The Unity of Tabari’s Chronicle

by Tayeb El-Hibri

Those who read Tabari’s chronicle for the history of the early Islamic period (Prophetic, Rashidun, Umayyad), and the ancient period are accustomed to historical accounts borne by long chains of narration that stretch down the generations and get clustered around a set of well known names. Abū Mīkhnaf (d. 774), Sayf b. ‘Umar (d. 796), ‘Umar b. Shabba (d. 812), Wāqīḍī (d. 822), and Madā’īnī (d. 839) are a few of those narrators who are household names for Islamic medievalists. Diversity in accounts around these individuals further impels the reader to try to draw a line between original accounts and later, redacted versions as well as to find corroborating evidence for Tabari’s reports in other chronicles and literary texts.

The experience of reading Tabari, however, is different for one who consults the text for later periods. There, for uncertain reasons, the names of the aforementioned narrators virtually disappear as we move into the early Abbasid caliphate. Why the narrators who are cited for events of the 7th c. never speak to events that happened in their lifetime in the 8th and 9th c. is a major mystery in Tabari’s chronicle. Instead of these scholarly icons, one encounters a mixed set of speakers reminiscing about events. Bureaucrats, soldiers, servants, and singers are commonly found reporting about one or two events of their lifetime, only to disappear forever.

Surprisingly, however, many of those accounts (including those preserving official documents and speeches) dealing with the Baghdad and Samarra’ caliphate are couched in a stylistic mode (whether in language, imagery, or thematic evocation in religious and moral terms) that resonates with strong echoes of the earlier Islamic past. Deciding why there is such a resemblance across different periods, and how to draw the line between myth and fact, therefore becomes a crucial prerequisite for historical writing.

Popular approaches to source criticism of Tabari’s work were often based on traditional perceptions in Biblical criticism that look to aspects of continuity and influence among texts, as well as on authenticating quests in hadith studies. These approaches have traditionally explained Tabari’s consistent style as a function of a process of redaction that emulated, expanded, and amended earlier texts. As a result, the entire record of Islamic history is viewed as having undergone layerings, additions, and changes as the process of transmission moved forward. While this view provides a convenient and plausible explanation from a folkloric angle of representation, it is untenable on internal liter-
ary grounds. Sensitive readings make it difficult to believe that narratives can ever be continued without a clear sign of a break in voice, descriptive detail, or character image across the ages, however mild this break may be. Instead, what one sees in Tabari's work is a seamless unity in texts across disparate periods, a unity that reveals virtually no rupture in voice or style, whether it is Sayf and Abû Mihkhaf speaking about the lives of 'Ali and 'Uthmân or an 'Abbasid courtier reporting on events in the life of al-Mutawakkil and al-Muntasir. Contrast among different chronicles reporting on contemporaneous events is greater than within Tabari's reports from diverse chronology periods.

Discovering the meaning behind Tabari's narratives may well lie in applying an interpretational reading that examines the bonds linking various sections of seemingly juxtaposed stories. Repetitions in the overall text entice the reader generally to pursue such a reading, and examine the range of repetitions. There are, for example, minor features in the behavior and actions of characters that lead one to correlate characters across the ages. Statements, gestures, inflections of mood, and moral profile can lead one to correlate, for example, al-Mansûr with Ḥājjâj, Ḥârûn al-Rashid with Solomon, al-Ma'mûn with 'Ali b. Aṭâ'îb, and Tâhir b. Husayn with Abû Muslim al-Khurasânî. However, broader, more sweeping events also punctuate political history with important religious and cyclical overtones. In this light one is led to see the Ridda as a renewed Jâhilîyya, Qâdisîyya as a remaking of Bâdîr, and the Taḥkim as a reenactment of the Saqîfa of Banû Sâ'îda incident conflated with the treaty of Ḥudaybiyya; while much later stories such as those about the foundation of the Arab settlement at Marw, the Ḥâshimi da'wa, and the emergence of ahl Khurasân seem to provide a revival of the model of Islam's new emergence in Medina, the hijra, and the achievement of the Anṣâr respectively. The Iranian phase of the da'wa was not so much a later narrative addition as it was a story simultaneously woven with the early narratives. Readers would have known this in Tabari's time, just as Jâhid would say: "al-Anṣâr annârsâr" [There are two Anṣârs] (the Aws and Khazraj in the beginning and the ahl Khurasân at the end of time). Hypotheses postulating intentional synchronisms and cycles of this kind in the narrative, however, have to be based on a political, religious, or cultural context if they are to explain why narrators wanted to portray some events as a reenactment of the past.

Unifying features in Tabari's style are numerous and include a range of devices that highlight dialogue across the narratives, especially in regards to the language and roles of historical actors. Slightly more elusive, but equally effective in unifying the texts, is a technique Tabari frequently uses to connect a series of successive plots to an original "heralding" moment, which is meant to shape the reader's appreciation of later developments. The model in this situation is the Qur'anic account which describes how al-Khûdr shocks Moses from the outset of their encounter by making choices that are outrageous on the surface (i.e., from the vantage point of religious law and the morality of the moment); yet his actions carry an internal wisdom that preempted a worse course of events. Thus, just as in Khûdr's story, Tabari's history often leads the reader into engaging in a variety of "what if" exercises that would have altered the course of history and underscored the expansive and potentially deteriorating dependency of original moral ambiguities. Abû Bakr's statement of regret on his death that one of three things he wishes he had done is to murder al-Ash'âth b. Qays after his surrender in the Ridda makes no sense unless one appreciates not only the role that al-Ash'âth later played in bringing about the Taḥkim, but the role Muhammad b. al-Ash'âth played in betraying the cause of Husayn, and even more the role his son 'Abd al-Rahmân b. Muhammad b. al-Ash'âth played as child in leading to the 'A'id tragedy and later inciting the fina that decimated the ranks of religious scholars in Umayyad times.

Building on this style, one sees how, as time moves on, background information on the careers of personalities was scarcely provided by Tabari to serve as hard historical facts, which might inform a cumulative reading of political causation. Such fragments of background biography as are provided offer instead an insight into an actor's character and its potential role within familiar (or, sometimes, inscrutable)
patterns of a tempting fate. Knowing this, and being aware of outcomes that resulted from missed opportunities, the reader then comes to appreciate alternative passages of history that the Qur’anic model alludes to in a mystical way. Narrative plots thus come to portray vignettes of aborted judgment and the seditious phases of an alternative destiny. This model provides one of many Qur’anically inspired methods that would have been adopted as techniques for developing early Islamic stories. Various other Qur’anic wisdom schemes exploring the mysteries of nature, the riddles of language, and the interface between art and fate are also drawn upon as a system of signs for developing narratives in a broader chronicle structure.

Prophecy experience as recounted in the Qur’an, emphasizing a spectrum of ethical challenges set in a matrix of diverse roles, provided on the whole a template of models that narrators drew on to represent secular lives. As such, a story like the one of the war between al-Amin and al-Ma’mun would have been viewed not only against the backdrop of a longstanding ‘Abbasid crisis over succession arrangements, but also in light of the parable frame of the primordial fraternal struggle between Cain and Abel. The struggle between the two caliphs was viewed in cyclical terms as an earthly manifestation of a heavenly model on moral dissent and rivalry. ‘Abbasid pretensions to divine selection and prophetic powers further motivated narrators to embellish the history of the civil war. In the process, however, the religious traditions on the Cain-Abel story tended to be shaped in light of the civil war context.

Another religious-historical theme that would have been equally shaped in light of this 9th century crisis is the story of Isma’il and Ishâq. Which among Abraham’s heirs was meant by the Qur’an as the target sacrifice, and which heir ultimately received salvation and selection, was a religious question that resonated with important cultural and political overtones when discussed in light of the Amin-Ma’mun civil war, especially in traditions that considered Ishâq to be the ancestor of the Persians. The issue also opened up various artful ways for debating the irony of political victory vs. religious selection, and what it all signified in the ‘Abbasid historical plot in particular and the plot of human history in general.

If the 9th century is to be read in light of a panorama of relevant stories from Creation down to the ‘Abbasid period, one question that readers should probably pay more attention to is: Where should one begin reading Tabari’s chronicle? And how does one trace a passage of meaning across his texts? As various studies on different portions of Tabari’s chronicle continue to explore source-critical questions and, more importantly, place the details of each phase back in public memory, more connections will inevitably become evident. This will gradually limit the traditional approach to synthesizing data from widely different types of medieval chronicles and literary texts. It will ultimately be more useful to ask what were the original motives and goals of narrators, than to ask what factual picture can be corroborated from other sources. In the end, a diverse reading of Tabari, one transcending chronological boundaries, will likely get us closer to the outline within which the chronicle or originally intended his work to be read. This, in turn, may let us better understand the position of other contemporaneous texts.

Access to Middle Eastern & Other MSS
& Rare Books at Cambridge

Cambridge University Library:
Manuscripts and Rare Books Reading Rooms

The University Library has been awarded a grant to enlarge its reading rooms for manuscripts and rare books. The work is expected to start during the summer of 1999 and to be completed by the early autumn of 2001. During that period all materials from the collections will remain available to readers. Some classes will be fetched to other reading rooms in the Library, but most will have to be consulted in a temporary reading room accommodating readers of both manuscripts and rare books, where space will be limited. It may be necessary at peak times to place some restrictions on access and usage.

Scholars planning to work on the rare book and manuscript collections are advised to try to plan their visits to avoid peak times (June to September) and, if possible, to use the Library before May 1999. If this is not convenient, prior notice to the Rare Books (rarebooks@ula.cam.ac.uk) or Manuscripts Departments (mss@ula.cam.ac.uk) is recommended. Further details will be made available on the University Library’s Web site (http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk).
Poetry & the Study of the Medieval Middle East

by Th. Emil Homerin

When students are overwhelmed by "fundamentalists" and "terrorists," when they grow tired of pillars and creeds, how can we help them to sense Islam's deeper dimensions? The question is the same whether or not one is a believer, for the issue is not about belief but feelings and their evocation. Some recent attempts to solve this problem have sought to revise text-based theological and legalistic orientations to Islam by stressing more anthropological approaches to Muslim populations. Particularly useful for undergraduates have been visits to mosques and meetings with Muslims. Another successful strategy has been the use in the classroom of films, of novels and short stories written by Muslim women and men. These efforts to gain more personal insights into Islam, however, have one very real limitation: they are confined largely to Islam in the 19th-20th centuries. To study and understand medieval Islamic culture in the Ottoman, Mamluk, Safavid, and Mughul Empires, in the "Classical" Abbasid period, or earlier at the time of the Prophet, we must rely more extensively on written materials. Clearly, the study of certain texts and types of texts imposes limited views of the medieval Middle East while privileging certain kinds of language or forms of discourse. Yet, we can broaden and enhance our range of vision by reading requisite religious and historical writings in light of other works, such as tales of travel or romance and, of course, poetry. For centuries, poetry has been a preferred art form in the Middle East serving to distill human and historical experiences, and to articulate specific beliefs and world views. Offering students even a single quatrain ascribed to 'Umar Khayyâm, for instance, may dramatically illustrate to them the diversity in the medieval period by highlighting issues, opinions, and actions at odds with many current depictions of Islam and life in the Middle East (Persian text in Arberry, 218):

Drunk at the tavern last night, I passed
a drunken old man with jug in hand.
"Have you no shame before God?" I said.
"Why?" he replied, "God is kind-- drink wine!"

Further, in contrast to the majority of standard religious texts and historical writings, medieval poetry generally does not seek to convey factual information so much as to evoke an intensity of feeling, moving us to live imaginatively in a shared experience. It is one thing for students to read that, on the eve of Islam, Arab society was plagued by blood feuds and vendettas, and quite another to hear the words of the poet Sahil ibn Shaybân al-Zimmânt (c. 6th C.E.) as he recounts the internecine warfare devouring his kinsmen (Arabic text in Abû Tammâm, 1:32-38):

We forgave the sons of Hind
and said:
"The folk are brothers.
“Perhaps the days
will restore the tribe
as they were.”

But when the evil
was plain and clear,
stripped bare to see,

And nothing remained
but enmity,
then we paid back as they paid!

We strode
like the stalking lion,
the furious lion,

With a devastating,
crunching,
crushing blow.

And a thrust, gashing, spewing
like the mouth of a wine-skin,
a very full wine-skin.

A little forbearance
when quick action is called for,
tells of servitude.

And in evil is salvation
when goodness
can not save you.

Obviously, not every scholar and
teacher of the medieval Middle East will
have the time, skills, or inclination to trans-
late verse relevant to their course offerings
and fields of interest, and this underscores
the importance of the continued availability
of skilled poetic translations that can capture
some of the tone and mood of the
originals. Too often, however, translations
and studies of Arabic, Persian, Turkish and
other literatures of the Middle East have
been marginalized in the West by awk-
ward translations, naive realism, and an
antiquarian determination that works of
non-western literature are linguistic arti-
facts. As Norman Daniel noted in the mid-
60’s: “At first we find [these translations]
restricting, and we pass rapidly through
irritation to boredom. Such writing does
much to keep [the West] and Muslim world
apart” (Daniel, 55). This situation has im-
proved somewhat, especially during the
last ten years, and several reasonably priced
anthologies of fine translations are still
available for class room use, including
Edward Fitzgerald’s classic The Rubaiyat
of Omar Khayyam (Dover), Michael Sell’s
version of pre-Islamic Arabian odes in
Desert Tracings (Wesleyan, 1989), Cola
Franzen’s Poems of Arab Andalusia (City
Lights, 1989), Elizabeth Gray, Jr.’s rendi-
tions of Hafiz in The Green Sea of Heaven
(White Cloud Press, 1995), and the trans-
lations of Ottoman verse by Walter
Andrews, et al. in Ottoman Lyric Poetry
(Univ. of Texas, 1997). Quality trans-
lations of poems from the medieval Middle
East may also be found in less accessible
and usually more expensive scholarly books
and articles, though Robert Irwin has gath-
ered some of these translations together for
his anthology of Arabic poetry forthcoming
from Penguin Books.

Still, relative to the immense
amount of poetry available from the medi-
ieval Middle East, our existing trans-
lations are meager for most subjects, though less
so for Sufism. This is fortunate since pre-
senting Islamic mysticism-- or any mysti-
cal tradition, for that matter-- poses several
problems, not the least of which is how to
depict and discuss abstruse doctrines of
mystical theology. Though such theosphy-
cal doctrines are often highly abstract and
complex, presenting them in a cogent fash-
ion is important since they have influenced
and shaped the world-views of countless
Muslims for centuries. Clearly, Sufi
shaykhs have faced the same problem, and
one of their solutions has been to under-
score and reinforce their teachings with
verse. Perhaps for this same reason, schol-
ars of Sufism frequently cite translations of
verse in their own works. In fact, Annemarie
Schimmel repurposed her Mystical Dimen-
sions of Islam (Chapel Hill, 1975) in terms
of poetry in As Through a Veil: Mystical
Poetry in Islam (Columbia, 1982) while,
more recently, John Renard has quoted
extensively from translations of Sufi po-
tery in his study and anthology on Islamic
spirituality, Seven Doors to Islam (Berke-
ley, 1996) and Windows on the House of
Islam (Berkeley, 1998). In addition, poetic

Illustration Two. From al-Hariri’s Maqamat, by Yahya ibn
Mahmud al-Wasiti, 1337.

SEE POETRY, PAGE 11.
# ANNUAL MEETINGS

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New MEM Board Members

At its 1998 business meeting, held in Chicago on December 3, 1998, those attending approved two new members of the MEM Board to replace outgoing Board members Irene Bierman (University of California, Los Angeles) and Wael Hallaq (McGill University), whose terms of office expired on December 31. The new Board members are Michael Chamberlain (University of Wisconsin) and Ethel Sara Wolper (University of New Hampshire). They will serve three-year terms ending December 31, 2001.


Prof. Chamberlain’s research interests focus on the social and cultural history of the Middle East from around 1100 to around 1400 C.E. He is currently at work on two projects: a biography of Ibn Taymiya and an exploratory attempt at asking what comparative elite family history can tell us about the comparative history of politics.

Ethel Sara Wolper received her Ph.D. in Art History from UCLA in 1994 and since 1996 has been Assistant Professor of History at the University of New Hampshire at Durham. Her dissertation was entitled “Patronage and Practice in Late Seljuk and Early Beylik Society: Dervish Lodges in Tokat, Sivas, and Amasya,” her research for the dissertation also provided the point of departure for her two articles, “Religious Conversion and Social Transformation,” Al-‘Usur al-Wusta 6 (1994), 32-33, and “The Politics of Patronage: Political Change and the construction of Dervish Lodges in Sivas,” Mugarnas 12 (1995), 39-47. She is currently preparing for publication a monograph entitled Politics, Piety and Patronage: Khidr and the Dervish Lodges of pre-Ottoman Anatolia, and she has three articles in press or in preparation: “Princess Safwat al-Dunya wa-l-Din and the Production of Sufi Building and Hagiographies in Pre-Ottoman Anatolia,” in Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies (SUNY Press, forthcoming); “Khidr and the Islamization of Anatolia” and “Portal Patterns in Seljuk and Beylik Anatolia” (both in preparation).

Prof. Wolper plans to extend her research to embrace medieval Sufism in Egypt, and Syria, as well as further work on Sufism and manuscript production in the early Ottoman Empire and the figure of Khidr in the development of pilgrimage sites in the Islamic world. Her current situation has caused her recently to develop an interest in Islamic architecture in New England.
**MEMBER NEWS**

Camilla P. Adang (Tel Aviv University) is working on a book on the Zahirī legal methodology of Ibn Ḥazm, which will include a part on usūl al-fiqh and a number of case-studies dealing with marginalized groups; e.g., women, slaves, non-Muslims, homosexuals, foundlings, the insane, etc.

Terry Allenis (Occidental University, California) "Ayyubid Architecture," an electronic publication dealing with the architecture of Syria during the Zangid and Ayyubid periods, is now substantially complete and available online ( alas, without illustrations) at http://www.sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/readmea.html


Vassilios Christides (Institute for Graeco-Oriental and African Studies, Athens) published "Tarābulus," in EI2; and "Some Hagiographical Works (Greek, Latin, Arabic and Ethiopic) as a Source for the Study of Navigation and Sea Trade in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean in Pre-Islamic Times," Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 21 (1997): 62-76. He has received a grant from Princeton University to conduct research on Arab seafaring. He will be in Princeton from March 10 to May 1, 1999. He will also offer a seminar on “The Tomb of Alexander the Great and the Arabic Sources” at the Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles on April 14, 1999.


Robert Fulton, DVM (Ann Arbor, Michigan) finished his MA in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan, August 1998. His thesis is entitled ‘Umran b. al-Khaṭṭāb as a Messianic Figure in Early Islam.


Neil D. McKenzie (Howell, Michigan) participated in the sixth season of excavations at Sijilmasa, Morocco (May-June 1998).

Christopher Melchert (Springfield, Missouri) received a Social Science Research Fellowship (Syria, 1998-1999) for his research on “The Coming Together of the
Sunni Community, 9th-10th Centuries C.E.


Marina Tolmacheva (Washington State University) has been appointed Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. She published “Female Piety and Patronage in the Medieval Hajj,” in Women in the Medieval Islamic World, Gavin R.G. Hambly, ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998): 161-79.


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The International Association for Coptic Studies

The International Association for Coptic Studies (IACS) was founded during the First International Congress of Coptology in Cairo (actually: Colloquium on the Future of Coptic Studies, 11-17 December 1976), sponsored by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization, at the end of the UNESCO project to publish a facsimile edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices. An important predecessor of the newly founded association was the Cairo-based Société d’Archéologie Copte (formerly, 1934-1937, Association des Amis des Églises et de l’Art Coptes). Including the meeting in Cairo, there have now been six International Congresses of Coptic Studies sponsored by the IACS. In 1990 the IACS founded the Journal of Coptic Studies.

As of 1996, the official address of the IACS is: Institut für Ägyptologie und Koptologie, Schlaunstrasse 2, D-48143 Münster, Germany. Tel.: +49 251 8324940, or +49 251 8324537; fax: +49 251 8329933; email: emmstel@nwz.unimuenster.de.

The IACS holds congresses at intervals of four years.

The address of the IACS home page on the internet is: http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/~iacs.
POETRY, FROM PAGE 5.

allegories and narrative poems, especially those by Ḥurr al-Dīn ʿAtār (d.1220) and Rūmī (d.672/1273), have remained quite popular in parts of the Middle East, and their multiple English translations, particularly the Conference of the Birds of A. Darbandi and D. Davis (Penguin, 1984), continue to enjoy success. Notable, too, are Coleman Bark’s poetic versions of Rūmī; based largely on earlier translations by R.A. Nicholson and A.J. Arberry, they are among the bestsellers of poetry in English today.

Nevertheless, poetry’s central presence in the study of medieval Islamic mysticism is an exception, and poetry remains a vast, but untapped resource for the study of the larger medieval Middle East. As I have argued elsewhere, this poetry may serve as a means to probe the “submerged history” of the period, including the life of the masses, the manners and etiquette of the elite, and particularly “the complex relationships between society, religion, and political authority and their multiple forms of expression” (Homerin, 1997). But above all, through this poetry and its translation, medieval men and women may continue to speak of their lives and tell us of their concerns (Arabic text in Abū Tammām, 2:902-905; Homerin, 1991, 1997):

She misses your tender touch and company; she keeps us all awake, and she grieves,

And as soon as I hear her sobbing in the night, my eyes begin to cry.

Here, Muwayliḥ al-Mazmūm (fl. pre 231/845) mourns his wife and worries for his daughter, and his elegy leaves a powerful image of the troubling emotions unleashed by death and grief. But by doing so, this and many similar poems elicit sympathy for a shared humanity and common fate, and this, in turn - for us and our students - challenges a number of culturally entrenched views of Arabs, Muslims, and for that matter many “others.” Through its concise, simple diction of direct address and touching images, this elegy conjures a living presence, and so including such poetry in both research and teaching can broaden our perspectives to include a more humanistic and humane appreciation of the medieval Middle East, its societies, cultures, and the people who lived and loved there.

Bibliography:
All translations are my own.
- Abū Tammām, Sharḥ Dīwān al-Hamāsah,
- A.A. Amīn and A. Hārūn, eds. (Cairo, 1951).

Pass by the grave
where Umm al-ʿAlā dwells
and greet her--
if she could only hear.

You-- so very timid--
how have you come to dwell
in a land
where the brave dread to pass?

God bless you
lost one;
the wasteland
is not for you.

For you left behind
a dear little girl:
she doesn’t know what mourning means,
but she mourns.

Illustration Three. Firdawsi Encounters the Court Poets of Ghazna
From the Shāhnāma of Shah Tahmasp, Iran, Tabriz, ca.1532.
Charles Cutler Torrey (1863-1956) was America's leading Arabist in the first half of the twentieth century. His extraordinary career in Semitic studies, including Arabic, Aramaic, Syriac, epigraphy of all periods, biblical studies (Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Apocrypha), and numismatics, made him a dominating figure across numerous disciplines that now tend to be independent of each other. This study focuses on his early career in Arabic studies, in which he was to occupy a commanding position for more than fifty years.

Torrey was born in East Hardwick, Vermont, five months after the battle of Gettysburg. He died in Chicago eleven months before the launching of the first sputnik satellite. No other scholar spanned so successfully the old New England school of biblical scholarship, the professionalization of Semitic studies in the American universities, the reshaping of American scholarship in the years between the two world wars, and its new directions in the nuclear age. Son of a Congregational minister, grandson of one of the first professors at the University of Vermont, Torrey graduated from Bowdoin College in 1884 and from Andover Theological Seminary in 1889. Andover was more than a bastion of New England orthodoxy; it was the birthplace of professional American biblical studies, pioneered by the "Hebrew prophet" Moses Stuart (1780-1852) and his two students Josiah Gibbs (1790-1861) and Edward Robinson (1794-1863). Stuart had been among the first Americans to master and appreciate the new philological approach to scriptural languages and documents. Robinson brought Stuart's mission to splendid fruition as a student of the German Hebraist Gesenius, devoting his career as explorer, teacher, translator, and editor, to the Bible and its landscape.

Thus the way was prepared for another traditional young scholar of Andover to take up Semitic languages in Germany and to return, like Robinson, to redirect American biblical and Semitic studies, including now Arabic and Islam. Equipped with a small fellowship from the Seminary, Torrey had no plans for a doctorate, but wanted only to deepen his knowledge of Semitic languages, in preparation for a possible teaching position in the Seminary upon his return. Like other accomplished Andover graduates, Torrey's Greek and Latin were excellent; he had a good knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac, and had studied some Arabic.

In 1889, Torrey set sail for Europe. Strassburg (now Strasbourg), then part of Germany since the Franco-Prussian war, was mecca for a Semitist, with Theodor Noeldeke (1836-1930), the greatest Semitist of his day, perhaps of any day, as professor, ably seconded by Julius Euting in Semitic epigraphy and Peter Jensen in Arabic and Assyriology. Torrey's diaries and letters to his family give a lively, vivid picture of a traditional New England scholar's growth under the aegis of the Altmeister, and of the vital friendship that grew up between them. These are in the possession of his daughter, Anne Torrey Frueh, through whose generosity I am privileged to tell this story.

Torrey's first task was to gain a practical knowledge of German, a language not often part of an American liberal arts education of the time. To this end, he settled in Göttingen in September, 1889 and embarked on a proceeding familiar to generations of American and English students in the German university system (more than ten thousand Americans studied in Germany prior to 1914). Engaging a room in the home of a professor's widow who took student boarders, Torrey set out to learn the language as quickly as possible. His mornings were spent with Kinder and Hausmärchen (children's stories) as good starter texts. Four or five evenings a week he had a session of an hour and a half with a German university student. They would converse and read aloud to each other, generally from the Märchen, then Torrey would give an "impromptu abridgment" of the stories he had read the previous time. This method worked well and quickly. In the afternoons he practiced German with English-speaking friends, taking prolonged walks through the delightful old town and picturesque surrounding countryside, returning to an evening collation of eggs, boiled rice, black bread, and cocoa at the boarders' table. As for
bedtime, "you are expected to sleep on one feather-bed with another one over you. The one that goes over you is thicker than the ordinary pillow and generally not long enough for any but short people... My experiences with these beds has not been one of unmixed pleasure ..."

The course announcements from Strassburg held exciting promise, so Torrey arrived in St. Louis in October, accompanied by a Harvard Arabist, George Jewett. "We found the great N. at home, and he was exceedingly cordial and pleasant. He is a little witted up man with thin grey hair and beard, and a very bright eye... careless of his personal appearance, and nervous in his movements... He had just been celebrating his silver wedding, and four of his Semitic friends (Professors in other universities [among them Socin and Prym, BRJ]) had sent him as a present a very fine Oriental rug or carpet, which he exclaimed to us with a good deal of pride. He had a good many questions to ask of me naturally, and advised me as to my work. All of his readings this semester are in advanced work, of considerable difficulty. He very kindly invited me to come in to the reading of the 'Durra' of Hariri, saying that I could see how it went... Lector Jensen's reading in Baladuri is better suited to my stage of progress... As for Syriac, he advised me to carry on some readings by myself, under his direction of course ...

Torrey boarded at Strassburg with a French-speaking family who spoke German with him. His New England boiled palate was not dismayed by a constant diet of sausages, potatoes, and cauliflower: "Variety in cooking is practically unknown to the ordinary German table... I sometimes think I would give a large part of my letter of credit for a half of Johnny cake or a plate of beans or an "undeone doughnut"... A cloak and Steppdecke, or quilt, made sleeping at least tolerable, though sometimes fleas made for a desperate battle ("50 or 60 bites on my right leg alone"). His daily regime was daunting: "I get up at 7 o'clock, have coffee at 7.30-7.45, and then study Arabic till 1 o'clock, with one or two pauses for exercise with a pair of iron dumbbells. On Wednesday I have a reading in the Koran at 8 A.M., & on Friday at 9. My readings with Prof. Nöldeke come at 12 o'clock, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Dinner at 1.30, and plenty of it, too, I am glad to say. In the afternoon, more Arabic, with an admixture of Syriac. Koran reading on Monday at 5 o'clock. I generally try to go out and take a walk somewhere, between 5 and 6 P.M. Supper at 7.30, very much the same as dinner. In the evening, more Syriac, sometimes Arabic, also an occasional dab at German grammar or reading. I go to bed at 11 o'clock, and sleep soundly all night ...

Within a few weeks Torrey had settled in and was "enjoying my work more and more. I sometimes fancy that Prof. Nöldeke's hair has turned a shade whiter since he has heard my 'German' renderings of the fine points of Hariri, but perhaps it is my imagination. I tell you, that man is a marvel! One's ideas of scholarship receive a great addition. I stand off and look at him as I would at the Sphinx of Egypt. Such a little fellow, too; - I could eat him in three bites; - but when he illustrates points in the reading by reeling off all languages ancient and modern, with an air of proprietorship, as if he had invented them himself, I can only sit and look at him in open-mouthed terror ..." Hariri was intimidating fare, especially since the only other student in the class was one Carl Brockelmann, but Nöldeke encouraged the young Yankee to stay with it.

Part of Nöldeke's teaching technique was to advise the student to read rapidly in texts outside of class at odd moments of the day, denying oneself "the pleasure of looking up doubtful words in the Lexicon, and of straightening out each sentence as you go along ..." Torrey used this method in Arabic, Syriac, and German, and spoke enthusiastically of the results. He found Freytag's Lexicon "in sumum Tironum excerpturn" helpful at first but at last splurged on "the big Freytag... It made a 100 mark bill look awfully sick though."

Tuition was cheap compared to an American college: the "Collegengeld" for two courses with Nöldeke and one with Jensen was twelve marks each. Complete living expenses, including room, board, and extras, was about eighty-two marks a month. For his part, Nöldeke confided to Torrey's mentor, the Andover biblical scholar George Foot Moore, "Ich Schüler, Herr Torrey, gefällt mir ausserordentlich" - praise from Caesar indeed.

In the second semester of 1890, Torrey signed up for advanced Syriac and Arabic with Nöldeke (Ibn Hisham and Syriac and Arabic poetry), all classes meeting from 7 to 8 A.M. He started Akskadian with Jensen, who proved to be eager to learn the game of poker. In due course Torrey would take up Egyptian as well with W. Spiegelberg.

A memorable occasion was provided by an invitation to dinner at the professor's home. "Managed to avoid shipwreck in my German, by dint of avoiding long sentences. Prof. N. has a jolly family. Besides his wife there is a daughter, of about my own age; three sons in the University, two of them youngsters who have just entered; a still younger son; and a 5-year old little girl, 'die Kleine.' They are a fine-looking lot, and as bright and sociable as the old Professor himself, which is saying a good deal. I should think the Germans would get used to the fact that some Americans are non-drinkers of wine and beer, but they don't seem to. 'What kind of wine does Herr Torrey prefer?' (and there were perhaps eight or ten choice bottles on the table). 'Many thanks; but I don't drink wine.' (Blank astonishment, followed by lively cross-questioning.) 'Then perhaps Herr Torrey will take some beer; 'No'. (More astonishment and questions). 'Has Herr T. tried the beer and wine; does he know how they taste?' 'Oh, yes; but he prefers not to drink them.' A happy thought strikes Frau N., and she suggests that the servant bring some 'Schnapps' (whiskey!) for Herr Torrey. (Generally believed to be the favorite American drink).

When this has been refused, then the question comes, 'What does Herr T. drink? milk?' and the young ones open eyes and ears in expectation. 'Water', 'Oh!' and a cry of surprise goes round. Nobody had thought of that." Nor did Herr Torrey take cognizance with his coffee ('dear me, how remarkable!'), and when cigars were passed around, everyone but the ladies puffed away: 'Doesn't Herr Torrey smoke?' 'Not ever' 'Um Gottes Willen' (all the Germans swear) 'What remarkable people some of these Americans are!' "Thus New England orthodoxy spurned continental pleasures - a generation before, the German theologian Tholuck had looked in vain for an opera house at Andover,
in Oriental History, Noeldke assigned him the Chronicle of Ibn Athir. "I think I must have turned pale when he said this, for the Chronicle in question is in Arabic (no translation exists), in twelve volumes(!), but I shut my teeth together and told him I thought that would be just the thing for me. I tell you, Noeldke is nobody's pet chicken. I ordered the book at the library this afternoon, and shall begin work on it tomorrow."

As a dissertation topic, Noeldke proposed that Torrey edit part of an adab-work recently acquired by the Strasbourg library. "I accepted at once, of course, and can get the ms. tomorrow." This turned out to be an Egyptian manuscript, acquired by the German scholar Reinhardt at Zanzibar, of 'Ali' al-Din al-Ghuzuli's Kitāb matālí al-budūr fi manāzil al-surūr. According to a manuscript note by Noeldke, "Das Buch scheint manches zu enthalten was d. Übersetzung lohnt." "My chapter was XX ... and I set to work at once to see if I could make anything out of it. Prof. N. had told me that the ms wd not be a very easy one to decipher, and it went terribly hard at first. A large part of the didactical points were wanting, and everything looked painfully unfamiliar. At last, after several false starts, I made out the first few sentences, with the exception of a word or two, here and there. The writing is very fine and so hard on the eyes - 25 lines to a page of 4 x 6 inches ..." But Torrey set to work with a will and gradually the manuscript yielded to his persistence.

Torrey's friends and classmates of those days included, besides Carl Brockelmann, Bruno Meissner, later Professor of Assyriology at Berlin, and Adam Mez, best remembered today for his book Die Renaissance des Islam. Mez passed his doctoral exams on May 9, 1891 "in first rate shape, too, getting a 'benef'. Accordingly, a small company consisting of Metz, a friend of his named S., Dr. Jensen, Spiegelberg, Glahn and I, met at 9 o'clock at the 'Stadt Basel'. A great pewter bowl, in which Herr S. made the 'Mai-Bowle', - white wine with 'Waldmeister' and sugar. At it till 2 o'clock in the morning. It grew rather uproarious. Postal cards written to send to Meissner and Hjelt. The latter bore the address 'Herrn A. Hjelt, verlorenes Schaf vom Hause Israel (then followed the Paris address),' while the other side bore simply the message 'Wo sind Sie??', surrounded by a few meaningless scrawls. The card to Herr Meissner was an awful looking scrawl, written almost wholly in Latin (?) by Dr. J. It was such a disgraceful production by the time some of the others had made their additions to it, that Herr Glahn took possession of it secretly and tore it up, though the others, being too tight to see what had become of it, made a great hue and cry in search of it later on. A pretty ricketty assemblage, by this time: Herr Metz has to make several tries before he can pick up a postal card from the table, and Dr. J. has similar difficulty in making the pen go into the mouth of the inkstand. A terrible racket on the way home. Glahn and I had rather played the part of spectators, but the others, especially Metz and Dr. J., were very much the worse for wear. Glück left us at the Schlossbrücke. Opposite the University we made such a noise that I was afraid we should bring the police on us. Here, while Spiegelberg and Dr. J. engaged in a fierce 'Schäfer-duel' with canes, Herr S. and I acting as seconds, Metz takes the following easy position against the lampstand and is accordingly accused of being a 'Bierleiche.' He makes a spirited speech (one of the queerest things I ever heard) in refutation of this charge. He then organizes us as a military company, and marches us twice before Dr. J., pounding with our feet in a style that would have satisfied any general. After paying the Dr. this honor, we separate ... shrieking and howling the whole way. Shouldn't care to do it a second time."

Over a period of five months, Torrey made excellent progress with his manuscript, receiving a duplicate from Vienna with didactical points, most of which, he was happy to see, agreed with his reconstruction of the Strassburg text. But disaster awaited him, to which he reacted with characteristic Yankee understatement: "Prof. Nöeldeke meets me with a very crest-fallen mien and says he has made 'a very disagreeable discovery,' namely that my Arabic ms. has already been published, and that my whole 'Arbeit' is accordingly gone up! ... Hard lines."

In the fall of 1891, Torrey took a term at Berlin, attending the lectures of Schrader ('rather poor stuff'), Sachau, and
Winckler, carrying on work with his new dissertation topic, the commercial vocabulary of the Koran. He went to one of Dieterici's classes on Arabic poetry: "Once is enough! Prof. D. is a fat, red-faced, decrepit, white-haired old man, with a voice like a steam whistle, and (apparently) no ear for music, eye for beauty, or appreciation of the historical setting of the fragments we read. Made the acquaintance of Mr. Breasted, ex-Yale, whose 'speciality is Egyptology.' He seems to be in some degree acting as Pres. Harper’s agent, in the matter of the books bought for the library of the new Chicago University-Calvary’s whole (antiq.) stock, 200,000 volumes for 180,000 M."

Torrey finally handed in his dissertation to the dean of the faculty, with his "Gesuch" (degree petition) and Latin vita, on February 14, 1892. His exam took place May 7, with Euting examining him in Hebrew, Noeoldeke in Syriac, Arabic, and Oriental History, and Lucius on Church History. "Got through in very good shape, was given the 2d degree, 'bene.'" The young American seminarian had become a Semitic trained to the most exacting standards.

At Leiden in May 1892, the Dutch Arabist De Goeje received him kindly, allowed him to work in "his ideal study," and recommended that his dissertation be published by E. I. Brill (it appeared as The Commercial-Theological Terms in the Koran (1892)).

Torrey’s drive and and industry, coupled with his clear, exact, and well-organized patterns of thinking and research, made him superbly qualified to respond to the challenge of first-rate scholarship. A raw American was to become one of Noeoldeke’s most distinguished students. Among the fifty scholars to whom Torrey sent his first book, Ezra-Nehemiah (1896), were Noeoldeke, De Goeje, Derenburg, Wellhausen, Mez, Jensen, Euting, Sozin, Kautzsch, Brockelmann, and Haupt. His early articles went to the likes of Clermont-Ganneau, Lidzbarski, Winckler, Sachau, Sayce, Edward Meyer, Schröder, Barth, and Bevan. Torrey could take his place confidently in that company.

In 1900 Torrey was appointed Professor of Semitic Languages and Literatures at Yale (Sterling Professor 1931), as successor to William Rainey Harper. He took the first year of his appointment in Jerusalem to found the American School of Oriental Research there as its first professor and as director of its first excavation, a Phoenician necropolis near Sidon. Among his further contributions to Arabic and Islamic studies was the first text edition of a major Arabic work published in the United States, The Fu’ah Mihir of Ibn Abd al-Hakam (1922, reprinted Cairo, 1991). His other contributions to Arabic and Islamic studies included Selections from the Sahih of Bukhari (1906), The Jewish Foundation of Islam (1933, reprinted New York, 1967), Al-Kindi’s History of the Qadis of Egypt (1910), and, among his many articles, studies of al-Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf (1893), Ibn Barri (1906), al-Asma’i (1911), Islamic Mysticism (1919), al-Kindi (1927), difficult passages in the Koran (1922, 1948 [submitted 1911]), and an Arabic papyrus (1936). Yet these were but a fraction of his seventeen books, well over 120 scholarly articles, and uncounted reviews and encyclopedia articles on Semitic, biblical, and numismatic subjects published over an active career of sixty years. Like Noeoldeke, Torrey was one of the leading teachers of his time, directing over forty doctoral dissertations in the Department of Semitic Languages and Literatures at Yale during a period of thirty years.

During the mad carnage and brutality of the First World War, when the call was for "relevance" and "serving the cause," Torrey, as president of the American Oriental Society (1918), reflected on the mission of American Oriental Studies. He saw that the United States could no longer set the Near East and Islam aside as an "old world" problem: "Our country is already confronted with new responsibilities, some only half comprehended, while others are yet to arise. No one can predict what, or when, or how much; but this is certain, that we shall take a more active part than we have ever taken before in preserving the equilibrium of the world through real fellowship and cooperation with the nations of the east..." We have also learned that whether our own remoteness from it all was justified or not, it will neither be justified nor possible in the future..." Torrey went against the general American shibboleth of "bigger and better" when he proposed: "We should not expect, and perhaps should not desire, any large expansion of oriental studies in the United States; what we should aim at is greater vigor, better quality, and more carefully coordinated effort."

Torrey saw a need for declaration of independence from German scholarship: "We have always been very dependent on European scholars and publications, and especially upon the Germans, who have supplied us with a large part of our text-books and technical treatises... It made possible what otherwise would have been beyond our reach, but had of necessity its detrimental influence. We were deprived of the stimulus to production which comes from the necessity of making our own working tools. We needed only to take what was provided, and to give to original research the amount of time proportioned to our taste and opportunity. Something of independent judgment was also sacrificed..." No one knew this better than Torrey himself, but even he could not have predicted Germany’s new role, this time in the form of emigrants to revitalize American scholarship in the decades before the next World War.

Noeoldeke was embittered by the outcome of the First World War, when Strasbourg was returned to France, but finally acceded to Torrey’s persuasion to maintain his connections with American scholarship. Through the terrible inflation in Germany in the aftermath of the war, Torrey sent him postage so they could maintain their correspondence. They did not meet again but maintained cordial contacts until Noeoldeke’s death, well into his ninth decade, in 1930.

Bibliographical Note:
The author is writing a history of American scholarship on the Near East, 1650-1950.
- F. Rosenthal, Introduction to Torrey’s The Jewish Foundation of Islam (Reprint, 1967), v-xxiii.
Call for Papers

International Medieval Congress 2000
University of Leeds
10-13 July 2000

The International Medieval Congress '99, will be held in Leeds from 12-15 July 1999. The special thematic strand for IMC '99 will be *Saints*, with a second special strand on *Encyclopaedias and Storytelling*.
Keynote speeches will this year be given by Peter Brown, on *Enjoying the Saints in Late Antiquity*, and by Kenneth Varty, on *Telling Stories with Pictures and Pictures Telling Stories: Some Examples, Problems, Reflections*.
The IMC'99 Programme is available on the following web-page: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/imi/imc/imc99/imc99.htm/.

The International Medieval Congress 2000 will be held at the University of Leeds on 10-13 July 2000. The estimated costs for the four-day IMC 2000 vary from £160 to £390 depending on the arrangements chosen. The IMC 2000 welcomes sessions and papers on any topic relating to the European Middle Ages (c.450-1500). Speakers may participate in the Congress regardless of their origin and status. Each speaker may present only one paper at the IMC. Speakers are welcome to present their paper in their preferred language, although it is recommend that submissions be presented in English, French or German to ensure that the sessions remain broadly accessible. Scholars are to offer a 20-minute paper within a general session. The deadline for submissions for individual paper proposals is **31 August 1999**.

Organisers of sessions are invited to submit between one and five proposals. Three individuals must present 20-minute papers on a related topic in each session. The deadline for submission of organised sessions is **30 September 1999**.

For more information contact: Marianne O'Doherty or Jostine Opmeir, International Medieval Congress, International Medieval Institute, Parkinson 1.03, University of Leeds, LEEDS, LS2 9JT, UK. Tel.: +44 (113) 233-3614; Fax: +44 (113) 233-3616; email: IMC@leeds.ac.uk. Additional information can be obtained from the web-page: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/imi/imc/imc.htm.

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Call for Papers

2nd International Congress on the
Archaeology of the Ancient Near East
Near Eastern Archaeology at the Beginning of the 3rd Millenium AD

Copenhagen, 23-27 May 2000

The 2nd International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE) will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, from May 23rd through May 27th 2000. It will be hosted by the Carsten Niebuhr Institute and the University of Copenhagen.

The congress aims at giving Near Eastern archaeologists an opportunity to meet and exchange the results of their work in line with the tradition established at the 1st ICAANE in Rome and to promote interest and research into Near Eastern Archaeology. The geographic area concerned stretches from Iran to the Mediterranean Sea and from Anatolia to Arabia, during the time span from the Palaeolithic to Alexander the Great. As a special feature, the Copenhagen Congress will host a section on Islamic Archaeology in order to promote archaeological research into this important aspect of the cultural history of the Near East. One of the themes proposed by the scientific committee of the Congress is on “The State of Islamic Archaeology.” A pre-organized symposium on “Strategies for Islamic Archaeology in Bilād al-Shām & the Jazīrah” is also scheduled. Those interested in presenting papers for this symposium should contact:
Alan Walmesley, Department of Semitic Studies, Main Building, A14, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia. Tel.: (+61 2) 9351 6755. Fax: (+61 2) 9351 6684. Email: alan.walmesley@semitic.usyd.edu.au.

(Papers for this symposium are encouraged to address interdisciplinary issues (texts, geography, numismatics, science-based analysis of materials, archaeoecology)).

For more information on the congress contact:
Secretary of the 2ICAANE, Carsten Niebuhr Institute, Snorresgade 17-19, DK-2300 Copenhagen S., Denmark. Tel.: +45 35 32 89 00. Fax: +45 35 32 89 26. Email: 2icaane@coco.ihku.dk. Web: www.hum.ku.dk/2icaane.
Call for Papers

III International Conference on
Islamic Legal Studies
“The Madhhab”
Deadline November 1, 1999

The Third International Conference on Islamic Legal Studies (formerly I and II Schacht Conference on the Theory and Practice of Islamic Law) will be held at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts on May 4-6, 2000. The conference will be sponsored by the Harvard Islamic Legal Studies Program.

The theme of the conference will be the madhhab. Preference will be given to papers that treat the madhhab as a distinct entity, addressing, for example, questions relating to madhhab formation, consolidation, defining characteristics, membership and affiliation, relationship to the state, relationship to the role and jurisdiction of the qadi, role in politics, boundaries between and across, structure and organization, social and ethical aspects of, and contemporary manifestations. Proposals from scholars working with a wide range of disciplines, including legal studies, history, politics, and history of religion are sought.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is November 1, 1999. Abstracts should include a clear definition of the thesis to be presented, nature of the source material, relevance of the topic to the theme of the conference, and discipline. Abstracts should be e-mailed to <pbearman@law.harvard.edu>. All oral presentations at the conference should not exceed 20 minutes.

The Mamluk Sultanate:
Cities, Societies, Economics

December 3, 1998
DePaul Center

A conference on “The Mamluk Sultanate: Cities, Societies, Economics” sponsored by Mamlûk Studies Review and DePaul University was held on December 3, 1998 at the DePaul Center, Chicago.

The following papers were presented:

The Keynote address was given by Robert Irwin (University of London), “Under Western Eyes: A History of Mamluk Studies.”
The Medieval Academy of America


The ISLAW Catalogue

The Oriental Institute at the University of Leipzig (OIL) has set up a new Internet site, beginning in April 1998. The "ISLAW - Catalogue" is a first attempt to collect all existing sites on the Internet about Islamic Law and the Law of the Islamic States. Everyone doing Oriental and Islamic Studies or who has an interest in International Law could be interested in the Catalogue. The URL is as follows: http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~orient/islaw.htm

For more information, criticism, and for new links, please contact: Thoralf Hanstein (Editorial Team) (e-mail: oil@rz.uni-leipzig.de).

The Third International Institute on Medievalism

The Third International Institute on Medievalism will take place 5 July - August 1999 at the University of York in England.

Sponsored by Studies in Medievalism, this is the only summer program to address the construction of the Middle Ages as an idea in postmedieval western culture since 1500.

Participants are housed in a residential college at the University of York; classes take place in the historic King’s Manor near York Minster. Costs are set at $2500, which covers everything but transportation.

Applications are invited from professional and independent scholars, graduate students, and highly qualified undergraduates.

For more information, contact:
Leslie J. Workman, Director, Institute on Medievalism, Department of English, Hope College, Holland, Michigan 49422-9000, U.S.A. Tel. 616-395-7626 or 7609; Fax 616-395-7134; Email: workman@hope.edu.

H-MidEast Medieval

Middle East Medievalists has launched H-MIDEAST MEDIEVAL, a moderated list for scholars and others interested in the study of the Islamic lands of the Middle East during the medieval period (defined roughly as 500-1500 C.E.). The list is free and open to everyone with a mature and abiding interest in the subject. The list favors contributions that adopt a scholarly, historical tone and content. Scholars, teachers and librarians professionally interested in teaching and research in the field of the medieval Middle East are particularly invited to join. Messages to the list will be read by one of the moderators before being posted; in certain circumstances we may contact you about your message and ask you to clarify its content.

If you would like to join H-MIDEAST MEDIEVAL, please contact MEM's Secretary-Treasurer, James Lindsay, at jlindsay@h-net.msu.edu. He will inform you of the necessary procedures for joining H-MIDEAST MEDIEVAL.
ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies

"Beirut: History and Archaeology"
ARAM Twelfth International Conference
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT, 13-16 APRIL 1999

ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies held its Twelfth International Conference in collaboration with the Institut Francais d'Archaologie du Proche Orien (IFAPO) on the subject of Beirut: History and Archaeology, at the American University of Beirut (Lebanon), on 13-16 April 1999.


For more information look up the website: http://users.ox.ac.uk/~aram/ or email: aram@ermine.ox.ac.uk.

Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies

27 August-2 September 2000
Leiden, The Netherlands

The Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies will take place in Leiden, The Netherlands, from August 27 to September 2, 2000. The five working days of the congress will be devoted to plenary sessions, lectures, and workshops devoted to special themes. All sessions will take place in the central building of the Faculty of Arts of Leiden University.

For more information, contact Jacques van der Vliet, IACS Congress Secretary, TCNO,sectie Egyptologie & Koptologie, Postbus 9515, NL-2300 RA, Leiden, The Netherlands or write to the following email address: cop2000@rullet.leidenuniv.nl.

Societas Iranologica Europaea

Fourth European Conference of Iranian Studies

6 to 10 September 1999
Paris, France

The Fourth European Conference of Iranian Studies will be held at Paris, from Monday 6 to Friday 10, September 1999. The conference will be held at the "Cité universitaire internationale de Paris" where a student-type accommodation will be available. Further details will be given in the registration documents.

Registration fees: Members of the Societas Iranologica Europaea: 300 FFR/45 EUR/60 USD; Non-members: 600 FFR/90 EUR/120 USD; Students: 100 FFR/15 EUR/20 USD. This fee does not include travel and accommodation costs.

Deadline for registrations (title and abstract of paper): past.


Subscription after this date will be surcharged by 200 FFR/30 EUR/40 USD.

Registration documents can be obtained from the conference organiser:
4e Conference européenne d'études iraniennes, CNRS, Monde iranien, 27, rue Paul Bert, 94204 IVRY, France. Tel. 33 (0) 1 49 60 40 05. Fax 33 (0) 1 45 21 94 19. Email: iran@dr1.cnrs.fr.

Organising committee: Bernard Hourcade, Philip Huyse, Rika Gysselen.
Monde iranien (CNRS - Sorbonne Nouvelle - Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales - Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes).
Redefining Christian Identity: Christian Cultural Strategies since the Rise of Islam

Symposium organised by the Universities of Groningen and Leiden. Groningen, The Netherlands, April 7-10 1999

The rise of Islam thoroughly changed the life of Christians in the Middle East. Although in the early Islamic period changes in the daily life and in the writings of these Christians may not seem radical, in hindsight the arrival of Islam initiated a new period in the history of Christianity. This symposium aimed to discuss the various ways in which Christians in the Middle East defined and redefined their identity from the early Islamic period until the beginning of the 19th century. Speakers at the symposium are working in the fields of Armenian, Christian-Arabic and Syriac/Neo-Aramaic Studies. Four different strands were followed:

- Christians Apologetics vis-à-vis Islam
- Christian Perception of History
- Common Elements in Christian and Islamic Literature and Art
- Language, Literature, and Identity

Papers included:

For more information visit the website: http://odur.let.rug.nl/events or send an email to Dr. H.L. Murre-van den Berg (h.l.murre@rullet.LeidenUniv.nl) or Dr. J.J. van Ginkel (j.j.van.ginkel@let.rug.nl).

Byzantine Eschatology: Views on the Last Things

Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposium
April 30-May 2, 1999

The Annual Byzantine Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks was devoted to Byzantine Eschatology: Views on the Last Things. Under the direction of Professors George Dennis and Ioli Kalavrezou, an international group of seventeen scholars investigated the beliefs and practices of the inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire concerning death and what follows death on both the individual and the cosmic scales. The speakers addressed the liturgical, legal, popular, and artistic aspects of funerals and burial, as well as the remembrance of the departed in homilies and letters of consolation. Further topics discussed included what the Byzantines believed happened to the soul after death, its journey and judgment, and its ability to intercede for the living. The theology of death, resurrection, apocalyptic elements, and the notion of final restoration concluded the program.
Conference on Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity
Urban and Rural in Late Antiquity (ca.200-600)

The Third Conference on Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity, “Urban and Rural in Late Antiquity, (ca.200-600),” was held at Emory University, Atlanta, on 11-14 March 1999.


For more information check the website: http://www.emory.edu/worldclasses/rome/frontiers.html.

Jerusalem in the Eschatological Thought of Judaism, Christianity and Islam

December 21-23, 1998

A conference on “Jerusalem in the Eschatological Thought of Judaism, Christianity and Islam,” sponsored by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and B’nai B’rith World Center, was held on December 21-23, 1998. Some of the papers presented were:

34th International Congress on Medieval Studies
Kalamazoo, Michigan, 6-9 May 1999

The Thirty-Fourth International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo took place Thursday-Sunday, 6-9 May 1999, on the campus of Western Michigan University under the sponsorship of the Medieval Institute. The congress comprised of over 500 sessions. Some of the sessions and papers that were presented were:


For more information check the web site: http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/.
The Middle East: Ancient to Modern Times
An interdisciplinary conference
March 27, 1999

Sponsored by the Humanities Research Institute (Irvine), the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (San Diego), the University of California Office of the President, Office of Research, & the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center (University of California, Santa Barbara) and hosted by the Islamic & Near Eastern Studies Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara at the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center (UCSB)

THE MIDDLE EAST: ANCIENT TO MODERN TIMES is an interdisciplinary conference convened with two primary goals: (1) To bring together scholars whose research and/or teaching deals with the Middle East but who are often separated within the larger field of Middle Eastern Studies by divisions in historical periodization (Ancient Near East, Late Antiquity, Medieval, Early Modern, Modern) or traditional disciplinary boundaries (Political Science, History, Religious Studies, and so forth). (2) To provide a context for faculty/scholars to discuss the potential for collaborative research & funding proposals, coordinating teaching programs among different campuses, sharing research resources and teaching materials, coordinating the training of graduate students, and other issues of mutual concern.

With an eye towards these twin objectives, the conference has been organized into two different types of sessions: “roundtables” for the presentation of research papers and “working groups” convened for open discussion of areas of potential collaboration. Although the presenters are drawn primarily from the campuses of the University of California and the California State University systems, the conference is open and free of charge to all faculty, students and the general public. Even the parking is free!

Further details about the conference will be posted on the conference website at: http://www.gisp.ucsb.edu/mideastcon

Additional queries can be addressed to: Dwight F. Reynolds, Chair, Islamic & Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA 93106, U.S.A. Tel. Off.: (805) 893-7143, Tel. Dept.: (805) 893-7136, Fax: (805) 893-2059, Email: dreynold@humanitas.ucsb.edu.


Some of the workshops presented are:
Undergraduate Curriculum in Islamic Studies—Courses and Materials: Convener Juan Campo (UCSB): An interdisciplinary workshop concerned with the development and role of Islamic Studies in the undergraduate curriculum. Participants will share their knowledge about the history and future prospects of Islamic Studies on their individual campuses, as well as discuss successful and not-so-successful approaches, courses and readings. Among the questions to be raised: What are the key issues that need to be addressed? What changes are occurring? How essential is the Middle East to undergraduate Islamic Studies courses? How are Muslim voices recognized and accommodated? Participants should bring sample syllabi to discuss and distribute to seminar participants.

Andalusian/Medieval Iberian Studies: Convener Dwight Reynolds (UCSB): This session is divided into two parts: First, two 15-minute research presentations, followed by discussion of the papers; then an open discussion on the status of Andalusian/Medieval Iberian Studies in the University of California and CSU systems. Papers include: James Monroe (UC Berkeley), “Doubling and Duplicity in the <Maqamat al-Huzumiyya> by al-Saragasti;” Samuel Armistead (UC Davis), “Near Eastern and Balkan Elements in Judeo-Spanish Narrative Poetry.”

Middle East Medievalists: Convener Stephen Humphreys (UCSB): An open discussion of the topics and issues in medieval Middle Eastern Studies and an exploration of potential areas for collaboration in research, coordination of teaching programs, and sharing resources.
REVIEW POLICY

Members of MEM are invited to submit reviews of recent books in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew, or other Middle Eastern languages that they have read and that deal with subjects of interest to MEM’s membership. In exceptional cases, reviews of books in English or other European languages will be printed, but the main focus will be books in Middle Eastern languages, because generally these are not reviewed in Western journals. Al-Usur al-Wusta relies on the voluntary submission of reviews because review copies of books in Middle Eastern languages are not usually made available.

Reviews should be brief, 250 words or, if possible, fewer. A short note is sufficient in many cases, as it serves the main purpose of bringing a worthwhile work of scholarship to the attention of MEM members who may be interested in the subject it treats. Be sure to include full bibliographical information: full name of author, full title, place and date of publication, publisher, and number of pages. Send reviews directly to the editor.


The manuals of secretarialship from the Mamluk period are valuable to the administrative historian for their information on the workings of the various ḍīwāns and their personnel, on the administrative geography of the Mamluk lands and on the relations of the Mamluk state with other groups like the Qābilis and with outside powers. Ibn Faḍl Allāh (1301-49) came from a prominent secretarial family and was, amongst other things, head of the Mamluk chancery in Damascus. His Taʾrif was the first of the Mamluk manuals in this genre; it was the starting-point for subsequent works like the author’s own ʿUrfa al-Taʾrif and Ibn Nāṣir al-Jayš’s Taḥāqif al-Taʾrif, and was praised for its pre-eminence by al-Qalqashandi in the supreme achievement of the genre, his Subḥ al-Aʾshā.

Al-Durūbī provides an exemplary critical text, having surveyed the thirteen surviving mss. or fragments of mss., none of which are autographs or archetypal copies. He shows that the hitherto existing “yellow paper” printed edition of Cairo 1312/1894 is, as one might have suspected, copied from a single ms., Dār al-Kutub adab 57, which has extensive lacunae anyway, but these last are compounded by the introducing into the printed text of numerous errors, distortions and further omissions. The English volume gives a useful discussion of the value of the Taʾrif within its genre, compares and elucidates the mss. and provides extensive notes on the names, technical terms, etc. in the edited text. All in all, this is the most significant text on later mediaeval administrative history to have appeared since R. Vesely’s edition of the Taḥāqif (IFAO, Cairo, 1987).

- C. Edmund Bosworth


Scholars concerned with the medieval Islamic world, or with the history and culture of Yemen in any period, will want to take note of the publication of this important volume. It offers a complete photographic copy of the original manuscript of a massive compilation by the fourteenth-century Rasūlīd sultan al-Malik al-Afdal, containing detailed information on a dizzying array of subjects (see below). The editors have of course not provided a critical edition of the text, but they have offered a detailed overview of what each of the various sections of the text deals with (pp. 9-23), and have provided brief orientations on the Rasūlīds and on al-Malik al-Afdal to put the manuscript in context. A few parts of the manuscript have been studied in some detail, but most of it has until now been completely unavailable.

Because of the wide range of subjects covered, this work should be of immediate interest to scholars in many subfields of medieval Islamic and Middle Eastern studies. An idea of the work’s range can perhaps most quickly be grasped by considering the entries in the “subject index” the editors provide on page 27. This includes the following: agriculture, animals, astrolabe, astrology, astronomy, biographies, calendars, chronology, crops, dates [i.e., dating], dreams, fisq, fruits, genealogy, geography, grammar, letters, lexicography, mathematics, medicine, miskh, prosody, protocol, proverbse, records, religion, route lists, ships, taxes, timekeeping, tribal law, warfare and weapons.

The facsimile pages are clearly printed, but given their rather small size and the fact that the manuscript usually has about 42 lines per page, the writing is small and many readers will probably have to labor through the text with the aid of a magnifying glass. This is particularly true of many of the numerous charts and graphs found in the manuscript, which are sometimes in an even smaller hand. Occasionally, fading of the original manuscript or the shadow of writing on the reverse of a given page poses a special challenge to the reader, but in most places one should be able to work one’s way through the text with determination. In short, the facsimile sheets are adequate to provide readers with some of the distinctive pleasures of reading medieval manuscripts, while working in the comfort of their own homes or offices.

The editors, the late R. B. Serjeant
who first suggested publication of the work in this format and who worked on the project in its early stages, and the trustees of the E.J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, deserve a resounding vote of thanks for having made this precious document available to the scholarly public in convenient form. The work can be purchased directly from Aris & Phillips Ltd., Teddington House, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 8PQ, U.K., or from the North American Distributor, The David Brown Book Company, P.O. Box 511, Oakville, CT 06779, USA; fax (860) 945-9468; Email david.brown bk.co snet.net.

-Fred M. Donner

\'Adnán Muḥammad Milḥim, Al-
Mu‘arrīkhūn al-‘Arab wa al-Fitna
al-Kubrā: Dirāsa Ta‘rīkhīyya
Manhajīyya [Arab Historians
and the First Civil War: An
Historical and Methodological
Study] (Beirut: Dār al-Tal'ā lil-Tībā‘a wa al-Nashr,

\'Adnán Muḥammad Milḥim examines the developments of the First Civil War (fitna) based on the works of al-Balādhuri (d.892), al-Ya‘qūbī (d.897), the author of al-Imāma wa al-Sīyāsa (9th century), and al-Tabari (d.923). The author discusses the political, social, and cultural backgrounds of the four historians mentioned above, and examines the sources of their accounts of the fitna. Milḥim argues that the traditional thought and political affiliations of these historians affected the way they chose, narrated, criticized, and evaluated their accounts.

Milḥim divides his study of the development of the fitna into two parts: first, he discusses the fitna in detail in order to know the particulars of each source separately. Second, he examines the positions of these historians on the fitna. The first chapter provides a detailed biography of the four historians, and the primary sources of their works. In chapter 2, the author discusses the fitna during 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān's rule, and then examines the circumstances that brought this third caliph to power. The study also deals with the Muslims' reaction to 'Uthmān's appointment to the caliphate and the criticism that he faced.

Chapter 3 discusses the development of the conflict between 'Ali and the alliance of 'A‘ishā, Taḥfa ibn 'Ubayd Allāh, and al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām, focuses on the allegiance (bay'a) to 'Ali and the Muslims' reaction to that bay'a, and gives a great deal of attention to the factors that led to the battle of the Camel. Chapter 4 discusses the impact of 'Ali's conflict with Mu‘awiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, the role of the Khawārij in the fitna, and the reunification of the Islamic Ummah.

According to Milḥim, al-Balādhuri and al-Ya‘qūbī condemned 'Uthmān's policies and criticized the revolts of 'A‘ishā, Taḥfa, al-Zubayr, and Mu‘awiyah against 'Ali. The author of al-Imāma wa al-Sīyāsa, on the other hand, defended and approved 'Uthmān's legitimacy for the caliphate, and condemned the revolts of the Khawārij against 'Ali. al-Tabari, like the author of al-Imāma wa al-Sīyāsa, defended the policies of 'Uthmān, and doubted the authenticity of the sources that criticized the caliph. Unlike al-Balādhuri and al-Ya‘qūbī, al-Tabari, however, stressed the Muslims' support for 'Uthmān vis-à-vis 'Ali.

Milḥim argues in his study that the accounts of the fitna varied from one historian to another due to different beliefs and ideologies. For instance, he displays al-Balādhuri's pro-'Abbāsid stance by pointing out that al-Balādhuri referred to the 'Abbāsid state as the blessed state (al-dawla al-mubāraka) and to every 'Abbāsid caliph as the "Commander of the Faithful" (Amīr al-Mu‘minīn). Moreover, al-Balādhuri's pro-'Abbāsid tendency prompted him to criticize the Umayyads in general and 'Uthmān in particular. As for al-Ya‘qūbī, Milḥim argues that the later discussed the history of the Islamic state from a Twelver Shi‘ī point of view, praising 'Ali's contribution to Islam.

Unlike al-Balādhuri and al-Ya‘qūbī, the author of al-Imāma wa al-Sīyāsa did not provide a clear criticism of the events of the fitna. Such obscurity kept his ideological inclinations in question. Milḥim argues that the author of al-Imāma wa al-Sīyāsa's main concern was to defend the institution of the caliphate, which led him to support the Umayyads, the Shi‘ī, and the 'Abbāsids. al-Tabari, on the other hand, pursued a method of not displaying any opinion on the events of the fitna, which prompted modern scholars to accuse this great Muslim historian of lacking the ability to criticize.

Aside from being a well written and organized book, this study serves as a major reference to students who are interested in the sources and historiography of the fitna.

-Hussam S. Timani

Zuhayr 'Uthmān 'Ali Nūr, Ibn 'Adī
wa-manhajuhu fi kitāb "al-Kāmil fi
du‘afā‘ al-rijāl" [Ibn 'Adī and His
Methodology in His Book "The
Complete Book on Weak
Authorities"] (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd
and Sharīkat al-Riyyāḍ, 1418/1997).

This was originally a 1990 doctoral dissertation at the University of Umm al-Qurā, Mecca. The introduction speaks of revision, but the notes suggest that it was slight. Nūr uses Ibn 'Adī al-Qattān (d. Gurgān, 360/970-971?), al-Kāmil fi du‘afā‘ al-rijāl (6 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1984), as his window into the field of early riṣālī criticism, with special stress on aspersion (jarh).

Like some North American dissertation writers, Nūr (apparently Sudanese) seems to have put down everything he knew. Much seems easy to skip, such as a superficial account of social and religious movements in Ibn 'Adī's time. Unlike most North American dissertation writers, Nūr plainly has not aimed to overturn previous views. He tends to assume that later writers always understood what earlier writers had meant. For example, his discussion of the term munkar includes many interesting quotations, but he explains Bukhārī's use of it by quoting some-
one else from over a century later, not (failing an explanation by Bukhārī himself) by deduction from where Bukhārī applies it. He avoids generalizing about changes over time. For example, he observes that Bukhārī is willing to asperse a few Companions as weak transmitters, Abū Zūr'ah not, but he does not address the question of whether there developed any general refusal to asperse Companions over the ninth and earlier tenth centuries.

The heart of the book is a series of systematic comparisons with other published works concerning weak transmitters, where Nūr at least quotes much useful material; for example, each comparison includes a notice of whether women are treated, shaykhās named, actual hadith reports quoted. Nūr takes careful note of the vocabulary of rijāl criticism and points out terminology peculiar to various critics. It seems regrettable that Nūr generally omits to consider works not devoted strictly to aspersions; e.g. the collected rijāl criticism of Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal and Abū Dāwūd. I wish I had his statistics for some of them. Still, anyone planning to investigate early rijāl criticism should find Nūr's work worth at least scanning. Among the appendices are nine biographies (under the letter s) extant in manuscript but omitted from the printed edition.

- Christopher Melchert


The authors, professors at the University of Kuwait, review in chronological order arguments allowing traditionalists to paraphrase hadith reports (al-riwāyah bi-al-ma'na), then in chronological order arguments forbidding paraphrase in favor of verbatim transmission alone (al-riwāyah bi-al-lafż). The authors add their own hypothetical rebuttals to the major arguments. Their final conclusion is that the Companions were too careful about exact transmission, too skilled at memorization, for similar but distinct wordings credited to different Companions to reflect anything but hearing from the Prophet on different occasions, so that the differences in wording go back all the way to the Prophet himself. As for the transmission of hadith after the Companions, widespread and early written transmission of hadith must have meant that in practice, only rarely, as for long stories, would traditionalists resort to paraphrase— even those traditionalists (such as Sufyān al-Thawrī) who argued strongly that paraphrase was permissible.

Arguments for and against paraphrase are here arranged more handily than in the standard handbooks of Rāmahurμuz, al-Hākim al-Naysābūri, and al-Khatīb al-Baghdādi. Rarely, however, have the authors looked beyond such handbooks for their examples.

-Christopher Melchert

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GRAPHICS CREDITS

Page 4: Illustration from the collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Cat. no.73.
Middle East Medievalists (MEM) is a non-profit association of scholars interested in the study of any aspect of the history and civilization of the Middle East in the period 500-1500 C.E. Regular membership in MEM is open to persons of all nationalities. Regular members receive two issues of Al-‘Usur al-Wusta, The Bulletin of Middle East Medievalists, annually (April and October). Institutions (libraries, etc.) may join at the same rate as individuals.

You may join MEM by sending the membership application form at the right (or a photocopy thereof), along with the appropriate dues payment, to James E. Lindsay, Secretary-Treasurer of MEM, Department of History, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1776, U.S.A.

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