on the structure of Shīʿī, as opposed to Sunnī, *Ḥadīth*. In Sunnī Islam, the Companions of the Prophet were assigned the primary role in the transmission of the Prophet's utterances to later generations. Hence, a Sunnī *isnād* will as a rule go back to a Companion who transmits from the Prophet. But in Shīʿī eyes, those very Companions so highly esteemed by the Sunnīs were, with few exceptions, the men who acquiesced in, or even actively supported, the illegitimate rule of the first three caliphs. Therefore, while Shīʿī theoreticians differed in their views on the religious and moral culpability of the Companions, they were united in arguing that the Companions could not serve as trustworthy transmitters.

Furthermore, with the growth of a Shīʿī doctrine of the imamate, it became firstly established Shīʿī dogma that the imam, in whom ultimate religious authority is vested, is by his very nature divinely protected from sin and error (*maʿṣūm*), endowed with a virtually limitless knowledge and appointed by an explicit, personal designation, conveying God's will. The Companions, on the other hand, even when no evil, anti-ʿAlid motives are attributed to them, are fallible mortals, whose deficient knowledge and often faulty judgement deprive them of any claim to authority. This last point is often exemplified in Shīʿī literature by references to various occasions when ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb was obliged to turn to ʿAlī for advice on legal matters on which ʿUmar himself was ignorant.

There are instances where Companions do appear in Shīʿī *Ḥadīth* as transmitters from Muḥammad. This occurs firstly for reasons of precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyyah*), when it is deemed necessary to feign acceptance of the authority of a Companion rather than an imam; and secondly, in anti-Sunnī polemical works, when a convincing argument can be provided against Sunnī opponents by having a Shīʿī tenet transmitted by an avowedly anti-Shīʿī Companion. But the main body of Shīʿī traditions is a recording of pronouncements made by the Prophet or by an imam (both Prophet and Imam possessing the same degree of authority) and transmitted to later generations by the disciples of each imam. The names of these disciples, often with short biographical notices, are found in early Shīʿī biographical works.

The earliest extant Shīʿī works are collections of *Ḥadīth* known as *uṣūl* (sing. *aṣl*). An *aṣl* is a collection of a particular kind: in contrast to other collections of *Ḥadīth*, which are known as *kutub* (sing. *kitāb*), it consists exclusively of utterances of an imam which are committed to writing for the very first time. In some cases the author of an *aṣl* reports traditions which he himself has heard directly from the imam, in others he relies on the authority of a *Ḥadīth* scholar who transmits what he heard the imam

say. A famous work which is considered to be an *aṣl* and which has survived in several recensions is the *K. Sulaym b. Qays* (or *K. al-Saqīfah*, named after its alleged author, the pro-ʿAlid Follower Sulaym b. Qays al-Hilālī al-ʿĀmirī, who died during the governorship of the Umayyad al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, governor of Iraq 75–95/694–714). The famous Shīʿī bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995 or 388/998) regards it as the first Shīʿī work. But later Shīʿī authors take a much more sceptical view of its authenticity (a scepticism shared by Goldziher) and some openly declare it a fabrication.

The number of *uṣūl* is usually estimated at 400 (they are therefore referred to collectively in Shīʿī works as *al-Uṣūl al-arbaʿu-miʾah*, "The four hundred *uṣūl*"), of which only thirteen are known to have survived in MSS. Most of the *uṣūl* were attributed to disciples of Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, though the compilation of *uṣūl* continued up to the death of the eleventh imam, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī (d. 260/873). The surviving *uṣūl* include traditions of a historical, doctrinal, legal, anecdotal and polemical nature. Their contents reflect the major characteristics of Shiʿism, which comprise veneration for the *Ahl al-Bayt* and for the imams and vilification of their enemies, as well as a tendency to stress the independent nature of Shīʿī *fiqh* and to reaffirm the basic belief that Shiʿism alone is the bearer of the original message of Muḥammad. Various *uṣūl* were incorporated at a later stage into larger works known as *jawāmiʿ*, which in turn served as the basis for the definitive Shīʿī works of subsequent generations.

The immense task of collecting and editing Shīʿī traditions was undertaken by Shīʿī scholars working in different parts of the Islamic world. By the third/ninth century Qumm had replaced Kufa as the most prominent Shīʿī centre of learning. Shīʿī scholars, like their Sunnī counterparts, often travelled extensively in search of authentic Shīʿī Traditions, and also engaged themselves in weeding out any doubtful material found in available *ḥadīth*. This was done chiefly by submitting the *isnāds* to a rigorous critical examination and condemning as "weak" (*ḍaʿīf*) those *ḥadīths* whose *isnāds* included one or more unreliable persons. In Shīʿī eyes, unreliability was often synonymous with religious deviation. Hence the large proportion of transmitters accused of *waqf* (i.e. "stopping" with a particular imam and not recognizing the entire list of twelve imams), of *ghuluww* ("extremism") or of *naṣb* (i.e. hatred of the Shīʿah, a characteristic ascribed in a derogatory fashion to the Sunnīs).

Shīʿī preoccupation with *Ḥadīth* in the first three hundred years of Islam was not only the result of the urge to preserve and propagate the Shīʿī heritage; it may also have arisen from the structure of the religious hierarchy within Shiʿism itself. As long as the theory of the imamate had not become a fixed and generally accepted doctrine, independent intellectual

endeavours within the community could be undertaken with relative impunity. Indeed, the biographies of such outstanding personalities as Hishām b. al-Ḥakam (d. 179/795–6) and his contemporary Muʾmin ("Shayṭānān") al-Ṭāq, as well as the titles of their works, attest the freedom with which theological and doctrinal questions were debated in the late Umayyad and early ʿAbbasid periods. However, the growing belief in the imam as the ultimate authority gradually imposed a limit on the divergence of views which could be tolerated: henceforth, anything expressed in writing by a loyal Shīʿī author was presumed to bear the imam's stamp of approval. Thus Ḥadīth, which by its very nature reflects the imam's authority, remained the only field where Shīʿī scholars were generally unobstructed in their work.

This state of affairs underwent a complete transformation as a result of two major events. The first was the disappearance, in 260/874 or 264/878, of the Twelfth Imam. According to Shīʿī belief, after his disappearance the Twelfth Imam was at first represented among his followers by four successive sufarāʾ (sing. safīr, "messenger", "vicegerent"). This period is known as the "Small Occultation" (al-ghaybah al-sughrā). It was followed by the "Great Occultation" (al-ghaybah al-kubrā), which started in 329/941, and in which there is no direct representative of the imam on earth. During the period of the "Great Occultation", which will last until the reappearance of the imam as Mahdī, the religious leadership of the Shīʿī community is in the hands of the ulema. In other words: Shīʿī scholars found themselves, from the fourth/tenth century onwards, without the ultimate religious authority to which all important questions had hitherto been referred (though whether the later imams actually exercised their notional authority is a moot point). This fact placed the Shīʿī leadership in a position of unprecedented responsibility; it also gave a tremendous boost to Shīʿī intellectual activity. An additional impetus to this activity was provided by the second major event, the rise to power of the Shīʿī Buwayhid (Būyid) dynasty at the centre of the ʿAbbasid empire. During the Buwayhid period (334–447/945–1055), Shīʿīs could express their views with a freedom which they had seldom known before, and which was not to be matched for centuries to come. Not surprisingly, it was during this period that the centre of Shīʿī activity shifted from Qumm to Rayy and then to Baghdad, which became a focal point of Shīʿī learning.

Freed from the obligation to defer to the verdict of an imam and enjoying a certain protection from a benevolent régime,[1] Shīʿī scholars

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[1] Two facts which, as Cahen implies (in his article in EI², "Buwayhids"), may not be totally unconnected. In fact, the disappearance of the imam facilitated the tacit recognition of the temporal power represented by the ʿAbbasid sultan, and hence made a kindlier ʿAbbasid attitude easier.

were now at liberty to pursue new avenues of thought and expression. The field of Shī'ī literature was enriched by works on law, doctrine, theology, history, *adab*, and so on. These new works possessed a more individualistic character than their predecessors and bore the clear imprint of their authors. At the same time, although *Ḥadīth* retained much of its earlier importance, it now tended to be used as a basis upon which an argument would be built rather than to be studied as an end in itself. Moreover, as the result of increasing Mu'tazilī influence on Shī'ī thought, Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* now had to contend with reason for primacy. In the view of Shī'ī scholars who stressed the importance of reason, it was mistaken to accept automatically as legally or doctrinally binding every Tradition which had passed the formal *isnād* test. These authors, known as the Uṣūliyyūn (or Mujtahidūn), included most of the leading figures of the Buwayhid period. They were opposed by the more tradition-minded Akhbāriyyūn, who insisted that each individual tradition which had been declared sound was a legitimate source of law. The conflict between these two schools of thought, which may be traced back to the period immediately following the disappearance of the imam, flared up again during the Safavid period and finally died down in the eighteenth century with the victory of the Uṣūliyyūn.

For the history of Shī'ī *Ḥadīth*, the Buwayhid period is of fundamental significance. It was during those years, with their propitious political and spiritual climate, that both Uṣūliyyūn and Akhbāriyyūn devoted their energies to collecting and systematizing the vast corpus of Shī'ī traditions.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CORPUS OF SHĪ'Ī ḤADĪTH

Ḥadīth established itself in Shī'ī consciousness more firmly than any other literary form. It was through their *Ḥadīth* that the Shī'īs articulated their attitude towards their environment, formulated their customs and beliefs, and asserted themselves as a clearly definable entity. Although *Ḥadīth* reflects the oldest known stage of Shī'ī literary activity, it continued to occupy a position of central importance in subsequent generations as well. All available evidence points to the conclusion that the entire corpus of Shī'ī *Ḥadīth* had been produced by the beginning of the "Great Occultation", and that all traditions known today only from later works are actually a faithful reproduction of ancient material going back to the period of the imams. In fact, most Shī'ī *Ḥadīth* which have survived have come down to us in the systematized form perfected by Shī'ī scholars in the Buwayhid period. These scholars wished to classify the existing material, thus rendering it more accessible. To achieve this aim, they often

broke up the early *Ḥadīth* collections (*Al-uṣūl al-arba'u-mi'ah*) into their components and then distributed individual *ḥadīth* among various works according to subject matter. This process meant that the early collections in their original form gradually lost their pre-eminent position and fell prey to increasing neglect. At the same time, it is as a result of the major editing effort of these scholars that the corpus of Shī'ī *Ḥadīth* received its definitive and lasting form.

Among the compilations of Shī'ī traditions, those concerned with the virtues and prerogatives of the imam occupy a special position. An early work of this kind is the *Baṣā'ir al-darajāt* of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī (d. 290/903).[2] This work exists in two recensions, one of which may be an abridgement of the other. Shī'ī tradition has it that al-Ṣaffār copied many of the utterances which he included in the *Baṣā'ir* from a document (*ṣaḥīfah*) which the Prophet had dictated to 'Alī. Many of the traditions which appear in the *Baṣā'ir* were incorporated by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb al-Kulīnī (or Kulaynī) (d. 329/941) into his *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*. This major work encompasses in its two volumes the entire doctrine of the imamate in the form of numerous *ḥadīth*. The *ḥadīth* deal with such subjects as the necessity of an imam, belief in an imam as a prerequisite to true faith, the imam's knowledge, and so on. These and similar traditions are also quoted in theoretical works on the imamate, such as *al-I'tiqādāt al-imāmiyyah*, by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Bābawayhi (or Bābūya) (d. 381/991) and, to a lesser extent, *al-Shāfī fi 'l-imāmah*, which is a reply by 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044) to an anti-Shī'ī exposition on the imamate by the Mu'tazilī *qāḍī* 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad (d. 415/1025). A summary of *al-Shāfī* (entitled *Talkhīṣ al-Shāfī*) was composed by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067).

In addition to *ḥadīth* in which the special position of the institution of the imamate is brought to the fore, there are numerous traditions in which the rights of each individual imam are stressed by reference to words and actions of the Prophet constituting an explicit designation of that imam. The virtues and the right to rule of 'Alī, the first Shī'ī imam, are the subject of a very great number of traditions, which are often grouped together under the titles *Khaṣā'iṣ*, *Manāqib* or *Faḍā'il 'Alī*. Among the numerous works of this kind may be mentioned the *Khaṣā'iṣ amīr al-mu'minīn* of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (d. 406/1015). (The same title is also borne by a work of the Sunnī author Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad

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[2] All the works mentioned in this section have been published, some only in lithograph but most in printed editions. These editions are the result of recent, major efforts by scholars in Iraq and Iran.

b. Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/916), who was one of many non-Shīʿī authors to collect traditions on ʿAlī's virtues.) ʿAlī's biography as seen from a Shīʿī point of view occupies the bulk of the *K. al-Irshād fī maʿrifat ḥujaj Allāh ʿalā ʾl-ʿibād* of the renowned scholar, doctor and theologian Muhammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nuʿmān al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022). Al-Mufīd is also the author of the *K. al-Jamal*, otherwise known as *al-Naṣrah fī ḥarb al-Baṣrah*. This work includes pro-Shīʿī traditions relating to the Battle of the Camel (Jumādā II 36/December 656), which pitted ʿAlī's camp against ʿĀʾishah, Ṭalḥah, al-Zubayr and their followers. The huge literature of sayings attributed to ʿAlī includes the *Nahj al-balāghah*, of which the presumed author is al-Sharīf al-Raḍī. *Ḥadīth* in which ʿAlī's rights are established appear frequently in polemical, anti-Sunnī works, such as *al-Ikhtiṣāṣ* of al-Mufīd and *al-Iḥtijāj ʿalā ahl al-lajāj* of Abū Manṣūr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Ṭabarsī (d. beginning of the sixth/twelfth century).

Among the more famous biographical works devoted to one particular imam may be mentioned the *ʿUyūn akhbār al-Riḍā* of Ibn Bābawayhi, which deals with the eighth imam, ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā, known in Shīʿī literature as Abū ʾl-Ḥasan al-Thānī (d. 203/818). Besides quoting many of his utterances, Ibn Bābawayhi also provides in this work a Shīʿī interpretation of the relationship between al-Riḍā and the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn (ruled 198–218/813–33).

In numerous *ḥadīth* it is stressed that the number of legitimate imams is twelve. Such *ḥadīth* were directed not merely against the Sunnīs, but also against such non-Imāmīs as the Zaydīs and the Ismāʿīlīs. A typical compilation of such *ḥadīth* is the *Kifāyat al-athar fī ʾl-nuṣūṣ ʿalā ʾl-aʾimmah ʾl-ithmay-ʿashar* ("A sufficiency of traditions concerning the designation of the Twelve Imams"). Its author is believed by most Shīʿī authorities to be a pupil of Ibn Bābawayhi, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Khazzāz al-Rāzī (d. 381/991). Not only must the number of imams be established beyond doubt as twelve; the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam and his future return must also be shown to have been decreed by God and made known by Muḥammad and the imams. The most famous compilations of traditions on this subject are the *Ikmāl (kamāl) al-dīn wa-itmām (tamām) al-niʿmah* of Ibn Bābawayhi, the *K. al-Ghaybah* by al-Kalīnī's pupil, Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Zaynab al-Kātib al-Nuʿmānī (d. c. 360/971), and the *K. al-Ghaybah* by Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī.

An invaluable source of traditions is provided by early Shīʿī Qurʾān commentaries. In some commentaries stress is laid mainly on Shīʿī traditions which describe the reasons for the revelation of particular verses (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). This is the case, for example, in the *Tafsīr* attributed to

the eleventh imam, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī, which exists in the recension of Ibn Bābawayhi. A *Tafsīr* which includes much historical material relating to the *Sīrah* is that of Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. *c.* 307/919), who was one of al-Kalīnī's teachers. This *Tafsīr* is imbued with a radical anti-Sunnī spirit. Because of its basically polemical character, hardly any attention is paid to linguistic problems, and there are many difficult Quranic passages which it ignores entirely. Al-Qummī based his commentary exclusively on utterances attributed to the sixth imam, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq. The first transmitter of al-Qummī's *Tafsīr*, Abū 'l-Faḍl al-ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim, incorporated into the work traditions from the *Tafsīr Abī 'l-Jārūd*, i.e. the Qurʾān commentary which Abū 'l-Jārūd Ziyād b. al-Mundhir transmitted from the fifth imam, al-Bāqir. Another *Tafsīr* which is largely based on Shīʿī traditions is that of the Samarqandī scholar Abū 'l-Naḍr Muḥammad b. Masʿūd b. Muḥammad al-ʿAyyāshī al-Sulamī (d. 320/932), who was a prolific Sunnī writer before he joined the Shīʿah. What has survived of al-ʿAyyāshī's *Tafsīr* covers the first eighteen *sūrah*s only; it is possible that the work was never completed. Many of the Traditions in it appear also in al-Kulīnī's *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*. Later Shīʿī Qurʾān commentaries are mainly concerned with legal, linguistic and doctrinal problems, though *Ḥadīth* still occupies a prominent position in them. Two famous commentaries of this kind are *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* of Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī, and the authoritative *Majmaʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* of al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī (d. 548/1153).

Shīʿī traditions of a legal nature are reported to have existed in very early times. Indeed, Shīʿī authors have claimed that the lost *K. al-Sunan wa-'l-aḥkām wa-'l-qaḍāyā*, which they consider to be their oldest juridical work, was written by the Companion Ibrāhīm Abū Rāfiʿ, who died during ʿAlī's imamate. Legal traditions are to be found in *al-Uṣūl al-arbaʿu-miʾah*. In the Buwayhid period, such traditions were incorporated into large-scale works, of which the most famous came to be known as the "Four Books". These are al-Kalīnī's *al-Furūʿ min al-kāfī*, which is a continuation of his *al-Uṣūl min al-kāfī*; Ibn Bābawayhi's *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu 'l-faqīh*; the *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām* and *al-Istibṣār*, both of Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī. In their structure, these books resemble the Sunnī *muṣannaf* works in that all traditions relating to a particular subject are grouped under one heading. Authors of later generations collected the traditions found in the "Four Books" and commented on them. Of these collections, perhaps the most popular today is the *Wasāʾil al-shīʿah ilā aḥādīth al-sharīʿah* by Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1693).

Shīʿī traditions were often transmitted by shaykhs, who would dictate to their pupils, relying either on their memory or on written sources. Such

works, known as *Amālī* ("dictations"), were regarded by Shīʿī *Ḥadīth* scholars as very reliable, particularly when the shaykh was an eminent scholar. *Amālī* were usually dictated on successive sessions (*majālis*); hence the same work may sometimes be referred to both as *Amālī* and as *Majālis*. Works of this genre derive from all the most prominent Shīʿī scholars of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, including Ibn Bābawayhi, al-Mufīd, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī. The Traditions found in the *Amālī* are not grouped thematically; instead they relate to a variety of historical, doctrinal and legal issues.

A particular branch of Shīʿī literature is that in which the reasons (*ʿilal*) behind various laws and tenets are explained, usually by referring to the relevant Traditions. The *K. al-Maḥāsin* of Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Khālid al-Barqī (d. 274/887), which consists mainly of Traditions from the field of *adab*, contains a special chapter on *ʿilal*. Much valuable material concerning Shīʿī beliefs is preserved in Ibn Bābawayhi's *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ*. Ibn Bābawayhi is also the author of the *Maʿānī ʾl-akhbār*, in which the meanings of difficult Traditions and of obscure expressions and words are elucidated.

To complete this brief survey of early Shīʿī *Ḥadīth* literature it must be stressed that much important material from the early period is preserved in the encyclopaedic works of later Shīʿī scholars, who flourished mainly in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries and again in the Safavid period. Among the most prolific of these authors are Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192), who wrote the *Manāqib Āl Abī Ṭālib*, a collection of traditions on the virtues of ʿAlī and his descendants; ʿAlī b. Mūsā Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266) and Ḥasan b. Yūsuf Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), both of whom wrote extensively on *Ḥadīth*, theology and history. The most famous product of the Safavid period is the voluminous *Biḥār al-anwār* by Muḥammad Bāqir b. Muḥammad Taqī al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1700), which is an incomparable mine of valuable information on Shīʿī history, doctrine and tradition. Al-Majlisī uses a vast range of Shīʿī sources; he scrupulously mentions the source of each report which he quotes, and his quotations are always accurate. A useful index to the *Biḥār* was compiled by ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Qummī (d. 1940) under the title *Safīnat al-biḥār wa-madīnat al-ḥikam wa-ʾl-āthār*.

CHAPTER 13

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IN THE *HADĪTH* LITERATURE

One of the greatest of the infidels killed at Badr, which was the first victory for the fledgeling forces of Islam, was the renowned Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith. His death was lamented by his sister in an elegy of moving eloquence; the Prophet is reported to have felt so much sorrow when he heard this poem that he said he would not have allowed Naḍr to be killed, if he had heard the poem before his death.

Naḍr was learned in Persian literature, and his opposition to the Prophet and to Islam took the strange form of interpreting this struggle as a contest of excellence in storytelling. "I am a better teller of tales," he asserted; "Muḥammad tells tales from the past, but I relate the histories of the great Persian heroes, Rustam and Isfandiyār." He had such success in vexing the Prophet that it was he who ordered Naḍr to be killed at Badr, though it was rarely that he gave such orders, and to that extent it was out of character.

This narrative and other less well-known historical anecdotes show the hold that storytellers had over the Arabs even at this early date, and it gives an indication of the nature of this kind of popular oral literature, often based on a core of heroic poetry.

Within this cultural milieu it was only natural for them to seek to weave new narratives around the life and deeds of Muḥammad, the greatest of their heroes. But storytellers and other narrators, although they recognized this need and were capable of meeting it, were nevertheless handicapped in many ways. The military campaigns of the Prophet, which were the natural material for such tales, were so important, and indeed sacred, in the memory of the Islamic community that they were straightway taken up by serious historians, who verified the facts after an objective analysis of the evidence and then registered them in great detail in their books of *maghāzī*. In the process of their sifting and editing they transformed the methods of the *ayyām* and *ansāb* literature into something much more scientific and laid the basis for the objective historical techniques of the *futūḥ* literature.

Thus considerations of authenticity and accuracy, and an awe natural in the presence of the sacred, tended to clip the wings of imagination and, indeed, with the stories of the campaigns and the events surrounding them verified and recorded as history, little enough remained to exercise the creative talents of the storytellers. The sayings of the Prophet, which were collected only a century and a half after his death, might well have been lost altogether, then, had not the caliphs after the Orthodox (*Rāshidūn*) become involved in one controversy after another. Political power-play and sectarian squabbles were deeply reflected in the interpretation of how the religious duties enjoined by the holy text of the Qur'ān should be performed and understood. The importance of prayer had been stressed, but the question of times and frequency was left to the Sunnah and *muḥaddithūn* (*Ḥadīth* scholars) to elucidate. Accounts of the deeds and sayings of the Prophet were thus so essential to one side or another in religio-political controversies that the *muḥaddithūn* were encouraged to relate ever more and more. Certain scholars, and even relations of the Prophet, rejected all these *ḥadīths* as spurious. Bukhārī relates, on the authority of Zubayr, a *ḥadīth*, according to which the Prophet had strictly forbidden the fabrication of lies about him – a veto which kept his nearest relations, such as Zubayr, from quoting him at all for fear of unwittingly transgressing.

A storyteller was also hampered in many other ways. The potential characters of any story, namely the Prophet and his family and Companions, were all so real to his listeners that he had only to name one for the character to take shape, almost in flesh and blood, in the imagination of a listener. This almost dispensed with the need for his description talents on the one hand, and on the other allowed him no scope for the creative development of character or characterization. He was also limited in his ability to describe actions, since these had to conform with what was already accepted as fact, and could show only what was noble, humane, or even ideal. Infidels, of course, had, by the same token, to be depicted in the opposite light, and this again restricted the creative ability of storytellers. Nor was the situation any better with dialogue. Minor characters might be allowed some freedom in this respect, but the principal hero's sayings must conform to what the text of the Qur'ān, and even what the less reliable accounts, would allow. The narrator's freedom to understand and interpret situations was thus severely limited by religious considerations.

Though confronted by these handicaps, which covered every single constituent element of the narrative form (namely characterization, action, dialogue and stance), the storyteller still did not throw up his hands in

despair. The eager ears of the public encouraged him to narrate even within these constricting fetters and to exercise his narrative talents as best he might.

In *Ḥadīth* the *isnād*, or chain of transmitters, was required to begin with a contemporary transmitter and to go back at least to one of his Companions, or to a member of his family, but this did not deter the storyteller one whit. Believers, with certain exceptions, were not as finicky about the absolute accuracy of the text of the *Ḥadīth* as about that of the Qur'ān. Abū Hurayrah, who is consistently denigrated as a transmitter by those who are unconvinced of the reliability of all of the corpus of the *Ḥadīth*,[1] is one of the most prolific contributors to the corpus. Despite the number of *ḥadīth* related on his authority it is not possible to identify his contributions on the basis of stylistic analysis, let alone those of any other less prolific transmitter. Moreover, descriptions of the different phases of the Prophet's life have not, as they are presented, any clearly distinguishable differences in narrative content. His personal life was much scrutinized by the Islamic community and had therefore to be presented as blameless. Nor was his life in Mecca or Medina differentiated by local features of any kind arising from the difference of environment.

Similarly, details of his life before the revelation are edited away by a neglect of what does not suit the later image, except those events of religious import such as his first hearkening to the angel Gabriel delivering the holy message, his birth and his purification by angels. In these instances the element of the supernatural gives notable scope to the narrative skill of the storyteller.

Subject matter, therefore, and not subjective skill, was the major factor in the variation of the narrative, and was crucial to the dimensions of both quality and quantity. The Sunnah, which concerned itself with acts, allowed less liberty of treatment than did the *Ḥadīth*, which concerned itself with sayings and was easier to commit to memory, but in fact we find Sunnah and *Ḥadīth* complementing one another. The formal outlook was strict enough, defining *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* ("that which is illicit" and "that which is licit"), but allowed some latitude in laying down standards of behaviour and good manners. The sayings, however, could be represented as rhetorical devices, and the action could then be subordinated to the role of providing a setting for these figures. The sayings themselves were short, since brevity is the essence of eloquence (*al-balāghah al-ījāz*): sometimes only one word, like the exclamation "Behold!", as the Prophet said of the moon's eclipse (*inshiqāq al-qamar*: 1,784).[2] The narrator had only to add

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[1] Abū Rayyah, *Aḍwā'* and *Shaykh al-maḍīrah*.

[2] The numbers of the *ḥadīth* refer to those of Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *al-Lu'lu'*.

that the unbelievers had asked for a miraculous sign and the moon was then eclipsed.

The sayings often gain in this way from the brevity in the utterances enhancing their rhetorical effect. When doomsday or hell-fire is the theme we have a flow of words that is almost poetical in its rhythm:

> Beware when chaotic rebellion befalls thee;
> when the seated shall profit more than the standing;
> the standing more so than the walking;
> the walking more so than the running...(1,833)

Besides being required to be models of eloquence, the sayings of the Prophet are required to be illustrations of his humane and lovable personality. A common device of narrators is to bring someone before the Prophet to ask a question of him, and to show him making an amiable and convincing response. The questioner can be a near relation, a passer-by or even an infidel, but his question is always serious and earnest. The Prophet, in his turn, never tires of answering, no matter how unseasonable or unreasonable the time or place. Zaynab, the wife of 'Abdullāh, asks Bilāl to go in and ask Muḥammad about almsgiving. When Bilāl says Zaynab has asked him to come in, he is asked by the Prophet, "Which Zaynab?" (584). This is a clever narrative device which implies that people asking questions were so many that they need not be known to the Prophet, and at the same time that any person was at liberty to ask questions at any time and receive guidance and help.

The narrative elements in *Ḥadīth* do not give a picture of Muḥammad in action so much as create an atmosphere of the presence of a beloved hero. We are shown him in everyday activities such as prayer, when small miracles are performed, as when the amount of water is increased for him in the ritual of washing before prayer. Indeed, all the *ḥadīth* about prayers create some sense of intimacy and friendly presence, as when he prays with a child near him or avoids waking a sleeping cat after praying. These *ḥadīth* also reflect the general principle that "Islam is simplicity, not complexity".

But sometimes a genuine story is told. In an account of the forbidding of alcohol, 'Alī, the Prophet's cousin, accuses Ḥamzah, the uncle of both of them, of usurping 'Alī's right to camels taken at Badr (1,292). The action here is portrayed in a lively way (even the reactions of the characters are briefly mentioned), and an intimate light is cast on the whole story when 'Alī makes it clear that the camels were intended for the wedding-feast at his marriage to the Prophet's daughter, Fāṭimah.

One of the devices of the narrator is enumeration. Numbers are fed into the narrative in such a way as to maintain suspense and interest. "Seven

will have shelter in God's shade where there will be no other shade but His." "The Muslim has a right to five from his fellow Muslim" (1,397).

A simple logic irradiates the saying itself, as when Muḥammad is asked if it is permissible to accept gifts while holding public office, providing the gift is given with good intentions. The reply is, "Go and sit at your father's and mother's home and see whether anyone will present you there with gifts."

The narrator often piles up details to accentuate their cumulative effort and their inter-relationship. The *hadīth* that Muḥammad is the last of the prophets is a good illustration of this. Here a whole process is compared to an edifice which has been erected but for one stone. People over the ages asked when the last stone would be added to complete the masterpiece. Muḥammad is likened to this last and vital stone (1,473).

Riddles are a part of many tales. The Prophet describes something in an unusual way and the listeners will be asked to name it. When they fail the *hadīth* supplies the answer. Such riddles usually provide an example of the behaviour proper to a true believer. An example of this is the riddle about the palm-tree. Like a true believer it does not shed its leaves when the fair weather ends (1,792).

Use is also made of techniques familiar from folk-tales. In the *Arabian Nights*, for example, we come across narratives which provide a framework for a sequence of tales held together by quite fragile connecting links. We also come across narratives where odd people chance together and tell their stories to one another. In the *Hadīth* we hear how a blind man, a bald man, and a leper each pray to God to improve his condition. In their supplication each tells the best act he has performed as a Muslim, but only the deed of the blind man is adjudged worthy of reward (1,868). In other *hadīth*, three men shut into a cave by a rockfall supplicate God to release them (1,745).

Many *hadīth* illustrate the personal life of the Prophet, and some have good narrative development. When the event is important the pace is characterized by ease and involvement. However, when certain *sūrahs* were revealed in connection with the incident many details are supplied and the development is less taut. The pace slackens, but the emotional content is often heightened simultaneously, invoking sentiments of reverence for Muḥammad.

When 'Ā'ishah describes the last days and hours of the Prophet the narrative is so evocative that one cannot fail to be deeply moved by it (e.g. 233, 235). However, it has a practical importance as well, since it concerns also the succession of Abū Bakr to the caliphate. We meet the same charged atmosphere in the account of the death of the Prophet's only son (1,495).

Ḥadīth on Muḥammad's appearance and looks, sleep, dress, food, his treatment of servants and so forth, are factual, detailed, but often dry and uninspiring; but when the theme is some situation mentioned in the Qur'ān we can see that the narrator is able to make detail arouse emotion.

Ḥadīth al-Ifk, the slandering of 'Ā'ishah (1,763)[3] is the longest *ḥadīth* of all. The commentator Zamakhsharī points out that nowhere else in the Qur'ān is the Almighty as severe as He is with the authors of this slander. 'Ā'ishah is herself the source of the text of the narrative, and her feelings are vividly portrayed. The action takes place in various locations – the desert, the Prophet's home, her father's house – and the personalities are many and varied. There is a tense climax. 'Ā'ishah is innocent, but cannot prove it. Her father believes her, but shares the sorrow of his most beloved friend. The emotions are confused and evoke sadness. The story does not end when her innocence is proclaimed. The forgiving of the slanderers is dealt with ably, and it is pointed out that a misleading situation had deceived them.

Also notable is the treatment of the story elements in the *ḥadīth* on Ka'b b. Mālik's repentance and petition for forgiveness. The sweep of the narrative in this *ḥadīth* is much more extensive than in most *ḥadīth*, though less than that of *al-Ifk*. In this account Ka'b truly confesses his sin, but much of the interest in the narrative resides in the blasphemous behaviour of a beloved woman, which arouses complex emotions.

Some *sūrahs* indicate the heroic stature of the Prophet. When, for example, his wives complain that their life is one of poverty and deprivation, despite the fact that Muḥammad has in his care much booty acquired by the Muslims, the corresponding *ḥadīth* (944, 945) are surprisingly short, giving only the bare minimum necessary to understand the basic situation.

When an important point, for which there is no Quranic precedent, is raised in a *ḥadīth* (for example, inheritance and the saying of the Prophet that prophets should neither bequeath nor inherit, since they do not and should not own anything), then the narrator feels less constricted in his treatment. When we meet Fāṭimah with 'Ā'ishah's father, Abū Bakr (1,149), he forbids her inheriting the Prophet's share at Medina and Fadak, and also the fifth of the booty from Khaybar, quoting the *Ḥadīth*.

The story goes on to say that 'Alī sided with his wife Fāṭimah, but when she died, six months after her father, he became reconciled to Abū Bakr. Whether these details can be verified or not the narrator does not tarry to determine, instead snatching at a chance to depict a tense situation and construct a good story.

[3] An English rendering of this story can be found in Guillaume, *Life*, 494–9.

There is a great contrast between those *ḥadīth* which deal with real people and their attributes – the Prophet's relations, his Companions, prominent people, the Anṣār – and those that deal with the supernatural. The first type include little narrative, whereas the second are the richest source of narrative in the whole corpus.

With the supernatural there is the fascination and mystery of the unknown and the pleasure of going beyond the borders of humdrum reality. There is a good deal of raw material, moreover, for the storyteller, such as the dreams of the Prophet foretelling the outcome of battles to come, warning of defeats or heralding victories. The Qur'ān contains only one prophecy, namely the defeat of the Byzantines, but the *Ḥadīth* contains many. Some are vague, promising Muslim sea-warriors that they will be kings in Paradise, but others are on important themes and are treated with richness and colour.

Into this latter category come the doomsday *ḥadīth*. One cannot fail to be impressed by the description of the glorious light, blazing in Hijaz, flooding the neck of camels in Syria with its rich glow, reminding one of the light that flashed on the birth of the Prophet and shook the throne of the Persian emperor. There are also predictions of the coming of false prophets. One *ḥadīth* (639) predicts the coming of the Khawārij, concentrating on describing the features of their leader, Ḥurkūṣ b. Zuhayr, this description being later verified when 'Alī kills him at the battle of Nahrawān.

Predictions about what the believers will find in Paradise and Hell do not come into the category of prophecies, even if they describe the future. It is interesting that the torments of Hell are more vividly and exaggeratedly described than the pleasures of Paradise. In one curious *ḥadīth* we have an account of a debate between Heaven and Hell with God adjudicating against false arguments.

Numbers play a role in the exaggeration of these supernatural *ḥadīth*. Infidels whose flesh is consumed by fire will have it renewed hundreds of times in order to prolong their agonies. The shadow cast by the trees of Paradise is so long that a horseman will gallop in vain for a hundred years trying to outrun it (1,801). The piling up of atrocities goes almost beyond imagination. It is interesting that Abū Dharr, nowadays claimed as the first Islamic socialist, supplies an addition to this *ḥadīth* concerning the unhappy lot of those who are damned to be tormented for having treasured money in this world (579).

Besides treating prediction as a miracle (not one accepted by the pious, for whom the only miracle is the Qur'ān), *Ḥadīth* has one or two other miracles. In one *ḥadīth* (1,323), reminiscent of the Christian miracle of the

loaves and fishes, we have the story of how a little wheat and milk miraculously feeds the hungry multitude around the Prophet. The food increases, not in the hands of Muḥammad, but in the hands of a hostess doing his bidding.

With important supernatural themes the storyteller handles his subject matter with fluency and art. When, on the other hand, he relates how the Prophet was carried by Gabriel to Heaven to meet past prophets or to meet venerated heroes, the account is rather brief. This is Islamic lore and the narrator is unwilling to draw on the current Judaic lore to supplement it. The story of Moses and al-Khiḍr, however, already given in some detail in the Qur'ān, gains further detail and colour as the narrator adds to it (1,539). The *isrā'*, the night flight to Jerusalem, gains even more. Since it is an important incident in Islamic history and belief the Prophet was asked to comment on it. The *Ḥadīth* give several versions of these comments, some quite long, to establish that both body and soul were involved. Abū Bakr is not quoted, and the much-impugned Abū Hurayrah is hardly quoted. The longest passages are attributed to Abū Dharr and Mālik b. Ṣaʿṣaʿah. Moses is given an important role in the night flight, and it is in it that the frequency of daily prayers is laid down.

The details of the two main versions differ somewhat. The Prophet meets Adam and the earlier prophets in the same order in both versions, and the dialogue between Gabriel and the keeper of the door is the same. Each prophet asks Gabriel whom he has brought with him.[4] The dialogue between Moses and the Prophet seems almost up-to-date, since every time Muḥammad comes back to say how often Muslims are to pray, Moses sends him back to ask for a reduction. "Your followers will not put up with so many," he repeats. Thus he finally gets the number of prayers reduced from fifty to five.

Abū Hurayah, who did not have much to say about the *isrā'*, has his say, with Anas and others, on the subject of doomsday. One finds oneself in celestial spheres with God and the angels, in Heaven or in Hell. The narrative runs every which way to show why this one or that one enters Heaven or Hell, how people in death are lost and frightened, bothered and bewildered. The torments of the damned get as much attention as elsewhere.

The narrator sometimes plays up the element of suspense to keep us in a state of continued tense interest. Samurah b. Jundub relates, in the Prophet's supposed words, a dream he had in which he was awakened by two people who asked him to come with them. They witnessed certain curious situations and incidents in Heaven and Hell. The Prophet was not

[4] For other occurrences of this motif, see above, "Early Arabic prose", pp. 114–53.

allowed to stop and ask questions, but ordered to carry on till they reached
a crystal palace in Paradise where everything perplexing was explained.
Here were folk who had sinned thus and thus, and there the faithful
recompensed for good deeds. The narrative is one of the lengthiest of all.

On the subject of death and the two angels that meet by the head of
the corpse in the tomb to judge his soul, the storyteller gives himself rein,
since the theme is one that fascinates all who wish to know what will
happen to them when they die.

No doubt storytellers would have developed their craft to a much higher
level if the collectors of *Ḥadīth* had not very soon slammed shut the door
to exclude any addition to the corpus. The storytellers' talents soon faded
and were quickly eclipsed. The amount already collected was more than
Islamic society needed and standards needed to be brought up again to
an acceptable level.

CHAPTER 14

EUROPEAN CRITICISM OF HADĪTH LITERATURE

"Dans cet ensemble gigantesque constitué par les *ḥadīths*, chaque école a puisé ce qui paraissait venir à l'appui de sa propre doctrine, et a repoussé ce qui la gênait."[1] This statement represents a fair summary of the current view of Western scholarship on the role played by *Ḥadīth* in the development of Islamic legal doctrine. According to traditional Islamic jurisprudence the *Ḥadīth*, particularly those recorded in the six "canonical" collections of the third/ninth century, constitute an authentic record of the legal precedents, or *sunnah*, set by the Prophet Muḥammad, and as such were regarded as a primary source of law, providing both an interpretation of, and a supplement to, the legal provisions of the Qur'ān itself. European scepticism over this view, however, stemming largely from the fact that the *Ḥadīth* embody considerable conflict and contradiction of substance, has eventually led to the conclusion that the ascription of legal doctrines to the Prophet was largely apocryphal and that the great mass of *Ḥadīth* originated in the second/eighth century, thus representing very much a secondary stage in the growth of legal doctrine.

Muslim scholars themselves were, of course, intensely conscious of the possibility of fabrication of *Ḥadīth*. But their test for authenticity was confined to an investigation of the chain of transmitters (*isnād*) who narrated the report.[2] Provided the chain was uninterrupted and its individual links deemed trustworthy persons, the *ḥadīth* was accepted as binding law. There could, by the terms of the religious faith itself, be no questioning of the content of the report; for this was the substance of divine revelation and therefore not susceptible of any form of legal or historical criticism. European and non-Muslim scholars, naturally enough, deemed the Muslim type of critique inadequate. The *ḥadīth* was to be tested by its content and by the place its terms occupied in the development of legal thought and institutions, ascertained objectively (from the non-Muslim standpoint) by reference to all the available literary sources.

[1] Bellefonds, *Traité*, 33.
[2] Cf. above, cap. 10, "The development of the science of *Ḥadīth*", especially "Criticism", pp. 277–9.

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Ignaz Goldziher was the pioneer of this historical critique of the Ḥadīth.[3] But the systematic development of his thesis, the detailed formulation of criteria for the evaluation of Ḥadīth, and their application to a wide range of materials in the original Arabic sources, was the work of Joseph Schacht.[4] Here lies the inspiration of all contemporary enquiry into the early history of Islamic law.

The picture of early Islamic legal history which emerges from the researches of Schacht has its focal point in the work of the scholar Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820). By Shāfiʿī's time the early schools of law – fraternities of scholars seeking to elaborate an ideal code of Islamic conduct – were well established in numerous geographical centres, the two most important and enduring of which proved to be the schools of Medina and Kufa. These early law schools formulated their doctrine largely on the basis of local customary practice, due account being taken, of course, of the dictates of the Qur'ān. But just prior to Shāfiʿī an opposition movement had emerged within the schools which sought a more strictly Islamic scheme of law based directly upon the precedents of the Prophet himself. This "traditionist" movement was championed by Shāfiʿī, and the central pillar of his theory of the sources of law was the binding authority of the Ḥadīth which established the Prophet's practice. Despite initial opposition from the Establishment in the early law schools, Shāfiʿī's legal theory inevitably won the day, and by the end of the third/early tenth century the four classical schools of Sunnī law – the Mālikīs who were the successors of the early school of Medina, the Ḥanafīs who were the successors of the early school of Kufa, the Shāfiʿīs and the Ḥanbalīs – all formally accepted the paramount role of the Ḥadīth as a source of law.

Schacht illustrates this process of early legal development with a wealth of examples, and a typical example of his methodology is provided by his analysis of the early source materials relating to the institution of *khiyār al-majlis*. This is the right, or option, of contracting parties who have completed the formalities of offer and acceptance to withdraw from the contract before they physically separate and leave "the session of the bargain". Although several alleged statements of the Prophet affirm the validity of this rule, it was not unanimously accepted by all Muslim jurists. In particular the Mālikī school rejected it.

The evidence of the first Islamic legal compendia shows that the rule was not recognized by the general doctrine of the early schools of Kufa and Medina. In one of the works of Shāfiʿī, however, the Meccan scholar ʿAṭāʾ (d. 114/732) is reported to have supported the rule – an ascription

[3] Particularly in his *Muhammedanische Studien*, II, 1–274.
[4] *Origins*.

which Schacht considers to be genuine, since the rule is here couched in less sophisticated terms than those of the alleged statements of the Prophet in the classical collections of *Ḥadīth*. The most important of these classical *ḥadīth* supporting *khiyār al-majlis* expresses the rule in the form of a legal maxim, which is invariably the sign of a late stage in the formulation of any doctrine, and has the *isnād* Mālik – Nāfiʿ – Ibn ʿUmar – the Prophet. This *isnād* is considered one of the most reliable by the Muslim scholars, but from the little information that is available about Nāfiʿ (he was a freedman of Ibn ʿUmar, who died about 117/735, and therefore can have had little actual association with the leader of the school of Medina, Mālik b. Anas, d. 179/796), Schacht concludes that "the bulk of the traditions which go under his name must be credited to anonymous traditionists in the first half of the second century A.H.".

The writers of the law schools in Medina and Kufa reacted to the "Nāfiʿ *ḥadīth*" by referring to their own contrary established practice or by minimizing its effect through interpretation. This was in turn countered by the traditionist opposition, who produced a further *ḥadīth* which alleged that Ibn ʿUmar himself followed the rule. Schacht is satisfied that this *ḥadīth* must be later than the "Nāfiʿ *ḥadīth*" because its terms presuppose the existence of the latter. Other classical *ḥadīth* supporting the practice are also clearly later because they are "elaborations with exhortations and circumstantial detail added". Schacht therefore concludes that the doctrine of *khiyār al-majlis* originated in Mecca and was taken up by the traditionists, through the *ḥadīth* they put into circulation, in opposition to the established practice of the law schools of Medina and Kufa.[5]

There can be little doubt to the non-Muslim mind that Schacht's view of the origins of the legal *Ḥadīth* and their role in the development of Islamic legal doctrine is essentially sound. Reservations must, however, be expressed as to the extent to which he drives his thesis. His ultimate conclusion is that "the evidence of legal traditions carries us back to about the year 100 A.H. only",[6] and his methodical rule is that "every legal tradition from the Prophet, until the contrary is proved, must be taken not as an authentic or essentially authentic...statement valid for his time...but as the fictitious expression of a legal doctrine formulated at a later date. Its date can be ascertained from its first appearance in legal discussion, from its relative position in the history of the problem with which it is concerned, and from certain indications in text and *isnād*...".[7] The present writer regards Schacht's conclusion as too rigid, particularly because his arguments concerning the "relative position" of a *ḥadīth* "in the history of the problem with which it is concerned" are not always wholly convincing.

        [5] *Origins*, 159–61 and 176–9.   [6] Ibid., 5.   [7] Ibid., 149.

One example is "the case of the six slaves". A *ḥadīth* records that when an individual on his death-bed set free six slaves, which were the only property he had, an Umayyad governor held the manumission to be effective in respect only of two of the slaves, as determined by lot. Schacht regards this *ḥadīth* as authentic and others, which ascribe precisely the same decision to the Prophet, as fictitious.[8] From this he draws the conclusion that the fundamental rule of Islamic succession – the restriction of bequests or testamentary dispositions to a value of one-third of the testator's nett estate – originated in Umayyad times, but while Schacht's arguments for the spurious nature of the *isnād* of the alleged ruling of the Prophet are convincing enough, the definite conclusion he draws seems unwarranted.

If an indication of the authenticity or otherwise of an alleged precedent of the Prophet is to be found in "its relative position in the history of the problem" concerned, then there are cogent reasons for believing that the fundamental one-third rule was in existence well before the reported decision of the Umayyad governor. In the first place, the legal nature of the decision is that it extends to gifts made on the death-bed of the donor an accepted rule of limitation of bequests. This point is in fact made by the jurist Shāfi'ī himself, and upon any reasonable assumption of the process of legal development the governor's decision must have followed, and cannot have preceded, the one-third rule. In the second place, the one-third rule is a simple and basic one which cannot be assumed to be fictitiously attributed to the Prophet in the same way as those rules which undeniably represent an advanced stage in legal development. Indeed, although the Qur'ān itself had laid down a meticulous scheme of compulsory inheritance, it had in no way indicated how that scheme was related to the right of testamentary disposition. In particular, the question posed was what limit, if any, was to be set to testamentary power. This was a problem created by the Quranic legislation itself, one of considerable practical importance and one which therefore would naturally fall to be answered by the Prophet, as interpreter of the Qur'ān and judicial head of the early Muslim community.

Schacht's approach, then, might be considered somewhat too narrow because he rigidly identifies the development of law with the growth of *Ḥadīth* and fails to take proper account of intrinsically legal issues of this kind. In sum, he translates the negative proposition that the evidence of legal *Ḥadīth* does not take us back beyond the second century of Islam into the positive statement that legal development began only in late Umayyad times. This creates an unacceptable void in the picture of law

[8] Ibid., 201ff.

in the early Muslim community; for it is unrealistic to assume that legal problems created by the terms of the Qur'ān itself were ignored for a century or more. Granted, therefore, that the formal *isnād* may be fictitious, it may well be argued, even from the secular standpoint of historical criticism, that the substance of the *ḥadīth* reflects an authentic decision of the Prophet.[9]

In such cases, then, it may be that the truth lies somewhere between traditional Islamic legal theory and the rigorous historical approach of Schacht. At the same time it must, of course, be frankly recognized that the Muslim and the Western methods of *Ḥadīth* criticism are irreconcilable because they rest upon totally different premises. Between the dictates of religious faith on the one hand and secular historical criticism on the other there can be no middle way of true objectivity.

[9] For the more detailed arguments in support of this view, see the correspondence in *Middle Eastern Studies*, III/2, 1967, 195ff.

CHAPTER 15

THE IMPACT OF THE QUR'ĀN AND *HADĪTH* ON MEDIEVAL ARABIC LITERATURE

THE QUR'ĀN AND ARABIC POETRY

To the Arabs the Qur'ān was not only a religious book which set up for them new principles of religious, moral and social conduct, but also a literary work of the highest quality, the very Speech of God that no man can surpass or rival and, therefore, the final authority regarding language and grammar and the standard by which a literary work might be judged. But in spite of this, and of the fact that Muḥammad was taken by his Meccan opponents to be a poet and soothsayer, the influence that the Qur'ān has exerted on the development of the Arabic poem, its themes, structure, language and general spirit, is less significant than that exercised by the works of the pre-Islamic poets. The pre-Islamic *qaṣīdah* or ode remained the model after which the new poets, who were born after Islam, composed their works, and the standard by which these works were judged. This happened in spite of the hostile attitude expressed by the Qur'ān and the Prophet towards heathen poetry and poets, an attitude which amounts to a condemnation of poetic imagination and truth.

   Three main reasons seem to have contributed to this peculiar phenomenon. At the time when Muḥammad began his prophetic career the Arabic *qaṣīdah* was fully developed in structure, language and metrical scheme, the poetic traditions firmly established and the whole imaginative range of life in Arabia explored by the poets. Therefore, it was impossible for Islam to switch the course which the Arabic *qaṣīdah* was following or to abolish the poetic traditions which were created by the heathen poets. On the other hand, the Qur'ān did not offer itself as a poetic work to be followed, but as a divine revelation totally different from poetry and beyond imitation. To look upon it as a poetic work and aspire to its standard or imitate its style would have been regarded as an impious act. The third reason lies in the fact that though the religious beliefs and political life of the Arabs changed after Islam, the old tribal relationships, social notions and habits of thought, which found their finest expression in the old *qaṣīdah*, remained as strong after Islam as they were before it.

   However, the impact of the Qur'ān can be found in all types of poetry

which were written during the Umayyad period (41–132/661–750), a period of political struggle, civil wars, religious studies and poetic revival, and in the works of all poets, including al-Akhṭal (d. c. 92/711), who was a Christian. In their panegyrics, satires, rajaz and ascetic poems the Umayyad poets made an extensive use of the Quranic ideas, images, diction and expressions, of the narratives relating to prophets and the fate of their opponents, and of the descriptions of Paradise, Hell and the Day of Judgement.

Under the impact of the Qur'ān panegyric poetry became almost a new art. It was employed as a weapon in the political struggle and religious dispute between the Umayyads and their opponents, as a vehicle through which they expressed their political ideas and religious arguments. This led the poets to act as spokesmen of the various political parties, and to make every use of the Qur'ān in defending the position of their patrons and their claims for power or right to the office of the caliphate.

Any of the poems of Jarīr and al-Farazdaq (both d. c. 112/730) in the praise of the Umayyad caliphs and their provincial governors can be taken as an example. Here the Umayyad caliphs are presented as vicegerents of God on earth, as protectors of Islam or as religious leaders (imams) chosen and assisted by God, and as the companions of the Prophet in Paradise; they are compared with Adam, Muḥammad and former prophets, particularly Noah, Moses, King Solomon and Jesus Christ, and granted every virtue bestowed by God on these prophets. Their opponents and those of their agents, on the other hand, are presented as unbelievers, evil-doers and hypocrites, ill-at-heart, as the hosts of Satan and rebels against God's will, as worshippers of idols and inhabitants of Hell; they were also likened to the opponents of the prophets mentioned above, to Pharaoh, the Samaritan who misled the children of Israel, the slaughterer of the she-camel of Ṣāliḥ (see above, p. 108), the son of Noah who refused to join his father in the Ark, and the peoples of 'Ād, Thamūd and Lot.

In all this the Quranic ideas, images and phrases, which are used in abundance, are *assimilated, transformed* and *modified*. A line is sometimes constucted out of two or three Quranic verses. At other times we find lines and hemistichs made up of complete Quranic verses and phrases.

Let us now examine some examples from the two poets. Jarīr writes of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (99–101/717–20):

> He received the caliphate, since it was a measure fixed for him [by God]
> Like Moses who came to his Lord according to a decree.

Here we find the influence of the two Quranic verses:

> For everything God has fixed a measure (lxv.3).
> Then you came according to a decree, o Moses (xx.40).

In another poem devoted to Muʿāwiyah b. Hishām we read such a line
as:

>   None can lead astray the one whom God guides,
>   And none can guide the one whom God sends astray,[1]

a line based on the Quranic verses:

>   And as for him whom God sends astray there is no guide,
>   And him whom God guides none can lead astray (xxxix.36–7).

Such lines can also be found in large numbers in al-Farazdaq's poems.
He says to Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Malik (96–9/715–17):

>   We have found the house of Marwān to be the pegs of our faith,
>   As the mountains are made pegs for the earth.[2]

In this line the image is derived from the Quranic verses: "Have We not
made the earth as a cradle and the mountains as pegs?" (lxxviii.6–7). In
another poem, while praising Maslamah b. ʿAbd al-Malik, he writes of
Yazīd b. al-Muhallab and his followers:

>   When encompassed by God's power they found themselves
>   Like cattle led astray from the way,
>   Nothing was seen of them in the morning
>   Save their dwellings as though they were
>   From Thamūd of al-Ḥijr or Iram.[3]

Here the first hemistich of the second line is made up of a Quranic verse
which refers to the destruction of Thamūd (xlvi.25), while the first line
echoes the two verses: "And they were encompassed by that at which they
have mocked" (xlvi.26); "They were but like cattle; nay, they are further
astray from the way" (xxv.44).

In their personal satire the two poets also resorted to the use of Quranic
images, phrases and narratives regarding the evil deeds and punishment
of the peoples of ʿĀd, Thamūd, Lot and Noah, the Samaritan and the
hamstringer of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel, and the sufferings of the unbelievers in
Hell. The following two lines, one by Jarīr and the other by al-Farazdaq,
can be taken as examples:

>   You have gone astray from the way
>   Like the Samaritan and his folk
>   Who went on cleaving to a calf.[4]

>   I have been told that the wretched fellow of Jaʿfar
>   Has brought misery upon them,
>   As Thamūd's most wretched fellow was their own destroyer.[5]

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[1] *Dīwān*, 275, 153.   [2] *Dīwān*, II, 76.   [3] Ibid., 252.
[4] *Dīwān*, 464.   [5] *Dīwān*, II, 369.

In comparison with panegyric and satire, Umayyad love poetry was less influenced by the Qur'ān than by the pre-Islamic amatory prelude (nasīb). This is true of both the traditional and 'Udhrī poets (see below, pp. 421–7). Almost all the themes, motifs, symbols and images around which this poetry revolves can be traced back to the pre-Islamic poets. Yet we do not fail to find in the works of each poet a number of lines whose phraseology, ideas or images are based on Quranic verses or lines which express attitudes and emotions influenced by the Qur'ān. They can be found in the traditional amatory prelude, in the description of the beloved and her old encampment, in the expression of the poet's feelings and desires, in his answers to rebukers and to the complaints of slanderers, in his calls or prayers to God and in his oaths to his beloved regarding his faithfulness and the constancy of his love.

In describing the erased encampment of his beloved the poet sometimes makes use of the Quranic references to the dwellings of 'Ād and Thamūd, or compares the encampment with the ancient scriptures of Abraham and Moses and with an old ruined sanctuary.[6] He beseeches his travelling companions to pray where his beloved has already prayed and promises them God's reward on the Day of Judgement:

> Do not despair of God's forgiveness for your sins,
> If you pray where she has already prayed.[7]

This line by Kuthayyir (d. 105/723) echoes the Quranic verse: "Do not despair of God's mercy; for surely God forgives sins altogether" (xxxix.53). Dhū 'l-Rummah (d. c. 110/728) also writes:

> O my friends, look around, that God may offer you
> A sublime degree in Paradise and shade outspread.[8]

Al-Farazdaq presents his divorced wife Nawār as being his "Garden of Eternity" and compares himself with Adam after his fall from Paradise:

> She was my Paradise from which I was exiled,
> Like Adam when he rebelled against his Lord.[9]

Jamīl b. Ma'mar (d. 82/701) associates his beloved with "the Night of Power" (laylat al-qadr) in which the angels descended from Heaven:

> She has been given preference in beauty to people
> As the Night of Power was preferred to a thousand months.

He also claims that she was created by God to be a trial to him and presents his love as something predetermined by God or as a compact confirmed by God.[10]

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[6] Dīwān Jarīr, 197, 321; al-Akhṭal, Shi'r, 38; al-Ruqayyāt, Dīwān, 8.
[7] Dīwān, 95.   [8] Dīwān, 132.
[9] Dīwān, I, 294. See also Jamil, Dīwān, 20; 'Umar, Dīwān, I, 93, 117.
[10] Jamīl, Dīwān, 23, 20.

Other poets associate their loved ones with the witches who are mentioned in the Qur'ān as "those who blow on knots", and relate the enchanting power of their eyes to the magic of the two Babylonian angels Hārūt and Mārūt (ii.96). Thus 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah (d. *c.* 102/720) says:

> They told me that she has made for me knots
> On which she blows;
> What delightful knots they are![11]

In his turn Dhū 'l-Rummah writes:

> An eye as though from which the two Babylonian angels
> Have poured magic into your heart on Ma'qilah day.[12]

The Umayyad love poets also benefited from other Quranic ideas, images and phrases, particularly those relating to the prohibition of killing an innocent soul except in retaliation for another soul, to prayer and pilgrimage, sin and punishment, piety and repentance, justice and injustice. As a final example we may take Jamīl's line:

> I pray, yet I weep during my prayer on remembering her;
> Woe to me for what the two angels write![13]

Among the poetic genres initiated by Islam and developed under the influence of the Qur'ān was the ascetic poem, the pioneers of which were the Kharijite poets, particularly 'Imrān b. Ḥiṭṭān and al-Ṭirimmāḥ (d. *c.* 105/723). The Quranic concepts of God and man, life and death, piety and evil, reward and punishment, form the core of this poem. The descriptions of the Day of Judgement, Paradise and Hell also provided the poets with ample material to draw on. Therefore, their ascetic poems often represent Quranic ideas, images and phrases cast into poetry. They centre around death and present life as a trial, wealth and power as mere vanity, piety and good deeds as the only things which count in this life, and the world to come as the everlasting abode.

The following lines by al-Ṭirimmāḥ may be taken as an example:

> Every living being will complete the number of years
> Allotted to him in life, then perish away.
> How amazed I am at him who gathers wealth,
> Stores it up and prides himself on it;
> And so loses that to which God will bring him
> On the day when neither friends nor sons will avail
> A rich man [against God],

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[11] *Dīwān*, I, 116. See also al-Ruqayyāt, *Dīwān*, 77.
[12] Dhū 'l-Rummah, *Dīwān*, 172, also 677.
[13] *Dīwān*, 50; cf. Qur'ān, II.79, lxxxii.10–2.

> The day he is brought [before the Judge];
> His accusers among men and jinn
> Are his hands and feet.[14]

In these lines all the ideas and images are derived from the Qur'ān.[15]

The *rajaz* poem, which reached its full development under the Umayyad régime, also acquired a religious tone. In a number of their *rajaz* poems both al-'Ajjāj (d. *c.* 90/709) and his son Ru'bah replace the conventional amatory prelude by a religious one which revolves around the praise of God and the expression of the poet's hope in His forgiveness and mercy. Al-'Ajjāj also devoted some of his poems to the treatment of Quranic themes and religious experiences. In one of them he echoes the Quranic descriptions of the Day of Resurrection, Paradise and Hell, and in another, which also echoes the Qur'ān, he praises God and expresses his thanks to Him for saving him from an illness which brought him close to death.[16]

These Quranic influences continued in the works of the 'Abbasid poets. The new poets also looked upon the Qur'ān as a source of poetic inspiration, derived or borrowed from it many of their ideas, images and phrases, and based on it their political and religious arguments. Though we often find in their panegyrics, satires, love lyrics, ascetic poems and hunting poems the same Quranic ideas, images and arguments employed by the Umayyad poets, we also come across some highly delicate and witty uses of many other Quranic ideas and images. This is particularly so with regard to the drinking songs of Abū Nuwās (d. *c.* 195/811), the satirical and remonstrating poems of Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 283/896) and the panegyrics of Abū Tammām (d. *c.* 231/846).

The impact of the Qur'ān appears in every aspect of Abū Nuwās' drinking songs: in the description of the wine and its pleasures and of the cup-bearers and the tavern-maidens, in the blasphemy of the poet, in his arguments in favour of the pleasure of this world as opposed to that of the world to come, and in his references to God's forgiveness and mercy.

He describes the wine sometimes as though it were a divine being or heavenly spirit, and speaks of its glory and light, which he associates with those of God. Thus, he opens one of his poems with this line:

> Praise the wine for its gifts
> And call it by its most beautiful names,[17]

a line written in imitation of such Quranic verses as: "And remember

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[14] 'Abbās, *Shi'r*, 97, also 30–1.
[15] Qur'ān, vii.34, iii.145, civ.1–9, iii.116, xxvi.88, xxiv.2.
[16] Ahlwardt, *Majmū'*, II, 5–7, 11–12, 15–16, 24–5, 40, 43.
[17] *Dīwān*, 13.

God's gifts that you may prosper" (vii.69); "To God belong the most beautiful names, so call Him by them" (vii.180). In another poem he says:

> A wine at the mention of which the kings fall down prostrate;
> So glorious to be called by names.[18]

Here we are also reminded of two other Quranic verses (xix.58; lv.78).

At other times he speaks of it as though it were one of the houri damsels of Paradise, or as a maiden frightened by the fire of Hell, and presents it as his "Garden of Eternity", as the heritage of Adam and Eve, and as the companion of Noah in the Ark.[19] He compares its "radiant sparks" with the shooting stars whereby evil spirits are stoned.[20]

He even uses complete Quranic verses which make up full lines or hemistichs. For example:

> A group of youths whose faces are fragrant flowers,
> In a garden where they hear no blame;
> Near them are its shades,
> And close upon them hang down its fruits.[21]

Here, while the first line echoes some Quranic verses which refer to the pleasures of the believers in Paradise (lvi.25, 89), the second one is made up of a full Quranic verse (lxxvi.14).

In describing the cup-bearers and the tavern-maidens he presents them as being the ideal or model according to which God has created the houri damsels and immortal youths of Paradise, and as heavenly beings made of light and flame, or of gold and pearl, while all other men and women are created of clay and moulded mud.[22] He also speaks of them as being assisted in their enchantment by the hosts of Satan and taught the power of magic by the two Babylonian angels, Hārūt and Mārūt.[23]

He sometimes uses Quranic phrases and images which refer to the light and power of God in order to describe the beauty of his beloved and the effect of love. He writes, for instance:

> Had you seen her, you would have
> Fallen down thunderstruck.[24]
>
> Then you would have known that love can seize
> With the grip of a powerful one.[25]

The Quranic verses which stand behind these lines are: "But when his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble to dust; and

[18] *Dīwān*, 704.

[19] Ibid., 145, 91, 113, 183, 9, 42, 80, 126, 704, 139, 684.   [20] Ibid., 39.

[21] Bāqillānī, *I'jāz*, 52, also 53.   [22] Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān*, 349, 90, 392, 719.

[23] Ibid., 711, 39, 332.   [24] Ibid., 278.   [25] Ibid., 280. See also p. 228.

Moses fell down thunderstruck" (vii.143); "They counted false all Our signs, so We seized them with the grip of One, sublime and powerful" (liv.42).

In describing his suffering in love he benefits from the Quranic description of the fire of Hell and the punishment of the unbelievers. He speaks of the man who loves, for instance, as being like those who dwell in the Fire and who "neither live nor die", or as being placed midway between Paradise and Hell.[26]

The ascetic poem reached its final form in the religious poetry of Abū 'l-'Atāhiyah (d. c. 210/826) and Abū Nuwās. Abū 'l-Atāhiyah's *dīwān* (collected poems) consists almost exclusively of ascetic poems which centre on the mortality of the world and the impotence of man in the face of death. Like the Umayyad ascetic poems, they present life as delusion and a trial, death as the ultimate power and truth in this world, and piety as the only sustenance which man will have in the Hereafter.

The impact of the Qur'ān is predominant in them. They are, in fact, sermons in verse based on the notions and descriptions found in the Qur'ān of God and man, life and death, the Day of Judgement and the world to come, the reward of those who fear God and fulfil their duty to Him and the punishment of the others who neglect this duty and pursue their worldly interests. They repeat again and again that man is created from dust and returns to dust, that everything in the world is determined by God according to a measure, and that all things pass away while God alone endures.

In stressing the power of death and the impotence of man Abū 'l-'Atāhiyah also avails himself of the Quranic references to the fate of 'Ād and Thamūd, Pharaoh, Korah and Hāmān, and the death of Adam, Noah, Luqmān, David and King Solomon.

The following lines are representative examples of how Abū 'l-'Atāhiyah has used Quranic ideas, images and phrases. Each of them is constructed out of two or three Quranic verses, which are a little modified to fit in the metre:

> Death is true; the world is a passing abode;
> And each soul shall be recompensed for what it has earned.

> He is my Lord who is sufficient for me;
> An excellent Protector and Helper.

> No man who will travel to his Last Abode
> Without commerce is a [good] merchant.[27]

Panegyric poetry continued along the same Islamic lines established by

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[26] Ibid., 118, 368. See also p. 228.   [27] Abū 'l-'Atāhiyah, *Dīwān*, 37, 103, 101.

the Umayyad poets. The 'Abbasid caliphs were also presented by the new poets as devoted and pious Muslims who feared God and sought His reward, as the heirs of the Prophet, as the guardians of Islam and the religious leaders of all Muslims and as the vicegerents or shadows of God on earth. They were sometimes raised above prophets and associated with God in majesty, power and knowledge. Obedience to them was claimed to be obligatory on men by divine sanction. Their opponents were satirized, in turn, as wrongdoers, unbelievers, hypocrites, devils, worshippers of fire and rebels against God's command. They were also likened to the peoples of 'Ād and Thamūd, to Pharaoh and his sorcerers, to the Samaritan and the hamstringer of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel.

The panegyrics of Abū Tammām (d. 231/846) and al-Buḥturī (d. 284/897) represent the prime examples here. In them Quranic ideas, images, phrases and narratives are freely and largely used. In a poem devoted to al-Mu'taṣim, Abū Tammām says with regard to al-Wāthiq, the son of al-Mu'taṣim:

> And confirm the caliphate by Hārūn [Aaron];
> A repose and stable abode is he for it.[28]

In this line three Quranic verses are assimilated:

> And appoint for me a minister from my family; Aaron,
> my brother; *by him confirm* my strength (xx.29–31).

> Surely, your prayer is *a repose for them* (ix.103).

> And the Hereafter is *the stable abode* (xi.39).

A more representative example of Abū Tammām's use of Quranic ideas, images and phrases is the following line in the praise of Mūsā b. Ibrāhīm:

> In Mūsā [Moses] we have taken refuge from a time
> Whose onslaught has brought back to life
> *Pharaoh of the stakes.*[29]

Here the reference is to the Quranic verses (xl.23–8 and lxxxix.10).

As regards al-Buḥturī, his poems in the praise of al-Mutawakkil, which are highly religious in character, provide the best examples:

> Guidance you seek and with justice you judge
> And hope for a commerce that will never end.

> You were assisted in [your] clear, decisive speech
> With wisdom telling of the manifest truth.[30]

Everything in these lines can be traced back to the Qur'ān, but the most influential verses are: "They hope for a commerce that will never end"

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[28] Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, II, 208.   [29] Ibid., 129.   [30] Buḥturī, *Dīwān*, II, 52; I, 213.

(xxxv.29); "And We gave him [David] wisdom and clear decisive speech" (xxxviii.20).

The panegyrics of al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965) and al-Ma'arrī (d. 449/1057) ought also to be mentioned here. In his early poems, which he wrote in Syria before he was brought into contact with Sayf al-Dawlah (the governor of Aleppo), al-Mutanabbī often resorts to the use of far-fetched ideas and images based on Quranic verses which describe the nature, power, light, gifts and words of God or refer to the virtues and miracles of prophets. He says, for instance, to one patron:

> You are open to the eyes, even when you're hidden [from the eyes];
> The outward, even when you're the inward.[31]

Here we find the echo of the Quranic verse: "He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward" (LVII.3). He says of another patron:

> Pass his garment over your skin,
> And you will be cured of your disease.[32]

In this line or couplet the idea is derived from the following Quranic verse, which is spoken by Joseph: "Take this shirt of mine and cast it on my father's face, and he will recover his sight" (xii.93).

This type of Quranic influence can also be found, though to a lesser degree, in al-Mutanabbī's later poems, which he wrote in the praise of Sayf al-Dawlah and Kāfūr.

Al-Ma'arrī's panegyrics also exhibit a strong Quranic influence. Like al-Mutanabbī, he bestows upon his patrons the virtues and powers enjoyed by prophets in the Qur'ān. He thus ascribes to one of them the command exercised by David and Solomon over mountains and winds, and describes the town of another as the sacred valley in which God spoke to Moses, as the Garden of Eternity to those who show loyalty to him and as the blazing fire of Hell to the others who deviate from this loyalty.[33]

In their satire the 'Abbasid poets also relied on the use of Quranic images, ideas, phrases and narratives, particularly those relating to the peoples of 'Ād, Thamūd, Lot and Noah, to Adam and Satan, Moses and Pharaoh, the children of Israel and the Samaritan, King Solomon and the Seven Sleepers of the Cave. But the poets who excelled in satire were very few. The most prominent among them were Di'bal al-Khuzā'ī (d. 246/860), Ibn al-Rūmī and Abū Nuwās.

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[31] Mutanabbī, Dīwān, 142.
[32] Ibid., 113; also 53–5, 62, 64–5, 67, 89, 119, 131, 136, 139, 143–4, 165.
[33] Ma'arrī, Dīwān, 13, 28, 76; also 33, 23, 37, 51.

As an example from Di'bal al-Khuzā'ī we may take the following two lines in which he satirizes al-Mu'taṣim, the eighth 'Abbasid caliph:

> Seven, record the books, are the kings of al-'Abbās' house;
> And of an eighth of them no record has been received;
> Like the people of the cave, seven in number,
> And their dog was the eighth of them.[34]

From Ibn al-Rūmī we may also take one or two examples. He writes of one of his contemporary poets:

> Had you not been a drop in Adam's loin
> Iblīs [Satan] would have been the first [among the angels]
> To fall down worshipping him.

In satirizing the grammarian al-Akhfash and defending his poetry (which al-Akhfash seems to have criticized as being vague), he also writes:

> Nor am I Solomon, the conqueror of satans [evil spirits],
> Who could make the animals and birds understand his words.[35]

The 'Abbasid love poetry reflects a wider Quranic influence than the one shown by the Umayyad poets. The 'Abbasid poet, with his keen sense for metaphor and searching after new ideas and images, exploited everything in the Qur'ān that he found to bear some relevance to his love theme. Thus Muslim b. al-Walīd (d. 208/823) describes love as a holy war, presents himself as a man on pilgrimage clothed in the garment of love, speaks of his death and revival at the hand of his beloved ("She has killed my soul and brought it back to life") and writes of love that it originates and restores in his heart: "Love has entered my heart, originating and restoring."[36] He thus makes use of the Quranic verses: "It is He who brings death and gives life" (liii.44); "It is He who originates and restores" (lxxxv.13).

Abū Tammām also speaks of how his beloved used to kill and restore his love, compares her to the houri damsels of Paradise and to Bilqīs, the Queen of Sheba, and describes her old encampment as "the Gardens of Delight".[37] His rival al-Buḥturī presents his beloved as a combination of Paradise and Hell or as a Garden of Eternity by which he is punished, her promise as delusion, and her phantasm as falsehood which resembles truth.[38] He often speaks of his error or perversity in love and describes

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[34] Khuzā'ī, *Shi'r*, 51–2.
[35] Ibn al-Rūmī, *Dīwān*, 13, 291; also 375, 110, 340, 386.
[36] Muslim b. al-Walīd, *Dīwān Sarī' al-Ghawānī*, 240, 34, 178, 196–7.
[37] Abū Tammām, *Dīwān Abī Tammām*, II, 320, 264; III, 346, 161.
[38] Buḥturī, *Dīwān*, I, 87, 161, 183, 138, 153; II, 31, 162.

it in Quranic terms as "rectitude" and "guidance". He also benefits from some of the Quranic references to Abraham, Jacob, David and Zachariah:

> And you blame me for a desire that has found
> Its way to David in his shrine.[39]

He seems to mean Zachariah, not David, and to refer to the Quranic verses iii.38–40.

One of the prime examples of the 'Abbasid love poems which reflect a deep Quranic influence is Ibn al-Rūmī's poem about Waḥīd, the singer. Here are some lines from it:

> Coolness and peace it [the fire] is on her cheek,
> And a painful chastisement for the lovers [of her].
>
> My love for her is my companion,
> Following me, wherever I go,
> And a watcher upon me, wherever I settle down,
> Sitting now on my right, now on my left,
> Now in front of me and now at my back;
> So how can I escape from him?![40]

The Quranic verses under whose influence these lines were written are: "We said: 'O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham'" (xxi.69); "When the two angels receive, sitting one on the right and one on the left, he utters not a word, but by him is a watcher ready" (l.17–8). Such Quranic influences can also be found in the amatory preludes of al-Mutanabbī's and al-Ma'arrī's early poems.

To conclude this sketch of the impact of the Qur'ān on Arabic poetry we may turn now to the mystic love poem, which was, like the ascetic poem, an offshoot of Islam. In writing their divine love poems the mystics have relied heavily on the descriptions that they found in the Qur'ān of God and His angels, of Heaven and Hell and of life and death; on the narratives relating to the creation of Adam, his fall from Paradise and the refusal of Iblīs to worship him; to the prophecy of Moses and the divine revelation which occurred to him; to al-Khiḍr, his knowledge and mysterious actions; to Abraham, his puzzlement, worship of the sun and the moon and his deliverance from the fire that was set up for him; to Joseph, his beauty, dream and resistance to temptation; to Jesus Christ, his birth, miracles, crucifixion and resurrection; to the Queen of Sheba, her youth, beauty and throne; to the sorrows of Jacob and the affliction of Job; and to the prophecy of Muḥammad, the divine revelation that he received from God through the angel Gabriel and his journey to Heaven.

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[39] Ibid., I, 15, 69; II, 241.   [40] Ibn al-Rūmī, Dīwān, 98, 100.

They also made every use of Quranic ideas, images and phrases relating to prayer, fasting and pilgrimage, to worship and love, and to sin and repentance.

In order to see how these diverse Quranic elements were employed and assimilated by the mystic poets one need only examine the small *dīwān* of Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235). Here the beloved is presented as the poet's Paradise, his guardian against evils and his goal of prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. He compares his tears with the Flood of Noah and his flame of passion with Abraham's fire. He also claims that Jacob's grief is the least of his sorrows, that Job's affliction is but a part of his own affliction and that had the mountains, including Sinai, felt what he suffers, they would have crumbled to dust before the revelation that occurred to Moses.[41] He speaks of his covenant or compact with his beloved after the manner and language of the Qur'ān.[42]

He identifies himself with God, Adam, Abraham, Moses, al-Khiḍr and Muḥammad, and describes his journey to Heaven, the angels' adoration of him and the sacred valley in which he saw the fire of his beloved, which turns out to be the bush-fire of Moses.[43] Identifying himself with Moses, he says to his beloved:

> Be gentle and answer not when I request to see you
> As you are: "You will not see me."[44]

> From my near horizon my comrades craved guidance
> But my unity [with the Beloved] was achieved in my second separation,
> And in the swoon that crushed my senses
> My soul fell prostrate before me and recovered before Moses's repentance.[45]

THE QUR'ĀN AND ARABIC PROSE

The first prose works which were produced in Islam consisted almost exclusively of orations, sermons and epistles. As a result of the political struggle and religious dispute during the Umayyad era oratory was widely cultivated, and reached a height never surpassed in later times. It was used as a political and religious instrument by the Umayyads and their opponents. In supporting their arguments and arousing the emotions of their audience the speakers of the various political parties usually resorted to the Qur'ān and quoted it. It was generally agree that an oration should be adorned with Quranic verses, and should commence by praising God and blessing the Prophet.[46] In fact, many of the Umayyad orations,

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[41] Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān*, 47.
[43] Ibid., 90–1, 102–3, 105–7, 112–13, 115–16, 175–6.
[45] Ibid., 90–1; cf. Qur'ān vii, 143–4.

[42] Ibid., 52–3.
[44] Ibid., 169.
[46] Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, ii, 5.

particularly those of the Kharijites and Shi'ites, were highly religious in character and cast in Quranic diction and idiom.

The Umayyad sermons, which formed the greatest part of the prose literature of the age, were also based on Quranic notions and cast in Quranic language (the distinction between orations and sermons is arbitrary in many cases). They centred around the fear of God, the mortality of the world, the terrors of the Day of Judgement and the punishment of wrongdoers. In them the preachers constantly reminded their listeners of death and life after death, warned them against committing sins, and called them to devote themselves solely to the service of God and to renounce the pleasures of this world for those of the world to come. Therefore, they abound in Quranic verses or phrases, ideas and images. In some of them Quranic rhythms and syntactical features are also emulated. The most eminent figure among these preachers was al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), whose few preserved sermons can be taken as representative examples.[47]

The foregoing remarks about orations and sermons also apply to many of the epistles that we have received from the Umayyad epoch. They fall into two types, the religious correspondences like those of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ghaylān of Damascus, which are basically sermons, and the official ones which were written by or for the Umayyad caliphs and their provincial governors. The supreme example of the second type is the long epistle (in thirty-nine pages) that 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā (d. 132/750), the founder of the secretarial school of letters, wrote on the behalf of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān II, to his son 'Abdullāh (see above, cap. 4, especially pp. 167–72). Though the impact of the Qur'ān is less conspicuous in it than in the religious letters, it clearly demonstrates that the use of Quranic idioms, verses, ideas and images, and the emulation of Quranic rhythms and stylistic features, had become at the time an essential part of the tradition of literary writing.[48]

These types of prose works continued during the 'Abbasid period, carrying with them more or less the same Quranic influences. In their style and rhythms, however, the 'Abbasid epistles and sermons moved closer to the rhymed prose of the Qur'ān, particularly that of the early *sūrahs*, in which phrases are kept in balance and emphasis is achieved by parallelism in structure. In some epistles the religious opening was greatly expanded, as though it was intended to form a piece of its own. Here the best examples are to be found in the epistles of Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣābī (d. 384/994), the closest 'Abbasid epistle writer to 'Abd al-Ḥamīd. In addition

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[47] See Ibid., III, 85, 88–92, 108; also Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat*, II, 132–58.
[48] See Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, x, 195–233, particularly 195, 197, 209–10, 212, 218, 232–3.

to their religious preludes, which are long Islamic or Quranic prayers, these epistles are loaded with quotations from and allusions to the Qur'ān. This is also true of the sermons of Ibn Nubātah, known as "al-Khaṭīb" (d. 374/984), in which he was mainly concerned with the duty of prosecuting the Holy War against Christian Byzantium. In the epistles of other writers such as Ibn al-'Amīd (d. 360/971) and Ibn 'Abbād, known as "al-Ṣāḥib" (d. 385/995), this sort of Quranic influence is less dominant.

Though the main bulk of the 'Abbasid ornate prose consists of epistles and sermons, the major literary prose works produced during the new era were different in nature and larger in scope. Among these works are the *Kitāb al-Bukhalāʾ* ("Book of Misers") and *Kitāb al-Tarbīʿ wa-'l-tadwīr* of al-Jāḥiz (d. 255/869), al-Ma'arrī's *Risālat al-ghufrān* ("Book of Forgiveness") and *al-Fuṣūl wa-'l-ghāyāt fī muḥādhāt al-suwar wa-'l-āyāt* ("Book of Paragraphs and Endings Composed on the Analogy of the *Sūrahs* and Verses of the Qur'ān"), and the *Maqāmāt* ("Assemblies") of Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008) and al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122).

The impact of the Qur'ān on al-Jāḥiz's *Bukhalāʾ* is almost confined to a number of quotations and allusions, to some anecdotes connected with prayer and almsgiving, and to a few brief references to Satan and his plots, the Day of Judgement and the fire of Hell. It also contains a number of the Prophet's *ḥadīth* invoked in support of the arguments expressed in favour or against niggardliness.

In contrast to this work, *K. al-Tarbīʿ wa-'l-tadwīr* exhibits a very strong Quranic influence in both language and content. It is a satirical work which consists largely of series of questions on a wide range of topics posed to a man called Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb. Many of them are religious questions relating to Adam and Satan, to ancient prophets, kings, peoples and historical events mentioned in the Qur'ān, to angels and devils, to Paradise, Hell and the Day of Resurrection, to prophethood, divine revelation and inspiration, to faith, guidance and perversity. Quranic phrases, verses, ideas, images and rhythms permeate the whole book.

The following quotations can be taken as examples:

He was broadly built in stature and granted abundance of knowledge.[49]

So you said: "Had it not been for the virtue of width over length, God would not have described Paradise as [a place] wide rather than long when He – glory be to Him – said: 'And a Garden the breadth of which is as the breadth of Heaven and Earth'".[50]

Had you acted extravagantly, we would have said: "You were modest", and had you gone astray, we would have said: "You were rightly guided." But you commit

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[49] Jāḥiz, *Tarbīʿ*, 5; cf. Qur'ān, II.247.   [50] Ibid., 18; cf. LVII.21.

something "at which the heavens are nearly rent, the earth split asunder and the mountains crumble to dust".[51]

When I saw you I soon realized that you are a chastisement poured out by God upon every noble man and a mercy created by Him for every ignoble one.[52]

Turning now to al-Ma'arrī's two works, we find different kinds of Quranic influences. In its first large part the *Risālat al-ghufrān* consists of imaginary anecdotes, tales and dialogues with ancient poets, grammarians and linguists in Paradise and Hell. In it al-Mar'arrī has made extensive use of the descriptions that he found in the Qur'ān and the *Hadīth* of God, Paradise, Hell, the Day of Judgement and the present world, and of some of the reference to Adam and Satan, angels and devils. It is written in rhymed prose and replete with Quranic verses, idioms, rhythms and ideas. In a word, it is a work which owes its very existence to the Qur'ān and to the *Hadīth* and *mi'rāj* (ascension to Heaven) and could not have been written without a full knowledge of them.

The following is an illustration. It is the opening of the meeting between Ibn al-Qāriḥ, the hero of the book, and the poet al-A'shā:

The voice said: "I am that man. God has bestowed His favour upon me after I had been drawn to the brink of Hell and had despaired of [His] forgiveness and of being acquitted [of my evil deeds]." So the shaykh turned to him with delight and saw a fair young man who had for a long time been living in bliss...He then said to him: "Tell me, how were you delivered from the Fire and freed from [the consequences of your] ignominious conduct?" He replied: "When the *zabāniya* [the guards of Hell] were dragging me into *saqar* [Hell] I saw a man whose face was shining like the moon and to whom people were calling from every direction: 'O Muḥammad, o Muḥammad, intercede for us, intercede for us...' I then shouted while the *zabāniya* were laying their hands upon me: 'O Muḥammad, help me, for I have a claim upon you.' He said [to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib]: 'O 'Alī, go to him and see what his claim is.' So 'Alī – God's blessing be upon him – came to me while I was being driven to be cast into the lowest reach of the Fire and ordered the *zabāniya* to stay away from me...".[53]

In this passage not only the description and images are taken from the Qur'ān but also many of the phrases and idioms.[54]

Al-Ma'arrī's other work, the "Book of Paragraphs and Endings", is written in imitation of the styles and rhythms of the Qur'ān. It is an ascetic work devoted to the praise of God and the expression of the poet's fear of Him and hope in His forgiveness and mercy. To see how closely

[51] Ibid., 24–5; cf. vi.141, xl.43, xxxv.32, xvi.9, xix.89–90.
[52] Ibid., 45; cf. lxxxix.13; xliv.48, xxix.21.
[53] Ma'arrī, *Ghufran*, 169–70.
[54] Cf. Qur'ān, iii.103, lvii.20, xcvi.18, lxxiv.26–7, xliv.47, iv.145, xxxvii.97, xix.87. See also Tibrīzī, *Mishkāt*, Damascus, III, 69–72, 81, 83–4.

al-Ma'arrī has imitated the oracular style and rhythms of the early *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān we need only read these two paragraphs:

I swear by the Creator of the horses, and the camels trembling at Ruḥayl, seeking the homes of Ḥulayl, and the wind blowing at night from among the *sharaṭ* star and the places of rising of Suhayl, that the unbeliever is in lasting grief, and life is [short] like a double-hemmed mantle.

The young she-camel has humiliated her father, who was left in loneliness after he had brought her up. God the bounteous has chosen her, and honoured her with His gifts. He sent the northern and eastern winds, and He fears not the consequence thereof.[55]

Before discussing the impact of the Qur'ān on al-Hamadhānī's and al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* we need to say something of the *maqāmah* as a new literary form of composition in which rhymed prose and verse alternate.

The Assembly [says T. Chenery] is a kind of dramatic anecdote in the telling of which the author's object is to display his poetry, his eloquence, or his learning, and with this view the subject is continually subordinated to the treatment of it, the substance to the form.[56]

It relates through a certain narrator the adventures, speeches and poems of "a witty, unscrupulous improviser, wandering from place to place and living on the presents which the display of his gifts produced from the generous and tasteful...".[57] Being such in nature and purpose the *maqāmah* has always been subjected to the influence of the Qur'ān. When al-Hamadhānī began to write his *Maqāmāt* the use of allusions to the Qur'ān, and the interweaving of verses and phrases from it into the text, were generally regarded as an indispensable part of the discipline of literary composition and as a sign of wit and eloquence. The emulation of the rhythms, forms of expression and stylistic features of the Qur'ān was also a common practice among bellettrists. Therefore, his "Assemblies" are studded with Quranic quotations and idioms, and with sequences of phrases written after certain passages in the Qur'ān. Complete passages are sometimes composed out of verses of the Qur'ān and sayings of the Prophet.

This is particularly true of the "Assemblies" which have religious themes and consist of sermons, prayers and ascetic poems on the instability of the world, the terrors of death and the certainty of the Day of Judgement. Such assemblies are "the Exhortative Assembly", "the Assembly of Ahwāz" and "the Hospital Assembly". The last one is a discourse on predestination and free will filled with verses of the Qur'ān and Traditions of the Prophet.

[55] The two paragraphs are quoted by Ḍayf, *Fann*, 284; cf. Qur'ān, c and xci.
[56] Chenery, *Assemblies*, 1, 40.   [57] Ibid., 19.

In his turn al-Ḥarīrī has adorned his *Maqāmāt*, which are more elaborate, with large numbers of allusions to, and quotations from, the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*. He even designed a fair number of them as sermons and inserted in them elaborate oaths composed after those found in the early *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān. In fact, the most prominent or characteristic image of the hero of these *Maqāmāt* is that of a preacher who, though a hypocrite and insincere, is well versed in the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* and is always ready to deliver his exhortations.

Let us look at one of these exhortations or sermons. In the twenty-first *maqāmah* we find two sermons, the first of which runs as follows:

O son of man, how you cleave to that which deceives you, and cling to that which harms you! How you pursue that which causes you to transgress, and how you are delighted by him who flatters you!...You are not content with that which is sufficient for you, and abstain not from the forbidden! You listen not to admonitions and are not deterred by threats!...It pleases you to increase what you already possess, but you remember not what lies before you! You ever strive for your *two caves* and care not whether the account shall be in your favour or against you! Do you think that *you will be left to roam at will,* and that you will not be reckoned with tomorrow? Or do you think that death accepts bribes and distinguishes between the lion and the fawn? No, by God, neither wealth nor sons shall ward off death; and nothing profits the people of the graves but the accepted work. Then blessing to him who hears and retains and makes good what he claims; *and restrains the soul from desire* and knows that the gainer is he who turns away from evil; *and that man shall have nothing save his work, and that his work will be seen.*[58]

In this sermon there is hardly a phrase whose motif, idea or image could not be found in the Qur'ān. In fact, behind each phrase there stand several Quranic verses which lend power to it. The italicized clauses and sentences are quotations from the Qur'ān, the first of which is little modified. The image "your two caves" alludes to one of the Prophet's sayings. On being asked: "What sends men into Hell?" the Prophet answered: "Their two caves, *os et pudenda.*" They are generally understood as being "the two apertures or channels of the body...by which mankind gratify the appetites of gluttony and lust".[59]

As an example in which Quranic rhythms and manner of expression are imitated we may take the following series of oaths:

I swear by the heaven with its constellations, and the earth with its plains, by the pouring flood and the blazing sun, by the sounding sea and the dust-storm, that this is the most auspicious of charms, one that will best suffice you for the men-at-arms.[60]

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[58] Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt,* 156–7. Cf. Chenery's translation, *Assemblies,* 224–5.

[59] Chenery, *Assemblies,* 460.

[60] The translation is taken from Chenery, *Assemblies,* 172, with two or three slight changes; see Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt,* 90; cf. lxxxv.1–3, lxxviii.13–4, lxxxvi.11–4, lxxxi.17–21.

THE ḤADĪTH AND ARABIC LITERATURE

The impact that the Ḥadīth has exerted on Arabic poetry seems to have been very limited. It appears mainly in ascetic and mystic poetry and in such meditative poems as those written by al-Ma'arrī in the Luẓūmiyyāt where the religious element is very strong. Outside the ascetic and mystic circles the study of the Ḥadīth did not begin to claim the attention of poets until the third/ninth century, which witnessed the compilation of books of the Ḥadīth such as the Musnad of Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) and the two Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875).

Therefore, during the Umayyad period we find only a handful of lines influenced by the Ḥadīth. Such lines are:

1. Al-Ṭirimmāḥ:
   Behold, men are like growing corn;
   As soon as it is ripe, comes the reaper.[61]

2. Kuthayyir [addressing the Umayyad caliph, Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, and referring to his governor of Jordan, Ḥassān b. Mālik.]:
   Whenever it is said: "Ride on, O·horses of God".
   You are satisfied that they are led by the Jordanian.

3. Kuthayyir:
   Do you conceive of the love of them [the family of 'Alī] as a sin?!
   No, the love of them is the expiation of sin.[62]

Al-Ṭirimmāḥ's line seems to have been influenced by the ḥadīth: "The example of the believer is like that of a growing ear of corn", while in Kuthayyir's lines the influence comes from the two ḥadīth: "Ride on, o horses of God", and "Remorse is the expiation of sin."

During the second/eighth century the impact of the Ḥadīth is found mainly in the ascetic poems of Abū 'l-Atāhiyah. As an instance from these poems we may take the following lines:

> You accumulate wealth and build up your hopes on it;
> But nothing of what you own is really yours
> Save that which you expend or give in charity;
> Nothing you own of what people eat save that
> Which you yourself eat and devour
> Of property lawfully earned.
> . . .
> And nothing you own of what people wear
> Save that which you wear and consume.[63]

Here we find an elaboration of the ḥadīth: "Nothing of what you own is really yours save that which you eat and devour, and save that which you

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[61] The translation of the line is taken from Krenkow, Poems, 44.
[62] Kuthayyir, Dīwān, 83, 494.   [63] Abū 'l-'Atāhiyah, Dīwān, 46.

wear and consume, and save that which you give in charity and so preserve [for the Hereafter]."[64]

With Abū Tammām, al-Buḥturī and Ibn al-Rūmī the influence of the *Ḥadīth* begins to show itself in every aspect of the poem, in the amatory prelude, panegyric and satire. In describing the old encampment of his beloved al-Buḥturī exploits the *ḥadīth*: "My companions are like the stars; you shall be guided by any of them whom you follow."[65] He writes:

> Sites of dwellings standing forth like the stars;
> O, which star will guide us in love should they be erased?![66]

Abū Tammām, in presenting an effaced encampment of his loved one, avails himself of the other *ḥadīth*: "The false oaths change the dwellings [of their swearers] into wastelands." His lines read thus:

> I behold your abodes desolate
> After they were inhabited and pleasant;
> Devastated, as though their dwellers had sworn oaths
> Which plunged them into sin and left you waste.[67]

Such examples are rare, however, in non-mystic love poetry. We may add to them the following lines by Ibn ʿAbbād, the "Ṣāḥib", which seem to have been composed as an exercise in the art of weaving sayings of the Prophet into poetry:

> He said to me: "Beware of the watcher,
> For he is of ill nature."
> I replied: "O, bother me not! Your face is Paradise
> Encompassed with things disliked."[68]

The *ḥadīth* employed here is: "Paradise is encompassed with things disliked, and Hell with things desired." Ibn al-Fāriḍ, we may notice here, has alluded to the same *ḥadīth* in his line:

> Tranquillity! how far is it from the life of a lover!
> The Garden of Eden is encompassed with things disliked.[69]

Panegyric poetry offers us more examples. The following are two hemistichs, one by Abū Tammām and the other by al-Maʿarrī:

> He has removed from the face of the nation the darkness of injustice.[70]

> In defence of you the shield dies [a natural death] yielding up its last breath.[71]

Here we are reminded of the two *ḥadīth*s: "Injustice is darkness..." and "He has died a natural death after yielding up his last breath."

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[64] Maydānī, *Amthāl*, ii, 450.   [65] Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, iii, 2.   [66] Buḥturī, *Dīwān*, i, 170.
[67] Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, ii, 263.   [68] Qazwīnī, *Īḍāh*, vi, 138.
[69] See Nicholson, *Studies*, 206; Ibn al-Fāriḍ, *Dīwān*, 52.   [70] Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, iii, 26.
[71] Maʿarrī, *Dīwān*, 37.

As an instance from satire we may take these lines by Ibn al-Rūmī:

The father, yours and mine, is the old Adam,
In whom our ancestral lines meet;
So write no satire on me; it is disgraceful enough to me
To have been brought forth by a father who also brought you forth.[72]

The basic idea of these lines goes back to the Prophet's words in the Farewell Sermon: "O ye people, your Lord is one, and your father is one; all of you belong to Adam, and Adam was created of dust."[73]

In the following centuries the Ḥadīth claimed a wider impact on poets. The weaving of sayings of the Prophet into poetry became common practice and was generally looked upon as legitimate wit. It was studied by all rhetorical books as a branch of the "inclusion of quotations" (taḍmīn), which is itself a branch of the badī'.[74] However, the types of influences which the Ḥadīth exercised on later poetry did not differ from those that we have just discussed. The main works in which they appear are al-Ma'arrī's Luzūmiyyāt, the mystic poems of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and his contemporaries, and the poems, or hymns in the praise of the Prophet of al-Būṣīrī (d. c. 695/1295).[75]

Turning to prose, we again find that the impact of the Ḥadīth appears mainly in later works. During the Umayyad period the sayings and sermons of the Prophet seem to have served as models after which the preachers composed their sayings and sermons. This is particularly so with regard to the pronouncements and sermons of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, which contain a number of ideas, images and expressions taken from the Ḥadīth. An example of this is al-Ḥasan's saying: "Repolish these hearts [by remembrance of God], for they are quick to rust", which is an echo of the ḥadīth: "Hearts will rust, even as iron will." When the Prophet was asked: "What is their polish?", he answered: "Remembering God and reading the Qur'ān."[76]

From the third/ninth century onwards the influence of the Ḥadīth went hand in hand with that of the Qur'ān. In al-Jāḥiẓ's essays quotations from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth are used in abundance. He usually resorts to them in support of his arguments. In subsequent works, like the Maqāmāt of al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī, the allusions to the Ḥadīth come next in number to those made to the Qur'ān.

[72] Ibn al-Rūmī, Dīwān, 13.   [73] Jāḥiẓ, Bayān, II, 25.
[74] See, for example, Qazwīnī, Īḍāḥ, VI, 127–45, and Usāmah, Badī', 249–59.
[75] See the "Mantle Poem" of al-Būṣīrī, translated into English in Jeffery, Reader, 605–20.
[76] Maydānī, Amthāl, II, 450.

To conclude these remarks let us take some examples from al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*:

"Now,...prepare for the journey, and turn not aside to *the greenness of dung heaps*."
"...to conceal poverty is self-denial, *to await relief with patience is devotion*." "When we saw that their fire was the fire of the glow-worm and their state as the mirage of the deserts, we said: "*May their faces wax unsightly...*" "...they [beggars] make no country their home and fear no king, and they differ not from *the birds that are hungry in the morning and full at eventide*."[77]

The words in italics are quotations from the *Ḥadīth* woven into the text.

[77] These quotations are taken from Chenery, *Assemblies*, 126, 156, and Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, II, 97–8, 171–2.

THE *MAGHĀZĪ* LITERATURE

In general, the word *maghāzī* means raiding expeditions, primarily for the sake of plunder. But as a literary technicality, it is specifically applied to the accounts of the early Muslim military expeditions in which the Prophet took part; those at which he was not personally present are termed *sarāyā* or *buʿūth*. At the same time, the early books of *maghāzī* include accounts of events which are not military expeditions, such as the treaty-making at Ḥudaybiyah, the Prophet's last pilgrimage (*Ḥajjat al-wadāʿ*), etc. Obviously, this *maghāzī* literature forms a sub-category within the *Sīrah* literature (see chap. 17), and the two words are used by later commentators in juxtaposition, as in phrases such as "compilers of *maghāzī* and *siyar*"; there is, indeed, a hint that *maghāzī* is the dominant identifying term, for Ibn Isḥāq is more often referred to as a compiler of *maghāzī* than of *sīrah*. The dichotomy between the two is, in fact, an artificial one and the phrase *sīrah–maghāzī* would probably reflect more accurately the essential homogeneity of the material. But this chapter deals with the *maghāzī* material insofar as it is possible to consider it separately.

In terms of form as well as theme, *maghāzī* literature is superficially reminiscent of the pre-Islamic accounts of tribal battles (*ayyām al-ʿArab*): both deal with battles and are a mélange of prose and verse. But though *maghāzī* literature is thus heir to an ancient tradition, it is more than a record of individual skirmishes, and the role of verse in it is a secondary one. We can safely assume that, as a form of oral literature, it existed soon after the death of the Prophet – perhaps even in his lifetime. The nature of the theme would lend to it a special aura of reverence in addition to its intrinsic dramatic appeal, and would provide the necessary stimulus for its growth. Ibn Kathīr records a saying of al-Zuhrī that "the science of the *maghāzī* is the science both of this world and the Hereafter";[1] ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn is recorded as saying: "We used to learn the *maghāzī* of the Prophet as we learnt a *sūrah* of the Qurʾān";[2] and Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad b. Saʿd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ as saying: "My father used to teach us the *maghāzī* and *sarāyā* [see above] and say, "O my son, this is the glory of your ancestors, so

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[1] *Bidāyah*, 42.   [2] Ibid.

do not fail to memorize it."[3] That these accounts were learnt by heart suggests that an homogenizing tendency was present from the beginning, as a factor influencing the development. This explains, in part, the obvious similarity between the versions of a particular event in different *maghāzī* sources: a similarity which has prompted some scholars, erroneously I believe, to raise the possibility of plagiarism.

One cannot indicate with total certainty the point at which the *maghāzī* began to assume the form familiar to us in the second/eighth-century sources. Abān b. 'Uthmān (d. *c.* 100/718), though no book is credited to him, is said to have had special knowledge of the subject.[4] The papyrus fragment Schott-Reinhardt 8 claims to be from a book of *maghāzī* by Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 110/728), but later authorities do not mention him as a source of *maghāzī*. According to the eleventh/seventeenth-century bibliographer Ḥājjī Khalīfah, 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/713) was the first to classify the material on the *maghāzī*.[5] Although there is no specific book on this subject attributed to him, he certainly corresponded with the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik on matters relating to the life of the Prophet,[6] and there is an important link betweeen him and al-Zuhrī, who referred to him as an "inexhaustible sea of information".[7] His importance as an early architect of the *maghāzī* literature is confirmed by the frequency of the citations from him in the later authorities such as Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī.

Another link in the early development of this literature is 'Āṣim b. 'Umar Ibn Qatādah (d. *c.* 120/738); no specific book is attributed to him, but Ibn Isḥāq quotes him directly, and al-Wāqidī through intermediaries.

Al-Zuhrī represents a nodal point in the development. He was an important authority on *sīrah*, *maghāzī* and *Ḥadīth* in general. Ḥājjī Khalīfah ascribes to him a book of *maghāzī*,[8] but a statement of al-Dhahabī would seem to indicate that he left behind him no book whatsoever, or alternatively a single book on the genealogy of Quraysh.[9] In any event, his influence on the development of the *maghāzī* cannot be questioned and it seems probable that it is with him that it first became structured in the form familiar to us in Mūsā b. 'Uqbah, Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī, who all drew on him extensively. Of the same generation as he is 'Abdullāh b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥazm al-Anṣārī (d. 130/748 or 135/753). Once again, no book is attributed to him, but he is referred to by both Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī.

In the period immediately following al-Zuhrī we find a crop of *maghāzī*

[3] Zurqānī, *Sharḥ*, I, 467.
[5] *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, II, 1,747.
[7] Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat*, I, 62.   [8] Ibid.
[4] Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, Beirut, V, 156.
[6] Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, Cairo, II, 328.
[9] Ibid., I, 111.

works, all drawing heavily on him. In the triumvirate of basic sources upon whom later writers depend almost totally, Mūsā b. 'Uqbah, Ibn Ishāq and al-Wāqidī, it is the first who was regarded as the most authoritative by some of the early critics, including Mālik b. Anas and Ibn Ḥanbal. His *K. al-Maghāzī* has not come down to us in complete form, but a short fragment exists, consisting of twenty extracts with *isnāds*.[10] It is possible to reconstruct a considerable portion of it from quotations in later writers, and on this basis to make certain evaluative judgements as to both structure and contents of the work.

Ibn Isḥāq was of Medinese origin; it is interesting to note that the *maghāzī* literature, during the early part of its development, was geographically identified with Medina. In the sense that he did not write a separate work on the topic, he does not belong in the present chapter; but the *maghāzī* section of his *Sīrah* corresponds very closely to al-Wāqidī's *K. al-Maghāzī* and, so far as we can judge from reconstruction of the text, to that of Mūsā b. 'Uqbah. His *Sīrah* existed originally in more than fifteen recensions, corresponding to the stages of his career spent at Medina, Kufa, Basra, Baghdad and Rayy.[11] For the *maghāzī* section we are dependent on the recension of al-Bakkā'ī contained in Ibn Hishām's version of the text, though al-Ṭabarī and others quote from Ibn Bukayr's textual tradition (*riwāyah*), otherwise preserved for us only in a Tunis manuscript which does not contain the *maghāzī* section.[12]

Of the many works ascribed to al-Wāqidī by the bibliographers, his *K. al-Maghāzī* is the only authenticated one to come down to us; it corresponds closely in structure and content to that of Mūsā b. 'Uqbah and the relevant section of Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīrah*. With him, this branch of literature reaches its peak of development. Works bearing the title *K. al-Maghāzī* continued to be written during the third/ninth century, but from then onwards *maghāzī* was no longer a separate genre and became incorporated into works having a different *raison d'être*. The biographical work *K. al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* of Ibn Sa'd (d. 230/845), al-Wāqidī's amanuensis, contains a section on the *maghāzī*, but the greater portion of it is nothing more than a condensed version of al-Wāqidī's work with some additional information accompanied by *isnāds*; it also contains long sections on the Prophet's final illness and burial, which are not in al-Wāqidī's work. Al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* ("Noble genealogies") likewise contains a section on *maghāzī*, in two portions, the *ghazawāt* (expeditions in which the Prophet participated) and the *sarāyā* (those in which he did

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[10] Sachau, "Berliner Fragment", 449. For an English translation see Guillaume, *Life*, xliii.
[11] Fück, *Muḥammad*, 44.
[12] Guillaume has incorporated the important variants into his translation of Ibn Isḥāq.

not), thus breaking up the chronological sequence of presentation. His treatment of the subject is even briefer than that of Ibn Saʿd; he draws heavily on al-Wāqidī, usually through Ibn Saʿd, and seldom refers to Ibn Isḥāq.

Sections on *maghāzī* continue to appear in later works on the *Sīrah*, but continue to be based on the second/eighth-century sources. The value of such books does not lie in their introducing any interpretative or innovatory element, but in their presenting of the earlier sources in juxtaposition and, by so doing, preserving material which would otherwise have been lost to us. The same can be said of those universal histories which consistently name their sources, above all al-Ṭabarī's historical compilation. *Al-Bidāyah wa-'l-nihāyah* of Ibn Kathīr, although late, is worthy of mention in any survey of *maghāzī* literature; his section on the topic includes not only material from Mūsā b. ʿUqbah, Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī, but also relevant material from the canonical *Ḥadīth* collections.

It will be evident from the foregoing that although *maghāzī* literature may have assumed its basic shape by the time of al-Zuhrī, it was with Mūsā b. ʿUqbah, Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī that it became finally crystallized into a pattern that remained little changed during subsequent generations. In what follows, a comparative evaluation of these three primary sources is attempted, partly to throw light on the form and content of the genre and also to make some assessment of its significance as historical source material.

There are features common to all three: for example, the *isnād* as a presentational mechanism, though there are differences in the way the device is used. To judge from the numerous quotations from Mūsā b. ʿUqbah, the conventional *Ḥadīth*-type *isnād* was in his case the exception rather than the rule. Quotations from him are most frequently introduced by the phrase "Mūsā b. ʿUqbah said, from al-Zuhrī"; this absence of a full *isnād* has occasionally been remarked on by later commentators.[13] There is a hint in the Berlin fragment of his work that he made use of the collective *isnād*, when for one episode he gives as his sources "Ibn Shihāb, from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Kaʿb b. Mālik of al-Sulamī and other traditionists".[14] The collective *isnād* later became a feature of *maghāzī* literature and was functionally formalized in the work of al-Wāqidī.

Ibn Isḥāq uses the *isnād*, in the conventional *Ḥadīth* sense, irregularly. It is seldom complete, and frequently omitted altogether; very often it does not go beyond his immediate source. Quite frequently there appears the phrase which has puzzled commentators, "One whom I do not distrust related to me." The phrase is normally used to designate Ibn Isḥāq's

[13] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ*, VIII, 86.   [14] Guillaume, *Life*, xliv.

immediate source of information, introducing an account attributed to a Companion or a Follower with intervening lacuna. On this puzzling problem, Robson has raised the possibility of deliberate obfuscation on Ibn Isḥāq's part, in order to hide a source which was not reputable, or to indicate his own doubts concerning the material recorded.[15] Perhaps a more likely explanation is the nature of this literature at the end of the first/seventh and beginning of the second/eighth century. It has been suggested earlier that the material had already taken shape by the latter period, that is, by the time of al-Zuhrī. If this was so, then Mūsā b. 'Uqbah, Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī were drawing upon a central core of material so well known that verification by conventional *isnād* was superfluous; this explains both the characteristic use of the collective *isnād*, and the phrase "one whom I do not distrust", which would be simply an admission that he had forgotten from which of his immediate sources the particular item of information had been obtained. A similar imprecision is found elsewhere in the *maghāzī* section of his *Sīrah*, while he uses the collective *isnād* a dozen times. It is tempting to see a system behind his use of the collective *isnād* followed by a number of narrative units without *isnād* or introduced by "Ibn Isḥāq said". It is a tenable hypothesis that the authority for these continues to rest on the original collective *isnād*, but his presentational method is so unsystematic that we cannot be certain.

With al-Wāqidī's use of the *isnād* we are on much firmer ground, since he is more systematic. He opens with a list of the authorities from whom he has obtained his information,[16] followed by the statement; "each of them related to me a portion of this, some of them being more detailed in their accounts, and others have related to me also. I wrote down all that they related to me: they said...". The phrase "they said" is then repeated constantly in the subsequent narrative and there can be no doubt about its referring back to the original collective *isnād*. Thereafter new topics are introduced with a collective *isnād*, though the list of authorities may differ in each case. This device is central to the charge of plagiarism which has been brought against him. Because of obvious similarity between his *Maghāzī* and that of Ibn Isḥāq, and because at no time does he mention the latter, the assumption has been made that he modelled himself on his predecessor in the arrangement of his material and drew from him much of the basic warp of his narrative, to which he added his own weft, obscuring the indebtedness by the phrase "they said":[17] I have elsewhere tried to demonstrate that, so far from being the means of hiding a plagiarized passage, the collective *isnād* is an essential tool in his

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[15] "Ibn Isḥāq".   [16] *Maghāzī*, I, I.

[17] Wellhausen, *Muhammad*, iiff.; Horovitz, *De Waqidii Libro*, 9ff.; Horovitz, "Biographies", 518ff.

presentational technique, used consciously and with methodological consistency.[18] The similarities in the two texts are to be explained by the fact that both writers were drawing on a common corpus of material.

A further characteristic of the *Maghāzī* of Mūsā b. 'Uqbah, Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī is presentation within a chronological framework. This is not to be wondered at, since a sense of chronology is an essential phase in the nascent development of any historical literature, and a growing consciousness of the importance of chronology seems to have marked the emergence of the *maghāzī* literature in Medina. Even on the incomplete evidence of surviving quotations, it is clear that Mūsā b. 'Uqbah gave many dates for the events. In Ibn Isḥāq, the chronological details are usually, but not always, given. In al-Wāqidī, the chronological framework is complete: an introductory survey gives the sequence of the *maghāzī* and their dates, with the information subsequently repeated in the text, for each *ghazwah* begins with a precise dating, often relating it to another chronological point of reference, such as "in Ramaḍān, seven months after the *Hijrah*". Events which in Ibn Isḥāq have no date or chronological order, but are grouped together at the end of the *maghāzī* section, are by al-Wāqidī given a date and put in chronological sequence.

However, any expectation that we are dealing with a totally acceptable system of chronology is soon dispelled. As Caetani noted, the chronology up to the battle of Badr shows wide divergencies, and the same can be said elsewhere.[19] There are often different dates for the same events: for example, the battle of al-Khandaq is dated by Mūsā b. 'Uqbah on 4 Shawwāl, by Ibn Isḥāq on 5 Shawwāl, and by al-Wāqidī on the fifth of the following month. An analysis of the variants suggests a division into four categories.[20] The first consists of instances where there is complete or almost complete accord in the sources on the dating of an event; this includes many of the most important ones, such as the battles of Badr and Uḥud and the conquest of Mecca. The second comprises dates found acceptable after collation and internal criticism of the texts, as is the case with al-Wāqidī's dating of events up to Badr. Thirdly, there are the dates given only by al-Wāqidī and not substantiated by any other source. Finally, there are cases where contradictions in the sources are not resolvable.[21] Those in the last category we can reject out of hand. The data in the first category are admissible as historical evidence, and so too, to a lesser extent, are those in the second. Those provided by al-Wāqidī alone need to be handled with caution. His precise dating of events such as the expedition to Dūmat al-Jandal does not always stand up to closer examination,[22] and

[18] "Chronology".   [19] *Annali*, I, 466.
[20] Jones, "Chronology", 245ff.   [21] Ibid., 279.   [22] Ibid., 271.

one is left with the suspicion that he may have attempted to fill in some
of the gaps by a process of logical deduction. This qualification having
been stated, it must be admitted that al-Wāqidī emerges as the soundest
of the early authorities on matters of chronology. He does provide a
complete and systematically constructed chronological framework, and
there are occasions, such as his dating of events up to Badr, when textual
criticism vindicates his chronology.[23]

A parallel development to the systematizing of the chronology can be
seen in the way that personal judgements of the author begin to make their
appearance in the texts. So far as we can tell, Mūsā b. 'Uqbah did not do
this; Ibn Isḥāq (as Guillaume noted) did it only seldom. The latter voices
his reservations about some of the material he was recording only by fairly
frequent stereotyped phrases of dubiety, such as "he asserted" or "God
knows". In contrast, al-Wāqidī makes forthright and unequivocal state-
ments about his material: for example, having given two versions of a
detail in one of the narratives, he states, "and the first version is the
soundest in my view". When he cannot decide which of two versions is
preferable, he may simply say, "each of these two accounts has been
narrated". If a story is to be rejected, he writes, "all our companions have
denied this account". Even more indicative of a critical attitude is his
statement in an account of the Banū Qurayẓah incident: "This account
of their killing has never been heard, and I think it is erroneous; it belongs
properly in the account of the Khaybar incident."[24]

Two other features of al-Wāqidī point to developments within *maghāzī*
literature and raise interesting questions concerning the as yet unexplored
relationship between it and Arab geographical literature and *tafsīr*. Ibn
Isḥāq gives no details of the locations of places mentioned in his own text
(those which occur in the *Sīrah* stem from Ibn Hishām). But al-Wāqidī
usually gives standardized details of the places mentioned, which are not
fortuitous, since Ibn Sayyid al-Nās ascribes to him the following statement:
"Never did I meet one of the sons of the Companions, or sons of the
martyrs, or a *mawlā* of theirs, without asking him about the place of the
martyrdom, or where [his father] had been killed. And when he had told
me, I went to the place and examined it; I went to al-Muraysi' and looked
at it; and I never heard of a *ghazwah* without going to the place and looking
at it."[25] Similarly, he gives additional information about *tafsīr* and the
"occasions of the revelation". Both he and Ibn Isḥāq have sections at
the end of their accounts of Badr and Uḥud referring to verses of the
Qur'ān which relate to those events; and al-Wāqidī extends this treatment
to other *maghāzī*.

[23] Ibid., 259, 261.   [24] Al-Wāqidī, II, 505.   [25] *'Uyūn*, I, 18.

The handling, by the three authors under discussion, of the battle of Badr illustrates characteristics more broadly representative of their individual works. As one would expect in the case of so famous an incident, the general spread of subject matter is the same in all three, but there are still important differences. For example, in the lists of Muslim participants given by Ibn Kathīr[26] and Ibn Sayyid al-Nās[27] there are many variants ascribed to Mūsā b. 'Uqbah. The latter is also the only one to mention that the Prophet refused to allow the ransom money to be waived in the case of al-'Abbās, although the Anṣār had requested this.[28] The issue of al-'Abbās having taken part in the battle was a politically sensitive one in after times, and both Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī handle it more circumspectly than Mūsā b. 'Uqbah. Ibn Isḥāq does not mention him in the list of prisoners: yet he gives the total number as forty-three, while naming only forty-two – the missing name being presumably al-'Abbās.[29] Elsewhere, Ibn Isḥāq acknowledges that he was a prisoner, but this is accompanied, as a palliative, by the story that the Prophet could not sleep until he had been freed.[30] Al-Wāqidī discreetly makes no mention of the matter, but carries his extenuatory efforts even further than Ibn Isḥāq: in the story of 'Ātiqah's dream, al-'Abbās is represented as making a rudely energetic riposte to Abū Jahl's insult,[31] instead of tamely submitting as in Ibn Isḥāq's version.[32]

The same story reveals al-Wāqidī as not without a drily ironic humour. The dream was of a giant who hurled a rock, which shattered, and the fragments damaged every house in Mecca; but al-Wāqidī adds, "'Amr b. al-'Āṣ [the conqueror of Egypt] used to say, 'I actually saw all this! And there's a piece of the rock in our house today!'" The dream seems on the way to becoming a folk-tale of real events.

Al-Wāqidī's version of Badr is still the best-knit and contains much incidental material of great historical interest, such as the details of the Meccans' investment in the caravan ambushed at Badr.[33] And the *maghāzī* literature as a whole provides a wealth of source material on the Medinan period of the Prophet's life; for its richness and catholicity of content, it is a most important source on the development, both social and political, of the early Islamic community.

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[26] *Bidāyah*, III, 299. For a translation of some of the stories about Badr, see Guillaume, *Life*, 280–9.
[27] *'Uyūn*, I, 272ff.   [28] Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, III, 299.
[29] Guillaume, *Life*, 338.
[30] Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, I, 1340.   [31] Al-Wāqidī, I, 30.
[32] Ibn Hishām, I, 608. [The untranslatable vulgarity of al-'Abbās' words seems a guarantee of authenticity. It is more likely that the vulgarity caused other sources to omit them than that they were invented by someone desirous of improving his image. (Edd.)]
[33] Al-Wāqidī, I, 27.

THE *SĪRAH* LITERATURE

Sīrah literature (biography of the Prophet), inspired as it was by the imposing personality of the Prophet and bearing the marks of the stormy political events of the conquests, of the social changes in the Muslim community and of the struggle of the different factions, came into being in the period following the death of the Prophet. It developed in the first half of the first century of the *hijrah*, and by the end of that century the first full-length literary compilations were produced. The development of *Sīrah* literature is closely linked with the transmission of the *Ḥadīth* and should be viewed in connection with it. Most of the reports about utterances and orders of the Prophet were, during his lifetime, transmitted orally, and few of them seem to have been written down. Although some accounts about the recording of the utterances, deeds and orders dictated by the Prophet to his Companions are dubious and debatable[1] and should be examined with caution (and ultimately rejected), some of them seem to deserve trust. The pacts which the Prophet concluded with the different groupings in Medina after his arrival in that city were apparently written down so as to serve as the legal basis for their communal life. His letters to rulers, governors and chiefs of tribes are recorded in some of the compilations of the *Sīrah*. The *Sīrah* also contains accounts of pacts concluded between the Prophet and conquered tribes or localities and of grants bestowed upon tribal leaders.

Information about tax-collectors appointed by the Prophet was conveyed to the tribal units to which they were dispatched. The news about the victories of the Prophet and his conquests were widely circulated in the vast areas of the Arabian Peninsula. All this material came to form an essential part of the *Sīrah*.

In addition to this, the affection of the Companions of the Prophet and

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[1] E.g., on the *ṣaḥīfah* of 'Alī, cf. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, II, nos 1306, 1307, 1297. The Prophet did not single out the 'Alids by anything not granted to others; the only thing by which they were singled out was the *ṣaḥīfah* attached to the scabbard of 'Alī's sword (or in other sources that of the Prophet or that of 'Umar). It contained some short utterances about taxes imposed on camels (or, according to some, sheep), about the sanctity of Medina, the obligation to give protection to the People of the Book, etc.

their loyalty, respect and awe for him, in contrast to the attitudes, customs and practices of other communities towards their rulers, leaders and chiefs, constituted a favourite topic of conversation at the gatherings of his Companions as well as of his enemies, and were embodied into the compilations of the *Sīrah*. The daily contacts of the Prophet with his family and relatives, his adherents and adversaries, formed the subject matter recorded by the transmitters. The *Sīrah* aimed at giving information about the men who aided the Prophet loyally and faithfully, about stubborn opponents and enemies who persecuted him and those who later fought him, about hypocrites who concealed unbelief and hatred in their souls and about Companions who suffered and fought for him. Consequently the *Sīrah* became a record of the life of contemporary society, reflecting as it did the mutual relations between the Prophet and this society. Every member of this society is therefore assessed as to his virtues, views and actions and is placed on a graded scale according to his rank as believer, fighter, adherent and supporter, or as enemy or hypocrite. It is thus plausible that, in the early compilations of the *Sīrah*, people eagerly compiled lists of the first men who embraced Islam, the first who suffered for the cause of Islam, the first who emigrated to Abyssinia, the first Medinans who gave the oath of allegiance, the men who opposed the Prophet in Mecca, etc. Later special treatises dedicated to such subjects, the *awā'il*, were compiled.[2] The careful evaluation of the deeds and actions of the Companions of the Prophet gave rise to the compilation of biographies of the *Ṣaḥābah*.

Furthermore, certain passages in the Qur'ān, pointing to some events in the life of the community, required explanation and elucidation. It was necessary to specify to what people or events certain expressions or phrases referred. For an interpretation to be reliable in the opinion of the Muslim community it had to be based on an utterance ascribed to the Prophet or to one of his Companions. These utterances, stories or reports expounded the background and the circumstances of the verses of the Qur'ān, establishing to whom they referred and providing details of the event recorded. These groups of Traditions, forming an essential part of the *Sīrah*, developed into an independent branch of Quranic exegesis, the *asbāb al-nuzūl* ("the reasons for the revelations"). The lengthy passages from the early *Tafsīr* of al-Kalbī recorded by Ibn Ṭāwūs,[3] the bulk of Traditions transmitted on this subject of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* by many scholars in their commentaries bear evidence to the richness of this material and its role in the interpretation of the Qur'ān. On the other hand the *Sīrah* compilations recorded verses of the Qur'ān, providing corresponding

[2] For the *awā'il* literature, cf. Sezgin, *GAS*, I, 176, 196, 522.   [3] *Sa'd*, 209–20.

material of the circumstances of the revelation. The development of *Sīrah* literature thus ran on parallel lines with that of the *Tafsīr*, intertwining and overlapping, corroborating and sometimes contradicting it.

EARLY COMPILATIONS

A subject of considerable importance in the formation of *Sīrah* literature, comprehensively dealt with also in some commentaries on the Qur'ān, was the stock of stories about the creation of the world, as well as about the messengers and prophets mentioned in the Qur'ān, who were sent by God to different peoples. These stories were extended and supplemented by additional material derived from Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian sources, transmitted by converts from these religions to Islam. It is evident that these "biblical stories" had to get the approval of the orthodox circles. This could only be achieved, as is usual in Islam, by an utterance transmitted on the authority of the Prophet. The utterance used in this case ("Narrate [traditions] concerning the Children of Israel and there is nothing objectionable [in that]") legitimized the flood of the "biblical" legends and stories which poured into the domain of Islam. The first compilation of this kind seems to have been the book of Ḥammād b. Salamah (d. 167/783), a contemporary of Ibn Isḥāq, entitled *Akhbār Banī Isrā'īl*.

The process of elaborating and enlarging upon the stories of the Qur'ān widened the scope of the Muslim conception of history. The biography of Muḥammad and the formation of his community were decreed by God before the creation of Adam. Muḥammad was destined to be a prophet long before the creation of Adam. Were it not for Muḥammad, God would not have created Adam. Nine thousand years before things were created, says a Tradition, God created the Light of Muḥammad. This Light turned around the Power (*qudrah*) and praised Him. From this Light God created a jewel; from this jewel He created sweet water and granted it His blessing. For a thousand years the water raged and could not come to rest. Then, from this Light God created ten things: the Throne, the Pen, the Tablet, the Moon, the Sun, the Stars, the Angels, the Light of the Believers, the Chair and Muḥammad. The Light of Muḥammad, which resided in the pure ancestors of the Prophet, was transmitted in the line of descendants until it reached the Prophet. God granted Adam the *kunyah* (honorific name) Abū Muḥammad. The name of Muḥammad is written on the Throne of God; Adam saw this inscription when he was created. When he committed his sin, he begged God to forgive him by referring to the name of Muḥammad.

The contact between the Muslim conquerors and the population of the conquered territories, bearers of ancient cultural and religious traditions with a rich lore of prophetical beliefs and stories, brought about the appearance of literature concerning the miracles of the Prophet. Stories about miracles, either performed by the Prophet himself or wrought for him by God, were widely current and were later collected; compilations of stories about his miracles were *Amārāt al-nubuwwah*, *A'lām al-nubuwwah*, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwah*. The miraculous power granted the Prophet by God, and his extraordinary feats, are often compared in these books with the miracles performed by the preceding prophets.[4] Tradition emphasizes that the Prophet was superior to other prophets in the graces granted to him and the miracles performed by him. God enjoined the prophets to tell their peoples of the appearance of Muḥammad and to bid them embrace his faith. The assumption that this genre of the *dalā'il* grew up under the impact of the contact with other faiths is confirmed by the account of a letter sent by Hārūn al-Rashīd to the Byzantine emperor in which he recorded the "proofs of the prophethood" (*a'lām al-nubuwwah*) of Muḥammad. The letter was compiled by Abū 'l-Rabī' Muḥammad b. al-Layth al-Qurashī after a detailed perusal of the "books of the foreigners".[5] Al-Ma'mūn, the son of Hārūn, is credited with a book entitled *A'lām al-nubuwwah*; this seems to be the earliest compilation on this subject. It was followed by a treatise of al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 256/870), entitled *Dalā'il al-nubuwwah*,[6] and by al-Jūzajānī's (d. 259/873) *Amārāt al-nubuwwah*. Later Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/889) compiled his *A'lām al-nubuwwah*. Books of *dalā'il al-nubuwwah* were compiled in the same period by Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā (d. 281/894) and Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī. Other *dalā'il* books were compiled by al-Firyābī (d. 301/914), Ibrāhīm b. Ḥammād b. Isḥāq (d. 323/935), Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Naqqāsh (d. 351/962), Abū 'l-Shaykh al-Iṣfahānī (d. 369/979), Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Shāshī (d. 365/975) and Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Shāhīn (d. 386/996). A comprehensive book of *dalā'il*, entitled *Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā*, was compiled by 'Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad al-Khargūshī (d. 407/1016). The "proofs of prophethood" form a considerable part of this compilation; however, it contains extremely rich material about the life of the Prophet. The author touches upon the pedigree of the Prophet, his virtues, his battles, his proverbs, his dreams, virtues of his family, virtues of Medina and of the Mosque of the Prophet, virtues of his Companions, virtues of Mecca and stories foretelling the appearance of the Prophet. Al-Khargūshī's book was widely circulated and it is often quoted by both

[4] See e.g. al-Māwardī, *A'lām*, 68–70.
[5] 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Tathbīt*, 1, 77–8.
[6] Cf. al-Sandūbī, *Rasā'il*, 117–54; *Ḥujaj al-nubuwwah*.

Sunnī and Shīʿī authors. The famous Muʿtazilī scholar ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1024) discusses in his *Tathbīt dalāʾil al-nubuwwah* the miracles of the Prophet against a wide background of historical situation, having recourse to comparisons with other religions and entering into polemics with the unorthodox sects of Islam.

The compilations of the first half of the fifth century, the *Dalāʾil* of Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) and the *Dalāʾil* of Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 430/1038), became very popular. Another book of *dalāʾil* was written in the same period by Abū Dharr al-Harawī (d. 435/1043). Often quoted in later compilations of the *Sīrah* literature is the compilation of the great scholar al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), *Aʿlām al-nubuwwah*. In the same period, the *Dalāʾil* of al-Mustaghfirī (d. 432/1040) was compiled.

Among the many compilations of this genre the famous book of Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ al-Yaḥṣubī (d. 544/1149), *al-Shifāʾ fī taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*, deserves special mention; it became one of the most popular and most admired books in some Muslim countries.

The glorification of the person of the Prophet, as expounded in these compilations of the "proofs of prophethood", was indeed a continuation of a very early trend which, as mentioned above, began shortly after the death of the Prophet. The miracles wrought by the Prophet, or for him, form an essential part of the *Sīrah* of Ibn Isḥāq; in the *Jāmiʿ* of Maʿmar b. Rāshid, a special chapter is devoted to this subject. Miraculous elements were included in the *Sīrah* of Mūsā b. ʿUqbah[7] and in the *Sīrah* traditions reported by al-Zuhrī.[8] The earliest *Sīrah* compilation, the *Sīrah* of Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 110/728 or 114/732), contains an unusual amount of miraculous stories as attested by the fragments of the papyri.[9] Fück was right in his conjecture, made before he read the fragments of the papyri, that the *Sīrah* of Wahb was a work in which truth and legend about the life of the Prophet were interwoven, turning it into an entertaining story.[10] Indeed, the fragments of the papyri of Wahb contain the same kind of miraculous elements as can be found in later compilations. The role of the Devil in the council of the Meccans, convened to get rid of Muḥammad, corresponds to what we have in later biographies of the Prophet. The setting of the story of the *hijrah* in the papyrus is similar to the accounts in later compilations: it contains, for instance, the miraculous story of Umm Maʿbad, recorded, with few variants, in almost every later *Sīrah*; the story of Surāqah; the story of the dove and the spider at the entrance of the cave and the dust thrown at the heads of the watching Qurashī guard

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[7] Cf. e.g. Sachau, "Berliner Fragment", 469 (the story of Surāqah); 470 (the Prophet sees in his dream Jesus performing the circumambulation of the Kaʿbah).

[8] Duri, "al-Zuhrī", the story of Surāqah.

[9] Khoury, *Wahb b. Munabbih*, 118–75.   [10] Fück, *Muhammad*, 4.

besieging the house. All these stories are essential elements of the later biographies. Some passages of the papyrus of Wahb cannot, however, be traced in later compilations; they were apparently discarded. Such are the cases of al-Ṭufayl b. al-Ḥārith's letter to Jaʿfar b. Abī Ṭālib in Abyssinia and the story of Abū Bakr's meeting with the Devil; neither could be traced in other stories. A part of the papyrus contains a record of an expedition of ʿAlī against Khathʿam. This story fully attests the impact of the Shīʿī trend on the development of early *Sīrah* literature.

A number of scholars have analysed with insight the various stages of the early compilations. The fragments of Wahb's *Sīrah* corroborate the conjectures of these scholars about the popular and entertaining character of the early *Sīrah* stories, a blend of miraculous narratives, edifying anecdotes and records of battles in which sometimes ideological and political tendencies can be discerned. These stories were widely circulated among the believers; pious men used to narrate the *Sīrah* in mosques and to discuss the *maghāzī* at their meetings. It was considered less binding as a duty to narrate the *maghāzī* than to transmit utterances of the Prophet. Scholars refrained from recording *Ḥadīth* utterances transmitted by unreliable scholars while they did not hesitate to relate *maghāzī* material on their authority. It was only later, in the first half of the second century, that *Ḥadīth* scholars reacted strongly against the popular *Sīrah* literature and made attempts to discard dubious folk-stories by applying strict rules of *Ḥadīth* criticism. They did not, however, succeed; the *Sīrah* literature absorbed these narratives and they continued to be transmitted there. The fragment of Wahb's papyrus reflects the very early stage of the formation of the legendary type of *Sīrah*; the *Sīrah* of Ibn Isḥāq is in fact a selective collection of this material. Late compilations such as *al-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, *al-Sīrah al-Shāmiyyah*, al-Zurqānī's *Sharḥ al-Mawāhib* and Mughulṭāy's *al-Zahr al-bāsim* contain references to early popular Traditions not incorporated in the generally approved *Sīrah* compilations.

POETRY IN THE *SĪRAH*

A characteristic feature of early *Sīrah* literature is the numerous poetical insertions.[11] The heroes of the stories narrated often improvise verses referring to the events recorded; in these poetical passages opponents blame others in verse, fighters expound their virtues and extol the virtues of their clans or their leaders, poets or relatives bewail the warriors killed in battle. These poetical compositions are generally of rather poor quality. The poetical passages attached to the *maghāzī* stories closely resemble the

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[11] Cf. below cap. 18, "The poetry of the *Sīrah* literature".

poetry of the *ayyām* (days of battle). A part of this poetry is false, and some of these forgeries were convincingly shown to be so by 'Arafāt;[12] a certain portion seems, however, to be authentic. But even the fake poems, reflecting as they do the internal struggles in the Muslim community, are of some importance: the historical allusions in these verses may help to gain an insight into the event referred to; the activity of the forgers had its inception in the first decades of the first century, and the forgers were closely acquainted with the details of the event.

Of interest are popular verses in the *Sīrah* literature. Some are attributed to unseen persons, who recited them to the jinn, to idols, to the Devil or to his progeny. Such specimens of popular poetry can be found in the fragments of Wahb's *Sīrah*, in the compilations of Ibn Isḥāq, al-Ṭabarī, Abū Nu'aym, al-Bayhaqī and in the later biographies of the Prophet. This trend is well represented in the *Sīrah* compilations of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Bakrī.

Poems in praise of the Prophet preserve elements of the laudatory poems addressed to tribal leaders.

The contents of the eulogies of the Prophet differ, however, in some respects; they specially stress his prophetic mission, emphasize his spiritual qualities, praise the new religion and point out personal or tribal allegiance to the Prophet and Islam. They breathe a spirit of the new faith and stress the moral values of Islam, often coupling them with the old ideas of tribal pride and boasting.

Some observations on the change of attitude towards poetry in the early period of Islam may help us to gain a better insight for evaluating the poetry of the *Sīrah*. The attitude towards poets and poetry in the Qur'ān was clearly and explicitly unfavourable.[13] Some pious circles persisted in their negative attitude towards profane poetry, further supporting their argument by the famous utterance attributed to the Prophet: "It is better for a man that his body be full of pus than that he be full of poems."[14] It is in accordance with this view that 'Ā'ishah vigorously denies, in a Tradition attributed to her, the claim that Abū Bakr ever recited poetry. In a speech ascribed to Mu'āwiyah poetry is counted among the seven things forbidden by the Prophet.

A version of the Prophet's saying contains the following addition, which demonstrates the tendency to restrict its scope: "than that he be full of poems by which I was satirized".[15] According to this enlarged version the transmission of poetry which does not contain satirical verses against the Prophet is permitted.

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[12] 'Arafāt, "Aspect", 32–3; 'Arafāt, "Early critics", 453–63.
[13] Qur'ān, xxvi.225–8.
[14] Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 56.
[15] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 226–8.

The same trend of concession and compromise is reflected in another Tradition attributed to the Prophet. The Prophet is said to have stated that some poetry is wisdom. A considerable part of poetry containing aphorism, exhortation, edification or moralizing clearly won the approval of orthodox circles.

Another utterance attributed to the Prophet permits poetry if its aim is to gain justice from oppression, to gain means of deliverance from poverty and expression of gratitude for a favour received.

It was pointed out that the reason why the transmission of poetry was forbidden was the fact that it served to excite inter-tribal discussions and disunity. The libellous and defamatory verses which might threaten the peaceful relations in Islamic society were dangerous and harmful. Such poetry was censured and rejected. But poetry supporting the Prophet and his struggle against the Unbelievers and verses written for the cause of Islam were, of course, praiseworthy. The exceptive phrase in Qur'ān xxvi.228 was explained as referring to the poets of the Prophet, who were commended. They were described as striking the Unbelievers with their verses. Consequently *Sīrah* literature and *adab* compilations record stories that the Prophet encouraged poets who composed poems in praise of God, and liked to listen to good and beautiful poetry recited by poets. Abū Bakr, a Tradition says, came to the Prophet and, in his presence, met a poet who recited a poem. Abū Bakr asked: "How is that? Qur'ān and poetry?" "Sometimes Qur'ān and sometimes poetry," answered the Prophet.[16]

There was thus good poetry, which was permitted and which the Prophet even sometimes recited, and bad poetry, which was forbidden. 'Ā'ishah formulated it as follows: "There is good and bad poetry: take the good and leave the bad."[17] A similar Tradition is attributed to the Prophet: "Poetry is like speech; good poetry is like good speech, bad poetry is like bad speech."[18] According to this utterance the ban on poetry is almost entirely lifted; the listener had to distinguish between good and bad poetry and choose the good, just as he ought to distinguish between good and bad speech and choose the good. The pious Ibn 'Umar indeed acted in this way: he listened to a recitation of a poet; when the poet began to recite unseemly verses he stopped him.

A further step in the development of the favourable attitude towards poetry was the legitimization of Jāhiliyyah verse. A Tradition, attributed to the Prophet on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, states that the Prophet gave licence for the transmission of Jāhiliyyah poetry with the exception

16 Al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, i, 79.
17 Al-Jīlānī, *Faḍl*, ii, 324, no. 866.
18 Qurṭubī, *Jāmiʿ*, xiii, 150.

of two poems (one of Umayyah b. Abī 'l-Ṣalt, the other of al-Aʿshā). The same idea is reflected in Traditions that the Prophet used to sit with his Companions and listen to their recitation of pre-Islamic poetry, smiling (that is, with approval). Among the pieces recited in the presence of the Prophet are verses of praise, of contemplation on life and death, of belief and piety; there are also some erotic verses, verses recited by women at a wedding celebration, and even a complaint of a poet deserted by his wife.[19]

The favourable attitude towards poetry is represented in Traditions stating that the four Orthodox Caliphs were poets, that they either quoted verses or listened to recitations of poems. ʿĀ'ishah is said to have had a good knowlege of poetry; she recited verses of Jāhilī poets and encouraged people to study poetry. Ibn Masʿūd used to recite poetry of the *ayyām* (battles of the pre-Islamic Arabs).

Abū Dharr (d. 604/1207) quotes an opinion of a Muslim scholar, that the ban on the transmission of poetry was imposed when there were conflicts between Muslims and unbelievers. But once people had embraced Islam and animosities between believers had disappeared there was no objection to transmitting poetry. This view is in fact based on the actual situation in Muslim society of the first century. Poetry was widely transmitted; poems were recited at private meetings, in the markets and even in the mosques. The great scholar al-Shaʿbī (d. 103/721) recited poetry in the mosque of Kufa. ʿAbdullāh b. al-Zubayr was surprised to find a group of people reciting poetry in the court of the mosque of Mecca; they argued that it was not the kind of poetry which was forbidden. When ʿUmar reproached Ḥassān for reciting poetry in the mosque of Medina, he said: "I recited poetry in this mosque in the presence of a man who was better than you." Ḥassān was referring, of course, to the Prophet. ʿUmar left him and permitted poetry to be recited in the mosque. Muḥammad b. Sīrīn was asked, when in the mosque, whether it was permitted to recite poetry during the month of Ramaḍān (some people even went so far as to claim that recitation of poetry nullified the ritual ablution). He immediately recited a verse which was far from being chaste, and stood up straightaway to lead the prayer. It was Ibn Sīrīn who, when rebuked for reciting a Jāhilī verse, said: "What is disliked is poetry composed in Islam; poetry composed in the period of the Jāhiliyyah has already been condoned." It is possible to guess at the identity of those who persisted consistently in stubborn opposition to the transmission of poetry from a significant remark by Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab. Having been told that some people in Iraq disliked poetry, he said: "They became ascetics in a non-Arab fashion."

[19] See al-Aʿshā, *Dīwān*, 218–19.

Transmission of poetry was encouraged by rulers and governors; poetry became one of the subjects essential to the education of the Umayyad prince. Poetry continued to be one of the most favoured preoccupations of Muslim society in the first century and even fighting troops on the battlefield showed a vivid interest in it. What poet surpasses others in the art of poetry? Who is the best poet? These were common subjects of talk and discussion.

An alleged saying of the Prophet accurately reflects the love of poetry of the Arabs: "They will not give up poetry until camels give up yearning [for their resting places]."[20] Ibn Abī 'l-Sā'ib al-Makhzūmī expounded it in an utterance very much to the point: "By God, were poetry banned, we would be punished at court several times every day [that is, for reciting it]."[21]

The origin of the *Sīrah* poetry, its formation and growth have to be viewed against the background of the uninterrupted transmission of poetry and the struggle for its legitimization. Simple, not elaborate, but vivid, it became a regular component of the early *Sīrah* literature, and was popular and widespread. It was not earlier than the second/eighth century that the content of the early *Sīrahs* came under the scrutiny of scholars and the criteria of *Ḥadīth* scholars were applied to assess their validity. This applied to the poetry in the *Sīrah* as well as to its prose portions.

GENEALOGY

Genealogy was an essential subject of the *Sīrah* literature. Traditions stress the purity of the Prophet's pedigree and the qualities of his ancestors. Special chapters were dedicated to the virtues of Quraysh and the family of the Prophet, the Hashimites.

Utterances attributed to the Prophet tried to prove that there was a close link between the ancestors of the Prophet and Islam. Ka'b b. Lu'ayy is said to have foretold the appearance of the Prophet. The Prophet is said to have forbidden the disparagement of Muḍar because he was a proto-Muslim. Other versions of the utterance of the Prophet forbid the disparagement of Rabī'ah, Imru' al-Qays, Asad b. Khuzaymah, Tamīm and al-Ḥārith b. Ka'b; they all were said to have been Muslims or believers in the faith of Abraham. Another list of the ancestors of the Prophet whom it was forbidden to abuse, because they were true believers, includes 'Adnān, Ma'add, Udad, Khuzaymah, Tamīm, Asad and Ḍabbah. Khuzaymah b. Mudrikah was the first who uttered the testimony of faith. Al-Yās b. Muḍar was also a true Believer; he was the first who offered

[20] Ibn Rashīq, *'Umdah*, I, 17.
[21] Ibid.

sacrifices in the *ḥaram* of Mecca and it is forbidden to abuse him. Ma'add was a follower of the Ḥanīfiyyah of Ibrāhīm (Abraham), 'Adnān acted according to the Ḥanīfiyyah; he was the first who clothed the Ka'bah with leather clothes. Nizār was endowed with the "light of prophethood", which was handed on to Muḥammad.

The glory of the pedigree of the Prophet was extended, as a matter of course, to include the whole of Quraysh; the idea of the excellency of Quraysh was embodied in the rich literature of *Faḍā'il Quraysh*. Quraysh, says a Tradition traced back to 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās, were the light in the presence of God two thousand years before the creation of Adam; this light, reposited first in Adam, passed on and was transmitted to the Prophet.[22] The excellence of the pedigree of the Prophet is formulated in an utterance of the Prophet: "The best of the Arabs are Muḍar; the best of Muḍar are 'Abd Manāf; the best of 'Abd Manāf are Banū Hāshim; the best of Banū Hāshim are Banū 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. By God, since God created Adam never was there a division of people into two parts without my being in the better one."[23] An opposite tendency, that of depreciating the excellence of Quraysh, is evident in a Tradition stating that all the Arab tribes have their share in the pedigree of the Prophet. Pious circles in the Muslim community, struggling against the excessive study of genealogy, nevertheless stressed the value and importance of the genealogy of the Prophet.

The interdiction on tracing genealogical lineages beyond Ma'add was not followed in the case of the pedigree of the Prophet; his genealogy was traced back to Abraham and the close link of descent and prophecy between him and Abraham was especially stressed.

FACTIONALISM

The constant struggles between the various political and ideological factions in Islamic society left their mark on the formation of the *Sīrah*. Invented stories and alleged utterances served the cause of the rulers, pretenders and rebels. Some examples are quoted below.

The 'Abbasid bias can be clearly seen in the story of the attempt to sacrifice the father of the Prophet, 'Abdullāh. It was al-'Abbās, according to this version, who drew him out from under the feet of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, trying to save his life. It was al-'Abbās who was the first to kiss the Prophet after he was born; his mother took him to the abode of Āminah, the Prophet's mother, and the women in the house drew him to the cradle of the Prophet, encouraging him and saying: "Kiss thy brother!" The same tendency is evident in the story that al-'Abbās took the oath of

[22] Ghanamah, *Manāqil*, fols 3b–4a.   [23] Suyūṭī, *Durr*, III, 294–5.

allegiance from the Anṣār for the Prophet at the 'Aqabah meeting. Not less tendentious is the report that al-'Abbās embraced Islam before the battle of Badr and served as a spy of the Prophet in Mecca. The utterance attributed to the Prophet, "Al-'Abbās is indeed my trustee (*waṣī*) and my heir; 'Alī and I are closely related",[24] bears the mark of an 'Abbasid and anti-Shi'ite tradition, standing in contrast to the Shī'ī tradition about the trusteeship of 'Alī.[25] The general expression "'Alī and I are closely related" merely serves to emphasize the special position of 'Abbās.

The famous utterance of the Prophet known as the "Tradition of the Garment" (*Ḥadīth al-kisā*), when he is said to have covered 'Alī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn with a garment, establishes the entity of the "Family of the Prophet" (*Ahl al-Bayt*) and provides an essential argument for the legitimacy of 'Alī's claim to the caliphate; it has its counterpart in an opposing Tradition, according to which the Prophet covered al-'Abbās and his sons with a garment and said that they were the Family.

It is not surprising to find a Shī'ī Tradition describing how al-'Abbās and Abū Lahab instigated people against the Prophet and publicly denounced him as a liar.

The Tradition about the pact of fraternity (*mu'ākhāh*) between the Prophet and 'Alī[26] is contradicted by a Tradition that the Prophet said: "If I had chosen a friend I would have chosen Abū Bakr, but he is my brother and Companion."[27] The Tradition which talks about the close fraternal relation between the Prophet and 'Alī is of crucial importance for proving 'Alī's legitimate claim to the caliphate.

The contradictory reports about the first man to embrace Islam, whether it was Abū Bakr, 'Alī or Zayd b. Ḥārithah, reflect the different opinions of the religio-political parties. The Shī'ah vigorously affirm, of course, that the first believer was 'Alī.

An Umayyad bias can be noticed in a peculiar Tradition reporting that the family of Abū Sufyān, himself an Umayyad, were the first to be admonished and warned by the Prophet. Abū Sufyān rejected the scornful words of his wife, saying that the Prophet was not a liar or a wizard.

There are divergent and contradictory reports about various events in the life of the Prophet. Some incidents, even very prominent ones, are subject to debate by transmitters and scholars. Only a few cases may be reviewed here.

Varying Traditions about the number and identity of the children of the Prophet were further blurred by the tendentious inventions of the

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[24] Al-Muttaqī 'l-Hindī, *Kanz*, XII, 280, no. 1649.
[25] Ganjī, *Kifāyat*, 260–1.   [26] Ibid., 192–3.
[27] Ibn Abī 'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*, XI, 49.

religio-political factions. A Shīʿī report stated that Ruqayyah and Zaynab were the daughters of Hālah, the sister of Khadījah; another Tradition claimed that they were the daughters of Jaḥsh.[28] This served as a weighty argument in Shīʿī polemics against ʿUthmān, who was called Dhū 'l-Nūrayn, it was said, because he had married two daughters of the Prophet.

There are different reports also about the date of birth of the Prophet, of his revelation, about the age of Khadījah when she married the Prophet, about the *hijrah*, the change of the *qiblah* (direction of prayer) and about the chronology of the battles and raids of the Prophet.

Lists of participants in crucial events were deliberately rearranged or changed. Some of the Anṣār, says a report of Ibn al-Kalbī and al-Wāqidī, omitted certain names from the list of participants at the ʿAqabah meeting, substituting the names of their relatives, who had not attended the meeting. The lists of participants at the battle of Badr were also a subject of debate. Ibn Saʿd felt constrained to consult the genealogy of the Anṣār, and having done this, he removed a spurious name from the list of those who took part in the battle of Badr.[29] The reports about the number of the Companions who were present at the oath of allegiance at al-Ḥudaybiyah are divergent. There were conflicting Traditions about the person appointed to take charge of Medina when the Prophet went out to Badr and the one bidden to divide the booty after the battle. Reports concerning the warriors who remained with the Prophet at Uḥud and those who deserted the battlefield are similarly divergent; among the latter group Shīʿī tradition counts Abū Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān, while ʿAlī was, of course, of those who stayed with the Prophet and defended him.

How far political interests had a bearing upon the transmission of the *Sīrah* can be seen in the following story. Al-Zuhrī told his student, Maʿmar b. Rāshid, that it was ʿAlī who had written out the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyah, and added, laughing: "If you asked these people they would say it was ʿUthmān who wrote the treaty." By "these people", Maʿmar remarks, "He meant the Umayyads."[30]

Another anecdote illustrates the attempts made by the Umayyads and their governors to denigrate ʿAlī in the *Sīrah*. Khālid b. ʿAbdullāh al-Qasrī bade al-Zuhrī write down the *Sīrah* for him. Al-Zuhrī asked: "If I come across events related to ʿAlī, may I mention them?" "No," said Khālid, "except when you see him in the lowest part of Hell."[31] In another story al-Zuhrī courageously refuses to transfer the guilt of slandering of ʿĀ'ishah from ʿAbdullāh b. Ubayy to ʿAlī.[32]

[28] Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib āl Abī Ṭālib*, I, 138, 140.
[29] Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 513.   [30] ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, V, 343, no. 9722.
[31] Horovitz, "Biographies", 49.   [32] Horowitz, "Biographies", I. C. II, 41.

The favours bestowed on al-Zuhrī by the Umayyads and the close relations between him and the rulers aroused the suspicions of independent *Ḥadīth* scholars as to his integrity. The pious Saʿd b. Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf chided al-Zuhrī for transmitting a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet said that a caliph may not be invoked. Saʿd mentioned a case in which the Prophet was invoked and said: "How can it be that the Prophet was invoked and al-Walīd should not be invoked?"[33] It is evident that the aim of the Tradition invented was to encourage respect for the Umayyad rulers.

Salamah b. Dīnār Abū Ḥāzim, a pious scholar, sent to al-Zuhrī a lengthy letter censuring him for his co-operation with the oppressive Umayyad rulers and criticizing him severely for helping them in caring for their power and authority and in their aiming at worldly gain. He serves the oppressive rulers, "who have turned him into the axle of the wheel of their falsehood and into a bridge for their deceit and error", says Salamah. By his services they sow doubts in the souls of scholars and gain the favour of the ignorant. It is hard to deny that these accusations have some foundation, and the assertion that he (i.e. al-Zuhrī) "was not influenced by political parties and tried to give an impartial account of what he had seen in Medina"[34] is open to doubt. The possibility that his Traditions concerning the *Sīrah* were influenced by his ties with the Umayyad court cannot be excluded. Shīʿī scholars counted him among the Traditionists whose attitude towards ʿAlī was hostile. Although highly respected by Sunnī scholars engaged in assessing the credibility of *Ḥadīth* transmitters (*jarḥ wa-taʿdīl*), he was nevertheless recorded in the lists of the *mudallisūn*. An early report of al-Aṣmaʿī, traced back to Hishām b. ʿUrwah, states that al-Zuhrī used to expand or abbreviate the long accounts recorded by his father, ʿUrwah. A closer examination of the activities of al-Zuhrī and of the Traditions transmitted by him may help us to acquire an insight into the formative stage of the development of *Sīrah* lore and *Ḥadīth*.

It is, furthermore, important for the evaluation of the formation of *Sīrah* literature to consider the differences between the various schools of Tradition, especially those between Medina and Iraq. These differences were often pointed out in the literature of *Ḥadīth* and a special compilation was dedicated to this problem. The attacks against the Iraqi school were fierce and passionate, and the Traditions of its scholars were often stigmatized as lies. It is noteworthy also that divergences and contradictions could be found between the accounts transmitted by the disciples of the same Traditionist.

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[33] Ibn Durayd, *Mujtanā*, 55.
[34] Duri, "al-Zuhrī", 1off.

MAJOR *SĪRAH* COMPILATIONS

The section on the biography of the Prophet in the *Ta'rīkh* of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922) records a wealth of early Traditions carefully provided with *isnāds*. The philologist and commentator on the Qur'ān, al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) is credited with a *Maghāzī* compilation.[35] Muḥammad b. Hārūn al-Anṣārī al-Dimashqī (d. 353/964) wrote a book entitled *Sifat al-nabī*. The great scholar of *Hadīth*, Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān al-Bustī (d. 354/965), the author of a book on the *Ṣaḥābah*, compiled a biography of the Prophet. At the end of the fourth century the philologist Aḥmad b. Fāris compiled a book on the names of the Prophet and another about the life of the Prophet. A concise *Sīrah* compiled by Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064)[36] was based on the terse biography of the Prophet composed by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071), *al-Durar fī'khtiṣārī l-magnāzi wa-l-siyar*.

The later compilations, like the commentary of al-Suhaylī (d. 581/1185) on Ibn Hishām's *Sīrah*, *al-Rawḍ al-unuf*, the *Bidāyat al-su'ūl* of 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abd al-Salām al-Sulamī (d. 660/1262), the *K. al-Iktifā'* of al-Kalā'ī (d. 634/1236), the *Khulāṣat siyar Sayyid al-bashar* of al-Muḥibb al-Ṭabarī (d. 684/1285), the *'Uyūn al-athar* of Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734/1333), the section of the *Sīrah* in al-Nuwayrī's (d. 732/1331), *Nihāyat al-arab*, and the section of the *Sīrah* in Ibn Kathīr's (d. 774/1372) *al-Bidāyah wa-'l-nihāyah* contain a great number of early Traditions derived from lost or hitherto unpublished compilations.

Of special importance is the work of Mughulṭāy (d. 762/1360), *al-Zahr al-bāsim*. Arguing in his polemic against al-Suhaylī's *al-Rawḍ al-unuf*, Mughulṭāy records an unusually large number of quotations from various recensions of *dīwāns*, collections of poetry, compilations of genealogy, philology, lexicography, commentaries on the Qur'ān, biographies of the Prophet, books of *adab* and history. The painstaking efforts of Mughulṭāy to establish correct readings, his checking of variants, his pursuit of every record and Tradition, his comprehensive knowledge, turn his compilation into a veritable treasure for the study of *Sīrah* literature and help towards a better understanding of the controversial ideas of the scholars about the activities of the Prophet and his personality.

Summarizing compilations of the *Sīrah* were provided by Yaḥyā b. Abī Bakr al-'Āmirī (d. 893/1488) in his *Bahjah*, and by Taqī 'l-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441) in his *Imtā'*. Three late compilations deserve special attention: the *Subul* (= *Sīrah al-Shāmiyyah*) of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 942/1535), the *Insān al-'uyūn fī sīrat al-amīn al-ma'mūn* (= *al-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*) of 'Alī b. Burhān al-Dīn (d. 1044/1634), and the commentary

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[35] Cf. cap. 16, "The *Maghāzī* literature".   [36] *Jawāmi'*.

by al-Zurqānī (d. 1122/1710) on the *al-Mawāhib al-laduniyyah* of al-Qasṭallānī (d. 923/1517). Al-*Sīrah al-Shāmiyyah* is one of the most comprehensive compilations of the biography of the Prophet. Al-Ṣāliḥī drew, according to his statement in the preface, on more than three hundred books. He accumulated an enormous number of Traditions, narratives and reports from *sīrah* compilations, *Ḥadīth* collections, books of *dalāʾil*, *shamāʾil*, *khaṣāʾiṣ*, histories of cities and dynasties, biographies of transmitters of *Ḥadīth*, and treatises of asceticism and piety, recording carefully the variants of the reported Traditions and attaching detailed lexicographical explanations of difficult words and phrases.

Al-*Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, although extracted mainly from *al-Sīrah al-Shāmiyyah*, contains a great deal of additions by al-Ḥalabī. It is one of the characteristic features of this compilation that al-Ḥalabī records divergent and contradictory Traditions and strives to harmonize them.

Al-Zurqānī gives, in his meticulous commentary, a wealth of Traditions corroborating or contradicting the reports recorded by al-Qasṭallānī.

The late compilations thus contain an immense wealth of material derived from early sources. Some of these Traditions, stories, reports and narratives are derived from lost or hitherto unpublished sources. Some Traditions, including early ones, were apparently omitted in the generally accepted *Sīrah* compilations, faded into oblivion, but reappeared in these late compilations.

Only a small part of the *sīrah* compilations have been mentioned above. The uninterrupted flow of transmission of Traditions on the life of the Prophet embedded in the rich literature of Qurʾān commentaries, collections of *Ḥadīth*, works of *adab*, history, polemics of religio-political parties and works of piety and edification, is remarkable. The ramifications of *Sīrah* literature, such as the literature on the *Ṣaḥābah*, on the ancestors of the Prophet, on his genealogy, servants, secretaries, on the habits and characteristics of the Prophet, on his birth, on the "night-journey" (*isrāʾ*) and "ascent" (*miʿrāj*), are indispensable for an adequate study of the development of the conception the Muslim community formed, throughout the ages, of the person of the Prophet.

The narratives of the *Sīrah* have to be carefully and meticulously sifted in order to get at the kernel of historically valid information, which is in fact meagre and scanty. But the value of this information for the scrutiny of the social, political, moral and literary ideas of the Muslim community cannot be overestimated; during the centuries, since Muslim society came into existence, the revered personality of the Prophet served as an ideal to be followed and emulated.

THE POETRY OF THE *SĪRAH* LITERATURE

The earliest extant source for the poetry of the *sīrah* literature[1] is *al-Sīrat al-nabawiyyah*, composed by Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Yasār b. Khiyār (*c.* 85–150/704–67), which has survived in the edition made by Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Malik b. Hishām (d. 13 Rabīʿ II 218/8 May 833, or in 213/828). Although the work is in prose, much occasional poetry is included in it to illustrate historical events. Later critics have tended to consider a large part of this poetic corpus spurious, although Ibn Isḥāq himself admitted to his contemporaries that he was no fine critic of poetry, and that he merely restricted himself to the modest role of the compiler, not tampering with the texts he was provided with by his informants, but merely recording them *verbatim*. As will be seen, the author's uncritical acceptance of what he gathered from the contemporary poetic tradition makes the poems all the more valuable as an example of early Islamic verse.

A large number of the poems included in the work is attributed to the "poet laureate" of the Prophet, namely Ḥassān b. Thābit b. al-Mundhir b. Ḥarām al-Khazrajī (d. 40/659, 50/669, or in 54/673). Many of these, in the form recorded by Ibn Isḥāq, which often differs considerably from that found in other recensions, could not possibly have been composed by Ḥassān himself. Ḥassān had already established his reputation as a poet in the pre-Islamic era and did not put his art at the service of Muḥammad until he was well into his fifties. He was thus a poet of pre-Islamic training, whose poetic production, in the extant sources, is replete with variants and anachronisms that have led scholars to cast doubt on the authenticity of much of the corpus. In the light of the important theory of oral-formulaic composition, the question of the authenticity of Ḥassān's poetry needs to be rephrased in new terms, while the relationship of his poetic corpus to pre-Islamic poetry also needs to be re-examined.

From the perspective of the oral-formulaic theory, it becomes apparent that linguistically much of the poetry in Ibn Isḥāq's *Sīrah* is based not on the individual word, but on the use of a specialized poetic diction relying

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[1] See above, cap. 17.

largely upon the formula, defined by Milman Parry as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea".[2] This further implies that the technique of composition employed by Ḥassān, as by other major pre-Islamic poets, was oral rather than literary. In his use of themes, too, Ḥassān betrays oral composition. While many of the pre-Islamic themes are present in his poetry, that of war, and in particular, the war conducted by the Prophet against the unbelievers, achieves prominence. This does not signify, however, that the poems are epic in character, if by "epic" we mean a heroic narrative poetry, for they do not narrate events in the third person, arranging them around the figure of a central hero. They are, nevertheless, heroic in tone; but they treat the exploits of Islam and its leaders in a lyrical manner by using the first person singular or plural to convey to the listener certain subjective reactions and attitudes to important events and achievements that are narrated in the prose sections of the *Sīrah*. The importance given to the lyrical and subjective element in the work make it resemble a European historical romance rather than a true epic. The poems inserted in the text are generally occasional pieces, relatively short, and frequently make use of the Arabic theme of *fakhr* or "boasting" to stress the importance of the Islamic victories over paganism. Unlike some of the longer pre-Islamic poems which have been preserved, and with one single exception (the famous *Bānat Suʿad* of Kaʿb b. Zuhayr), those contained in the *Sīrah* are not *qaṣīdahs*, but represent instead a type of occasional verse (*qiṭʿah*) also cultivated by major pre-Islamic poets.

These occasional poems collected by Ibn Isḥāq reveal a transfer of the pre-Islamic style, genre, and method of composition away from the ideals of pagan tribalism and in the direction of a new ideal provided by the Islamic appeal to universalism. Whereas the ancient poet had often defended himself or his tribe against rivals, or against rival tribes, the new polarity to be detected in the poetry of Ḥassān is one between the believers and their enemies. Otherwise this poetry offers little to distinguish it, thematically or in the mode of its composition, from the occasional verse of pre-Islamic Arabia. The old techniques and themes were merely placed at the service of new religious ideals defended by a new political and religious community. The main difference between the new and the old seems to be one of quality, for the poems included in the *Sīrah* are often inferior from an aesthetic point of view, while they contain many grammatical and metrical errors and inconsistencies.

The variants to the poems of Ḥassān are likewise of great significance in casting a new light on the oral nature of his poetry. Thus, in the year

[2] Parry, "Studies", 80.

9/630 the poet was requested to recite a poem to the delegation of Tamīmīs visiting the Prophet, and Arabic tradition records that upon hearing the poem, the delegates immediately adopted the new faith of Islam. However, there are three different sets of poems extant, each of which is claimed by separate authorities to have been recited on the same occasion. This has led critics to doubt the authenticity of the poetry in general. However, in oral tradition improvisation always plays a crucial role. It is therefore plausible to suggest that later informants, when asked to transmit Ḥassān's poem, while not actually forging with intent to deceive, may have improvised with their own formulae, according to the oral technique, compositions that they felt to be generally faithful to their idea of what Ḥassān had actually uttered on a specific occasion. In much the same way, Thucydides paraphrased the speeches of his Greek contemporaries rather than rendering them word for word, but there is one important difference: Thucydides was a literate author and keenly aware of the distinction between an exact recording and a paraphrase. He was, in fact, conscious of paraphrasing, since he informed his readers that he was doing so. The oral poet, on the other hand, is unaware of the difference. In his art improvisation usually plays a far greater role than memorization. He is not trying to deceive his audience into thinking that his renditions of an earlier poem are *verbatim* (he sincerely believes they are so), but rather, he is unaware of what a "word" is. A most important recent discovery, which has had far reaching consequences for the study of oral literature in all languages, is that oral poets are not actually doing what they think they are doing, and this is something quite distinct from deliberate deception or forgery.

The above remark can be supported in Ḥassān's case from another angle. The *Dīwān* containing his poetry, in the edition made by Ibn Ḥabīb, includes 228 poems, while the *Sīrah* contains 29 additional ones (78 poems in it are attributed to Ḥassān). Furthermore, an unpublished thesis by Walīd 'Arafāt[3] shows, after a detailed analysis of the whole corpus, that between sixty and seventy per cent of the poetry may be "spurious" on the grounds that it expresses a variety of spirit and style and is full of contradictions and anachronisms. It also includes much inferior verse, all of which encourages 'Arafāt to suspect that not all the poems are by the same author. At this point it is necessary to add that any oral tradition is normally unhistorical, in the sense that the oral poet usually tends to view the past in the light of the present. Anachronisms do not disturb him in the same way they would a literate poet or a professional historian. In particular, between the historical events of the rise of Islam constituting

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[3] 'Arafāt, "Critical introduction".

the subject matter of the *Sīrah*, and the time when the book was compiled, two important events had taken place: the slaughter of al-Ḥusayn and his supporters at Karbalā' in 61/680 and the sack of Medina in 63/682 followed by the execution of some ten thousand of the Anṣār, including some eighty of the Prophet's Companions. According to Guillaume, "much of the poetry of the *Sīrah* was meant to be read against the background of those tragedies. The aim is to set forth the claims of the Anṣār to prominence in Islam not only as men who had supported the Prophet when Quraysh opposed him, but as men descended from kings." There is thus underlying much of the poetry what Guillaume refers to as a "thinly disguised Anṣārī–Shī'ah propaganda", and that author adds: "The account of the Tubba''s march against Mecca and his great respect for its sanctity stands in clear contrast with the treatment it received from the Umayyads when al-Ḥajjāj bombarded it."[4]

In this respect, it should not be forgotten that Ibn Isḥāq was himself a Shi'ite. Thus, in keeping with the general aims of the *Sīrah*, much of its poetry, while purporting to be the work of poets contemporary with the events narrated, actually reflects later political aspirations of the Shi'ite movement, and this apparent anomaly is entirely consistent with what is known about the nature of oral poetry. This background information would also explain why the figure of Ḥassān, a Medinese who in his poetry expressed the developing friction between the Meccan Muhājirūn and the Medinese Anṣār, would become important to the Shi'ites of a later period, once the rivalry between Muhājirūn and Anṣār had been transferred to the new plane of Umayyads versus Shi'ites.

The stylistic differences and anachronisms in the corpus of Ḥassān's poetry thus reflect a living oral tradition. Rather than viewing the poems from the irrelevant standpoint of authenticity versus non-authenticity, a more productive line of approach would result from regarding them as a continuously developing "Ḥassān cycle", the evolution of which can be traced up to a point in the light of historical developments, for in oral poetry there are no "original texts" and a search for such would prove to be a vain attempt. The question may thus legitimately be raised as to whether anything in that "Ḥassān cycle" is really authentic in the sense that it represents *verbatim* what the historical figure Ḥassān actually recited at any given moment. Since textual faithfulness is contrary to all that is known about the transmission of oral poetry, the "Ḥassān cycle" can be viewed more accurately as the result of a fluid process of oral transmission that "lives in its variants", to use the fortunate expression coined by the Spanish scholar Menéndez Pidal with reference to European balladry.[5]

[4] Guillaume, *Life*, xxvii.   [5] *Romancero*, I, 40.

The early critic of poetry, 'Abd al-Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d. 231/845), condemned the methods of Ibn Isḥāq in the following terms:

Muḥammad b. Isḥāq was one of those who did harm to poetry and corrupted it and passed on all sorts of rubbish. He was one of those learned in the biography of the Prophet, and people quoted poems on his authority. He used to excuse himself by saying that he knew nothing about poetry and that he merely passed on what was communicated to him. But that is no excuse, for he wrote down in the *Sīrah* poems ascribed to men who had never uttered a line of verse and to women too. He even went to the length of including poems of 'Ād and Thamūd! Could he not have asked himself who had handed on these verses for thousands of years when God said: "He destroyed the first 'Ād and Thamūd and left none remaining," while of 'Ād he said: "Can you see anything remaining of them?" and "Only God knows 'Ād and Thamūd and those who came after them."[6]

In one sense, it can be stated that the otherwise priceless testimony by the myopic medieval critic quoted above backfires from our modern critical viewpoint, for it is precisely the fact that Ibn Isḥāq knew nothing about poetry and that he merely passed on what was communicated to him (i.e. without making a critical selection, and without tampering with the texts of the poems he recorded) that offers us a valuable picture of the living oral tradition of his time, unlike what has happened in the case of the major part of pre-Islamic verse, where a process of selection (not to mention ill-advised though well-meant corrections) has left us with a far less reliable textual documentation for the true contemporary state of affairs with regard to poetry.

The picture that emerges is one of an oral-formulaic tradition that employs many of the themes common to pre-Islamic poetry; that is uneven in style and quality, some of it being good while much of it is mediocre; that is full of anachronisms and inconsistencies; the different recensions of which contain many variants and misplaced or added lines, just as is the case with regard to pre-Islamic poetry; that often exhibits grammatical and metrical irregularities.[7] Such a poetry can be authentic only in the sense that all oral poetry is authentic, despite its lack of original texts. Al-Jumaḥī's testimony to the lax selective criteria and critical "incompetence" of Ibn Isḥāq thus provides strong evidence in support of the theory that what remains to us is a cycle of oral poems, large numbers of which were fathered on Ḥassān, and which were woven into a prose work narrating (also in a style owing much to the oral storyteller) the saga of the rise of Islam and of its Prophet.

[6] Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4; cf. Guillaume, *Life*, xxv.
[7] It has, however, been suggested that this type of verse and diction may reflect the oral tradition of the townsfolk of the Arabian cities in contradistinction to the tribal tradition. (Edd.)

To sum up, we are informed by the sources that around the year 9/630 Ḥassān was already enlisted as a literary propagandist for the Prophet. The tragedies of Karbalā' and Medina occurred in 61/680 and 63/682 respectively, while Ibn Isḥāq, the compiler of the *Sīrah*, lived from 85/704 to 150/767. Thus, about a century passed from the time of the events narrated in the work until the accounts were committed to writing by the author. For an oral tradition, this is a relatively short span of time, and yet historical inconsistencies are already apparent, while by 218/833 Ibn Isḥāq's editor Ibn Hishām had already applied his "critical" (i.e. "literate") acumen to reject as spurious many of the poems included in the work by his predecessor. What checked the further development of this particular work was its clearly sacred character, since it purported to narrate the events leading to the birth of one of the world's great religions, and could therefore not be allowed by the guardians of that religion to continue being endlessly exposed to the vicissitudes of an oral transmission. In the case of other *sīrahs*, however, no such religious checks on their development were forthcoming, since these works were more markedly secular in character. The latter thus continued to evolve orally and ultimately came to embrace many centuries of Islamic history in their treatment of events.[8]

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[8] These later popular romances, which the author regards as developments of the poetry of the *sīrah* literature, are dealt with at length elsewhere in this history. Cf. cap. 19 in this volume, "Fables and legends", and in a later volume, a chapter with the same title covering the 'Abbasid period.

CHAPTER 19

FABLES AND LEGENDS IN PRE-ISLAMIC AND EARLY ISLAMIC TIMES

Introducing his translation of "The Book of Marvels" attributed to al-Mas'ūdī (d. c. 345/956), Carra de Vaux remarks: "Among Muslims there is a folklorist in every theologian, geographer and historian." Arabic fables and legends are inseparable from Arabian thought. They reveal every fashion, involve every social class and reflect every change in the evolution of Arabic literature.

Any attempt, however, to reconstruct the earliest Arabic fables is faced with formidable obstacles. Few texts survive. Are those we possess representative? Archaeological reconstruction may be misleading, since many pre-Islamic tales may have survived on bedouin lips, while others of lesser appeal have long been forgotten.

Arabic legends first appeared in a "Heroic Age". The Jāhiliyyah had its confederations of tribes, or city–states, ruled by chiefs or kings. Assemblies were convened at pleasure or in an emergency. They were mainly advisory. There was bitter rivalry or peaceful co-operation among an aristocracy of princes, kings and chiefs. Deities were astral, anthropomorphic, arboreal or lithic. They formed loose or local pantheons. Each god or goddess had a special abode. Although the heroes, whether kings, bards, vagabonds or soothsayers, were not the offspring of divinity, they at least possessed superhuman prowess, longevity or intimacy with the supernatural conceived as jinn or metamorphosed creatures – lions, foxes or vultures, for example.

Sagas or functional tales were recited by itinerant or resident bards. Attached to courts or camps, frequenters of festival fairs, such storytellers were occasionally seers. The ritual of a shrine, a hunt, a war or some prophylactic ceremony to avert natural disaster provided motivation. Many stories, however, were told simply to entertain. The creation of mediatory figures in legends and fables, who united aspects of the life of the nomad or the citizen in their characters and in their fantastic feats, epitomized the age of the Jāhiliyyah, with its rude juxtaposition of the "raw" and the "cooked".

Arabian legend is ultimately derived from stories common to the Ancient Eastern civilization. Archaic contemporary bedouin stories are concerned with denizens of the thickets which threaten their herds. Yet a serpent, kindly treated, may sometimes lead to hidden treasure, while the gentleness and beauty of a gazelle may be a deception and occasion an untimely death. Mirages, ruins or dust storms may harbour beneficent or malevolent jinn.

Superimposed upon, and sometimes fused with, these tales are cycles of epics and heroic deeds. They are drawn from Rabbinical, Syriac, Persian, Coptic and possibly Indian material. Kings, queens and Merlin-like magicians bear labels of an Arabian stamp. They may live in Syria, Egypt, Iraq or the Yemen, but their quests take them to the four quarters of the earth. The Nile source, North Africa, Central Asia and Tibet are conquered and colonized. The heroes or heroines may be dubbed *Tabābi'ah*, Pharaohs, Amalekites, or have biblical names – Nimrod, for example – or may be queens such as Zabbā', "the Hairy" and Bilqīs, "Queen of Sheba", famous for her intelligence and her "hairy" legs. Their regalia seem extra-Arabian. There is something Iranian, Babylonian even, in the repetitive occurrence of inscribed stelae, fire-towers, ziggurat palaces, talismans, two-horned crowns, Methuselahs, and solar symbolism. One is reminded of prototypes in the legends of Sargon of Agade (*c.* 2500 B.C.), who, as "the King of Battles", led his armies to Asia Minor and inscribed his claim to the cedar forests of Amanus and the "silver mountains" of Cilicia.

As if to indicate some lingering contact with ancient Sumer, Arabic legends of al-Khaḍir "the Green one" retain the personality of the ubiquitous Ut-Napishtim in the Gilgamesh epic, while the tale of the Poor Man of Nippur appears in a transposed manner as "The history of the First Larrikin" in the *Thousand and one nights*. The plot is widely diffused, and Arabian versions of it are probably important channels for its diffusion. Although it is impossible to be sure exactly when and where this fable was first told, it has been conjectured that in the centuries following the downfall of Assyria, perhaps in Persia or Arabia, an Indian tale found in the *Panchatantra*, dating prior to the sixth century A.D., introduced new elements in the *dénouement* of the plot.[1]

Proof of the existence of Ancient Eastern prototypes in the Arabian fable during the Prophet's lifetime is provided by Ibn Isḥāq as he describes Muḥammad's enemies in Mecca; he records:

Now Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith was one of the satans [rogues] of Quraysh; he used to insult the apostle and show him enmity. He had been to al-Ḥīrah [the Lakhmid

[1] See Gurney, "Nippur", and Burton, "Larrikin".

capital in Iraq] and learnt there the tales of the kings of Persia, the tales of Rustam and Isfandiyār. When the apostle had held a meeting in which he reminded them of God and warned the people of what had happened to bygone generations as a result of God's vengeance, al-Naḍr got up when he sat down and said, "I can tell a better story than he; come to me!" Then he began to tell them about the kings of Persia, Rustam and Isfandiyār, and then he would say, "In what respect is Muḥammad a better storyteller than I?"[2]

Possibly late Sasanian works such as the *Xwadāy Nāmag*, the letter of Tansar, and the *Kārnāmag of Ardashīr* were among the sources for such tales.[3]

If Arabian legends have an ancient and eclectic origin, and an indefinite survival, they are also eminently exportable. The Mahrah of Southern Arabia tell a story, vaguely reminiscent of "Saint George and the dragon", about the folk-hero Bū Zayd al-Hilālī. It is a version of a similar tale heard by the explorer Bertram Thomas among the bedouin of the Empty Quarter of Arabia.[4] The daughter of a ruler is tied up as food for a *jinnī* serpent which, if deprived of sustenance, will lay waste the land. Bū Zayd and two companions release her. Then each one takes a part of the night to watch for the monster. During the first third of the night one comrade distracts the serpent by propping its jaws open with a branch. During the subsequent third another comrade entertains it by singing. Then in the last third of the night Bū Zayd slays it by cutting off its head, which he places on the top of the castle wall. The ruler offers his daughter without a dowry to anyone who can prove, by a leap to seize the head on the wall, that he is the saviour of the princess and the kingdom. Only Bū Zayd, initially disguised, is able to seize the head.

How ancient is this tale? It appears to have a minimal connection, if any, with the so-called *geste* of the Banū Hilāl. Furthermore, the Mahrah and the Empty Quarter are in South Arabia, whereas the late medieval Hilālī cycle has a North Arabian bias. In view of so many South Arabian tales of subterranean moist or dry habitations of the jinn, it is by no means improbable that the original of the fable is local, lost in a dim and distant antiquity. It has certainly been diffused intercontinentally, and, for example, reappears in Nigeria and its borders as the legend of the snake-killer of Daura, Abuyazidu, Emir of Baghdad, who married the queen of Daura.[5] Between them they begat the Hausa princes. Certain details in the Hausa accounts and the Arabian fables are identical, even if there has been some change in the sequence of events. Since Songhai tales about Za al-Ayaman (arabized later *jā' min al-Yaman*, "he came from the Yemen") tell of their founder–hero slaying a tyrannical river-god and

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[2] Guillaume, *Life*, 136.   [3] Cf. Boyce, "Middle Persian", 31–66.
[4] Thomas, *Arabia Felix*, 246–51.   [5] See the Arabic text in Salifou, "*Damagaram*", 233–5.

inheriting a kingdom, a link between ancient South Arabian legend and medieval Muslim African tales is virtually certain.

Excluding the Qur'ān, which deals primarily with religious leaders, biblical patriarchs and pre-Islamic Arabian prophets, there are two principal sources which shed light on the earliest corpus of Arabian legend; pre-Islamic poetry and the Persian-influenced *Märchen* collections of Umayyad and early 'Abbasid times. The latter are among the masterpieces of Yemeni Arabic literature.

The *dīwāns* of pre-Islamic verse are full of allusions to folk-stories. Certain wars, like those of Basūs and Dāhis, were a byword in Arabia. The former war, for example, entailed slaughter between Taghlib and Bakr. It was allegedly caused when the camel of a "protected person" was suspected of having trespassed in a *ḥimā* (interdicted pasture), and was shot in the udder. The honour of the owner's protector was insulted, and redress was demanded. The feud escalated and mighty men were slain on both sides.

Legends are also linked to the names of Ta'abbaṭa Sharrā and al-Shanfarā, vagabond poets of genius. They tell of a sword or a *ghūl* (demon) carried beneath the armpit of the former when he was an infant, and of the latter as having slain one hundred men of Salāmān by the skill of his swordsmanship, of a blow from his severed hand, and of a bone of his skull lying bleached in the sand. This bone poisoned the foot of his hundredth victim.

Some pre-Islamic poets allude to legends in a matter of a verse or two. Clearly these stories were on everyone's lips. Sulmī b. Rabī'ah of Dabbah is a representative example. In a lament included in the *Ḥamāsah* of Abū Tammām (d. 228/843), he says:

> Death brought to nought Ṭasm long ago,
> Ghadī of Bahm, and Dhū Judūn,
> The race of Jāsh and Mārib and the house of
> Luqmān and al-Tuqūn.[6]

The vendetta between Ṭasm and Jadīs, in which appears a camouflaged army reminiscent of the march of Birnam Wood to Dunsinane in *Macbeth*, is one of the most famous, widely diffused and varied of all pre-Islamic stories. The tribe of Ṭasm in Yamāmah were almost exterminated at a feast by Jadīs, their rivals. The latter were advised by Aswad b. 'Afar, whose sister had been the victim of a kind of *jus primae noctis* practised by Ṭasm. One of the former, Riyāḥ b. Murrah, escaped and sought refuge with Ḥassān b. As'ad Tubba', King of Ḥimyar, who aided this sole survivor

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[6] Lyall, *Arabian poetry*, 64–5.

to avenge his kinsmens. Riyāḥ b. Murrah warned the king that Zarqā', his sister, who was married to a man of Jadīs, had exceptional vision and could see a rider at a distance of three days' journey. He accordingly advised Ḥassān b. Asʿad Tubbaʿ to order each Himyarite soldier to uproot a tree and bear a branch of it before him as he advanced towards Jaww, the capital of Jadīs. The Himyarī army followed his advice.

Zarqā' al-Yamāmah scanned the horizon and reported to Jadīs that she spied bushes on the march and that there were humans behind it, including a man who was mending his sandal. Jadīs refused to believe her. When the Himyarī king and his men were a night's distance from Jaww, the order to attack was given. The inhabitants were slaughtered. Zarqā' al-Yamāmah was brought before the king, who was curious to know the secret of her sharp vision. Her eyes were found to be impregnated with antimony, which had dyed the arteries. Zarqā' al-Yamāmah died in torment, suspended from a gibbet over the gate of Jaww.

This story is undoubtedly pre-Islamic, but it is impossible to date it with any precision. References to rejected and repugnant marital customs suggest some social function in its intention. To it is attached the colourful march of a Yemeni king in a bush-or a tree-covered terrain. This, together with confrontation of a superhuman being, who is eventually slain, bears a superficial resemblance to the story of the march of the Sumerian King Gilgamesh with his companion Enkidu and fifty volunteers of Erach to the cedar-covered domain of Huwawa (Humbaba), who could hear an intruder at a distance of sixty leagues. The magic power of antimonied eyes is commonly found in popular Arab lore. Probably this whole story is a *collage*, composed over a long period. In it disparate elements have been fused to signal some social or ethnic response to a change of ancient customs, associated with semi-forgotten peoples.

LUQMĀN

If Ghadhī of Bahm and Dhū Judūn are little more than names, Luqmān, a supreme *collage* in pre-Islamic story, is arguably the greatest figure in the whole corpus of pre-Islamic myth and legend. His varied roles as free-booter, man of wisdom, patriarch and king reveal a remarkable ability to survive in popular tales, despite a number of transformations in his personality. He was a Methuselah (*muʿammar*) whose life-span matched that of seven vultures. These birds occur very frequently in world folklore. They are so linked to the person of Luqmān that they cannot be excluded as the source of some aspects of his personality. Sacred creatures were clients of divinities or related to jinn or certain humans. In our culture,

the vulture is symbolic of death, but the vultures of Luqmān – the seventh, Lubad, being the most famous – denoted longevity and superhuman survival. Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 206/821) in his "Book of Idols", mentions that Wadd, Suwāʿ, Yaghūth, Yaʿūq and Nasr – the vulture or eagle – were all just men who died in the space of a month and who later became idols. A cult of Nasr survived at Balkhaʿ in Sheba until the Himyarites were converted to Judaism in the reign of Dhū Nuwās.[7]

Luqmān appears in the Qurʾān in sūrah xxxi. The Prophet conceived of him as a prophetic Aesop who taught godly wisdom to his son. But Luqmān "the sage" (al-ḥakīm) is only one of the many aspects of his personality. Their contradiction and assortment testify to widespread story-cycles of great antiquity. Luqmān climbed socially in pre-Islamic legend: first an Ethiopian slave, next a vagabond or a sage, then a king of the prehistoric ʿĀd, and lastly a virtual prophet in Arabia. This chameleon-like hero for some complex reason enjoyed an impressive longevity in Arabian fable and legend.

Luqmān the free-booter was a very different person. He had a passion for maysir – a game of chance played with arrow-shafts, the stake being the joints of a slaughtered camel. René Basset has conjectured that it is this character who may have furnished the original Luqmān of legend: "There existed perhaps in pre-Islamic antiquity an adventurer noted for his cunning and his adroitness who was at an early date identified with the mythical king of ʿĀd, to whom the legend of the vultures was attached. The Qurʾān, which has made use of the best-known names of previous epochs, employed the name of Luqmān to apply to a man, or to describe saws, adages of general wisdom, and anecdotes, attributed to Aesop by the Greeks. This confusion of the two imaginary beings grew and grew, and it was complete at the time when the fables of Aesop were translated from Syriac into Arabic."[8]

Despite noted dissenters, in Umayyad and early ʿAbbasid times there was a general literary consensus that Luqmān was above all else a pious giant of royal pedigree. He was an ʿĀdī – a general title synonymous with peoples of Arabian prehistory. He did not reject the warnings of the Prophet Hūd sent to his people. Survivor of an appalling catastrophe sent by the Almighty, he was rewarded with longevity and the status of a law-giver over the later ʿĀdīs, who lived as troglodytes. Luqmān reputedly began the construction of the Mārib dam in the Yemen. His royalty did not conflict with his life in an inaccessible cave. A troglodyte king or a vagabond prince were familiar figures in pre-Islamic Arabia.

[7] Ibn al-Kalbī, al-Aṣnām, 6–8.
[8] Basset, Loqmân, LXIX.

The following tale of Luqmān, attributed to Wahb b. Munabbih, furnishes a vivid portrait of his character:[9]

Al-Samaydāʿ went with them [the Banū Karkar] to Luqmān, and when they stood before him, Luqmān proposed [sworn acceptance] of truth and protection. They one and all consented, and he settled them in the land of al-ʿĀliyah [Ṣirwāḥ and Mārib]. He married a woman of theirs called Sawdāʾ bint Imāmah. She was beautiful, and Luqmān was very jealous. So he took her and placed her in a huge cave at the top of a high rock which was inaccessible to all save himself, due to his height and his accomplishment. He used to worship God in that cave.

Once a year at a feast he prayed in the company of men and women. He did so with the Banū Karkar. The men and women were assembled and Hamaysaʿ b. al-Samaydāʿ b. Zuhayr espied Luqmān's wife. He fell in love with her. He said, "O company of ʿĀd, if you do not cunningly devise some ruse whereby I may attain my desire of Sawdāʾ, Luqmān's wife, I shall slay Luqmān, this for sure. Then Ḥimyar will put an end to you." Now he was a rash and murderous fellow. When they realized that if they did not comply with his wishes, he would act just as he said, the Banū Karkar agreed to contrive a crafty plan to unite the two without Luqmān's knowledge.

One of them, named ʿĀmir b. Mālik, said, "You have abused the protection offered and have broken your covenant. How your former state is like unto your latter! There is no indemnity subsequent to trickery and no pardoning after treachery and no trust after a criminal act. You have obeyed a sensual lecher. You have disobeyed and followed the prompting of a devil."

They paid no heed to what he said and followed their unlawful plan...Al-Samaydāʿ b. Zuhayr, who was their lord and master, said, "O Banū Karkar, slay him!" So they slew ʿĀmir b. Mālik. Then they came to Luqmān and spoke to him: "We fear war between ourselves. Would you consider retaining our weapons with you in this cave, so that if we dispute we will have no arms to cause bloodshed nor slaughter of kinsmens?" Luqmān said to them, "Act in this wise." They took the weapons and in the middle of them they concealed Hamaysaʿ b. al-Samaydāʿ. They totally hid him thereby. They gave them all to Luqmān who lifted them up to his cave.

When Luqmān left, Hamaysaʿ spoke to Sawdāʾ, Luqmān's wife, and said, "I am Hamaysaʿ b. al-Samaydāʿ." She released him, and he satisfied his desire with her. She gave him food and drink, then she put him back among the weapons. She acted with him thus, until he slept with her on Luqmān's bed. Then he spat and ejected phlegm on the ceiling of the cave, and there it stuck.

After that Luqmān returned. He was weary and threw himself down on his bed. He cast his eye on the roof of the cave and saw the phlegm. He said to his wife, "Who spat so?" She replied, "I did." "Spit then!" So she spat but could not reach [the roof of the cave]. "But I was sitting up." "Sir up, then!" This she did, but all to no avail. "I was standing up." "Stand up, then!" She did so, but with no greater success.[10] "The weapons, then, are the source of my

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[9] Ibid., LXXI–LXXXI.

[10] The triple repetition of "elevation and debasement" which occurs so often in such tales is found, for example, in that of the poor man of Nippur, that of the exploits of Abū Zayd al-Hilālī, and in later tales of three death-leaps from the walls of the "Copper City".

misfortune." Luqmān hurried to them, uncovered them and brought out Hamaysa'.

He summoned Ḥimyar and asked them, "What is your opinion?" "O Luqmān," they said, "Banish the Banū Karkar b. 'Ād from the land of Ḥimyar, since they are a treacherous and crafty people. Let them not sow cunning amongst us, nor burden us with hatreds, nor bequeath malice unto us." Luqmān said to 'Ād, "Depart from my protection!" Next he climbed the mountain, tied Sawdā', his wife, to Hamaysa' among the weapons which had hidden him. Then he cast them down from the top of the mountain and stoned them. All those with him followed his example. Luqmān was the first who stoned according to the penalty for adultery, and he killed them both.

FOLKLORE AND ARABIAN PAGANISM

Works of prose in the Umayyad and 'Abbasid period retell legends which shed light on religious beliefs of the Arabian pagans. Allowance must be made for later Islamic interpretation or for Persian influence, but there seems little doubt that besides major Arabian prophets referred to in the Qur'ān, there were numbers of religious eccentrics and thaumaturges about whom many tales were told. One such character was Khālid b. Sinān.[11] Fire-worship was allegedly in fashion prior to the Prophet – perhaps under Iranian influence – but it was Khālid b. Sinān who extinguished the fire of the two *ḥarrahs* (lava tracts). Casting his stick into a fire, he exclaimed, "There is the path which leads to God most high. I shall enter this burning blaze, and I shall come out of it with my garments moist with dew." He put out the fire. Again, on his death-bed he said to his brothers, "When I am buried, a troop of onagers, led by a tailless onager, will strike my tomb with its foot. When you see it, disinter me. I shall come out, and I shall tell you all that exists." When he was dead and buried, his prophecy was seen to come to pass. There was, however, violent dispute about whether he should be exhumed, some of the Arabs fearing public outcry at an act believed by many to be sacrilegious. The daughter of this Ishmaelite prophet and patriarch, it is said, met the Prophet Muḥammad and on hearing the words of the latter maintained that her father had proclaimed the self-same message. Such legends as these, incorporating, no doubt, names of historical characters, reflect the tendency of post-Islamic writers to integrate stories of the Jāhiliyyah into a pattern of monotheistic disclosure. Himyarite princes and princesses, for example, were conveniently furnished with monotheistic epitaphs. Copious reissue of older legends often makes it hard to date pre-Islamic material conclusively.

[11] See a version of this myth in Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, IV, 476–7.

Fables of the pagan Jurhumites and their activities in Mecca's shrines, of which they were custodians, are to be found integrated with the records of the Banū Isrā'īl, the Amalekites and other Semitic peoples. Some tales relate to their idolatory. A reference to them by, among others, al-Mas'ūdī has parallels with a widespread popular belief in the transformation of humans into stones, a phenomenon not unlike the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt to mark her disobedience:

Jurhum gave themselves up to all kinds of disorders in the temple of the Ka'bah. One of them went so far as to commit an act of fornication there with a woman. The man was called Isāf, and the woman Nā'ilah. God changed both of them into stones, which later were made into two idols, which were adored as intermediaries between man and divinity.[12]

The Jurhumites were also infamous for their expropriation of the Ark of the Covenant.

The Children of Israel after the death of David and Solomon used to proceed with the Ark. When war broke out, the Children of Israel who carried the Ark cast away its shafts, and they fell. The angels carried the Ark above David's head until he defeated the giants and their people. The Children of Israel continued to march with the Ark until the time of al-Ḥārith b. Muḍāḍ al-Jurhumī, after the death of Ismā'īl the Prophet and after the death of his son and heir Nabt b. Qaydhār b. Ismā'īl.[13] The Children of Israel changed the religion of David and Solomon, and they compounded the Psalms with plagiarized books. They marched to the people of the Ḥaram. At that time they were the Amalekites and Jurhumites. In Mecca were the Ishmaelites. The leader and counsellor in God's religion and the mission of Ismā'īl was Hamaysa' b. Nabt b. Ismā'īl b. Ibrāhīm.

The king of Mecca and its neighbourhood was al-Ḥārith b. Muḍāḍ al-Jurhumī. When the Children of Israel reached Mecca, marching with their helpers who were Banū Isḥāq and the first Greeks of the East from Syria, Jurhumī went forth against them with 100,000, and the Amalekites with 100,000, and they fought them fiercely. The Children of Israel and their allies were defeated. They cast aside the Ark. The Jurhumites and the Amalekites took it, and they brought it to one of the dung heaps of Mecca. They dug a pit and buried it there. Both Hamaysa' b. Nabt b. Qaydhār b. Ismā'īl and al-Ḥārith b. Muḍāḍ al-Jurhumī forbade them to do it, but they disobeyed them. Hamaysa' said to them, " The scrolls of the Psalms are in it, likewise the Sakīnah[14] [Shekinah]." A grievous plague afflicted them, and they could not alleviate their circumstance, whereupon al-Ḥārith b. Muḍāḍ went to the Ark in that dung heap and removed it by night. Hamaysa' took it and kept it, and his heirs inherited it until the time of Jesus son of Mary – peace be upon him.[15]

Certain pre-Islamic figures lingered in popular stories for varied reasons, and at sundry times were to re-emerge transformed, often barely recognizable, in extended epics and romances. Ḥātim al-Ṭā'ī was a paragon of

[12] Ibn al-Kalbī, al-Aṣnām, 6.
[13] Also "Nābit" and "Qaydhar", and other variants.
[14] God's tranquillity, presence or abiding spirit. Cf. Qur'ān, ii.254–50 and Jeffery, Foreign vocabulary, 174.   [15] Webb, K. al-Tījān, 179–80.

generosity, while 'Antarah b. Shaddād became the epitome of chivalry. But two pre-Islamic Yemeni characters, one a tyrant, the other a hero, were to leave an indelible mark on Arabic oral and literary composition. Dhū Nuwās,[16] one of the last kings of Ḥimyar, whose massacre of the Arabian Christians of Najrān earned him a reference in the Qur'ān (*sūrah* lxxxv) and profoundly influenced Arabian history, was a shrewd zealot of Yemeni Judaism. Yet his atrocities were in time to be glossed over through a more sympathetic patriotic view of his exploits, which terminated with a suicidal ride on his horse into the ocean.

Sayf b. Dhī Yazan, his successor and the liberator of the Yemen from the Ethiopians, was always popular. A "freedom-fighter" and gallant, he nonetheless emerges from a somewhat obscure aristocratic background. Tales of his life differ. Some record that he was speared to death by Ethiopian servants. Others allege his conquest of Ethiopia, and this theme was later to be greatly expanded. The celebrated historian Ibn Khaldūn lauded this prince's generosity:

One may compare the gifts Ibn Dhî Yazan presented to the Qurashite ambassadors. He gave each of them ten pounds (*riṭl*) of gold and silver, and ten slaves and maidservants and one flask of ambergris. To 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib he gave ten times as much. Ibn Dhî Yazan's realm, as it was located in the Yemen, was under the complete control of the Persians at that time. His [generosity], however, was caused by his high-mindedness, which stemmed from the royal authority that his family, the Tubba's, had possessed in the Yemen and from the superiority they had once exercised over the nations of the two Irâqs, India and the Maghrib.[17]

For this period of upheaval in South Arabia we have a dossier of Syriac documents presenting the events as seen by a contemporary Syrian Christian, Simeon, bishop of Bêth Arshâm. Two have become generally known as "the Book of the Himyarites" and "the Letter of Simeon of Bet Arshām", while the third has recently been published by I. Shahid, who presents a good case for regarding all three as the work of the same author. In this dossier, Dhū Nuwās – or a character similar to him – was swayed by patriotic as well as religious sentiments to persecute the Najrān Christians as he did. Such a view is supported by Ibn al-Kalbī, who mentions that it was an outrage committed by Christians of Najrān against a Jew that began the conflict. A certain Dhī Yazan, who invited Persian aid, was a leading figure on the Ḥimyarī side. The confusion in the varied accounts, the drama of an ethnic conflict, Quranic reference, all combined to produce both a corpus of tales and a dynamic potential for romance arising out of the events of the period prior to, and during, the Persian occupation of the Yemen.

[16] See Guillaume, *Life*, 13–18.   [17] Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah*, 1, 360.

The reference by Ibn Khaldūn to Sayf b. Dhī Yazan, quoted above, reads oddly from the pen of the writer of the *Muqaddimah*, who, like his predecessor Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), waxed eloquent in debunking the historic substance of so much pre-Islamic tradition, particularly the chronicles which were composed with serious intent during the reigns of the early caliphs and under the Umayyads. Yet, paradoxically, it is this same author in another passage[18] who most succinctly outlines the sequence of peoples and dynasties which was to emerge from a confused mass of legendary and semi-legendary pre-Islamic material:

When the royal authority of ʿĀd was wiped out, their brethren, Thamūd, took over. They were succeeded in turn by their brethren, Ḥimyar. Ḥimyar were succeeded by their brethren the Tubbaʿs, who belonged to Ḥimyar. They, likewise, were succeeded by the Adhwāʾ [Dhū Nuwās etc.]. Then, the Muḍar [North Arabians] came to power.

EARLY FOLKLORE COMPILATIONS AND SCHOLARSHIP

The credit for sifting and arranging these cycles of epics and legendary chronicles must be tentatively given to a handful of Yemeni writers who, particularly under the Umayyad and early ʿAbbasid caliphs, wrote works which were prototypes for ʿAbbasid and later historians, geographers and storytellers. Probably the most famous of these reputed South Arabian connoisseurs of fable was Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. 32/652 or 34/654) of the Yemen and Medina, who allegedly knew the caliph ʿUmar and was at hand to advise at the court of Muʿāwiyah (41–61/661–80). It was Kaʿb, for example, who spoke with authority about oral traditions when the pillared palace of Shaddād b. ʿĀd was by chance "rediscovered" by a cameleer while wandering near Abyan, Mārib or Shabwah in South Arabia. The fabulous city of "Iram of the columns" and its whereabouts was only one item in the store of legendary data at the command of this remarkable Jew. Yet the very existence of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār is far from certain. Historians such as al-Ṭabarī make no mention of him. Even if he was historical there seems little doubt that his name was slavishly or spuriously quoted whenever a storyteller or interpreter of a folk-tale was demanded.

Far more substantial are other South Arabian writers, or North Arabians or converted Persians who turned their hand to the recording of legends. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh b. Wahb b. Munabbih, for example, studied jurisprudence (*fiqh*) under Mālik b. Anas (*c.* 97–179/715–95). To him are accredited many books, including stories of the prophets, tales of Old Testament times (*Isrāʾīliyyāt*) and a book which

[18] Cf. *Martyrs*.

undoubtedly introduced the sagas of the pre-Islamic South Arabian kings
(*K. al-Mulūk al-mutawwajah*). None of these works has been discovered.
Two other South Arabian authors have been more fortunate. ʿUbayd b.
Sharyah al-Jurhumī was invited by Muʿāwiyah to go to Damascus and
recount the tales of the early kings of Arabia. His "Book of kings and
the history of those of past times" (*K. al-Mulūk wa-akhbār al-māḍīn*) was
widely quoted by later writers. His surviving work about the history of
Ḥimyar and their poetic anthologies (*Akhbār ʿUbayd fī akhbār al-Yaman
wa-ashʿārihā wa-ansābihā*)[19] is one of the earliest extant texts of this type.
Like Kaʿb al-Aḥbār's the historical existence of ʿUbayd b. Sharyah
al-Jurhumī is suspect. He is described as long-lived, having witnessed the
war of Dāḥis (sixth century A.D.).[20] yet also having taught and entertained
Muʿāwiyah in the latter half of the seventh century. Yet even if such
improbabilities are entertained, his writings are fundamental for the study
of the artistic and literary flowering of the earliest Arabic romance.

Wahb b. Munabbih al-Yamanī (d. 114/732) has been called the Manetho
of the South Arabians. His record of the Ḥimyarī kings, and other
characters such as Bilqīs, the "Queen of Sheba", and the Jurhumites has
come down through the recension of Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833). This book
of the "crowned" kings of Ḥimyar (*Kitāb al-Tījān fī mulūk Ḥimyar*) is a
rich mine of Arabian fable, legend and garbled chronicles. In it may be
seen the powerful influence of Rabbinical Syriac and Persian lore in both
poetry and prose.

There is also a plausible, if unproven, case to show that it was through
the South Arabians of Fusṭāṭ, the early Islamic capital of Egypt, that
culture contact led to the fusion of this Arabian material with Egyptian
(Coptic or Greek) legends about the seers, kings, Pharaohs and magicians
of ancient Egypt. Characters such as Horus, Hermes/Idrīs, Misraim,
Qahṭān/Joctan, ʿAbd Shams, Shaddād b. ʿĀd and others were to be
increasingly confused, rearranged and chronologically catalogued.[21] The
whole snowball process of absorption of African and Asian fable into
Arabic romance inexorably began as the conquests extended their frontiers
and absorbed multi-racial communities. Is it surprising therefore that
bedouin tales of the Mahrah and the Empty Quarter should be transported
via Egypt and the Maghrib to Niger and Lake Chad?

The court of Muʿāwiyah was also the centre for the transmission of the
earliest Persian and Indian tales, the "One thousand fables" (*khurāfāt*) or
Hazār Afsānah. The ʿAbbasids were to perfect the process, "but the great

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[19] Printed as a supplement to Webb, *Tījān*, and entitled simply *Akhbār ʿUbayd*.
[20] Regarding the problem of the chronology of this war, see Lyall, *Ancient poetry*, 115–16.
[21] See Vadet, "Acculturalisation".

probability is that the pre-Islamic Arab materials competed with the Persian from the start, followed closely by the tales and anecdotes of the early Caliphs and of the Umayyads and their times".[22] An eighth-century translation of both the *Hazār Afsānah* and an Islamicized Arabic version of it looks increasingly likely. These early South Arabians, who were so well equipped to relate the legends of the orient at large, as well as the glories of Himyar, occupy a unique place in this rich and rewarding genre of Arabic literature. To them much is owed by later Arabic romancers.

[22] See Abbott, "Fragment", 161.

CHAPTER 20

UMAYYAD POETRY

The Umayyad period (40–132/661–750) is one of the most interesting and important for the critic of poetry. More than the verse of any other period prior to modern times, Umayyad poetry was in dynamic development and registered, obliquely and directly, the deeper changes in the spiritual condition of the times. This period of rapid development was flanked by more settled periods of poetic creativity: on the one side the pre-Islamic, on the other the 'Abbasid poetry; and there can be no doubt that Umayyad poetry stems from a powerful poetic tradition of high achievement. The verse of al-Akhṭal (Ghiyāth b. Ghawth of Taghlib, d. 92/710), for example, seems to grow out of a well-rooted tradition, developed to a kind of perfection by generations of poets. The verse of a poet like the Qurashite 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah (23–93/643–711) gives a different impression. He wrote experimental poetry that deviated in tone and technique from the poetry preceding it. Nevertheless, although he did not model himself on the pre-Islamic heritage except occasionally, he still built on the achievements of his predecessors, and profited from the strength and malleability of their techniques.

Umayyad poetry abounds with experiments. Many aspects of the poem were explored. New moods and themes were introduced, points of emphasis were shifted, and old motifs reappeared, intensified and sometimes exaggerated. This is a period in which an unrivalled revolution took place spontaneously, unbound as yet by imposed traditionalism.

A NEW WELTANSCHAUUNG

With the great changes taking place in all aspects of society, the inner life of the individual was changing. It was an age of anxiety. The oppressive measures of rulers such as Ziyād b. Abīh and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, the two viceroys who ruled Iraq in 45–60/665–80 and 75–95/694–713 respectively, bore hard on a freedom-loving people unused to a centralized government and the machinery of state. What was now happening to the Arab people was happening for the first time in their history. The cruel treatment of

the Prophet's family, especially the massacre at Karbalā' of al-Ḥusayn and his small group (61/680), must have been a deep shock to the Arabs. The tyrannical supremacy of Quraysh must also have been a source of disillusionment to them, for Islam had promised equality and justice to all. Except with the Kharijites, however, the disillusionment did not take overt shape, but was an insidious pain which expressed itself in the restlessness that characterized the age.

Civil strife was both a cause and a result of the general discontent. Most poets were forced to take sides, and in Iraq especially, a poet could hardly isolate himself from the tumult that surrounded him on all sides.

Early Muslim society was full of tensions. A new hierarchy was emerging, different from the old tribal order and quickly acquiring status as the source of power and wealth. Society was moving steadily towards a more urban way of life. People were coming to depend more and more on the state, whose emblem was the caliph and his entourage.

The sudden thrust of a bedouin people through conquests into a completely different world, under such different banners, also caused a kind of anxiety. It needed more than four generations of Islam and urbanization to obliterate the effect of the pre-Islamic days and ways of the Arabs, and to bring in basically different attitudes, more suited to the spirit of Islam.

However, Umayyad society was far from being homogeneous. It was, rather, a cluster of still disparate cultures. The cultures of conqueror and conquered were as yet unable to feed each other artistically in such a way as to produce new kinds of poetry. This was the time, rather, when the Arabs were trying to rid themselves of a culture arising from their earlier way of life. It was a long and difficult process and occupied almost the whole of the Umayyad period.

An equally long and different process was taking place amongst the *mawālī*, who were learning Arabic and conceiving ambitions to achieve recognition in that most venerated art of the Arabs, poetry. Great poets like Bashshār b. Burd were to appear as a result, even before the Umayyad period was over.

Moreover, there was a marked difference in outlook, mood and interests between the various regions of the new empire. It is for this reason that Umayyad poetry can be regarded as reflecting a great variety of regional environments.

In Iraq, the Arab population of the new towns of Basra and Kufa was formed by the soldiers and their families, recruited from many Arabian tribes. However, there was also a large non-Arab population, some of whom were the indigenous farming people of southern Iraq, others Persian prisoners who had been brought in by the thousand.

Despite the presence of a large number of neo-Muslims of other races, these garrison towns were dominated by the Arabs. The way of life in them was predominantly bedouin, as we conclude from descriptions of this period. However, despite this ethos and the rise of tribal fanaticism, as well as the dangerous situation arising out of the larger-scale civil strife, they still succeeded in becoming centres of poetry and linguistic studies. Basra had a famous market place called Sūq al-Mirbad, which had the same function as 'Ukāẓ in pre-Islamic times. Al-Mirbad was situated to the west of the town, towards the Arabian desert, and was a meeting place not only for the Basrans, but also for the bedouins who crowded into Basra. Aside from being a commercial centre, al-Mirbad was a platform for literary exchanges. People flocked there to listen to poetry being recited, and philologists went there to collect *gharīb* (unfamiliar words) from bedouin fresh from the Arabian desert. The major poets each had their own platform and own circle of admirers. Thus Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and Rā'ī'l-Ibil each had his own circle, and among the *rajaz* poets both al-'Ajjāj and his son Ru'bah had their own following. The poets had their reciters (*ruwāh*) who also acted as messengers giving accounts of what a rival poet had just declaimed. This was the centre of satire in the Umayyad period, where satirical competitions of great artistic and philological interest were conducted. Kufa also had its market place, al-Kunāsah, which was a meeting place of poets and attracted a fair audience, but al-Mirbad was the more important centre throughout this period.

Unlike the garrison towns, Damascus was a land of order and civic discipline. The original inhabitants had been accustomed to law and order and to obeying a ruling class. Mu'āwiyah was the first of the Muslim kings, although he did not use the title. One of the subtlest minds in Islam, he knew the value of keeping up a façade of princely life, and turned his capital into a centre of power and pomp. A court was organized, with courtiers and poets, book-keepers and guards. It was during the reign of Mu'āwiyah that eulogy was established as an essential function of the poet, and highly rewarded.

Hijaz was different again. The home of Quraysh and the Arab aristocracy, it housed the sons and grandsons of the Muhājirūn and Anṣār, and numerous claimants to the caliphate. After the failure of Zubayr's revolution in 73/692, the destruction of the Ka'bah and the ensuing massacres, the energy of the urban population was subtly but surely directed towards the pleasures of life. Money was poured into the area, as were slaves by the thousand. They brought with them their arts and crafts. And in Medina, Mecca and Ṭā'if they found an already urbanized population, ready to assimilate and enjoy the pleasures of civilization.

Medina became a centre of fashion and elegance, as well as of music and song. New tunes and motifs were introduced to Arabic music from Persia and Byzantium, and Arabic music in this period underwent important changes.

However, if the youth of Hijaz were enjoying a pleasure-oriented life, it was because their ambitions had been thwarted and their political aspirations diverted. They turned, or were turned, from the austerity of religion to lotus-eating. In the desert of Hijaz and Najd, one encounters the same frustrations, but since life there could not be adapted to revelry, men developed a cast of mind centred on self-denial and abandon that expressed itself in poetry of tenderness and sorrow. The anxiety of the age thus expressed itself in an attitude of escapism and self-indulgence. Only Damascus, with its formalized poetry and its court-bound poets, is shielded, to an extent, from the wayward, disturbed temper of the age.

EARLY ISLAMIC POETRY

Before proceeding to examine the development of Umayyad verse and its main characteristics, one would do well to look briefly at the poetic situation during the forty years preceding the Umayyad age.

The Qu'rān's preoccupation with poetry was largely a negative one: it was directed at repudiating the accusation, made by hostile Qurashite, that the Prophet was a poet, for the Qu'rān

> is the speech of a noble Messenger.
> It is not the speech of a poet (little do you believe)
> nor the speech of a soothsayer (little do you remember)
> Descending down from the Lord of all Being.
>
> (lxix.40–3)[1]

The poet, the Qur'ān makes clear, is neither a soothsayer nor a man possessed. The assertion of Quraysh that the Qur'ān was the creation of a man possessed ironically served in the end the aims of the new religion. It reflected, as the verses of the Qur'ān clearly indicate, a not very high opinion of the greatest art of the Arabs, linking it with hyperbole, untruth and satanical inspiration, criticism also made of it in the Qur'ān:

> And the poets, the perverse follow them;
> hast thou not seen how they wander in every valley
> and how they say that which they do not?
> Save those that believe, and do righteous deeds, and remember God, and
>   help themselves after being wronged.
>
> (xxvi.224–7)

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[1] All Quranic quotations are from Arberry, *Koran*.

The exception furnished by the last verse does not, in fact, recover for poetry the dignity it loses in the preceding verses, for they imply that poetry which is not committed to the cause of Islam is misguided and misleading. They certainly shocked the leading Muslim poets of Medina, who came scurrying in anguish to the Prophet, seeking reassurance. Eventually, however, this attitude towards poetry helped serve another aim of the new religion, namely to draw the attention of the Believers away from everything except the Qur'ān and the Traditions that grew around it.

The Prophet was sensitive to the genius of the literary expression, and was himself a superior rhetorician. However, he usually refrained from repeating verses of poetry. However, he recognized its importance, regarding it as an activity to be strictly committed to the cause of Islam. When Qurashite poets such as 'Abdullāh b. al-Ziba'rā, Dirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ and Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥārith attacked the Prophet and Islam, the Prophet invited the early Muslims to fight them with their weapons. Poets like 'Abdullāh b. Rawāḥah, Ka'b b. Mālik and Ḥassān b. Thābit, all from al-Khazraj of Medina, responded promptly, and the Prophet selected Ḥassān for this particular task because of his ability to compose biting satire.

The Orthodox Caliphs showed greater interest in poetry than the Prophet, and would discuss it with others. 'Umar and 'Alī in particular were known to have had an interest in poetry, but the poetry all of them favoured was that which embodied noble values and preached a morality in line with the teachings of Islam.

Poetry was now under the surveillance of both religion and the state. This accentuated the difficult artistic problems that arise for poetry in times of rapid change.

Islam started as a puritanical religion, stressing scriptural revelation and the observance of rules more than emotional states. The values preached by Islam were mostly new, grafted on to a pagan background which was not renounced even after a century of Islam.

In the early Islamic period poets quickly discovered that poetry had acquired a new aim. It became a medium for the glorification of Islam and the Prophet, in which a new poetic idiom and a different emphasis had to be acquired. Islam had introduced a new rational order of symbols at variance with the emotional order of symbols prevalent in the poetic heritage of the period. Poets whose logic was rooted in experience were faced with a new logic rooted in rational speculation. They had to construct rational categories which forged connections different from those formed out of emotional experience, and their disorientation was considerable. Like all other members of the community, they were

concerned about their changed world and the way they should look at it. The uncertainty of their reaction is evidenced by their recurrent consultations with the Prophet and his Companions on matters of conduct and attitude. A sudden shifting of one's intellectual focus does not always coincide with a shift in one's emotional attitudes. Poetry has to accommodate all aspects of experience and fit them into a unified whole. The poetry of this early period, however, could not be expected to encompass all the stages of development at once, to change altogether the thematic conventions of poetry and its points of emphasis, to reject its involvement with a deep-rooted tradition, and at the same time to produce great poetry. Hassān b. Thābit, the Prophet's poet and the most prominent pre-Islamic poet of Hijaz, is himself said to have felt the dilemma and to have referred to his incapacity to reconcile truth with poetry.[2] His Islamic poetry, other than his satires, was hardly ever informed by any of the fiery energy, eloquence or music of his pre-Islamic verse. The acquisition of a new poetic idiom, however, was particularly difficult in this period. In the first place, it was a time of great disruption. With conquests, urbanization, great influx of wealth and a new system of beliefs, the whole picture of the world was changing rapidly. In the second place, Islam had furnished its own literary *chef d'oeuvre*, the Qur'ān, whose superior literary qualities captured the imagination of the Arabs and commanded their admiration. And in the third place, poets had to learn to cope with the stigmatization of poetry embodied in the very text of the Qur'ān.

Thus many factors militated against the normal development of poetry. This period cut off the line of steady evolution of the poetic art and a wedge was driven between two flourishing poetic periods, the pre-Islamic and the Umayyad. It created a discontinuity which was a shock to the Arab creative talent, making it unsure of its values, its artistic concepts and its traditional roots.

This purely artistic facet to the poetic situation of the Islamic period is the aspect that has received least acknowledgement by critics and literary historians. Yet it is only by understanding what had happened to poetry with the advent of Islam that we can understand its development in the Umayyad period.

The poetic situation described above had several important results. Firstly, the continuity of poetic tradition was severed. The admission that there was an interruption of certain aspects of poetry is vital for the understanding of the development of Arabic poetry as an *art*. Secondly, the lapse in creativity, recognized by both classical and modern writers on the period, allowed the urban language of the Qur'ān and the traditions

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[2] Cf. Nimrī, *Istīʿāb*, I, 346.

that grew around it to dominate, and established the supremacy of the language of Quraysh. The later development of a poetic diction in the towns of Hijaz during the Umayyad period was to produce an urban, and urbane, poetic language of great malleability, and promote a poetry so simple that it seemed at times to be conversational and discursive. Thirdly, poetry acquired a new direction, becoming linked with the state and Islam. It was not destined, however, to stick to expounding Islamic ideals during the Umayyad period. Poets were to become propagandists of a political régime and eulogy, mostly written for reward, was to become a cult, the most important theme in Arabic poetry.

It is therefore apt to describe this period as a period of interruption on the one side, and of laying of foundations for a different kind of poetry on the other.

THE REVIVAL OF POETRY IN THE UMAYYAD PERIOD

With the advent of the Umayyad period the poetic situation suddenly changed. The Umayyads, with certain exceptions, were not interested in establishing a theocratic state. Having succeeded to power by force, they were compelled to keep it by all available means, and they realized the great role poetry could play to propagate and prop up their authority. The court, therefore, opened its doors to the best poetic talents, and eulogy was firmly established as a major genre in the verse of the period.

The revival of poetry was also enhanced by the re-emergence of tribal partisanship. Poets elaborated and renewed the motif of pre-Islamic *fakhr*, regurgitating accounts of their past victories and achievements in blatant contradiction to Islam's objective of unity and integration among the Muslims.

A third incentive in the revival of poetry was the need to interpret the language of the Qur'ān by resorting to texts from pre-Islamic poetry. The famous Companion of the Prophet, 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās (d. 70/689), is said to have been the first to use pre-Islamic poetry to do this, and there is no doubt (despite later accretions) that he and other ulema did seek the help of the old poetry to interpret the *gharīb* of the Qur'ān and the traditions that grew around it.

A fourth incentive behind the revival of poetry was the need to record the grammar of classical Arabic. The towns of Basra and Kufa quickly became important centres of grammar and language, and there was a great revival of interest in pre-Islamic poetry. A new category of *ruwāh* arose who committed to memory thousands of verses which they collected from the desert tribes.

Umayyad poetry is accordingly a poetry of conflict and contradictions. It is important to the literary and social historian because it is perhaps the truest representation of the inner consciousness of the Arab people during the first century of Islam. To read Umayyad verse only as an expression of political and social phenomena is to misunderstand it and the age in which it appeared.

With the loss of settled values in art and life, a new artistic freedom was born, and the art of poetry reflected the movement of a spirit set free from an established way of life; a painful freedom, because it was still looking for a focus in the age. It was no longer pagan, but it was not yet spontaneously and completely Muslim. Islam still had not completely changed the poets' vision of life and the universe. To most of those poets Islam was a social and political framework, not a deep spiritual experience. In the Umayyad period this situation expressed itself in a poetry of fancy and adventure, of tears and despair, of revelry and mischief, of bawdiness and satire. Except in al-Akhṭal, the desire for order and equilibrium evidenced in pre-Islamic poetry was gone. Seeing in perspective, one feels that the instinctive desire in both Iraq and Hijaz was for catharsis through poetry, for escape from the harsh life of the new era and from the tension of oppression and bloodshed.

The contradictions and conflicts at this stage of Islamic civilization were able to imbue the poetry with a quality of force and ardour. Poetry sprang into vigorous life, reflecting the deep and vigorous movements of the national mind. The exhaustion that followed the massacres and civil wars, oppression and martial law does not appear to have affected the vigour of the people, which seemed inexhaustible. Poetry showed a resilience that knew no spiritual fatigue. The vigour showed itself everywhere: in the pursuit of political conflict, in religious strife, in national conquests and in the quest of pleasure and sensual joy. A surplus energy was spending itself everywhere. It was the energy of a young emergent nation at the moment of self-discovery and self-assertion.

The greatest conflict in Umayyad poetry was perhaps that between tradition and innovation. Pre-Islamic poetry while still at its height had suddenly been attacked and suffered a relapse. Then, in the Umayyad period, it regained its importance for linguistic reasons. But poets did not thereby resume the pre-Islamic poetic traditions.

The pre-Islamic poem of excellence was a wide, entangled mesh of experiences, not a collection of disparate subjects. It incorporated the main elements of nomadic life and transcended them, arriving at universality. Although the imagery and topics were taken from desert life and scenery, a universal vision of life and the human condition subtly illuminated the

poems, accounting to a great extent for the esteem and admiration pre-Islamic poetry has been able to gain and keep over the centuries. Writers who have understood and interpreted the pre-Islamic poem as literally representing life in its external aspects have overlooked the very secret of such a poem's artistic importance. They have failed to realize the implications that underlie this whole system of poetic portrayal of life, how it represents an approach to the stress and strain of nomadic existence and of all human existence, with its continuous drama of life and love and death, the passage of time, the withering away of youth, and of all the rigours of a life hemmed in by the formidable barriers of the merciless desert.

As one generation of pre-Islamic poets came after another, they enlarged the range of their vision, and what must initially have been a spontaneous delineation of the everyday experience of nomadic life grew with the years to symbolize something greater. This development was the outcome of a growing artistic refinement and a speculative interpretation of life.

Important among the themes of pre-Islamic poetry was the journey of the poet, linked with much danger and fatigue, leading him to a powerful dignitary who would compensate with money and gifts all his exhausting struggles. This later became an established poetic procedure in the Umayyad period. Dhū 'l-Rummah was outstanding in his age in that he perpetuated the earlier traditions and themes and developed them to a high degree of artistic sophistication.

However, two things were happening to these traditions even in pre-Islamic times. Firstly, the poetry of the vagabond poets (al-ṣaʿālīk) such as al-Shanfarā al-Azdī (d. A.D. 525) and ʿUrwah b. al-Ward (d. A.D. 594?) rejected many conventions and followed a direct approach to the subject matter. Their poetry was characterized by alienation and preoccupied with the pursuit of booty and adventure. They were preoccupied by the problems of a lawless existence. The campsite preludes (aṭlāl) were usually absent from their poems, as well as the ritualized descriptions of horse and camel.

Secondly, there were signs that these traditions were becoming conventionalized and merely decorative in the verse of some pre-Islamic poets. We see this, for example, in Ḥassān b. Thābit, a town poet whose weeping over the imaginary deserted campsites reeks of artificiality.

The same kind of disjunction took place in the Umayyad age. The period of the Rāshidūn had already cut into the traditions and destroyed their continuity. The leading Umayyad poets such as al-Farazdaq, al-Akhṭal and Jarīr understood and perpetuated these traditions only in their purely descriptive aspects. The depth, and the implicative and archetypal features, of the best pre-Islamic poems eluded them. A basic change in metaphysical

attitudes, moreover, stood as another barrier to the apprehension of these traditions and their metaphysical nature. Necessity was blind in the pagan conception of life and death; the movement of fate was haphazard. There was no purpose behind the work of destiny. With the Muslim poets life became directed by God's own hand. God, for purposes of His own, willed man to be or not to be. The tragic edge of destiny was blunted, and the once living and poignant tradition became a flat convention.

EULOGY AND THE RISE OF AL-AKHTAL

The politics of state directed much of the poetry of the Umayyad period, and the caliphs and their governors encouraged the writing of eulogies that would help to strengthen the state and instil awe and reverence for them. Poets were regarded by the new ruling class as propagandists and entertainers, and from now on they began to see poetry as a privilege centring around and bolstering up their class. However, this did not prevent poets from composing also for large audiences of poetry, and this will be discussed later in the chapter.

The aim of eulogy was to create an image of the great dignitary. The concept of nobleness combined many attributes, high birth and a superiority of character embodying courage, beneficence, clemency, grandeur and sagacity – the archetypal male qualities inherited from pre-Islamic times, but quickly acquiring additional dimensions within the framework of Islam and the grandeur of the new monarchy. Physical qualities were accepted as the counterparts of spiritual attributes, and a new tone with which to address the caliphs became an essential prerequisite. 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān criticized Jarīr's famous verse to al-Akhtal:

There is my cousin, a caliph in Damascus; if I should wish it, he would
    drag you to me as a slave.[3]

Responding to the verse, 'Abd al-Malik commented, "He [Jarīr] has made me into nothing but a policeman; had he said 'If *he* should wish...', I should have had him [al-Akhtal] dragged to him."[4]

Eulogy was becoming the way by which a poet could earn his living, but it did not carry the stigma it has in modern times. Men still did not question the right of the grandees to receive homage and praise.

Among the major poets of the Umayyad age, al-Akhtal is the one whose name is linked most intimately with formal eulogy. He was called "the poet of the Umayyads", and maintained a constant loyalty to the dynasty, eulogizing the caliphs from Yazīd b. Mu'āwiyah, whom he eulogized while still a Crown prince, to Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik, in whose reign he died.

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[3] *Dīwān*, 477.   [4] Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, 880.

Al-Akhṭal was introduced to the court of the Umayyads by Kaʿb b. Juʿayl, an older Muslim poet from Taghlib, al-Akhṭal's tribe. Mazīd b. Muʿāwiyah had been aroused to anger by the Anṣarī poet, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥassān b. Thābit, who had written love poems about Muʿāwiyah's daughter, Ramlah, to annoy her father and family. This kind of poetry, in which the womenfolk of the antagonists were alluded to, had already been utilized in pre-Islamic days by Ḥassān himself in his quarrel with Qays b. al-Khaṭīm, another Medinese poet from the tribe of Aws. By throwing doubts on the honour of the woman, the poet proved the incapacity of her menfolk to protect her. In this instance, Yazīd had asked Kaʿb b. Juʿayl to satirize the Anṣār, but Kaʿb made his apologies and introduced in his stead al-Akhṭal, whose biting satire he himself had already experienced. Al-Akhṭal wrote a short, cutting satire on the Anṣār in which he said:

> Quraysh has appropriated all the glories; there is naught but meanness under the turbans of the Anṣār.[5]

The Anṣār came in protest to Muʿāwiyah, who promised to have the poet's tongue cut out. However, Yazīd interceded on behalf of the poet and Muʿāwiyah pardoned him. The resulting friendship between Yazīd and al-Akhṭal lasted until Yazīd's death.

Al-Akhṭal is the most famous Christian Arab poet before modern times. He was, moreover, one of the three major poets of the flyting genre (naqīḍah). Although he was the most traditional of the major poets of the Umayyad period, this traditionalism did nothing to suppress his individuality. He leaned on the pre-Islamic poets not only in diction and imagery, but often also in the structure of his poems. He is full of echoes of poets like Kaʿb b. Zuhayr, al-Nābighah and al-Aʿshā, and was proud of his tribe, Taghlib, which had won many battles of which it could boast in pre-Islamic days.

Al-Akhṭal was a Christian, and this is important when his use of language is analysed, for he does not seem to have been influenced much by the changed literary idiom furnished by the Qurʾān. It is true that he often included words and images from the new Muslim vocabulary, and utilized Islamic references to enhance his ideas, but this does not testify to the contemporaneity of his poetic language in general. His principal poetic idiom was still pre-Islamic, tied to pre-Islamic poetic conventions.

However, although his employment of the pre-Islamic poetic traditions was generous, his use of the tradition, at its deeper level, reflects a weakening grasp of its more symbolic aspects. He adopted the old motifs and imagery without really being able to assimilate the full artistic experience. This is hardly surprising, for his experience was decisively

[5] Shiʿr, 314.

different. State politics were an element inseparable from his verse, and the precarious position of his tribe in a flourishing Muslim world was another focus around which his poetry orbited. This involved him in a socially committed poetry of a new kind. In such poetry, pre-Islamic traditions, with their pristine force, could no longer be central to the poet's vision of life. The artist in him could not fail to be fascinated by the best in the old poetry's imagery and stylistic methods, but, having lost some of its former implications, it became descriptive rather than connotative.

Thus, although the tendency to invoke some of the formal and substantive aspects of the pre-Islamic traditions in descriptive passages persisted in this age in the poetry of al-Akhṭal and others, this poetry did not have the coherence of the pre-Islamic poem of excellence except in the poetry of Dhū 'l-Rummah (77–117/696–735). Other major poets such as Jarīr and al-Farazdaq wrote largely disjointed, multi-topical poems. Many poems of al-Farazdaq and Jarīr had two or more topics which were virtually unrelated. This disjointedness was later to be corrected by the rule of *ḥusn al-takhalluṣ*, i.e. the contrivance of logical or even causal relationships to fuse the various subject matters of the multi-topical poems into a unity. Such linking elements are not always missing in al-Akhṭal, for his perception of the old poetry was keen. Moreover, modern criticism can often read psychological links into seemingly disjointed multi-topical poems. This is aptly represented by one of al-Akhṭal's early poems, composed after he had fled from Damascus in fear of Muʿāwiyah's punishment. The prelude of the poem was inspired by the poet's visit to Saʿid b. Banān, and he left his place saying:

> How can the physician cure me of my anguish,
> When Barrah is married to the one-eyed Ibn Banān?
> When a shrunken, foul-smelling belly
> Lies on top of the vibrant belly of a beautiful girl.[6]

This is not simply a grotesque allusion, but an expression of genuine chagrin at seeing beauty devoured by ugliness. However, the poet has other worries on his mind, and in the next new section he admits to his fear and anxiety:

> Friends! It is not right to abandon me in a wilderness echoing with the howling [sic] of the owl and *hāmah*.[7]

The owl is a nocturnal bird linked with ruins and abandoned places, and the *hāmah* is a legendary bird believed by pre-Islamic Arabs to come out of the heads of the slain and to search for vengeance. He then goes on to describe his encounter with a wolf (symbol of hunger) and a crow

[6] Ibid., 233.   [7] Ibid., 234.

(harbinger of separation and ruin). They keep him sleepless, and despite his sharp Yemenite sword, they fill him with terror. They compete for the food he throws, the crow gobbling it up before the wolf has a chance to. It sometimes takes flight, and sometimes walks or hops. What freedom this carnivorous bird has, and how full the earth is of hard contradictions! Ugliness devours beauty, and only the fierce and aggressive are able to thrive. The moment of despair, however, does not last, for the poet is driven by fear to flee:

> When I saw the world full of constraints,
> Terror sent me riding on an endless journey.[8]

The usual description of the she-camel follows, and directly after this, he speaks of his ordeal, of the threats received, and of the faith he has in Yazīd. Then follows the vision of drought where even the sand grouse, a bird noted for its capacity to find what it seeks, cannot find water, and abandons its young, their newly hatched egg shells still yellow with yolk. Then, suddenly, the poet starts speaking of a horse race in which Yazīd's stallion wins, which indicates in an oblique way that his sponsor, Yazīd, is one of nature's winners and to be relied upon for help.

The attitudinal, highly personal ingredient which we find in al-Akhṭal's *nūniyyah* is not present in many poems by the poet. He was not involved, it seems, in many predicaments, and death on the whole did not move him. Some poems randomly expose an interesting, jovial and rather mischievous personality, reflecting his love of wine, women and youth. His short *dāliyyah* beginning with the verse:

> We drank and died a pagan death
> Of people who departed before knowing Muḥammad[9]

is an interesting example of his subjective approach to experience, and of his occasional nonchalance.

Al-Akhṭal did not compose elegies. When his great patron, Yazīd, died, his short poem on his death was uninspiring. Even when his son died, he wrote no poetry to commemorate his death. His only interest in the subject lay in his constant obsession with the passing of his own youth and strength.

Al-Akhṭal is one of the most important bacchic bards in Arabic poetry. Although he leaned greatly on the work of his pre-Islamic predecessors, such as al-Aʿshā, Imruʾ al-Qays, Ḥassān b. Thābit and ʿAdī b. Zayd, his poetry on wine is genuine and impassioned. He does not achieve the sophistication of Abū Nuwās later, but Abū Nuwās owes al-Akhṭal a debt

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[8] Ibid.   [9] Ibid., 321.

in his bacchic songs. Al-Akhṭal's personality is portrayed in his delineation of the effect of wine on the drinker:

> He got up swaggering, dragging his cloak; if his soul were in his hands, it
>   would have fallen.
> And he went away; had someone shouted, "Beware of the sword!", he
>   would not have winced.[10]

Description is one of the poet's strongest points. He gives minute pictures from life, often depicting scenes in motion. An example of the latter is his satire on Ibn Badr al-Fizārī, where the image of the fleeing chief is comically portrayed:

> Ibn Badr was saved from our spears by a swift mare, whipped and streaming
>   with sweat.
> Whenever our spears were about to strike him, his long-legged,
>   swift-breasted mare would carry him away.
> Cleaving the desert mirages together, as if swimming in a sea, he would
>   whisper in her ear:
> "I would offer you my mother's life if you kept this up until the
>   afternoon!"
> And he went on making her promises, and she went on like an eagle flying
>   to its nest at dusk, sweat running from her sides like water from great
>   vessels.[11]

Al-Akhṭal often creates extended images that are sustained throughout several verses, and in this he is influenced by al-Nābighah. The following is from his famous rāʾiyyah eulogizing ʿAbd al-Malik:

> The Euphrates, when its waves swell, and uprooted trees float along its
>   length and breadth,
> The summer winds playing on it, and fountains dancing on the crest of its
>   waves,
> Flowing swiftly from the Byzantine mountains, winding its way in many a
>   turn and curve,
> Is not more generous than he [ʿAbd al-Malik] when you ask of him, nor
>   more magnificent to behold.[12]

Al-Akhṭal's other great attribute is the grandeur of the music of his verses. There is a masculine strength in his verses which surpasses that of al-Farazdaq in its capacity to combine with meaning a symphony of sounds which is more rhetorical than lyrical. His choice of words well suits his basic themes of eulogy, satire and fakhr, which require loud tone and high rhythmic pitch. On the whole, he chooses the longer metres, just like his two great contemporaries, Jarīr and al-Farazdaq. Al-Akhṭal was more mindful of weight and sonorous strength then of agility.

[10] Ibid., 296.   [11] Ibid., 130–1.   [12] Ibid., 101–2.

He was not a poet of pathos or the tragic. These nuances of human experience eluded him on the whole, but he dealt with the human condition in its dimensions of fear, pride and joy of life. Despite his basic traditionalism, he sustained a distinctive individuality. The way in which his poetry lingers on in the aesthetic experience of his audience points out his distinctiveness, and scholars have especially sought to elucidate this aspect. His poetry played a complex role in his time. It furnished a poetic language grounded in Jāhilī vitality and strength, without the pedantry of some of his contemporaries. It perpetuated the Jahīlī tradition mainly in its descriptive aspect, using motifs that were rapidly losing their importance. He greatly helped to establish the art of eulogy as a necessary accompaniment to state and political machinations, and also to establish the art of satire, which was to arrive at an important artistic level in this period. The supremely positive quality of his poetry, however, lies in the fact that it was a treasure-house of images expressed in sound and movement.

AL-FARAZDAQ AND JARĪR

Along with al-Akhṭal and Jarīr, Hammām b. Ghālib b. Ṣa'ṣa'ah (c. 24–111/640–729) was regarded as one of the foremost poets of the Umayyad period. Personal circumstances and tribal affinities induced al-Akhṭal to side with al-Farazdaq against Jarīr in the lifelong quarrel which expressed itself in satire, taking the form of the aforementioned *naqā'iḍ*. These will be discussed later, but one must explain here that satire was regarded by critics and poets alike as one of the four basic subjects of good poetry, the others being eulogy, *fakhr* and description. Because the three poets combined in their poetry all four prerequisites, they came to be regarded as the greatest poets of the Umayyad period.

Al-Farazdaq was bedouin by origin, reared among the Banū Tamīm and resident in Basra, where he spent most of his life. He was a rather rough, uncouth man whose life in town did not influence him towards a greater urbanity of behaviour. Like many tribesmen living in towns, he retained the Jāhilī ideals of chivalry, hospitality, generosity, tribal zeal and noble lineage. These ideals he extolled in his *fakhr* and his eulogies, using rhetorical expressions and an oratorical tone which were by nature conducive to difficult and pompous diction. And since the ideals he portrayed were, with some inevitable variation, pre-Islamic, they naturally retained in large measure their former phraseology. However, al-Farazdaq seems to have been influenced more than al-Akhṭal by the changing language of the period, and whenever he innovated or portrayed personal experience, the difficult struggle for the attainment of this new idiom

manifested itself, and can be detected in his rather awkward, verbose and sometimes prosaic constructions. Whenever he consciously strove to prove his verbal dexterity, which happened frequently, his language showed an accumulation of *gharīb*, resulting in a ruggedness and incongruence of style at variance with the more harmonious style of pre-Islamic poetry, a poetry better established in its idiom.

Al-Farazdaq's contemporaries described him as a poet who "chiselled from rock", while his rival, Jarīr, was described as a poet who "baled out of the sea".[13] This points to the ruggedness and apparent strength of al-Farazdaq's style, where the words seem to be fitted to each other like massive blocks laid side by side. There is little of the melodious flow of Jarīr's poetry, or the music of al-Akhṭal's, and he certainly lacked their grand eloquence.

The change in syntactical ordering noticeable in al-Farazdaq's poetry shows a spark of creativity, but mostly reflects only the poet's incapacity to cope with the burden of establishing a new mode of sentence formation more in tune with the new age, while accumulating as much *gharīb* as possible. The passion for filling the new poetry with *gharīb* is greatest at Basra, where the best philologists lived. At its best, this change is seen in such verses as:

> If I should wish, a melodious ivory neck would sing for me over a tender, smooth wrist.[14]

or this:

> When eyes look askance, and the wilderness, running with mirages, dazzles them.[15]

At its worst, this change results in banality, verbosity and flabbiness, camouflaged by grand, unfamiliar words:

> Blame is like that which Nawār gives you early after the night[16]

– a very clumsy and convoluted construction. His verse does not always show an apt choice of vocabulary where the word seems to be inevitable, as:

> She sways to the prayer-house, as if walking on sand with a leg badly broken.[17]

In the following verse, he uses no less than three constructs:

> When Nawār keens, she rouses in me the like of the heat of the flame of hell.[18]

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[13] Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 387.   [14] *Dīwān*, I, 153.   [15] Ibid., I, 372.
[16] Ibid.   [17] Ibid., I, 363.   [18] Ibid., I, 220.

The poetry of al-Farazdaq is a rich record of the events of his time. In this he surpasses all his contemporaries. He entered the arena of public life with a vigorous determination and was a prominent Basran, making friends (and sometimes enemies) of the Umayyad viceroys in the town. He was an ambitious man, proud of his tribe, Tamīm, of his father Ghālib and his grandfather Ṣa‘ṣa‘ah, both well known for their hospitality, chivalry and authority in their tribe. He regarded himself as the defender of the honour and fame of Tamīm in the world. He lived a long and full life, and kept on writing poetry until the end.

Al-Farazdaq's personal life was as eventful and as turbulent as his public life. His poetry records many marriages, at least six and probably seven. Some of his wives seem to have been on bad terms with him, but it was his wife al-Nawār bint A‘yun, a distant cousin of his, who was his greatest source of misery. She seems to have dealt a harsh blow to his dignity and manhood, for his poetry registers a wounded pride at odds with his strong personality. He had tricked her into marriage, and she immediately went to Medina and complained to the then caliph, ‘Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr. Nawār must have been persuaded or made to stay with the poet, for we see her life with him depicted in his poetry. We see al-Nawār materialize as angry young girl, as dissatisfied wife, chiding him for his old age and white hairs, as bereaved mother, as jealous wife, then as the mature woman provoking him to divorce her. He did, in the presence of the famous traditionist al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), then regretted the divorce ("She was my paradise, and I left it"),[19] and compared himself with "a man who had deliberately put out his eyes".[20] He sounds inconsolable in this *rā’iyyah*, which he composed just after he divorced her. This must have been a traumatic experience for him, for after that she haunted him. His hankering for her was endless, and her phantom hovered around him at night. Later, he claimed to have been able to transcend all youthful attachments, except his love for her. He addresses himself in one of his later poems:

> You love her foolishly, but the storms of fate leave no union intact,
> Though you have completed ninety years and abandoned all frivolities.[21]

A poem composed in 96/714 contains a symbolic description of his relationship with Nawār, who is portrayed as a *belle dame sans merci*, alongside his experience with a wolf that attacks a sleeping caravan. Like al-Akhṭal's poem on the wolf many years earlier, this poem is a *nūniyyah* in *ṭawīl* metre and pictures the poet sharing his food with the ever-hungry animal. Al-Farazdaq in this poem does not experience al-Akhṭal's fear of

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[19] Ibid., I, 294.   [20] Ibid.   [21] Ibid., II, 110.

the wolf, but depicts himself, rather, as the wolf's generous travelling companion. It is Nawār, in fact, who is the haunting presence in this poem – treacherous and inconstant (but now middle-aged) Nawār, who had tormented him. She had hastened his old age, "kindling a fire [of anguish and scandal] for him everywhere".[22]

The rest of the poem, on a political theme, seems irrelevant, but in fact confirms al-Farazdaq as the spokesman of the great Tamīm and brings about a sharp contrast with the failed and suffering lover.

Al-Farazdaq was not a poet of tenderness and affection; he did not experience the kind of romantic grief that dominated much Umayyad love poetry. Al-Farazdaq was a sensualist, indeed a lecher. He combined the lusts of the flesh with an adoration of beauty, but his passions were not combined with any veneration of woman. The death of his wife, Ḥadrā', he received coolly, for a woman's death, in his opinion, was the easiest bereavement to bear. However, he retained a deep veneration for the traditional qualities of feminine morals.

He often boasted of success in his adventures with married women, but again, there is nothing here of the light-hearted and warm treatment that appears in 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah's accounts of his adventures with women.

Al-Farazdaq paved a way to emotional veracity, but the emotions he treated truly were not always very deep. His emotion, however, swells with grandeur when he speaks of personal or tribal glory, or depicts ideals of manhood in his eulogies. The same can happen in his satires, where the antecedents of those ideals of honour and greatness are brought out.

His poetry is often informed by a rational point of view, and he sometimes uses too many words, which accounts for the prosaic and laborious tenor of his verse. In an age noted for the predominance of emotion in poetry, al-Farazdaq's unemotionalism might be explained in terms of the intellectual life of Basra, in which he was an eager participant. However, one feels that his natural reticence and lack of tenderness, as well as his keen sense of his own strength, must have influenced this too.

Al-Farazdaq's poetry is more authentically confessional than that of any of his contemporaries. He had the courage, for example, to confess his sins:

For thirty years never did an opportunity for pleasure occur for which I did not saddle my camel.[23]

One regrets that the poet was not able to write with more fervour. On the other hand, had his style been less marked by occasional clumsiness, his harnessed emotion might have been a welcome antidote to the excessive effusiveness of the poetry of the period.

[22] Ibid., I, 330.   [23] Ibid., II, 153.

Al-Farazdaq is regarded by many critics as a traditional poet, but his poetry shows the struggle to break away from these traditions. The overtures in some of his poems have lost their topical relevance and are mere conventions which the poet does not take seriously. The same merely conventionalized usages are to be seen in al-Farazdaq's verses on the horse and the she-camel. This deviation from Jāhilī usage is very important for the study of Umayyad verse, because it points to the tendency of this poetry to struggle towards truth and authenticity as it was reflected in the experience of a different age when most of the poets were living in towns.

Whilst al-Farazdaq's poetry reveals a strong and well-defined personality, and details the events of his life, the poetry of Jarīr b. 'Aṭiyyah (33–114/653–732) reveals a contradictory personality but gives only the broadest outline of his personal history. Despite its apparent simplicity, his poetry attempts to combine conflicting elements, and it is difficult to reconcile those contrasts in one harmonious whole. Jarīr was at once a biting satirist who lampooned over forty poets of his time, exposing them (and sometimes their women) to the vilest attacks imaginable, and a polished lyricist whose love poetry idealized woman with tender sensitivity. His poetry on love and woman ranks among the finest in Umayyad love poetry.

From reading his poetry it is possible to discover some facts about his travels, the caliphs he visited, the high officials he knew, his imprisonment in Medina, his quarrels, the death of his wife and of some of his children, and other particulars, but despite these sporadic allusions to his personal life, it is difficult to discover his real interests and ambitions. He was involved in *fakhr* and tribal rivalry, but the tribe whose honour he extolled was not his clan, Kulayb, nor yet his tribe, Tamīm (of Muḍar), but Qays 'Aylān of Muḍar.

Jarīr's love poetry in the overtures to his poems is noted for its tenderness and sweetness, but he admitted that he had never been in love, a declaration which one can believe because, though tender and sometimes sad, the poetry lacks passionate appeal. His contemporaries knew that he was a pious man, and it is said of him that he would talk to no one after the morning prayer, but would spend the time until sunrise in contemplation and perhaps in reading the Qur'ān. However, he wrote no religious poetry and, as stated above, his satires are not only cruel and biting, but are irreligiously scabrous. Despite the exultant vaunting of his satires, some of his eulogies whine with entreaty for reward. He never achieved al-Farazdaq's social and political status. He came from a rather humble origin, and seems to have suffered at times from poverty. His father had neither money nor status in his clan, Kulayb, which did not enjoy the high

prestige of some of the other branches of Tamīm. He married several women, who gave him over a dozen childen, and he had some concubines, but neither in his poetry nor in the stories told about his life is there any hint of sensuality or deep involvement with women. There seems to be no cause that illuminated his vision of life and the world but his ambition to be a great poet.

An equally astonishing facet of this poet's complex character is revealed by his ability to alternate successfully between two systems of poetic diction without confusing them. He sometimes used a Jāhilī order of syntax and idiom, and at other times a contemporaneous urbanized idiom, bearing decidedly new tones and intonations. This second idiom sometimes contained a conversational phraseology quite different from the simulation of discourse in Jāhilī. Moreover, no formula or explicit rule can be provided to explain all the vacillations between the two systems of diction. For example, he was more prone to use contemporary diction when writing love poetry, elegy and even eulogy, and more inclined to resort to the Jāhilī poetic idiom when writing satire. However, some of his satires are written in remarkably contemporaneous diction and phraseology. He is at his best when in *wāfir* metre. This metre was still fresh and did not carry echoes of great pre-Islamic poets as did *ṭawīl* and *basīt*. *Wāfir* had therefore a great potential for introducing a diction nearer to the spoken language of the Umayyad period. Jarīr felt the freedom which this metre allowed at this time, and utilized it to the full, using it for about one fifth of his poetry. However, even when writing in *ṭawīl*, the metre he used most in his poetry, he would sometimes employ the same syntactical and idiomatic innovations as for *wāfir*.

Jarīr's poetry, therefore, presents one of the major experiments, and perhaps the greatest experiment, in poetic diction in the Umayyad period. Others such as 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah and the majority of Hijazi poets wrote in the new language, but their subject matter was relatively limited, and concentrated on love poetry, which is by nature lyrical and therefore nearer in spirit to the current language. Unlike them, Jarīr wrote much eulogy, *fakhr* and satire, subjects conducive to the reintroduction of Jāhilī diction because of their dependence on pre-Islamic motifs of meaning, imagery and rhetoric. Jarīr's great achievement lay in the fact that he was able to compose most of his eulogy and part of his satire in the new language. In this way, as in others, he flouted all rules. Satirizing the tribe of Taym he said:

> Your father, Taym, is not from Khindif.
> Your black colour arouses suspicion, arouses suspicion.[24]

[24] *Dīwān*, 26.

Eulogizing Caliph Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Malik he said:

> God willed it that you should be caliph,
> You are given power! So ascend the throne and be safe![25]

This is very urban and decidedly removed from earlier usage. Jarīr makes splendid use of the new intonations of contemporary speech, speech very much influenced by the Quranic style, with its repetition of single words and phrases, and of such stylistic devices as the sudden change from third to second person. In the following verses there is simulation of dialogue quite different from that found in such poems as the *Muʿallaqah* of Imruʾ al-Qays and the famous *rāʾiyyah* of ʿUrwah b. al-Ward (d. *c.* A.D. 616):

> I tell my friends as we travel on, while my tears are streaming,
> "Do you pass the deserted camps and do we not stop to greet them?
> I refuse, then, to talk to you.
> Stay on, one day is like another!"
> But still you owe loyalty to your companions.[26]

In these verses his tone changes within the same verse so that it is possible to punctuate not with only the comma, but also with the semi-colon and the full stop. This is very typical of the style of Jarīr and also of other poets such as ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿah, as will be seen later. However, ʿUmar was a city poet, while Jarīr stayed on in the desert of Yamāmah until he was over thirty-five years of age. He came to Basra probably in 71/690, when his tribe insisted on his coming to challenge al-Farazdaq on his own ground. His linguistic achievement is the more remarkable for this.

There are fewer echoes of other poets in Jarīr's poetry than there are in the poetry of al-Akhṭal or even of al-Farazdaq. To read Jarīr is to read the poetry of a new age. Moreover, Jarīr reveals his authentic poetic instinct by the fact that he does not seem to have taken much interest in the philological enquiries of Basra. The poetic interest which led him naturally to the use of contemporary diction also kept him away from essentially unpoetic interests.

The conflict between the two idioms brought to some of al-Farazdaq's poetry a convoluted and awkward style which is absent from the verse of Jarīr. Almost invariably his style runs smoothly and harmoniously. His approach is relaxed and seemingly devoid of deliberation. Most critics would call it "spontaneous". However, this masks a careful choice of words and a subtle interest in the refinements of language and its poetic effectiveness. The essential spontaneity of his poetry arises from his keen sensitivity to the music of words and phrases, and he depends for his musical flow on long vowels and the repetition of single words and phrases more than on assonance and alliteration.

[25] Ibid., 396.   [26] Ibid., 416.

In his satires and in many of his eulogies, however, this change of tone
is not revealed. His language remains loud, pompous and haughty in his
satires, accentuated by the usual vaunting motifs of pre-Islamic *fakhr*.
Many of his eulogies also fail to display his full tonal development, though
it should be noticed that in the poems addressed to the caliphs he
undoubtedly developed the distinctive tones which became the established
mode of address in the eulogy of the 'Abbasid age. His full tonal
development is reached in his amatory preludes and in his elegies, which
arrive at great urbanity and tenderness. This is helped by the silky, lyrical
flow of his rhythms, and by his verbal felicities. His capacity to manoeuvre
a rhythmic flow simulating current speech helps him to achieve on certain
occasions a tone of warm intimacy.

The traditional preludes in Jarīr's poetry are reasserted mainly in the
pre-Islamic motifs of the deserted camp – and of love. The campsite
overtures can sometimes be quite complex and effectively symbolic of the
painful passage of time:

> O, how strange are the deserted campsites and their long-gone inhabitants!
> And how strangely time changes all!
> The camel of youth walks slowly now; its once quick pace is gone; it is
>   bored with travelling.[27]

The traditional description of the she-camel is very limited. Jarīr often
neglects this part of the tradition, and even when he writes about it, he
is frequently sparing in his treatment. New points of emphasis divert this
poet's attention from a real involvement with a tradition that was losing
its significance for the town poets of the Umayyad period. His movement
from one subject to another is almost always abrupt and unrelated, and
a testimony to the fact that Umayyad poetry was still innocent of the rules
and regulations that hampered the poetry of a later age.

Jarīr's poetry does not express any deep philosophical contemplation
on life or the human condition. His approach is emotional and intuitive.
Unlike al-Farazdaq, he is hardly ever confessional, but, unlike him also,
he enriches the vein of emotion in verse, albeit at the expense of reasoning.
His love poetry does not reflect any strong attachment to particular
women. It was, rather, his thirst for beauty, as exemplified in woman, that
largely informed his amatory preludes. His interest in singing might have
given him a further incentive to write love poetry of a high order of
lyricism. He seems to have been writing with an eye on the singers of Hijaz,
who sang several verses for him. Commenting on Jarīr's love poetry,
al-Farazdaq is quoted by Ibn Qutaybah as having said, "How he needs
the strength of my poetry for [a complement to] his chastity; and how

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[27] Ibid., 360.

I need the tenderness of his poetry for [a complement to] what you see in me [of the passion for women]!"[28]

Jarīr said of himself, "I am the city of poetry."[29] His greatest services to Umayyad poetry can be summarized in three ways. Firstly, he developed the language, tone and music of poetry, bringing these elements into harmony with current speech and with the quickly developing art of music and singing. Secondly, he composed poetry for popular audiences. Although he was one of the foremost eulogists of the Umayyads, he did more than any other contemporary poet to popularize poetry and make it a successful vehicle of entertainment for the public. This he accomplished mainly in his satires. Thirdly, it was also in his satires that he introduced, with considerable success, humorous imagery and witty invective. This was a real achievement in view of the tendency of most classical poetry before him to assume a serious, dogmatic and sometimes even a grave tone.

AN AGE OF SATIRE

Al-Farazdaq well realised that Jarīr had been turned from his true course as a fine lyricist and as a love poet by futile quarrels with other poets when he said: "By God, had they left him alone, he would have made old women weep for their lost youth and young girls cry for their lovers, but they goaded him and found him a fierce dog with well-grown teeth!"[30] These quarrels, which were expressed in satires, blasted through the decades of the Umayyad period in Iraq. Jarīr, the lover of beauty, was caught up in the contradictions of his time. The numerous tensions at work on the Arab tribes settled in the towns of Iraq created a need for catharsis. This need expressed itself through a love of sensationalism and an eagerness for entertainment. Whatever may be adduced to explain the Umayyad satires, they remain the strongest expression of a popular need and a testimony to the importance of the people in this period as an audience for poetry. Poetry was not yet the privilege of the ruling classes.

Satirical poetry in Iraq took on important dimensions in this period. It came to be regarded as an essential part of a poet's qualifications, and poets like Dhū 'l-Rummah were regarded as minor because they did not excel in satire and its counterpart, eulogy. The age produced a gallery of satirists in Iraq. The rise of a rich class of dignitaries of state encouraged the emergence of poet–blackmailers such as al-Ḥakam (d. 100/718), al-Uqayshir al-Asadī (d. 80/700) and others who, following the methods of al-Ḥuṭayʿah (d. 59/678), extorted money from the rich and powerful in return for praise. Otherwise, they would satirize them, and reputations

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[28] Ibn Qutaybah, *Shiʿr*, Beirut, I, 377.   [29] Ibid.   [30] Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī*, VIII, 11.

could be ruined by satire. Satire became a vogue that culminated in the
flytings, of which the *naqā'iḍ* of Jarīr on both al-Farazdaq and al-Akhṭal
were the most outstanding. A large number of poets entered the arena,
however, when it was clear that this was a promising theme. When one
of the greater poets recited a new satire in al-Mirbad, it was immediately
circulated among the inhabitants of town and desert, and spread around
the whole of the Arab world.

Flytings were already an established art form in pre-Islamic times, and
were employed in personal and tribal disputes. In the early Islamic period
they became important as retorts by the Muslim poets to the pagan poets
of Quraysh. However, in the Umayyad period they took on a new social
significance which made them a much more important medium of
comment.

Al-Farazdaq and Jarīr, who both belonged to Tamīm, came to be at
loggerheads when a poet from Mujāshi', al-Farazdaq's clan, was defeated
in satire by Jarīr. In his satires Jarīr insulted the women of Mujāshi', who
appealed to al-Farazdaq to defend their honour. The two greatest poets
in Iraq thus began the longest dispute in Arabic poetry. Their *naqā'iḍ*,
numbering at least a hundred, were composed over forty years, and ended
only with al-Farazdaq's death. The *naqā'iḍ* became a vehicle of competition
in which poetic skill was demonstrated. Large audiences gathered round
the poets, each standing in his corner in al-Mirbad, often especially dressed
up for the occasion. The audiences would often break out into peals of
laughter, especially when they listened to Jarīr's invective, which was full
of mischievous barbs and comical imagery. With time these two poets
developed ambivalent feelings towards each other. Each must have
admired the other for his art and resilience in the arena. Several stories
are recounted about their mutual affection, and when al-Farazdaq died,
Jarīr wrote an elegy for him.

Literary historians are not agreed as to the reasons for al-Akhṭal's entry
into the dispute on the side of al-Farazdaq. Taghlib, the poet's tribe, was
often at war with Qays, whose honour Jarīr was extolling. It is possible
that the antagonism between the two tribes induced the quarrel between
the two poets. It is also possible that al-Akhṭal's preference for al-Farazdaq's
poetry was the real incentive for the quarrel. In any event it ended only
with al-Akhṭal's death. Jarīr does not seem to have nurtured the same
ambivalent feelings towards al-Akhṭal as he did for al-Farazdaq, and when
al-Akhṭal died, he satirized him viciously.

Jarīr was the target of many Umayyad satirists. Perhaps it was no
coincidence that Jarir's own satires were generally more popular, and
spread more rapidly among the people.

The history of many of the more important Arab tribes and their battles can be reconstructed from these poems. Their social and political content is very rich. In this they are a faithful continuation of pre-Islamic satires and poems of vaunting. Artistically, however, they developed the technique to a great degree. Jarīr believed that satire must be funny, and his satires were faithful to his theory, despite their tendency to be foul-mouthed and scabrous.

Umayyad satirists did not adhere to "truth" in the vices they exposed. Very often they exploited a rumour, or a slight incident related about their antagonist and his tribe, and enlarged it to grotesque dimensions, giving it a lewd, or at least a degrading, interpretation. Thus the fact that al-Farazdaq's grandfather had had slaves who worked as blacksmiths was used by Jarīr as an excuse to call al-Farazdaq's noble family "a family of blacksmiths", a low caste in Arabia. Jiʻthin, al-Farazdaq's sister, known for good character, was the victim of another incident. Al-Farazdaq had accosted a girl from another tribe, which retaliated by sending one of its men, who surprised Jiʻthin and touched her shoulder insultingly. Jarīr spent his life describing, in one poem after another, Jiʻthin's sensual orgies. Sometimes the poet would invent an accusation which everybody would know to be a fabrication, as when al-Farazdaq accused Jarīr of necrophilia. Such satire, based on untruth, loses its real effect as satire, becoming a kind of comical lampoon. Al-Farazdaq was mortally frightened of any new rumour about himself that might be exploited by Jarīr, the scandal-monger. Jarīr's life, on the other hand, had little to attract rumour. It was a rather quiet, humdrum sort of life. Al-Farazdaq therefore either invented rumours, such as the afore-mentioned necrophilia, or sodomy, or taxed Jarīr with his humble origins. Jarīr's political vacillations from the Umayyads to the Zubayrids, then back to the Umayyads after the annihilation of Ibn al-Zubayr, were little exploited by al-Farazdaq. The enigma of his support for the tribe of Qays, which was not his own, induced al-Farazdaq to accuse him of taking bribes from them, but it was not exploited as much as it could have been.

Characterization was an important element of those satires, but once the original caricatures were established, they remained static. This is perhaps the gravest artistic fault of the naqāʼiḍ. When new victims appeared, they were added to the assembly of rogues and were tarred with the same brush. Only al-Akhṭal had the added "fault" of being a Christian, which made him and his tribe even more vulnerable to the barbs of Jarīr. Umayyad satires, moreover, have the utilitarian moral rules of satire in general, which do not usually treat love and death seriously. Love is turned into sexual pathology, death into an occasion for felicitation. Jarīr's unrestrained glee

at al-Akhṭal's death expressed itself in crude abuse of the dead poet. Al-Farazdaq's satire on Jarīr's dead wife, Khālidah, is even cruder. This was the retort to Jarīr's tender elegy on her.

The lewd nature of the *naqāʾiḍ* is again in line with the nature of satire, in which women's sexuality is a perennial topic. In Umayyad satires the womenfolk of one's rival are pictured as lustful, incestuous and often depraved, with nymphomaniac tendencies. The men are equally depraved. They are presented as lecherous and incestuous, sometimes homosexual, or as indulging in onanism. Some of the pictures are comical, but on the whole they are excessively gross and obscene. Al-Farazdaq and Jarīr (al-Akhṭal was far less lewd) show an obsession with what was physical and sexually obscene. They cross the frontiers of satire into pornographic fantasies that arrive at absurdity.

Obscenity was rare in pre-Islamic times. In the early Islamic period, the famous *rājiz* (a poet who writes only in the *rajaz* metre), al-Aghlab al-ʿIjlī (d. 21/742), composed obscene poems. Ḥassān b. Thābit, satirizing Quraysh, poured forth the most venomous accusations of adultery on Hind b. ʿUtbah, Muʿāwiyah's mother, and other women of Quraysh. The sensuality of women as depicted in the Umayyad satires, however, is far more grotesque, and repeated with greater insistence. It lacks humour, but it must have been well received by Umayyad audiences.

The unity of form and content is never more successfully achieved than in the Umayyad satires written in the classical two-hemistich, monorhymed form. The division of the verse into two equal, or quasi equal, hemistichs with a caesura at the end of each (obligatorily at the end of the second hemistich) gives scope to the formation of bursts of the short sentences best suited for satire. These sentences frequently divide themselves syntactically according to the length of each hemistich. The sentences are balanced, and a complete statement within the confines of the two-hemistich verse is achieved. The rhyme, generally of a sonorous nature, rings loudly at the end of the verse, securing a final climax to the statement. The result is usually a concise unit, often epigrammatic.

The power of these satires lies in their imagery. Although it is often crude, it can be vivid and comical. Its deliberate simplicity gives it immediate effectiveness, for it brings out salient contours quickly to the ear. Al-ʿAbbās b. Yazīd al-Kindī, satirizing Jarīr, says:

> Banū Tamīm got angry with you, but their anger could not hurt even a fly;
> If a crow should witness the vices of Banū Tamīm, it would go white.[31]

31 Ibid., VIII, 20.

Jarīr, satirizing the tribe of Taym, says:

> If you should meet the tribe of Taym with their slaves, you would ask which of them were the slaves.[32]

Umayyad satire employs two different dictions. Contrary to the general rule of satire, which tends to approach current, everyday language for its effectiveness, it is often pedantic and steeped in pre-Islamic diction. Jarīr jumps with agility between the two dictions. His famous satire on al-Rā'ī 'l-Numayrī, which was written overnight in a state of extreme agitation, is simple and unpedantic, and had a wide circulation. However, the inability of the Umayyad poets to resort wholly to current language in their satires (which would have been the instinctive thing to do) is due to the fact that these satires were always combined with vaunting, and vaunting was, in its spirit and subject matter, a pre-Islamic motif, and accordingly tended to remain fixed to the idiom of the past. Umayyad satires, particularly *naqā'iḍ*, were therefore a mine of linguistic information, and there has arisen around them a whole critical and linguistic literature.

IDEOLOGICAL POETRY

The political poetry of this age ran in two main streams. In the first there was the poetry composed in support of the Umayyad régime. This was mostly eulogy; it was deliberate, artistically polished, pompous in tone, and included a great deal of tribal *fakhr* based on the feuds and rivalries of the Arab tribes. This was also a direct continuation of pre-Islamic tribal vaunting, and was characterized by a repetition of pre-Islamic *fakhr* motifs, and the assertion of the same tone and attitudes. The language of this poetry shows only mild, inevitable variations on the language of pre-Islamic tribal poetry.

In the second place, there was the poetry of the religious and political factions, the Shī'ah, the Khawārij, the Zubayrids and others. This was usually a poetry of ideology. It responded to events and reflected the moral, emotional and sometimes intellectual attitudes of its protagonists. Most importantly, it was a poetry that treated new subject matter and situations. It was not connected with the poetic traditions of the previous age. Because it reflected new viewpoints and experiences that were directly related to current events, it employed for the most part the language of the day, a language characterized in general by vitality, simplicity and, except for some Shī'ī obliquities, directness.

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[32] *Dīwān*, 130.

The poetry of the Khawārij (that of al-Ṭirimmāḥ being an exception) is remarkably free from links with earlier poetic traditions. The Khawārij lived with danger, and fought with courage and determination. They were passionate in their beliefs, and they expressed their viewpoints with ardour and enthusiasm. Their subject matter concentrated on the praise of the two qualities of courage and piety, and expressed a profound desire to die for the cause and thereby win everlasting bliss.

Kharijite poetry is free from eulogy of the ruling class and from tribal and racial prejudices. It is the purest example of an Islam-oriented poetry. Most of it was written as short pieces, and the old structure of the Arabic poem with its amatory prelude (nasīb) and its desert traditions was brushed aside as irrelevant. This was a poetry of experience and urgency, reflecting the bitterness of their life, their isolation and the chill of the surrounding world which, according to their faith, should have been united in sublime harmony. The poetry of poets such as Qaṭarī b. al-Fujā'ah (d. 79/698) and 'Imrān b. Ḥaṭṭān (d. 84/703) cannot fail to impress the modern reader by its earnest tone, its sincerity and directness, and above all by its expression of a deep spiritual experience.

The Shī'ah had numerous poets, but it was al-Kumayt b. Zayd (60–126/679–743) who was their most prominent poet in the Umayyad period. He was an adherent of the moderate Zaydī sect, so called after Zayd b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, who became a claimant for the caliphate in the later Umayyad period. Because of Umayyad oppression, the Shī'ah allowed their members to adopt the principle of dissimulation (taqiyyah) which gave a dispensation from an overt adherence to their religious principles in times of coercion. Al-Kumayt was, therefore, able to eulogize the Umayyads after a bitter experience of imprisonment and threat of mutilation and death. However, when Yūsuf b. 'Umar al-Thaqafī was appointed ruler of Iraq in 120/737, he persecuted the Shī'ah and killed Zayd b. 'Alī. Al-Kumayt was desolated, and satirized Yūsuf. When he later attempted to appease Yūsuf in a eulogy in 126/743 he was killed by his guards as he stood declaiming it to him.

Perhaps the most important verses of al-Kumayt are his Hāshimiyyāt, poems written in praise of the Hashimites, the Prophet's family. In these poems, some of which are very long, al-Kumayt combines thought and emotion, each gaining ascendency in turn. Sometimes, he tries to argue the cause of the Hashimites and prove their right to the caliphate in logical terms. In such poems, or verses, his language can be flat and prosaic. However, even in such pieces he can burst into a passionate declaration of his loyalty and devotion to the Hashimites:

If I die, I do not die with my soul divided, doubtful, blinded or ignorant;
My sorrowful soul aches for them [the Hashimites] out of a love that
   annihilates the appetite.[33]

In one of his *Hāshimiyyāt*, a *'ayniyyah*, he is inconsolable about the destiny
that befell the Hashimites, describing his sorrow as deeply ingrained in
his heart. His defence of their usurped rights, is a mixture of passion and
rationalism. He attacks the Umayyads with unrestrained fury in a fierce
spirit of dissidence and opposition. They are kings of evil, heretical,
cruel and oppressive tyrants. When, he asks, will this long suffering
end?

Al-Kumayt, however, in adopting the method of intellectual reasoning,
was creating a poetic technique. Had he not become interested in the
philological activity in the Iraqi towns and been determined to follow the
vogue of such poets as al-Farazdaq and Ru'bah, he might have secured
through his efforts a basic change in the poetic diction. He was born in
the vicinity of Kufa and brought up in the town itself, but his knowledge
of *gharīb* was not spontaneous. He is known to have asked Ru'bah for
words of *gharīb*, which he subsequently included in his verse, and he is
quoted as having said, "When I compose direct, simple verses, I put them
aside until I find some difficult words and use them."[34] Despite
such statements his poetry remains simple and colloquial, as does all Shī'ī
poetry.

Long before Abū Nuwās protested against the desert traditions and
amatory preludes of early poetry, al-Kumayt had rejected them:

Why does sorrow return to you, when you are neither in love nor
   afflicted...
Neither sad for women travelling away, nor crying over campsites forsaken
   long ago;
The abandoned campsites never answered him who enquired of it [about its
   old dwellers], nor did it weep for those who departed.[35]

In al-Kumayt's poetry and in that of other Shī'ī poets of this period, three
important traditions are established. Firstly, there is the poem of mourning,
which was to become a most important part of Shī'ī literature and to last
down to the present time. Secondly, there is the religious eulogy which
enumerated the great qualities (*manāqib*) of the Hāshimites, which, even
at this early stage of its history, had become highly ritualized. Thirdly, there
is the guilt poem, its importance stemming from the fact that guilt had
never before been a vital element in Arabic poetry, nor in the Arab

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[33] Kumayt, *Hāšimijjāt*, 23.
[34] Marzubānī, *Muwashshah*, 303.   [35] Kumayt, *Hāšimijjāt*, 74.

personality. The guilt in these poems is both subjective and objective. Personal regret and private sorrow mingle with a general guilt and shame which Shī'ī Muslims feel at the death and persecution of the Prophet's family. Perhaps the role which the Iraqis played in the defeat of 'Alī and his progeny, especially in the massacre at Karbalā', and their failure to come to the rescue of the Hashimites (such as al-Ḥusayn and his grandson, Zayd b. 'Alī) at crucial moments contributed largely towards their general feeling of responsibility and regret. However, it is the translation of this general feeling into a personal sense of guilt and failure that lends to this poetry a greater complexity and depth, and introduces into it new horizons of meaning and attitude.

Umayyad "rajaz"

Pre-Islamic *rajaz* was not able to arrive at the sophistication of the other Arabic metres such as *ṭawīl* and *basīṭ*, the two metres used most in classical poetry. In pre-Islamic times *rajaz* pieces were short, written in a few hemistichs. This metre was used mostly in popular verse and was often extemporized. It was used in composing for everyday purposes: in dance rhymes, when drawing water from wells, in *ḥidā'* (songs sung to prod on camels); but also in battle. The annals of the Islamic conquests are full of short *arājīz* (songs in *rajaz* metre) extemporized by the warrior as he dashed into attack – a continuation of pre-Islamic battle *arājīz*. There were several qualities common to all pre-Islamic *arājīz*: they were spontaneous, popular, extemporized (by a group of people, it would seem), and, most importantly, they often provided an accompaniment to physical activity.

In the pre-Islamic period the *rujjāz* attempted to elevate the status of this everyday metre. The first *rājiz* to make this attempt was al-Aghlab al-'Ijlī (d. 21/642), who composed longer *arājīz*. His work was taken up by such *rujjāz* as al-'Ajjāj, 'Abdullāh b. Ru'bah of the Sa'd clan of Tamīm (d. 90/708). Al-'Ajjāj wrote very long *arājīz* and employed *rajaz* for subjects formerly treated only in other metres. He was a bedouin and stayed in the desert until he was a mature man. He came to Basra when his famous son, Ru'bah (d. 145/702) was already a young man, and composing *arājīz* like his father. Both father and son became famous for the vast collection of *gharīb* included in their *arājīz*. Moreover, neither would hesitate to invent words or coin new words from old, in order to give precise meaning to their intention. They had a great mastery of the language with all its archaic, obsolete and specialized vocabulary. They and other *rujjāz* also included in their poems some Persian words.

Another *rājiz*, a contemporary of Ru'bah, was Abū 'l-Najm al-'Ijlī (d. 130/747), who wrote one of the most famous *arājīz*, describing the camel,

of the period at the demand of the caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik. When he recited it in al-Mirbad in front of Ru'bah, the latter called it *Umm al-rajaz* ("the mother of *rajaz*"). This *urjūzah* well deserves its fame, for it is permeated by a spirit which reminds one of Dhū 'l-Rummah's passionate approach to the description of the desert and its animals.

Pre-Islamic and Umayyad *rajaz* was written in single hemistichs of three feet each. The basic foot in all *rajaz* is ‒‒◡‒ (*mustafʿilun*), but it can undergo several transformations by elision. The last foot in the hemistich can also become *faʿūlun* or *mafʿūlun* (◡‒‒, ‒‒‒), giving this metre an interesting variety of rhythmic and musical effects. Each hemistich in pre-Islamic and Umayyad *rajaz* was rhymed, and a sustained single rhyme was used throughout the *urjūzah*. The recurrence of the rhyme at the end of every hemistich meant that there was an obligatory and restrictive caesura at the end of every three feet. This gave this metre its most distinctive nature. It also gave it its restrictive character and its main difficulty. So long as this artificial arrangement was adhered to, the difficulty was insurmountable, and this was one of the reasons why this metre continued to be differentiated from other verse in this period. The sustained rhyme at the end of every hemistich divided the composition into short units, usually syntactically independent.

The popular origin of the *rajaz* could have been a vital incentive for Umayyad *rujjāz* to compose their *arājīz* in the current language of the period. It was a mobile metre. It carried fewer echoes of former poets and of the motifs of the other metrical formations. Its staccato construction, lacking the facile musical flow of other metres, was, moreover, less prone to perpetuate the poetic idiom of previous generations of *rujjāz*. It was, therefore, capable of being composed in any diction which the poet was inclined to use, whether it was current speech or in a mode replete with obsolete words. Umayyad *rajaz* did both. Jarīr, for example, used the two. His little *urjūzah* on his son Bilāl is a lovely example of the use of a simple language, which, nevertheless, sustains a certain degree of elegance:

> Bilāl was born of an honest mother; [though] his maternal uncle is not the
>   equal of his paternal uncle.
> His fragrance heals headaches; his embrace expels worries,
> As if he were bathed in musk; no Muslim should blame him;
> He is firm in managing things, and lofty of aspirations; a sea of seas, his
>   patience great;
> He solves problems, and never complicates them; our souls and our goals
>   are one.[36]

Abū 'l-Najm al-'Ijlī arrives in some of his short *arājīz* at a comical, rather

[36] *Dīwān*, 437.

vulgar, representation of Umayyad life and mentality. In the following he talks about his daughter Ẓallāmah:

> Ẓallāmah, the sister of Shaybān, is like an orphan, although her parents are still alive;
> Her head is full of lice; her legs are naught but threads;
> That's a girl who would frighten even the devil.[37]

It is in such *rajaẓ* and other poetry pieces that the everyday Umayyad language can be sought.

However, Umayyad *rujjāẓ* were greatly inclined to respond to the insatiable linguistic needs of the philologists. They found it desirable to include a vast assortment of *gharīb* in their *arājīẓ*. This was due not only to the relative freedom of this metre from the shackles of the past, but also to its nature, which encouraged the inclusion of words derived from a quadri- rather than tri-radical basis, despite their relatively bare occurrence in the language as a whole. In one of his long *arājīẓ* rhyming in *y*, al-ʿAjjāj uses such words liberally, many of them being derived from quadri-radical roots, such as *daghfalī*, *daghmarī*, *shaghẓabī*, *dawsarī*, *ẓanbarī*, *shawdhabī*, *ʿudmulī* and *ʿajrafī*. He has, moreover, many more words of the same pattern or of similar patterns, derived from tri-radical bases: *jawlānī*, *yamʾūdī*, *rajrājī* and *daḥdāḥī*.[38] To give the meanings of such words, which are rare and obsolete and rather outlandish on the whole, would serve no purpose, for it is the pattern that is interesting.

The rhythms of this metre, moreover, had not as yet been able to acquire a harmonious flow. It accordingly attracted words with many consonants rather than long vowels, and in this the metre seemed to dominate the poet, rather than the other way around. *Rajaẓ* had yielded itself readily to the colloquial idiom of the various tribes in pre-Islamic times, but it was not used for high poetic purposes. As a consequence, the verses tended to remain prosaic. When *rujjāẓ* in the Umayyad period started using this metre for purposes formerly restricted to other metres, such as eulogy, description and *fakhr*, a new hope for *rajaẓ* arose. This hope, however, was shattered when this metre was discovered to be one into which abstruse words could be fitted. These obstructed the flow of music and there was born, in the revived *rajaẓ* of this period, a countereffect which militated against the ambition of Umayyad *rujjāẓ* to raise this metre to a high poetic level. In later ʿAbbasid times, *rajaẓ* deteriorated and came eventually to be used mainly in didactic poetry. It was not revived and brought to a high artistic level until the fifties of the twentieth century.

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[37] *Aghānī*, x, 165.   [38] *Dīwān*, I, 480ff.

Moving on to Hijaz, we enter a new realm of poetic creativity, for the main contribution of the Hijazi poets revolved around women and love. Umayyad love poetry in Hijaz has been analysed over and over again by modern Arab writers, but most of these interpretations give a purely social and political explanation for this poetry, reducing the reasons for its emergence to the simple assertion that the region was politically impotent whilst it enjoyed affluence, luxury and the advantage of an important revival in music and song.

However, there are other considerations to take into account. Hijazi love poets were not altogether contemporaries. The earliest among them, such as 'Urwah b. Ḥizām (d. 30/650), Qays b. al-Mulawwaḥ, known as al-Majnūn (d. c. 68/688) and Qays b. Darīḥ (d. 68/688), lived during the more turbulent days of Hijazi politics.

Secondly, a study of the lives of several Hijazi poets in this period shows that they were not without political ambitions. 'Ubayd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt (d. 85/704) was a committed Zubayrid, and moved to the eulogy of the Umayyad caliphs only after the death of 'Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr in 73/693. During his Zubayrid phase he used his great gift for writing love poetry to satirize the Umayyads by writing love songs on their women. As has been mentioned before, this idea was based on a tradition of love satire resorted to in pre-Islamic times by 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥassān and by the two Medinese poets, Ḥassān b. Thābit al-Khazrajī and his adversary, Qays b. al-Khaṭīm of the tribe of Aws. The same satirical form was used by other Umayyad poets such as al-Aḥwaṣ al-Anṣārī (d. 105/723) and al-'Arjī, a descendant of the caliph 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (d. 120/738). Another Umayyad poet, Kuthayyir 'Azzah (d. 105/723), a Shī'ī extremist of the Kaysāniyyah sect, although conforming to the policy of dissimulation (taqiyyah), eulogized the Umayyads. It is impossible to regard any of these poets as apolitical, although they were more interested in the theme of love. The explanation that the rapid development of love poetry in Hijaz was due simply to the fact that the people of this region were not involved in politics is therefore a fallacy. Thirdly, in the Umayyad period not only Hijaz but the whole Arab world was interested in the theme of love. Love was one of Jarīr's more important themes. It was also a major theme in the poetry of Dhū 'l-Rummah (d. 117/735), far away in the desert of al-Dahnā', and of Yazīd b. al-Ṭathriyyah (d. 126/744) in the desert of Yamāmah. In Damascus, the caliph Walīd b. Yazīd wrote on love and wine, and the theme of woman was one of the themes in the treatment of which al-Farazdaq was at his most original.

The concentration of love poetry in Hijaz, however, remains a phenomenon to be explained. This can be done in terms of several of its salient features. Firstly, Hijaz was socially a fairly settled region. It was comparatively free from the direct involvement with the tribes asserting their position and prestige in new surroundings, as was the case in Iraq, Persia and in the vicinity of Damascus. Hijaz had more leisure than the new provinces and could more happily turn its attention to poetry on the topic of love and women.

Secondly, Hijaz's loss of its former status as the centre of Arabian political life must have caused a reaction which might, in turn, have been expressed by amatory romanticism. However, one must remember that this was a period of anxiety for the whole Arab people and that this anxiety everywhere expressed itself in attitudes to love, in rebellious self-assertion and in satire. It was an age when the emotion needed to be released after a period of enforced abstinence, decades of war, abrupt changes in life-style and inevitable changes in art forms. A romantic spirit, which found release in bawdiness and revelry in Iraq, found in Hijaz and elsewhere a kind of necessary release in eroticism, sometimes pleasure-oriented, sometimes self-annihilating. Unlike institutions based on abstract principles, love is not a historically transient phenomenon, but a durable and concrete feature of the human condition. However, the expression of amatory themes has its own history, flourishing in certain periods, dwindling in others. Love in literature sometimes involves a totality of relations; sometimes it is frugally defective in passion, or concentrates solely on physical aspects. In its changes of attitude, emphasis and depth from century to century, such literature seems to undergo its own internal transformations. We have only to bring to mind Platonic love in ancient Greece, courtly love in medieval Europe, and in Umayyad times, 'Udhrī love.

Thirdly, the long-urbanized society in Hijaz furnished a fertile ground for the urbane arts of singing and song-writing. Indeed, one can see that in all regions, Umayyad poets, with the exception of Dhū 'l-Rummah and some others, were writing for immediate consumption as entertainment of this kind.

Fourthly, we have the possibility of the emergence of a poetic vogue which caught on. Since it eludes rational categorization, this is sometimes overlooked by critics who strive to allot social, political and economic preconditions to every literary vogue. A vogue, however, has an element of serendipitous excellence which transcends environmental and historical conditions.

A concentrated reading of Hijazi amatory literature cannot fail to confirm the idea of a "fashion" or "vogue" accounting in part for the

rapid development of Umayyad love poetry and of a genre of stories of love. These stories told of failed lovers who loved unto death, and who were characterized by loyalty, devotion and self-sacrifice. Though the origin of this tale and of the poetry that accompanied it lies in pre-Islamic times with such poets as al-Muraqqash al-Akbar, ʿAwf b. Saʿd (d. A.D. 550) and al-Muraqqash al-Aṣghar Rabīʿah b. Sufyān (d. A.D. 570), the genre arrived at its peak only in the Umayyad period, and the stories of Majnūn-Laylā and the ʿUdhrī lovers have become legendary. It is therefore appropriate to think that the appearance of such stories as that of al-Majnūn, though based on an already existent tradition, started a fashion for a genre of love literature that proved to be enormously popular. The appearance of a poet like ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿah must also have started a vogue for a Don Juan-like personality as expressed in the popular poetry of the Hijazi towns. It would seem, therefore, that the preoccupation with love as a theme in Hijazi literature is accounted for by several factors, not all of them sociologically based.

Another important feature of Hijazi love poetry is the fact that it flourished in two manifestations: the urban love poetry of which ʿUmar, al-Aḥwaṣ and al-ʿArjī were important protagonists, and the ʿUdhrī love poetry which flourished in the desert and of which Jamīl b. Maʿmar (known as Jamīl Buthaynah, d. 82/701), Kuthayyir ʿAzzah and the afore-mentioned Majnūn-Laylā and Qays b. Dharīḥ were the most famous. Arab writers on the subject regarded this urban love poetry as lecherous, or, at its best, as realistic. It spoke of many loves, of illicit adventures, of great amatory activity. The second type was chaste, pure and tender, and concentrated on one beloved. Writers on the subject saw the difference as resulting from the contrast between city and desert life, the first merry, affluent, with easy access to slave girls; the second poor, sad, helpless and dominated by the virtuous spirit enjoined by Islam. This, however, is only partly true. Urban poetry, in most of its examples, was not necessarily loose. It mirrored a greater freedom in relations with women, but it was seldom licentious. In fact, the most licentious love poetry of the period was composed not in Hijaz but in Iraq, and not by an urban poet, but by one who had strong bedouin roots, namely al-Farazdaq. This proves that a bedouin background was not a passport to chastity. Moreover, there is no reason to believe, and some reason to doubt, that bedouin poets were more strongly influenced by the moral teachings of Islam than the urban poets. The most profoundly Muslim poet of the Umayyad age was al-Kumayt b. Zayd, who was born and reared in Kufa. On the other hand, the bedouin Jamīl, who is rightly regarded as the greatest representative of ʿUdhrī poetry, shows little interest in Islam, and the bedouin Dhū 'l-Rummah, known to have

been a pious Muslim, rarely reflects any influence of Islam in his poetry or outlook on the human condition. Another point to make here is that despite the abundance of slave girls in the towns of Hijaz in this period, the poets for the most part sang of Arab women, many of whom came from the aristocracy and nobility of Hijaz. 'Umar's poetry on famous women of Quraysh was playful and mischievous, but not particularly sensual. On the other hand, al-Ahwas and al-'Arjī, despite the fact that they modelled themselves on 'Umar in many of their poems, employed in other poems motifs directly borrowed from 'Udhrī poetry. This shows that neat and facile explanations for the appearance of poetic phenomena should be accepted with caution.

Both kinds of poetry, indeed, were the result of the same motivation: the need for escapism and sensationalism which informed the spirit of the age. The contradictions of the period, which showed themselves everywhere, are well exemplified by the double role a city like Medina played as a centre at once of singing and of religious studies.

The poetry of 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah transgressed the boundaries of social taboos, and with hilarious irony it flouted the rituals of Muslim life, making of the annual pilgrimage to the Holy Places of Mecca and Medina an occasion of mischief and pleasure as the poet accosted the women pilgrims arriving from Iraq, Damascus and Hijaz itself. In his pursuit of women of the Qurashite nobility he was chasing women with a taboo attached to their name. He had modelled himself on the womanizing Imru' al-Qays, but transcended him by an absolute concentration on his role and by a more light-hearted attitude. Other poets followed suit. Everything about their poetry spoke of a new kind of freedom. 'Umar was brought up by an indulgent widowed mother who traded in perfumes. He had therefore the opportunity as a young boy to meet upper-class women and watch the way they behaved. Over forty women are mentioned in his poetry as objects of love. There is a remarkable absence of tragedy in his poetry. Its rebellion was not a negative escape into spleen, but an escape through nonchalance and a light-hearted defiance of the social code.

In 'Umar's poetry there is hardly any ambivalence or real conflict. It is never a poetry of crisis or of extreme situations, but a constant quest for beauty and the intimacy of love. Many of his poems are narcissistic accounts of the poet's "fatal" attractiveness to the other sex, and much of his poetry is a song of self-praise. Some of his poems are a repetition of love dialogues between him and one of his women, or of conversations among women. They exhibit little depth or fire. He and his women, in fact, hover on the borders of love, but never cross them to a real discovery of the passion. It is his attractive personality, his poetic skill and command

of his art, that save his poetry from being a mere indulgence in the trivialities and banalities of polygynous love. There is a gentleness in his attitude which, though rarely tender, makes of the woman the heroine of the moment, in command of her heart and of her behaviour.

The service done by 'Umar to the poetic diction of the period is immeasurable. It would not be inept to regard his poetry as the best example in his age of the contemporary language. The parody of women's patter can be used as a guide to linguists as an example of how the Qurashites conducted discourses. In most of this poetry the connection with the pre-Islamic poetic diction is not clear, but in certain poems where he is imitating the effect of pre-Islamic diction it is clear and unmistakable.

Much of his poetry was written to be sung, and this accounts for 'Umar's frequent choice of the shorter metres. His poetry was sung by such famous singers as al-Gharīḍ, who was his personal friend, as well as by Ibn Surayj and others. Despite his choice of shorter metres for much of his poetry, his favourite metre was *ṭawīl*, the metre most used in Jāhilī times. It was in this metre that he composed his more imitative poetry, but it was also the metre of many of his more typical poems:

> When we met and I was at rest after a parting, and those we feared were
>   absent,
> I took her hand in mind, and put it on a heart beating from fear of a new
>   parting;
> She said to her friends when she perceived my agony, "This man does not
>   speak the truth."
> They said, "Can the eye weep of one who suffers neither pain nor sorrow,
>   the eye of one who knows no sleep?"
> She said, "It is only longing that called forth the tears of his heart."
> They said, "We witness that he is not a liar, but speaks the truth",
> And they got up to leave us, and her eyes filled with tears,
> And she said, "Have mercy on me, do not leave me to him, you know he is
>   rash!"
> They said, "Be quiet, you shall not be obeyed; he is kinder to you than we
>   are!"
> She said, "Then do not go far from this canopy; I am afraid of him, by
>   God!"[39]

The poem is simple, frivolous and typical of 'Umar's skilful parody of women's talk, and of his narcissistic self-absorption. The gentleness that pervades the poem partly compensates for the lack of depth and passion. Although not as completely narrative as some of his other poems rhyming in *r* on Nu'm, the use of conversation assures an organic unity which is found in many other similar poems.

[39] *Dīwān*, Beirut, 265.

Although 'Umar, when it pleased him to imitate the pre-Islamic amatory prelude, could do so with skill, such preludes are absent from most of his poetry. Besides the links with language and syntax, he severs many other bonds with the pre-Islamic poem. His poetry, in fact, is the best example of the change that took place in the structure, language, tone, attitude and theme of the Umayyad poem. It is in this that 'Umar's poetry represents a major development in Umayyad verse.

The poetry of 'Ubayd Allāh b. Qays al-Ruqayyāt has a more varied scope than 'Umar's. Since he went in for politics, he opens a window on some of the political history of the period. He has a great serenity of style, but there is also a rare quality of playfulness, and a skill in musical arrangement and choice of rhyme which must be regarded as one of the developments of this age. He, too, used the contemporary idiom, although he does not give us, as 'Umar does, the current language in its extreme form, for 'Umar was parodying the talk of women, whose speech is less rhetorical than men's. Al-Ruqayyāt's charming poem rhyming in b on Umm al-Banīn, the wife of al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik, in which he aimed at annoying her father-in-law, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik, is perhaps his most famous poem. The mischievous playfulness of its tone, the intimacy of its approach and the grace with which the poet directs an insult at the Umayyad dynasty without hurting the honour of Umm al-Banīn, make of this poem a fine example of Hijazi raillery and of the homage to the personality and beauty of women. Al-Ruqayyāt takes a great step away from the vulgar malice of Iraqi satires, which insulted men by directing the vilest accusations at their women. Umm al-Banīn, he says in this poem, visited him in his sleep:

> And when I felt joy at her [visit], and her lips touched mine,
> I drank from her nectar, and gave her to drink [from mine].
> I spent the night as her bed-companion, each enamoured of the other,
> And I made her laugh and cry, and stripped her of her clothes.
> I played with her and she vanquished me; I made her happy and I angered her.
> That was a night we spent, in my sleep, playing and joyful,
> But the caller to prayer woke me up...[40]

It is recounted that Umm al-Banīn was so pleased with the poem that she interceded later on behalf of the poet with the caliph and persuaded him to forgive him.

The pattern of the 'Udhrī love poetry and love tale was set early in pre-Islamic times. The earliest 'Udhrī love poet in the Umayyad age was 'Urwah b. Ḥizām, and his tragic love story sets the pattern for the numerous love stories of the Umayyad period. He loved his cousin, 'Afrā,

[40] *Dīwān*, 123.

but her father insisted on a large dowry and the young lover went to seek wealth. He returned to find that her father had married her off to another man. There then began the agonizing experience of unrequited love. 'Urwah, like many foiled lovers of the Umayyad love story, sickened and died of love. Most of these stories are stories of extreme situations. Sickness, madness, roving the deserts, complete absorption in the *mise-en-scène*, the pain and tears and delirium of the heart, and often death, are typical features. Many of these stories are attributed to the Banū 'Udrah, the tribe of Jamīl who lived in Wādī 'l-Qurā, a valley in Hijaz, between Syria and Medina, but lovers and poets from numerous other tribes join the chorus of the afflicted. It is impossible to correlate the appearance of this tidal wave of love tales and love poetry with the political situation in the desert of Hijaz, or in the Arabian desert at large where such poet–lovers as Yazīd b. al-Ṭathriyyah and Dhū 'l-Rummah appeared.

Jamīl b. Ma'mar, the greatest of the 'Udhrī love poets in the Umayyad age, was born and reared in Wādī 'l-Qurā, where his tribe had settled among other tribes. The Banū 'Udrah, as has been already noted, were famous for their tragic love tales: "a people who when they love, die".[41] Their women were famous for their beauty, and their men for their chastity, and Jamīl's love of Buthaynah is only one of the many amatory stories told of them. It revolves around the same theme, the lover whose beloved is given in marriage to another man and who spends his life in bemoaning his lot. Jamīl had met Buthaynah when they were very young and their love lasted till Jamīl's death. Buthaynah's marriage was only the beginning of a long story of perpetual dolours, punctuated by moments of joy when the two lovers met in secret. These attempts at meeting angered her family, who complained first to the poet's tribe, and then to the authorities. The ruler prohibited Jamīl on pain of death from going into the vicinity of Buthaynah's settlements. Persecuted and pursued, he roamed from region to region, ending in Egypt, where he died.

How much of his story (and of other similar stories) is true, and how much is the work of reciters, is irrelevant. These stories show the interest in the tragic predicament.

If the lovers' life was controlled by society, they, and the poetry Jamīl wrote, were nevertheless outside society. In fact, the whole Umayyad love story is anti-social, a criticism of social norms, and an expression of a longing for individual freedom. However, this rejection of society is only partial. In none of these stories do we encounter radical defiance, such as an attempt to kill the adversary, or to elope, or, on the part of the girl, a decisive refusal to marry someone else. Even in the story of Qays b.

41 Sarrāj, *Maṣāriʿ*, II, 186.

Dharīḥ, who was married to Lubnā, we see that society, represented by an authoritarian father, overrules the sacrament of marriage and enforces divorce of the barren though adored wife. The sad acquiescence of the girl, the passive role she plays, is unchanging. Whenever she performs an act of volition, such as meeting her lover, she does so in secret. The code of honour in these stories proved itself stronger than love and life. There is no doubt that in the Umayyad period the nation was building a structure of romantic tales within the boundaries of what its norms and morality were likely to allow. It anticipated a more oppressive future for Arab lovers, and especially for Arab women. The splendid individuality of many Kharijite heroines, such as al-Nawār, the wife of al-Farazdaq, or of 'Ā'ishah, the Prophet's wife, is noticeably absent from these stories, where the woman is hardly more than a recipient of love. She promises, but never fulfils; she loves, but, in this literature, never gives.

However, there is a brighter side of this story. Buthaynah becomes the ideal of womanhood. Time cannot touch her, nor can her beauty and perception change. The following little poem is one of the finest love poems in Arabic. In its tone and attitude it points to a new sensibility of amatory experience:

> Buthaynah said when she saw my hair tinted red [i.e. with henna]:
> "You have grown old, Jamīl! your youth is spent!" I said, "Buthaynah,
>   don't say that!
> Have you forgotten our days in Liwā, and in Dhawī 'l-Ajfur?
> Did you not see me more, when we were in Dhū Jawhar?
> When we were neighbours? Do you not remember?
> And I young and soft-skinned, trailing my train behind me,
> My hair black as the raven's wing, perfumed with musk and amber,
> That was changed by the vissicitudes of time, as you well know!
> But you! Like the *marzubān*'s[42] pearl, still a young girl,
> We were neighbours once, sharing the same playground. How did I grow
>   old and you did not"?[43]

One can argue that the metamorphosis of the beloved into an ideal of womanhood was a rebellion against polygamous marriage, against the cult of concubinage, and against the rejection of celibacy professed by Islam. There is nothing in Islam (other than the figure of the Virgin Mary) which allows for the sanctification of woman. Yet, suddenly, ideals of virginity and chastity come to fill the 'Udhrī poetry of the period. The poets found in this kind of idealization of woman a ready and easy means of combining the sensual with the spiritual and of satisfying the quest of the age for the sensational without drastically violating its moral values. Those heroines evoke a poetry which makes a bridge between the human and the divine.

[42] Persian governor of a frontier district.   [43] *Dīwān*, 92–3.

Jamīl's poetry roots the transcendental in the earthly and renders its spiritual and emotional agony in physical terms in the details of stories that describe meetings and conversations. A masochistic streak dominates this poetry, however, as it dominates the rest of 'Udhrī verse.

Most of what can be said of Jamīl can be said of the other 'Udhrī poets. Poets whose real identity has been questioned, such as al-Majnūn, show the same overall pattern in the arrangement of their thoughts, the emotional sweep and devotional tone of their verse; in their sentence formation, their use of language and in the motifs they employ. Whoever wrote the poetry attributed to al-Majnūn was writing in the genuine 'Udhrī tradition, and his contribution is one of the finest achievements of 'Udhrī verse.

In all 'Udhrī poetry the emphasis is more on the release of emotion than on imagery, and on a musical grandeur and serenity unlike that of the bouncing, merry rhythms used in much of the urban love poetry of Hijaz. This was a poetry composed, perhaps, to accompany the tale, rather than to be set to music, though much of it was also sung. The use of language in this poetry is simple, direct and lucid, but it appears to us to be the language used by Hijazi bedouins rather than town language, for, although it is simplified and developed, it has a different mode of address and is less smooth and polished.

A MAJOR POET OF THE UMAYYAD PERIOD

The critical attitude to poetry in this period shows itself most in the comments which the contemporaries of Dhū 'l-Rummah (Ghaylān b. 'Uqbah, 77–117/696–735), of the tribe of 'Adī of Muḍar, made about his poetry. Dhū 'l-Rummah is artistically the most important poet of his age and undoubtedly one of the greatest poets of the Arabic language. Yet he lived his life with his status as an important poet unrecognized. Reciting one of his poems at al-Mirbad, he saw al-Farazdaq among the audience and asked him what he thought of his poem. Al-Farazdaq testified to its worth. "Then why am I not regarded among the *fuḥūl* (great poets)?" asked Dhū 'l-Rummah. "Because of your constant weeping over the abandoned campsites...and your preference for describing your camel and your desert," al-Farazdaq answered.[44] Jarīr, when asked about his poetry, said that it was "like the dung of gazelles and the make-up of a bride", because the dung of gazelles is sweet-smelling at the beginning, but becomes foul afterwards, and a bride's make-up quickly vanishes.[45] The most damaging judgement on him came in a later age, when he was described as only a quarter of a poet! The reason for this was that Dhū

[44] Marzubāni, *Muwashshaḥ*, 274.   [45] Ibid., 272.

'l-Rummah did not excel in eulogy, *fakhr* or satire. These were three out
of the four basic themes of good poetry, the fourth being description. Dhū
'l-Rummah excelled only in that, and he was therefore a quarter of a poet.
This later judgement coincided with that of al-Farazdaq when he regarded
the desert topics in his poetry as inferior to those of the *fuḥūl*. Dhū
'l-Rummah struggled hard to integrate himself into the poetic milieu of
the Iraqi towns, eulogizing the viceroys and frequenting the market-places,
but his poetry could never shine with the grandeur and rhetoric of the
great exponents of eulogy and satire. The poetic concept was so well
ingrained, and eulogy and satire had become so firmly established in this
period, that it never occurred to him or to his contemporaries that his
poetic sensibility was different from theirs and that his orientation as a poet
of the universal human condition was incompatible with the demands of
those other topics. He loved the art of poetry, and, with a dedication
worthy of a great poet, applied himself to the constant polishing of his
verse. His description of the way he composes reveals a genuine poet: "In
some of my poetry words come easily, in some laboriously, and in some
madly."[46]

   Dhū 'l-Rummah was born in the desert of al-Dahnā' in the south-eastern
part of Najd where his tribe, 'Adī, was a neighbour to many tribes of
Tamīm. He came from a rather poor background, and his father having
died, he grew up in the custody of an older brother. As a child he is
described as having been very sensitive, nervous of the dark and phantoms
of the night. His mother had him read the Qur'ān, and he is said to have
been a devout Muslim. However, the influence of the Qur'ān is seen in
his poetry only in certain expressions and allusions and in the syntax of
some of his sentences. His outlook on life shows little interest in the Islamic
metaphysical philosophy. The poet, moreover, must have studied a
substantial amount of pre-Islamic poetry, and is said to have been the *rāwī*
(reciter) of the poet 'Ubayd b. Ḥuṣayn, known as Rā'ī 'l-Ibil or simply al-Rā'ī
(d. 90/708), who specialized, as did Dhū 'l-Rummah, in the description
of the camels and the desert. Dhū 'l-Rummah's poetry shows a continuation
of pre-Islamic poetic traditions, as if the nine or more intervening decades
had served only to mature those traditions and invest them with depth
and splendour. However, as has been noted above, he also joined the
Umayyad love poets who had been singing in Hijaz long before he was
born. His poetry on Mayyah and Kharqā' adds to the Umayyad period
yet another erotic note of great tenderness and nostalgia, in line with the
desert love poetry of the time.

   Dhū 'l-Rummah met Mayyah when both were in their early youth, and

[46] Ibid., 273.

on his part it was love at first sight. She was from Banū Minqar, a branch of Tamīm. Many accounts of their relationship exist. What is relevant to our discussion, however, is that he never married her, for her father gave her in marriage to one of her cousins. The story goes on to say that Mayyah's husband forced her to insult the poet. Dhū 'l-Rummah, deeply wounded, is said to have met Kharqā' afterwards, and to have fallen in love with her, or to have written love poetry on her just to tease Mayyah.

Dhū 'l-Rummah paid many visits to Basra and Kufa and met the poets there. But although he eulogized their governors he never met with acceptance. He came of age at a time when philological studies in these towns had arrived at a high level. A desert poet, he found out that he possessed one of the widest vocabularies of any poet in his age, a richness of language which few poets could combine, as he did, with fine poetic creativity. His poetry contains much *gharīb*, but he beautifully co-ordinates the fantastic variety of synonyms with eloquent and poignant poetic expressions unlike many of the stiff and awkward concatenations of some contemporary poets and *rujjāz*. His language is malleable, transparent and apt. Its sophistication and his skill in its manipulation proves that genius can never be simple even though the artist is a simple man.

Dhū 'l-Rummah's poetry is superior in its nuances and musical co-ordination and his use of alliteration and assonance is unrivalled in his age. Images are a central part of the method with which he approaches his art. All kinds of images abound in his poetry – visual, auditory, somatic, olfactory, kinetic – but the last dominates them all. There is nothing static in his poems, despite his involvement with the desert and its creatures, and there is little that is described merely for aesthetic pleasure or the demonstration of descriptive skill. Everything is invested with emotion and meant to enhance the poignancy of experience. The desert, which forms the background on which the drama of life, love, struggle and death is enacted, is itself variable in appearance: a sea of mirages, full of fountains but without water, of phantoms that move but do not move; a treacherous wilderness, a cauldron of fire, an unfathomable maze, a deep valley that merges in complete oneness with the pitch-black of night.[47]

Dhū 'l-Rummah does not spare us any of the painful details of the hardships of life. One can almost feel the deep fatigue of those camel-riders as they and their camels (the camel, the saddle and the rider are always one) traverse a seemingly endless maze in which there is no breeze and where even the sand grouse perishes from drought (*Dīwān*, 591, v. 12). An empty wilderness stands between the poet and his beloved, full of

[47] *Dīwān*, 399.

mirages, while the midday sun blinds the eyes (*Dīwān*, 86, v. 49);[48] The heat is so immense that it cracks the eggs in their nest (*Dīwān*, 91, v. 57).[49]

His description of fatigue and drowsiness, the perpetual drowsiness and exhaustion of the desert travellers, brings out images of men so overcome with fatigue that their heads rock on their chests, and their turbans loosen and fall away. They almost drop off their saddles, their tired bodies bent like those of men drawing water from a well, or (and this is even more poignant) like a pail hung on two ropes to draw water from a crooked well, forever swinging to and fro (*Dīwān*, 87, v. 43).[50] Compared with this immense fatigue, the she-camel sustains the image of fortitude and endurance.

Out of very limited material he created a world of immense riches and powerful depths. This is because the material was apprehended by him in all its dimensions: obliquely, symbolically, in terms of mood, and was invested with a life and continuity of its own, parallel with human experience.

Dhū 'l-Rummah's poetry is the finest continuation in the Umayyad period of the pre-Islamic poetic tradition, perfected to its fullest capacity and illuminated by this great poet's special interest and outlook. It is also a witness to the depth and suggestiveness of the pre-Islamic poetry and of its ritualized, archetypal themes. Pre-Islamic poetry symbolized and represented life piecemeal. The abandoned campsites were calendars of the desert; the lament on old age was a lament on the inevitable end of life; the phantom of the beloved stood for the quest of man for beauty and union through love, just as the journey in the desert was a quest for fertility and the achievement of an ideal. The she-camel and the horse were symbols of man's endeavour to conquer his surroundings, while the desert itself symbolized the vastness, the hardships and the treachery of life. There is no single motif or theme in Dhū 'l-Rummah which has no counterpart in pre-Islamic poetry, but he gives them two new dimensions. First, there is the obsessiveness which pervades his poetry as he repeats the ritualized themes in re-created forms until their involvement with a universal vision of life becomes part of the listener's or reader's experience. The second is his deep anxiety, reflected in his vision of the splendid but tragic polarity of life. On the one hand, there is the unattainable beauty of Mayyah and Kharqā', and of the gazelles and the golden sands with which they are compared; and the splendour of fortitude and unfailing endeavour exemplified by the never-tiring she-camel; on the other hand, mingled with this splendour, the tragedy lurks everywhere on the journey as all creatures of the desert pant and struggle for existence under a blazing sun. The animals are sun-dazed, or frightened by the rain, or are hunted and chased;

[48] Ibid., 591.   [49] Ibid., 86.   [50] Ibid., 91.

their survival is a facet of the failure to achieve a goal. The journey in the desert has a fantastic continuity, pointing to a kind of inner wondering and search for an unidentified goal. This picture of a world at breaking point is symbolic of the poet's own experience in love and public life, and many poems are completely dedicated to the symbolic journey of man through the wilderness of life.

A nostalgia of immense depth pervades his poetry, appearing to be directed to the phantom of woman, but basically a nostalgia that yearns to arrive at something which the poet himself does not, perhaps, discern. His poetry abounds with a love of life and innocence which stands in contrast to the destructive sneers of the Basran satirists.

The poet's love of live, however, does not express itself in joy and celebration. His attitude is not confident, for he can see only too well the dilemma of existence and can sense the dangers and immense hardships that lie in wait for all beings. His vision of "danger" as ever-present in life drives him, in one of his poems, to describe the "fierce hunter" lurking for the innocent animals as a victim himself, for there are two deadly snakes beside him throughout the night.[51] Even the hunter, however, gets a share of his sympathy, for he has a large family, and he can do no other than hunt. The whole situation is one of necessity, for in order to survive the animals must drink, and the hunter must kill.[52]

Dhū 'l-Rummah died prematurely at the age of forty. His excellence as a poet is only now being discovered by avant-garde critics who can wield on his poetry the tools of modern criticism. The difficulty of his language might have been a hindrance to his discovery, but in fact the main obstacle stems from two other points: firstly from the fact that his poetry was full of subtle implications, and was of such an order of universality and excellence that it eluded the critics. Secondly, in order to understand the achievement of Dhū 'l-Rummah, a new view of pre-Islamic poetry had to be evolved, a view that apprehended in that poetry more than a series of disparate, limited expressions of physical life and practical experience. The connotative, implicative attitude of such poetry, its capacity to produce out of the limitations of desert life a universal interpretation of human existence, was not discovered either by the classical savants or by many modern critics. Recently, however, a new look on pre-Islamic poetry has been developing. Dhū 'l-Rummah's poetry, as has been remarked above, is one of the key elements which bring the universal, referential aspects of pre-Islamic poetry into full focus. His achievement is the final triumph of generations of desert poets living and struggling within the confines of the vast, treacherous and unyielding desert.

[51] Ibid., 87.   [52] Ibid., 534–6.

Before the Umayyad age was quite over the first supreme example of
the Persian genius in Arabic poetry manifested itself in Bashshār b. Burd
(95–167/713–83), whose experiments reflected the immense influence of
the intellectual and literary life of Iraq in this period. However, the
discusion of his poetry belongs to a study of the first 'Abbasid period, for
in mood, attitude, diction, syntax and thematic variations he rightly
belongs there.

The poetic experiments of the Umayyad period, more varied than those
of any other period before modern times, laid the basis for a new poetry,
a reflection of life in a Muslim world. The main endeavour of Umayyad
poetry was to achieve a level of harmony with this life. It was marked by
great spontaneity and freedom. On the whole, Umayyad poetry raises many
points of interest for a critic in search of examples of the relationship
between art and society, between poetry and tradition. Throughout this
chapter, an attempt has been made to observe the influence of Umayyad
society on poetry, and the basic relationship between the leading Umayyad
poets and the pre-Islamic tradition has been discussed. Above all, this
chapter has attempted to study the development of poetic language in this
period of great change in all areas of life, taking particular note of the
influence of urbanization on this poetic language and of the struggle
between the tendency for this language to reflect the speech of the times
and its attempt to satisfy the needs of the philologists for documentation
of the language as it was before the great expansion out of Arabia.

MUSIC AND VERSE

Apart from its intrinsic interest, the relationship between music and verse is of particular concern because of the often-mooted possibility that music (and musicians) may have made a significant contribution to the developments that took place in Hijazi poetry during the first/seventh century. But the nature of the relationship is not easy to define with any precision, and some of the problems it raises are singularly intractable. In effect, early Arabic poetry and music differ radically as objects of scholarly enquiry, essentially because there is nothing in music comparable to the extensive corpus of poetry that has been preserved. The first specimen of notation that may be thought to provide a reasonably accurate account of a song as realized in performance dates from as late as c. 700/1300, represents a seventh/thirteenth-century composition, and is moreover a unique example.

To re-create the early musical idiom from the limited materials available is quite impossible. One might suggest as a literary parallel an attempted reconstruction of early poetry from much later forms based on a consideration of such diverse sources as the critical remarks of al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn Qutaybah, the biographies of poets in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (the "Book of Songs", a famous fourth/tenth-century work by al-Iṣfahānī), and one or two technical treatises on prosody and rhetoric – but with all the examples of poetry removed. Broadly speaking, discussions of music tend towards either the theoretical (culminating in abstractions sometimes of questionable relevance to practice) or, when dealing with the performer and his milieu, the sociological. From theoretical treatises proper it is possible to derive a highly schematic account of the modes and rhythms regulating the actual sound-structures, and to learn something about forms of composition and vocal and instrumental techniques; while from works of a more general nature we may gain valuable biographical information about many of the most prominent musicians, and in addition gain some insight into the various functions of music in society, and into changes in attitude towards it. But it would be idle to pretend that all this adds up to more than background material – an account of the theatre and the

actors rather than of the play – and certainly the particular issue of the
relationship between the verse and the music to which it was sung is
illustrated in only the most fitful way.

SOURCES

A rather more precise indication of the nature of the primary source
materials may be gained from the following list of some of the most
important early works (up to and including the *Aghānī*), arranged in rough
chronological order:[1]

al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869): *Kitāb al-Qiyān*
al-Kindī (d. 260/874): *Risālah fī khubr ṣinā'at al-ta'līf*
Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā (d. 281/894): *Dhamm al-malāhī*
al-Mufaḍḍal b. Salamah (d. c. 290/903): *Kitāb al-'Ūd wa-'l-malāhī*
Ibn Khurdādhbih (d. c. 300/911): *Mukhtār min Kitāb al-Lahw wa-'l-malāhī*
Ibn al-Munajjim (d. 301/912): *Risālah fī 'l-mūsīqī*
Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940): *Kitāb al-'Iqd al-farīd*
al-Fārābī (d. c. 339/950): *Kitāb al-Mūsīqī al-kabīr*
al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967): *Kitāb al-Aghānī*

These early documents provide a fairly representative sample of the
various kinds of material making up the existing corpus of literature on
music, for the main strands are all represented: belles-lettres (*adab*)
(containing mainly social and biographical information); treatises on
theory and on instruments; and polemics on the legality of music. But they
are also typical in their limitations, for even in the works devoted to theory
many aspects of contemporary practice are ignored, while others are
sometimes distorted in the interests of the writer's preoccupation with
abstract norms derived from mathematical absolutes.

A further general difficulty arises from the fact that these texts date from
the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries. They must therefore be viewed
with a certain reserve as sources of information for the Umayyad period,
and with the greatest caution as sources for earlier periods. Setting aside
the potentially suspect nature of the *Ḥadīth* material relating to the
permissibility or otherwise of music, it may be readily conceded that there
were few doctrinal or dynastic grounds for falsification: thus material
relating to the Umayyad period might remain generally unaffected by the
anti-Umayyad bias to be detected among 'Abbasid historians (except in
so far as it might tend to give an unflattering portrait of a particular
Umayyad caliph). At the same time, however, it can hardly be said that
the transmission of material was subjected to as rigorous an examination

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[1] Cf. Farmer, *Sources*, 19–37.

as took place in other fields, despite the frequent provision of an *isnād*. Nor can it be supposed that, say, the authorities quoted in the *Aghānī* were all reliable witnesses – indeed, al-Iṣfahānī himself is openly critical of some of them. Nevertheless, for all its limitations of scope, the documentation of musical activity during the Umayyad period does exhibit a certain depth and consistency, and many of the doubtful points concern details rather than basic issues, or involve questions of interpretation rather than of verification. But for earlier periods the extent, and reliability, of the available material decreases sharply, and accounts of pre-Islamic musical practice in particular are meagre and uninformative, as well as being of extremely doubtful historical value.

THE PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD

With all their drawbacks, the above texts must still be considered the primary source for this period. To supplement them it is possible to draw on references to music in poetry and on philological evidence. But while the former are of considerable interest, the latter is of little help to the subject under discussion, indicating as it does hardly more than the common Semitic origin of a few basic general terms and the early diffusion among the Semitic peoples of certain types of instrument. Nor is there much help to be sought from archaeological or art remains, which have often proved to be the most informative sources of all for the early musical history of other civilizations.

If we ignore for the moment the supplementary area of poetry, the available material may be said to concern itself primarily with two themes: descriptions of various genres of music and the differences between them; and legendary accounts of particular musicians and of the origins of music and certain instruments. The latter topic may be disregarded in the present context, for even where the musicians are assumed to be historical figures the remarks made about them fail to provide any concrete information about the music they performed. The one point worth bringing out here is that most of them are *qiyān*, singing slave girls.

Discussions of the various categories of music are rather more instructive. Two main types are distinguished, *ḥudāʾ* and *ghināʾ*, the latter further subdivided into *naṣb*, *sinād* and *hazaj*. (However, accounts on this subject are not unanimous and it would be possible to propose other layouts.)[2] The *ḥudāʾ* is generally viewed as the most ancient form of musical expression among the Arabs, and according to Ibn Khurdādhbih it was from the *ḥudāʾ* that *ghināʾ* evolved. Unfortunately the musical characteristics

[2] Al-Asad, *Qiyān*, 95–100.

of the *hudā*ʾ are nowhere described: we are left merely with an impression of a form considered to be relatively simple and unsophisticated. Of the three subdivisions of *ghinā*ʾ, the *naṣb* is sometimes stated, or implied, to be similar to the *hudā*ʾ, and in addition has in common with it an association with male performers. The remaining two types, *sinād* and *hazaj*, would appear to have been complementary opposites within a single more developed idiom (suggesting that the categories might be more realistically arranged as *hudā*ʾ; *naṣb*; *sinād/hazaj*). The *sinād* is described as "heavy", with an ornate melodic style, while its *hazaj* counterpart is "light", gay, and associated (albeit by a rather late authority, Ibn Rashīq of the fifth/eleventh century) with dancing.

However welcome such details, it should be borne in mind that the light/heavy contrast, with precisely the same stylistic connotations, is an important feature of descriptions of later Islamic court music. One cannot, therefore, rule out the possibility that third/ninth and fourth/tenth-century writers projected on to a long-extinct genre some of the characteristics of music as practised in their own day. Indeed, even the initial division of *ghinā*ʾ into three types may not be wholly uninfluenced by later concepts, for a threefold division of music (according to a variety of criteria) is a commonplace of Arabic musical literature. But whatever its specific characteristics, the existence of the *sinād/hazaj* genre may reasonably be accepted; and it may further be assumed that such music was associated primarily with the singing slave girl (*qaynah*), and that it was this particular type that provided the basis for the later development of *ghinā*ʾ *mutqan*, and thence, of the sophisticated idiom of court music.

Behind the above classification of the various types of song lies, as Ibn Khurdādhbih makes clear, the notion of a historical sequence of development. But this may be a projection on to a temporal plane of contrasts more pertinently described in terms of variations in surface complexity (even if, for the pre-Islamic period, the differences in idiom between the various types mentioned need not have been very marked). Alternatively, the implied diachronic separation may reflect what was in fact a largely synchronic differentiation relating to social function. For example, one crude stratification of music might distinguish as separate categories work-songs, ceremonial music, and entertainment music, and it is not inconceivable that *hudā*ʾ, *naṣb* and *sinād/hazaj* were representative song-types constituting an informal classification of a similar order. The identification of the *hudā*ʾ as at least in origin a form of work-song is hardly controversial; and the *sinād/hazaj* may well have been typical of entertainment music. But lack of evidence makes it virtually impossible to assign the *naṣb* to any particular category. If anything, the fact that it

seems to have resembled the *ḥudāʾ* in certain respects suggests,[3] in addition to the overt differentiation of *ḥudāʾ* and *ghināʾ*, an implied binary opposition between, on the one hand, *ḥudāʾ* and *naṣb* (primarily non-entertainment music with male performers) and, on the other, *sinād* and *hazaj* (primarily entertainment music with female performers).

There remains one further category, the lament (*nawḥ*), which is nowhere described or placed in relation to the scheme of classification discussed above. The most likely reason for this is the lack of any perception of a specifically musical element that could be isolated from its ritual context. In terms of social function the *nawḥ* would come into the category of ceremonial music, but it has in common with entertainment music the fact that its performers were traditionally female; indeed, it is by no means inconceivable that the "heavy" *sinād* could have evolved out of the *nawḥ*, or at least have been influenced by it at a formative stage of its development.

In effect, the principal differences between entertainment music (as represented by *sinād* and *hazaj*) and the other types probably related originally less to musical idiom than to social function, involving therefore variations in the context of performance, the social identity or status of the performer, and the nature of the performer–audience relationship. (It is in fact only with entertainment music that one can properly begin to speak of performer and audience as separate entities, for in work-songs and ceremonial music the emphasis is on group participation, either through collective performance or through integration in a complex collective activity of which music constitutes just one element.) But although the idiom of entertainment music may have been based firmly on that of the other existing styles, the development of more complex musical structures relating to greater technical expertise could well have been a concomitant of the gradual emergence of the specialist performer. Such a trend presumes an audience of increasing sophistication, and as the employment of professional musicians (even when of slave status) implies of itself a degree of economic development more characteristic of urban or sedentary societies, it can hardly be doubted that these performers were concentrated in particular localities, notably in the chief townships of the Hijaz, and at the courts of the border states of al-Ḥīrah and Ghassān. The latter, which were more directly exposed to the impact of the high cultures to the north, presumably acted as channels (and at the same time as filters) through which musical influences spread southwards, and may well have been in the vanguard of musical change.

[3] See al-Asad, *Qiyān*, 95–100.

Pre-Islamic poetry

In relation to the poetic corpus, the term "pre-Islamic" may in the present context be regarded not literally, as a confident statement of date, but rather as an indicator of social background (labelling it as predominantly bedouin in ethos) and mode of composition (assigning it to a fundamentally oral tradition). Accordingly, problems of authenticity may be largely disregarded: conventionality of theme, allied to the inherently conservative nature of an at least partly formulaic diction, ensures that material that in terms of strict chronology might be post-Jāhilī can still provide a reasonably faithful reflection of pre-Islamic culture and values.

The musical information which can be derived from pre-Islamic poetry relates to the general area of performance practice, concentrating more specifically on the performer, normally a slave girl. The prominence of the singing slave girl in what is an essentially bedouin art form would seem to furnish an argument against identifying her with a sedentary and at least semi-urbanized society. But contacts between the nomadic and settled populations could readily have made her a familiar figure (and if not, one can point to a number of references in poetry to phenomena foreign to nomadic tribal culture found striking precisely because of their strangeness). The slave girl appears not in isolation, but usually as part of a particular situation embodying one ideal form of sensual indulgence. She is conventionally portrayed entertaining a party of drinkers led by the free-spending poet who may underline the "vaunting" aspect of the episode (*fakhr*) by emphasizing the quality of the wine and occasionally also by noting the craftsmanship of the drinking vessels. But when he turns to the slave girl herself his description often concentrates on her physical charms – not surprisingly in view of the fact that the entertainment she offered was not always exclusively musical – so that the amount of detail relating to the actual vocal or instrumental performance is usually quite small, deploying little more than one or two conventional motifs. These, however, may involve the mention of certain instruments: the slave girl is often depicted accompanying herself on a (presumably skin-bellied) lute, variously known as *mizhar*, *kirān*, and *muwattar*, and other string instruments, as well as wind and percussion instruments (principally the *mizmār* and the *duff*, a frame drum), are also mentioned.

By far the richest crop of such names occurs in the corpus of poetry attributed to Maymūn b. Qays al-Aʿshā. Here several instruments of Persian origin are referred to, and – perhaps another Persian feature – allusions are made to male musicians. Further, if we accept the identification, attributed to Abū ʿUbaydah (d. 209/824–5), of Hurayrah as a

singing girl, then it is in the *Muʿallaqah* of al-Aʿshā (beginning *Waddiʿ Hurayrata*) that the poetic theme of the slave girl is accorded its most extended and elaborate treatment. But music is nowhere mentioned: the passage in question is fundamentally a virtuoso exploration and exploitation of the standard motifs and formulaic techniques associated with physical description in the particular context of love poetry, and the assumption that the woman so described is of low status (and dubious morality) means that it can also be regarded as a partly parodic variation on existing conventions. The identification of the woman portrayed as a singing slave girl is thus of strictly literary, rather than musical, significance.

Music and verse

In general, it may be assumed that the type of poetry sung by the slave girl would be that of the very poets who mention her in their verses. Thus there may have existed some kind of loose association between the main classical metres and the *sinād/hazaj* (and perhaps also *nawh*) genres – with possibly the songs of the *naṣb* and *hudāʾ* genres being more commonly in the *rajaz* metre (that of the first *hudāʾ*, according to one legend), or even not subjected to any regular metrical structure at all. But about the nature of the relationship, if any, between the poetic metre and the musical rhythm in the *sinād/hazaj* genre one can only speculate. It seems reasonable to suppose that at an early stage of development the rhythmic structure of the melody might have been affected by the metrical organization of the verse, or at least, broadly, by the relative incidence of syllables containing long vowels as against those containing short vowels. But we do not even known whether the melody tended to be predominantly in free (non-periodic) rhythm (where such metrical considerations could be of considerable importance) or in fixed rhythmic cycles (where metrical considerations would be of relatively little importance or might even be disregarded entirely). Possibly both types existed side by side, so that the *hazaj*, for example, might have been marked by the use of fixed rhythmic cycles, and the *sinād* not. The suggestions in our sources that – according to one interpretation[4] – some, or indeed all, of the fixed rhythmic cycles were post-Islamic innovations must be considered with due caution, but might nevertheless be taken to indicate that there was one particular style or genre in which free rhythm had hitherto predominated. On the other hand, references in the poetry to the use of percussion instruments such as frame drums certainly suggest the presence of fixed periodic rhythmic structures (but without, of course, demonstrating their universal use); and

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[4] See e.g. Farmer, *History*, 51.

the early Islamic practice of marking time with a beater (*qaḍīb*) is presumably also to be viewed as a survival of an earlier tradition of percussion accompaniment.

Equally obscure – both generally and also specifically in relation to the question of the way melodic structure might have been affected by prosodic features – is the nature of the contrast between the melodic styles of the ornate "heavy" *sinād* and the "light" *hazaj*. Relatively it would seem plausible to assume in the former a far more marked tendency to extend long vowels, either at a single pitch level or by associating with a single vowel (and hence syllable) an extended melodic phrase employing more than one pitch level. Such a procedure, like the use of fixed rhythmic cycles, although in a quite different and perhaps more radical way, would tend to undermine any sense of a quantitatively regular relationship between metrical and rhythmical patterns. Again, it may be presumed that the melody was organized at least partly according to normative modal formulae, some of which – especially cadential formulae – might have had set associations with certain metrical features, being in effect triggered by a particular segment of the verse. It must, however, be emphasized that such suppositions are purely conjectural: any rules governing modal structure and its response to metrical structure would have been transmitted orally (by example, not verbally) and no trace of them survives, except in so far as they may have persisted, undetected, in later stages of the development of the musical system.

Nor is there any conclusive evidence with regard to the question of whether poetry was normally chanted rather than spoken (in however stylized a manner). There are one or two anecdotes implying that both forms of delivery may have been known, and it is quite feasible that they could have co-existed, just as they do, for example, among the Sinai bedouin today. Certainly it is by no means unreasonable to suppose that at an early stage in the development of pre-Islamic prosodic structures the poet might have chanted his verse, if only to help metrical regularity. Comparable bardic traditions in other cultures where poetry is oral and formulaic provide plentiful examples of this kind of practice, and reference may also be made in this connection to the style of delivery characteristic of, say, present-day Nabaṭī vernacular poetry. The form of chant employed by the pre-Islamic poet would probably have been fairly rudimentary, consisting of a simple melodic phrase repeated for each line of the poem, or even for each hemistich, with perhaps slight occasional variation to avoid monotony. For the poet, if improvising, such repetition would have the important advantage of providing a framework, the fixed articulations

of which would control line length and at the same time prompt selection from an appropriate set of verbal formulae having a common metrical structure. We would thus be dealing with a type of musical expression far removed from, and much more ancient than, the entertainment music of the *sinād/hazaj* genre cultivated by the singing slave girl (so that there is nothing incongruous in suggesting that whereas one might have contributed to the stabilization of certain metrical patterns, the other could have been affected by them). The chanting of poetry would, if anything, have aligned itself rather with the *ḥudā'* and *naṣb*, or may even have constituted one branch of a separate tradition involving also religious chant. But of such a tradition there is scant record, and it must be stressed once again that the above remarks are of a highly speculative nature.

THE FIRST CENTURY OF ISLAM

General developments

Perhaps the most pervasive theme in later accounts of musical practice during the first/seventh century is that of innovation. Attention is drawn to changes introduced in a wide variety of fields, including melody, rhythm, form, instruments, and the social identity and role of the musician. The extent of these innovations has, perhaps, been overestimated, as a result of attaching too much weight to one element (c) in what might be abstracted as a narrative formula: "a was the first b to do c in d" (where a is a person, while b specifies e.g. sex, c a particular musical activity, and d time or place). Nevertheless it can hardly be disputed that a number of significant changes did take place, and most if not all of them may be seen as an indirect result of, on the one hand, the Arab conquests, and on the other, the gradual development of Islamic orthodoxy.

The spread of Arab hegemony beyond the Peninsula brought about more immediate contacts with the high cultures of the former Byzantine and Persian territories, either directly or through captives sent to the Hijaz. Of the two the Persian influence was to prove by far the more potent, and was symbolized in its early stages in the person of a certain Nashīṭ, whose songs, we are told, became so popular that prominent Arab musicians found themselves obliged to learn from him. There is a sad lack of factual information about the musical characteristics of these Persian songs and no indication as to whether they were merely a fashionable exoticism, or were to exert a more permanent influence on Hijazi practice. The latter would appear the more likely supposition, but it is impossible to determine

the nature and extent of the influence. Perhaps the most instructive material in this connection is contained in accounts of the careers of two of the most celebrated early Umayyad musicians, Ibn Misjaḥ (d. *c.* 96/715) and Ibn Muḥriz (d. *c.* 96/715), both of whom are credited with incorporating into their own musical language elements acquired during their extensive travels through what had previously been Byzantine and Persian territories. The particular narrative may not be historically sound in every respect – and almost certainly would not be true of both musicians. But it may be considered realistic to the extent that it recognizes the importance of outside influences while at the same time stressing the fundamental independence and resilience of the Arab musical idiom, which did not borrow indiscriminately, but rejected whatever was not readily assimilable.

More specific details are to be found on the instrumental side. We see, for example, the introduction of the Persian wooden-bellied lute – it is only now that the term *'ūd* becomes current – and, in all probability, a change in the accordatura to a system of tuning in fourths throughout, thus giving a range of two octaves as against the earlier single octave. One cannot, however, conclude from this that the normal vocal range was extended at all: there is no reason to suppose that it was ever restricted by the limitations of accompanying instruments. Emphasis on high/low octave alternation does seem to have been a feature of 'Abbasid practice, but it could obviously have originated much earlier; indeed, the extension of the lute range could have been adopted the more easily to copy an already existing vocal model.

A further important general development – which may also have been brought about partly by outside influences – is claimed to be the emergence of *ghinā' mutqan*. Again, no description of this style is forthcoming, nor are we told anything about the differences, probably minor, between it and the *sinād/hazaj* type, out of which it presumably evolved, and which it seems to have superseded. The one descriptive epithet associated with it, *raqīq* ("fine", "delicate") suggests perhaps a greater degree of refinement, and its sophistication (already implicit in the term *mutqan*, meaning "perfect", "precise") may have related not only to innovations in the texture of sound, but in part also to changes in behaviour, since there are indications of a higher degree of formality and decorum on the part of both performer and audience.

The contrast between the "heavy" and "light" styles was probably an important feature of *ghinā' mutqan*, even though it is never discussed in these terms. The *Aghānī* contains a number of instructive anecdotes that clearly indicate a differentiation between more serious and gayer styles of

composition during the first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries, and it is difficult to conceive of these as unconnected with *ghinā' mutqan*. A number of interesting details also emerge: thus the "heavy" style seems to have enjoyed greater artistic prestige, although there are suggestions that, at least towards the latter part of the Umayyad period, the "light" style was by far the more popular, and was therefore cultivated as a safer guarantee of financial reward. (That the *Aghānī* should at the same time record a larger number of songs having "heavy" rhythms might therefore be interpreted as a covert value judgement.) Increasing specialization, matched no doubt by improvements in technique, is indicated by persistent references to individuals being pre-eminent in one particular area. The contrast drawn by Ma'bad (d. 125/743), one of the greatest Umayyad singers, between himself and the equally eminent Ibn Surayj (d. 107/726) points in addition to geographical distinctions, suggesting, perhaps, that it was the "light" style that was the more affected by innovations of Persian origin. Such might also be the implication of an anecdote in which the singing of a Hijazi musician is criticized in terms recalling descriptions of the earlier "heavy" *sinād*; and it is again the "light" style that seems to have been the more receptive to the later wave of Persian influence affecting 'Abbasid court music.

But whatever the differences between the "heavy" and "light" styles – and in attitudes towards them – it is clear from the growth of a standard technical terminology towards the end of the Umayyad period that they were considered to belong to the same general system. Codification of this system was particularly developed in the areas of melody and rhythm, while criticisms of individual songs often show a keen interest in, and awareness of, formal considerations. Melody is classified according to a system of eight modes whose names are technical shorthand descriptions relating to frets on the lute. The nomenclature used divides them into two sets (*majrā*) of four, one including notes produced on the middle finger (*wusṭā*) fret, the other the ring finger (*binṣir*) fret (the *wusṭā* and *binṣir* fret notes being mutually exclusive), and the organization of the whole system may conceivably have been influenced by the example of the Byzantine *octoechos*. Our sources tell us something about the scale system to which these modes relate, but not about the extent to which they are more than merely scales, i.e. how far they prescribe what the composer or performer should or should not do, although anecdotes suggesting virtually instant composition would seem to point to a fairly highly developed use of modal formulae. A conceptual differentiation that appears to come to the fore only during the 'Abbasid period is that distinguishing the basic outline of a song from the ornamentation added to it in performance. But it reflects a conflict that

may have begun somewhat earlier: the extent to which a singer embellished a song represented a compromise between the moderating influence of taste and the urge to demonstrate his virtuosity, and the trend towards technical display – which implies also a relative devaluation of the words in the total aesthetic impact of the performance – can hardly have been a purely 'Abbasid phenomenon.

Music and verse

There are other and perhaps clearer indications of an increase in, or greater emphasis on, the autonomy of music as against verse. This is not to say, however, that the relationship between the two was seriously eroded or played down in any way: Ibn Surayj's brief catalogue of the virtues sought in a good singer gives due weight to correct articulation of the verse, and in the 'Abbasid period the internal structure of a song is still discussed in terms derived from prosody, so that presumably the melodic phrasing was evaluated at least partly in the light of its appositeness to the natural divisions of the verse. Nevertheless the melodic unit was extended from one verse to two, which suggests a less rigid relationship between melody and the verse unit and, in the former, the capacity to organize more extended structures. The musician also seems, on occasion, to have handled his text in a rather cavalier fashion. Apart from the predictable alteration or suppression of material offensive to a particular audience, we find examples of lines being taken from various parts of a poem, of words being changed, or of a line being inserted from a different source. But too much weight should not be attached to this; marked variations in both phraseology and line order occur between the different transmissions of much early poetry, and are only to be expected in a still partly oral tradition. It may therefore be doubted whether there was anything abnormal or extreme in the musician's apparent capriciousness, although it is instructive to contrast Umayyad practice in this respect with the distinctly preservationist attitudes of Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī (150–235/767–850), who attempted to guard the Umayyad musical legacy against the depradations of his contemporaries.

The balance between music and verse may also have been subtly affected by changes in the relationship between voice and accompanying instruments. While still subordinate, the latter acquired greater importance, and it gradually became the norm for the singer to accompany himself on the lute (where previously he may have used, if anything, a percussion instrument, usually a framed drum). As an extension of this practice there evolved another token of musical independence, the instrumental prelude,

the melodic structure of which had, by the time of al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) if not before, become purely instrumental in conception.

The growing refinement of instrumental technique was apparently matched by increasing subtlety in vocal technique. Attention was drawn not only to variations in voice production and timbre – although the terms used are unfortunately not always clear, being auditory and impressionistic rather than articulatory – but also to phonetic features, so that the verse came to be viewed in a sense as raw material the sound texture of which the singer should manipulate to the best advantage. Hence he is concerned both to underline and to enhance the beauty of the words, and at the same time, paradoxically, to devalue their impact as meaning by employing them as a vehicle for projecting specifically musical effects. Indeed, in the pursuit of the latter aim the words could on occasion be subjected to certain alterations (including even a change of rhyme in one instance recorded by the *Aghānī*). Normally, however, these would occur at the sub-morphemic level, involving for the most part different methods (including syllable repetition) of extending long vowels.

The functional nature of the musician's evaluation of the phonetic properties of the verse is clearly demonstrated by al-Fārābī's analysis, which is quite independent of the tradition of Sībawayh, the famous second/eighth-century grammarian. Here sounds are divided first into vowels, with short, long, and diphthong subdivisions, and consonants. The latter are then subdivided, according to evidently musical criteria, into continuants and stops; and the continuants are further classified on an aesthetic basis into the liquids and nasals (*l*, *m* and *n*) on the one hand and on the other those which are considered to detract from the quality of the notes with which they are associated (', *ḥ* and *ẓ* are the examples given).

Also in some way associated with the emergence of *ghinā' mutqan* during the first/seventh century is, apparently, a degree of innovation in the area of rhythm. As has been noted, however, fixed rhythmic cycles can hardly have been absent from pre-Islamic entertainment music, so that the reported innovations may indicate not so much a radically novel departure as a tendency to make the use of such cycles (their number perhaps enlarged by new developments) a more important, possibly even a universal and obligatory, feature of the musical system. If so, such a change would again point to a greater degree of musical autonomy, since the general use of fixed cycles would tend to diminish any influence the verse structure might have exerted on the rhythmic articulation of the melody. (The shift would be even more dramatic if the extent of rhythmic innovation during the first/seventh century were greater than is here

supposed.) The cultivation or continuation of a musical style not incorporating fixed rhythmic cycles can in fact only have existed on the margin of Umayyad practice (for example in unaccompanied vocal improvisation) or in specific areas, such as improvised instrumental preludes, considered to fall outside the main body of a song; for whenever technical details about a song are given in the *Aghānī* they always include a reference to the rhythmic cycle employed. Indeed, it is evident that for 'Abbasid scholars the rhythmic cycle took precedence over the melodic mode as a criterion of identification – being perhaps easier to isolate – for the latter is frequently given in abbreviated form or even not mentioned at all.

Musician and poet

Of perhaps even greater importance than these technical developments for the relationship between music and verse were the social changes taking place during the first/seventh century. The musicians whose names have been mentioned in the preceding sections are all male, and while the singing slave girl, who had reigned supreme in the entertainment music of pre-Islamic Arabia, continued to fulfil an important function, she soon yielded pride of place to the male musician. Such an apparently abrupt reversal is not easy to account for, but may be related to a general transformation of Hijazi society during this period. Not only had the traditional social fabric been subjected to severe stresses, especially in the urban centres where entertainment music flourished, by the establishment of the Islamic state, but it had also subsequently to come to terms with the loss of political power attendant upon the founding of the Umayyad caliphate and the consequent removal of the capital to Syria. The process was to prove a painful one, and as one of its symptoms may be seen the growing opposition between the pious, sometimes ascetic, adherents of the new faith and a pleasure-seeking young élite, enjoying wealth without responsibility, whom the professional musician served. In this context it is not without significance that a number of the most prominent early male musicians were effeminates, forming therefore a group that in a sense operated on both sides of the dividing line between male and female, and may have helped preserve certain pre-Islamic attitudes and forms of social behaviour by circumventing the more rigid Islamic segregation of the sexes.

Thus these effeminates may be considered to provide an intermediate, transitional stage in the transfer from a female-dominated to a male-dominated profession. No doubt there were transitional stages in performance practice also; there are anecdotes, for instance, suggesting the

survival of "female" elements in the vocal technique of Ibn Surayj
(perhaps in the use of a particular style of voice production, or an
exaggeratedly high register). The admission of men into what had formerly
been a woman's preserve also occurs outside the strict limits of entertain-
ment music, for according to the *Aghānī* both Ibn Surayj and al-Gharīd
started their careers as exponents of the lament (*nawḥ*), and in the case of
the latter the women were, interestingly, eager to teach him. A further
common element among Umayyad musicians was their social status:
almost all were non-Arab Muslims (*mawālī*) and some, furthermore, were
of doubtful parentage. It is thus hardly surprising to find many of them
on the fringes of established society, fulfilling certain functions which the
community could not allow its accredited members to perform. However
lacking in respectability, their profession possessed the crucial advantage
of conferring both a degree of social mobility and the possibility of
material reward.

The particular social situation within which the performer operated –
especially in so far as he served to perpetuate a fundamentally non-Islamic
code of behaviour – may also be seen as one of the chief causes of the
changing attitudes towards music that were to crystallize into overt
hostility on the part of 'Abbasid legists. Apart from the automatic
disfavour that would have been incurred by any type of music associated
with pagan religious practices rejected by Islam, it seems unlikely that there
was any initial disapproval of music. Rather, music, or more specifically
entertainment music, gradually became associated with various forbidden
activities, and was thus regarded as implying, or even embodying, values
that were to prove increasingly unacceptable as Islamic orthodoxy defined
itself more precisely. It is evident from the later debate on the legality of
music that the upholders of orthodoxy tacitly recognized a classification,
based on differences of function, not fundamentally dissimilar to the one
suggested above in discussing the pre-Islamic period. Thus musical
activities that accompany, and are integrated into, social activities and
ceremonies are sanctioned (if sometimes grudgingly or even by the legal
fiction of being defined as something other than music), while entertain-
ment music and the instruments associated with it are deemed unlawful.
Principally, entertainment music was associated with the shadowy moral
world of effeminates, its sexually ambiguous purveyors; with wine-drinking
(in literature the two are virtually inseparable); and, particularly in relation
to the slave girl, with sexual provocation. Its erotic impact was further
heightened by the fact that by far the most common type of poetry set
to music was love poetry.

Within this preferred area early Umayyad musicians also showed a

marked partiality for the verse of their contemporaries, in particular that
of 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah and the other Hijazi love poets. Indeed, Hijazi
musicians and poets of the first/seventh century seem to have had a keen
awareness and appreciation of each other's achievements, whereas more
traditional bedouin poets are sometimes depicted as reacting rather naively
to the music of the professional urban Hijazi performer, with which they
were presumably still relatively unfamiliar. In such circumstances, and
taking into account the fact that in both poetry and music the Hijaz seems
during this period to have been a centre of innovation, the question
naturally poses itself of the possibility of one art influencing the other, and
in particular of whether the new style of entertainment music could have
had some effect on the development of poetry. As might be expected, the
available evidence does not permit any conclusive answer to be drawn.
Nevertheless, since the view has been put forward that some of the most
distinctive features of the new Hijazi love poetry may be at least partly
attributable to this source,[5] there are a number of general observations
that ought to be made, principally about metre, but also in relation to
developments in form, diction, and theme.

The thematic connection is obvious: the verse most frequently chosen
by the singer has as its subject matter the poet's preferred topic. But the
nature of the causal link is not quite so obvious. There is no doubt that
a number of love poems (or fragments of them) first became popular in
song form. Consequently, it can well be imagined that a fledgeling poet
might have concentrated on love poetry in order to attract the attention
of well-known singers and thereby gain a wider audience for his verse.
But poets with an established reputation would not have felt such pressure,
so that in their case a predilection for love poetry cannot have been
dictated – although it may have been encouraged – by the preferences of
the singer. A further complicating factor concerns the expectations and
demands of the singer's audience, literary as well as musical; to what extent,
in short, may it be assumed that the singer was the arbiter of public taste
rather than its servant? In partnership with the poet, he may be credited
with having given characteristic expression to a change in sensibility
among influential sectors of leisured Hijazi society. But although his
contribution to the efflorescence of love poetry was possibly of some
significance, his influence on the particular cast its subject matter took can
only have been of a general order; and to that extent the theory of musical
influence becomes, in relation to the specific domain of thematic content,
not implausible, but rather inadequate as an explanatory hypothesis, since

[5] See e.g. Ḍayf, *Taṭawwur*, 101–5.

it is only of marginal help in accounting for the innovations that differentiate the Hijazi love poem from the pre-Islamic amatory prelude (*nasīb*).[6]

Similar arguments can be marshalled with regard to form and diction. If it is assumed that the ode (*qaṣīdah*) preceded the short poem (*qiṭʿah*) it is conceivable that the singer's preferences may have hastened the establishment of the amatory prelude as a separate section, which could then evolve as an independent love poem. But the average length of the short poem cannot have been affected by the structure of songs, since these would have suggested the development of much shorter forms dealing with perhaps one isolated motif. To find a musician setting a whole poem, even of no more than ten lines, is extremely rare: normally he chooses just two or three. With reference to diction, the suggestion that one of the reasons for the greater simplicity of language in Hijazi love poetry was the desire to enhance its effectiveness when sung may not be demonstrably false, but is hardly convincing. A reduction of lexical range can be accounted for quite readily by the particular nature of the thematic content and by the frequently conversational tone adopted. In any case, the implication that song-texts normally tend towards simplicity may itself be discounted as simplistic; a striking feature of much Arabic folk-poetry that is normally sung, for example, is complexity of rhyme resulting in frequent homophony and paronomasia.

A rather stronger general argument could be made for musical practice having influenced line length, and consequently also metre. Assuming that a line of verse would normally take much longer to sing than to speak, there could have been a trend, especially as a reaction to an increasing complexity of melodic structure, to prefer shorter lines when composing verse for singing. They would not only help guarantee comprehensibility, but also preserve the single line as a stable unit of perception. There would thus appear to be greater justification for the suggestion that musical practice and the desire to compose verse easier to set encouraged an increase in the popularity of the lighter and shorter metres (e.g. *hazaj*, *ramal, sarīʿ* and the dimeter forms of *kāmil* and *wāfir*). However, consideration may best be given to this particular issue in the context of a wider discussion of the relationship between poetic metre and musical rhythm.

[6] See, however, Vadet, *Esprit courtois*, 71–102. But cf. J. E. Bencheikh, "Musiciens".

RHYTHM AND PROSODY

The one obvious area where one might conceive of a stable, consciously maintained and readily quantifiable relationship between early Arabic music and verse is in fact in their rhythmic structure. Melody as an organization of pitches needs to be viewed as something quite separate from the vague pitch contours derivable from the intonational patterns of speech; but there could clearly be some kind of parallel between the regular groupings of long and short syllables (together with any attendant stress patterns) forming the metrical pulse, and the standard spacings of percussions within the cycle of a rhythm.

The relationship between the two is underlined by Arab tradition itself. The same paternity, that of al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad, is accorded to both the study of prosody (*'arūḍ*) and the study of rhythm (*īqā'*), while a considerable number of later theorists employ techniques of analysis and a terminology derived from the prosodists. There is also an obvious, if partial, overlap in nomenclature, for the names of two of the poetic metres, *ramal* and *hazaj*, are also used to designate musical rhythms, and a third, *khafīf*, is again occasionally applied to a specific rhythmic cycle, although it is more commonly employed to designate a set of rhythms. These particular conjunctions are of additional interest in that the poetic metres concerned are relatively rare in the pre-Islamic corpus, emerging into prominence in first/seventh century Hijazi love poetry. Thus the possibility immediately suggests itself of certain rhythmic features of the new and increasingly popular *ghinā' mutqan* style having influenced the system of poetic metres, if not in the elaboration of new structures, then at least in transforming the scale of popularity of existing ones.

The analysis of rhythm

But any hypothesis about the influence of rhythmic structure on metrical structure (or indeed vice versa) can be tested, at least in the first instance, only by comparing the two systems. Here a number of difficulties arise. For while the system of poetic metres has been codified into an agreed set of optimal structures, each with a number of permissible variants, the system of musical rhythms remains by contrast obscure. Also, since the individual components are subject to historical change, there is no guarantee that the information contained in 'Abbasid sources would be valid for earlier periods. Further, the earliest extant accounts (those of al-Kindī (d. 260/874), Ibn Khurdādhbih (d. *c.* 300/911) and al-Fārābī (d. *c.* 339/950)) differ from each other in certain important respects, and are

moreover sometimes difficult to interpret and on occasion imprecise. Even the nomenclature varies somewhat; the following, for example, are the rhythms mentioned in the *Aghānī* and by al-Kindī, the earliest theorist:

Aghānī	al-Kindī
thaqīl awwal	*thaqīl awwal*
thānī thaqīl	*thaqīl thānī*
khafīf al-thaqīl	*khafīf al-thaqīl*
khafīf al-thaqīl al-awwal	
mākhūrī	*mākhūrī*
ramal	*ramal*
khafīf al-ramal	*khafīf al-ramal*
hazaj	*hazaj*
khafīf al-hazaj	
	khafīf al-khafīf

Al-Kindī and Ibn Khurdādhbih (quoting Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī) are agreed on a scheme of eight basic rhythmic cycles. But it is not clear whether this accurately reflects practice, or might in some respects be an artificial construction. ·We may recall that there were eight melodic modes also, and it seems fortuitous to find a system of rhythms mirroring them not only in the total number of items but also in the (albeit asymmetrical) subdivision into two groups (in this case a *thaqīl* set and a *khafīf* set). In the fourth/tenth century a rather different and much more detailed description of the rhythmic cycles is provided by al-Fārābī. His theoretical treatment of the subject is highly complex and the account of the rhythms given in the *Iqā'āt*, for example, would again seem to result as much from an urge towards systematization as from unprejudiced observation. But neither he nor later theorists, some of whom provide a fuller account of practice, suggest any equivalence between modes and rhythms, whether in total number or internal groupings.

A more pertinent difficulty facing any attempt to confront the rhythms with the verse metres concerns the definitions of the individual rhythmic cycles themselves. Al-Fārābī incorporates variables into some of his definitions by means of a method which raises problems of its own. Thus *ramal*, for example, is defined as $(x + 2) + (x + 1) + (x + 3)$, yielding possible cycles of $2 + 1 + 3(x = 0)$, $3 + 2 + 4(x = 1)$ and $4 + 3 + 5(x = 2)$. With the partial exception of al-Fārābī, then, it is fair to say that the theorists present structures that by no means exhaust the possibilities encountered in practice. They are to be construed rather as archetypes, each symbolizing a group of available variant forms distinguished from other such groups by certain characteristic features. Thus the cycles as given could be

modified not only by internal subdivisions and elisions – features not in
themselves radically different from the permissible prosodic variations – but
also, so it would appear, by extension, i.e. by repeating the equivalent of
a metrical foot. Further, the application of the terms "heavy" and "light"
to both metres and rhythms is deceptive, for, though no doubt justified
by broadly analogous effects, it does conceal a fundamental structural
difference. The distinction between "heavy" and "light" metres (e.g. *ṭawīl*
and *hazaj*) is based largely on line length, whereas the corresponding
contrast in rhythm, although also involving variations of structure, relates
principally to tempo. Thus if we take, for example, the descriptions given
by al-Kindī, we may offer the following as a conjectural interpretation (o
representing a time unit marked by a percussion and . an unmarked time
unit):[7]

slow/heavy		fast/light	
thaqīl awwal	o o o .	*khafīf al-thaqīl*	o o o .
thaqīl thānī	o o o . o	*mākhūrī*	o o . o .
ramal	o . o o .	*khafīf al-ramal*	o o o
		khafīf al-khafīf	o o .
		hazaj	ơ o . .

Correlations

It is indicative of the problematic nature of the relationship between
rhythm and metre that it is precisely the terms common to both that are
the most awkward to pin down. Although the logic of the *ramal/khafīf
al-ramal* contrast, supported by the authority of al-Fārābī, would apportion
ramal to the slow set, it is associated in the *Aghānī* with a "light" style.
Again, we have seen that the term *hazaj* was earlier used to designate such
a style, so that it may not have acquired specific rhythmic connotations
until the Umayyad period; and even then it may have continued to
function as an indicator of genre rather than simply as the name of a given
cycle, for despite the alleged popularity of *hazaj* the number of songs in
the *hazaj* rhythmic cycle mentioned in the *Aghānī* is extremely small,
perhaps because they were considered of lesser artistic value and hardly
worth recording. Further, for al-Fārābī *hazaj* denotes the abstract notion
of a recurring rhythmic pulse as well as a particular cycle. The term *hazaj*
would appear therefore to involve a bundle of features, so that it is by
no means certain that it was ever a particular common element of metrical
and rhythmic structure that occasioned its employment in both music and
poetry.

[7] For a different interpretation cf. Farmer, "Music", 448.

However, if one attempts to correlate the above interpretation of al-Kindī's descriptions with metrical feet there are two cases in which some kind of parallel can be detected. The *ramal* cycle, o . o o ., could be related to the *fāʿilun* foot of, amongst others, the *ramal* metre ($-\cup- = 2 + 1 + 2 = $ o . o o .), while *mākhūrī*, o o . o ., could be similarly related to the *faʿūlun* foot, which occurs in *ṭawīl* and *wāfir*, as well as being fundamental to *mutaqārib* ($\cup-- = 1 + 2 + 3 = $ o o . o .). Correspondences of this type are, indeed, explicitly mentioned by al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Kātib (late fourth/tenth century) – if only to be dismissed as rare, and avoided by good musicians. But whether or not one is tempted to seek here the possible origin of a rhythmic cycle or metrical pattern, there is no certainty that the correlation would have had any validity for Umayyad practice.

More fundamentally, it may be argued that the elements juxtaposed have not been shown to be commensurable. Ignoring its variant forms, the verse foot is unambiguous, and may be abstracted from existing poetry. The musical rhythm, on the other hand, cannot be abstracted from a song in the same way (unless we consider the percussion accompaniment in isolation), for the singer was under no compulsion to make the words fit the rhythm in the same sense that the poet was obliged to choose words that conform to the metre. Congruence between the verse (foot) structure and the rhythmic cycle structure as applied to the melody might have occurred sporadically, but would not have been systematic. Indeed, for al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Kātib the contemporary aesthetic required non-congruence, so that the musician would deliberately refrain from setting verse to a rhythm exhibiting similar patterns of accentuation. But irrespective of whether such an attitude was specific to the ʿAbbasid period, the fact remains that the only valid correlation between the metrical and melodic layout of the words would be so broad as to exclude the possibility of meaningful comparisons in any one instance; one can say no more than that, in singing, long syllables would be kept on average significantly longer than short syllables, but not in the rough 2:1 ratio of the spoken form. Later notation shows short syllables spread over one or two time units, while long syllables vary in duration from two to more than fifty time units. Umayyad practice may not have presented such extreme contrasts, but the relative extension of long syllables must certainly have occurred.

It would follow that the rhythmic and prosodic uses of the structures juxtaposed above were in fact quite different. The latter relate directly to the words, while the former do not and have no regulative function with regard to them. Consequently there is little point in seeking a musical

motive for the growing popularity of the "light" metres on this level of analysis. In the apparent absence of a structural and quantifiable relationship it could, nevertheless, still be argued that there might have been a conventional, affective correspondence, so that a given rhythm was felt, however arbitrarily, to be more suitable for the setting of poetry in a given metre. From this it would follow that if such a rhythm was particularly favoured by musicians it might encourage poets to employ the metre subjectively paired with it.

Comparative data

The evidence provided by the *Aghānī* is perhaps not conclusive, but can hardly be said to confirm such a hypothesis. The relevant information in volumes i–v of the work may be most concisely expressed in tabular form, enabling us to compare the relatively popularity of the various rhythmic cycles in relation to the metres of the verse set both between different periods and, within the same period, between different musicians.

There are, unfortunately, a number of complicating factors necessitating a few brief preliminary remarks. The area covered in the early theoretical works by the pair *khafīf al-thaqīl al-awwal* and *khafīf al-thaqīl al-thānī* (for which *mākhūrī* is a synonym) is in the *Aghānī* distributed among three terms: *khafīf al-thaqīl*, *khafīf al-thaqīl al-awwal*, and *khafīf al-thaqīl al-thānī/mākhūrī*. It may well be that *khafīf al-thaqīl* (by far the most frequent of the three) is simply a more general term embracing the other two, which may during the Umayyad period have been still relatively undifferentiated. Indeed, *khafīf al-thaqīl al-thānī/mākhūrī*, especially in view of its particular association with Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (125–88/742–804), might possibly represent a wholly post-Umayyad development (only one Umayyad composition is said to be in it). But if so, the insertion of *awwal* in relation to Umayyad settings would have to be viewed as an addition by later scholars, and if not, the distinction between *khafīf al-thaqīl* and *khafīf al-thaqīl al-awwal* would still be obscure. Because of this confusion over the precise domain of each term all three will be grouped together. Elsewhere, inaccuracies may result from the rather arbitrary handling of cases of dual or multiple attribution, and from the inclusion of some undetected duplicate entries. However, if such inaccuracies are assumed to be fairly evenly spread the degree of distortion involved should not be very high.

Table 1 includes only Umayyad settings. The musicians who supply the great majority of these can reasonably be held to form a single school, so that from this point of view table 1 does not represent a conflation of differing trends (although, as we shall see, there might be considerable variation from musician to musician). The relevant master–pupil

relationships[8] (which should not be taken to imply necessarily a lengthy apprenticeship) are shown in diagram 1; the boxed names are those whose compositions are most frequently listed by al-Iṣfahānī.

For purposes of comparison, table 11 shows the early ʿAbbasid settings. The same layout is adopted, so that there is one composite *khafīf al-thaqīl* entry, despite the pertinence for the ʿAbbasid period of the distinction between *khafīf al-thaqīl al-awwal* and *khafīf al-thaqīl al-thānī/mākhūrī*.

The chief contributors to table 11 are Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī, Ibn Jāmiʿ, ʿArīb, Mutayyam, ʿAllūyah, Siyāṭ and Mukhāriq. The relevant teacher–pupil relationships (which, as before, would vary considerably in importance) are shown in diagram 2.[9] It may be noted that both Yaḥyā 'l-Makkī and Yūnus al-Kātib provide direct links with Umayyad practice, the latter having reportedly had contacts with Ibn Muḥriz, Ibn Surayj and al-Gharīḍ, amongst others.
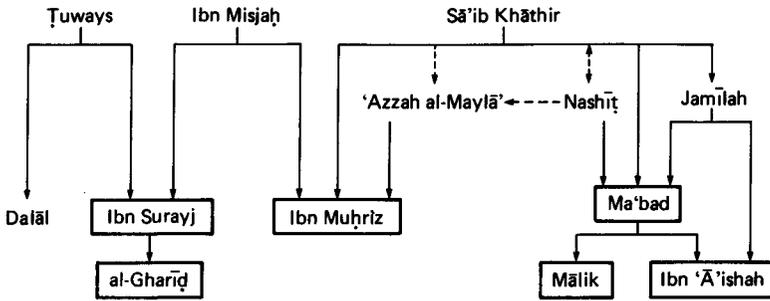
1. Master–pupil relationships in the Umayyad period
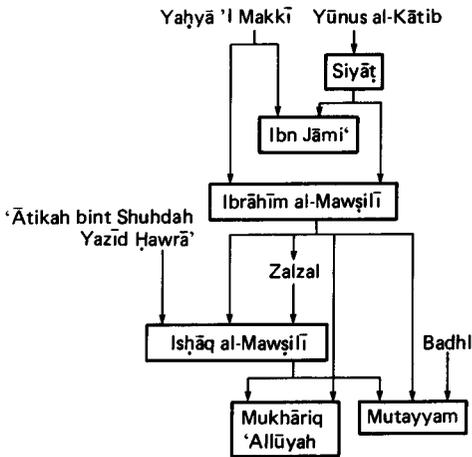
2. Master–pupil relationships in the ʿAbbasid period

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[8] After Farmer, *History*, 53–8 and 77–86.

[9] After Neubauer, *Musiker*, 140–52. Farmer, *History*, gives different forms for some of these names: ʿUrayb, Mutayyim, Siyyāṭ.

Table I. *Umayyad settings*

Metre \ Rhythm	thaqīl awwal	thānī thaqīl	khafīf al-thaqīl	ramal	khafīf al-ramal	hazaj	khafīf al-hazaj	Total	Percentage of total
ṭawīl	52	26	23	20	9	4	0	134	21.6
kāmil	37	15	27	15	13	2	0	109	17.6
khafīf	29	12	40	14	13	0	1	109	17.6
wāfir	23	12	19	10	8	0	0	72	11.6
basīṭ	17	8	13	9	5	1	1	54	8.7
ramal	5	10	14	10	7	1	0	47	7.6
munsariḥ	7	4	8	7	4	1	0	31	5
mutaqārib	3	8	6	7	3	0	1	28	4.5
sarī'	2	5	2	3	2	0	0	14	2.3
madīd	6	2	4	0	2	0	0	14	2.3
Other	2	1	0	3	3	0	0	9	1.4
Total	183	103	156	98	69	9	3	621	
Percentage of total	29.5	16.6	25.1	15.8	11.1	1.4	0.5		

Table II. *'Abbasid settings*

Metre \ Rhythm	thaqīl awwal	thānī thaqīl	khafīf al-thaqīl	ramal	khafīf al-ramal	hazaj	khafīf al-hazaj	Total	Percentage of total
ṭawīl	32	20	23	21	13	5	0	114	31.8
kāmil	13	9	7	13	4	2	1	49	13.7
khafīf	10	9	10	9	5	3	0	46	12.8
wāfir	7	7	11	9	5	3	1	43	12
basīṭ	5	1	4	4	2	6	0	22	6.1
ramal	5	5	7	4	3	3	1	28	7.8
munsariḥ	4	0	3	2	3	0	0	12	3.4
mutaqārib	4	6	5	2	2	0	0	19	5.3
sarī'	3	1	3	0	3	1	0	11	3.1
hazaj	2	0	3	1	1	1	0	8	2.2
Other	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	6	1.7
Total	87	58	76	66	43	25	3	358	
Percentage of total	24.3	16.2	21.2	18.4	12	7	0.8		

Tables I and II are clearly similar in their general profiles. Table II suggests that among the rhythms there had been a slight relative reduction in the popularity of *thaqīl awwal* and the *khafīf al-thaqīl* complex, with a marginal corresponding increase in that of *ramal*, and a rather more marked increase in the incidence of *hazaj*. But *hazaj* remains, at a modest 7%, somewhat infrequent, and the overall change is remarkably small. Further,

if *ramal* is considered a "heavy" rhythm then the relationship of "heavy" to "light" also remains virtually unchanged, the "heavy" rhythms forming 62% of I, 59% of II. (If not, there is a drop from 46% to 40.5%.) Changes in the relative frequencies of the various metres are also generally unremarkable – with the notable exception of *ṭawīl*, which rather unexpectedly increases its dominance to account for almost a third of all settings in II.

The importance of *ṭawīl* serves as a reminder that the musicians' fondness for the lighter metres, the popularity of which they are supposed to have encouraged, was by no means obsessive. A comparison of table I with a frequency table of metres used in early bedouin poetry (say in the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*) would thus show not a dramatic reversal of previous preferences but rather a general flattening out of the differences between metres. In fact, the four metres (*ṭawīl, kāmil, wāfir*, and *basīṭ*) which account for the vast majority (83%) of the poems in the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, while losing their overwhelming preponderance, still occupy four of the first five places in table I, and represent between them 59% of the total (although this figure does conceal a tendency towards greater use of the dimeter (*majẓū'*) forms of *kāmil* and *wāfir*). The "light" metres that appear most prominently are *khafīf* and, to a lesser degree, *ramal*, which together account for 25% of the total in table I, and 20% in II. It is, of course, extremely interesting that the two metres rising most swiftly in popularity should be ones the names of which also occur as technical terms relating to musical rhythm. But unfortunately one can do little more than note the fact, since, as we have seen, it is extremely difficult to establish meaningful links between the prosodic and musical uses of these terms.

With regard to the variations between tables I and II in the pairings of metres and rhythms, no reference will be made to combinations with the metres *sarī'* and below, and the rhythms *hazaj* and *khafīf al-hazaj*, because of the small size of the sample. The one important point to be noted concerning them in the present context is that tables I and II exhibit between them no more than one example of a *hazaj* poem set in *hazaj* rhythm. Comparing the settings in the various rhythms as percentages of the total for each metre, table II shows a number of significant changes, and although no clear pattern emerges from them one can nevertheless detect a relative reduction in the proportion of combinations of "heavy" metres with "heavy" rhythms, "light" with "light". Comparison of the settings of the various metres as percentages of the total for each rhythm provides fewer sharp contrasts between the two tables. What differences there are, however, seem to point in the same general direction, and indicate in particular a rather more even distribution of *ṭawīl* over all rhythms.

The internal variations in table I, although therefore greater than those in table II, are still hardly dramatic. They seem to indicate a marginal preference for pairing "light" metres with "light" rhythms, "heavy" with "heavy", but little more. Thus, despite the prominence of a few particular combinations, notably *ṭawīl/thaqīl awwal* and *khafīf/khafīf al-thaqīl*, there would appear to be no strong indication of a trend towards specific conventional pairings that might suggest a possible musical influence.

Choice of rhythm would seem in fact to have been dictated largely by the musician's personal predilection – or his particular area of technical expertise. The great majority of Ma'bad's songs, for example, are in *thaqīl awwal*, while Mālik evinces a preference for the *khafīf al-thaqīl* rhythm(s). (It is no doubt true that once such associations were established there may have been a tendency towards the automatic attribution of pieces of unknown authorship, but the effect would only be to distort the picture, not to create a totally false one.) One example of variation in choice of rhythm may be seen in table III, which includes all the settings in volumes I–V of the *Aghānī* (except for one in *khafīf al-hazaj*) of verse by 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah.

Table III. *Settings of poems by 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'ah*

Rhythm... Metre	thaqīl awwal	thānī thaqīl	khafīf al-thaqīl	ramal	khafīf al-ramal	thaqīl awwal	thānī thaqīl	khafīf al-thaqīl	ramal	khafīf al-ramal
ṭawīl	4	2	1	10	1	4	2	1	0	0
kāmil	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	4	0	0
khafīf	1	1	3	6	1	2	1	3	0	2
wāfir	2	1	5	3	1	4	1	2	0	2
basīṭ	1	0	0	4	3	1	0	2	0	0
ramal	1	3	0	4	3	0	2	0	0	0
mutaqārib	1	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0
			Ibn Surayj					al-Gharīd		

Metre	thaqīl awwal	thānī thaqīl	khafīf al-thaqīl	ramal	khafīf al-ramal
ṭawīl	7	3	4	0	0
kāmil	3	1	4	0	0
khafīf	3	1	13	1	3
wāfir	3	1	4	1	0
basīṭ	2	0	3	0	0
ramal	1	2	4	0	0
mutaqārib	0	2	3	3	2
			Other musicians		

Settings ascribed to both Ibn Surayj and al-Gharīd, or to one of these and another musician, have been entered in each of the relevant columns.

Apart from the below average number of settings in *kāmil*, table III shows nothing unexpected in the relative distribution of the metres. With regard to choice of rhythm, al-Gharīd's preferences would seem to be fairly typical, differing from the average only in a slightly less frequent use of the *khafīf al-thaqīl* rhythm(s). The figures for Ibn Surayj, by contrast, demonstrate a marked and idiosyncratic predilection for *ramal* (which accounts for no less than 43% of all settings attributed to him), accompanied by lesser deviations from the average in the high number of entries for *khafīf al-ramal* and, particularly, in the low number for *khafīf al-thaqīl*.

It may be readily admitted that the information contained in the three tables is by no means reliable in every respect. Nevertheless it can hardly be doubted that they present us with a broadly accurate reflection of certain general features. With regard to the specific domain of rhythm and metre, therefore, it may safely be accepted that the assumptions sometimes made about the influence of music on the development of poetry during the first/seventh century are not susceptible of demonstration on the basis of the evidence at present available. However, to conclude that such a direct influence on metre should probably be discounted is by no means to deny the possibility of a creative and fruitful interaction between musician and poet, but rather to call into question the level at which this may operate.

THE GREEK IMPACT ON ARABIC LITERATURE

PRE-ISLAMIC TIMES

Among the oldest documents we possess are records of contact between Arabia and the outside world. Sargon's cuneiform inscriptions record receipt of tribute from Shamsiyyah, Queen of Arabia, and Ithamara of Saba, the biblical Sheba. For hundreds of years before the birth of Christ overland trade from India avoided the Red Sea by crossing from Ḥaḍramawt to Ma'rib, capital of Saba, and thence to Macoraba (Mecca), Petra, and the Mediterranean port of Gaza. It was the association of Arabia with the wealth of the India trade which made the appellation "Arabia felix" a name for Roman authors and proconsuls to conjure with, a striking contrast with the Muslim hagiographic image of the pre-Islamic age in Arabia as one of backwardness and barbarism – Jāhiliyyah. The accentuation of the primitiveness, and hence the isolation, of pre-Muslim Arabia must be attributed in part to an effort to underscore the contribution of Islam, parallel to the emphasis Muḥammad put upon his having been unlettered prior to his receipt of revelation, partly to the romanticizing nostalgia with which an urban civilization looked back upon its beginnings. From the Qur'ān itself we learn that Muḥammad, although unlettered and relatively untravelled, knew of the existence of great civilizations in Arabia long before his time; and vaguely, to be sure, of their relations with the surrounding peoples.

Arabia was never hermetically sealed; and when the Arabs, united by Islam, left the confines of the Peninsula, the world which they conquered had long been subject to Hellenizing influence. Plato's respectful references to the ancient wisdom of Egypt and the Greek deference to Iraq in matters of astronomy were recalled by Arabic writers centuries later to correct the impression that the commerce between Hellas and the Near East was necessarily a one way street. The widening of the Greek horizon by the eastern conquests of Alexander, indeed, had made possible a deep cultural interpenetration, which continued long beyond the so-called Hellenistic age. To cite just one example of this interaction, Plotinus, himself a native of upper Egypt, numbered at least one Arab, Zethos, among his closest

friends. Porphyry was Tyrian, his real name being Malchus, and Iamblichus may have been an Arab.

The Arabian desert of the pre-Islamic age, seen from its civilized periphery, from Syria, South Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, Mesopotamia or Abyssinia, was not a wasteland but a sea, capable of being traversed, dotted with island oases, outposts of influence – political, religious, economic, intellectual. When Valerian was defeated in battle by Chosroes Sabur I, it was his Arab ally Udhaynah (Odenathus) who drove Sabur back to al-Madā'in (Ctesiphon) in 265, for which Gallienus rewarded his vassal with the title of Augustus and placed him in command of the Roman legions in the area. Zenobia (Zaynab), widow of the murdered Odenathus, broke away from Rome and, with Palmyra as a base, strove to carve out an eastern empire from the haunches of the Roman world. Her political and philosophic adviser was the Platonist Longinus, fellow student with Plotinus of the Alexandrian sage, Ammonius Saccas.

We must endeavour to overcome the illusion that the entire population of Arabia were primitive barbarians prior to the coming of Islam, who had nothing better to do than to raffle camels, bury daughters alive, or offer human sacrifices to their heathen gods. Muḥammad himself, with his doctrine of the natural *ḥanīf*, does not believe this. Pre-Islamic poetry is a highly stylized art, a selected sampling of which has had the misfortune of surviving almost alone as an artifact of the pre-Islamic age. It has therefore been rather heavily overinterpreted. The notion of time as the universal enemy, casting its pall over all human happiness, is a subtle theme, despite its becoming a cliché of the Arab poets. It has been made to appear primitive only because it is a rather secular and a melancholy theme. The celebration of *muruwwah*, again, has been interpreted as indicating a kind of barbarism on the part of the early Arabs. But indeed it is only a value upheld by a tribal society, in which survival depends to some extent on prowess, and then glorified or romanticized – *and emphasized* – by a later, urban society, whose real interest was a kind of chivalry, *virtù* as it were.

There was, then, a higher culture in pre-Islamic Arabia itself; and, although its base might have been narrow, and its style somewhat mannered and repetitive (this after all is the sign of antiquity in an art form), its themes were by no means incompatible with what was to be received from the Hellenistic milieu. The materials of Arab culture did not leave their possessor naked or unprepared for what he was to learn when he became master of the great cities of the Hellenistic world. And Greek notions were never entirely foreign to him.

"Even the earliest Arab poetry shows definite traces of Hellenistic

tradition", as von Grunebaum pointed out: "As early as *c.* A.D. 500 the poet al-Muraqqish the Elder died of love." Ṭarafah (d. *c.* A.D. 565) warns his beloved of the former poet's fate, and al-Aʻshā (*c.* A.D. 565–629) "calls his beloved a slayer of men".[1] The poet may of course be expressing his sincere emotion, but he does so by means of a clearly identified (and identifiably Greek) literary convention. The same poet echoes Moschos (*c.* 150 B.C.) in "relating (in the first person) the well-known situation of a closed circle of unreciprocated loves so familiar to us from the comic stage". Here love is not a primitive – still less an elemental experience – but a somewhat stylized relationship in which individuals may become entwined more or less interchangeably. The symmetry of their attachments may be pathetic subjectively or objectively comic, but the poem is clearly not a means of living into the experience (as it might have been for a primitive), but a means of attaining distance from it.

We know that there were significant populations of Jews in Arabia prior to the coming of Islam. They seem originally to have come seeking a haven from persecution, and to have been reinforced by successive waves of refugees. While retaining their religious traditions, these monotheists became thoroughly Arabized, and they in turn exercised a marked influence on many Arab tribes. Zenobia herself was regarded as a Jew, and the Ḥimyarite king Dhū Nuwās was a convert to Judaism. The Jewish tribes of Medina were for Muḥammad not only a political force to be reckoned with as a possible ally or enemy, but also a source of data and of criticism for his revelations, although ultimately a thorn in his side to be removed.

Christian populations too had long lived in and near Arabia prior to Muḥammad's time. Their delegates from Najrān in the south had treated with Muḥammad regarding religion, and Arab Christian tribesmen of Jacobite (i.e. Monophysite) persuasion were to fight alongside the Muslim forces in the first years of the *hijrah*, and subsequently to adopt Islam. Indeed the mass conversions of the first years of Islam are foreshadowed by the alleged mass ordinations of Jacobite priests attested in the Syriac sources.

The Lakhmid vassals of Sasanid Persia and the Ghassanid vassals of Byzantium were subject to considerable Greek influence, not only through the Hellenized "successor states" to which they owed allegiance, but also through the sectarian Christians who had taken refuge among them from Byzantine authority. Al-Ḥīrah, near the site of the ancient Babylon and seat of the Lakhmid court, had served as a gathering place for Arabs from the interior since the third century A.D. It was visited by Arab poets and

[1] *Medieval Islam*, 313–14.

boasted its own bishop by the year 410. Around 400, Nu'mān I, the Lakhmid king, seems to have become a religious of some sort, possibly Christian. Several other Lakhmid rulers were Christian, and so were the majority of their subjects. The tale told in the *Aghānī* of the loyalty of Ḥanẓalah and Sharik[2] cannot fail to call to mind the Greek story of Damon and Pythias. But one can only conjecture as to when and how the Greek coloration was injected into this tradition of Lakhmid times. In the case of the earliest Arab exposures to Greek logic and medicine, however, we are by no means left in the dark.

We hear, for example, that the first Arab to be trained scientifically as a physician was Ḥārith b. Kaladah of Ṭā'if (d. *c.* 13/634). Ḥārith, who is also remembered as a poet, studied medicine at the great medical centre of Jundīshāpūr, which was supported by the Sasanian monarchs, staffed in part by Christian refugees bearing Greek medical traditions, and which endured long into the Muslim era to provide the base for the great Persian medical achievements of the ninth–eleventh century. There is a record of a long conversation on medicine between Ḥārith and Chosroes Anūshirvān (reigned A.D. 531–79). Ḥārith's wife was a maternal aunt of Muḥammad, and it appears that the physician knew the Prophet. The couple's son Naḍr, also trained in medicine, is said to have been executed by 'Alī, on orders from Muḥammad, after criticizing the latter's message.

It was not necessary for an Arab to travel as far as Jundīshāpūr or Alexandria to come into contact with Greek ideas. The Jews of Arabia, Palestine and Iraq, the Christians of the same lands and of Syria and Abyssinia, the pagan star-worshippers of Ḥarrān, brought Hellenistic thinking well within the cultural horizons of the knowledgeable Arabian.

As a counterpoise to the Lakhmids, Justinian had built up the power of the rival Arab grouping under the Ghassanids. More thoroughly Hellenized than the Lakhmids, the Ghassanid princes held camp in the marches of Syria, skirting Damascus and Palmyra. But theirs was not a Spartan existence. They were entertained by choruses of Greek singing girls. And Greek influence reached them on a non-secular level as well, for the Ghassanids were Monophysites. The Monophysites and their Nestorian opposite numbers were to play a decisive role in the translation of Greek works into Syriac which preceded their translation into Arabic. Since Jews and Christians were among the principal bearers of Hellenistic culture in pre-Islamic Arabia, an index of the penetration of Hellenistic ideas in Arabia prior to Islam is the impact of Jewish and Christian traditions on the mind of Muḥammad.

The Prophet had heard tell of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus,[3] Christians

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[2] xix, 87, ii.18ff.   [3] Qur'ān xviii.8–26; see *EI*[2], "Asḥāb al-Kahf".

who took refuge in a cave during the persecution of Decius (reigned
A.D. 249–51) and awoke in what was for Christians the more propitious
reign of Theodosius. But he knew no details of the story, and attempted
to mask his ignorance of the exact number of refugees by attributing a
kind of double talk to his supernatural informant. He related in quite
recognizable form a complex of Moses legends and fragments of the
Alexander Romance.[4]

THE EARLY YEARS OF ISLAM

The material which penetrated to Mecca from Greece prior to Islam was
popularized, and heavily fused with Jewish and Christian elements. What
is striking in the contrast, in this regard, between the pre-Islamic age and
the age of Islamic dominance is the transition from the passive (and to
some extent casual) filtering of popular Greek notions into the backwaters
of Arabian culture to the active and systematic acquisition by the
Arabic-speaking peoples of large bodies of highly articulated knowledge,
Greek arts and sciences, the absorption of a number of major, complex
themes and problems of Greek higher culture, and above all the transfor-
mation of Arabic literature as a whole from the atomistic or lapidary mode
of writing to the Greek method of thematic exposition. Prior to the
incorporation of large segments of Greek scientific, technical, and philo-
sophic literature, and particularly the absorption of Greek modes of
intellectual organization (Socratic analysis, Aristotelian taxonomy) into
Arabic literature, each *bayt* or verse of an Arabic poem was, in the view
of the Arab critics, a discrete atom of meaning, almost interchangeable in
order with any other, like a bead strung on a string.

Arabic prose writing was in many ways the same. The oldest Arab
historical traditions were genealogical and anecdotal, and the earliest
Arabic works of history were annalistic chronicles and collections of
accounts of striking incidents and traditions. *Ḥadīth*, which became a
foundation of Islam, was anecdotal. Most of the early books listed in the
Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm are mere collections, often grouped together
around some rubric which serves less as a unifying theme than as a pretext
for the presentation of material. It was from the Greeks that Arabic
literature learned to value a thematic exposition which made possible the
composition of original technical, scientific, and philosophic works in
Arabic. In this sense we may say that even al-Bukhārī's classification of
the vast materials of *Ḥadīth* under the codified heads of particular topics
(see above, cap. 10, especially pp. 274–5) was one stage in the process
leading from the episodic or linear perception ("x begat y") to the

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[4] Qur'ān xviii.59–81, 82–97.

comprehensive and synthetic vision of an Avicenna or an Ibn Khaldūn. It is clear that a crucial cause in making possible this remarkable set of changes was the vast broadening of the Arabic horizons by the Islamic conquests and the integration under the banner of Islam of a world which included some of the principal seats of Hellenistic civilization. Even so, the speed and directness with which this great task[5] of intellectual absorption and assimilation was accomplished cannot be understood without reference to the preparing of the ground not only in Arabia but also in the surrounding lands, which were to become the Islamic empire.

Science, theology and philosophy

In the great Hellenistic centres which were to fall to the Arabs, Greek traditions of mathematics, natural science, philosophy, medicine and astronomy had flourished in the pagan period. These traditions had been preserved, and at the same time subtly prepared for their subsumption into Islamic culture by their prior encounters with monotheism. Philo of Alexandria (c. 25 B.C. – c. A.D. 45) had accomplished a profound and creative synthesis of Mosaic thought with the philosophy of Plato. Christian thinkers from Origen of Alexandria (c. 185 – c. 254) to Eusebius of Caesarea (bishop c. 315 – c. 340) diligently fostered the fusion of Hellenistic with Christian values and ideas, and throughout the period of Christian persecution promoted the view that Christianity was the true *paidea*, for which all of previous civilization had been the preparation. This campaign proved so successful that the survival of Greek modes of thought became quite independent of the marginal question of the survival of such groups as the pagan community of Harrān. For the monotheists themselves had become the mainstays of Greek thinking. Thus one Christian bishop comments that he has not ceased to be a philosopher by becoming a Christian; the Christian myths he uses to exhort the people on Sunday are pointers to the philosophic creed to which the mind adheres – a striking anticipation of Fārābī's Platonic doctrine of the roles of prophecy and philosophy in society.

By the time the Christians in their turn had become persecutors, the process of acculturation had gone too far to be reversed. The traditions of Greek learning – or, rather, their bearers – were simply pressed intellectually, politically, even geographically closer to what was to be the centre of gravity of the Islamic world.

Paradigmatic of this process, and of momentous import for the Muslim

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[5] The bulk of this activity, which includes the systematic translation of Greek scientific, technical and philosophical works, and the active elaboration of the studies found therein, took place during the 'Abbasid era, and will therefore be treated in a later volume of this history.

adoption of the Greek arts and sciences, was the fate of the Monophysite and Nestorian movements. Initially the differences between the Monophysites and their opponents within the Church were largely verbal, based upon an ambiguity in the Greek term *physis* or "nature", but the attempt by the Church at the Council of Chalcedon to lay down an authoritative doctrine on the abstruse and highly charged issue of the nature(s) of Christ catalysed a radical polarization about what might otherwise have remained a speculative and academic issue. For there were a great many pious Christians in the East who found the notion of a crucified God spiritually and aesthetically repugnant and were thus naturally inclined to take refuge in the Monophysite doctrine that Christ had *not* truly suffered on the cross, or in the Nestorian belief that Christ's "divine nature" at least had been spared this ignominy. The insistence by the Church on the enforcement of the Chalcedonian decree crystallized the eastern opposition to the central authority and led directly to the organization of separate Jacobite (Monophysite) and Nestorian churches. Persecuted whenever, and as far as, the authority of the Byzantine emperors could reach, Nestorians and Monophysites flourished in Egypt and built literally hundreds of monasteries and schools in Syria, Transjordan, and Iraq. To escape Byzantine persecution, a body of Nestorian scholars from Edessa took refuge in 457 across the Persian border in Nisibis. The Persian Nestorian contingent was reinforced in 489 when the Byzantine emperor Zeno permanently closed the Nestorian school at Edessa. With them the Nestorians brought to Persia their knowledge of medicine and of logic, represented by the work of such figures as Probus of Antioch, who had commented on Aristotle's *De interpretatione* and *Prior analytics* and on Porphyry's *Isagoge* or Introduction to the logic of Aristotle, which was first translated into Syriac in his time. To the sectarian Christians, the logic of Aristotle was a bastion of argumentative force in their polemics with one another and against the orthodox Church, not only because it taught them the formal principles of disputation, but also because it provided a conceptual basis for dealing with the problems of ontology which lay at the root of their theological disputes.

The work of the Nestorians was broadened and supplemented by that of the quondam Monophysite scholar Sergius of Ra's 'Aynah (d. A.D. 536), who studied medicine at Alexandria and was the first major translator of Greek medical works into a Semitic language. He is credited with the Syriac translation of twenty-six works of Galen, primarily textbooks, as well as a number of other medical works. His philosophical translations included not only the *Isagoge* but the *Categories*, the most challenging, metaphysically, of the works grouped in the *Organon* of Aristotle, on which

he wrote a detailed commentary. He also translated into Syriac the important pseudo-Aristotelian stoicizing treatise *De mundo* and the Neo-platonic writings which circulated under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite. Sergius translated the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Herostrophos* (*Aristippus*), which touches on the problem of physical resurrection. He may also have been the translator of the Grammar of Dionysius of Thrax, He wrote original treatises on logic and on the influence of the moon. Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (134–260/809–73), greatest of the Arab translators, was to continue this work of Sergius almost as though there had been no interruption of over three centuries between them, revising and correcting his translations, and vastly expanding his list of titles.

The selection from the *Enneads* of Plotinus which went by the name of the *Theology of Aristotle* was perhaps put together in the sixth century under Syriac and somewhat Jacobitical auspices comparable to those of Sergius. For scholars whose primary interest lies in classical antiquity, such works as the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, the material drawn from Proclus which circulated as " Aristotle's " *Book of Causes*, and the works of pseudo-Dionysius are simply unfortunate forgeries. But for those whose interest is in the conceptual dynamics of cultural fusion, these writings are of far greater import than many an authentic work, for such writings reveal the mechanics of the subtle process by which the thought of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and Proclus was fused and integrated with monotheism – angels naturally taking the places of the lesser pagan gods, Plato's ideas being merged with the Hebraic concept of the divine command, and emanation taking its historic place as the philosophic interpretation of creation and foundation for the conceptualization of revelation.

The task of the Syriac scholars was clearly recognized by them to be one of cultural transmission and adjustment. Thus their works were translations, commentaries, textbooks, compilations and encyclopaedias, in which the intellectual achievements of the Hellenistic world were organ-ized, formalized, systematized, modified and of course, concurrently, somewhat rigidified. But what was transmitted was a living tradition, capable, like an old and gnarled vine, of new bursts of life and surprising displays of activity at almost any point where it might meet with the propitious conditions.

Typical of the continuance of Greek intellectual traditions in the pre-Islamic Greek world was the vitality of late Greek mathematics. When Justinian wished to rebuild the Hagia Sofia, he could call upon two of the most advanced mathematicians the world had yet produced, Anthemius of Tralles and Isidorus of Miletus, to supervise the engineering. Both men were in the forefront of solid geometry in their day. Anthemius, who wrote

commentaries on the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle as well as the *Arithmetic* of Nicomachus, had gone far beyond Apollonius' treatment of conic sections to a mastery of parabolic curves. Another Byzantine mathematician, Eutocius, wrote commentaries on Archimedes and Apollonius, preserving the knowledge of conic sections which was to become so important to the Arabs, not only as geometrical theory but also philosophically, because it afforded them conceptual means of dealing with the notion of infinity. A pupil of Isidorus added a fifteenth book, on regular solids, to the *Elements* of Euclid.

The same tradition of studying, teaching, and augmenting the sciences of the Greeks continued down to the *hijrah* and beyond, well into the Muslim era. The court of Heraclius, Byzantine emperor A.D. 610–41, enjoyed the services of the physician/physiologist Theophilus Proto-spatharios, whose student, Stephen of Athens, wrote medical works as well. Roughly contemporary was Aaron of Alexandria, whose medical textbook was translated both into Syriac and Arabic and proved invaluable to Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā' al-Rāzī. Another contemporary physician, Paul of Aegina, compiled a fundamental seven-part medical encyclopedia based on the works of Galen and Oribasius, which was to be translated into Arabic by Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq. Paul remained in Alexandria when the Muslims took that city in 640, as did the Jacobite bishop and physician John of Alexandria, commentator of the works of Galen and Hippocrates. The christology of the Qur'ān was itself Jacobitical, so John did not find himself poles apart from the new ruling authority. And, of course, for many members of the unorthodox Christian groups, the Muslim conquest was in some ways a deliverance. The Arab emir, 'Amr b. al'-Āṣ, was delighted to learn that John rejected the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity.

Legend has it that the Muslim conquerors destroyed the great library of Alexandria, yet the earliest report of this event dates from the thirteenth century. The fact is that Alexandria was filled with Monophysite Coptic Christians and surrendered without a struggle in 19/640 when the Coptic Patriarch opened the gates to the Muslim forces, no doubt hoping once and for all to end his flock's subjection to the rule of Byzantium. We have no positive knowledge that the library still existed in A.D. 640 or in 646 when Alexandria was given up to plunder after an abortive attempt by Byzantium to regain the city. The notion that the conqueror argued that either the library contained what was in the Qur'ān or it did not, and that it was redundant in the first case and impious in the second, is absurdly anachronistic on two grounds: the Arabs had not yet acquired sufficient interest in the niceties of doctrinal theology to trouble to burn books over it; and the argument *formally* is an example of the Stoic type of disjunctive

dilemma made popular in Islam by the early dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*) and used (generally to quite the opposite *material* effect) by philosophers such as Kindī. The fact is that the Greek tradition, by and large, continued unbroken under Christian auspices after the Muslim conquest.

Severus Sebokht was bishop at Qinnesrin in northern Syria/Iraq in the latter part of the seventh century. Sebokht wrote on astronomy and geography; and, like his predecessors, he commented on the *Prior analytics* and *De interpretatione*. Nearly three centuries later, the "Second Teacher" (after Aristotle), al-Fārābī, was to wonder why it was that such penetrating minds as the Syriac scholars had not pressed on to the *Posterior analytics*. Convinced that this could not be for want of intellectual ability, Fārābī concluded that there were theological reasons which restrained them from delving into the subject of apodeictic demonstrations. This answer may seem simplistic in a way, for Fārābī was better taught than the Syriac monks, and philosophically far keener and more original than they. But his explanation contains a kernel of truth, for the Syriac monks and bishops were practical men, and their interest in philosophy and science was pragmatic. Unlike Fārābī, they were not imbued with the spirit of intellectual discovery for its own sake, or with the notion of philosophy as a guide to life, rather than simply the source of a useful tool. Thus they did not go beyond what was immediately useful or needful to their work, whether in science, technology or theology. Indeed, as we shall see, this pragmatic tendency is carried over into the first philosopher/scientist/ physicians of Islam. We shall encounter it quite plainly in the work of both al-Kindī and al-Rāzī. Severus, at any rate, wrote on the zodiac and eclipses, the astrolabe, and other matters of what must have seemed quite practical, non-speculative science. Like Kindī, he believed science to be international and hence quite readily portable. And, to be sure, the sort of science he did was just that. Severus was the first person outside India to describe the Hindu system of numerals, which is now universal. Unlike metaphysics or political theory, such pieces of wisdom do not *in themselves* create any social or intellectual difficulties.

Jacob of Edessa (*c.* A.D. 633–708), disciple of Severus Sebokht and Monophysite bishop of Edessa from roughly 684–8, wrote a chronicle of his period, very much in the tradition of the numerous Syriac chronicles which preceded it. He also wrote the first systematic Syriac grammar and introduced into that language seven vowel signs and thirty-six diacritical and accent marks. He revised the *History* of Eusebius and brought it up to 692, revised the *Peshitta* or Syriac text of the Bible, and undertook a *Hexaemeron*, or account of the Creation. Structured around the biblical

format of the six days of creation, Hexaemeron literature such as Basil's *Homily on the Hexaemeron* and Gregory of Nyssa's *De opificia hominis* afforded, in F. E. Peters's words, "an easy and natural home" for Greek scientific ideas in the monastic context. A comparable work, the *De natura hominis* of Nemesius of Emessa (Homs), was to be translated into Arabic in the time of Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq. Jacob of Edessa's *Hexaemeron*, which included an ambitious geographical section, was completed by his friend and disciple, George, bishop of the Arabs. George, whose ministry was to the Monophysite tribes of Iraq, lived in Kufa. Once again he translated and commented on the vital texts of the *Categories*, *De interpretatione*, and the *Prior analytics*, for this was an age when there was scarcely a distinction to be made (in terms of labour) between a new copy, a new edition, and a new work.

As a scholarly and scientific centre Alexandria had eclipsed Athens for centuries before the *hijrah*, and even in philosophy this greatest Hellenistic centre was a serious rival to Athens. The cumulative effect of the work of Aristobulus (181–46 B.C.), Philo (*c.* 25 B.C. – A.D. 45), Origen (A.D. 185–254), Plotinus (205–70), and many others was to shift the axis of Greek philosophy into a plane to some extent compatible with monotheist assumptions and scriptural religion. Thus the school of Alexandria effected a transition to Christianity which was to prove politically, intellectually, and emotionally impossible for the school of Athens.

Damascius, last Scholarch of the Academy of Plato at Athens until its closing by Justinian in A.D. 529, was a native of the city whose name he bears. Forbidden by the imperial edict to teach philosophy at Athens, Damascius and six other Neoplatonists accepted the invitation of Chosroes Anūshirvān to come to Ctesiphon as his guests. The philosophers returned to the Greek world in 533, under the protection of a clause secured for them in Anūshirvān's peace treaty with Justinian. Their brief stay in Persia was not without philosophical interchange, for there survive some of the answers which Priscian the Lydian, one of the seven, addressed to the questions of the Persian monarch.

Of far more lasting import for the future of what was to be Islamic thought was the clash between the Alexandrian Christian physician John Philoponus and his contemporary, Simplicius, another of the exiled pagan Platonists. Students of the same master, the conciliatory Alexandrian Ammonius son of Hermias, the two took up positions diametrically opposed to one another. Philoponus, as a Christian, attacked the eternalism of Aristotle and Proclus, discovering and inventing many ingenious arguments to undermine the Neoplatonists' notion of the immutability of

the heavens. In the course of his religiously motivated polemic, for example, Philoponus argued against the Aristotelian dogma of the simplicity (hence indestructibility) of the heavenly bodies by pointing out that the stars have different colours. He explained this observation by positing that the stars contain different compounds which burn with different coloured flames – an anticipation of the conceptual basis of modern spectrography, as one pioneer of that science has remarked. In refuting the Aristotelian theory of motion, Philoponus comes close to the modern concept of inertia. In both cases, the anticipation is not coincidental, for the thrust of Philoponus' argument is the same as Galileo's: to treat all material substance, celestial or terrestrial, according to the same laws of mutability. Only in this way can Philoponus achieve his objective of highlighting the contrast between the timelessness of God and the temporality of all material creation. In the process he affords a particularly brilliant example of Whitehead's point as to the intimate relation between monotheism and the rationalism of science, a theme which is concisely summed up by the biblical injunction (which might well have served as a motto for Galileo, Philoponus – or Einstein): "One law shall there be for ye..."

Simplicius, on the other hand, Philoponus' opponent, whose controversy with the Christian thinker seems to have precipitated the fall of the Academy, defended the same principle of continuity in nature, in a different dimension. For where Philoponus had argued the applicability of the same natural laws to heaven and earth, Simplicius followed Aristotle in demanding the inviolability of the causal nexus throughout the time dimension and thus upheld the eternity of the cosmos, dismissing creation, as had Greek philosophers from Parmenides to Proclus (the teacher of Damascius) as an arbitrary and unseemly interruption of the continuity of the causal law. The echoes of these disputes continued to be heard not only in Alexandria and the daughter school of Gaza, but also long afterwards wherever philosophy was studied. And the import of the problems at stake was well understood by the Arabic philosophers. Al-Fārābī, who was the first Muslim to project a rigorous and systematic philosophical system within Islam, wrote a refutation of Philoponus.[6] Averroes, as the last and foremost champion of an undisguised Greek philosophical tradition in Islam, was to uphold causal uniformity against

[6] The Arabic text has been recovered, cf. M. Mahdi in Hanna, *Middle East studies*. For the translation with commentary and discussion by Mahdi, cf. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XXVI, 1967, 233–60. The school of Gaza is represented by Aeneas of Gaza (*fl.* A.D. 530), Zacharias (d. 553), who became bishop of Mitelene, and Procopius of Gaza (d. 538), defenders of creation and physical resurrection – both themes to be adopted by al-Kindī. For their writings, see Migne, *Patrologia graeca*, LXXXV.

creation, not only (like Aristotle) as a scientific principle, but also (like Proclus) as an explicitly theological one. Kindī, on the other hand, the first Muslim philosopher, was to find in Philoponus a quarry of creationist argument. Ghazālī, who relied upon the same arguments, went much further. He discovered in eternalism not merely an excessive and arbitrary reverence for the inviolability of the causal nexus, or a subordination of the spatial to the temporal continuity of nature, but also a fundamental incompatibility of Aristotelian with monotheist assumptions. His argument, couched in modern terms, was that eternalism robbed monotheism of its operational meaning – a penetrating analysis indeed, since it was not merely causality (given its apotheosis by Averroists as the Wisdom of God), but the divinity of the cosmos itself which was at stake for eternalists, ever more explicitly from Aristotle to Simplicius. If the cosmos were eternal and its laws immutable, then its order might visibly express its divinity, an assumption not out of keeping with Plato's notion of telescoping one deity into another (as one ideal universal may contain another), but a notion which was totally alien to the principles of radical monotheism.

Yet despite his recognition of the incompatibility of Greek eternalism with monotheism, Ghazālī was unwilling, and indeed unable, to excise the Greek philosophical element from Islamic literature and culture, for on a conceptual level, the two had become inextricably intertwined. Still less was it possible or desirable to remove the Greek sciences from Islamic civilization, or the Greek themes from Islamic literature and culture.

THE UMAYYAD PERIOD

The Greek arts and sciences, and even significant elements of the Greek world-view, became inextricable from what was to be Islamic thinking primarily because of the continuity with which Greek literary and school traditions were carried on in the Islamic world. Yet by the time of the 'Abbasid revolution Muslim science had not yet begun. The crucial intervening links are provided by the Syriac-speaking scholars, who represent the last stages of Greek wisdom prior to and concurrent with the rise of Islam, and the parallel movement in Persia.

Anūshirvān, who kept three empty seats in his palace against the time when the emperors of China and Byzantium and the Grand Khagan of the Turks of Central Asia would sit at his feet as vassals, ordered the translation of works by Plato and Aristotle into Persian, and had his court philosopher, Paul the Persian, write commentaries on Aristotle's logic in Syriac and Pahlavi. Anūshirvān's grasp, of course, was greater than his reach, and there is no evidence that the court of Anūshirvān mastered the

philosophy of Aristotle. But an interest had been expressed, and a first step
had been taken in philosophy, not as deep nor as lasting as the work in
medicine at Jundīshāpūr, but one which was seconded powerfully by the
Syriac scholars, and destined to be overwhelmingly reinforced once the
entire region had been integrated culturally under Islam.

The wall paintings of Quṣayr 'Amrah are an eloquent non-literary
testimony of the Umayyad attitude toward things Greek and in particular
towards Greek writing, an attitude which laid the foundations for the work
of translation which was begun in the Umayyad age and carried on
systematically by the early 'Abbasids. Executed in Byzantine style,
probably by Arabic-speaking Christian artists in the reign of Hishām
(reigned 105–25/724–43), the paintings reveal that the Umayyad caliph has
taken up the universal claim to power which was formerly made by the
ruler of Iran. The crowned heads of the world, the Byzantine Caesar, the
Persian Shah, the Abyssinian Negus, Roderick the last Visigothic King
of Spain, and two other figures, probably the emperor of China and a
Turkish or Indian monarch, are represented as paying fealty to the Arab
ruler. Nearby stands the symbolic figure of victory, for all these mighty
rulers had been bested in battle by the early Umayyads. But the claim to
universal power means more than simply dominance. The kings are shown
not merely as subordinates, but as colleagues, whose might adds lustre to
the Umayyad rule, and there is a sense of pride in the responsibility for
the stewardship of culture and civilization which the Umayyad paintings
clearly express in their inclusion of symbolic figures and scenes representing
history, philosophy, poetry, music, the hunt and the dance. This interest
in Greek culture was not confined to the circle of those Umayyad rulers
who are usually represented as pleasure-seekers. 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz
himself (reigned 99–102/717–20) showed a marked interest in the Greek
arts and sciences. He is credited by Ibn al-Nadīm with ordering the Arabic
translation of a Greek medical work. Just as the Umayyads adopted the
plan of the Greek bath, and structured their great mosques after (or out
of) the great basilicas (which often themselves stood upon the foundations
of pagan temples), so the Umayyads looked to the indigenous sources of
Hellenistic thinking for many of the ideas which were to shape their
thought and exert a powerful influence upon Islam in the period of its
greatest plasticity and most rapid growth.

Grammar

The articulation of the structure of Arabic grammar is traditionally
ascribed to Abū 'l-Aswad al-Du'alī of Basra (c. 605– c. 688), who was
told by the Prophet's nephew, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, that the parts of speech

were three – noun, verb, and particle – and that he must write a treatise
founded upon this premise. The serious beginnings of the systematic study
of grammar, as far as we can ascertain, date from nearly a century later
than this conversation can have taken place, from the times of 'Īsā b. 'Umar
al-Thaqafī (d. 766). But the remark ascribed to 'Alī is of great interest
nonetheless. There is no need to study grammar at all as a science until
one must confront the problem of integrating a linguistically heterogeneous
population. While the study of Arabic morphology could gain little from
Greek grammar, in view of the fundamental differences between the two
languages, there was a great deal to be gained from Greek logic for the
theory of Arabic syntax. The classification of the parts of speech in
Aristotle, to begin with, was the same as that given by 'Alī – noun, verb
and connective – and the logical relations among the terms of a proposition
were recognizably the same, no matter how they were expressed
morphologically. This surely one could learn readily by studying the
Categories and *De interpretatione.*

One cause of the projection of the founding of Arabic grammatical
science back upon 'Alī may well have been the unpopularity of its true
patron, the ex-schoolmaster al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714), who served
as governor of Iraq in the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik and that of Walīd.
It was Ḥajjāj who introduced the use of vowel signs and diacritical marks
to differentiate the consonants in Arabic, and he encouraged the incipient
study of grammar in what was to become the school of Basra. The
Umayyads, however, had a notorious press among Muslims of 'Alid
sympathies, and much of the data we receive is coloured by this prejudice.

Records and administration

Mu'āwiyah, founder of the Umayyad line, was said to stay up long hours
of the night studying the history and policy of foreign rulers. Two of his
sources for such lore were Yemeni Jews, who served as counsellors and
tutors in the court and may have contributed in this way to the political
wisdom of the caliph. It is not at all hard to believe that Mu'āwiyah would
have schooled himself by the use of literary examples in the cultivation
of his well-known *ḥilm* or clemency. Mu'āwiyah made a point of staying
on good terms with his non-Muslim subjects. His physician was a
Christian, and so were many of his administrative officials. From the time
of 'Umar, Mu'āwiyah had regarded warfare on the Byzantine front as his
personal responsibility, a campaign which he conducted successfully until
he was finally turned back at Constantinople itself by the use of Greek
fire. The provinces in which his rule was most secure were all formerly

Greek, and Muʿāwiyah consciously patterned his administration of them on the Greek model. So, to a great extent, did his successors. The prominence of Jews and Christians among the tutors, physicians and officials of the early Umayyads was viewed in later times as evidence of Umayyad impiety, but it may better serve as a marker of the gradual assimilation of the materials and skills of Greek culture.

Muslim fiscal records were not transposed from Greek into Arabic until the time of ʿAbd al-Malik (reigned 66–86/685–705) and even then it was only the language which was changed; the Greek system of accounting remained in force, and many of the Greek (and Persian) bureaucrats retained their posts. It was many years more before a Muslim administrative class could be created, and that in itself could not be accomplished without the purges of the reign of Walīd or the friction of an immense cultural interchange, which is reflected in the literature of the Shuʿūbiyyah.[7] Even the coinage was not stamped in Muslim style until nearly seventy-five years after the *hijrah*, when ʿAbd al-Malik's renewed hostilities with Byzantium, after a fifteen-year lull, made the familiar Christian and Persian symbols politically unacceptable. The altering of watermarks on Egyptian export paper from a Christian to a Muslim motif seems immediately to have preceded the more visible change with regard to coinage. It was not until the year 87/706 that al-Walīd had Coptic replaced by Arabic as the pulpit language of Egypt.

The initial problem for the Muslim rulers in the first century of Islam did not express itself as an intellectual matter but as the immediate and existential problem of relating with the *de facto* presence of large numbers of non-Muslims in the midst of *Dār al-Islām*. The creation of *dhimmī* status provided a mechanism by which a new cultural equilibrium could be reached. But, until the process of reaching that equilibrium was quite far along, Muslim involvement with the cultures of the conquered peoples was largely not of the sort that can be grappled with by the intellectual historian. Nevertheless, the working out of these political, economic, and social relationships did not require, or even attempt to enlist, the entire energies of every member of the newly dominant group.

Khālid b. Yazīd (d. 704 or 709), the grandson of Muʿāwiyah, was called the scholar of his family because of deep interests in the arts and sciences, which, since he never became caliph, he was free to pursue. He was an orator, a poet, and a master of fine Arabic writing style, whose interests were comprehensive according to Ibn al-Nadīm. Not surprisingly, he is listed as the author of a poem on the fortunes of kings. He had lived in

[7] A chapter on the anti-Arab, pro-Persian Shuʿūbiyyah will be included in a later volume of this history.

Egypt, and from there he is said to have gathered about him a group of scholars and engaged them in the translation of Greek and Coptic works into Arabic. This would be the first recorded translation into Arabic of works on medicine, astrology, and alchemy, and "the first translation in Islam from one language to another".[8] As Khālid's translator, one Stephen the Ancient is named. This may possibly be the same man as Stephen of Alexandria. Khālid's novel interest in the hitherto unknown arts of the Greeks, which up to now had been shrouded in an alien language, was popularly ascribed to a lust for the secret lore of alchemy, and the legends of subsequent generations made him an alchemist and author of alchemical works. But there is no solid evidence upon which such embroideries may be fastened. Indeed, the entire tradition of Khālid's scholarly interests has been dismissed as fanciful. What we can observe, again, however, is the practical bias at the roots of the Arabic translation movement, as traditionally conceived. For it was the Greek arts – alchemy, medicine, and (judicial) astrology – not the sciences, upon which, in the first instance, extensive energies were expended.

The translation of official records from Greek into Arabic by Abū Thābit Sulaymān b. Saʿd, secretary to ʿAbd al-Malik and Hishām, gave a major impetus to the creation of Arabic prose. But this step itself does not simply represent a long-delayed "arabization" of Umayyad administration. Rather it is merely one phase of a vast and complex process of acculturation. Abū 'l-ʿAlā' Sālim, another secretary of Hishām and one of the founders of Arabic prose, commissioned the translation of a selection of letters purportedly from Aristotle to his illustrious pupil, Alexander the Great (see above, pp. 155–64). Such letters afforded a safe and convenient Hellenistic vehicle for the exposition of political ideas and proposals. One of the oldest surviving specimens of Arabic prose writing, this collection appears to be extant.[9] Freely adapted by Sālim himself to the political conditions of his day, the collection is filled with pointed advice to "Alexander" on how to organize his realm according to the best principles of Greek (and Sasanian) political wisdom.

Law

It is now fairly clear that the early development of Islamic law, which dates from the second Muslim century, was based in large part upon the adaptation of existing practices in the former Byzantine and Persian provinces (particularly Iraq) to the new context of Islam. Naturally this involved the incorporation of a good many principles and methods of

[8] Ibn al-Nadīm, Fihrist, 581.   [9] Grignaschi, "Rasāʾil", 7–77.

Roman law into the nascent Muslim *fiqh*. This process was rationalized by the early jurist Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/798), who held that non-Arab practice (*sunnah*) not specifically abolished by Islam might not be altered even if it caused hardship. This ruling, though rejected by Mālik (d. 179/795) and Shāfiʿī (d. 204/819), helps to explain much of what we find of Roman law in *fiqh*. And the ruling itself seems to be an application of the general Roman presumption in favour of prior precedent, which was adopted in Islamic law under the rubric of *istiṣḥāb*. The principal vehicle of the adoption of Roman legal principles and methods, according to the late Professor Schacht, was not the great Roman codes themselves, but rather traditions of rhetoric, by which concepts of justice and injustice and modes of legal reasoning were articulated in Iraq, not only for the Muslim jurists but also for the great scholars of the Talmud, whose thinking often shows remarkable parallels with that of the early Muslim jurists.[10] The Islamic technical concept of *ijmāʿ* or consensus is perhaps the most successful such adaptation, but the importation of Greek modes of legal reasoning is from our present standpoint the most interesting.

It was readily recognized by Muslim jurists as they endeavoured to apply the legal principles of the Qurʾān to the new situations of the garrison cities that scripture was finite, whereas the variety of possible cases was infinite. Thus it was necessary to expand the law of the Qurʾān, and the earliest systematic mode by which this was done was the application of discretion (*raʾy*). The reasoning which guided *raʾy*, like Talmudic reasoning, was analogical and often based upon considerations of utility and purposiveness. It thus assumed causality in nature and the applicability of human standards of rationality to divine revelation. For in the endeavour faithfully to enlarge upon the explicit datum of scripture, the ground (*ʿillah*) of a given prohibition or ordinance would be sought, and then the ordinance could be broadened in accordance with the understanding of its "spirit" or justification. Abū Ḥanīfah (80–150/699–767) is often represented as the exponent par excellence of the use of reason in the elaboration of Islamic law. But this evaluation itself is simply the product of the subsequent effort to subordinate reason to tradition in Islam and the attendant attempt to make Abū Ḥanīfah the whipping boy of what seemed by later standards an excessively arbitrary rationalism. In the words of Professor Schacht: "Abū Ḥanīfa used his personal judgement (*raʾy*) and conclusions by analogy (*qiyās*) to the extent customary in the schools of religious law in his time; and as little...was he inclined to abandon the traditional doctrine for the sake of 'isolated' traditions from the Prophet...such as began to become current in Islamic religious science

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[10] Cf. Schacht, "Foreign Elements", 9–17.

during the lifetime of Abū Ḥanīfa."[11] Muslim literalism toward the Qur'ān, purist traditionalism, which preferred (what we now recognize as *ad hoc*, fabricated) *ḥadīth* to what it considered the arbitrary sentences of human reason, and legal positivism, which refused to consider the infinite array of hypothetical legal situations (as the Talmud had) but demanded that legal judgements be confined to the finite range of actual occurrences, were all products of a reaction to the uncontrolled use of reason. It is almost inconceivable that this reaction can have taken place before theology had reached the point of regarding as problematic the attribution of motivations to the Divine. And, in fact, the attitude of purist fundamentalism does not arise in Islam until the third/ninth century. It was indeed impossible for there to be a systematic reaction against the application of logical or analogical reasoning to questions of law in Islam before such modes of reasoning had been formalized and systematically employed. The birth of Muslim literalism or fundamentalism (Ẓāhiriyyah) is, indeed, but one other particularly fascinating aspect of the protean impact of Greek thought upon Islam.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

The time has long since passed when it was possible to view the Greek impact upon Islam purely in terms of the importing of Ionic rationalism into the context of "semitic" radical monotheism. As E. R. Dodds has so amply demonstrated (since there was apparently a time when this was doubted), the Greeks themselves were not all rationalists every moment of the time. Greek spirituality, Greek morals, Greek views of revelation, Greek mysticism, had been interacting with Near Eastern notions of the same topics long before Islam appeared on the scene; and their impact upon Islam is manifold and complex. Even Greek rationalism is not simple or uniform in its effects. To cite only one example, the Stoic notion that if there are gods there is divination (and vice versa) provides the logical heart of the Mu'tazilite rationale of revelation by appeal to theodicy. It was to take the penetrating analytic sense of an Ash'arī to recognize that such rationalism (i.e. the rationalization of revelation) is at variance with the Quranic theme of divine grace. For a more pedestrian intellect, such as that of Ibn al-Nafīs, it was far less obvious that the Quranic notion of grace is inconsistent with an "*a priori* deduction" of the mission of Muḥammad.

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's (d. 110/728) symbolism of the working out of divine salvation as a race is plainly reminiscent of the Greek athletic imagery of Origen, who employed this symbolism to express the major theme of his

[11] *EI²*, "fiḳh".

sóteriological thinking. Ḥasan's asceticism, which is what his symbol of the race actually designates, is fundamentally Hellenistic and Christian, harking back to the great Hellenistic transition from the active to the passive conceptions of an *agon* (or struggle), a transition which begins with Socrates and with Stoicism and climaxes in Christianity. Massignon has illuminated the mechanics of the transmission of ascetic/mystic methods and terminology from Christian to Muslim spiritual seekers. Until the third/ninth century Muslim ascetics actually consulted with Christian eremites on the theoretical and technical problems of mysticism. Indeed such consultations were so well accepted that Muḥammad himself is represented as having employed them. Thus it need not seem surprising that the oldest literary relic of the science of *Ḥadīth* collection which we have is the *K. al-Zuhd* or "Book of Asceticism" of Asad b. Mūsā (d. 131–2/749). Abstemiousness was not the primal theme of Muḥammad's message. But it had been, since the days of ancient Greek mystery cults (forerunners of the Ṣūfī "retreats") and their conception of moral/physical purification (*katharsis*), a principal theme of Greek spirituality, sublimated into philosophy by Plato, taken up by Christianity as the surest way in which to seek salvation, but still celebrated in its pagan form by the famous dictum of Plotinus: "cut away everything!"

Crucial to the development of Islamic thought was the work of the great Christian theologian, John of Damascus, an orthodox (Melkite) Christian. Damascene, as he was called, was the grandson of Manṣūr b. Sarjūn, who had helped draw up the terms for the surrender of Damascus to Khālid b. al-Walīd in Rajab 14/September 635 and arranged for the payment of the capitation tax (*jizyah*) by which the safety of the Christian populace was secured. By assuming responsibility for the collection of *jizyah* (poll-tax), Manṣūr, who had been the principal finance officer of Damascus under Byzantine rule, became an indispensable financial advisor to the Muslim governors. His son, Sergius (Damascene's father) and his grandson, Manṣūr b. Sarjūn b. Manṣūr, were finance ministers to the Umayyad caliphs Mu'āwiyah and 'Abd al-Malik. Raised at the court and friendly with Mu'āwiyah's son and successor, Yazīd, and his boon companion, the Umayyad laureate Akhṭal, Damascene seems to have left office at the time of the Islamicization of 'Umar II and retired to a scholarly existence at the monastery of St Sabbas in Palestine. His *Fount of knowledge* comprised three parts: a dialectical/philosophic portion based upon the Greek Fathers and Aristotle's *Organon*; an account of one hundred heresies, including Islam; and the celebrated *De fide orthodoxa*, which endeavours to integrate biblical theology with the Neoplatonism of pseudo-Dionysius. Damascene's works included poetry, religious exhortations, scriptural exegesis in the tradition

of John Chrysostom, ascetic works, and, most fascinatingly, a dialogue between a Muslim and a Christian, based no doubt upon his own discussions with Muslim thinkers. Much of this material, including the dialogue, was translated into Arabic and exercised a profound influence upon the Christian philosopher and translator Theodore Abū Qurrah. Gardet and Anawati call Damascene the last great exponent of the Greek Patristic tradition. In more ways than one he was a prototype of the *kalām* (scholastic theology). His heresiography, which culminates a long tradition of such Christian works, sets the tone for the comparable studies of al-Ashʿarī, Ibn Ḥazm and al-Shahrastānī. His subordination of philosophy to theology caps a long tradition of such usage in Christian sectarian disputes and anticipates what was to become the most distinctive feature of the *kalām* approach, the placing of the axioms of philosophy and of logic itself in the service of theology. His theology, by broaching the scriptural questions in the context of Neoplatonic thought, goes beyond the *kalām* to pose what were to be the principal material problems of Islamic philosophy.

Islamic theology itself, as a formal science which provided the intellectual substrate for the introduction of philosophy as a technical discipline into Islam, seems to have originated not in sectarian differences within Islam, for these initially were political at root, but in apologetic discussions of the sort that John of Damascus engaged in with his Muslim interlocutors. Thus the emphasis upon theodicy (and hence on free will), in the earliest Qadarite sources seems to reflect a Christian polemic against Mazdean dualism, while the stress placed upon (radical) monotheism in the early *kalām*, evidenced by the Jahmite rejection of divine attributes and the Muʿtazilite dogma of a created Qurʾān (rather than a pre-eternal *logos*) plainly reflects Christian and anti-Christian polemics regarding the ontic status of Christ as the word/wisdom of God and parallel Jewish discussions, dating back to Philo, regarding the concept of a pre-eternal Torah.

As a solution to the problem of the status of Muslim perpetrators of grave sins, the notion of the "Intermediate Position" (*al-manzilah bayna 'l-manzilatayn*) was proposed by Wāṣil b. ʿAtāʾ (d. 131/748), founder of the Muʿtazilite movement. The major sinner (*fāsiq*) remained a Muslim, and therefore might not be persecuted (in Kharijite fashion) as an apostate. His ultimate punishment was left to the justice of the Almighty in the Hereafter, where he would be damned eternally as he deserved – yet his eternal torment would not be as dire as that suffered by an Unbeliever (*kāfir*). The discovery of this middle ground seems to have been made possible by an exposure to Greek logical categories. Its circumlocutious

phrasing (lit. "a position between the two positions") certainly suggests that, initially at least, the concept of a middle ground between damnation and salvation was both new and foreign. The later emphasis upon the allegedly more authentically Islamic notion that salvation depends solely upon God's grace was a reaction against the presumption that man might know whom God was pleased to save.

An even more significant adaptation of the Greek concept of the mean was the legal classification of all behaviour as obligatory, desirable, permissible, undesirable and forbidden. Since the classification was rational and exhaustive it could be applied to all actions considered in the Qur'ān – or, indeed, to any facet of human behaviour; and the standard of judgement or point of view from which these categories were construed to be applied was, of course, always either objective or divine. But the introduction of a morally neutral class of actions seems to originate ultimately from an adaptation of the Stoic principle that between good and evil there is a far larger class of things indifferent; and the distinction of the desirable from the obligatory seems to be an adaptation of the Stoic differentiation of things worthwhile from things "preferred".

CONCLUSION

The early years of Islam saw the transformation of the Middle East from a contested territory between the two great successor states, Byzantium and Persia, into the centre of a new and highly articulated civilization with a character distinctively its own. Yet, paradoxically, the originality of that civilization could not have been achieved or maintained had not its bearers found themselves capable of incorporating vast quantities of alien material, much of it Greek, and assimilating it to the new identity which they were in the process of forming. The absorptive phases of this process of intellectual assimilation reached their peak in the early 'Abbasid era, when the literary monuments of classic, Hellenistic, and later Greek thought were systematically and bodily incorporated into Arabic literature by the translation movement which went into full swing in the latter half of the second/eighth century, reached its climax in the third/ninth, continued into the fifth/eleventh, and still showed some signs of life in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries. But, of course, the bodily incorporation of alien material is not tantamount to its digestion and assimilation. The processes by which Greek themes and modes of thought were made at home in the Islamic world of Arabic literature, not merely disguised, but adjusted to the Islamic experience and the Arabic idiom,

is an even more fascinating and complex subject than the movement of translation itself. For it is at this second phase that the true intellectual appropriation (or rejection) of the Greek materials takes place, in the context of criticism and polemic in which contrasting Greek and Near Eastern ideas are forced to prove their mettle or be discarded. It is our hope, therefore, that we may touch on this interaction of Greek with Islamic and Arab themes, so decisive to the formation of Arabic literature as we know it, in a later volume of this history.

THE PERSIAN IMPACT ON ARABIC
LITERATURE

The roots of Islamic, essentially Arabic, self-expression in the early
medieval period lie in the three great literary traditions of the Arabs
themselves and of the two peoples whose world-empires had for centuries
contended for mastery in the Near East, the Persians and the Greeks. This
assertion does not invalidate the subordinate contributions to the rich
fabric of Arabic literature from such traditions as the Syriac Christian
one – at least for the Syro-Mesopotamian heartlands – and yet others on
the peripheries, such as the Coptic one in Egypt and even, at a later date,
the Indian one. But in their less culturally xenophobic frames of mind, it
was essentially the empires of the Kisrās (Persia) and Qayṣars (Byzantium)
which the Arabs regarded as their external cultural mentors, albeit with
the qualification that these traditions had all lacked the vital transformatory
power of Muḥammad's revelation and the Islamic faith, the indispensable
unifying bond of all Islamic civilization.

In Iraq and Persia, the Arabs made themselves heirs of the Sasanids,
at first only in a military and political sense, but gradually as the cultural,
literary and artistic heirs also. The process of acculturation was in many
ways easier than in (say) Syria or Egypt, and certainly easier than in
Andalus (Spain), for in these latter three lands the indigenous Christian
culture retained its spiritual and intellectual vitality and its hold on the souls
of a substantial proportion of the population; although Christian
confidence was temporarily shaken by the successes of Islam, a teleological
view of human history and a trust in the ultimate carrying through of
God's plan for the redemption of His people allowed for a dark period
during which the Islamic evil was seemingly in the ascendant before the
return of Christ and the establishment of the millennium. Above all, there
still remained Christian kingdoms in Byzantium, Nubia, northern Spain,
Italy, etc., now perhaps on the defensive, but still surviving as beacons
of the faith.

For the Persians, however, the collapse of the Sasanid state in the 630s

and 640s A.D. was total. The Sasanid emperors themselves vanished from
Persian soil, with the descendants of Yazdagird III left to hover impotently
round the Central Asian frontiers of Islam awaiting the Chinese or Turkish
counterstroke against the Arabs which never materialized. The Zoroastrian
state church was suddenly dethroned from its dominating position, and
from being the persecutor of internal religious ·dissidence – Christian,
Jewish, Mazdakite and dualist – was now itself the persecuted. Although
it persisted in some strength in remoter, mountainous regions like Fārs,
Kirmān, Ādharbāyjān and Khurāsān, and even enjoyed a last intellectual
revival in the ninth century, it was well outside the mainstream of Persian
political, cultural and religious life, and after the eleventh century survived
only in fossilized form. Hence, with no hopes of outside military support
and a dramatic reversal of fortune, with few inner resources from
Zoroastrian faith to sustain them, the masses of Persian population
embraced Islam with what seems to have been frequently a genuine
enthusiasm. Nurtured by a sense of political and social grievance, there were
to be at times acute outbreaks of anti-Islamic feeling in outlying provinces
like Ādharbāyjān, the Caspian provinces and Transoxania, but the future
of Islam in Persia was never to be seriously compromised. Moreover, the
old Sasanid governing class, that of the *dihqāns* or local landowners,
preserved their social influence and their possessions within the framework
of the Arab policy of indirect rule in Persia, whilst the institution of
wilāyah (clientship to an Arab leader or tribe) enabled the Persian masses
to find a niche, even if a lowly one, in the social constitution of the Islamic
state.

Because of the progress of this religious and political integration of
Persians within Arab Islamic society, there was theoretically no spiritual
impediment to the incorporation of the older Persian secular culture, its
literature, its art and its ways of material life, into the increasingly
syncretistic culture of Islam. Most of this culture was religiously neutral
in tenor, and from the ethical point of view perfectly acceptable within
the rather practical and utilitarian moral framework of Islam. Not
surprisingly, there was for a while a hostility to Persian ways of life and
thought among the rigorist sections of the Arab religious institution, the
ulema and *fuqahā'*, who held that the Qur'ān and Sunnah were sufficient
both for salvation and for all human needs, so that all else was superfluous
and could be rejected. An obvious reflection of this opposition is the
appearance of patently spurious *ḥadīth* against 'Ajamī (non-Arab, Persian)
ways, such as the use of knives at meals or rising to one's feet as a sign
of respect for someone entering a room; and in the ninth century, this
religious disapproval assumed a literary and cultural guise, seen in the

Shu'ūbiyyah controversies, which were in large measure a struggle over the acceptance or rejection of the long-established Persian cultural heritage into an Islam hitherto dominated by Arab ways of life and thought. But by that time, much of the process of incorporation was irreversibly under way; the partisans of the Arabs against the Shu'ūbīs could only hope to control and direct the inflow of non-Arab literary and cultural material. Already by this time, we can discern a distinct Persian imprint on an important sector of Arabic prose literature, that of *adab*, and it is not too much to say that it was primarily impulses from Persia which moulded this very characteristic and influential genre of Arabic literature and thereby provided a channel of entry for many of the older Persian political and ethical concepts into Islamic civilization as a whole.

It is hardly necessary to remark that by Islamic times, all direct cultural and literary contact with Median and Achaemenid Persia had disappeared. A whole millennium had passed since, in the see-saw of Graeco-Persian hostilities, Alexander the Great had victoriously brought Hellenistic political and cultural influence eastwards into the Persian lands. For Muslim Arab and Persian alike, only a semi-legendary historical tradition, plus the physical monuments of ancient Persia, attested the past glories of the house of Cyrus the Great; and when in 344/955 the Būyid emir 'Aḍud al-Dawlah Fanā-Khusraw visited Persepolis, the Zoroastrian *mōbadh* of Kāzarūn could only interpret for him the much later Middle Persian or Pahlavi inscriptions of Shāpūr II's time.

Continuity with the immediate Sasanid past was, on the other hand, a living reality in Persia, and the Persian literary culture of the Sasanid period was already beginning to have a certain effect on the pre-Islamic literature of the Arabs, if only from a lexical point of view. Arab tribesmen along the frontiers of the Mesopotamian settled areas served as auxiliary troops of the Sasanids, and Persian cultural influence in the Lakhmid kingdom of al-Ḥīrah in central Iraq was discernible, seen in the fact that an Arab Lakhmid prince of the later sixth century is found with the typically Persian epic name of Qābūs (the son of al-Mundhir III), where Qābūs is arabized from Kāvūs. Arab desert poets sought the patronage of the kings of Lakhm and thus encountered Persian culture and perhaps even Persian literature and music. Certainly, this must have been a point of entry for Persian words in the pre-Islamic Arabic vocabulary; Ibn Qutaybah comments on Maymūn b. Qays al-A'shā's predilection for using Persian words in his poetry, and says that "al-A'shā used to visit the court of the kings of Persia [at Ctesiphon?], and because of that, Persian words abound in his poetry" (Persian words in al-A'shā's poetry actually quoted here designate musical instruments, such as the *nāy*, "flute", the *ṣanj*, "lute"

and *barbaṭ*, "harp").[1] The Qur'ān uses several words of Iranian origin, especially for theological and moral ideas and figures, e.g. *junāḥ*, "crime" (late MP *gunāh*, "crime, sin") and *'ifrīt* "demon" (early MP *āfrītan*, " to create" > "creature"), and for eschatological concepts, e.g. *firdaws* "paradise" (Avestan *pairidaēza*, "circular enclosure") and *rawḍah*, "garden, meadow" > "paradise" (perhaps from MP *rōd*, "river", to be connected with a well-watered region like Mesopotamia), and not a few of these words are already found in the poetry of the Jāhiliyyah. Whilst many Persian words demonstrably came into Arabic via Aramaic, certain of them, like *junāḥ*, must have been borrowed directly from the spoken Persian of Persian circles in Mesopotamia or Khūzistān, since they do not occur in Syriac.

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE PERSIAN

Returning from lexis to literature proper, much of what must have been a rich Middle Persian secular literature is irretrievably lost today. The flourishing tradition of minstrel poetry, that of the Parthian *gōsāns* and the Sasanid *huniyāgars* (NP *navāgar*, Arabic equivalent *muṭrib* or *mughannī*), disappeared altogether, though its influence survived in Firdawsī's *Shāh-nāmah*, and the long romantic poem *Vīs u Rāmīn* is a rewriting of the eleventh century of a minstrel work with apparently Parthian antecedents. Also unwritten in the Sasanid period, but carefully handed down by oral tradition, was the prose literature of entertainment, stories and fables (some of them of ultimately Indian origin), making up the body of literature which was to be called in Islamic times *musāmarah* and *khurāfāt*. Some of these were in fact written down towards the end of the Sasanid period and then found their way into Arabic literature as contributory elements to the *Thousand and one nights*; well-known passages in al-Mas'ūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab* and Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* refer to the Persian *Hazār afsāna* "Thousand stories" as a basis for the Arabic *Alf laylah wa-laylah*, and especially to those tales with magical and fairy themes, and Nabia Abbott holds that the translations into Arabic were made as early as the eighth century.[2] On the whole, however, writing in pre-Islamic Persia was a hieratic and secretarial preserve, and as such reserved mainly for Zoro-astrian religious works (although many of these were handed down orally till a late date) and for legal edicts and diplomatic communications. Most of this literature was regarded, after the Islamization of Persia, as either heretical or irrelevant, and knowledge of it was accordingly allowed to lapse. Sometimes deliberate destruction by the conquerors took place, for

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[1] Ibn Qutaybah, *Shiʿr*, 136–7.   [2] "Fragment", 129–64, esp. 153–4.

al-Bīrūnī records that Qutaybah b. Muslim's Arabs destroyed much of the ancient Iranian culture of Khwārazm when they invaded that province in 93/712. As remarked above, it was not until the post-Islamic period, when the strength of the Zoroastrian survivals in Persia was fast ebbing, that some attempt was made to record the sacred literature of the Magians, mostly in Middle Persian language and Pahlavi script, before it vanished completely.

What did survive into the Islamic period, and was therefore potentially capable of exerting some influence on the nascent post-Islamic Arabic literature, was a small body of Persian literature mediated through the Arabic translations of certain Persian converts to the new faith, for Persians picked up the Arabic language, that Semitic tongue quite alien to the structure and feeling of their own Indo-European one, with astonishing rapidity and fluency, so that the direct participation of Persian converts (or *mawālī*) to Arabic literature of the 'Abbasid period was to be found of outstanding significance. The material inherited from the Sasanid past consisted almost wholly of history or belles-lettres, and was to have an influence on Arabic literature disproportionate to its exiguous extent; it was, for instance, minute in quantity compared with the great corpus of Greek scientific, philosophical and medial literature brought to the Arabs via Syriac translations and other channels.

In this work of transmission from the Pahlavi, the pioneer figure was apparently 'Abdullāh b. al-Muqaffa' (*c.* 102 – *c.* 139/*c.* 720 – *c.* 756), a Persian from Fārs; we possess only a part of what he must have translated, and that not in his own original Arabic versions. Foremost amongst these works was his *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, a version of a collection of animal fables stemming originally from the Sanskrit *Pañchatantra* and beyond that, the *Tantrakhyāyika*, but made by Ibn al-Muqaffa' from a Pahlavi recension of the mid-sixth-century version composed for Khusraw (Chosroes) Anūsh-irvān by his physician Burzōē. Since this last is itself lost (although a Syriac version made from it almost contemporaneously has survived), it is difficult to estimate what specifically Persian features, accreted to this ancient Indian collection of tales, were thereby brought into Arabic literature. But the idea of voicing criticism of revealed religion and of human society and morality through the mouths of animals was to be influential in later Islamic literary and philosophical tradition, seen clearly in the tenth century *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-ṣafā'*, the epistles of the Ismā'īlī "Pure ones" of Basra, where this thinly veiled subterfuge is adopted in the disputation of animals and men before the king of the jinn. Naturally, this approach commended itself – as in the case of the Ikhwān al-ṣafā' – to those whose religious or philosophical orthodoxy were already dubious

in the eyes of the official spokesmen for Islam (Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ himself was suspected of *ẕandaqah*, an attachment to the older faiths of the Iranian world, and especially of sympathy for Manichaean dualism, in defence of which he allegedly composed a polemic, preserved in a Zaydī Shīʿī refutation of it from the ninth century).

This *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah* translation is further important as the starting point of the Arabic "Mirrors for princes" literature – works on practical statecraft and on worldly behaviour and mortality, usually studded with aphorisms and wise counsels and with illustrative historical anecdotes, a field of literature which had flourished in Middle Persian during the later Sasanid period. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ himself opened the genre in Arabic with his *K. al-Adab al-kabīr*, on the behaviour of the ideal prince and his courtiers, and his *Risālah fī ʾl-ṣaḥābah*, eminently practical advice on the handling of political and military affairs addressed to an ʿAbbasid caliph or prince, and its subsequent development is seen in a line of works extending from the Persian general Ṭāhir Dhū ʾl-Yamīnayn's recommendations to his son ʿAbdullāh (early ninth century) to its culmination three centuries later in a work like al-Ghazālī's *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, in which the fusion between the Sasanid *pand-nāmah* or *andarẕ-nāmah* tradition and that of Islamic religion is fully achieved. We know that in Middle Persian literature such books as the political testament of King Ardashīr, the testament of Khusraw Anūshirvān and the maxims of the wise minister Buzurgmihr existed in several versions, so that although these Pahlavi works have not survived intact, much material is quoted from them and their protagonists became stock figures in Arabic *adab* and *Fürstenspiegel* literature, cited whenever worldly wisdom and circumspect behaviour in politics or war were in question.

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ also concerned himself with the once-glorious imperial heritage of Persia, the exploits of its monarchs and the achievements of its material culture. The translation of three important works of this historico-epic nature is imputed to him. Firstly, the compilation of the Middle Persian *Khwatāy-nāmah* ("Book of kings") is attributed to a trio of Persian writers in the reign of the last Sasanid emperor Yazdagird III, and it covered the history of Persia from legendary times till the death of Khusraw Aparvīz in 728. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's Arabic version was only the first of many renderings of this royal chronicle, some of which used his translation whilst others apparently went back to the Middle Persian original, adding material not utilized by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and endeavouring to harmonize it with the existing historical material. Secondly, of a similar type to the "Book of kings" was a *Tāj-nāmah* ("Book of the crown"), mainly on the life of the wise emperor Khusraw Anūshirvān, although

the citations of it which have survived in Arabic works are concerned more with the later ruler Khusraw Aparvīz.

The Persians have always been deeply conscious of their ancient historical tradition and of the continuity of their present environment with this past, and it seems that Persian *dihqāns* and others of the early Islamic period preserved in their personal possession copies of these historical and epic works, where Islamic authors mention seeing histories and biographies. The Afshīn Ḥaydar of Ushrūsana in Central Asia had in his possession, when arrested by the caliphal authorities in 225/840, beautifully bound and illuminated Persian books, one on the *adab* of the Persians, a copy of *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah* and a book on Mazdak (the *Mazdak-nāmah* translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ?). Al-Masʿūdī records that in 303/915 he was at Iṣṭakhr in Fārs, the old Persian imperial heartland, and saw in the possession of an ancient family of the Persian nobility there a big book on the history and monuments of the Persian kings, with painted portraits of the Sasanid emperors, and containing material not to be found in any other Persian books such as the *Khudāy-nāmah* or the *Āyīn-nāmah* or the *Kuhan-nāmah*; this volume was an Arabic version of a Persian original said to have been found in the Persian royal treasury (at Ctesiphon, or in Fārs itself?) and translated on the orders of the Umayyad caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik. If true, this is an indication of the fact that Arab interest in the Persian epic and historical past antedated Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's work. The outcome of all this general Islamic interest in ancient Persia is seen in the more or less extensive sections on Persian chronology and history, as far back as the legendary Pīshdādī and Kayānī dynasties, to be found in most of the works dealing with universal chronology and history from the ninth century onwards, such as Ibn Qutaybah's *K. al-Maʿārif*, al-Yaʿqūbī's *Tārīkh*, al-Dīnawarī's *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, Hamzah al-Iṣfahānī's *Tārīkh sinī mulūk al-arḍ*, al-Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-ʾl-mulūk*, al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj al-dhahab*, Abū ʾl-Muṭahhar al-Maqdisī's *K. al-Badʾ wa-ʾl-tārīkh*, al-Thaʿālibī's *Tārīkh Ghurar al-siyar* and al-Bīrūnī's *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah*, much of whose material stems from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's, but other parts of which apparently come from other sources, perhaps oral tradition.

Side by side with an interest in Persian dynastic history ran an interest by early Islamic society in the secular, material culture of the Persians, and the third of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's historical translations was of the *Āyīn-nāmah* ("Book of customs and usages"), the Persian word *āyīn* corresponding closely in meaning with Arabic *adab* or with Arabic *rasm*, meaning method, procedure, custom (hence in the fifth/eleventh-century dictionary of Asadī Ṭūsī, the *Lughat-i Furs*, *āyīn* is defined as *rasm*). The *āyīn* here envisaged was primarily that of the royal court and the etiquette of life there, that

of companionship with the monarch, of eating and drinking, of hunting and polo-playing with him, and the development of the genre in Arabic under this Persian influence is seen in a work like the *K. al-Tāj fī akhlāq al-mulūk* ("Book of the crown concerning the conduct of kings"), often attributed to al-Jāḥiẓ, but considered by such authorities on the Jahizian style and approach to scholarship as O. Rescher and Ch. Pellat to be apocryphal and the work of some Persian scholar inferior in talent to al-Jāḥiẓ; this work draws upon both Arabic and Persian material, but with a preponderance of the latter, and with the *Āyīn-nāmah* and the *Tāj-nāmah* as translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ providing a certain proportion of the subject matter. In time, Persian concepts of public behaviour and private life style were introduced, via such channels as these, to the sectors of society below the level of rulers and courtiers, and by the ninth century they were influencing all those classes in the central and eastern parts of the Islamic world who had access to literature and learning of any kind, as appears from an anecdote in al-Jāḥiẓ's *K. al-Bukhalāʾ*; a penny-pinching Khurāsāni shaykh, living, apparently, near Baghdad, nearly has to share his lunch with a passer-by because the latter mistakes the formulaic exchange of greetings as an invitation to eat together, and the shaykh has to explain to him the finer points of the *āyīn* involved in this exchange.[3]

Although an outstanding figure, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was by no means the only person active during the early ʿAbbasid period in interpreting Persian literature and culture to a general Islamic audience, as various mentions of other translators in the *Fihrist* attest. Thus the Persian *mawlā* Abān b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Lāḥiqī of Basra (d. 200/815–16), a protégé of the Barmakīs and, like Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, suspected by some of *zandaqah*, produced a versified *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, much prized by the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, and a versified *K. Mazdak*, on the basis of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's prose Arabic versions; he also made many direct translations, including ones of the ultimately Buddhist romance of *Bilawhar wa-Yūdāsaf*, the story of Sindbad and the *sīrah* of Khusraw Anūshirvān. Even a translation of *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah* by the Muʿtazilī theologian Bishr b. Muʿtamir is mentioned. Furthermore, although the part of Syrian and Mesopotamian scholars, many of them Christians or Sabians, was dominant in the work of interpreting the Greek scientific and medical heritage to the Arabs, the role here of certain Persians, such as Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Farrukhān al-Ṭabarī (d. 199/815) and his son Abū Bakr Muḥammad, is signalled by Ibn al-Nadīm; what is unclear in this latter source is whether any of these texts came into Arabic via Middle Persian versions, possibly made at the academy of Jundīshāpūr in Khūzistān. Certain Sasanid astronomical works

[3] *Bukhalāʾ*, 24–6.

in Middle Persian, based on both the Greek and the Indian scientific traditions, were in due course rendered into Aramaic or Arabic. There seems even to have arisen the curious situation whereby Arabic translations from Middle Persian subsequently served as bases for translations back into New Persian; this was probably the origin of the New Persian version of *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah* by the Samanid poet Rūdakī (d. 329/940–1), known from a few citations in Asadī Ṭūsī's *Lughat-i Furs*.

Most of the Persian translators mentioned in the *Fihrist* are little more to us than names, with their translations known only as bare titles, and apart from his two opuscula mentioned above (see p. 488), little of the *ipsissima verba scripta* of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ is known. Their work has come down to us rather from the use made of it by later, better-known Arabic writers like Ibn al-Qutaybah, al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, seen especially clearly in such works of the first author as the *K. al-Maʿārif* and the *ʿUyūn al-Akhbār*. Ibn Qutaybah was himself of remotely Persian stock (though a stout defender of the Arab side in the Shu-ūbiyyah disputes); he cites frequently "the *adab* of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ'" and mentions the *kutub al-ʿAjam* and the *K. al-Hind*. According to Gabrieli, he drew directly on Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translations of the *Khudāy-nāmah*, e.g. in the last chapter of the *Maʿārif* on the *mulūk al-ʿAjam*, and on his translation of the *Tāj-nāmah* (counsels of Khusraw Aparvīz to his son Shīruya) in the *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*.

In evaluating the contribution of Persian culture to early Arabic literature, one needs to avoid an over-enthusiastic, neo-Shuʿūbī attitude by attributing too much to Persian influence, when we possess so little of the literature directly emanating from the translators. For instance, undue reliance on the mere titles of books mentioned in the *Fihrist* and other works led the last generation of orientalists to discern a Persian guiding concept and form (even though the subject matter was clearly Islamic) behind the minor genre of ʿAbbasid literature which balances antitheses in qualities, actions, etc., a genre illustrated by the *K. al-Maḥāsin wa-'l-masāwī* of Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Bayhaqī (*floruit* early fourth/ tenth century). An inspiration was seen here in the Middle Persian Zoroastrian work on questions of law and ritual purity *Shāyist nā-shāyist* ("What is permissible and what is not permissible"), and the link was seen in a translation called the *K. al-Maḥāsin* of ʿUmar b. Farrukhān, about which virtually nothing is known but which was regarded as the model for various subsequent books of this title. In fact, the latest investigator of this sub-genre of Arabic *adab* literature, Ibrahim Geries, has pointed out that two of these later works are known only by the author's name and a third, by Ibn Qutaybah, is only a component part of a problematic work of the latter author, the *K. ʿUyūn al-shiʿr*; the idea that the antithetical

balancing of *maḥāsin* and *masāwī*, *khayr* and *sharr*, reflects a dichotomy in Persian religious thought of the two primordial principles of existence is attractive and even possible, but wholly unproven.

Arabic influences on Persian literature

Worthy of a brief note only in parenthesis, since it is not our direct concern in this chapter and belongs more properly to a history of Persian literature, is reverse-direction influence by Arabic literature, above all poetry, on the New Persian literature which appears in the ninth century and comes to florescence in the succeeding one. The question of Middle Persian prosody and metrics has not yet been fully elucidated, but Middle Persian poetry seems to have been essentially syllabic and accentual, with some attention to rhyme and assonance, though these latter features were not essential. Under the Saffarids of Sīstān and the Samanids of Transoxania and Khurāsān (later ninth century onwards), we find a well-developed New Persian poetic structure, with quantitative metre and a fully rhymed verse-scheme, probably adopted under Arabic influence, completely replacing the older type of minstrel poetry. (Professor Boyce has made an interesting comparison, in this connection, with what happened in England after the Norman Conquest; the old unrhymed, irregular Anglo-Saxon verse was abandoned in favour of new rhymed, French metres.) Moreover, the style and content of much of the developing New Persian lyric and romantic poetry depends clearly on the "new wave" in Arabic poetry of the early 'Abbasid period, that of the *muḥdathūn*, so that an early Ghaznavid poet like Manūchihrī (*floruit* early fifth/eleventh century) faithfully follows Arabic models in poetic structure, echoes in his wording a poet like Imru' al-Qays and employs all the stylistic devices of *badī'*.

LANGUAGE

The symbiosis of Arabic and Persian culture within the 'Abbasid caliphate had its counterpart in the linguistic as well as the literary field, and the adoption of Persian loanwords into Arabic, already noted as a trickle in the pre-Islamic and Quranic times (above, pp. 485–6), becomes perceptibly more widely diffused. The process is discernible as soon as the upheavals of the great conquests started bringing numbers of Persian slaves and clients into the garrison cities of Iraq and as far as Medina and Hijaz. The great musician and singer of the middle Umayyad period, Ibn Misjaḥ of Mecca, learned Persian melodies and songs from Persian slaves employed by the anti-caliph 'Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr to repair the Ka'bah and became

famed as the first to introduce Persian song (*ghinā'*) into Arabic music. Already the people of Kufa used the Persian expression *buzurg-ashkanb* ("pot-bellied") for the corpulent caliph 'Alī, and in the ninth century al-Jāḥiẓ gives examples of how in common Medinan usage, certain Persian words had driven out the usual Arabic ones, e.g. Persian *kharbuz*, arabized to *khirbiz*, for Arabic *biṭṭīkh*, "melon". In Arabic poetry, which, with its desert origins, one might imagine to be more resistant to neologisms and non-Arabisms, the verse of the Umayyad period sometimes makes use of Persian loans, especially in the case of poets having connections with the eastern Islamic world; thus in a poem of A'shā Ḥamdān (d. 82/701 or 83/702), written about events in Afghanistan on the remote fringes of the Arab empire, we find such Persian words as *dayzaj*, "darkish-coloured" (arabized from MP *dēza*, NP *dayza*) and *raydhaj*, "beardless youth" (arabized from MP *rētak*, NP *rēdak*). The works of al-Jāḥiẓ are precious witnesses to the state of Arabic vocabulary in the third/ninth century, showing that Persian words had become especially necessary to denote aspects of material life and culture unknown in ancient Arabic nomadic or agriculturist society, e.g. for foodstuffs (*sikbāj*, "a stew of meat and vinegar", *tabāhaj*, "rissoles of minced meat with eggs and onions", etc.). The vocabulary of urban low life – crime, begging, sexual deviation, stemming in large measure from the conurbation of Baghdad – is particularly rich in Persian words.

Since many poets and writers of Persian origin were doubtless bilingual in both literary Arabic and the spoken early New Persian of the time, from the eighth century onwards we find poets, for instance, introducing into their Arabic verses not only common Persian words which had been early arabized and were thus part of the common Arabic lexical stock, but also pure Persian words which would be obviously incomprehensible to a non-Persophone reader. Certain verses of Abu Nuwās are valuable early evidence for these last in a written form; he was the author of several *fārisiyyāt*, poems basically composed, of course, in Arabic, but with a considerable admixture of what might be called "raw" Persian words and phrases. Mujtaba Minovi has studied intensively the text of one of these poems, addressed to an *amrad majūsī* (a beardless Zoroastrian youth) called Bihrīz, together with the commentary which Ḥamzah Iṣfahānī, one of the two main *ruwāh* or transmitters of Abū Nuwās' *Dīwān*, wrote on some of the unfamiliar Persian words; the Persian words used by Abū Nuwās include some familiar words in an archaic and unusual orthographic form (e.g. *n.w.k.r.w.z* for *nawrūz*, "new year"), and words which may have been assimilated into Arabic by the poet's time (e.g. *al-bistāq* for *pīsh-tāq*, "entrance hall, portico"), but also some words which had clearly not been

assimilated (e.g. *difahrī*, "wretch, outcast" < MP *dyḫr*, "anger"). From the fourth/tenth century onwards in particular, we find bilingual poets composing macaronic poetry with Persian words inserted into the Arabic or with alternate verses, of differing meanings, in Arabic and Persian (*mulamma'āt* "patchwork verses"), as various examples in the eleventh-century anthologies of Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad al-Tha'ālibī, the *Yatīmat al-dahr* and the *Tatimmat al-Yatīma*, and their continuation by Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Bākharzī, the *Dumyat al-Qaṣr*, show. When a Persian word is homologous with an Arabic one, pleasing plays upon words, intelligible only to persons literate in both languages, could be devised. An anonymous poet cited by al-Jāḥiẓ uses in one hemistich the word *mardā*, "O man!" (Persian) and *mard*, "having downy cheeks, as of a youth" (Arabic); and a Samanid poet and official, Abū 'Alī al-Sājī, plays on the two senses of the consonant ductus *m.r.w*, the town Marw in Arabic and the negative imperative *ma-raw*, "don't go!" in Persian.

GENERAL TRENDS

Looking at the general trends behind the reception of Persian literary forms and concepts into early medieval Arabic literature, one notes first of all a perceptible Persian influence on the development of Arabic historiography. Characteristic of the Persian tradition of historical writing, whether of prose or of epic verse as in the *Shāh-nāmah*, is a mastery of this epic form, with an ability to present action convincingly and to blend together pure history, romance and a mystical element to produce an arresting story. This historical tradition was never fully taken over, however, by the Arabs, even though subjects of unparalleled grandeur were to hand in the unfolding of the Prophet Muḥammad's mission and the great military conquests. When versified history was at last grudgingly accepted at the beginning of the tenth century (e.g. in Ibn al-Mu'tazz's *Sīrat al-Imām* on the exploits of his cousin the caliph al-Mu'taḍid, in Abū Firās al-Ḥamdāni's ode on the campaigns of his cousin Sayf al-Dawlah, and Ibn 'Abd Rabbih's one on the raids against the Christians of 'Abd al-Raḥmān III in Andalus), the Persian form of rhymed couplets was adopted, at least in the *rajaz* poems of the first and third of these authors; but efforts like these did not prove to be the start of a fruitful tradition in Arabic literature. Of greater future significance was the borrowing from Persian historical literature of an idea of individual personality. Supplementary component strands came also from the Prophet's *sīrah*, the pagan tales of the *ayyām al-'Arab* transmuted into the raids or *maghāzī Rasūl Allāh*, and, probably, impulses from the *vitae* of Christian saints; but, as we have seen, much

Middle Persian historical writing treated of individual personages and their reigns (Ardashīr, Bahrām Chūbīn, Khusraw Anūshirvān, Khusraw Parvīz, etc.), and this was taken over by the Arabs under the general title of *Siyar al-Mulūk wa-Akhbāruhum*.

The incorporation of this Persian historical material into Arabic literature is, in its turn, one constituent contributing to the formation of *adab* literature in general. In the early 'Abbasid period, the growth of urban life, a flourishing internal economy, plus a certain relaxation and broadening of spirits after the *Sturm und Drang* of the age of the conquests, brought about a rising standard of life and a refinement of manners, overlaying the earlier bedouin grossness and violence. *Adab*, the ethical and practical ideal of the civilized person, widened itself to take in foreign cultures, so that the *adīb* was now expected to have a knowledge of sections of extraneous literatures, Persian, Hellenistic, even Indian, in addition to the basic one of *'ilm*, comprising the native Arabic sciences of Qur'ān interpretation, tradition, theology, law, grammar, poetry, history, etc. Certain particular aspects of *adab* literature show clearly their specifically Persian provenance: those concerned with equestrian prowess and games of skill like chess and backgammon, those concerned with food and drink and with clothing (on the Persian words frequently borrowed for such items, see above, p. 493), those concerned with boon-companionship with the ruler, those concerned with secretarial and diplomatic skills, etc. Goldziher quoted an interesting pronouncement of the Persian secretary to the caliph al-Ma'mūn, al-Ḥasan b. Sahl (d. 236/850–1), on the nature of *adab* as it was viewed by contemporaries: "The arts of refined culture are ten: three are Shahrajānī, three are Anūshirvānī, three are Arabic and one exceeds them all. The Shahrajānī arts are lute-playing, chess and polo; the Anūshirvānī ones are medicine, mathematics and equestrian skill; the Arabic ones are poetry, genealogy and historical knowledge; but the one which exceeds them all in value is the retailing of stories and evening conversations which people indulge in at their convivial gatherings."

Hence, for all these finer aspects of life, Arabic literature offers either special sections of larger works on *adab*, or anthologies of *adab*, or independent manuals of guidance for particular topics, such as the *Adab al-nadīm* of Abū 'l-Fatḥ Maḥmūd Kushājim al-Sindī (d. probably in 360/971; his family was of Indo-Persian origin), the *Adab al-kātib* of Ibn Qutaybah, the *Kitāb fī 'l-shaṭranj* of Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/946–7 or 336/947–8; his ultimate ethnic stock was probably Turkish). It was accordingly not surprising that the oriental origin of so much of this lore and material should provoke suspicion and mistrust among the orthodox and traditionally inclined, especially as not a few of

the translators of Persian works and of the proponents of *adab* were regarded as sympathetic to *zandaqah* or were supporters of the Shuʿūbiyyah. Hence the reaction provoked amongst the defenders of purely Arabic culture, seen in al-Jāḥiẓ's strictures (in his *Risālah fī dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb*) against the secretaries who swagger round and exalt the wisdom of the Sasanid emperors and Buzurgmihr, and the *adab* of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ over that of the Prophet and the caliphs, and even over that of the Qurʾān; but by the next century, the tenth *adab* had overcome these reservations and had established itself as a recognized facet of the moulding of all truly educated Muslims.

THE SYRIAC IMPACT ON ARABIC LITERATURE

The Syriac-speaking Christians of Syria and Mesopotamia made one of the most important contributions to the intellectual efflorescence centred in 'Abbasid Baghdad which became the chief glory of medieval Islam. The first century and a half of the 'Abbasid dynasty saw the momentous movement of translation of Greek, Syriac and Persian works into Arabic and the transference of Hellenistic lore to the followers of the Arabian Prophet. In the years following the founding of Baghdad the major philosophical works of Aristotle and the Neoplatonic commentators, the chief medical writings of Hippocrates and Galen, the mathematical works of Euclid and the geographical work of Ptolemy became available to readers of Arabic. In this movement it was the Syrians who were the chief mediators.

To understand how Syriac came to exercise its important influence on Arabic literature it is necessary to have a clear picture of the development of Syriac literature itself. This development may be divided into three stages.[1] The first period extended from the pre-Christian era to the eighth century A.D., and is represented by the few surviving pagan works (e.g. the Story of Aḥīqār and the writings of Māra bar Seraphion and Bāba of Ḥarrān),[2] and a far more extensive Christian literature. It commences with the Bible in successive versions (Monophysite versions, Malkite versions and Nestorian versions), commonly called *Peshiṭṭa* ("simple"), for the Syrian church seems never to have been satisfied with its translations. The latter half of the period was the golden age of Syriac literature, with the commencement in the fifth century of the native historical literature of Syria, and the initiation of the great task of translating into Syriac the theological and doctrinal writings of the Greek Fathers, as well as the works of Peripatetic philosophy, by the Syriac-speaking Fathers.

With regard to original works of Syriac literature in the first phase of its history the weight of interest must lie with the ascetic and mystical books. The earliest work in this field was the *Book of Hierotheos*, attributed

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[1] Cf. Barṣūm, *Lu'lu'*, 233–7.   [2] Barṣūm, *Lu'lu'*, 115f.; Kāmil and Bakrī, *Tārīkh*, 23–4.

to Stephen bar Ṣudaylī (d. A.D. 510), a work which exercised a strong influence on Syrian mystics throughout the Middle Ages, especially on Bar Hebraeus, who wrote a commentary on it and made copious extracts from it. Outstanding in this field are the works of Isaac of Nineveh, who flourished in the late sixth century, and Simon of Ṭaybūtheh (d. c. 680). Isaac, who is credited with the writing of "seven volumes on the guidance of the Spirit, and the Divine mysteries and judgements and dispensation",[3] lays stress in his teaching on the contemplative life, and emphasizes that it cannot be born in the womb of reason. Simon asserts that at least a part of knowledge is perceived through the inward silence of the mind, and that that sort of knowledge is the highest of all, for it reaches the hidden Godhead. It is in the field of the ascetic–mystical that the Syriac parallelism to Ṣūfī literature is striking.

The fifth century saw the Syrian church split into two hostile sects, the Jacobite and the Nestorian. Despite the weakening of the church which this involved, the rift served as an impetus to the translation of the logic of Aristotle, in which both factions found arguments for their doctrinal positions. It also, however, made easier the conquest of Persia and Syria by the Muslim Arabs.

The second period, lasting from the eighth to the close of the thirteenth century, coincides broadly with the period of the definitive Arab domination of Syria and Iraq. Although the most important feature of this period was the Syriac-speakers' transmission of Greek philosophy and medicine into Arabic, the Syrians also produced many original works in a wide range of fields, particularly in the field of general and ecclesiastical history. One of the earliest of the Syriac historical writings was the *Acts of the Martyrs*. In this period shine the names of Michael the Great (d. 1199) whose most important work was a *Chronicle* from the creation to A.D. 1196, and Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), "one of the most learned and versatile men that Syria ever produced",[4] who wrote a universal history, the *Chronicon syriacum*, in three parts.

The third period, from the thirteenth century to the present day, is generally considered an age of decline, in which the Syriac language has been virtually extinguished in everyday, and even literary, use by Arabic. Nevertheless, some Syrians and Lebanese have continued to produce literary works in Syriac, and today there are some signs of a modern revival. Liturgical writings form a considerable part of the literary activity of this period. Barṣūm records in his book *al-Luʾluʾ al-manthūr* the names and literary products of some fifty-six writers, translators and poets since the death of Bar Hebraeus and up to the nineteenth century.[5]

[3] Cf. Wright, *History*, 111.   [4] Cf. Wright, History, 265.   [5] Cf. Barṣūm, *Luʾluʾ*, 543–82.

Arab contact with the Syrians goes back to the days of the Arab kingdoms
of the Lakhmids of al-Ḥīrah in Iraq and the Ghassanids in southern Syria.
Syrian physicians practised medicine in Arabia before Islam and Syrian
missionaries converted many Arabs to Christianity. The first bishop of
Beth 'Arbāyā (between Nisibis and Sinjār), Aḥūdeme (d. 575), was a
successful preacher of the Gospel among the bedouin and ended by earning
the crown of martyrdom at Chosroes' hands for converting a youthful
member of the Persian royal family, whom he baptized by the name of
George. A later churchman, George, bishop of the Arab tribes (consecrated
724), whose diocese included the Tanūkh, Tha'lab and Taghlib, was well
known for his translation into Syriac of Aristotle's *Organon*. In the course
of time Christian communities grew up in the Yemen, particularly Najrān,
and in Yathrib in the Hijaz, where the first church in the city was dedicated
to the Virgin Mary.

    Words of Syriac or Aramaic origin in the Qur'ān (e.g. *furqān*, *sifr*, *zakāh*,
ṣalāh, *kāhin*, *qissīs*) demonstrate the cultural influence which the Syrians
were already exerting on the very beginnings of Islamic civilization. Many
other ecclesiastical terms were borrowed from Syriac, and several Greek
words were arabized through Syriac (e.g. *khūrī*, *iskīm*, *baṭriyark*). Syriac
also made a significant contribution to the writing of Arabic. The Arabic
alphabet descends from the Nabataean script (a sister of Syriac) and the
diacritical points and vowel pointing in Arabic follow the East Syrian
system.[6]

    When we turn to examine the interaction between Syriac literature and
the literature of the Arabs, we find that it is the ascetic–mystical books
of the golden age of Syriac literature which represent the first important
influence of Syriac on Arabic. As noted above, the parallels between the
writings of Isaac of Nineveh and Simon of Ṭaybūtheh and the later
writings of the Ṣūfīs are striking. This parallelism may also be seen in the
recently discovered manuscript sources for Athanasius Abū Ghālib (d.
1177). As Vööbus rightly points out, the dynamic stream of Syrian
mysticism, which was initiated by pseudo-Macarius and others, "had a
very important role in bringing to fruition the mystical movement in
Islam, in Mesopotamia and Persia, namely Sufism".[7]

    The evidence for this influence is based on parallel ideas only, but with
the Syrian translators of the eighth and ninth centuries we come to
abundant documentary evidence of the Syriac influence on Arabic. The
Syrians' transmission of the knowledge of the Greeks into Arabic was
undoubtedly vital to the preservation of ancient Greek learning.

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[6] Cf. pp. 10–15 above, "The Arabic script".   [7] "Important discoveries", 269.

For two centuries before Islam the Syrians had been translating Greek works into Syriac. This activity was based on the great schools of Nisibis, Edessa, Ḥarrān and Jundīshāpūr. The Persian school at Edessa was the chief centre for the study of Syriac and Greek during the early phase of Syriac literature. In addition to translations of a large number of the Early Church Fathers' theological and doctrinal works, there were translations made in the fields of philosophy, medicine, ethics and physics. Outstanding in this field, especially in translating the writings of Aristotle, was the Jacobite figure of Sergius of Rās 'Ayn (d. c. 536), who was well known among the eastern and western Syrians as a physician and for his knowledge of Greek, and particularly for his knowledge of Aristotelian philosophy. Among the Jacobite scholars, Sergius was "unanimously called the one who first brought Aristotle into the Syriac language".[8]

The first recorded translation from Syriac into Arabic was a version of the Four Gospels which was made by a number of translators in A.D. 643 during the patriarchate of John of the Sedras, Patriarch of Antioch. According to Bar Hebraeus this was made by translators from the Arab tribes of the Ṭayyi', Tanūkh and 'Uqayl, at the command of 'Amr b. Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ al-Anṣārī, the Muslim governor of al-Jazīrah. This translation, however, has not survived, and it was over a century later, in the caliphate of al-Manṣūr (136–59/753–75), that the activity of translation from Syriac to Arabic began in full force.

With the Islamic intellectual awakening of the eighth and ninth centuries the translation work of the Syrians from Greek into Syriac entered a new phase: the retranslation of Syriac versions of the Greek works into the new imperial language, Arabic. The importance of this work of translation overshadows that of original works of Syriac literature in the second phase of its history as briefly described above. The Syrians, although they added virtually nothing to Greek science, medicine and philosophy, were zealous preservers and propagators of this lore as they found it in the original texts, and when the intellectual curiosity of the Arabs was aroused, the local conservators of Hellenic knowledge in Iraq and Syria, the Syriac-speaking Christians, were the natural candidates for the role of transmission of Greek thought to the Muslims. Without the translations made by the Syrians, Muslim scholars from the ninth to the twelfth centuries would not have had access to Greek philosophy and sciences. This dependence may be illustrated by examples as illustrious as those of al-Kindī, who relied exclusively on translations in his studies, and al-Fārābī, who owed his education in Greek philosophy to two Syrian teachers, Abū Yaḥyā al-Marwazī and Yūḥannā b. Ḥaylān.

[8] Renan, De philosophia, 118.

The first of the "foreign sciences" (*'ulūm al-'Ajam*) which claimed the attentions of the Muslims, and particularly Muslim rulers, was the practical art of medicine. The caliphs early availed themselves of the services of Christian, Syriac-speaking physicians; the family of Bakhtīshū', which produced eminent medical men through seven generations, is particularly celebrated for its services to al-Manṣūr and later caliphs.

Yūḥannā b. Māsawayh (d. 243/857), an early Christian medical writer, was associated with the Bakhtīshū' family, and was charged by Hārūn al-Rashīd with the translation of Greek books, mainly medical, found at Ankara and Amorium. The name of Yūḥannā b. Māsawayh stands out among the eminent Syrian Christian physicians. He was the head of the Bayt al-Ḥikmah, which was established by al-Ma'mūn in 217/832 as a centre where scholars could pursue their translations. Yūḥannā is credited with the authorship of some fifty works, including the *Medical Axioms* (*Al-Nawādir al-ṭibbiyyah*) which was twice translated into Latin in the Middle Ages.

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TRANSLATIONS OF THE QUR'ĀN INTO EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

The Qur'ān is both inimitable and untranslatable. Yet many attempts have been made to imitate it and to translate it, even by Muslims themselves, despite the total prohibition or disapproval of such action on the part of religious authority.

ORIENTAL TRANSLATIONS

Many translations into the oriental languages of Islam exist. Persian translations have been recorded by Storey[1] and Turkish by Hamidullah,[2] preceded by Birge. The list of eastern languages in which translations exist is a long one; Chauvin knew of the following: Armenian, Arvi (Tamil written with Arabic characters), Bengali, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindustani, Javanese, Macassarese, Malay, Panjabi, Persian, Pushtu, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil and Turkish. To this already long list we can add Amharic, Assamese, Burmese, Chinese, Georgian, Syriac. A translation into Maltese is being undertaken. Professor Muḥammad Hamidullah has been active in publishing samples of translations. His *Quran in every language* came out in a third edition in Hyderabad-Deccan in 1936; at the time he had available in manuscript a fourth edition which gave examples of translations in 102 languages. A similar series of specimens, giving the first, short chapter of the Qur'ān (the fātiḥah) in a large number of languages, was published in *La penseé chiite* (III–XII, 1960–2) and in a revised form in *France–Islam* (II, 1967 onwards).

AFRICAN LANGUAGES

In African languages several versions have been made into Swahili, including one produced by the Ahmadiyya community, whose Uganda Mission also produced one in Luganda in 1965.

PREDECESSORS OF THE PRESENT WORK

The first to concern himself with translations of the Qur'ān was Johannes Conradus Lobherz, who on 18 June 1704 submitted in Nuremberg his *Dissertatio historico-philologico-theologico De Alcorani versionibus variis, tam orientalibus, quam*

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[1] Cf. *Persian Literature*, I, 1927, "Quranic literature".
[2] Cf. *Turkiyat mecmuasi*, XXIV, 1964, 65–80.

occidentalibus, impressis et hactenus 'ανέκδοτοις. In his day the latest versions to be described were the Latin of Marracci and the German made from it by Nerreter. Lobherz was followed by Schnurrer, whose bibliography contains a section "Coranica".

Victor Chauvin's great *Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux Arabes publiés dans l'Europe chrétienne de 1810 à 1885* (Liège, Leipzig, 1913–22) contains in Section x, "Le Coran et la tradition" (1907), a virtually complete bibliography of the Qur'ān for the period covered by his work, embracing manuscripts and editions of texts, western and oriental translations, commentaries, etc., and a supplement to the bibliography of Schnurrer. As befits the work of one of the greatest bibliographers in the field of Islamic studies, the details given for works which he saw himself are impeccable, but many titles stem from other bibliographers, catalogues and booksellers' lists, such entries being clearly indicated. Every edition of every translation known to Chauvin, whether complete or selective, is recorded by him.

A short bibliography, linguistically and chronologically arranged, was published by W. S. Woolworth in *Muslim World*, xvii, 1937, 279–89. This gives names of translators and dates of 118 texts and translations, of which 77 are versions in western languages. It refers the reader requiring additional information to an earlier list by Zwemmer in the same journal (v, 244).

In the introduction to his French translation, Hamidullah gives an inventory of translations into European languages, both complete and partial, mentioning only the names of translators and the dates of the various editions.

In the present bibliography I have tried to be as comprehensive as possible, examining *de visu*, in so far as I was able from visits to libraries in Britain, all editions of all translations. But it has not proved possible to discover every single one in the British Library, Bodley, Cambridge University, School of Oriental and African Studies, India Office Library, Royal Asiatic Society, Manchester University or others which I have visited. Many details have been furnished by colleagues in this country and overseas. Where I have not been able to examine a title personally, the reference to the bibliography, catalogue, library or individual which supplied the information is given in parentheses. It has been necessary to restrict the present bibliography to complete printed translations of the Qur'ān, or those intended to be complete, with only occasional mention of manuscripts. Efforts have been made to give all useful bibliographical information, but, no attempt has been mounted to emulate the practices of what might be called the "higher bibliography" in giving every single minor variation in title of editions of the same work. Nor, for the earlier translations, has it been thought necessary to aim at reproducing in linear form the different varieties of fount and the lineation of the original title pages.

BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF QUR'ĀN TRANSLATIONS

The Latin paraphrase made by Robertus Ketenensis at the behest of Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, and completed in 1143, exists in the autograph of the

translator in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris. This manuscript was discovered by Miss d'Alverny. The work of Robert formed the basis for several medieval versions,[3] but was apparently unknown to another translator of the earlier period, Mark of Toledo.[4] It was recopied in the seventeenth century by Dominicus Germanus, whose work exists in Montpellier, the Escurial and elsewhere.[5] It was published, in a volume comprising the Cluniac corpus together with various other works of Christian propaganda, by Thomas Bibliander (Buchmann) in three editions issued at Basel in 1543 and one issued at Zurich in 1550. These contain a preface by Martin Luther, in one of them attributed to Philip Melanchthon, which accounts for the interests of Lutheran scholars in the description of these works.

The first translation in a modern European language was the Italian version of Andrea Arrivabene, published in 1547.[6] Though its author claims it to be made directly from the Arabic, it is clearly a translation or paraphrase of the work of Robertus Ketenensis published by Bibliander. Arrivabene's version was used for the first German translation made by Solomon Schweigger, preacher at the Frauenkirche in Nuremberg, which in turn formed the basis of the first Dutch translation, made anonymously and issued in 1641.

The first French version by André du Ryer, "Sieur de la Garde Malezair", came out in a great many editions between 1647 and 1775. All editions contain a "summary of the religion of the Turks", letters to du Ryer from the consuls of Marseilles, together with their certificate of authorization of the work, and a translation of the *laissez-passer* issued by Murād IV for du Ryer's journey from Istanbul to Paris and back. The first Qur'ān in English was the version made by Alexander Ross from du Ryer's French, which also fathered versions in Dutch (by Glazemaker), German (Lange) and Russian (Postnikov and Veryovkin).

The second Latin version was made directly from the Arabic text by Ludovico Marraci (or Marracci) and issued first in 1698 and secondly, with additions and annotations, by Reineccius in 1721. It was translated into German by Nerreter. Denison Ross devoted an article to Marracci, which was later supplemented by Giuseppe Gabrieli,[7] and his sources were investigated by Nallino.[8]

The eighteenth century brought translations made directly from an Arabic original by Sale into English (first published in 1734), Boysen (German, 1773) and Savary (French, 1783). Sale's version was in vogue in the English-speaking world for nearly two centuries: his famed preliminary discourse, based, according to Nallino, on Marracci and Edward Pococke senior, was translated into several European languages and published either in company with the translation into

[3] D. Cabanelas, "Juan de Segovia y el primer Alcorán trilingüe", *Andalus*, XIV, 1949, 149–73.
[4] M. Th. d'Alverny, G. Vajda, "Marc de Tolède, traducteur d'Ibn Tumart", *Andalus*, XVI, 1951, 99–140, 259–307; XVII, 1952, 1–56. Mark's preface to his translation is given at 260–8 of XVI.
[5] M. Devic, "Une traduction inédite du Coran", *JA*, 8 sér., I, 1883, 343–406.
[6] C. de Frede, *La prima traduzione italiana del Corano sullo sfondo dei rapporti tra Cristianità e Islam nel Cinquecento* (Studi e materiali sulla conoscenza dell' Oriente in Italia, II), Naples, 1967.
[7] In *Il pensiero misionario*, III, 1931, 303–13.
[8] "Le fonti arabe manoscritte dell'opera di Ludovico Marracci sul Corano", *Rend. Accad. Lincei, Cl. sci. mor. stor. filol.*, ser. 6, VII, 1931, 303–49.

that language, or separately. It was even translated into Arabic, but by Protestant missionaries in Egypt.

Savary's version was, according to Chauvin, evidently made from the Latin of Marracci: it bears the distinction of having been published in Mecca in 1165 (or so the title page of one edition states)! Kasimirski, whose translation has also had a long run, and indeed (like that of Savary) is still being republished in our own time, was requested by Pauthier to revise Savary. He decided against it, however, preferring to make a new translation directly from the Arabic while consulting the works of Marracci and Sale.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the translations were normally made without remove from the Arabic. In the twentieth century, the first English versions made by Muslims appeared, and the Ahmadiyya movement began its publishing activities in issuing Koran texts with translations into European and even African languages. Our own time has seen the appearance of translations meeting the requirements of philological scholarship made by the most prominent Arabists and Islamic scholars of our day, such as Hrbek (Czech), Kramers (Dutch), Bell and Arberry (English, worthy successors to Rodwell and Palmer), Blachère and Hamidullah (French), Rudi Paret (German), Bausani and Moreno (Italian), Krachkovsky (Russian), and Vernet Ginés (Spanish).

PUBLISHED TRANSLATIONS IN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

AFRIKAANS

[1950] Anon. *De heilige Koeraan.* Pretoria: Universal Truth Movement.
1961 M. A. Baker. *Koran. Dit is 'n vertaling van die dertig dele van die Heilige Qur'án.* Kaapstad: Nasionale boekhandel. Pp. xliv, 464 (*Index transl.* 14, 21466).

ALBANIAN

1929 Anon. *Ajka e kuptimeve te Kur-ani qerimit. U lexue, u shqyrtue e u pelqye prej këshillit te naltë te sheriatit.* Shkoder: Ora e Skhodrës. Pp. 1,156.

BULGARIAN

A translation by Nikola K. Litsa, made from Sale's English version and published in Plovdiv 1902–5, remains uncompleted, only four parts having appeared. Another version, also made from the English, possibly of Sale, by Tomov and Skulav, was published in Ruse (Rustchutz) about 1930. Made for missionary purposes, it carries a preface by E. M. Hoppe and a translation by Simeon Popov of Max Henning's introduction to his German version. Full bibliographical descriptions are given in the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library,* XLI, 1937, p. 96, and in a short article in *Muslim World,* XXIII, 1933, pp. 187–90.

CZECH

1913 Veselý. *Korán. Z arabštiny přeložil Dr. Ignác Veselý. S předmlovou a 5 vyobrazenimi v textu.* Praha: Nákladem "Orientální bibliotéky". Pp. [ii], vi, 591.

1934 Nykl. *Korán. Z arabštiny přeložil Dr. A. R. Nykl. V. Řijnu.* 2nd edn, Nakladelství L. Mazáč v Praze, 1938. Pp. xxix, 281.

1972 Hrbek. *Korán, z arabštiny přeložil Ivan Hrbek.* Praha: Odeon. Pp. 802.

Further information on the first two items will be found in *Bull. New York Publ. Libr.*, XLI, 1937, pp. 96–7. The translation by Hrbek is described, with the work of other Czech orientalists, by Annemarie Schimmel, "A new Czech translation of the Qur'an...", *Studies in Islam*, XV, 1978, pp. 171–6, and in a German version of the same article in *Welt des Orients*, VII, 1973–4, pp. 154–62.

DANISH

1967 Madsen. *Koranen (På dansk ved A. S. Madsen.)* 3 vols. København: Borgens Forlag (Borgens billigbøger, 34.). New edn 1980.

DUTCH

1641 Swigger (Schweigger). *De Arabische Alkoran, Door de Zarazijnsche en de Turcksche Prophete Mahometh, Im drie onderscheyden deelen begrepen: van der Turcken Religie, Gheloove, Almoessen, Vasten, Ghebeden, Bedevaert na Mecha, met t' samen sijn Gods-diensten, ende Ceremonien, Wetten ende Rechten. Wt de Arabische sprake nu nieuwelijcks int Hoochduytsch getranslateerd, met t' samen en aenhangende Voor-reden, door Salomon Swigger, Prediker der Kercken tot Nevrenbergh. Ende nu wederom uyt de Hooghduysche in onse Nederlantsche spraecke overgheset.* Hamburg: Barent Adriaensz Berentsma. Pp. vi, 164.

1658 Glazemaker. *Mahomets Alkoran, Door de Heer du Ryer uit d' Arabische in de Fransche taal gestelt; Beneffens Een tweevoudige Beschryving van Mahomets Leven; En een Verhaal van des zelfs reis ten hemel, Gelijk ook zijn Samenspraak Met de Jood Abdias. Alles van nieus door J. H. Glazemaker vertaald, en te samen gebracht.* T'Amsterdam, Voor Ian Rieuwertsz. Pp. 5, [vii], 692, 125.

1696 ————*Zynde den twede en laatste Druk, met koopere Plaaten verciert.* T'Amsterdam, By Timotheus ten Hoorn. Ff. 6, pp. 547. Reprinted 1698 at Amsterdam, and in the same year at Rotterdam, with a misprint ("Abdais") on the title page.

1707 ————*Alles op nieuws door een Liefhebber overzien, en van alle druk-fouten gezuivert. Met Kopere Plaaten verciert.* Te Leyden, By Hendrik van Damme.

1721 ————Te Leyden, By Jan vander Deyster.

1734 ————*Alles van nieuws door J. H. Glasemaker vertaald en te zamen gebracht. Zynde den zevende en laatste Druk, met kopere Platen verciert.* Te Leyden, By Jan en Hendrik vander Deyster.

1859 Tollens. *Mahomed's Koran, gevolgd naar de Fransche vertaling van Kasimirski, de Engelsche van Sale, de Hoogduitsche van Ullmann en de Latijnsche van Maracci; met*

bijvoeging van aantekeningen en ophelderingen der voornaamste uitleggers, en voorafgegaan van en levensschets van Mahomed; door Mr. L. J. A. Tollens. Batavia: Lange & Co. Pp. xiii, xlv, 666, v.

1860 Keyzer. *De Koran, voorafgegaan door het leven van Mahomed, eene inleding omtrent de Godsdienstgebruiken der Mahomedanern, enz. Met ophelderende aanmerkingen en historische aanteekeningen van M. Kasimirski...Dr. L. Ullmann...Dr. G. Weil...en R. Sale...Bij het nederlandsche publiek ingeleid door eene voorrede van Dr. S. Keyzer...* Haarlem: J. J. van Brederode. Pp. viii, 876.

1879———Tweede druk. *Waaraan toegevoegt een historisch oversigt van de verhouding der Turken tot het overige Europa, naar aanleiding van Freeman's " The Ottoman power in Europe, its nature, its growth and its decline". Door Mr. F. A. De Graaff...* Opgehelderd door vier in kleuren gedrukte kaartjes. Haarlem: J. J. van Brederode. Pp. vii, 929.

1905———3e druk. *Waaraan is toegevoegd een kort overzicht van de geschiedenis der Turken, Voornamelijk in hun verhouding tot her overig Europa door N. Japikse.* Rotterdam: Bolle. (Chauvin 225.)

1934 Soedewo. *De Heilige Qoer-aan verbattende den arabischen tekst met ophelderende aantekeningen van Maulwi Moehammad Ali...In het nederlandsch vertaald door Soedewo. Eerste druk. Uitgegeven door: het Hoofdcomité Qoer-aanfonds onder de auspiciën van de Ahmadijah-Beweging Indonesia (Centrum Lahore).* Pp. cxciii, [4], 1234.

1953 Ahmadiyya. *De Heilige Qor'aan met nederlandsche vertaling, onder auspiciën van Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad...* Rabwah: The Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation. Pp. xii, 180, 638. 2nd edn 1969.

1956 Kramers. *De Koran uit het Arabisch vertaald door J. H. Kramers.* Amsterdam/Brussel: Agon Elsevier. (Agon Bibliotheek.) Reprinted six times to 1978.

ENGLISH
Versions by Christians

1649 Ross. *The Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated out of Arabique into French; by the Sieur du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, and Resident for the King of France, at Alexandria. And newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities, by Alexander Ross.* London, Printed, Anno Dom. 1649. Pp. 420.

1649———[Another edition] Pp. 407+14+7.

1688———*To which is prefixed, the Life of Mahomet, the Prophet of the Turks, and Author of the Alcoran. With a needful Caveat, or Admonition, for them who desire to know what Use may be made of, or if there be danger in Reading the Alcoran.* London: printed and are to be sold by Randal Taylor. Pp. xviii, 511. 4°. Also in a folio edition of the same year.

1719 *A Compleat History of the Turks, from their origin in the Year 755, to the year 1718...In four volumes.* (Vol. 4: *The Life of Mahomet: together with the Alcoran at large, translated from the Arabick by the Sieur De* [sic] *Ryer, and now faithfully English'd.*) London: printed by J. Darby for Andr. Bell, W. Taylor, John Osborne.

1806————*The Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of Mahomet. Translated from the original Arabick into French, by the Sieur De* [sic] *Ryer...the whole now faithfully translated into English.* 1st American edition. Springfield: Printed by Henry Brewer, for Isaiah Thomas, jun. (Library of Congress 36–34770.)

1734 Sale. *The Koran, commonly called The Alcoran of Mohammad, Translated into English immediately from the Original Arabic; with Explanatory Notes, taken from the most approved Commentators. To which is prefixed A Preliminary Discourse. By George Sale, Gent.* London: C. Ackers for J. Wilcox. Pp. ix, 187, 508, [15].

1764————2 vols. Printed for L. Hawes, W. Clarke and R. Collins; and T. Wilcox. Pp. xviii, 248, 266+[3], 519.

1774————London. (Chauvin 148.)

1795————2 vols. A new edition. Bath: S. Hazard printed (for several persons).

1801————2 vols. A new edition. London: printed by T. Maiden (for 11 persons or companies). Pp. xv, 248, 264, [12]+[vi], 519, [vi].

1812————2 vols. London: J. Walker [and others]. Pp. xvi, 256+523.

1821————2 vols. A new edition. London: printed for Scatcherd and Letterman [and 11 others]. Pp. xiv, 248, 256+523.

1824————*To which is prefixed a brief memoir of Mahomet...* London: Scatcherd and Letterman [etc.] 2 vols. (LC 35–35763.)

1825————2 vols. London: for T. Tegg; Dublin: R. Milliken; Glasgow: Griffin & Co.; Paris: M. Baudry. Pp. xxiv, 255, 213+iv, 535.

1826————*The Holy Koran; commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammad, translated from the original Arabic, and with the former translations diligently compared and revised. By special command.* London: for the Koran Society by R. Carlile. Pp. iv, 386. Sale is not mentioned anywhere in the book, which does not carry the Preliminary Discourse.

1836————*The Koran, commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed: translated from the original Arabic. With explanatory notes, taken from the most approved commentators. To which is prefixed, A preliminary discourse. By George Sale. A new edition, in which the surats, or verses, are, for the first time, marked.* 2 vols. London: Longman, Rees & Co. [and 11 others]. Pp. 218, 219+468.

1838————A new edition.

1844————A new edition, with a memoir of the translator (by R. A. Davenport), and with various readings and illustrative notes from Savary's version of the Koran. London: T. Tegg. Pp. xx, 132, 516. There were many reprints of this edition, some undated. Sir John Lubbock included it as no. 22 of his "Hundred books" (1892). Several American editions appeared at Philadelphia and New York to 1975. E. M. Wherry used it as the nucleus of

1882–6 Wherry. *A comprehensive commentary on the Quran: comprising Sale's translation and preliminary discourse, with additional notes and emendations, together with a complete index to the text, preliminary discourse and notes, by E. M. Wherry.* 4 vols. London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, and Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Reprinted in 1896, 1900, 1917. The work was republished in 1921 with an introduction by Sir Denison Ross, and remains in print, having been reissued as recently as 1973 by Zeller in Osnabruck.

1876———2nd revised and emended edition.

1909———*With an introduction by the Rev. G. Margoliouth.* (Everyman's library.) London: Dent; New York: Dutton. Pp. xi, 506. Reprinted some twenty times to 1963.

1861 Rodwell. *The Koran: translated from the Arabic, the surahs arranged in chronological order, with notes and index, by the Rev. J. M. Rodwell.* London: Williams and Norgate. Pp. xxvii, 659.

1880 Palmer. *The Qur'ân, translated by E. H. Palmer.* 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press. (Sacred books of the East, vi, ix.) Pp. cxviii, 268 + 362. Reprinted in 1900 with an introduction by R. A. Nicholson in "The World's Classics", also several times in Britain, the U.S.A. and India.

1937–9 Bell. *The Qur'an. Translated, with a critical re-arrangement of the Surahs, by Richard Bell.* 2 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. Reprinted in 1960.

1955 Arberry. *The Koran interpreted.* By A. J. Arberry. 2 vols. London: Allen & Unwin. Pp. 350, 367. Also published in a one-volume edition by Macmillan in New York, and often reprinted.

1973 Mercier and Tremlett. *The Koran.* Henry Mercier and Lucien Tremlett. Mystic, Conn.: Verry. Pp. xvi, 332. (*Index transl.* 26, no. 16902.)

Versions by Muslims

1862–8 Abdul Hamid. *The divine Qur-an. It contains the Arabic text with a very lucid translation and short explanatory notes that make the sense clear.* By Al-Hajj S. M. Abdul Hamid. Dacca: Islami Tabligh Mission. Also in 3 vols, Dacca: Darul Islam, 1962–3? (National Union Catalog). 2nd edn, 1965–8.

1899 Anon. *The Koran. (Translated into English by a Muhammedan Graduate.)* [Text, with English, Persian and Urdu Translations.] Sialkot: Punjab Press.

1905 M. Abdul Hakim Khan. *The Holy Qurán. Translated by Dr. Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan, M.B....with short notes based on the Holy Quran, or the authentic traditions of the Prophet, or the Old and New Testaments or scientific truths. All fictitious romance, questionable history and disputed theories have been carefully avoided. The great miracles and prophecies of the Prophet, Mohammad (Peace be with him) have been pointed out throughout. No efforts have been spared to render the translation full and faithful.* Patiala: Rajinder Press. Pp. 917.

1911–12 Abu'l-Fadl. *The Qur'ân. Arabic text and English translation: arranged chronologically: with an abstract, by Mirza Abu'l Fadl.* 2 vols. Pp. xxxi, 752 + 1072, 25. New editions appeared in 1916 and 1955, the latter described as "4th revision".

1916 Hairat. *The Koran, prepared by various Oriental learned scholars and edited by Mirza Hairat. In three volumes.* Delhi: H. M. Press. Another edition or reprint appeared in 1930.

1917 Muhammad Ali. *The Holy Qur-an, containing the Arabic text with English translation and commentary, by Maulwi Muhammad Ali.* Woking: "Islamic Review" Office. Pp. cxi, 1275. 2nd edn 1920; 3rd 1935; 4th 1951; 5th rev. edn 1963.

1928 Muhammad Ali. *Translation of the Holy Quran. With short notes and introduction by Muhammad Ali.* Lahore: Ahmadiyya Arjuman-Ishaat-i-Islam. Pp. cxvi, 631. The fifth, revised, edition was issued in 1963 (NUC 65–6402).

1925 Bodamialisade. *The Koran. A new version by M. Nejmi Bodamialisade. The first part.* Paphos, Cyprus. Pp. A-G, ii, 39.

1934———*The Gouran versified by Nejmi Sagib Bodamialisade, the saviour promised by God, the versifier of the Gouran, the grace of divine justice, the defender of the martyrs. The first part.* Nicosia: Shakespear School. Pp. xii, 24.

1926 Rahman. *An English version of the Holy Quran in verse,* Part I. By M. A. Rahman. Printed at the Rowjees Press, Adoni. Pp. ii, 138, 4.

[1929] Sarwar. *Translation of the Holy Qur'ân from the original Arabic text with critical essays, life of Muhammad, complete summary of contents, by Al-Haj Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar.* First edition. Singapore: the author. Pp. cxix, 377. According to Hamidullah, editions were published at London, 1928 and 1929, and Oxford, 1930. Several reprints in 1928–30; 2nd edn 1973.

1931 Badshah Husain. *The Holy Quran; a translation with commentary according to Shia traditions and principles. Series no. 42. Part I: Surahs I and II with introduction. By A. F. Badshah Husain.* Published under the auspices of Moayyedul Waezin, Lucknow. Part II was ready for sale; the three remaining parts were being written, but remain unpublished.

1934–7 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Ali. *The Holy Qurān: an interpretation in English, with the original Arabic text in parallel columns, a running rhythmic commentary in English, and full explanatory notes. By 'Allama 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali.* Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf. 30 parts. Pp. xxii, 12, 1,849.

1937–8 *The Holy Qur-ān: Arabic text with an English translation and commentary by 'Abdulla Yusuf' Ali.* Two volume edition. Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf. Pp. xx, 820 + 821 – 1849.

1938———Third edition. Three-volume edition. Pp. 1,854. The two-volume, and a three-volume edition, have been reprinted many times, in Washington, D.C. (1946) and New York, by the Muslim Student Association of the U.S.A. and Canada, with an introduction by Sayed Abu A'la Maududi, in 1975; in Lahore in 1947–64, 1957, 1967, 1969, 1973; in Delhi, 1978, 1979; in Beirut, 1965; and in Leicester by the Islamic Foundation in 1978.

1930 Pickthall. *The meaning of the glorious Koran; an explanatory translation by Marmaduke Pickthall.* London: A. A. Knopf. Pp. viii, 693. Reprinted numerous times by Allen & Unwin in London and by New American Library in New York.

1935? Jafri. *Al-Quran. . . English interpretation with Arabic text, and brief explanatory notes, including a discourse on five glorious principles of Islam, a portrait of the life of Prophet Mohammad and a sketch of the life of Prophet Abraham, with a foreword by Dr. S. M. A. Jafri.* Simla: Quran Society. (Library of Congress 35–11609.)

1938 *The meaning of the glorious Qur'ān; text and explanatory translation by Marmaduke Pickthall.* 2 vols. Hyderabad, India: Government Central Press. This bilingual edition has also been reprinted often, in Karachi, Beirut, New York. A de-luxe

edition was published, jointly by Allen & Unwin and Fine Books (Oriental), in 1976.

1956 Dawood. *The Koran*. A new translation by N. J. Dawood. Harmondsworth: Penguin books. Pp. 428. (The Penguin Classics, L52.) Rev. edn 1959, 2nd edn 1961, 2nd rev. edn 1966, 3rd edn 1968, 4th edn 1974, 4th rev. edn 1978. Multiple reprints of each edition.

1957 Abdul Majid (Daryabadi). *The Holy Qur'ān. Translated from the original Arabic with lexical, grammatical, historical, geographical and eschatological comments and explanations, and side-lights on comparative religion. By Abdul Mājid.* 2 vols. Lahore and Karachi: The Taj Company. Pp. xii, 456+457–969. A second edition appeared in 1971.

1962 Jullundri. *After a few centuries a true and easy translation of the glorious Holy Qur'an, with commentry* [sic] *by the late Ali Ahamad Khan Jullundri.* Lahore: World Islamic Mission. 11 parts. Other editions 1963, 1978?

1964– Mahmood Hasan, S. A. Usmani. *The noble Quran (Arabic text, English translation & commentary). Urdu translation & commentary by Shaikh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmood Hasan (Prisoner of Malta) and Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (Sheikh-ul-Islam of Pakistan). Presented in English by Mohammad Ashfaq Ahmad.* Karachi: Maktaba-e Matloob.

1964 Ahmad Ali. *The Holy Qur'an, with English translation of the Arabic text and commentary according to the version of the Holy Ahlul-Bait. With special notes from Ayatullah Agha Haji Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdi on the philosophic aspects of some of the verses by S. V. Mir Ahmad Ali.* Karachi: Sterling Printing & Publishing. Pp. 191, 1,928. Also published in the same year by Muhammad Khaleel Shirazi of Karachi, and in 1975 by Peer Mohamed Ebrahim Trust.

1964 M. Asad. *The message of the Qur'ān; translated and explained by Muhammad Asad.* Mecca: Muslim World League. New edition, with Arabic text, Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980.

1964 Nuri. *The running commentary of the Holy Qur-an, with under bracket comments, by Allamah Khadim Nuri.* Ed. by al-Haj Zohurul Hoque. Shillong: Sufi Hamsaya-Gurudwar, 1964. Pp. xvi, 1,144.

1967 Maududi. *The meaning of the Quran, by Abul A'la Maududi.* Lahore: Islamic Publications. 2nd edn 1978.

1967 Abul Kalam Azad. *The Tarjuman al-Qur'ān by Mawlana Abul Kalam Azad. Edited and rendered into English by Dr. Syed Abdul Latif.* Vol. 2. London: Asia P.H. The first volume, published in 1962, contains the commentary on the Sūrat al-Fātihah. The third volume was to be published shortly.

1969 Abdul Latif. *Al-Quran. Rendered into English by Syed Abdul Latif.* Hyderabad, India: Academy of Islamic Studies. (Library of Congress 73–906841.)

[1970] Salahud-Din. *The wonderful Koran. A new English translation by Pir Salahud-din.* Eminabad, W. Pakistan: Raftar-i-Zamana Publications. Pp. xviii, 631.

1971 Zafrulla Khan. *The Quran. The eternal revelation vouchsafed to Muhammad, the seal of the Prophets. Arabic text with a new translation by Muhammad Zafrullah Khan.* London: Curzon Press; New York: Praeger. 2nd rev. edn 1975. Reprinted 1979.

[1974] Amir-Ali. *The message of the Qur'an presented in perspective, by Hashim Amir-Ali.*
Rutland, Vermont: C. E. Tuttle. (N.U.C. 1973–7.)

1975 Siddiqui. *The Holy Qur'ān . . . with English translation and explanatory notes, by
Abdul Hameed Siddiqui.* Lahore: Islamic Book Centre. 2nd edn 1976; 3rd edn
1977.

1979 M. Ahmad. *The Koran. The first Tafsir in English by Mufassir Mohammed Ahmad.*
London: Emere.

1980 *Al Quran. Fasc. 1.* Luton: Centre Culturel Islamique. Translation of *Le saint
Coran,* 10ᵉ éd., Paris. (B.N.B. 1980.)

Ahmadi versions

1915 *Qur'ān majīd. The Holy Qur'ān with English translation and explanatory notes, etc.
Part I. Published, under the auspices of the Hadrat Mirzā Bashīr-ud-dīn Mahmūd
Ahmad, the Second Successor of the Promised Messiah, by Anjuman-i-Taraqqi-Islam,
Qadian, Punjab, India.* First edition. Pp. 8, 118, viii.

1947–63 *The Holy Qur-an, with English translation and commentary.* 1st edn. Qadian,
India: published under the auspices of Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud
Ahmad, by the Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya. 1947–63. 3 vols in 4. 2nd edn
Rabwah: Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation, 1964– .

1955 *The Holy Qur'ān, Arabic text and English translation, by the late Maulawī Sher
'Alī.* Rabwah: Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation. 2nd edn 1960;
3rd 1965; 4th 1967; 5th 1968. A new series of editions began in 1971, 2nd 1972,
3rd 1974.

1969 Farid. *The Holy Qur'ān. English translation and commentary edited by Malik
Ghulam Farid.* Rabwah: Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation.

FINNISH

1942 Ahsen Böre. *Koraani. Opastus ja johdatuspahan hylkäämiseen ja hyvän valitsemissen
Z.I. Ahsen Böre.* Tampere: Ahsen Böre. Pp. 799.

1957 *Koraani.* [Transl. by Aro, Salonen and Tallqvist.] Helsinki: Porvoo. (Pentti
Aalto.)

FRENCH

1647 Du Ryer. *L'Alcoran de Mahomet. Translate' d'arabe en françois Par le Sieur Du
Ryer, Sieur de la Garde Malezair.* A Paris, chez Antoine de Sommaville. Pp. 648,
[iv]. Further editions by Sommaville in 1649 (pp. 416), 1651, 1672; by Elzevier
in Amsterdam "suivant la copie imprimée à Paris", 1649 (pp. 686), 1651, 1652,
1672; a pirated edition by J. Jansson in Amsterdam, 1649 (pp. 416). Three
editions were put out by Lucas in Anvers in 1716, 1719 (pp. viii.485) and 1723.
In 1734 appeared a "Nouvelle édition, revüe et corrigée" (2 vols. A Amsterdam
chez Pierre Mortier), reprinted in 1746 and 1756, and in 1751 at Geneva,
according to Woolworth. Further editions in 1770 and 1775 as follows:

1770————*Nouvelle édition, revue, corrigée & augmentée Des Observations Historiques*

& Critiques sur le Mahometisme, ou Traduction du Discours préliminaire mis à la tête de la version Angloise de l'Alcoran, publiée par George Sale. 2 vols. A Amsterdam et A Leipzig, Chez Arkstée & Merkus.

1775———*Nouvelle édition, Qu'on a augmentée d'un discours Préliminaire extrait du nouvel Ouvrage Anglois de Mr. Porter, Ministre Plénipotentiaire de S. M. Britannique en Turquie.* 2 vols. A Amsterdam et a Leipzig, chez Arkstée & Merkus. Pp. 472 + 476.

[1751] Savary. *Le Coran, traduit de l'arabe, accompagné de notes, et précédé d'un Abrégé de la vie de Mahomet, tiré des écrivains Orientaux les plus estimés.* Par M. Savary. 2 vols. A La Mècque, l'an de l'Hégire 1165 (!). Another edition was issued at Paris, chez Knapen & fils, Onfroy, in 1783; also, one at "Amsterdam, Leide, Rotterdam & Utrecht, chez les libraires associés". There was a "nouvelle édition" at Paris, 1798, and at Paris/Amsterdam in 1821–2. The 1826 edition is "précédée d'une notice sur Mahomet, par M. Collin de Plancy" and the two-volume work was issued by Bureau de Courval et Cie. In successive years, 1828 and 1829, further issues were made by Schubart and Heideloff, at Paris, Leipzig and London, and the latter by Doney-Dupré Père et Fils at Paris. In 1883 the work was acquired by Garnier Frères, who have published many editions to date (known are those of 1891, 1898, 1923, 1948, 1958, 1960, 1963, 1968, and one of unknown date recorded in N.U.C. 1973–7).

1840 Kasimirski. *Civilisation musulmane. Observations historiques et critiques sur le Mahométisme, traduites de l'anglais, de G. Sale. Le Koran, traduction nouvelle faite sur le texte arabe, par M. Kasimirski. (Les Livres sacrés de l'Orient... traduits ou revus et publiés par C. Pauthier.* Panthéon littéraire.) Paris: chez Firmin Didot, Aug. Desrez. Pp. 461–746. Reprinted 1842, 1843, 1847, 1852, 1857. In 1858 it was taken into the series *Les livres sacrés de toutes les religions, sauf la Bible, traduits ou revus et corrigés par M. M. Pauthier et G. Brunet, publiés par M. l'abbé Migne,* vol. 1, pp. 461–746. This translation was also published in 1840, independently of the two series named, by Charpentier in Paris (pp. xiv, 576) and in a "nouvelle édition avec notes, commentaire et préface du traducteur" which was reprinted in 1844, 1847 and 1850. A further edition "entièrement revue et corrigée; augmentée de notes, commentaires et d'un index" has passed through at least twenty reprints and has survived in print until our day. The 1948 edition contained a bibliography by G. H. Bousquet, who embellished the edition of 1952 with a new introduction, and the 1959 one (in the *Livres de sagesse* of the Club des Libraires de France) with an introduction and notes. Still other editions are known: Garnier–Flammarion, with a chronology and preface by Mohammed Arkoun in 1970; a 1973 one by Pasquelles (pp. xxxiv, 523) and an undated one at Bièvres by P. de Tartas (*Index transl.* 29, FRA 319).

Later translators

1861 Fatma-Zaida. *L'Alkoran! (Le livre par excellence.) Traduction textuelle de l'arabe faite par Fatma-Zaida Djarié-Odalyk-Doul den Beniamin-Aly Effendi-Agha.* Lisbonne: Soc. typographique franco-portugaise.

1929 Montet. Mahomet. *Le Coran. Traduction nouvelle par Edouard Montet.* Paris: Payot (Bibliothèque historique). Pp. 895. Preceded by selections, published in 1925. Reprinted 1949, 1954, 1958 (preface by Jacques Risler, but same pagination), 1963 (2 vols), 1968–9 (Petite bibliothèque Payot. Library of Congress 75–880370).

[1931] Laimèche, Ben Daoud. *Le Coran (lecture par excellence). Traduit par Ahmed Laimèche, B. Ben Daoud.* Paris: Geuthner; Oran: Heintz frères. Pp. 348.

[1936] Pesle, Tidjani. *Le Coran. Traduction par Messieurs O. Pesle, Ahmed Tidjani.* Paris: Larose; Rabat: Moncho. Pp. xvi, 458. Reprinted 1946, 1948, 1950, 1967.

1947–50 Blachère. *Régis Blachère: Introduction au Coran.* Vol. I. (Vols II–III with title:) *Le Coran. Traduction nouvelle par Régis Blachère.* (Islam d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, vols III–IV.) Paris: Maisonneuve. Reprinted 1957, 1959 (vol. I only?), 1966, 1972.

1951 Rajabalee. *Tafsirul-Coran: la traduction du texte arabe du saint Coran avec commentaires.* Parts I–II [no more published?]. Par Zainul Abedin Rajabalee (Maulvi Fazil). Port Louis, 1949– .

1956 Mercier. *Henry Mercier. Le Coran (Traduction et presentation nouvelles). Miniatures de Si Abdelkrim Wezzani.* Rabat: E.T.N.A.; Tanger: Editions Eurafrique. Pp. xx, 333. (*Abstracta Islamica*, XIII, no. 111. Also published in an English version by L. Tremlett (London: Luzac, pp. 332) and a German one. *Surāhs* arranged under various topics, not complete.)

1957 Ghedira. *Le Coran; nouvelle traduction par Ameur Ghedira. Enluminures de Jean Gradassi.* Lyon: Editions du Fleuve. Pp. [v, 488].

1959 Hamidullah. *Le Coran. Traduction intégrale et notes de Muhammed Hamidullah . . . Avec la collaboration de Michel Léturmy. Préface de Louis Massignon.* (Paris:) Le Club Français du Livre. New edn 1966.

1965 Anon? *Le Coran.* 2 vols. Paris: Payot. Pp. 447 + 416. (*Index transl.* 16, 12000–1.)

1967 Masson. *Le Coran. Préface par Jean Grosjean. Introduction, traduction et notes par Denise Masson.* Editions Gallimard. (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 190.) Pp. 1,078. New edn 1980.

1972 Si Boubaker Hamza. *Le Coran. Traduction français et commentaire . . . par le Cheikh Si Boubaker Hamza.* 2 vols. Paris: Fayard/De Noël. Pp. xix, 1390. Reprinted 1977 (N.U.C. 1980). *Nouvelle édition, revue, corrigée et augmentée.* 2 vols. 1979.

GERMAN

1616 Schweigger. *Alcoranus Mahometicus. Das ist: Der Turcken Alcoran | Religion und Aberglauben. Auss welchem zu vernemen | Wann unnd woher ihr falscher Prophet Machomet seinen ursprung oder anfang genommen | mit was gelegenheit derselb diss sein Fabelwerk | lächerliche und narrische Lehrgedichet und erfunden | Auch von seinen Träumen und verführischem Menschenstand | Benebens von der Türcken Gebett | Almosen | Fasten | sampt andern Gottesdiensten und ceremonien, Erstlich auss der Arabischen in die Italianische: Jetzt aber inn die Teutsche Sprach gebracht. Durch rc. Herrn Salomon Schweiggern | Predigern zu unser Frauen Kirchen inn Nürnberg | sampt dessen*

beygefügten Vorrede | *Inn dreyen unterschiedlichen Theilen* | *und angehengtem ordentlichem Register inn den Druck gegeben.* Nürnberg | Inn Simon Halbmayern Buchladen zu finden. Pp. 269, [18]. Reprinted 1623, 1659.

1688 Lange. *Vollständiges Türckisches Gesetz-Buch* | *Oder Des Ertz-Betriegers Mahomets Alcoran. Welcher vorhim nimmer vollkommen herausgegeben* | *noch im Druck ausgefertigt worden. Auss der Arabischen in die Frantzösische Sprach übergesetzet Durch Herrn Du Ryer. Auss Dieser aber in die Niederlandische durch H. J. Blasemacker* [sic: *l. Glasemaker*] *Und jetzo Zum allerersten mahl in die Hochteutsche Sprache versetzet Durch Johan Lange, Medicinae Candidatum.* (*Thesaurus exoticorum, Oder eine mit Raritäten und Geschichten Wohlversehene Schatz=Kammer . . . Von Everhardo Guernero Happelio.*) Hamburg. Pp. [iii], 115.

1703 Nerreter. *David Nerreters Neu-eröffnete Mahometanische Moschea* | *worinn nach Anleitung der VI. Abtheilung von unterschiedlichen Gottesdiensten der Welt* | *Alexander Rossens* | *Erstlich Der Mahometanischen Religion Anfang* | *Ausbreitung* | *Secten* | *Regierungen* | *mancherlei Gebrauche* | *und vermutlicher Untergang* | *Fürs andere* | *Der völlige Alkoran* | *Nach der besten Edition Ludovicii Marraccii, verteutscht* | *und kürzlich widerlegt wird.* Nürnberg: In Verlegung Wolffgang Moritz Endters. Gedruckt bey Johann Ernste Adelbulner. Ff. [viii], pp. 2, 1222, [25].

1746 Arnold. *Der Koran, oder insgemein so gennante Alcoran des Mohammeds, Ummittelbar aus dem Arabischen Original in das Englische übersetzt, und mit beygefugten, aus den bewährtesten Commentatioribus genommenen Erklärungs-Noten, Wie auch einer Vorläuffigen Einleitung versehen Von George Sale, Gent. Aufs treulichste wieder ins Teutsche verdollmetschst Von Theodor Arnold.* Lemgo: J. H. Meyer. Pp. xxviii, 712.

1772 Megerlin. *Die türkische Bibel, oder des Korans allererste teutsche Uebersetzung aus der Arabischen Urschrift selbst verfertigt: welcher Nothwendigkeit und Nutzbarkeit in einer besonderen Ankündigung her erwiesen von M. David Friederich Megerlin...* Franckfurt am Mayn, bey Johann Gottlieb Garbe. Pp. 876.

1773 Boysen. *Der Koran, oder das Gesetz für die Musulmänner durch Muhammed, den Sohn Abdall. Nebst einegen koranischen Gebeten, unmittelbar aus dem Arabischen übersetzt, mit Anmerkungen und mit einem Register versehen und herausgegeben von Friedrich Eberhard Boysen.* Halle. 2. Ausgabe, Halle: Gebauer, 1775. Pp. 678.

1828 Wahl. *Der Koran oder das Gesetz der Moslemen durch Muhammed den Sohn Abdallahs. Auf den Grund der vormaligen Verdeutschung F. E. Boysen's von neuem aus dem Arabischem übersetzt, durchaus mit erläuternden Anmerkungen, mit einer historischen Einleitung, auch einem vollständigen Register versehen von Dr. Samuel Friedrich Günther Wahl.* Halle: Gebauersche Buchhandlung.

1840 Ullmann. *Der Koran. Aus dem Arabischen wortgetreu neu übersetzt, und mit erläuternden Anmerkungen versehen, von Dr. L. Ullmann.* Crefeld: J. H. Funcke. Reprinted eight times to 1897, then reissued as *Der Koran; das heilige Buch des Islam, nach der Übertragung neu bearbeitet und erläutert von Leo Winter.* München: W. Goldmann [1959]. This in turn has often been reprinted.

1901] Grigull. *Der Koran. Aus dem Arabischen für die "Bibliothek der Gesamt-Litteratur" neu übersetzt von Theodor Fr. Grigull. Mit Vorbemerkung und Index nebst dem Facsimile einer Koranhandschrift.* Halle a.d.S. Pp. viii, 512. Another edn Berlin: Otto Hendel Verlag.

1901 Henning. *Der Koran. Aus dem Arabischen übertragen und mit einer Einleitung versehen von Max Henning.* Leipzig: Ph. Reclam Jun. Pp. 611. Another edition with introduction and notes by Annemarie Schimmel was published at Stuttgart by Reclam in 1960 and reprinted in 1962. Another, with introduction by Ernst Werner and Kurt Rudolph and revision of the text (*Textdurchsicht*), notes and index by Kurt Rudolph, was issued in Leipzig by Reclam in 1968. This, like the Schimmel edition, was included in Reclams Universal-Bibliothek and has been reprinted in 1974 and 1979.

1916 Goldschmidt. *Der Koran. (El Koran, das heisst Die Lesung. Die Offenbarung des Mohammad ibn Abdallah des Propheten Gottes. Zu Schrift gebracht durch Abdelkaaba Abdallah Abu-Bakr, übertragen durch Lazarus Goldschmidt, im Jahre der Flucht 1334 oder 1916 der Fleischwerdung.* Also published at Leipzig 1916 and 1923.

1939 Sadr-ud-Din. *Der Koran. Arabisch–Deutsch. Übersetzung, Einleitung und Erklärung von Maulana Sadr-ud-Din.* Berlin: Verlag der Moslemischen Revue. Pp. xi, 1022. A second edition was published at Berlin-Wilmerrdorf by "die Moschee, die Muslim.-Mission". (*Index transl.* 28, DEU 471.)

1954 Ahmadiyya version. *Der Heilige Qur-ân. Arabisch–deutsch, versehen mit einer ausführlichen Einführung unter der Leitung von Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad.* Zurich & Hamburg: Ahmadiyya-Mission der Islams. 2nd edn 1959.

1957 Aubier. *Der Koran. In neuer Übersetzung und Darbietung von Henry Mercier. Aus dem Französischen übersetzt von Jean Aubier. Miniaturbilder von Si Abdelkrim Wezzani.* Tanger: Eurafrika-Verlag.

1963–6 Paret. *Der Koran. Übersetzung von Rudi Paret.* 2 vols. Stuttgart &c.: Kohlhammer. Vol. 3, *Kommentär und Konkordanz*, published in 1971.

GREEK

A Greek version by Gerasimos Pentake was published in Alexandria at the press of Alefon Kurmuzē, with a second edition in 1886. Ḥamīdullāh knows of others which appeared in 1887 and 1928. Another version by Zografos-Meranios was issued, according to *Index transl.* 10, 9286, in Athens in 1959.

HUNGARIAN

1831 Szedmajer. *Magyar forditás: Alkorán, Mohammed, Abdali fi hamis prófestának izlami hitvallása. Magyarorsitották és jegyzetekkel ellátták Buziday Szedmajer Imre és Gedeon Gyorgy táblabirák.* The full title, with its translation, is given by Woolworth in *Muslim World*, XVII. Hamidullah knows of a work published in 1854 by Szokolay, "Religious and political law-book of the Turks".

ITALIAN

1547 Arrivabene. *L'Alcorano di Macometto, nelqual si contiene la dottrina, la vita, i costumi, e le leggi sue. Tradotto nuouamente dall'arabo in lingua Italiana. Con gratie e Privilegii.* Ff. 1, 100.

[**1912**] (New York P.L.) or [**1913**] (Hamidullah). Branchi. *Maometto. Il Corano.*

1847 Calza. *Il Corano; versione italiana del Cav. Commend. Vincenzo Calza...Con commenti, ed una notizia biografica di Maometto.* Bastia: Cesare Fabiani. Pp. xiv, 330.

1882 Anon. *Il Corano. Nuova traduzione italiana dall'arabo con note dei migliori commentatori orientali preceduta dalla Leggenda di Maometto e dal Sommario della religione turca.* Milano: Giovanni Panzeri. (Acc. naz. Lincei.) Chauvin says it can only be Savary's version translated into Italian. The "Sommario" seems to stem from du Ryer.

1912————Milano: E. Bruciati & c.

1913————(Hamidullah).

1914 Fracassi. *Aquilio Fracassi...Il Corano. Testo arabo e versione letterale italiana.* Milano: Hoepli. (Manuali Hoepli.) Pp. lxx, 337, 359.

1929 Bonelli. *Il Corano. Nuova versione letterale italiana con prefazione e note illustrative del dott. Luigi Bonelli.* Milano: U. Hoepli. (Manuali Hoepli.) Pp. xxxi, 524.

1940————*Secunda edizione riveduta e migliorata.* Pp. xxiv, 614.

1948————*Ristampa anastatica 1948 della seconda edizione riveduta e migliorata.* Milano: U. Hoepli. (Manuali Hoepli.) Pp. lxxix, 779. (B.L. Arab. Cat.) Reprinted also in 1956 and [1972]. (N.U.C. 1973–7.)

[**1955**] Bausani. *Il Corano. (Introduzione, traduzione e commento di Alessandro Bausani.)* Firenze: Sansoni. (Classici della Religione, 11.) Another edn 1961.

[**1967**] Moreno. *Il Corano. A cura di Martino Mario Moreno.* [Torino:] Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinense. Pp. viii, 606. (*Index transl.* 18, 18085.) Reprinted in 1969.

n.d. Violanti. *Il Corano di Maometto. Unica versione completa, fedelissima all' originale di Alfredo Violante.* Roma: Casa Ed. Latina. Published in parts, of which two only have been seen.

LATIN

1543 Robertus Ketenensis. *Machvmetis Sarracenorum vita ac doctrina omnis, quae & Ismahelitarum lex, & Alcoranum dicitur, ex Arabica lingua ante CCCC annos in Latinam translata...Theodori Bibliandri, sacrarum literarum in Ecclesia Tigurina professoris...pro Alcorani editione Apologia...Cum Caesareae Maiestatis gratia & privilegio ad septennium.* [Basel.]

1550————*Machumetis Saracenorum principis, eiusque successorum vitae, doctrina, ac ipse Alcoran...quae ante annos CCCC...D. Petrus Abbas Cluniacensis, per viros eruditos, ad fidei Christianae ac sanctae matris Ecclesie propugnationem, ex Arabica lingua in Latinam transferri curauit...opera & studio Theodori Bibliandri...qui collatis etiam exemplaribus Latinis & Arab. Alcorani textum emendauit, & marginibus apposuit Annotationes...* [Basel.] Also published in Zurich.

1698 Marracci. *Alcorani textus universus Ex correctoribus Arabum exemplaribus summa fide, atque pulcherrimis characteribus descriptur. Eademque fide, ac pari diligentia ex Arabico idiomate in Latinum translatus; Appositis unicuique capiti notis, atque refutatione: His omnibus praemissus est Prodromus Totum priorem Tomum implens, in quo contenta indicantur pagina sequenti, auctore Ludovico Marracio...* Patavio, Ex Typographia Seminarii.

1721————*Mohammedis Filii Abdallae pseudo-prophetae fides islamica, i.e. Al-Coranus ex idiomate Arabico, quo primum a Mohammede conscriptus est, Latine versus per Ludovicum Marraccium...et ex ejusdem animadversionibus aliorumque observationibus illustratus et expositus, praemissa brevi introductione et totius religionis Mohammedicae synopsi, ex ipso Alcorano, ubique suris et surarum versiculis adnotatis, congesta. Cura et opera M. Christiani Reineccii...* Lipsiae, sumtibus Lanckisianis.

NORWEGIAN

There is no complete translation in Norwegian, but a volume of selections was published in 1952:

1952 *Al-Qur'an. Koranen i utvalg. Wilhelm Schencke. Fork. og bearb. Harris Birkeland.* Oslo: Aschehong. Pp. xxii, 192. (*Index transl.* 5, 9148.)

POLISH

1828 Sobolewski? *Koran.* (Przekład Sobolewskiego?) Poznán: naklad Bernarda Potockiego. Pp. 325.

1858 Buczacki. *Koran (Al-Koran) z arabskiego przekład polski Jana Murzy Buczackiego, Tatara z Podlasia, wzbogacony objasnienami Własysława Kosciuszki, poprzedzony życiorysem Mahometa z Washington Irvinga, pomnożony pogladem na stosunki Polski z Turcja i Tatarami, na dzieje Tatarów w Polsce osiadłych, na przwileje tu im nadane, jako też wspomnieniami o znakomitych Tatarach polskich Juliana Bartoszewicza...* 2 vols. Warszawa: nakladem Aleksandra Nowoleckiego. Pp. x, viii, 402 + 608. Both of these versions are described in *Bull. New York Publ. Libr.*, XLI, 1937, p. 97.

PORTUGUESE

1882 Anon. *O Alcorão. Traducção portuguesa cuidadosamente revista.* Paris: Belhatte & Cie. (Chauvin 232.)

1964 Castro. *Muhamad. Alcorão; versão portuguesa de Bento de Castro.* Lourenço Marques [: Carvalho]. A translation of Pickthall's English version.

1975 Hayek. *Alcorão sagrado.* Samir al Hayek. São Paulo. (*Index transl.* 28, BRA 257.)

RUMANIAN

1912 Isopescul. *Coranul traducere după originalul arabic insoţita de o introducere de Dr. Silvestru Octavian Isopescul.* Cernauti: Editura Autorului. Pp. 538.

RUSSIAN

As full biographical details of the earliest (1716) translation by Postnikov, and his successors Veryovkin, Kolmakov, Nikolaev, Sablukov and Krymskiy are given in the article "The Koran in Slavonic. A list of translations. Compiled by the Slavonic Division" in *Bull. New York Publ. Libr.*, XLI, 1937, pp. 95–102, it

is not thought necessary to list them again here. Krachkovskiy's translation was published by the Institut narodov Azii, Moscow in 1963.

SERBO-CROAT

The first translation into Serbo-Croat was made in 1875 by Mićo Ljubibratić from a French original. Details of the revised edition of 1895 are given in *Bull. New York Publ. Libr.*, XLI, 1937, p. 102. Selections from this translation, re-edited and rearranged by Vuk Karadžić, with a preface by Hasan Kalesi, were published in the series "Zodijak" at Belgrade in 1967.

Two other versions followed closely on one another. The first, by Hafiz Muhammed Pandža and Džemaluddin Caušević, came out originally in 1936 and has run into a second edition in 1969 and a third in 1974 (*Index transl.* 27, YUG 134). The second, by Hadži Ali Riza Karabeg, was published at Mostar in 1937 and reprinted at Sarajevo in 1942.

SPANISH

A short account of the Spanish versions, including those in *aljamiado*, is given by M. de Epalza: "Una nueva traducción árabe del Coran", *Almenara*, IV, 1973. Pp. 239–42.

1844 Gerber de Robles. *Al Koran, ó dogmas civiles, morales, políticas y religiosas de los musulmanes, precedido de la vida de Mahoma. Traducido exactamente del original árabe por Mr Kasimirski, intérprete de la embajada fancesa en Persia. Versión castellana, por D. J[osé] G[erber] de R[obles]*. Madrid: D. Hidalgo. (Chauvin 205.)

1872 Ortiz de la Puebla. *El Corán ó Biblia mahometana seguido de la Biografía de Mahoma: primera versión española anotada y comentada según los distinguidos comentadores del Coran por D. Vicente Ortiz de la Puebla. Edición adornada con láminas del reputado artista Sr. Puiggari*. Barcelona: J. Aleu. Pp. viii, 9–666.

1875 Murguiondo. *El Corán. Traducido fielmente al español, anotado y refutado según el dogma, la doctrina santa y la moral perfecta de la santa religión católica apostólica, romana, única verdadera...por Benigno de Murguiondo y Ugartondo*. Madrid.

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GLOSSARY

adab Belles-lettres; refinement, culture.

'adālah Probity; *also synonym of* *ta'dīl.*

adīb Writer of *adab*; man of letters.

'ahd Covenant, treaty, engagement.

Ahl al-Bayt The Family of the Prophet.

ahl al-Ḥadīth Those collecting and learned in the *Ḥadīth*. Cf. *muḥaddith.*

Ahl al-Kitāb "People of the Book", especially Christians and Jews.

ahl al-ra'y People of reasoned opinion; those using their own opinion to establish
    a legal point.

akhbār Reports, anecdotes, history.

akhbārī (pl. *akhbāriyyūn*) Shī'ī scholar who accepted as a source of law all
    Traditions declared sound (opposed to *uṣūlī*).

'āmil (pl. *'ummāl*). Governor of an Islamic province.

ansāb See nasab.

'arabiyyah The standard of correct Arabic usage of the sixth–seventh centuries
    A.D., as envisaged by the eighth-century grammarians.

arājīz See urjūzah.

'arūḍ Prosody.

'aṣabiyyah Tribal solidarity.

asbāb al-nuzūl The occasions and circumstances of the Quranic revelations.

aṣl (pl. *uṣūl*) Root, origin; basic text.

aṭlāl (pl. of *ṭalal*) The remains of a former campsite.

Awā'il The Ancients; the first people to do something.

āyah (pl. *āyāt*) Sign, miracle; verse of the Qur'ān.

ayyām al-'Arab "Days" of the Arabs; pre-Islamic tribal battles.

bāb Sub-chapter, especially in *Ḥadīth* literature.

badī' The art of rhetoric.

basīṭ A metre employed in Arabic poetry.

basmalah The formula "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate"
    (*bi-'smi 'llāhi 'l-Raḥmāni 'l-Raḥīm*).

barā'ah Declaring oneself quit of a contract etc.

binṣir Ring finger.

bint Girl; daughter of.

bish'ah Trial by ordeal, when the tongue of the accused is flicked with a red-hot knife blade.
bu'ūth See sarāyā.

daftar Register.
dahr Time, fate.
ḍa'īf (pl. *ḍu'afā'*) Weak, as classification of a *Ḥadīth*; Traditionist of dubious reliability.
dār Abode.
Dār al-Islām The Islamic world.
dhimmah Security, pact.
dhimmī Non-Muslim protected by the Islamic state; Christian or Jew.
dihqān Landowner (Persian).
dīwān Register; a department of the Islamic bureaucracy; collection of poetry by a single author or from a single tribe.
dīwān al-rasā'il Chancery.
du'ā' Private prayer, as opposed to ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*).
ḍu'afā' See ḍa'īf.
duff Framed drum.

faḥl (pl. *fuḥūl*) Stallion; outstanding poet.
fakhr Boasting, self-glorification or tribal vaunting.
faqīh (pl. *fuqahā'*) One learned in *fiqh.*
fātiḥah The first *sūrah* of the Qur'ān.
fiqh Islamic jurisprudence.
al-fiṭaḥl The time before the Flood.
fitnah Dissension, civil war; particularly the dissension ensuing on the murder of the Caliph 'Uthmān.
fuqahā' See faqīh.
fuṣḥā The "pure" Arabic language.
futūḥ Conquests; the early Islamic conquests.

gharaḍ (pl. *aghrāḍ*) Main theme of a *qaṣīdah.*
gharīb Rare, uncommon word or expression.
ghayrah Jealousy.
ghazal Love poetry.
ghazwah (pl. *ghazawāt*) synonym of *maghāzī.*
ghinā' Song, Music, Form of musical expression, which can be divided into three types, *naṣb, sinād* and *hazaj.*
ghinā' mutqan Form of musical expression which superseded the *sinād/hazaj* type from which it seems to have evolved. A refined, sophisticated and formal type of music.
ghulāh (pl. of *ghālī*) Extremists, disparaging term for a number of Shī'ī groups.
ghuluww Religious extremism.

ḥabl Covenant, treaty, engagement (*'ahd*).

ḥadīth (With a capital) the corpus of Traditions of the sayings and doings of the Prophet; (with small initial) such a Tradition.

ḥājib Chamberlain.

ḥajj The annual pilgrimage to Mecca in the month of Dhū 'l-Ḥijjah.

ḥalāl Licit, permitted; opposite of *ḥaram*.

hamz The glottal stop of Arabic phonology.

hamzah The written symbol for *hamz*.

Ḥanafiyyah The group of *ḥanīfs*.

ḥanīf A Quranic epithet applying to those of true religion; used particularly of Abraham, the representative of pure worship and neither Jew nor Christian.

ḥaram Sacred enclave; especially those of Mecca and Medina.

ḥarām Forbidden, illicit; opposite of *ḥalāl*.

ḥasan Category of *ḥadīth* situated between "sound" (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and weak (*ḍaʿīf*).

ḥāshiyah (pl. *ḥawāshī*) Margin of book; marginal commentary.

ḥawṭah Sacred enclave, cf. *ḥaram*.

ḥazaj Light; type of musical expression; one of the poetic metres.

hidāʾ See *ḥudāʾ*.

hijāʾ Versified lampoon.

hijrah Muḥammad's migration from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622.

ḥikmah Wisdom; aphorism.

ḥimā Interdicted pasture; sacred enclave, c.f. *ḥaram*.

ḥudāʾ Camel-driver's song.

ḥukm Judgement.

ḥusn al-takhalluṣ The fusing of various subject matters of a multi-topical poem into a unity.

ibn Son (of).

iʿjāz Inimitability of the Qur'ān.

ijāzah Licence given by a scholar to his pupil, authorizing the latter to transmit and teach a text.

ijmāʿ Consensus; the consensus of the Islamic community.

ijtihād Exertion; right and duty of forming one's own opinion on how the rules of law are to be interpreted.

ikhtiyār Choice, especially between variant readings of the Qur'ān

'illah (pl. *'ilal*). Cause; defect; especially gap in chain of authentic transmission of a *ḥadīth*.

'ilm Knowledge; science.

ilzām (pl. *ilzāmāt*) Synonym of *istidrāk*.

imām Leader, especially religious leader; the head of the Islamic community according to the Shīʿah; paragon; leader in communal prayer (*ṣalāh*).

īmān Faith, being a believer.

Injīl The Gospel.

īqāʿ Rhythm.

iqtiḍāb Omission of the *takhalluṣ* in a *qaṣīdah*.

i'rāb The inflectional terminations of nouns and verbs.

ism Given name.

isnād Chain of authorities; in particular in *Ḥadīth* and historical writings.

isrā' Journey by night; the famous night-journey of Muḥammad to Jerusalem.

isrā'īliyyāt Jewish traditions used to amplify Quranic allusions.

istidrāk (pl. *istidrākāt*) *Ḥadīth* fulfilling all the criteria of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, yet not found in their two *ṣaḥīḥ* books.

istiṣḥāb Seeking a link to something known and certain; legal process of settling rules by linking up with earlier ones.

'itāb Poetic passage expressing friendly remonstrance (*contrast hijā'*).

Jāhiliyyah The term used by Muslim writers to denote the period before Muḥammad's mission.

jār Person under tribal protection.

jarḥ Impugning (the credibility of a *muḥaddith*). *See also ta'dīl.*

jazālah Strength, force and energy as applied to poetry.

jihād Holy war.

jilā' Proof enabling one to dispense with oath-taking.

jizyah Poll-tax; capitation tax.

kāfir Unbeliever.

kāhin Pre-Islamic soothsayer.

kalām Scholastic theology.

kāmil Metre employed in Arabic poetry.

kātib Secretary.

khaṭīb Orator; person pronouncing the Friday *khuṭbah.*

khaṭṭ Writing; handwriting, especially calligraphic.

Khaṭṭī Of al-Khaṭṭ, a district in the Gulf.

khindhīdh Pedigree stallion; great poet.

khiṭābah Function of pronouncing the Friday *khuṭbah*; office of *khaṭīb.*

khiyār al-majlis The right or option of contracting parties who have completed the formalities of an offer and acceptance to withdraw from the contract before they physically separate and leave "the session of the bargain".

khamīs Military formation with van, centre, rear and two wings.

khurāfāt Fables, tales.

khuṭbah Oration; address in the mosque at Friday prayers.

kirān Skin-bellied lute; synonym of *mizhar, muwattar.*

kitāb (pl. *kutub*) Writing; Scripture, book; in *Ḥadīth*, a division approximating to a chapter. In a title, abbreviated to "*K.*"

kitābah Writing.

kufic Style of Arabic script, used in early Qur'ān codices and for lapidary purposes.

kunyah Name compounded with Abū... or Umm..., see cap. 1.

kurrāsah Quire; gathering of a book.

kutub *See* *kitāb.*

laqab (Earlier) name alluding to a personal characteristic; (later) honorific title; see cap. 1.
luqmah Fee.

madīḥ Panegyric poetry.
maghāzī Early Muslim military expeditions in which the Prophet took part.
majālis *See* *majlis.*
majlis Meeting, session; scholarly discussion, salon; (in pl., *majālis*) written record of such discussions.
majrā Course; designating a group of modes, according to a characteristic musical note.
majzū' Shortened form of a poetic metre.
manāqib Virtues, good qualities.
mansūkh Abrogated.
al-manzilah bayna 'l-manzilatayn Intermediate position; the position adopted by the *Mu'tazilites* in Islam with regard to a major sinner: he was neither a true Believer, nor an Unbeliever; he was in between and would be punished by God.
marā'iṭ *See* *murayṭā'.*
ma'rūf What is recognized in law.
marthāh More commonly *marthiyah.* Elegy.
marzubān The governor of a Persian frontier district, satrap.
maṣāḥif *See* *muṣḥaf.*
ma'ṣūm Protected from sin and error; term applied to the Shī'ī imam.
matn Main text; narrative content.
mawlā (pl. *mawālī*) Client, non-Arab Muslim.
maysir Game of chance played in pre-Islamic times with arrow-shafts.
mi'rāj Ascent; the Prophet's vision of Heaven.
mizhar Synonym of *kirān, muwattar.*
mizmār A reed wind instrument; in later period specifically shawm.
Mu'allaqah (pl. *Mu'allaqāt*) A collection of pre-Islamic poems. See "The *Mu'allaqāt* problem", cap. 2, pp. 111–13.
mu'an'an An *isnād mu'an'an* is a chain of authorities in which each link is known to have met his predecessor in the chain.
mubāriz Champion.
mubashshi' One practising *bish'ah.*
mudallis Narrator of a Tradition who does not mention from whom he has heard a given Tradition, while yet mentioning the earliest narrator of it, so as to convey the impression that he has heard it from him.
Mufākharah Contests of vaunting, a war of words constituting a literary genre.
mufliq One who does something extraordinary; poet of the first or second rank.
muḥaddith *Ḥadīth* scholar, collecting and studying the *Ḥadīth.*
muhājirūn Those who went with the Prophet from Mecca to Medina at the time of the *hijrah.*

mujtahid Synonym of *uṣūlī.*

mu'min Believer.

muraytā' (pl. *marā'iṭ*) The smooth, hairless belly skin of an animal used as parchment.

muruwwah Manliness, chivalry, prowess; the qualities of the ideal pre-Islamic Arab.

musāmarah Evening entertainment.

muṣannaf Classified, systemized compilation. *Ḥadīth* compilations arranged according to subject matter.

muṣḥaf Qur'ān codex.

musnad Work of *Ḥadīth* in which individual *ḥadīth* can be attributed to the Prophet himself.

mut'ah Marriage contracted on a temporary basis.

mutakallim Scholastic theologian.

Mu'tazilah Theological school which created the speculative dogmatics of Islam.

muwattar Synonym of *kirān, mizhar.*

nabī Prophet.

nafas Breath.

nahḍah Renaissance.

najdah Succour of the weak.

naqīb Chief of tribal section or extended family; one of the Shī'ī leaders, subordinated to the *imām.*

naqīḍah (pl. *naqā'iḍ*) Flyting poem, one of a pair in which two poets seek to outdo each other.

nasab (pl. *ansāb*) Genealogy.

naṣb Raising; type of musical expression, see p. 435.

naṣb Hatred of the Shī'ah.

nasīb Amatory prelude of the *qaṣīdah.*

nāsikh Passage in the Qur'ān or *Sunnah* which abrogates another passage.

naskh(ī) "Book-hand" style of Arabic script (contrasted with *kufic*).

naṣṣ Content, purport, text; constituting a proof.

nawḥ Category of musical expression, the lament.

nāẓir Supervisor.

nifār Proceeding to a judgement with judges.

nisbah Derivative form (ending in *-ī*) of a name or other noun; see p. 19.

Pañchatantra A collection of Sanskrit animal fables which formed the basis of *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, by Ibn Mufaqqa'.

qaḍā' Pronouncing judgement.

Qadarites A group of teachers of the 'Abbasid period who championed free will against the theory of predestination. They later merged with the *Muta'zilites.*

qāḍī Judge of a *sharī'ah* court.

qaḍīb Percussion stick, beater.

qāfiyah Rhyme.

qara'a 'alā Literally read aloud to; study under.

qāri' (pl. *qurrā'*) Reader, reciter of the Qur'ān.

qasīdah Poetic genre conventionally represented as "ode".

qaynah (pl. *qiyān*) Slavegirl trained as a singer.

qiblah Direction of prayer.

qirā'ah Recitation of the Qur'ān; variant reading of the Qur'ān.

qisas See *qissah.*

qissah (pl. *qisas*) Story, narrative tale; in particular, in the plural, the narrative tales of the Qur'ān.

qit'ah Short poem; short section of *qasīdah* quoted in isolation.

qiyās Analogy; the process of arriving at a legal decision by analogy.

qudrah Power.

qudsī Applied to a *hadīth, qudsī means that the hadīth* is introduced by such words as "The Prophet said in what he relates from God."

qurrā' See *qāri'.*

qussās Storytellers, relaters of *qisas.*

rahmah Mercy; rain.

rajaz A metre employed in Arabic poetry, though considered inferior to the other classical metres.

rājiz (pl. *rujjāz*) A poet composing in the *rajaz* metre.

rasā'il See risālah.

Rāshidūn The first four caliphs (Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī), sometimes called by Europeans "the Orthodox Caliphs".

rasūl Messenger; apostle; especially in "the Apostle of Allāh", i.e. Muhammad.

rāwī (pl. *ruwāh*) Reciter, transmitter (especially of poetry).

ra'y Opinion; exercising opinion in arriving at a legal decision.

rijāl (sing. *rajul*) Men; trustworthy authorities in *Hadīth* literature.

risālah (pl. *rasā'il*) Epistle; literary genre in the form of a letter.

rithā' Lament.

riwāyah Transmission (of a non-religious text); recension; variant reading in poetry.

ruq'ah Style of modern Arabic script regularly used in handwriting.

sadaqah Almsgiving not of a prescribed amount (contrast *zakāh,* though in the earliest period the distinction was not always strictly observed).

sādin Guardian of a shrine.

safīr (pl. *sufarā'*) Envoy; messenger.

Sahābah The group of the Companions of the Prophet.

sāhib al-shurtah Captain of the guard; chief of police.

sahīfah (pl. *suhuf*) Page, leaf; in the plural, manuscripts, documents containing Hadīth material.

sahīh Sound (category of *Hadīth*); name of the *Hadīth* collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

saj' Balanced and rhyming prose; utterance originating with pre-Islamic sooth-
sayers, of primitive style, short and with a single, invariable monorhyme at the
end of each member.

ṣalāh Canonical prayer.

sanad Synonym of *isnād*.

sarāyā Early Muslim military expeditions at which the Prophet was not present;
synonym of *bu'ūth*.

ṣawm Fasting.

sa'y Ritual running between the hills of al-Ṣafā' and al-Marwah during the Meccan
pilgrimage.

shādhdh Peculiar; in particular, unacceptable variants of the Quranic text.

sharaf Honour.

sharḥ Systematic commentary.

sharī'ah The corpus of Islamic law.

shaṭr Hemistich.

shikastah (Persian) "Broken"; extremely cursive style of Arabic script, used in
Persia and India.

Shī'ah Sect, who hold that headship of the Islamic community belongs only to
descendants of 'Alī and Fāṭimah.

Shī'ī Member of the *shī'ah*; pertaining to the *shī'ah*.

shi'r Verse.

shūrā Consultative council; the council of electors appointed by 'Umar to choose
his successor.

Shu'ūbiyyah Anti-Arab political and literary movement, especially strong in
Iranian circles.

shuwaylir Poetaster, poet of low rank.

sijill Record, writing.

simṭ Necklace.

sinād Form of song, probably serious in style.

sīrah (pl. *siyar*). Biography, especially of the Prophet.

siyar See *sīrah*.

siyāsat-nāmah (Persian) a treatise on politics.

ṣuḥuf (pl. of *ṣaḥīfah*) Leaves, pages; Qur'ān codex, synonym of *muṣḥaf*; see also
ṣaḥīfah.

sukayt The last horse in the race; poetaster, poet of low rank.

ṣu'lūk (pl. *ṣa'ālīk*) The pre-Islamic vagabond poet.

sunnah Way, path; customary practice, usage sanctioned by tradition, the sayings
and doings of the Prophet which have been established as legally binding.

Sunnī Muslim who believes that the *sunnah* cannot be overridden by any human
authority (for practical purposes antithetical to *shī'ī*).

sūrah A chapter of the Qur'ān.

tabābi'ah See *tubba'*.

tābi'ūn (sing. *tābi'*) Followers, the generation after the Prophet's Companions
(*ṣaḥābah*).

ta'dīl Confirming the credibility of a **muḥaddith**. Cf. **jarḥ**.

taḍmīn Insertion, inclusion; the inclusion of quotations into a literary work.

tafsīr Quranic exegesis.

takhalluṣ Disengagement, the part of the **qaṣīdah** moving from the **nasīb** to the main theme, often by the description of a journey.

tanzīl The divine revelation incorporated in the Qur'ān; occasionally the inspiration of soothsayers.

taqiyyah Dissimulation of one's real beliefs when in fear of one's life.

ṭaraf (pl. *aṭrāf*) A part of a **ḥadīth** which reminds the reader of the rest of it, then proceeds to explain its references in al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

ṭardiyyah Hunting poem.

tashbīb Amatory genre in poetry; also synonym of **nasīb**.

tawḥīd The doctrine of the unity of God.

ṭawīl A metre employed in Arabic poetry.

ṭayf/ṭayf al-khayāl Dream-vision of the beloved.

tha'r Blood-feud.

tubba' (pl. *tabābi'ah*) Title of the pre-Islamic Ḥimyarite kings of the Yemen.

'ūd Wooden-bellied lute.

'udhrī The poetry of chaste, "platonic" love.

ummah Folk; the Islamic community.

'ummāl See *'āmil*.

'urf Customary law.

urjūzah (pl. *arājīz*) Poem composed in the **rajaz** metre.

uṣūl See *aṣl*; the fundamentals of jurisprudence.

uṣūlī (*pl. usūliyyūn*). Shī'ī scholar who did not accept every Tradition which had passed the **isnād** test as legally or doctrinally binding.

wāfir Metre employed in Arabic poetry.

waḥy Divine inspiration of a prophet.

waqf Stopping; stopping at one particular Shī'ī imam, and not recognizing all twelve; a pause in recitation; pre-pausal position of a word; mortmain for pious purpose.

warrāq Paper-seller, stationer, bookseller, copyist.

waṣāyā See *waṣiyyah*.

waṣf Description; a descriptive passage in poetry.

waṣiyyah (pl. *waṣāyā*) Testament; in the plural, wisdom-sayings, exhortations.

wusṭā Middle finger.

yamīn Right hand; oath.

zakāh Alms-tax of prescribed amount (*contrast ṣadaqah*).

zaqqūm The foul-tasting fruit of the tree of Hell.

zuhd Asceticism.

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