THE JOURNAL OF
MIDDLE EAST MEDIEVALISTS

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IN MEMORIAM:

Letter from the Editors

We are pleased to be publishing our fifth issue of *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* in its current online and peer-reviewed format. Please be aware that the journal is now housed at the new website of Middle East Medievalists. This is the current URL: https://www.middleeastmedievalists.com/.

The issue contains yet another set of fine contributions, including five full-length studies, a substantial review essay, ten book reviews, and a report of a conference, "Mysticism and Ethics," held at the American University of Beirut. Special thanks are due to Professor Donald Whitcomb for providing his remarks as last year's recipient of MEM's Lifetime Achievement Award. We would add that the production of this issue proved to be bittersweet as we are publishing Michael Bonner's final article, which he was revising at the moment of his passing.

The journal, which appears once annually and has averaged well over two hundred pages per issue, involves no small amount of effort. We would first like to express our gratitude to Dr. Christiane-Marie Abu Sarah. Marie began her work with us as a graduate student but, in October of this year, defended her brilliant PhD dissertation, "To Drink a Cup of Fire: Morality Tales and Moral Emotions in Egyptian, Algerian, and French Anti-Colonial Activism, 1945–1960" (University of Maryland, under the supervision of Professor Peter Wien). To Marie, many congratulations! We are very grateful indeed for her consistent and excellent work as our Managing Editor. We would also be remiss in not extending deep thanks to Hanna Siurua for her outstanding editorial support, and to Drs. Malika Dekkiche (University of Antwerp) and Luke Yarbrough (UCLA), our book review editors, for bringing together a superlative set of reviews on a range of new publications in our fields. Finally, we would like to thank the History Department at the University of Maryland; it is their continued institutional support that has helped keep *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* an open-access journal.

(Photo of Antoine Borrut by Juliette Fradin Photography)

This issue of *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* contains remembrances by colleagues and former students of three much-lamented teachers and scholars: Professors Michael Bonner (University of Michigan), Kenneth Holum (University of Maryland), and Speros Vryonis Jr. (UCLA). We publish these remembrances with sadness but also gratitude for the lasting contributions of each. As the testimonies published here make clear, these scholars' devotion to scholarship and teaching endured over years: they not only contributed vital work in their respective fields but also modeled such dedication to the next generation. We share the anxiety of many of our colleagues in the humanities that a decrease in public funding for higher education, a decline in modern language study, and the relentless assault on science and empirical knowledge, and indeed on reading and critical thinking, are eroding the ability of our students to carry on where these three cherished colleagues left off.

The contents of this issue bespeak, however, the considerable intellectual energy and sheer hard work that continue to inform the best scholarship in our many overlapping disciplines. A very grateful thanks to our contributors. To restate our central guiding principle from previous letters, we remain committed to using *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* as a platform from which to bring out significant new scholarship. We seek, with each issue, to produce the journal as expeditiously as possible, thus providing our contributors the opportunity to bring their ongoing work to a broad audience in timely manner. We are no less committed to the publication of longer and more substantial research articles and book reviews. The present roster of articles, the review essay, the book reviews, and the one conference report illustrate, we believe, these aims. It is our hope and expectation to be publishing, in our future issues, new dossiers of research articles devoted to specific themes (and under the aegis of guest editors), as we did in last year's issue with the dossier coordinated by Maribel Fierro and Patrice Cressier, "Formulating the Caliphate in the Islamic West: Umayyads, Ḥammūdids, and Almohads."

As we announced in the previous issue, the journal will continue to appear online but will also become available in print, through a print-on-demand option, in the foreseeable future. Issues of the newly formatted journal (2015 to the present) will be obtainable through our website.

We close on two familiar notes. First, we continue to rely on your financial support. Our journal is online, open access, and peer-reviewed, but it is certainly not free. To cover costs of publication and the work of our staff, among other expenses, you provide valuable support by keeping your membership in Middle East Medievalists up to date. For information on membership and the fund, please proceed to the MEM home page at https://www.middleeastmedievalists.com/ and click on "MEMbership." Second, as we noted in a previous issue (*UW* 24 [2016]), the full run of the journal is available online. Our thanks to Professor Fred Donner (University of Chicago) for his assistance in this regard. The full archive can be accessed on our website: https://www.middleeastmedievalists.com/volume-index/.

Sincerely,
Antoine Borrut and Matthew Gordon

MEM Awards

Remarks by the Recipient of the 2018 MEM Lifetime Achievement Award
Given at the Annual Meeting of Middle East Medievalists
(San Antonio, 15 November 2018)

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This acknowledgement of my work in Islamic archaeology comes as a complete surprise and therefore is all the more appreciated. It is with some humility that I would express my gratitude to Middle East Medievalists, especially as I had begun to wonder whether my field of studies had become irrelevant or just passé, a forgotten corner of Middle East studies. I will discuss this further but, first, I would offer a short account of my entrance into this arcane, if not irrelevant field of studies.

As an undergraduate, I wanted to study archaeology in the Middle East, and so I went to Iran with the Peace Corps (to experience the region and learn to teach). I returned to the University of Georgia to study with Joe Caldwell and worked on proto-Elamite ceramics from Tall-i Ghazir. He supported my move to Chicago to study urbanization with Robert Adams, who enabled me, in turn, to return to Iran to look for proto-Elamites in 1972. I conducted a survey in Fars province but found nothing except Islamic sites. During this time, I also worked at Siraf and realized that the same problems of urbanism could be studied in the Islamic period, with even more resources. When I told Adams of this decision, he was delighted, and, thereafter, I always counseled students to choose a subject that interested their advisor but one the latter has never done themselves.

My dissertation committee consisted of Robert Adams, Paul Wheatley, and Bob Braidwood. Bob Braidwood kept me sane at times when I realized that his promulgation of the study of prehistory was as unaccepted in his day as Islamic archaeology seems today. But it was Paul Wheatley who was a fundamental resource. He showed me his manuscript on the Islamic city, what would become *The Places Where Men Pray Together* (2002), and for about twenty years we met at least once a week. I would not have finished without his final advice. Adams did not like my thesis but could not explain why. Wheatley said the problem was simple:

I had produced a deductive argument and Adams, being a social scientist, wanted an inductive argument. "Put your conclusions in front as hypotheses and write a new conclusion," he suggested. I did so, adding no new ideas, and Adams accepted it immediately.

In my thesis, "Trade and Tradition in Medieval Southern Iran" (1979), I describe Fars province in terms of the development of Islamic cities. I found that, in the field of Islamic archaeology, this was a new and rare approach that necessitated study of historical contexts as well as art historical resources. My study of Islamic archaeology began with potsherds in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MMA) and elsewhere. While I believe this is the first and necessary concern for all archaeologists, I will make only light reference to it here.

I began fieldwork for the Oriental Institute of Chicago (OI) at Quseir al-Qadim, a medieval port on the Red Sea (excavated with my wife, Janet Johnson, from 1978 until 1982). Quseir was not a place of great architecture, and, in fact, one of my first questions was whether it was inhabited year-round. We discovered much about the Roman port, but it became clear that the Islamic reoccupation, which followed a thousand-year period of abandonment, had only minimal housing, rather similar to coastal villages today. The Arab/Islamic occupation was explained in hundreds of merchants' letters, which have been read and published by Li Guo (*Commerce, Culture and Community in a Red Sea Port in the Thirteenth Century*, 2004).

We next dug trenches in the mound of medieval Luxor in 1984–1985. This was an actual "tell" not unlike the mounded remains of ancient settlements. We discovered the remnants of over two millennia of occupation at Luxor, a stratification revealed when the temple and avenue of the Sphinxes were cleared (a destruction that occurred as late as the 1960s). We excavated two-step trenches that revealed a sequence from a fourteenth-century floor back to a Byzantine painted room (with a sculpture collection of different periods, including a head of Tuthmosis III).

Beginning in 1986, Jan and I spent almost a decade discovering and exploring the port of Aqaba in Jordan. The port recalls the attack scene in the movie *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), a portrayal that conveys only about one-tenth of the actual scale and was filmed on the southern coast of Spain. In his written account, T. E. Lawrence writes of finding "Arab pottery" and of being told of sub-surface walls in 1914. We delineated the walled city and four meters of changes from the Islamic conquest to the advent of the Crusaders. The mosque, the administrative center, the suq, and other aspects of this Islamic urban center became clear and are still being studied today. The information and artifacts are now displayed in a site museum, and Aqaba is today a major tourist attraction for Jordan.

An opportunity then presented itself to excavate the site of Qinnasrin in northern Syria near Aleppo. I teamed up with Marianne Barrucand and Claus-Peter Haase for a small but international venture (1998–2000). We avoided the very large tell of Qinnasrin and excavated the early Islamic village called Hadir, literally the "camp." Perhaps our most important find was a house that has been converted from a traditional tent, literally a "settlement" of the Muslims.

Events from 2001 onwards have made fieldwork more difficult and have provided a prompt to catch up with publications (Braidwood once found a group of archaeology students and counseled us, "Archaeology would be a fine occupation, if one did not have to publish"). I took part in, and organized, a great variety of lectures and conferences, including the first OI seminar, which resulted in the publication of *Changing Social Identity with the Spread of Islam: Archaeological Perspectives* (2004). That same year, I was invited to Iran and examined a series of sites for possible excavations.[1] I settled on a return to the Islamic city of Istakhr, near Persepolis. Funds and permissions were obtained and a team selected in 2005, but the final permits were denied. Visits to Saudi Arabia yielded potential for digging at Jurash in the Asir, but again no permit was obtained.

I began discussions for an excavation with Hamdan Taha, director of archaeology for the Palestinian Authority, in 2007. We agreed on a joint project at the famous site of Khirbat al-Mafjar in Jericho, which lasted from 2011 until 2015. The site was well known from Dimitri Baramki's excavations (1935–1948), which had uncovered a palace and a bath hall highly decorated with mosaics and stucco work of the early Islamic period. I was invited by the Palestinian Authority to explore the Northern Area. This was a building complex that had been excavated by Awni Dajani in the 1950s, but no records or artifacts are extant. We recovered an original Umayyad building complex, later transformed into an Abbasid agricultural estate.[2] This was the urban focus later transferred to the nearby town of Jericho (located near the biblical site).

Our work with the Palestinian Authority resulted in the creation of an archaeological park, featuring a museum designed by Jack Green and specialists from the OI. All of these endeavors were enabled through massive USAID funding using Palestinian designers and craftsmen. When we opened the museum, several Palestinian colleagues stated, "We can do this, too, and much cheaper." Now there are several more and far less expensive museums in Palestine. This is the best sort of aid program and might be a model for future ventures.

When I started the project at Khirbat al-Mafjar, I mentioned the site to the Islamic studies faculty at the University of Chicago. With the exception of Fred Donner, they were totally innocent of archaeological knowledge, to the extent of being unfamiliar with the name "Mafjar" and its importance for Islamic studies, though most did recognize the name "Jericho." As I discussed in a plenary paper

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1. For some background on archaeology in Iran, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, see D. Whitcomb, "Archaeology in Iran and the Experience of Arthur Upham Pope," in *Arthur Upham Pope and A New Survey of Persian Art*, ed. Y. Kadoi, 97–109 (Leiden, Brill, 2016).

2. D. Whitcomb, M. Jennings, A. Creekmore, and I. Arce, "Khirbet al-Mafjar: New Excavations and Hypotheses for an Umayyad Monument," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 79 (2016): 78–87; D. Whitcomb, "The Mosques of Mafjar: A Sequence and Some Implications for Understanding Qasr Hisham," *Proceedings of the 9th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East: Islamic Session*, ed. D. Genequand, 2:469–78 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016); D. Whitcomb, "Notes for an Archaeology of Muʿāwiya: Material Culture in the Transitional Period of the Believers," in *Christians and Others in the Umayyad State*, ed. A. Borrut and F. M. Donner, 11–27 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2016).

at the sixth International Congress for the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE) in 2010, there is an evident lack of definition of "Islamic archaeology" in the minds of almost all historians, many other archaeologists, and not a few of those claiming to belong to this field.

Islamic Archaeology as a New Research Discipline

I describe my research on Islamic cities to show the range of types of sites that may be investigated, from untouched places to previous excavations. The study of Islamic urbanization is only one of many possible specializations within Islamic archaeology. From the context of Near Eastern archaeology at the OI, we use fieldwork to elucidate the rise of Near Eastern civilization by tracing cities and states, and their religions, especially relationships with the biblical tradition. It may seem strange now, but the study of prehistory began with the research of Robert Braidwood, and this field was not readily accepted. Likewise, the study of medieval archaeology in the Near East experiences only slow growth.

There is a growing awareness that Islamic materials provide a connector to the past, showing the continuation of most ancient accomplishments unique to the Near East. The Islamic material also provides a connector to the present, making archaeology relevant and important to modern Middle Eastern studies. Yet the academic niche of Islamic archaeology is often misunderstood; the analysis of Islamic monuments and other artifacts is usually read as the province of art history. But the techniques and approaches of art history, beyond its focus on aesthetic valuation, are quite different.

Islamic archaeology is practiced as a historical archaeology, providing evidence for the development of society and economy in Islamic contexts. Each project, whatever its intended goals, produces informative assemblages of artifacts that can be compared to relevant textual sources. The field lacks a clear mandate and anything approaching a guiding textbook. The result has been a wide range of interpretations of context and methodology. Like other fields that grew in the OI from comparative analyses of different sites and regions, this new research field illuminates processes of adaptation and development that define this part of the Near (or rather, Middle) East.

Previous recipients of the MEM Lifetime Achievement award offer a number of insights into what this award may mean, especially in relationship to Islamic archaeology. One of the most pertinent sets of remarks is also the most recent: that of Suzanne Stetkevych (2017), who speaks of the problematics of poetry and history. She begins by stating that "poetic materials should be more stable, and therefore more authentic than the prose narratives that have come down to us.... So, we may have a body of material that is authentic, but... does not provide the information that historians are looking for—or at least, not in the form we are looking for.... It is not meant to record names and dates and battle descriptions, rather... for further exploration as we deal with political, religious and cultural history" (*Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 26 [2018]: viii–ix).

If the study of archaeology may be compared with poetry, one must examine more carefully the definition of this field. When Fred Donner, the award recipient in 2016, states that "archaeology... has received a great deal of attention and has brought important insights" (*Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 25 [2017]: vi), he gives a vague acknowledgment without really exploring what the field might have contributed. One might suspect that when Patricia Crone, the 2014 recipient, first wanted to be an Ancient Near Eastern archaeologist (*Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 23 [2015]: iii), she may have been misled as to the nature of the field (alas, what contributions she might have made!). And finally, when Richard Bulliet, the 2015 recipient, complains that "the innovative methodologies that are showing such promise in the study of most other parts the world, such as quantitative history, climate history, and material history in general, are still little explored with respect to the Middle East" (*Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 24 [2016]: vi), one may be sure that he has not included the progress in Islamic archaeology.

One might begin with the misunderstandings that historians sometimes have about ceramics, in particular the penchant that archaeologists have for little sherds. These artifacts form the language of archaeology. One might view the sherd as analogous to the "phoneme," a basic sound that might occasionally convey meaning. One must turn to the pot (or other complete piece) to have the equivalent to a "word," a complex element full of meaning or uses. More importantly, artifacts should be found together in an "assemblage," which may be considered the material equivalent to the sentence. An archaeological assemblage has interpretative meaning(s) based on find location and contexts, that is, natural and cultural factors.

This linguistic analogy suggests that archaeology, the study of material culture, has a distinctive methodology. The study of artifacts focuses on the idea that artifacts are found in a context or matrix that reflexively amplifies the meaning of each element. It also sees artifacts as correlative in that their physical elements may be abstracted to form categories or typologies to facilitate comparisons. Comparative studies, in turn, result in generalizing abstractions aimed at patterns of assemblages. Artifactual patterns are the basic tool of archaeology, interpretations from which wider inferences or social history may be postulated.

Interpretations, on the macrosocial plane of political events and cultural transformations or the microsocial level of private affairs and domestic routines,[3] are a necessary element in this methodology. This is because archaeology is never isolated but rather interacts with other studies of particular cultural complexes. Interpretations of archaeological information may then be utilized by historians and others for particular information, building reflexive inferences for other archaeological patterns, and ultimately archaeological theory building.

The study of archaeology, following such a methodology, begins with a concern for the excavations or other field procedures that produced the evidence. This

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3. See M. L. Rautman, "Archaeology and Byzantine Studies," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990): 147, 151.

means concern with the narrator, the archaeologist who has molded the material, and thus his or her background, orientation, presuppositions, and purposes. These factors may not be accessible but must be borne in mind during any evaluation. Such evaluations may be normal in scholarly research, but the esoteric nature of ideas derived from digging may be especially vulnerable to misunderstanding, or indeed misrepresentation.

The first MEM Lifetime Achievement award was given to George T. Scanlon in 1998. Curiously, there is no record of Scanlon's remarks on being presented the award, and, indeed, notice of the award seems to have escaped the attention of *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā*. The publication, initially the newsletter of the Middle East Medievalists begun by Fred Donner and Sam Gellens, carried in its first years (1992–1995) three to six articles on archaeology or art historical subjects. Thereafter, *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* consistently included two articles in these fields each year between 1996 and 2009, during which time I had the honor of being the journal's "editorial assistant (archaeology)." This listing continued with the reorganization in 2014, though no articles on archaeology have appeared between that date and the present. A possible explanation might be the launch of the *Journal of Islamic Archaeology* in that same year (2014), though one may also suspect a change in the orientation of *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* (ironically, the change happened in the same year in which Scanlon died).

Turning to the relationship between archaeology and the field of Mamluk studies, I would like to stress that, to paraphrase a recent discussion by Rautman, Mamluk artifacts are more than mere historical illustration; their evidence may be considered necessary to overcome the intrinsic limitations of the written evidence. Throughout Rautman's seminal article "Archaeology and Byzantine Studies," one may substitute "Islamic" for "Byzantine" to produce an insightful picture of the history and state of this parallel discipline. Yet historians of the Mamluk period do not seem to be aware of this potential or able to assess the relevance of fieldwork to their research. Much of the fault for this separation in disciplinary comprehension lies with the archaeologist, and with what is currently practiced as archaeology.[4]

The role of archaeological evidence in historical research is often misunderstood because of the nature of its evidential base. Although the study of material culture deals, at least in part, with physical objects, their contribution to historical studies is no more "real" or direct than is that of the historian's more traditional documents; archaeological evidence is cumulative and not specific. In other words, one should not expect new information about specific individuals or historic events. Though new documents may be discovered, archaeological research is more concerned with patterns, repeating contexts, and associations. Thus, one may seek patterns of land use (historical geography) and

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4. An approach to this dialogue is the subject of my comments in "Toward a 'Common Denominator': An Archaeological Response to M. Morony on Pottery and Urban Identities," in *Identity and Material Culture in the Early Islamic World*, ed. I. Bierman, 47–68 (Los Angeles: Von Grunebaum Center, 1995).

social organization (settlement systems), that is, broad questions of social and economic history.

Be that as it may, one may only hope that a lifetime achievement award does not mark the closure of research. Last year I returned to Khirbet al-Karak on the Sea of Galilee, where the OI dug in the 1950s, to reveal that the very early Islamic site of Sinnabra was an early Islamic palace next to a mosque (I hope one of the earliest to be physically revealed).[5] We came to style the project as "the search for the mosque of Muʿāwiya." Indeed, that pivotal personality in early Islamic history might have been sympathetic to the structure of a project led by Prof. Tawfiq Daʾadli, a Palestinian teaching at the Hebrew University, with collaborators from Chicago and Tel Aviv, employing local Palestinian workmen.[6]

A Return to Iran

While at the MMA, I studied the old excavations at Qasr-i Abu Nasr, the Sasanian and early Islamic site near Shiraz. I used the Istakhr records at the OI in my dissertation and was ready to return to an excavation in Istakhr in 2005, but it was canceled at the last moment.

A recent article shares my ideas on Sasanian cities.[7] Beginning with Jur (Firuzabad), the urban plan was laid out in circles, with radiating roads (some extending 5 km beyond the walls): twenty sectors, axial streets, gates, and a central district with the *tirbal* and *Takht-i Nishin* (the city having a diameter of 2 km, the central district a diameter of 400 m). The circular cities of Ardashir (224–242 CE) are not all known. His son built Bishapur, again with reliefs nearby, and a fort near the entrance to the city. The royal quarter with temples was laid out in a rectangular grid, but one may also note a grey circular area on the air photograph. This was near the Bab Shahr, forming a circle (400 m in diameter) centered on the northern limit of the grid city.

One may, finally, mention the city of Jundi Shapur, investigated by Robert Adams for the OI in 1962–63. This city was famed for its blackboard grid, a design said to imitate Antioch. A Corona satellite image shows this grid, and within it one can see the circular city, again 2 km in diameter. It follows that one should also find a *tirbal* and an administrative center (would that we might take a quick field trip!). One reads that Shapur found many of his father's cities in disrepair and rebuilt them, superimposing a western, Antiochian model. This became, then, a combination of urban traditions and possibly institutions. When I visited Iran in 2015, the director of Antiquities said to me, "You are going to excavate Jundi Shapur!" I replied, "Inshallah," and I retain that hope today.

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5. D. Whitcomb, "Sinnabra (or Khirbat al-Karak)," in *The Oriental Institute 2017–2018 Annual Report*, 145–53 (Chicago: University of Chicago, Oriental Institute, 2018).

6. See T. Daʾadli, "Stratigraphy and Architecture of the Fortified Palace," in *Bet Yerah, vol. 3: Hellenistic Philotera and Islamic al-Sinnabra*, ed. R. Greenberg, O. Tal, and T. Daʾadli, 133–78 (Jerusalem: IAA Reports 61, 2017).

7. D. Whitcomb, "'From Shahristan to Medina' Revisited," in *Cities of Medieval Iran: Sites, Society, Politics and Culture*, ed. D. Durand-Guedy and R. Mottahehdeh, 77–99 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

In Search of the Early Islamic Economy*

Michael Bonner
University of Michigan

Editors' Note

Michael Bonner passed suddenly and tragically on May 25 of this year while at work on a late draft of the present article. We are grateful to his spouse, Dr. Daniela Gobetti, for granting us permission to publish it in its current form. We opted to do so, not simply because it was well along in the production process, but more to the point, on the strength of its content. It is our understanding that Michael had intended to produce a full, book-length study on the basis of these same ideas and arguments. The present article, if somewhat programmatic, builds on Michael's recent scholarship on the "economy of poverty" and Arabian trade, among other topics. His stated goal was to raise new and pressing questions on a much-neglected topic and, in doing so, situate his discussion in the context of the most recent developments in imperial economic history—in this case as they relate to the early Islamic realm. It is our conviction that here, as in all of his previous published work, Michael advances the study of early and medieval Islamic history forward many paces.

The Early Islamic Empire and Its Economy in Comparative Perspective

In recent decades many historians have taken to viewing the empires of the past from comparative perspectives, and in doing this they have devoted considerable attention to the economic sphere.[1] Much of this work has come from historians of the Roman

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1. Recent contributions to this literature include J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); C. A. Bayly and P. F. Bang, "Introduction: Comparing Pre-Modern Empires," *Medieval History Journal* 6 (2003): 169–87; P. F. Bang and

empire,[2] not surprisingly since these were among its pioneers. But nowadays historians also bring comparative perspectives to the empires of medieval China, the early modern Muslim empires of the Ottomans and the Mughals, and many others.[3] In all this activity, however, the early Islamic empire or "classical" caliphate has had a low profile,[4] even though it seems an excellent candidate for comparison on many fronts.

Likewise, the modern historiography of the early Islamic world itself has not often featured comparative approaches—at least from the perspective of empire—in the half-century since Marshall Hodgson's *Venture of Islam*.[5] Some interesting exceptions have come from scholars who are not, in the first instance, historians of Islam.[6] Important comparative work has been done in environmental and ecological history and related areas.[7] But in the end it seems that many historians prefer not to describe the early Islamic polity as an empire at all. Behind this reluctance lies a tendency to view the early Islamic polity as *sui*

C. A. Bayly, eds., *Tributary Empires in Global History* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); P. F. Bang and D. Kołodziejczyk, eds., *Universal Empire: A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation in Eurasian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); A. J. S. Spawforth, ed., *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); J. Duindam, T. Artan, and M. Kunt, eds., *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); J. Duindam and S. Dabringhaus, eds., *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces: Agents and Interactions* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); A. Monson and W. Scheidel, eds., *Fiscal Regimes and the Political Economy of Premodern States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

2. More recently, such work includes P. F. Bang, "Rome and the Comparative Study of Tributary Empires," *Medieval History Journal* 6 (2003): 189–216; idem, "Trade and Empire—In Search of Organizing Concepts for the Roman Economy," *Past and Present* 195 (2007): 3–54; W. M. Jongman, "Rome: The Political Economy of a World-Empire," *Medieval History Journal* 6 (2003): 303–26.

3. E.g., L. de Ligt, "Taxes, Trade, and the Circulation of Coin: The Roman Empire, Mughal India and T'ang China Compared," *Medieval History Journal* 6 (2003): 231–48; D. Kołodziejczyk, "Khan, Caliph, Tsar and Imperator: The Multiple Identities of the Ottoman Sultan," in Bang and Kołodziejczyk, *Universal Empire*, 175–93.

4. Exceptions include H. Kennedy, "The Islamic Near East in Islamic Late Antiquity," in Monson and Scheidel, *Fiscal Regimes and the Political Economy*, 390–403.

5. M. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974, but written earlier); idem, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

6. For instance, C. W. Wickham, "Tributary Empires: Late Rome and the Arab Caliphate," in Bang and Bayly, *Tributary Empires*, 205–13.

7. R. Bulliet, *Cotton, Climate and Camels in Early Islamic Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). See also A. M. Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques, 700–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and critiques of it, including M. Decker, "Plants and Progress: Rethinking the Islamic Agricultural Revolution," *Journal of World History* 20 (2009): 187–206; and L. I. Conrad, "*Ṭāʿūn* and *Wabāʾ*: Conceptions of Plague and Pestilence in Early Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25 (1982): 268–307. Environmental and ecological issues figure in M. McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). See also A. W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), and W. Beinart and L. Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

generis and thus beyond comparison. Indeed, it is often proposed or assumed that Islam's founding structures and principles were unique to it and marked it off from other empires and polities. In this way a kind of "Islamic exceptionalism"[8] has planted itself in scholarly discourse and public opinion.

One reason for this exceptionalism involves present-day concerns about "universal caliphate," "political Islam," and other notions beyond this article's scope. Another is the well-known problem of the literary sources for the first two centuries of Islam. We have material evidence for this era, including coins, inscriptions, and documents written on papyrus and other materials. But when we try to set this evidence within a narrative frame— whether for economic or any other kind of history—we have no choice but to rely on the great corpus of writings in Arabic that have come down through a process of combined oral and literary transmission and that deal with this formative era. And here, as we all know, debates have raged for generations over the reliability, authenticity, and interpretation of these sources. These debates, while necessary and useful, have had the side effect of marginalizing certain historical questions and approaches, including comparisons of the caliphate with other polities and empires.

In what follows I hope to extend these debates over the literary sources to the economy of the early Islamic world. I also propose to discuss some of the ways in which we think about that economy; problems that this area of research has encountered; and possible new paths involving, among other things, comparison with other imperial structures. However, I can only discuss a limited number of issues. This essay will serve as the basis for a larger project, which will include fuller treatments of "economy," "empire," the relation between these two, and many other questions.

At the same time, I have the sense that I am dealing here with some fundamental matters. I agree with those practitioners of economic history (and other kinds of history) who insist that work of this kind needs to be based squarely on reliable data, typically (or to the extent possible) of a concrete, empirically verifiable nature. I also agree that we now have considerable amounts of such data for the early Islamic world, thanks to archaeology, papyrology, numismatics, and related fields. I still think, however, that we cannot bypass the problems of the early literary sources, many (though not all) of them in the Arabic language, to which I have already alluded. This is not only because these may, at times, provide unreliable information on revenues from taxation, agricultural and industrial production, trade routes, and so forth. It is also and above all because we need to have a governing narrative or, perhaps more realistically, a set of narratives within which to place our data. To take an often-cited example, we now know a great deal about the economy, government, and administration (especially at the local level) in Umayyad Egypt, thanks to the work of papyrologists and others. However, for a number of reasons it is difficult for us to integrate this knowledge into the larger history of the Umayyad Caliphate. Here, to an unusually large extent, local knowledge has a firmer foundation than nonlocal and

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8. See C. Robinson, "Reconstructing Early Islam: Truth and Consequences," in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, ed. H Berg, 101–34 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

"imperial-level" knowledge, which necessarily requires narratives that are both broad and detailed.

It is true that we already have historical narratives regarding the rise of Islam. However, some recent historiographical work has had the effect not so much of undermining those narratives as of demonstrating how varied, subtle, and at times conflictual they can be. Meanwhile, this historiographical work has concentrated on political, religious, and juridical aspects of the early Islamic world, and only rarely on economic aspects. I believe that it is necessary to bridge this gap, so as to bring the economic domain more fully into our discussions of the early Islamic empire or caliphate, and at the same time to give a fuller accounting of economic history itself.

Markets in the Early Islamic Economy

Some, though not all modern observers would probably agree that the first few centuries of the Islamic era in the Near East and North Africa witnessed the unfolding of two related but distinct processes. The first of these had to do with markets in the sense of concrete, individual loci of exchange. This process involved a net increase in the degree of integration,[9] connection, and specialized articulation among individual markets throughout the region. The second process featured the market in the abstract, generalized, and modern sense so familiar to us now. It consisted of the emergence of an economy which, at least to some extent, functioned in harmony with some of the principles of modern liberal (or "neoclassical") economics. In other words, when compared with its predecessors and contemporaries, the early Islamic economy had a greater share of the characteristics that we associate with the "free market." But can we prove that these two processes actually took place? And if they did, how can we explain and contextualize them?

One obstacle in the way of answering these questions lurks in the already-mentioned problems with the literary source materials for early Islam. In this essay I wish to discuss several approaches that can allow us to put at least some of these literary sources to productive (if somewhat unconventional) use. One of these involves the occurrence—generally though not universally admitted nowadays—of an economic boom in the early caliphate, beginning around the middle of the second/eighth century and lasting into the fourth/tenth century in some areas and beyond that in others. Another has to do with the spread of the Arabic and Persian languages throughout the caliphate and their penetration, over roughly two centuries, into both city and countryside at all levels of society. I will maintain that this phenomenon, which has still not been adequately explained on sociolinguistic grounds, can be related to the history of markets and provides proof of their increasing integration though not, of course, of their free-market character. Beyond this we have, beginning in the later third/ninth century, the rich literature that we call "geographical," in which markets and the economy (in some sense) have central roles. We also have other writings, mainly in Arabic, that deal with "economic" matters: not under that rubric, which at that time did not exist, but still relevant to these questions. Some of

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9. On this concept, see P. F. Bang, *The Roman Bazaar: A Comparative Study of Trade and Markets in a Tributary Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 12, 29, 114–15.

these writings belong to the broad category of juridical texts, others to that of humanistic belles-lettres (*adab*), and others to other categories.

Modern discussions often identify Islam itself as the main factor in these processes and events, indeed as the very phenomenon under investigation. And it is certainly true that many norms and practices that we identify as Islamic have direct bearing on this discussion. I wish to argue, however, that it was internal developments within the polity and the order of society that we identify as "Islamic" that resulted in the phenomena in question, including the two processes involving markets already mentioned. These developments involved religious and ethical precepts familiar to us from the Qurʾān, the Prophetic tradition (Sunna), biographies of the Prophet and other major figures, and so forth. However, they also involved other things. And while it is true that Islamic law, especially commercial law, had a major role, it is also true that a considerable period of time had to elapse before Islamic law extended its hegemony over marketplaces throughout the region—a period of time which corresponds to the formative era of the Islamic economy.

Accordingly, I will propose that certain elements of the nascent Islamic order, in addition to or even apart from the religious and juridical ones, played determining roles in the formation of what we may call the "Islamic marketplace." One of these was the imperial project of the early caliphate, which included, in addition to a religiously based ideology, an administrative bureaucracy operating within a patrimonial order centered upon the caliphs, their families, and their followers. Another was the role of the caliphs themselves, together with their patrimonial households, in the workings of the marketplace and the economy. I will argue that the market-friendly character of Islamic law and commercial practice had its origins, paradoxically, in an imperial-patrimonial system which, we might think, ought rather to have been its adversary and nemesis.

Boom or Bust

The study of the medieval Islamic economy lost momentum in the late 1970s, and while it has revived and flourished since then,[10] it has a more scattered character than it did before, in the sense that most of this work is now done on particular localities and regions, in accordance with a variety of methods and problematics. This is for excellent reasons: researchers have sought concrete data, and they have been successful in this endeavor. However, one characteristic that many of these studies have had in common since before the 1970s is a tendency to view the early Islamic economy in terms of either boom or bust.

The proponents of the "boom" view have painted an attractive picture that begins toward the middle of the second/eighth century. Here we have a huge landmass with a correspondingly broad surface of navigable sea, incorporated within a single entity which

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10. An excellent, indispensable starting point is M. Shatzmiller, "Economic Performance and Economic Growth in the Early Islamic World," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 54 (2011): 132–84. See also A. Walmsley, "Production Exchange and Regional Trade in the Islamic East Mediterranean: Old Structures, New Systems?," in *The Long Eighth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand*, ed. I. L. Hansen and C. Wickham, 265–343 (Leiden: Brill, 2000); idem, *Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Assessment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007); M. Morony, "Economic Boundaries? Late Antiquity and Early Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47 (2004): 166–94; J. Haldon, ed., *Money, Power and Politics in Early*

in its extent surpasses any other political system yet seen on the planet. The caliphate's inhabitants enjoy peace and relative ease of movement within its borders. Almost anywhere they go, they can make themselves understood in either Arabic or Persian. They participate in monetized fiscal and commercial systems. All these things encourage the inhabitants of the caliphate to travel for purposes of trade. And while there is nothing new about such journeys, they happen now on an unprecedented scale. A wide range of goods, from luxury products to everyday commodities, moves over both long and short routes. The consumers constitute a wider swath of society—including and beyond the elites—than the world has seen before. Customers also appear beyond the borders of the Islamic world. To satisfy this truly global demand, old centers of production flourish and new ones emerge. Meanwhile, the profession of merchant enjoys more respectability than previously, while the overall number of merchants increases, as does also, we may imagine (but never know for sure), their slice of the overall economic pie.

One of the best-known expressions of this view appeared a half-century ago in Maurice Lombard's *L'Islam dans sa première grandeur*.[11] This work provided, in broad strokes, an upbeat portrait of the early caliphate, with emphasis on its commercial networks. Rather than describe a world where trade routes plod from city to city and region to region, where contacts take place among distinct political, social, and religious groups, and where time is allocated into discrete historical periods, Lombard drew—quite literally—a series of connecting circles and spirals, taking form within overlapping and quickly changing units of time, among people whose linguistic, religious, commercial, and political affiliations change rapidly, slowly, or barely at all.[12] Lombard wanted to convince his readers that something new was going on here, with profound consequences for the entire Old World. Although some of the initial reception of this book was harshly negative,[13] since then many historians have agreed with much of it.

Other scholars, however, dissent from this view. They may concede that the early ʿAbbāsid era experienced growth, but they consider this growth epiphenomenal and outweighed by subsequent long-term decline. These writers, who include professional economists, point to the prohibition in Islamic law of lending on interest as a source of inefficiency. They also point to the prevalence in the Islamic world of short-lived partnerships instead of more durable firms, and they ascribe this supposed defect to the lack of a concept of corporation in classical Islamic law.[14] Going a step further, the advocates of the "bust"

Islamic Syria (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); A. Schubert and P. Sijpesteijn, eds., *Documents and the History of the Early Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

11. Paris: Flammarion, 1971, repr. 2014 with a preface by Hichem Djaït; The text was assembled posthumously from Lombard's notes. English translation by J. Spencer, *The Golden Age of Islam* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1975).

12. This helps explain why, according to Djaït's preface to the recent reissue (p. 13), Fernand Braudel said that Lombard was "le plus doué, le plus brillant historien de notre génération, le seul qui fût incontestablement de la classe d'un Marc Bloch."

13. C. Cahen in *Revue Historique* 502 (1972): 471–73.

14. T. Kuran, "Why the Middle East is Economically Underdeveloped: Historical Mechanisms of Institutional Stagnation," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no. 3 (2004): 71–90; idem, "The Absence of the Corporation

narrative tend to identify Islamic institutions as the root of these ills. For instance, they view *awqāf* (sing. *waqf*), pious endowments, not in the positive way that Marshall Hodgson once did,[15] but as a cause of a long-term decrease in the revenue accruing to the state and in the capital available to private enterprise. This approach, which has been described as "institutionalist," will come up again later in this article.

Other disciplines, including papyrology and archaeology, tend to focus more on local data and circumstances than on such "big picture" arguments, although they also arrive at big pictures of their own. We can see this in Alan Walmsley's summary of the situation in Syria and, more generally, in other provinces of the early caliphate.[16] According to Walmsley, the circumstances of different places need to be reconstructed painstakingly from the ground up, all the more so because the Islamic world began with lots of diversity among its regions and provinces. In Syria the arrival of Islamic rule did not leave much of a mark on local archaeological records, at least at first. Trade and infrastructure continued as before, apparently unscathed. Local production and consumption went on in this way throughout the seventh century. Currency remained readily available. Toward the end of the seventh century came a spike in production and arguably in overall wealth. Large-scale change did not arrive, however, until the late eighth century. For example, at that point high-quality ceramics in Syria moved away from local traditions toward styles and techniques originating in other places such as Iraq and Khurasan. This process involved both importing new wares from those places and imitating them in local production. Now we finally arrive in a world that we can recognize, technologically, stylistically, and culturally, as Islamic.

Walmsley notes that the concerns of archaeologists differ from those of historians who work mainly with the Arabic literary tradition. He also notes that both kinds of work are necessary and may ultimately come together through an integration of "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches. This point is crucial, although the integration of the two approaches may, in the end, prove rather difficult. It may also be the case that with regard to the economy of the early Islamic world, archaeological research is more advanced nowadays than is historical or, perhaps more precisely, historiographical research. If this article has more to say about the historical/historiographical side of things than it does about the archaeological (and papyrological and numismatic), it is because of my own predilections and experience, of course, but also because that historical/historiographical side needs more attention right now.

Meanwhile, we may add that even while much recent archaeological work tends to emphasize continuity from late antiquity to early Islam, it also points ultimately to historical change, if not rupture. For the changes visible in the archaeological record beginning

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in Islamic Law: Origins and Persistence," *American Journal of Comparative Law* 53 (2005): 785–835 [798–99]; M. Coşgel, "Stagnation and Change in Islamic History," University of Connecticut Working Paper 2007-47 (Sept. 2007), http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1195&context=econ_wpapers.

15. See also A. Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), and below, n. 38. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, 2:124.

16. Walmsley, *Early Islamic Syria*. See also G. Avni, *The Byzantine-Islamic Transition in Palestine: An Archaeological Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

around the turn of the third/ninth century are not merely stylistic; they are centrally important for political, economic, and religious history as well.

Other modern advocates of the historicity of an early Islamic economic boom privilege such terms as "market" and "free market." In this view, Muḥammad was not only a merchant, as everyone knows,[17] but something like the CEO of a state-sponsored enterprise run according to sound business principles. In this way the early Muslim community achieved a balanced market economy.[18] In tandem with this argument comes the statement or supposition that Islam has always been compatible with modernity and that it acted in its early period as a harbinger of modern capitalism by instituting market-friendly principles long before these appeared in Christian Europe. This way of thinking goes back at least to the mid-twentieth century, when some Western scholars argued for parallels and connections between the commercial expansion of early Islam and the rise of modern capitalism in early modern Europe.[19] It has also been a concern for modern Muslim reformers.[20]

Empires and Their Economies

One comparative discussion that has gone missing in modern work on the early caliphate regards the fundamental nature of imperial economies as a whole. For other imperial contexts, this discussion goes back at least to the 1970s and to work by the Greco-Roman historian M. I. Finley,[21] as well as to earlier writers including the sociologist Max Weber. For a long time it involved a debate between "modernists" and "primitivists": can we apply modern economic analysis to ancient economies, as we do to modern ones? As Finley and others moved beyond this narrow binary, they referred not only to Weber but also to the anthropologists Marcel Mauss and Bronisław Malinowski and the economist Karl Polanyi.

Polanyi, as is well known, rejected the (to us) familiar notion that the market, in the sense in which neoclassical or liberal economists use the term, constitutes a natural or default mode of human behavior and organization.[22] Instead he thought of the market as "instituted," that is, as the product of forces external to itself. Another, related principle was that of the "embedded" economy, namely, the idea that the economic realm is inextricably connected to elements deriving from culture, politics, religion, and so forth. Also of interest

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17. Even though we have this information mainly on the authority of Ibn Isḥāq; much other early Arabic literature ignores or contradicts it.

18. B. Koehler, *Early Islam and the Birth of Capitalism* (London: Lexington, 2014); a more balanced and detailed treatment in G. Heck, *Charlemagne, Muhammad, and the Arab Roots of Capitalism* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006).

19. S. D. Goitein, "The Rise of the Middle-Eastern Bourgeoisie in Early Islamic Times," in *Studies in Islam and Islamic Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 217–41; cf. M. Bonner, "The *Kitāb al-Kasb* Attributed to al-Shaybānī: Poverty, Surplus, and the Circulation of Wealth," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001): 410–27.

20. C. Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy: The Challenge of Capitalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

21. Especially Finley's *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, 1985).

22. Most famously in Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon, 2001). Much of Polanyi's work relevant for this discussion is collected in *Trade and Markets in the Early Empires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

is the identification, by Polanyi and others, of three principal modes of exchange. The first, redistribution, consists of extracting resources more or less forcibly from certain groups and redistributing them among others, a core activity of all premodern empires and indeed of all states. The second mode is reciprocity, whereby resources are transferred with the expectation that something else will be transferred in return at some unspecified, later time. Here the participants already know one another, and the transfer of objects is part and parcel of their relationship. The third mode consists of market exchange, in which goods or services are provided without either party (necessarily) being acquainted with the other. The process takes place, at least ideally, without constraint and without creating any obligations beyond the object of the transaction itself.

Here I do not mean to propose a Polanyian model for the early Islamic economy. Not only economists, but many specialists in the history of ancient empires, Assyriologists in particular,[23] have rejected Polanyi's ventures into these areas. Nonetheless, we may wish to consider applying certain elements of his approach to our study of the economy of the early Islamic world, especially because discussion of that economy has become so heavily weighted toward modern notions of market, wealth-seeking rational actors, and so forth. In other words, a partial and provisional "re-embedding" of the early Islamic economy may be in order, to help us see these phenomena in the context not only of the commercial and fiscal, but also of the political and religious domains.

In his masterful *The Ancient Economy*, which first appeared in 1973, Finley built on Polanyi's work, even though he barely mentioned it there.[24] Earlier treatments of this subject-matter, especially that of M. I. Rostovsteff,[25] had portrayed the Roman economy as a unified space where elites engaged in large-scale, rationally planned investment, development, and management in agriculture, industry, and commerce. Controversy around this view had already gone on for some time, including in the "modernist-primitivist" debate already mentioned. But Finley took things farther. He viewed the Roman economy in terms of its structures, which for him were as much political and cultural as economic. In his analysis, Finley focused on the notion of status, following Polanyi and, especially, Weber. Both of these stated that in the nineteenth century, class had replaced status as the most important social classifier in much of Europe, at the same time as market relationships became predominant; however, this had not been the case in earlier times and places, including the ancient empires. So in Finley's view, the ancient economy, though quite complex, was not really a market economy. He presented it through a series of status-related pairs: order and status, masters and slaves, landlords and peasants, town and country, and so forth.

The subsequent discussion of the Roman economy has been rich and varied. More recently there has been a trend to view it again in market terms; in particular, the economist Peter Temin has argued that the Roman economy was constituted by a series of integrated

23. Though see J. Renger, "Economy of Ancient Mesopotamia: A General Outline," in *The Babylonian World*, ed. G. Leick, 187–97 (London: Routledge, 2007).

24. Finley attended Polanyi's economic history seminar at Columbia University from 1948 to 1953; see Ian Morris's foreword to the second edition of Finley's *Ancient Economy*, xi.

25. Rostovsteff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

markets operating outside state control, and thus "free."[26] On the other hand, there has been a contrasting trend to argue that the Roman empire had a "tied" economy in the Polanyian sense, in which the state exerted control over the supply of staple foodstuffs to the capital and regulated and restricted traffic in strategic commodities such as materials for producing armaments, silks, and purple dyes. According to this view, trade in other commodities took place in the shadow of the state, though not under its direct control.

Institutionalism and New Institutional Economics

We may recall that in the argument over boom or bust in the early Islamic economy, some proponents of the "bust" perspective have been described as "institutionalist," because they point to institutional arrangements already present at the origins; or in other words, they posit an original and apparently endlessly durable "constitution" of Islam. Maya Shatzmiller has argued convincingly against these views by opposing the practice of relying on *a priori* generalizations generated by theoretical models that privilege political and economic institutions.[27] She instead advocates empirically based research and arrives at a model of an early Islamic economy undergoing growth and expansion. Along the way she provides estimates of its GDP for the years 700 and 1000 CE. Here the fundamental concept is *economic performance*, centered on growth and expansion.

At this point, however, we need to say more about the institutionalist approach. In fact, historians of the Islamic world have argued along these lines for many years, though more often with a focus on "principles" or "conditions" than on "institutions." For example, Maxime Rodinson, in his *Islam and Capitalism* and elsewhere, began his discussion of Islamic economic life with its "religious conditions."[28] Here principles derived from the Qurʾān, Sunna, and Islamic fiscal and commercial law set the stage *in advance*, perhaps not strictly so in terms of chronology, but logically and heuristically all the same. Accordingly, many economic characteristics of the Islamic world, throughout its historical existence, would have stemmed from those principles and foundational texts. And even if not all these principles were religious in a strict sense, Islam still imposed habits and outlooks that had (and may still have) a determining role.[29] More recently, as we have seen, others have argued for the reverse proposition: that Islamic law imposed principles and practices that turned out, in the long run, to have *negative* economic consequences. Either way, principles established at the foundation, perceptible to us now in Islamic law, shaped and determined the course of events.

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26. P. Temin, "A Market Economy in the Early Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 91 (2001): 169–81; *The Roman Market Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

27. Shatzmiller, "Economic Performance and Economic Growth," esp. 142ff.

28. Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism*, trans. B. Pearce (New York: Pantheon, 1974), 39–56, 111–57; idem, "Les conditions religieuses de la vie économique," in *Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Vorderen Orients*, ed. B. Spuler, 18–30 (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

29. As C. Becker already said in "Islam und Wirtschaft," *Islamstudien* I (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyere, 1924), 54–65, esp. 54.

Islamic law provides support for arguments of this kind. For instance, it states that prices in the market must remain beyond the control of individuals who might seek to manipulate them to their own advantage. Indeed, the maxim "Prices are in God's hands"[30] seems to converge nicely with Adam Smith's statement that whenever prices in the market become skewed, an "invisible hand" will intervene to reestablish balance. With regard to continuity with the past, Islamic law presents its doctrines and principles as having been transmitted through unbroken chains of authorities extending all the way back to the Prophet Muḥammad in Arabia. At the same time, however, Islamic legal texts do not make it easy to investigate the concrete circumstances of markets and exchange during this early period. For instance, the *Muwaṭṭaʾ* ascribed to Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795)[31] is generally thought, despite some modern dissent,[32] to express doctrines prevalent in Medina in the late second/eighth century. It cites authorities associated with that city from Mālik himself (or even later) all the way back to the Prophet. Its chapter on commercial law (*buyūʿ*) examines transactions involving sellers, buyers, and third parties. With regard to the setting, we see trade in grains and other foodstuffs, with slaves receiving especially detailed attention. But while these transactions could certainly be characteristic of a market in Medina, they could also be taking place in *any* Muslim and Arabic-speaking environment of the time. Apart from a few actions attributed to caliphs, ʿUmar I in particular, there is little mention of the marketplace's organization and regulation.

Modern controversies surround the origins and early development of Islamic law. For the purposes of this article, the most important of these controversies include the thesis that the early caliphs not only established a system of courts and legal bureaucracy but also legislated on their own authority, using the term *sunna* to refer to a tradition linked to the Prophet Muḥammad but also embodied in themselves;[33] and the question of continuity between Islamic law and its predecessors, such as Arabian customary, Roman, Jewish, and Sasanian law. Accordingly, we may ask: while Islamic commercial law seems to have reigned supreme, at least formally, in the marketplaces of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate from the later second/eighth century onward, what system(s) prevailed earlier on? For instance, in the mid- to late first/seventh century, the overwhelming majority of the caliphate's inhabitants were not Muslim, but they certainly bought and sold things and traveled in order to trade. What commercial systems and rules did they use? The likely answer is that they used whatever systems happened to be in place, dating from before the conquests; perhaps they modified or abandoned these systems whenever they dealt with the conquerors, but transactions of this kind can only have constituted a fraction of the total. What, then, were these older systems?

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30. A. Sabra, "Prices Are in God's Hands," in *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*, ed. M. Bonner et al., 73–91 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

31. Ed. M. F. ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1406/1985), 2:609–86.

32. N. Calder, *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).

33. J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950), 192–213; C. Décobert, "Notule sur le patrimonialisme omeyyade," in *Umayyad Legacies*, ed. A. Borrut and P. Cobb, 213–54 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), esp. 241–42.

Until now this question has been considered, in large part, under the rubric of Roman provincial law. Here the idea is that pre-Islamic Near Eastern legal systems may have preserved certain aspects of older, local, non-Roman law, combined somehow with Roman law itself.[34] Modern work on this theory, at least relating to the seventh century and its environs, has focused on discovering the influence (if any) that such hybrid systems had on the formation of Islamic law over exploring how non-Muslims actually conducted their affairs before and after the coming of Islam. Meanwhile, modern discussions of Byzantine markets and trade in Egypt and Syria-Palestine tend to end with the Persian conquest in the 610s or with the Arab/Islamic conquests beginning in the 630s.[35] Studies of Sasanian commerce and trade in this era are even scarcer.[36] One thing emerges clearly from this work: namely, that principles and rules derived from the Qurʾān, Sunna, and Islamic law in general did not govern—and *could not* have governed—this vast economic and commercial space at the outset. Here as elsewhere, a certain amount of time had to go by before Islamic principles and institutions became hegemonic and assumed the forms familiar to us now.

From this fact we may proceed to two conclusions. The first is that we cannot avoid the modern debates over methods and approaches to the literary sources for early Islam, beginning with the sources for the early development of Islamic law. For example, when Shatzmiller opposes the practice of relying on *a priori* generalizations generated by theoretical models—in this case, models that privilege political and economic institutions[37]—we must agree. However, when she advocates, as an alternative, "empirically based research," we need to ask this question: "Upon which empirically sound data is this research founded?" This is not to deny the existence of such data, by any means. Nonetheless, we ought to evaluate our source materials in light of recent work on historiography, source criticism, and other areas, which has shown such methodological sophistication and philological accuracy—even if these have not yet been applied to the economic realm. The second conclusion is that we need to devote our attention squarely to the Near Eastern marketplace, including in Arabia shortly before Islam and in the entire region during the era of the great conquests and the early caliphate. Precisely because our knowledge of this marketplace is so limited, we must avoid the temptation of imposing on it the better-known structures of Roman and/or mature Islamic law.

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34. P. Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For subsequent discussion of the fifth-century "Syrian-Roman Lawbook," see W. Selb and H. Kaufhold, *Das syrisch-römische Rechtsbuch*, 3 vols., Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Denkschriften der philosophisch-historischen Klasse 295 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2002). See also P. Crone and A. Silverstein, "The Ancient Near East and Islam: The Case of Lot-Casting," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 55 (2010): 423–50, repr. in Crone, *Islam, the Ancient Near East, and Varieties of Godlessness*, Collected Studies 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 17–43.

35. This is generally true of the papers in C. Morrisson, ed., *Trade and Markets in Byzantium* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2012).

36. See Morony, "Economic Boundaries?"; E. de la Vaissière, *Soghdian Traders*, trans. J. Ward (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

37. Shatzmiller, "Economic Performance and Economic Growth."

We may also inquire further into the very nature of institutions themselves, broadly speaking. Students of the early Islamic economy have worked with institutions and related concepts, as we have seen. They have not, however, done much with the "New Institutional Economics" (NIE) which has been discussed and deployed by historians of Rome, medieval Europe, and other areas.[38] As the late Douglass North, a leading figure of NIE, observed, "[present-day] economists hang on to a body of theory developed to deal with advanced economies of nineteenth-century vintage in which the problems were those of resource allocation," but this approach is no longer adequate, especially for the history of earlier economies.[39] A minority of today's economists would agree, at least in part, with North's statement, as would many non-economists. But North, and NIE in general, goes farther. For North an "institution" is not a preexisting, determining framework. In some ways it seems close to the French term *institution* as deployed by Pierre Bourdieu,[40] although this concept does not seem to have a major role in North's arguments. In any case, North takes care to distinguish "institutions" from "organizations." The former "are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. . . . [T]hey structure incentives in . . . exchange, whether political, social or economic." Institutions constitute "self-imposed constraints," a definition which is "complementary to the choice theoretic approach of neoclassical economic theory"[41] instead of opposing it. Meanwhile, if institutions are the rules of the game, organizations are the players, consisting of "groups of individuals bound together by some common objectives." The determining factor for the kinds of organizations that will come into existence in a given historical context is the relevant "institutional matrix."[42]

If NIE eventually proves relevant to the study of the early Islamic economy, it will be because of its flexible concept of institution. If we maintain that Islamic economic practice and theory were (and maybe still are) based on a certain institutional matrix or matrices, or that they evolved from something of this kind, this does not mean that a particular set of rules and practices—such as we may find in mature Islamic law and in later Islamic commerce and fiscal administration—was present at the beginning and determined all of the following sequence of events. Instead we may say that there was indeed some institutional

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38. See P. F. Bang, "The Ancient Economy and New Institutional Economics," *Journal of Roman Studies* 99 (2009): 194–206. The most important contributions to NIE include Douglass C. North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York: Norton, 1980); idem, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); idem, *Understanding the Process of Economic Change* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); and A. Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2006. See the detailed discussion and refutation of Greif in Shatzmiller, "Economic Performance and Economic Growth," 134–37.

39. North, *Understanding the Process*, 168.

40. As in C. Décobert, *Le mendiant et le combattant: L'institution de l'islam* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1991), using *institution* in Bourdieu's sense.

41. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, 3–5. In other words, North maintains here that NIE does not contradict but rather enhances "mainstream" economic thinking. His later work shows less optimism on this score.

42. Ibid., 58–61.

matrix—or more likely, matrices—present at the outset, which we must then identify and contextualize. Here we have a different task from that of, say, historians of the Roman economy, in that we have to deal with a relatively short period that appears unsettled and transitional. We need to remember, however, that it did not necessarily appear that way to the economic actors of that time and place. More importantly, certain institutional matrices must have been present there. All these things changed over time, without doubt, and this is precisely where institutions, as conceptualized by NIE, can help.

In the rest of this article I will take up several issues, or episodes, relating to the early Islamic economy writ large. These amount to a representative sampling and not a thorough and exhaustive treatment. Two considerations underlie them from beginning to end. The first is the attempt to discover institutional matrices, with an emphasis on their dynamic, changing nature. The second has to do with the sources, especially those which may be described as literary and which use the Arabic language. When, as often happens, these sources give us information which seems conflictual or even contradictory, how can we go beyond the (possibly hopeless) task of reconciling them, or promoting one of them at the expense of the other?

The Impasse of Meccan Trade

As noted earlier, the modern term "market" can refer to a physical place where activities of a certain kind typically happen and also, in a more generalized, abstract sense, to a system of exchange prevailing within a certain geographical space or even through all of space. We may think of these two meanings as poles at either end of a continuum, or in Peter Bang's words, as "two ideal-types at either end of a broad spectrum of varying degrees of integration."[43] Our everyday use of the term often falls somewhere in between. Modern discussions of the early Islamic economy as a whole have clustered around the general, abstract sense of "market," while the discrete, concrete sense has prevailed in the archaeological literature. It seems, however, that confusion between these two senses of the term may have been present in one of the most important historical and historiographical debates in this area.

For some time there has been a consensus that when Islam first emerged in Arabia, it was already so market- and merchant-friendly as to instill commercial habits and ideals into its followers. This characteristic led to the economic boom that began in the second/eighth century, and ultimately to the pro-market attitude and behavior that Muslims have maintained ever since. How did this happen? Well before Muḥammad's time, we are told, his tribe, the Quraysh, were great traders who established commercial networks so successfully that they became the peninsula's dominant economic and even political actors. And even though the majority of Quraysh opposed Muḥammad's teachings, they all, including Muḥammad himself, shared these market-oriented ways of thinking and behaving. According to one theory, the rapid accumulation of wealth in Mecca created inequalities and dislocations, so that the tribal system which maintained loyalty and

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43. Bang, *Roman Bazaar*, 140.

security began to unravel. The result was a crisis, at once social, economic, and spiritual, to which Muḥammad's teachings and the Qurʾān provided both a response and a cure.[44]

In 1987 these ways of considering the matter received a challenge in Patricia Crone's *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*.[45] Crone argued that pre-Islamic Mecca was not the favorable location for trade that modern scholars have made it out to be. In fact its barren soil and off-track location made it useless as a center of trade. Mecca never dominated Arabia's commerce with other countries and failed even to attract any notice from those countries. Meccan trade, if it existed, must have consisted of local distribution of leather, cheap cloth, livestock, and other such things. Crone based this demolition work on a devastating running critique of the Arabic literary sources for pre-Islamic Arabia.

While some of the responses to *Meccan Trade* consisted of outraged rejection of the entire thing,[46] others sought to overturn parts of the argument but not all of it.[47] And although there have been interesting contributions since then,[48] in overall terms there has not been much progress. As a result, it has seemed for some time that the argument over Meccan trade is over and done with. If we accept Crone's argument, then we agree that the entire edifice of pre-Islamic Arabian history, as constructed by twentieth-century scholars, has collapsed with no alternative edifice available to replace it. If we do not accept it, then we may maintain that Quraysh extended their commercial networks to the point that Mecca came to resemble the Italian merchant republics of later centuries;[49] that being shrewd businessmen, Quraysh grew rich; that this accumulation of wealth, together with increasingly individualistic behavior, led to a social and spiritual crisis in Mecca; and that the triumph of commercial values and market institutions in early Islam emerged from this sequence of events, or something like it, in western Arabia. In this way we find ourselves back where we were over half a century ago.

This controversy involves historiographical problems too complex to allow for any neat resolution, at least in such a brief space as this. Instead, I will attempt to find another mode of inquiry, another ground of debate, which perhaps can help us move forward.

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44. W. M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953). This portrayal of spiritual crisis as a response to social dislocation resembles E. R. Dodds's later explanation for the triumph of Christianity in late antiquity in *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

45. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.

46. Especially R. B. Serjeant's "Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam: Misconceptions and Flawed Polemics," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110 (1990): 472–86, to which Crone replied in "Serjeant and Meccan Trade," *Arabica* 39 (1992): 216–40.

47. For instance, M. Lecker, "King Ibn Ubayy and the *Quṣṣāṣ*," in *Methods and Theories in the Study of Islamic Origins*, ed. H. Berg, 29–71 (Leiden, Brill, 2003).

48. G. Heck, *Charlemagne, Muhammad, and Arab Roots*; idem, "Gold Mining in Arabia and the Rise of the Islamic State," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42 (1999): 364–95; P. Crone, "Quraysh and the Roman Army: Making Sense of the Meccan Leather Trade," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70 (2007): 63–88, repr. in idem, *The Qurʾānic Pagans and Related Matters*, Collected Studies 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 21–51.

49. H. Lammens, "La république marchande de la Mecque vers l'an 600 de notre ère," *Bulletin de l'Institut Egyptien*, 5th ser., 4 (1910): 23–54.

Narratives and Counternarratives

The idea that the manner in which a polity first comes into being provides a matrix for all of its subsequent history has a highly respectable pedigree, including such authorities as the ancient Roman historian Livy and his Renaissance Florentine disciple Machiavelli. No one, however, interprets this principle more generously than do modern historians of Islam, who often present the entire edifice of Islamic civilization as having taken form, ineluctably, from the circumstances of its foundation. For the economic realm this approach yields the argument that Islam was (and is) friendly to commerce and the free market because Muḥammad was a merchant, Mecca was a trading city, the Qurʾān and Sunna established principles for conducting commerce, and so forth.

As already mentioned, arguments of this kind rely on a body of Arabic texts that did not appear in the form in which we have them until the later second/eighth century and in most cases considerably later than that. Modern controversies around them have focused on whether their narratives may be taken as "authentic," in the sense of corresponding to events that actually happened in the world. Meanwhile, the arguments over method and interpretation have focused on such areas as politics, jurisprudence, and theology, and only rarely on economy. Yet there is no reason why this should be so. In other words, a modern treatment of the early Islamic economy needs to enter these methodological debates over the sources, just as much as do treatments of politics and religion.

Readers of ancient and medieval source materials know that different authors, while discussing identical or similar topics, often bring different, competing agendas and biases to bear on them. The authors may come from similar linguistic, political, or religious traditions and backgrounds, or they may not. Either way, they often express their differences without identifying their adversaries, and at times without even identifying the cause of dissension itself. What matters here is that such differences and tensions often exist in our source materials, and that practically by definition they are obscure to us.[50] Recovering them is accordingly a major part of our task. To do this we must recognize contested territory when we have it before us, and we must reconstruct the relevant narratives and counternarratives as best we can.[51] Some recent work—not, however, devoted to economic history—offers examples of how this may be done.[52]

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50. J. Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1986); idem, *The Middle East Remembered* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); T. El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); A. Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: L'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (v. 72–193/692–809)* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); N. Haider, *Waṣīya* of Abū Hāshim," in *Scholars and Scholarship of the Islamic World*, ed. A. Ahmed et al., 49–83 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

51. Or "alternative pasts"; see Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 5.

52. See Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory*; idem, *Middle East Remembered*; El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*; Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*; Haider, "*Waṣīya* of Abū Hāshim." S. J. Shoemaker, *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), builds on discordant views in the sources regarding the time of the Prophet's death to reconstruct a detailed narrative and counternarrative, and draws historical consequences from this tension.

Looking back at the controversy over Meccan trade, participants in the debate have agreed on one thing—namely, that pre-Islamic Arabia was deeply contested territory of some kind. At issue, among other things, has been whether Quraysh sought and achieved commercial dominance throughout Arabia. For those who think they did, Quraysh's political preeminence seems a logical (if not always explicitly stated) corollary. For those who think they did not, pre-Islamic Arabian tribal politics and commercial networks remain a puzzle.

Elsewhere I have discussed an Arabic narrative tradition about "the markets of the Arabs before Islam."[53] This tradition describes an annual series of markets or fairs that extended throughout the Arabian peninsula. According to the tradition, the series began in north-central Arabia at Dūmat al-Jandal. It then moved across Yamāma and the eastern coastlands and Oman and on to Ḥaḍramawt and Yemen before reaching its culminating point at the annual fair of ʿUkāẓ. Mecca and Medina did not belong to the sequence; in spatial terms, the closest they came to it was at ʿUkāẓ, not far from Mecca but separate and distinct from it.

This tradition provides a counternarrative to the better-known narrative(s) that we find in many sources, among which the history of Mecca by the third/ninth-century author al-Azraqī may be taken as representative. Al-Azraqī also describes an annual sequence of markets before Islam, but his is much shorter than the one in the "markets of the Arabs." In al-Azraqī this sequence assumes the form of a circle and culminates in the pilgrimage, for which the markets seem to function as prologue or "warm-up."[54] In the "markets of the Arabs," by contrast, the sequence is longer, both in space and in time, and takes the form not of a circle but of an inwardly directed, accelerating spiral, culminating in the fair of ʿUkāẓ (and not the pilgrimage). Furthermore, this spiral describes a moral trajectory that begins at a low point, Dūmat al-Jandal, where the local ruler enjoys a proprietary role in the market, levying taxes and selling his goods before anyone else, thus fixing prices. Even worse, the market at Dūma specializes in prostitution and slavery. The sequence thus begins at a point of total commodification: instead of good deeds requited or benefits reciprocated, we have persons deprived of their social status and the use of their own bodies. Even for free participants, exchanges are constrained by the selfish activity of a ruler, who is, in turn, hampered in his sovereignty and autonomy.

The next few points in the sequence come under the partial control or protectorate of the Sasanian empire. Here Arab rulers enjoy the same privileges as the ruler of Dūma. In Ḥaḍramawt we find the absence of any sovereignty whatsoever, together with the necessity for visitors of finding "protection." By contrast, the tradition expresses admiration for the markets at ʿAdan and Ṣanʿāʾ, where the rulers do not exact taxes and refrain from any activity at all.

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53. "The Arabian Silent Trade: Profit and Nobility in the 'Markets of the Arabs,'" in *Histories of the Middle East*, ed. A. Sabra et al., 23–51 (Leiden: Brill, 2010); "'Time Has Come Full Circle: Markets, Fairs and the Calendar in Arabia before Islam," in *Scholars and Scholarship of the Islamic World*, ed. A. Ahmed et al., 15–47 (Leiden: Brill, 2011); "Commerce and Migration before Islam: A Brief History of a Long Literary Tradition," in *Iranian Language and Culture*, ed. B. Aghaei and M. R. Ghanoonparvar, 1–27 (Malibu, CA: Mazda, 2012).

54. Al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makka* (Mecca: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1385/1965), 1:182–87; Bonner, "Time Has Come Full Circle," 36–40.

The sequence reaches its moral high point at ʿUkāẓ. Here the negative aspects of the earlier markets, from greedy "kings" to extorting tribal chiefs, are absent. Whereas at Dūmat al-Jandal everything was a commodity, at ʿUkāẓ market participants trade commodities, including luxury goods and everyday items such as "leather of ʿUkāẓ." The medieval sources single out ʿUkāẓ in terms such as these: "The tribes of the Arabs used to congregate at ʿUkāẓ every year and used to hold their boasting contests there (*wa-yatafākharūna fīhā*). Their poets would attend [the market] and would vie with one another with their most recent compositions. Then they would disperse."[55] The tradition thus associates the fair of ʿUkāẓ with the twin themes of generosity and competitiveness. ʿUkāẓ was also a place where questions of leadership were decided, even though—or precisely because—it lay under the control of no one. In former times, the kings of Yemen used to send agents to ʿUkāẓ to find out who was "the most valiant of the Arabs" and then "to cultivate him and offer him presents."[56] Meanwhile, other "kings" gave presents and "shares of the profits" to the "nobles." *Ribḥ*, the usual Arabic word for "profit," is tied here to the evaluation of nobility and the constant competition among "nobles" for prestige, recognition, and royal gifts. One effect of ʿUkāẓ, and ultimately of the market sequence as a whole, was thus to transform the proceeds from commerce and taxation into prestige-enhancing gifts.[57]

Al-Azraqī is evidently aware of this "counternarrative" because he echoes its details, accommodating them within his own Mecca- and pilgrimage-centered narrative. What, then, are the differences here between narrative and counternarrative? The world of the "markets of the Arabs" differs starkly from the world of Islam in its ethics (boastful self-aggrandizement) and politics (limited and fragmented sovereignty). It favors an archaic morality, exalting gift-giving and competition for noble status over what we now call commoditization and market exchange. However, the sequence also features such activities as transporting and selling goods. In the end it brings together international maritime trade, desert-crossing caravans, and local production and traffic, all within a single grand sequence.

We find a similar contrast within early Islam itself. The Qurʾān and Sunna regulate behavior in the marketplace, laying down principles that we can indeed interpret as favoring the "free market," for instance by insisting on transparency in transactions and by protecting weaker actors from stronger, tendentially predatory ones. But at the same time, the Qurʾān prescribes a morality based on generosity and reciprocity.[58] It uses lots of commercial metaphors, as is well known, but this does not mean that it imposes a morality based on what we moderns call free-market principles.[59] These differences and similarities between the tradition on the markets, on the one hand, and fundamental texts of early Islam, on the other, point to tensions between competing ideologies within the contested space

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55. Abū ʿUbayd al-Bakrī, *Muʿjam mā istaʿjam* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2008), 3:218; Yāqūt al-Rūmī al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1955–57), 4:142.

56. Al-Marzūqī, *Kitāb al-Azmina wa-l-amkina* (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif, 1914), 2:165.

57. Bonner, "Arabian Silent Trade."

58. M. Bonner, "Poverty and Economics in the Qur'an," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35 (2005): 391–406.

59. A. Rippin, "The Commerce of Eschatology," in *The Qur'an as Text*, ed. S. Wild, 125–35 (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

of pre-Islamic Arabia.[60] Alternatively, perhaps it is better to view both market sequences together as harbingers of the nascent Islamic order. Either way, we find ourselves in a (to us) largely unfamiliar Arabian environment, historiographically more promising than the impasse of Meccan trade.

Another contrast here between narrative and counternarrative has to do with the role of Quraysh. The modern arguments over Meccan trade may have obscured whatever it was that authors such as al-Azraqī actually had to say on this score. But it is clear, in any case, that al-Azraqī and others like him assign a major role in peninsular trade to Quraysh. In the tradition on the markets, by contrast, Quraysh are present and respected but in the end only one collective player among many. Other groups, especially Tamīm, have more prominent roles. This goes against what we think we know about tribal politics and the pilgrimage in Arabia before Islam.[61] However, the point here is not to claim that one or the other of these versions is historically accurate, but rather to explore the contours of this contested terrain.

One of the most attractive characteristics, historiographically speaking, of the counternarrative of the Arabian markets is its dynamism, as it sweeps up merchants, tribesmen, townsmen, gifts, commodities, and moral values into its spiraling movement. This circuit of markets and fairs is idealized, of course, but it may also correspond to movements that actually took place. It has similarities to, and likely connections with, fairs and markets in contemporary Byzantine Syria.[62] It also bears an uncanny similarity to events that happened soon afterward, especially the wars of the *ridda*, which, in the admittedly fragmented picture we have of them from Muslim historiography,[63] also constituted a grand movement around Arabia, this time proceeding counterclockwise instead of clockwise and featuring armies instead of traders and battles instead of seasonal fairs.[64] We may find it useful to think of these things in terms of Douglass North's "institutional matrices." In any case, in this way we obtain access to territory that the impasse of Meccan trade has prevented us from entering.

It is important to emphasize again that as of right now, *we still do not have a clear narrative*, based on undisputed data and facts, for the politics and economy of Arabia at this crucial time. What we do have, for better or worse, is a set of intertwining controversies and arguments, some of them dating from that time itself or soon afterward, and others dating from the modern era. Accordingly, we have no choice but to work with these arguments

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60. Bonner, "Time Has Come Full Circle," 40–44.

61. M. Kister, "Mecca and Tamīm," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965): 113–63.

62. L. de Ligt, *Fairs and Markets in the Roman Empire: Economic and Social Aspects of Periodic Trade in a Pre-Industrial Society* (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1993); A. Binggeli, "Annual Fairs, Regional Networks, and Trade Routes in Syria, Sixth-Tenth Centuries," in Morrison, *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, 281–96. The tradition on the "markets of the Arabs" describes such markets in Umayyad southern Syria; al-Marzūqī, *Kitāb al-Azmina wa-l-amkina*, 2:169–70.

63. M. Bonner, "The *Ridda* in East Arabian Perspective," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, Denver, November 24, 2015.

64. The chronology of the *ridda* is problematic, but Muslim historical writing preferred to describe it in the order Ḥijāz—Yemen—Oman—Baḥrayn—Yamāma.

and controversies, hoping to discover narratives that will accommodate the data and facts that we actually do have.

An Imperial Economy

Now we turn to a later set of episodes. The combined era of the Rāshidūn and Umayyad caliphs (11–132/632–750) is critical for understanding the history of the economy of the Islamic world overall. Under what conditions and within what structures did this economy operate during that formative era? When and how did the boom of the early ʿAbbāsid era get underway?

We may begin with a brief look at the early caliphate through a comparative lens. The caliphate assumed distinctive positions with regard to religion, law, military organization, and claims to legitimacy, although even in these areas it actually had much in common with its immediate predecessors.[65] In its basic organization and structure, however, the caliphate belonged to the venerably ancient club of land-based tributary empires. Taken together, these constituted a type that lasted from Sargon of Akkad in the later third millennium BCE down to the Chinese and other empires of the early modern and even the modern era.[66] Their tributary character relates to the first element in the Polanyian triad, namely, redistribution: they extracted resources, typically though not only through taxation, from certain segments of the population and then redistributed these resources to other segments. The recipients generally included courts (including bureaucracies), armies, and religious establishments (also often including bureaucracies). These processes took place on a massive scale and required enormous investments in labor, technological and organizational input, and other resources.

What about the other two elements of the Polanyian triad? Reciprocity has always played a major role, for instance, in relations between imperial aristocracies and other groups, and within those aristocracies themselves. Of most concern to us now, however, is market exchange. In the eyes of some observers, including Polanyi himself, market exchange and redistribution are incompatible, at least tendentially. Accordingly, to the extent that a premodern empire or state functioned through redistribution, it did not (and presumably could not) function through market exchange. We see this in Polanyi's identification of certain merchants as "factors," agents of the ruler or the state, rather than independent entrepreneurs—even though these merchants were active in markets (in the physical, concrete sense). This view of the incompatibility of imperial redistribution with market exchange is shared both by antimarket Polanyians and certain promarket economists, for whom redistribution seems grossly inefficient and unlikely to have produced such grand results as the Roman empire[67] or, we may suppose, the early caliphate.

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65. G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

66. Bang and Bayly, *Tributary Empires in Global History*, including Wickham, "Tributary Empires"; Bang, *Roman Bazaar*, 59–62, 122–23.

67. As in Temin, "Market Economy."

The role and nature of markets accordingly have an important place in these debates among historians of empire. For instance, it is sometimes argued that for various technological, political, and cultural reasons, tributary empires were unable or unwilling to intervene in or to control systematically the marketplaces within their own territory beyond restricting traffic in strategic commodities such as, in the case of Rome, materials for armaments, silks, dyes, and foodstuffs destined for the capital city. It is similarly maintained that such empires were unable to accomplish on their own all the tasks necessary for keeping themselves functioning. For example, peasants in the countryside made over a large portion of their produce to the state in the form of taxes. When, as often, the state wanted its tax payments in cash, the agricultural surplus had to be transformed into coin, for which markets were necessary. And even if the state agreed to receive payments in kind, the logistics of collection and transportation were generally too much for the imperial authorities to handle by themselves. Markets were thus part and parcel of the imperial system, as were also intermediary figures such as provincial notables and well-connected merchants. At the same time, although local markets may very well have behaved the way we now expect them to, by setting prices in accordance with the forces of supply and demand, they were not, at least by modern standards, well integrated, neither among themselves nor with the provincial and imperial centers.

Here I will argue that a similar situation prevailed in the early caliphate, though with some distinctive characteristics. For in addition to the shared features just discussed, each tributary empire had characteristics of its own. In the case of Rome, once the tributary surplus had been accumulated, it was disbursed mainly to three categories of recipients: first, the imperial court and its dependents; second, the residents and physical infrastructure of the capital and perhaps a few other great cities; and third, the armies stationed along the frontiers. This process of allocation was characteristic of Rome, if not utterly unique to it. The early caliphate, meanwhile, stood out for its relation to its own internal markets, as we'll see shortly. It also stood out for its manner of recruiting and financing its armies, as already mentioned, a topic which we cannot reexamine here in any detail, but which leads us to consider the following.

All empires are built on conquest, or at least on expansion of some kind, and they achieve this in different ways. In this regard the early caliphate was exceptional in its astonishingly rapid expansion. This quick pace had consequences, including a considerable variety among the caliphate's provinces, visible afterward in their fiscal organization. Another consequence was a peculiar kind of decentralization, especially during the Umayyad era (41–132/661–750). Part of the problem here is that our Arabic literary sources provide less information about Syria, the imperial center, than about certain other provinces, but in any case, these matters remain obscure. How regularly did provincial governors forward their fiscal surplus to the capital in Syria? What resources did the Umayyad caliphs have available at hand? How far did their writ really extend?

One answer came in K. Y. Blankinship's *The End of the Jihād State*.[68] Blankinship argued that since the Umayyad caliphs lacked access to much or even most of the revenues from

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68. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

the far-flung provinces, they came to rely, to an unhealthy extent, on their metropolitan province of Syria. But since these resources could not suffice for all the palaces, monuments, bureaucrats, armies, and so forth, how did the central state finance itself? Blankinship's response lies in his title. The Umayyad caliphate was a "jihad state" because of its devotion to foreign expansion. Lacking revenues from the provinces, it relied on spoils of war arriving from newly conquered territories. And arrive they did: the chronicles tell about fabulous hauls of precious metals, slaves, and other goods. But then expansion met its inevitable limits, rebellions and civil wars flared up, and new, formidable adversaries emerged. No longer able to afford the large armies it needed, the Umayyad caliphate tottered and collapsed.

It seems clear that the Umayyad state could never have lived from depredation alone. Nonetheless, Blankinship was right to identify it as a conquest polity. And here we arrive at an important difference between the two tributary empires under comparison, the Roman and the early Islamic. The Romans, as mentioned, stationed their legions along the frontiers. This involved lots of coming and going between the frontiers and their local hinterlands, but not so much of it between the frontiers and the imperial capital and heartlands. The Umayyad armies, by contrast, were constantly on the move from center to periphery and back again. The "camp cities" (*amṣār*) in the central provinces housed fighters waiting to be called up for service on the frontiers. Some of these eventually settled in the frontier provinces, whereas others returned to the *amṣār*. In addition to army regulars, unpaid volunteers (*mutaṭawwi'a*) also choked the highways. Accordingly, the great routes in the Umayyad realm saw the constant movement of supplies, matériel, fighters and their families, and camp followers, including, of course, merchants. It seems likely that these highways would have had a higher concentration of military traffic on average than the old Roman ones, though this is something incapable of proof.

In territories that had previously belonged to the Sasanian and Byzantine empires and that now belonged to the caliphate, there were already roads, including the ones that we refer to nowadays as constituting the "silk route." But now some of these, together with other, newer roads, became what I would call, collectively and anachronistically, a "superhighway," a product both of the initial movement of conquest and of the ensuing large-scale movement of persons and goods. Here it is important to emphasize that the frontiers were vital to the Umayyad state, not only for expansion and defense, but for the fiscal survival of a cash-starved imperial center and the legitimization of an unpopular regime. We may also note that like their near-contemporaries the Carolingians, the Umayyads rulers were mobile and peripatetic.[69]

This superhighway network had a role in the economic boom that began in the mid-second/eighth century, if not earlier. Yet it was expenditure by the state, especially military expenditure, that created it in the first place. A similar thing had already happened in the later Roman republic and early empire (principate), where the great roads, built by and for armies, contributed toward commerce and trade. In both cases, military

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69. Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 390, 397–411; cf. M. G. Chang, *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring and the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680–1785* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

expenditure by the state provided, more or less unintentionally, infrastructure for civilian commerce. But there were also differences. One of these had to do with the speed and care of construction. The Romans built their roads slowly, as part of a meticulously planned military infrastructure. The Umayyad roads, by contrast, possibly weren't roads at all, at least by the standards of the modern world or the Roman empire—since wheeled transport was likely already on its way out in the Near East. At the same time, however, the caliphate did invest in other aspects of long-distance communication.[70]

Another difference had to do with markets. Regarding the legions posted along the Roman frontiers and receiving their pay in coin, we may say, following Bang, that they represented a concentration of surplus consumption which attracted private resources, as civilian merchants and contractors provided services and goods to the army and the state. Few, if any, other places in the Roman empire afforded opportunities for transregional private commercial ventures on this scale.[71] The situation for the early caliphal armies must have been comparable. Markets sprang up along the routes, or if they were already there they increased in size. Individuals whom we may call private entrepreneurs provided the same service of transforming surplus for soldiers gathered in large numbers with cash to spend. Once again, however, there were differences between the Roman and Umayyad cases. One of these was the high volume of traffic along the Umayyad superhighway, at least in strategically important areas. Another was the direct connection that the superhighway created between the frontier zones and the cities of the interior. In other words, the military apparatus of the early Islamic state linked individual markets to one another while connecting the imperial heartland with its peripheries more directly and on a larger scale than had happened earlier in the Roman, Byzantine, and (quite likely) Sasanian empires.

Now, however, we encounter a problem: we have little evidence—especially archaeological—for these military markets. We may begin with the armies themselves. Army regulars (*muqātila*) received both stipends (*ʿaṭāʾ*), or payments in cash, and in-kind sustenance or provisions (*rizq*). These fighters would not have needed to visit markets for their basic needs, although some of them would have gone there anyway. However, there were others who did need markets, including the volunteers, who didn't receive provisions from the commissary. In any case, the chronicles provide little information about these markets, although they do recount episodes in which army commanders, cut off from their lines of supply, had recourse to markets.[72] We need to look elsewhere.

Some of the earliest extant literary productions of Islamic jurisprudence come from the area of *siyar*, or law of war and military justice. These books mention the exchange of goods in markets, especially in the context of division of spoils of war. If a fighter receives a share and prefers to exchange it for something else, he may do this in the marketplace. Furthermore, the army commander may, if he chooses, sell the entire haul on the market

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70. A. J. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

71. An example is the Rhône-Saône-Rhine axis in Gaul; see Bang, *Roman Bazaar*, 110–11, 127–28.

72. Examples include al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* (Leiden: Brill, 1879–1901), 2:1315–17 (Maslama's army starving before Constantinople) and 2:1494 (Asad b. ʿAbd Allāh in Khuttal). Cf. N. Fries, *Das Heereswesen der Araber zur Zeit der Omaijaden nach Tabari* (Tübingen: Schnürlen, 1921), 12–13.

and then divide the proceeds among the fighters.[73] However, the *siyar* literature says little or nothing about how these markets functioned—not even whether they followed Islamic commercial law or whether any of the merchants conducting business there were non-Muslim (as likely they often were).

Linguistic Evidence

The notion of a caliphal superhighway has linguistic evidence in its favor. Gilbert Lazard has argued that New Persian (Persian of the Islamic era) became the language of the entire Iranian cultural area as a direct result of the early Islamic conquests. Before that time, under the Sasanian empire, New Persian's immediate ancestor, Middle Persian or, more precisely, that version of Middle Persian known to us as Pahlavi, had already expanded beyond its original homeland in southwestern Iran, since it (Pahlavi) was the first language of the empire. However, other regions continued to use other languages including, on the Inner Asian frontier, Soghdian. But then, with the early Islamic conquests, came a large-scale movement from western to eastern Iran, involving lines of communication and supply, soldiers and their families, camp followers, and military governors with their courts and administrative apparatus. While Arabic served as the language of command and written communication, Persian constituted the everyday vernacular. It is accordingly in Khurasan and Transoxania that we find the earliest evidence for New Persian, using the Arabic alphabet. By 1000 CE it had replaced Soghdian in the east, by which time it had also moved back west and become the language of the entire Iranian cultural region.[74]

A similar argument could be made for the spread of Arabic in former Byzantine lands at the expense of Greek. How can we account for the rapid spread of Arabic, through all levels of society and in both urban and rural areas, when Greek had not spread similarly under Hellenistic and Roman rule?[75] The answer must have to do with increased communication among markets and towns and the articulation of their roles. Here we may note that the evidence of language, in and of itself, can be useful. We may also note that dynamic movement on a large scale provides a key to understanding the early development of the Islamic economy.

Ownership of the Market

In classical Islamic law, the market (a concrete, physical space, not the abstract space of the modern concept) is, or should be, marked by openness, both in the accessibility of the space and in the transparency of the transactions taking place there. The marketplace needs to be sustained and protected from predators, both internal and external, and

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73. A. Morabia, *Le ǧihâd dans l'Islam médiéval* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), 245.

74. Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," in *Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, ed. R. N. Frye, 595–632 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); idem, *La formation de la langue persane*, Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut d'Etudes Iraniennes I (Paris: Peeters, 1995).

75. D. Wasserstein, "Why Did Arabic Succeed Where Greek Failed? Language Change in the Near East after Muhammad," *Scripta Classica Israelica* 22 (2003): 257–72. See also R. Stroumsa, "Greek and Arabic in Nessana," in Schubert and Sijpesteijn, *Documents and History*, 143–57.

the political authorities are assumed to take responsibility for its safeguarding. It is not, however, a space owned by anyone. To this we may add that it is generally thought that Islamic governments, beginning with the early caliphate, did not exert monopolistic power in the marketplace in any systematic way. In particular, they did not corner the production and/or distribution of strategic commodities, at least not on the scale that their Roman and Byzantine predecessors and counterparts had achieved.[76]

However, this picture contrasts with other known characteristics of early Islamic government, especially of the Umayyads. We begin with the words attributed to Yazīd III upon his ascent to the caliphate in 126/744 during the civil war known as the Third Fitna: "O people, I give you my pledge that I will not place stone upon stone nor brick upon brick, I will not dig any canal, I will not accumulate wealth or give it to any wife or child [of mine]. . . ."[77] Here Yazīd condemned not only his predecessor al-Walīd II but the entire Umayyad dynasty and clan. However, Yazīd's attempt to dissociate himself from his family's mania for building did him little good, as he soon fell victim to the ongoing dynastic and civil strife.

Despite all the differences among the various opponents of the Umayyads (including Zubayrids, Shīʿites, and Khārijites), they agreed among themselves in condemning the Umayyads for having "usurped" property that ought, in the first instance, to have belonged to the early Arab settlers, or to the community as a whole, or to the Family of the Prophet. Now the Umayyads had their own claims and justifications in these matters. However, their accusers had material evidence on their side, in that the ruling elite demonstrably did engage in commercial and agricultural ventures, some of them quite extensive, in addition to the mosques and palaces and other buildings for which they are better known today.

According to a fairly well-known report, after Muḥammad first arrived in Medina, he opened a market there and gave instructions that no one should impose taxes on it or build it up. Perhaps around forty years later the caliph Muʿāwiya, who pursued building and agricultural projects in both western and eastern Arabia,[78] built two commercial spaces within the market of Medina and refurbished a third,[79] in apparent violation of the principle previously established by the Prophet. Afterward, during the reign of Hishām, the caliph's uncle Ibrāhīm, then governor of Medina, ordered the construction of a walled complex of shops, warehouses, and inns, thus uniting the city's commercial activity within one space. The complex was built handsomely and solidly with its rents accruing, of course, to Ibrāhīm. But when Hishām died, the city's residents razed the buildings to the ground.[80] We are not told what caused this resentment, but it may have had to do with the usurpation of assets properly belonging to the community or something similar. Did opposition also cohere

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76. A. Laiou and C. Morrisson, *The Byzantine Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

77. Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 2:1834–35; *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, trans. C. Hillenbrand (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987–2007), 26:194; Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 395.

78. G. C. Miles, "Early Islamic Inscriptions near Ṭāʾif in the Ḥijāz," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 7 (1948): 236–42; A. Al-Askar, *al-Yamama in the Early Islamic Era* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2002), 84.

79. ʿAbd Allāh b. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafāʾ bi-akhbār Dār al-Muṣṭafā* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Ādāb, 1373/1953), 1:541–43; R. Foote, "Umayyad Markets and Manufacturing: Evidence for a Commercialized and Industrializing Economy in Early Islamic Bilād al-Shām" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1999), 182–83.

80. Al-Samhūdī, *Wafāʾ al-wafāʾ*, 1:541–43; Foote, "Umayyad Markets," 182–86.

around the notion that this activity constituted a constriction of the market, upsetting the balance prescribed by Islamic law? We do not know, as our information on the episode is sparse and the "mainstream" chronicles do not even report it. The *Muwaṭṭaʾ* of Mālik, a Medinan product, does not hint at these events.

In Syria, the Umayyad caliphs and their relatives built and exploited many markets. We have both archaeological and textual evidence for some of these.[81] Now we may consider this information in the light of recent research on the "desert castles" of Umayyad *bilād al-Shām*, which has both expanded and problematized our knowledge of these buildings' commercial, agricultural, and urban contexts.[82] Meanwhile, we are also told that governors for the Umayyads built commercial structures in Iraq, and similar things are likely to have happened elsewhere, although the best-documented province, Egypt, does not yield a clear picture in this regard. The ʿAbbāsids seem to have engaged in this kind of activity less than their predecessors did, or in any case they managed to attract less attention in the process. It seems on the whole, however, that governors, rulers, and their relatives did continue to own commercial spaces and to rent them out for profit, at least some of the time. Why, then, do the Umayyads stand out for this practice?

The Umayyad caliphate was a patrimonial state, like the Roman/Byzantine and Sasanian empires before it and the ʿAbbāsid caliphate after it.[83] At the same time it was a frontier state (or as Blankinship calls it, a jihad state), not only because it relied on revenue from conquest, but because the frontier was essential to the ways in which it exerted and expressed its authority. This applied in particular to the metropolitan province of Syria, where the caliphate faced its first and greatest enemy, Byzantium, in frontier lands that were close by and readily accessible via the superhighway. Apocalyptic literature from this era points to anxiety over a possible Byzantine invasion of the Syrian heartland. The Umayyad caliph, meanwhile, presented himself as the protector of the Syrian Muslims in his person, just as he embodied the *sunna* for the entire community.[84] In this frontier zone, ordinary Muslims seem to have been prevented from acquiring landed property, at least during the later Umayyad era, because ownership of such property was considered a prerogative of the caliph.[85] It may also be that the Umayyad patrimonial frontier state extended its claim to ownership, at least tendentially, not only over newly conquered lands in the Syrian frontier zone but also over agricultural and commercial property in the Syrian

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81. See Foote, "Umayyad Markets"; M. McCormick, "Movements and Markets in the First Millennium: Information, Containers, and Shipwrecks," in Morrisson, *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, 51–98; A. Walmsley, "Regional Exchange and the Role of the Shop in Byzantine and Early Islamic Syria-Palestine: An Archaeological View," in Morrisson, *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, 311–30.

82. Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 412–43 ; D. Genequand, *Les établissements des élites omeyyades en Palmyrène et au Proche-Orient* (Beirut: Institut français du Proche-Orient, 2013); idem, "Formation et devenir du paysage architectural omeyyade: L'apport de l'archéologie," in Borrut and Cobb, *Umayyad Legacies*, 417–73.

83. The literature on patrimonial states is enormous, though not for the early caliphate; see Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 391–92.

84. Décobert, "Notule."

85. M. Bonner, "The Naming of the Frontier: ʿAwāṣim, Thughūr, and the Arab Geographers," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 57 (1994): 17–24, esp. 21–22.

heartland. It then put all these resources to productive use, compensating for the deficiency or unpredictability of revenues from other provinces.[86] Meanwhile, it may also be the case—although the matter remains controversial—that the Umayyad caliphs exerted control over the legal apparatus, which presumably had the final say in who owned what.[87]

Muslims, Christians, and Jews certainly mixed together in Umayyad Syria, and they must also have shopped together. This brings up once again the question of what legal system held sway over those marketplaces that were not, as in Medina, frequented entirely by Arabic-speaking Muslims. The only thing that seems certain is that some of these marketplaces were owned by the Umayyad extended family. Yet this was the formative era of Islamic commercial law, a system that prevents powerful individuals from dominating the marketplace. Here we have the basis of another contrasting narrative and counternarrative. Our usual idea is that in the formative era, the Islamic marketplace assumed its characteristics—including its emphasis on transparency and the absence of monopolistic activity, including by the powers that be—in a linear fashion, parallel to the early development of the law governing these practices. Against this we have a picture of a marketplace best characterized as diverse and conflictual.

Poverty, Wealth, Asceticism

Modern discussions of the early Islamic economy often have an ethical, even moralizing character. Writers—whether historians, economists, journalists, apologists, or polemicists—have their views about progress or decline in the Islamic world, and they tend to attach the praise or blame for it to Islam itself. We have already seen this in the arguments over boom and bust. We can also see it in another way of thinking about the early Islamic economy, which, unlike "boom or bust," has deep roots in arguments that actually took place in the Near East during the early Islamic era. These take the form of the following narrative, or something like it.

Before the coming of Islam, the Arabs lived simply and were accustomed to hardship. Those among them who acquired wealth preferred to give it away or to consume it with ostentatious hospitality and feasts, hoping in this way to acquire fame, followers, and clients. This picture did not change fundamentally with the coming of Islam, as Muḥammad and his community remained frugal in their habits and practiced solidarity and generosity toward those less fortunate than themselves. But then the great conquests transformed everything. Accustomed to making do with little in an austere land, the Arabs suddenly had all the wealth of the great empires spread before them. They divided some of this wealth among themselves as spoils of war and took advantage of the rest as beneficiaries of the tax revenues that now came their way. From then on, however, things did not go smoothly. Some individuals acquired fabulous wealth and flaunted it with the arrogance of *nouveaux riches*. Others—most famously the second caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb—condemned this attitude and practiced self-denial in ways which may strike us now as equally flamboyant. Meanwhile, tensions arose over who was to have how much and in comparison to whom.

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86. Borrut, *Entre mémoire and pouvoir*, 431–44.

87. Schacht, *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, 192–213; Décobert, "Notule."

Tensions of this kind underlay what some modern observers have called "social protests," such as the events associated with Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, and they had a role in the *fitna*s, or civil wars. Dissatisfaction of this kind also resulted, later on, in a widespread ethos of passively renouncing the world (*zuhd*). Indeed, Islamic asceticism is often portrayed as having emerged directly from the old Arabian austerity, or else from nostalgia for it.[88]

This mode of arguing and narrating had a major place in early Islamic economic thought and practice. For even if there was, as S. D. Goitein claimed, an "early Islamic bourgeoisie,"[89] not all its members enjoyed their prosperity with blissfully carefree consciences. Contrary to what some present-day writers claim when they link early Islam to modern notions of property, market, and consumption, many early Muslims in the commercial sector felt profound unease about "gain" (*kasb*, *iktisāb*).[90] Some of them expressed this unease, and perhaps even resolved it, through renunciatory practices ("this-worldly asceticism"). What we call the realm of economics was for them at least as much an ethical—and of course, religious—area of concern as it was a practical one.

Perhaps our modern discussions have taken this discourse too literally. It was quite natural for people in, say, third/ninth-century Baghdad to view their own ups and downs in continuity with events in Arabia two or three centuries earlier. For after all, it was old Arabia and the earliest generations of Islam that provided them with legal and ethical frameworks for understanding these matters. Nonetheless, they lived in a different world: wealthier, urbanized, monetized, and with incomparably higher degrees of division of labor and social inequality. Accordingly, we should pay attention to this discourse, and others like it, not as literal accounts of what happened, but as components of early Muslims' understanding of the economic realm.

Conclusions

Here we may step back for a moment to ask what questions matter most for us regarding the economy of early Islam. We will all have our own preferences, but it seems that most of the modern contributions discussed here share a concern with continuity. Did the coming of Islam mean business as usual or a fresh start? Did property and infrastructure suffer damage from the early conquests? What new technologies were introduced and what already-existing technologies advanced or declined? What happened to trade networks at the local, regional, and interregional levels? These questions often occur in the framework of an inquiry regarding the transition "from late antiquity to early Islam."

These questions are all important. However, as scholars have asked and (where possible) answered them, they have not managed to avoid the problems discussed toward the beginning of this article. In particular, the term "economy" recurs in its modern sense, as an autonomous domain of experience, whereas the inhabitants of the early caliphate did not think of the economy in such terms—as indeed no one did before the modern era. This does not mean that we should avoid the term, precisely in its modern sense: for as modern

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88. L. Kinberg, "What Is Meant by *Zuhd*," *Studia Islamica* 66 (1985): 27–44.

89. Goitein, "Rise of the Middle-Eastern Bourgeoisie."

90. L. Kinberg, "Compromise of Commerce," *Der Islam* 66 (1989): 193–212; Bonner, "*Kitāb al-Kasb*."

observers, we have no real alternative. However, we do need to integrate the economy into other areas of experience, including religion and politics (both civilian and military). We also need to consider the early Islamic economy in the comparative context of tributary empires.

Modern discussions tend to portray these changes in Near Eastern society, politics, and economy as dutifully attending upon the arrival of a new ideology. Once certain basic principles and habits have been inculcated in the earliest generations, they remain in force basically forever. Yet everything that we know about early Islam suggests that this was an era of dynamic change. For that collective actor known to us as the Muslim community, it was an era of intense conflict, both external and internal. Accordingly, we may do well to seek approaches that feature dynamism and movement. Here Maurice Lombard stands out, in retrospect, as a pioneer.

In this article I have discussed only a few of the many pieces that need to be integrated into a broad picture. I have tried to find ways to use the early sources productively, by identifying contrasting and conflicting narratives and counternarratives within them. In this way I hope to discover certain institutional matrices that shaped these processes—though they did not govern or determine them. In the case of the argument over Meccan trade, we can identify two rival matrices, one in the master narrative familiar to us from such authors as al-Azraqī, and the other in the narrative of the "markets of the Arabs." These matrices are then, in turn, relevant to the events of the *ridda* wars, which, as already noted, followed the sequence of the "markets of the Arabs" throughout the peninsula, but in reverse order. For the Umayyad era, meanwhile, we have lots of information regarding the economy, but we lack a framework (or matrix) for bringing it all together. Again, the juxtaposition of rival conceptions may be useful: instead of an orderly progress toward the "free-market" world of the ʿAbbāsid era, we may have before us a diverse, even chaotic marketplace in which the ruling elites do precisely that which, according to Islamic law, they are not supposed to do, namely, manipulate and create productive and commercial infrastructure and institutions, all to their own advantage.

Finally, we may return to the economic boom that began in the early ʿAbbāsid era, if not earlier. We do not know exactly how it happened, but during the third/ninth century the situation becomes clearer, as we begin to have literary sources of various kinds. Among these the Arabic geographical literature is especially helpful, and within this literature the fourth/tenth-century author Ibn Ḥawqal[91] stands out in particular. With his expertise in trade, commerce, finance, and public administration, Ibn Ḥawqal helps us recognize our point of arrival. He also presents the advantage of having devoured (or thoroughly plagiarized) his predecessor al-Iṣṭakhrī, so that this single text provides detailed information from at least two successive generations.

One of the features of Ibn Ḥawqal's work is his detailed itinerary, already familiar from earlier Arabic geographical literature. Even though al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal offer the results of their own experience and research, these itineraries constitute the collective

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91. Abū al-Qāsim Ibn Ḥawqal al-Naṣībī, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, ed. J. Kramers (Leiden: Brill, 1938; repr. 1967); trans. M. Bonner, *Book of the Image of the Earth* (Reading: Garnet, 2018).

achievement of several generations. They are tied in their origins not only to the imperial postal system (*barīd*) but also to the army, including of the Umayyad era, with its superhighway. Another feature is political fragmentation. Al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal do not even try to peddle the fiction of a unitary caliphate, which in their time existed barely or not at all. Despite this fragmentation, however, a remarkable integration of markets and production emerges from Ibn Ḥawqal's presentation of networks at the local, regional, and interregional levels. I use "integration" here in a general sense, but I think that upon close examination, this and similar texts will also yield evidence of integration in a more technical sense, regarding the relation (coordination) of prices for a range of commodities and over time in different, but connected markets.[92]

For the most part in Ibn Ḥawqal's world, governors and rulers do not intervene often in the marketplace, at least directly. The great exception, the Ḥamdānid ruler Nāṣir al-Dawla, intervenes in, or rather usurps and destroys marketplaces, especially in Nisibis and Mosul, so egregiously and outrageously as actually to prove the rule.[93] On another occasion, in Tiflīs (Tbilisi), when a group of merchants undertake a rather questionable piece of business, their leader sends a message to the *amīr* to inform him but does not wait for permission to proceed.[94] Here we see no Polanyian "factors" (merchants operating on the account of the ruler or the state), and none of the "piggybacking" activity of certain merchants in the Roman empire who, many centuries earlier, had combined lucrative activity on behalf of the state with commerce on their own account, receiving handsome tax breaks along the way.[95] On the other hand, Ibn Ḥawqal shows endless admiration for certain great men who, after acquiring fortunes in government service, set themselves up in the countryside in manorial splendor,[96] like provincial magnates in the Roman and other tributary empires. He never tires of recounting the exploits of such people in the fiercely competitive domain of generosity and hospitality.

Ibn Ḥawqal brings us to where we knew we were going to arrive all along: a world where princes and governors exert only limited control over the marketplace; where Islamic commercial law prevails, more or less, in that marketplace; where prices find their "correct" levels on their own; and where many people—including Ibn Ḥawqal himself—show remarkable sophistication in the economic, commercial, and fiscal domains. One way or another, this is a different world from that of late Byzantine Syria and Egypt and Sasanian Iraq and Iran. Markets are now more integrated and yes, by modern standards, more "free."

How have we arrived here? I would argue that it has not been along a straight line leading back to the Mecca and Medina of the Prophet and beyond that to an earlier, promarket (though still pagan) Mecca. Instead, the early Islamic economic regime included what we may call, in Polanyian terms, a surprisingly large dose of reciprocity, frequently expressed

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92. Bang, *Roman Bazaar*, 12, 29, 114–15.

93. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 211–16. The same applies to Sayf al-Dawla in Aleppo, and other members of the Ḥamdānid clan.

94. Ibid., 340–42.

95. Bang, *Roman Bazaar*, 74–75.

96. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, 98–99, 154, 454, 466.

in Qurʾānic rhetoric and ethics, together with more predictable doses of redistribution and market exchange. Above all, the early Islamic economic order emerged from the large-scale movements and mixings of merchants, soldiers, and other people, together with the legal and moral principles, commodities, gifts, and other things that they bring with them. It also emerged from a long series of conflicts, such as those between Quraysh and their rivals in old Arabia over trade and access to markets; between the earliest Islam and its ideological, political, and commercial rivals; between the Umayyad ruling house and its enemies; and others that remain to be identified and charted.

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Reacting to Muḥammad:
Three Early Islamic Poets in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* *

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Abstract

*This article investigates how the secular Arabic poetic tradition interacted with the new religious rhetoric of emergent Islam. Concretely, it deals with the verses and legacies of three poets contemporary to Muḥammad who converted to Islam, yet protested its pietistic rhetoric. Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhalī, Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī, and Suḥaym, the slave of the Banū al-Ḥasḥās, all lived in the Ḥijāz and witnessed the formation of Muḥammad's movement up close. The first aim of the article is to listen to their reactions. Because the three poets were not directly involved in the promotion of the new religion, nor were they in an open struggle against it, their testimony is especially valuable for its insight into the reception of the emergent Islamic movement among Arab tribes in the Ḥijāz, beyond Muḥammad's close community. The second aim is to follow the later reception of the poets and their incorporation into the Arabo-Islamic canon through an examination of the narratives (*akhbār*) that accompany the verses in Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 356/967) Kitāb al-Aghānī, the underlying assumption being that these *akhbār* are secondary to the verses. Besides these two main points, an examination of the interplay between the verses and the* akhbār *also establishes the importance of Mukhaḍram poetry as a historical source and exposes the multilayered nature of the poets'* akhbār*.*

"Nothing is like the times of our [old] abode [. . .]! Now, chains have encircled [our] necks / and the youth has become like a middle-aged man, saying only the right things (*laysa bi-qāʾil siwā al-ḥaqq*),"[1] noted Abū Khirāsh bitterly in his poem. The poet, commenting on the changes that the Prophet Muḥammad and his community had brought about, hereby

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1. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2008), 21:151–152. I have

condemned the new morality that he perceived as overbearing. His two verses employ a striking comparison, likening the emerging Islamic discourse to chains around one's neck. They also paint a forbidding image of a young man who, because of the new moralizing discourse, has become bereft of the exuberance of youth and sounds like a much older person, saying "only the right things." Abū Khirāsh hailed from the environs of Mecca and witnessed the impact of the emergent Islam on his fellow tribesmen. He belonged to the generation of poets who lived in the time of Muḥammad's prophecy, whom the Arabic tradition called the Mukhaḍramūn, "Straddlers,"[2] because they straddled the periods of Jāhiliyya and Islam. As such, the Mukhaḍramūn provide an invaluable insight into the fascinating transitional period during which Islam, or perhaps more precisely the "Believers' movement," to use Fred M. Donner's term,[3] first appeared and gradually established itself in seventh-century Arabia.

Great transitional periods determine the course of history for centuries to come; they also contain the personal dramas of individuals such as Abū Khirāsh who saw a world familiar to them suddenly rejected as wrong and misguided. The poet's testimony reflects the voice of someone who did not actively participate in the new movement and remained on its margins. In this regard, Abū Khirāsh is similar to the two other Mukhaḍramūn included in this study, Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī and Suḥaym, the slave of the Banū al-Ḥashās.[4] The three poets represent different social groups—Abū Khirāsh was a Bedouin, Abū Miḥjan an urbanite, and Suḥaym a black slave—but they share a similar position vis-à-vis Muḥammad's

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translated *laysa bi-qāʾil siwā al-ḥaqq* as "saying only the right things" rather than "saying only the truth" to stress that the remark does not refer only to an intellectual position but rather implies a more general attitude. We may understand it as the early Islamic equivant of "political correctness" in today's parlance. *Al-ḥaqq* should be taken here as the opposite of *bāṭil*, wrongness or impiety. For the entire poem and its translation, see the Appendix, 1.a (The numbers and letters in the Appendix refer to the poets and poem selections, not to pages.) All translations in this article are mine unless otherwise stated.

2. This is the primary use of the term Mukhaḍramūn. It was later also applied to the poets of the second/eighth century who straddled the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid eras. These later poets were usually called *mukhaḍramū al-dawlatayn*. The term also has a technical sense in *ḥadīth*. See Renate Jacobi, "Mukhaḍram," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; Stetkevych, "*Qaṣīdah* by Ibn Muqbil," 304–305.

3. See Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), esp. 56ff.

4. Though the three poets are well-known figures in the Arabic literary tradition, they have received scant attention in modern Western scholarship. There is an *EI2* entry on Abū Khirāsh written by Charles Pellat, and Tzvetan Theophanov uses Abū Khirāsh and his poetry to challenge Suzanne Stetkevych's vision of the poetry of brigands as a failed rite of passage. Tzvetan Theophanov, "The Dīwān al-Hudhaliyyīn and the Rite de Passage Manqué," *Studies in Arabic and Islam: Proceedings of the 19th Congress, Halle 1998*, ed. Stefan Leder, 337–346 (Sterling, VA: Peeters, 2002); cf. Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), part 2. More recently, Nathaniel A. Miller mentions Abū Khirāsh and his poetry on various occasions in his dissertation on the *dīwān* of the Banū Hudhayl. Nathaniel A. Miller, "Tribal Poetics in Early Arabic Culture" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2016). Abū Miḥjan, too, has a short entry in the *EI2*: N. Rhodokanakis and Ch. Pellat, "Abū Miḥdjan", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. More scholars have dealt with Abū Miḥjan, especially with respect to his encounter with the caliph ʿUmar, who punished him for drinking wine. See, for example, Sean Anthony, "The Domestic Origins of Imprisonment: An Inquiry into an Early Islamic Institution," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129, no. 4 (2009): 592. As for Suḥaym, he is also the subject of a short *EI2* entry, written by A. Arazi.

community. All three poets lived in the Ḥijāz and consequently witnessed the formation of the Believers' movement up close. Though they accepted its authority (and are considered Muslims by the tradition, as evidenced in *Kitāb al-Aghānī*), they repeatedly violated the movement's norms and every so often rebelled against its values through their poetry. Most importantly, they were no ideologues, in the sense that they were neither directly involved in the promotion of Muḥammad's message nor engaged in an open struggle against it. When I call them marginal, I thus refer to their marginal position vis-à-vis the active currents of the new Islamic movement.

One goal of this article is to examine the verses of the three poets in order to explore their reactions to the spread of Muḥammad's message.[5] How did they react to the world changing in front of their eyes? What were the points on which their world views clashed with Muḥammad's? The perspective of these three poets is unique precisely due to their position at the margins of his movement, but not outside of it. As such, their perspective differs from that of poets in the service of the new community, such as Ḥassān b. Thābit, the Prophet's personal poet; from that of the *mushrikūn* poets who challenged Muḥammad; and from that of the narrators of later accounts about this period, who were writing from a temporal distance, at a time when Islam had already prevailed. The Mukhaḍramūn poets' complaints about the impact of the new ideology on their personal lives provide a window into the reception of the emergent Islamic movement among Arab tribes in the Ḥijāz beyond Muḥammad's close community.

A second goal of the article is to study the narratives (*akhbār*) that accompany this poetry to gain insight into the reception of the Mukhaḍramūn's verses. I focus on the *akhbār* in Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 356/967) *Kitāb al-Aghānī* ("Book of songs").[6] At first sight, the *akhbār* provide the reader with the context of the verses, but as I show, they are far from mere biographical footnotes. Rather, they have great hermeneutical value because they record the attempts of later Muslims to interpret the verses. Therefore, I am not interested so much in *what happened* (because that is often impossible to ascertain) as in *how it was remembered.*[7] I analyze the various functions of the *akhbār* and call attention to the occasional discrepancies between the *akhbār* and the poetry. I explain the existence of these discrepancies as the result of the interpretative efforts of later narrators and collectors. I assume that some sentiments expressed in the poetry proved a challenge for these men, and they attempted to reconcile these sentiments with their Islamic worldview

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5. The title "Reacting to Muḥammad" should thus be read as "reacting to the changes that Muḥammad brought about" rather than reacting directly to his persona.

6. On *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, its overall composition, and its value as a literary work, see Hilary Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs: Compilation and the Author's Craft in Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī's "Kitāb al-Aghānī"* (New York: Routledge, 2003). Kilpatrick also provides an overview of modern research on the work (pp. 1–14). On al-Iṣfahānī's profiles of the poets, see Kilpatrick, "Abū l-Faraǧ's Profiles of Poets: A 4th/10th Century Essay at the History and Sociology of Arabic Literature," *Arabica* 44 (1997): 94–128. On the sources of *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, see note 27 below.

7. I am inspired in this regard by the work of Antoine Borrut and by his bringing of scholarship on memory into the field of Islamic studies. See, most importantly, his *Entre mémoire et pouvoir: L'espace syrien sous les derniers Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides (v. 72–193/692–809)* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), esp. 168–204.

by means of the *akhbār*. The *akhbār*, then, served to modify the original meaning of the poetry that they frame and to mitigate its subversive effects. In this way *akhbār* reveal how later audiences reinterpreted the memories of the coming of Islam that this early poetry captures.

This article thus seeks, first, to shed light on the reception of Muḥammad's revelation among certain segments of society marginal to the new Believers' movement, as embodied in the work of three recalcitrant poets from the Ḥijāz, and, second, to make plain the processes through which these early sentiments and figures were readjusted to fit later Islamic sensibilities through literary *akhbār*. Besides these two main points, an examination of the interplay between the Mukhaḍramūn's poetry and *akhbār* in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* also establishes the importance of such poetry as a historical source, provides an argument in support of its authenticity—insofar as we can speak of "authenticity" in the oral(-cum-written) context of early Islamic poetry—and exposes the multilayered nature of the poets' legacy. I elaborate on these side arguments in the concluding remarks. The next section introduces the world, poetry, and *akhbār* of the Mukhaḍramūn.

1. The Mukhaḍramūn: Their World, Poetry, and *Akhbār*

The Mukhaḍramūn, the poetic "Straddlers," lived a precarious existence.[8] Born and raised in one world, they witnessed its fading and the gradual establishment of a new one. Muḥammad's religious message and political victory had far-reaching consequences not only for the political landscape of the region but also for the private lives of individuals. The submission to God and the piety (*taqwā*) that he called for became the requirements of the new society that was quickly taking shape. The world that these poets and the generations of poets before them had extolled in their poetry was suddenly rejected as the Jāhiliyya, usually but not adequately translated as "the age of ignorance" and infused with connotations of falsehood and unbelief (Q 3:154; 5:50; 33:33; 48:26).[9] Jaroslav Stetkevych has stressed the liminality of this period, underlined by the various meanings of the root *kh-ḍ-r-m* as "to cut in halves," "to cut a camel's ear," and "to mix," and eloquently explained that the grasping of the world of the Mukhaḍramūn requires

> a movement adrift, away from even the most totemically understood "split ear" of the archaic camel, away from a very "old beginning," before that beginning was called

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8. For a discussion of Mukhaḍram poetry, see J. Stetkevych's "*Qaṣīdah* by Ibn Muqbil" and his "Sacrifice and Redemption in Early Islamic Poetry: Al-Ḥuṭayʾah's 'Wretched Hunter,'" *Journal of Arabic Literature* 31, no. 2 (2000): 89–120; revised version published as "Sacrifice and Redemption: The Transformation of an Archaic Theme in al-Ḥuṭayʾah" (ch. 5) in his *The Hunt in Arabic Poetry: From Heroic to Lyric to Metapoetic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), 57–87. See also Suzanne P. Stetkevych, "Pre-Islamic Panegyric and the Poetics of Redemption," in *Reorientations: Arabic and Persian Poetry*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, 1–57 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); James E. Montgomery, *The Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah: The Tradition and Practice of Early Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1997), 209–258. For further bibliography, see Montgomery, *Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah*, 210, n. 285.

9. The classical article on the concept of Jāhiliyya is Ignaz Goldziher, "Was ist unter 'Al-Ǵâhilijja' zu verstehen?," in Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1889), 1:219–228. See also note 158 below.

al-Jāhiliyyah, now pronounced with sudden declarative force to be a very "old past" and, therefore, of being "invalid"—while yet being "everything."[10]

To a large extent, the poetry of the Mukhaḍramūn represents a continuation of Jāhilī poetics, which at times clashed with the rhetoric of the new religious movement.[11] The poetry of Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym, too, is close to pagan pre-Islamic poetry, the main difference being the comments of the three men on the world changing around them.[12] It should be noted, however, that their poetry offers little insight into their religious beliefs. Their complaints relate to a general change in moral codes and a break with past customs rather than any particular doctrine or the inability to engage in concrete religious practices. The lives and verses of the three men demonstrate that in their time, divisions between pagans or "associators" (*mushrikūn*), on the one hand, and Muslims or "Believers" (*muʾminūn*), on the other, reflected more a sociopolitical reality (i.e., allegiance to the Believers' movement or lack thereof) than an essential difference in worldviews. Take the case of Abū Khirāsh, for instance. Before his tribe, the Hudhayl, converted collectively to the new religion in the aftermath of the conquest of Mecca in 8/629, he is said to have fought against the Prophet. In his poetry, Abū Khirāsh—nominally a Believer—bewails the supremacy of the Prophet's tribe, the Quraysh, because it prevents him from carrying out an act of vengeance, which he sees as his ancient right.

What do I mean by Jāhilī poetics? For the purposes of this article, I will use the term "poetic Jāhiliyya" to refer to the dominant discourse of pre-Islamic poetry and the heroic value system that permeates most of its famous odes. I want to state explicitly that, by the poetic Jāhiliyya, I do not mean the overall reality of pre-Islamic Arabia, as it is hard to say what part of the population adhered to these values. The following six lines from the famous *muʿallaqa* of Ṭarafa, one of the Seven "Suspended Odes" as translated by J. A. Arberry, capture perfectly the defiant spirit of this discourse:[13]

> If you can't avert from me the fate that surely awaits me
>   then pray leave me to hasten it on with what money I've got.
> But for three things, that are the joy of a young fellow
>   I assure you I wouldn't care when my deathbed visitors arrive—
> first, to forestall my charming critics with a good swig of crimson wine
>   that foams when the water is mingled in;
> second, to wheel at the call of the beleaguered a curved-shanked steed
>   streaking like the wolf of the thicket you've startled lapping the water;

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10. J. Stetkevych, "*Qaṣīdah* by Ibn Muqbil," 308.

11. Renate Jacobi (quoted in Montgomery, *Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah,* 210) points out that Mukhaḍram poetry deviates from the early tradition in a number of formal and conceptual elements. In this article, however, I focus only on the poetry's contents, not on its stylistics.

12. As Jaroslav Stetkevych has shown in his study of Ibn Muqbil, the Mukhaḍram poet can also display a profound nostalgia for the "good old days" of the Jāhiliyya. Stetkevych, "*Qaṣīdah* by Ibn Muqbil."

13. Ṭarafa was a pre-Islamic, sixth-century poet from the tribe of Bakr and the region of Baḥrayn, one of those who recited their poetry at the court of ʿAmr b. Hind (d. ca. 9/568) in Ḥīra.

and third, to curtail the day of showers, such an admirable season
  dallying with a ripe wench under the pole-propped tent,
her anklets and her bracelets seemingly hung on the boughs
  of a pliant, unriven gum-tree or a castor-shrub.[14]

Ṭarafa celebrates the enjoyment of wine, amorous adventures, and fighting—themes that are repeated across heroic pre-Islamic poetry. These themes, however, should not be considered values in themselves. Rather, as the first line of this excerpt hints, they convey the poet's expression of his heroic refusal to bow to the power of the unpredictable fate. The celebration of wine, amorous adventures, and fighting should be understood as a proclamation of defiance in the face of death. He is aware that fate can strike at any time and so dares it to hasten with his unrestrained life. This uninhibited spirit spills over to interpersonal relationships, and so, for instance, extreme generosity is praised in Jāhilī poetry even if it endangers one's life. The implicit logic is that we will die in any case; all that can survive is our name and the memory of our honorable deeds perpetuated in poetry. Admittedly, the rich body of pre-Islamic poetry is heterogeneous. It displays a range of themes as various scholars have noted. So, for example, Nathaniel A. Miller has demonstrated that pre-Islamic poetry shows regional differences.[15] Suzanne Stetkevych has pointed to what she terms "proto-Islamic" themes in the verses of Zuhayr b. Abī Salmā and Labīd.[16] And James E. Montgomery has suggested two or three types of the relationship between early Arabic poetry and Islam: the submission of the Jāhilī ode to Islam, the synthesis of the two, and the coexistence of the two.[17] Yet the defiant spirit pervades most pre-Islamic odes, whether they display some proto-Islamic elements or not. On the whole, the "poetic Jāhiliyya" was ruled by the chaotic, arbitrary, and amoral fate (*dahr*, *manāyā*) that strikes purposelessly, erasing both individuals and entire civilizations; the pre-Islamic poet becomes the hero confronting fate with an impassive face and fighting for earthly fame and virtue either for himself or for his tribe.

I show below that the verses of Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym embrace the same heroic and defiant perspective as does Ṭarafa's *muʿallaqa*, a perspective that clashed with Muḥammad's teachings. The sentiment of individual rebellion against the arbitrariness of

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14. See A. J. Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957), 86. For the Arabic original, see the Appendix, 4.

15. Miller has drawn attention to the differences between the Ḥijāzī and Najdī corpora of pre-Islamic poetry and criticized scholars for treating Najdī examples as representative of pre-Islamic poetry as a whole. He points out that the salient characteristics of Najdī poetry—praise, poetry, tripartite *qaṣīda*s, and equestrian boasting—have been turned into characteristic features of pre-Islamic poetry in general even though they are missing from the *Dīwān*, a typical representative of Ḥijāzī poetry. Miller, "Tribal Poetics," 6.

16. See Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, 42–45, 50–54, 284–285; Suzanne Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muḥammad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 28–30.

17. See James E. Montgomery, "Sundry Observations on the Fate of Poetry in the Early Islamic Period," in *Tradition and Modernity in Arabic Language and Literature,* ed. J. R. Smart, 49-60 (London: Routledge, 1996), 54-57. For an extended version of this article see Montgomery, *The Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah,* 209-257.

fate has a parallel in the biblical statement, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,"[18] which is frowned upon in Christianity. The ideology introduced by Muḥammad had little room for the individual heroically confronting fate (understood as the Jāhilī amoral force). Islam, like Judaism and Christianity before it, rejected this worldview and replaced the arbitrary fate with a wise and all-knowing Creator. Instead of promoting earthly honor and fame, the new religion commanded its followers to direct their lives to the afterlife and substituted the hope of salvation for the heroic defiance of death itself. Salvation and status were now to be attained through righteous behavior and piety,[19] exemplified by the figure of the young man who, much to Abū Khirāsh's distaste, says only "the right things." All fighting was to be collective, undertaken in the name of God and for a higher good. The Jāhilī worldview was rejected and so were its main bearers, the poets, as the famous Qurʾānic verse *Sūrat al-Shuʿarāʾ* indicates.[20] Geert Jan van Gelder has described the coming of Islam as a transition between two kinds of ethos: that of Islam, based on guilt, and that of pre-Islamic times, based on honor and shame.[21] Guilt is related to the morality deplored by Abū Khirāsh. This morality—focused on the individual's accountability to God—implies remorse, though as Van Gelder explains, to new converts it may have meant only liability to punishment.[22] Admittedly, these models do not exist in societies in their pure forms, nor did Islam at that time—in the form we know it from later sources. But the verses of Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym reveal that the poets perceived some elements of the new morality as oppressive.

To be clear, I am not making the claim that Islamic society sprang into existence fully fledged. Quite the opposite: I show the frictions that accompanied the gradual process of

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18. The saying appears in four variants in the Bible (Ecclesiastes 8:15; Luke 12:19; Isaiah 22:13; Corinthians 15:32), and in most of these its sentiment is reprimanded. The first version of the saying appears in Ecclesiastes, which seems to endorse it, but the statement comes from the mouth of Qoheleth, who does not recognize any life beyond the present one, and as such it must be rejected.

19. Fred Donner has emphasized and evidenced the centrality of piety in Islam in his writings; see, for example, his *Muhammad and the Believers*, 61–68.

20. The Qurʾānic condemnation in *Sūrat al-Shuʿarāʾ* ends as follows: "And the Poets—it is those straying in Evil, who follow them / Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley? / And that they say what they practice not? / Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of God, and defend themselves after they are unjustly attacked. And soon will the unjust assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take!" (Q 26: 224–27). All Qurʾānic translations are based on Yusuf Ali's translation, but I substitute "God" for his "Allah." For a detailed discussion of these verses and the controversies that surround them see Montgomery, *Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah*, 210-216. For references to scholarship dealing with them see Montgomery, *Vagaries of the Qaṣīdah*, 210, n. 286, and Alan Jones, "Poetry and the Poets," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān.*

21. For a discussion of the two types of societies within the Islamic, see Geert Jan van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly: Attitudes Towards Invective Poetry (*Hijāʾ*) in Classical Arabic Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 13ff. Van Gelder draws on George Fenwick Jones, *Honor in German Literature.* The terms "guilt culture" and "shame culture" were popularized in Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), but a full bibliography on the topic would be too long to include here. Cf. Timothy Winter, "Honor," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān.*

22. Van Gelder, *Bad and Ugly*, 13.

transformation. A clash between the two worldviews is clearly expressed in the Qurʾān itself:

> While the Unbelievers got up in their hearts heat and cant—the heat and cant of [the pagan Age of] Ignorance (ḥammiyyat Jāhiliyya)—God sent down His tranquility to His Messenger and to the Believers, and made them stick close to the command of self-restraint. (Q 48:26)

The "heat and cant" of the Jāhiliyya stands precisely for the defiant spirit found in pre-Islamic poetry, the same spirit to which the three Mukhaḍramūn also ascribed, although they were no unbelievers but newly converted members of the Believers' movement.

The second type of material discussed in this article consists of akhbār of the three poets in the fourth/tenth-century Kitāb al-Aghānī. The akhbār ostensibly provide a biographical and historical context for excerpts of poetry, clarifying the situations in which the verses were recited. Scholars have shown, however, that literary akhbār cannot be taken at face value as impartial historical material.[23] Suzanne Stetkevych, for one, has emphasized throughout her work the interpretative value of akhbār. She has analyzed the role of akhbār in constructing poets' mythic and folkloric personalities, which reveal how these figures were remembered centuries after their deaths.[24] She also points out that the akhbār provide an evaluation of the poetry and its performance. Thus the poems and the akhbār combined provide a basis for understanding the process through which pre-Islamic poetry was "transmitted, preserved, selected, and molded by Muslim hands into a literary corpus and a cultural construct that served to advance the interests of an Arabo-Islamic political, religious, and literary-cultural hegemony."[25] This is how I use the akhbār here—to reflect on the later transmission and reception process of, in this case, the poetry of the three Mukhaḍramūn.

More specifically, my focus is on the occasional discrepancies between the poetry and the akhbār. As much as the verses of Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym breathe the spirit of the poetic Jāhiliyya, their akhbār, on many occasions, show an unmistakably Islamic character. The reason for this, I argue, is that later audiences equipped the Mukhaḍram poetry with narratives that were meant to make sense of this poetry within their Islamic framework. In this regard, it is important that the three poets were seen as Muslims. The

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23. Beyond the genre of akhbār accompanying poetry, Letizia Osti has discussed how different compilers mixed and edited akhbār to evaluate the scholar al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/947); see Letizia Osti, "Tailors of Stories: Biographers and the Lives of the Khabar," Synergies Monde Arabe 6 (2009): 283–291. Fedwa Malti-Douglas has traced the functions of a group of akhbār in different genres in "Texts and Tortures: The Reign of al-Muʿtadid and the Construction of Historical Meaning," Arabica 46 (1999): 313–336. On khabar in general, see Stefan Leder, "The Literary Use of Khabar: A Basic Form of Historical Writing," in The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East, vol. 1, Problems in the Literary Source Material, ed. Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, 277–315 (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1999).

24. See especially Suzanne P. Stetkevych, "Archetype and Attribution in Early Arabic Poetry: Al-Shanfarā and the Lāmiyyat al-ʿArab," International Journal of Middle East Studies 18, no. 3 (1986): 361–390.

25. Suzanne P. Stetkevych, The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

generation of Muslims that overlapped with the Prophet and the first caliphs has a special place in Islamic memory and a continuing relevance for Muslims' conceptions of their origins. However, there is a temporal and epistemic gap between the poets and their later audiences. We have to remember that the poetry and the *akhbār* have been preserved in much later sources. Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym lived in the first/seventh century, but Abū al-Faraj, our main source, wrote his *Kitāb al-Aghānī* in the fourth/tenth century, although he depended on earlier written sources. His work thus represents the culmination of a process three centuries long during which different people were narrating the verses, imagining their circumstances, and embroidering them with stories.[26] Abū al-Faraj recorded many chains of transmissions (*isnād*s) for his reports, and various scholars have discussed his use of sources.[27] My emphasis is not on the individual transmitters or their methods of transmission (oral vs. written) but rather on the transformed world in which these narrators lived and that conditioned them to reinterpret old poetry according to new sensibilities.

I contend that the disharmony between the *akhbār* and the poetry to which I draw attention is indicative of the multilayered chronology of the preserved material. (I will attempt to sort out the possible layers in my concluding remarks; for now, let us treat the *akhbār* as one body of material to make clear the contrast between them and the poetry.) Although poetry may have been subject to later editing, the variants of early poems suggest that such editing was minor and that the poetry remained largely stable. The differences indicate reliable oral transmission: they consist mainly of variances in the order of lines or of individual words, as the meter and rhyme helped the stability of the verse. Admittedly, this observation pertains chiefly to long poems; many two- or four-line verses could have easily been created later on to embellish narratives.[28] Speaking generally on the issue of the

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26. Abū Khirāsh's poetry was also preserved in an earlier *dīwān* known as *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-ʿUrūba, 1965) by the third/ninth-century scholar Abū Saʿīd al-Sukkarī. Tribal *dīwān*s like this one focus mainly on poetry and contain only a few *akhbār*. Abū Miḥjan also has a medieval *dīwān* compiled by the fourth/tenth-century scholar Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī. Suḥaym's *dīwān* was edited from different version likewise compiled in the fourth/tenth century. See Abū Miḥjan, *Dīwān Abī Miḥjan wa-sharḥuh*, ed. Abū Hilāl [al-ʿAskarī] (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Azhār, n.d.); Suḥaym ʿAbd Banī al-Hashās, *Dīwān Suḥaym ʿAbd Banī al-Ḥashās*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Maymanī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1950).

27. The first to raise the issue of the sources of *Kitāb al-Aghānī* was Régis Blachère, who believed that Abū al-Faraj drew mainly on written sources. After him, Leon Zolondek argued that we need to focus on the "collector sources" who first collected the reports about a given poet. Manfred Fleischhammer conducted the most detailed study of *Kitāb al-Aghānī*'s sources and identified all of its 150 informants in his *Die Quellen des "Kitāb al-Aġānī"* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2004). Kilpatrick has also dealt with the sources of *Kitāb al-Aghānī* in her monograph. See Kilpatrick, *Making the Great Book of Songs*, 1–14; Régis Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1952), 135; Leon Zolondek, "The Sources of the Kitāb al-Aġānī," *Arabica* 8, no. 3 (1961): 294–308.

28. In this context it is also relevant to mention the distinction that Wolfhart Heinrichs has drawn between action poems and commentary poems. Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Prosimetrical Genres in Classical Arabic Literature," in *Prosimetrum: Crosscultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*, ed. Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl, 249–76 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1997). Action poems, defined as poems that form the core of narrative units, would seem to be primary in meaning and chronology, whereas commentary poems, serving as embellishment of the narratives they accompany, would be secondary.

authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry, James Monroe concluded:

> Pre-Islamic poetry should on the whole be viewed as authentic as long as it is clearly understood that what has been preserved of it is probably not an exact recording of what a great poet once said, but a fairly close picture of it, distorted by the vicissitudes of an oral transmission in which both memorization and "de-paganization" were operative and further complicated by a tradition of scribal correction.[29]

Memorization, as I have already noted, could be a reliable means of transmission, and "de-paganization" seems to have been operative mainly on the surface (e.g., through altering the names of deities). So in cases of discrepancy between poetry and *akhbār*, I take the poetry to be the earlier source. The *akhbār*, which in my understanding reflect the attempts of later audiences to interpret the old poetry, offer an insight into the multiple layers of collecting, writing, and organizing the past. Their examination reveals, broadly speaking, two ways in which later generations integrated the unruly poets within an Islamic framework: they transformed them into either Islamic heroes or deterring cases. Abū Khirāsh, discussed in the next section, falls into the first category.

2. Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhalī: From Brigand to Martyr

Abū Khirāsh, or Khuwaylid b. Murra, was a Mukhaḍram master poet (lit. "stallion," *faḥl*)[30] from the Hudhayl tribe. The Hudhayl lived in the environs of Mecca and al-Ṭāʾif, and during the war between the Prophet Muḥammad and the Quraysh they sided with the Quraysh and converted to Islam only after the latter were defeated in 8/629–30. Both the poetry and the *akhbār* of Abū Khirāsh indicate that he actively fought against the Prophet, which may also explain his lasting aversion to Muḥammad's message, expressed most poignantly in the verses quoted at the beginning of this article.

Aside from being a poet, Abū Khirāsh was also a brigand. In both respects he was an exemplary member of his tribe. The Hudhayl were famous for their poetry; the *ʿayniyya* elegy of Abū Dhuʾayb for his five sons became immortal.[31] They were equally famous for their brigandry (*ṣaʿlaka*). The term *ṣuʿlūk* is most famously used for pre-Islamic heroic poets such as al-Shanfarāʾ, who abandoned his tribe, attacked his own kinsmen, and composed verses about his bravery vis-à-vis both desert animals and men. So it may seem surprising that the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* would call the Mukhaḍram Abū Khirāsh, a loyal member of his tribe, a *ṣuʿlūk*. It should be noted, however, that *ṣaʿālīk* are found in history until the end

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29. James T. Monroe, "Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 3 (1972): 41.

30. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:147. Ibn Sallām does not mention him among *fuḥūl*.

31. For the Arabic text of Abū Dhuʾayb's *ʿayniyya*, see al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 4–41. The poem is also found in al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, with the commentary of al-Anbārī, ed. Charles James Lyall (Beirut: Matbaʿat al-Ābāʾ al-Yasūʿiyyīn, 1930), 849–92. On the Hudhayl, see G. Rentz, "Hudhayl," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; Kirill Dmitriev, "Hudhayl, Banū," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed. The *dīwān* of their poetry is the only one preserved among the old tribal *dīwāns*. That the pride of the Hudhalīs remains strong today is indicated by the forum "Majālis qabīlat Hudhayl," where the contemporary members of the tribe share their tribal poetry and legends: http://www.hothle.com.

of the Umayyad period[32] and that even some famous pre-Islamic *ṣaʿālīk* such as Taʾabbaṭa Sharran and ʿUrwa b. Ward remained integrated within their tribes.[33] Furthermore, as Albert Arazi has noted, one category of people identified as *ṣaʿālīk* consisted of groups of individuals who had opted for brigandry as a means of survival, such as the Hudhayl.[34] A characteristic feature of *ṣaʿālīk* was their prowess as runners, which they needed during their raids. Al-Shanfarāʾ's ability to run fast even became proverbial.[35] Referring to the brigand lifestyle, al-Aṣmaʿī commented about the Hudhayl: "If a Hudhalī is not a poet, nor can run fast, nor can shoot arrows, he is worthless."[36] And it may not be a coincidence that the root *h-dh-l* has to do with running swiftly.[37]

Abū Khirāsh's fleet-footedness is a theme that runs through his poetry and *akhbār* and thus functions to reinforce his image as a brigand. Abū Khirāsh is said to have run faster than the horses during his tribe's raids and wars.[38] A *khabar* narrates, for instance, that when Abū Khirāsh came to Mecca, he dared the rich Qurashī leader al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra (d. 1/622 or 623) to give Abū Khirāsh his race horses if the poet proved able to run faster than they did. According to the story, Abū Khirāsh won both the race and the horses.[39] So although he was an integral member of his tribe, Abū Khirāsh is a famous example of early Islamic *ṣaʿālīk*.

The brigand's life was filled with endless tribal feuds, which inevitably lead to the loss of his beloved ones and demands for blood vengeance. Abū Khirāsh composed many elegies for his friends and brothers. His *akhbār* tell us that he had ten brothers, all of whom died before him, and narrate the violent deaths of some of them. The following poem is Abū Khirāsh's elegy for his brother ʿUrwa. In it, the poet rejects the reproaches of ʿUrwa's wife Umayma that he has forgotten the deceased, declaring the depth of his sorrow:

> By my life, my appearance has made Umayma worried;
>   she doesn't see much of me.
> She says: "I see him [Abū Khirāsh] having a good time after the death of ʿUrwa."
>   If only you [Umayma] knew how great an affliction this is [to me.]
> Do not believe that I forgot the loss, Umayma;
>   yet my patience is a virtue.
> Don't you know that before us
>   the pure brothers Mālik and ʿAqīl were separated?

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32. A. Arazi, "Al-<u>Sh</u>anfarāʾ," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; Arazi, "Ṣuʿlūk," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

33. A. Arazi, "Taʾabbaṭa <u>Sh</u>arran," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

34. Arazi, "Ṣuʿlūk."

35. Arazi, "Al-<u>Sh</u>anfarāʾ." Other *ṣaʿālīk*, such as Taʾabbaṭa Sharran and ʿAmr b. Barrāq, were also known to be able to run fast. Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, 102.

36. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:149.

37. See *Lisān al-ʿArab*, s.v. "*h-dh-l*."

38. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:147.

39. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:149.

> The view of our now-emptied home and resting place
> > still disturbs me and robs me of my patience.
> And so does the fact that I embrace every morning light
> > with a deep, heavy sigh . . .[40]

To illustrate the kind of relationship he had with his brother, the poet draws on Arabian mythology. Two brothers, Mālik and ʿAqīl, legendary boon companions of a pre-Islamic king of al-Ḥīra, Jadhīmat al-Abrash, became proverbial for their lasting and deep friendship.[41] Abū Khirāsh further instructs Umayma to have patience, which, he assures her, is painful for him, too. Every morning he opens his eyes with a heart heavy over the emptiness of his house after ʿUrwa's departure. This and other elegies composed by Abū Khirāsh for his brothers and companions as well as narratives about his death from a snakebite add up to an image of a poetic figure no less heroic and tragic than Abū Dhuʾayb. They portray Abū Khirāsh as a true heir to the world of the poetic Jāhiliyya, with a life full of tribal feuds and death.

Abū Khirāsh's close relationship to the Jāhilī world is even more explicit in his elegy for the custodian of the shrine of the female divinity al-ʿUzzā. Here, the poet fondly recalls the hospitality that the custodian, called Dubayya, once showed him.[42] For the study of this transitional moment in history, it is significant that Dubayya was killed and the shrine of al-ʿUzzā was destroyed, allegedly by Khālid b. al-Walīd acting on Muḥammad's direct orders. Ibn al-Kalbī places this event in the year in which the Prophet conquered Mecca (8/629–30),[43] the same year in which the Hudhayl submitted to his rule. Abū Khirāsh's loyalties could not be more divided, as his tribe has just pledged obedience to Muḥammad, their former enemy. In the following verses Abū Khirāsh mourns Dubayya through the image of a wine gathering from which Dubayya is missing:

> What is wrong with Dubayya? For days, I have not seen him
> > Amid the wine-bibbers; he drew not nigh, he did not appear.
> If he were living he would have come with a cup
> > Of the banū Haṭif make, filled with Bacchus oil.
> Generous and noble is he; no sooner his wine cups
> > Are filled than they become empty, like an old tank full of holes
> > in the midst of winter.
> Suqam has become desolate, deserted by all of its friends,
> > Except the wild beasts and the wind which blows through
> > the evergreen trees.[44]

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40. See al-Iṣfahānī, al-Aghānī, 21:159; see also al-Sukkarī, Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn, 1189–95 (twenty-four lines rather than six). For the Arabic, see the Appendix, 1.c.

41. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, narrates a story about Mālik and ʿAqīl and mentions their occurrence in this verse as well as in that by Mutammim b. Nuwayra, another Mukhaḍram poet who was famous for his elegies for his brother Mālik. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: Brill, 1879–90), 1:755.

42. Al-Iṣfahānī, al-Aghānī, 21:150.

43. Ibn al-Kalbī, Book of Idols, trans. Nabih Amin Faris (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1952), 21.

44. This is the translation of Nabih Amin Faris in Ibn al-Kalbī's Book of Idols, 22. See also al-Iṣfahānī,

When Abū Khirāsh realizes that Dubayya is missing among the wine-drinkers, he immediately knows that something bad has happened to the custodian. The poet recalls Dubayya's generosity (describing him as *kābī al-ramād*, "the one who spreads ashes," implying that he frequently cooks and shares meals with others) and his vigor in drinking. Dubayya would, according to Abū Khirāsh, generously offer wine to his guests even in the winter, when no one has much food or drink to spare, and his cups seem bottomless, "like an old tank full of holes." But now that Dubayya is dead, the poet replaces the image of generosity and drinking with a scene of the desolate dwelling of the deceased, haunted by wild beasts and the howling wind. The themes of a drinking party, extreme generosity, and especially a pagan shrine root the verse in the poetic Jāhiliyya; yet the historical circumstances place it in the Islamic era. Another elegy by Abū Khirāsh, which I quoted at the beginning of this article and which I now discuss in greater detail, addresses this liminality directly.

"Jamīl b. Maʿmar grieved my guests . . ."

In his elegy for his close friend Zuhayr b. al-ʿAjwa, as in the previous poem, Abū Khirāsh celebrates a man killed by one of Muḥammad's companions. Zuhayr had been taken captive during the Battle of Ḥunayn (8/630) and had then been killed by a companion of the Prophet called Jamīl b. Maʿmar.[45] These details place the poem and the poet in the midst of the events surrounding the rise of Muḥammad's community. The accompanying story ascribes the killing not to a clash between a Believer and his opponent but to an older "hatred between them from the time of Jāhiliyya."[46] The elegy appears in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* in the following form:

> Jamīl b. Maʿmar grieved my guests with the slaughter
> > of a munificent man with whom widows sought refuge;
> whose sword-belt was long, who was not corpulent,
> > and whose sword-straps moved about on his body [as he was
> > slender] when he stood up;
> in whose house a stranger would take shelter in wintertime,
> > even a destitute man dressed in worn-out rags, in need to feed his family,
> who—suffering from cold, chased by the evening wind
> > that made him call out for help—went to him [Zuhayr];
> whose hands almost lose his cloak
> > when the north winds blow in his face.
> So what is the matter with the people of his tribe that they did not collapse
> > when such a wise and noble man departed?
> And I swear, had you not found him tied up,
> > thirsty hyenas would have come to drink your blood where the *wādī* bends.

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al-Aghānī, 21:150–151.

45. This Jamīl b. Maʿmar is not to be confused with the poet Jamīl b. Maʿmar, also known as Jamīl Buthayna.

46. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:210; al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1221.

> Then Jamīl would have been the one among his people slain most ignominiously.
>> But a man's concern is his opponent's back [i.e., Zuhayr was slain unfairly].
> Nothing is like the times of our [old] abode, Umm Mālik!
>> Now, chains have encircled [our] necks,
> and the youth has become like a middle-aged man,
>> saying only the right things; the railing women are relieved.
> But I have not forgotten our days and nights together at Ḥalya
>> when we met with the ones that we desired.
> (And our sincere friends now seem as if
>> someone were pouring [sand] on them by a graveyard
>> [i.e. burying them alive].)[47]

At the beginning of the elegy, Abū Khirāsh identifies Jamīl b. Maʿmar as the culprit behind Zuhayr's death. To show the greatness of this loss, the poet glorifies Zuhayr's generosity and majestic appearance. He mentions that Zuhayr used to offer shelter to the most fragile members of society: widows, strangers, and beggars. He also emphasizes Zuhayr's height by pointing to the length of his sword-belt (tall men wear long sword-belts) and describing him as "not corpulent," reinforcing his words with the image of his sword-straps "moving about on his body when he stood up." Zuhayr's noble presence contrasts with the destitution of a beggar who, dressed only in old rags, walks in the freezing and windy night crying out for Zuhayr's help.

The poem then juxtaposes another Jāhilī heroic feature of Zuhayr, bravery, with the cowardice of his killers from Muḥammad's community. Abū Khirāsh claims that the latter were able to slay Zuhayr only because they found him with his hands bound. Had they encountered him unfettered, Zuhayr would have slaughtered them, leaving their blood as if a drink for thirsty hyenas. Abū Khirāsh further stresses the unfairness of Zuhayr's slaying in captivity by quoting what seems like tribal wisdom about human insidiousness: "A man's concern is his opponent's back."

The verses that opened this article appear toward the end of the elegy. With their references to chains encircling the poet's neck and the premature sapping of youthful exuberance, they directly reject the moralistic spirit of Muḥammad's message. Although the poet's nostalgic appeal to the "days of [his old] abode" could be a standard motif found in the *nasīb* (amatory prelude) of the traditional *qaṣīda*, the image of chains and the new theme of correctness (*al-ḥaqq*) read like a direct comment on the rise of the new religious community and a complaint about its moralizing tone—a subtext strengthened by the tradition's identification of Jamīl, the murderer mentioned in the poem, as a Companion of the Prophet. Given the agreement between the verses and the *akhbār*, we can consider the poem an eyewitness testimony of the impact of Muḥammad's mission on the lives of his contemporaries.

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47. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī* 21:151–152; cf. Al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1221–1223. For the whole poem in the Arabic original as recorded in the *Aghānī*, see the Appendix, 1.a. The last line appears only in al-Sukkarī's *Sharḥ*, so I include it here in parentheses.

It is not difficult to guess what Abū Khirāsh would prefer the young men of his tribe to talk about instead of "the right things": bravery and comradery in fighting, wine-drinking, generosity, and other tribal values of the past. The phrase "the railing women are relieved" is a reference to Jāhilī poetry's traditional theme of railing women (*ʿawādhil*) who reproach and blame the poet for his extensive drinking and extreme generosity. In Jaroslav Stetkevych's description, the railing woman "is the reckless warrior's and fame-seeker's sobering, reminding, and warning voice 'of reason,' mostly social and domestic. She is, therefore, the counter-heroic, interest-oriented element in the earliest Arabic poetry."[48] Now, as Abū Khirāsh sourly notes, the *ʿawādhil* can be content. The new era has suppressed the heroism and exuberance of the past.

These lines force a reconsideration of the entire poem. Even the seemingly pure Jāhilī part is to be understood from the perspective of a Mukhaḍram, living at the threshold between the familiar past and the unknown future. In this light, Zuhayr functions not only as a traditional hero but also as a symbol of the bygone era of Jāhiliyya. Two further lines support this reading. In one, the poet, having extolled the hero's generosity and bravery, asks a rhetorical question: "So what is the matter with the people of his tribe that they did not collapse when such a wise and noble man departed?" In other words, he questions how Zuhayr's tribesmen can go on living in a world from which Zuhayr and his like are absent. This sentiment is presented even more clearly in the last line of the poem, a line that—most interestingly—does not appear in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* but is included only in al-Sukkarī's version of the poem: "And our sincere friends (*ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*) now seem as if someone were pouring [sand] on them by a graveyard."[49] The line movingly evokes a bygone past, a world that has vanished. The mention of *ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ* is, of course, not a reference to the mysterious, much later authors of a philosophical compendium of sciences, the Brethren of Purity, but a memory of the poet's comrades or, perhaps, honorable ancestors who lived by the values of the world that is now fading. Like Zuhayr, these "sincere friends" symbolize the pre-Islamic hero and the ancestral customs. And like him, they are dead. More importantly, their memory, too, is slowly falling into oblivion. The poet expresses this process of forgetting through the image of these friends being buried in sand, in a place hidden from the eyes of the community—by a graveyard. Closely examined, the poem is not only an elegy for Abū Khirāsh's dead friend but also a swan song of the Jāhiliyya.

Blood Vengeance (Thaʾr) in Abū Khirāsh's World

In a world in which Abū Khirāsh's close associates were dying one after another, retribution was crucial. The theme of blood vengeance permeates Abū Khirāsh's poetry and *akhbār*, as he repeatedly swears to avenge the deaths of his friends and brothers and boasts about his successes in doing so. In the case of Zuhayr, however, this order of things is interrupted. For, as another elegy for Zuhayr attests, the victory of Muḥammad's

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48. Stetkevych, "*Qaṣīdah* by Ibn Muqbil," 324. For a bibliography on the *ʿādhila* motif (and some controversy around it), see ibid., n. 40, and further Jaroslav Stetkevych, *The Zephyrs of Najd* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 244, n. 48.

49. Al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1223.

community made the appropriate blood vengeance impossible. In the first line of this excerpt, Abū Khirāsh reports having had a premonition of Zuhayr's death; in the second line, he expresses his frustration at his current inability to take revenge:

> Would I be saying every single night:
>   "May he not depart, the one killed by Jamīl?"
> I never used to doubt that if the Quraysh killed one of us
>   we would take vengeance [lit. they would be killed for our killed].
> And so I remain with a burning thirst, as long as you rule and prosper,
>   until you are killed.[50]

Whereas in the past the poet would always have been able to avenge a loved one even if he or she had been killed by the powerful Quraysh, now that Abū Khirāsh's tribe has pledged its allegiance to Muḥammad, this option to exercise an old right has been taken away from him. Like many others, Abū Khirāsh belonged nominally to the community of Believers but was steeped in the honor system in which blood vengeance played a central role. In his circles, the failure to avenge one's kin, as when blood money (*diya*) is accepted, constitutes grounds for mockery. So when Abū Khirāsh's brother al-Abaḥḥ—also a poet—swears to take revenge on Sārī b. Zunaym for the killing of another brother of theirs but then accepts *diya* instead, Sārī derides al-Abaḥḥ: "You took his blood money and you put aside his matter with the Banū Tamīm for a couple of starved camels."[51] Returning to the verses above, the poet's way of referring to Muḥammad's community as "the Quraysh" is interesting because it suggests that he did not consider it a new religious movement but simply a victorious tribe.

Abū Khirāsh's description of his exasperation at his inability to exercise *thaʾr* as a "burning thirst" is another noteworthy element of the poem. It indicates that vengeance goes beyond an honorable duty and rather constitutes—like thirst—a physical necessity. Similarly, al-Abaḥḥ describes *thaʾr* as "calming" (*munīm*),[52] suggesting that only when revenge has been taken can one regain peace. Elsewhere, Abū Khirāsh expresses his thirst for blood thus:

> My thirsty lips,
>   this is no sheep's milk.
> Instead, it is a gathering of young men,
>   each with a refined spearhead, heated up [and yearning for blood].[53]

The poet warns his lips that they will quench their thirst not with milk but with blood. His enemies' spearheads are similarly bloodthirsty. Suzanne Stetkevych has connected the same imagery of drinking lances in a poem by Taʾabbaṭa Sharran to the ritual of sacrifice, explaining that, like sacrifice, "the killing of the enemy in blood vengeance is perceived as

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50. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:152; see also al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1229. For the Arabic original, see the Appendix, 1.b.

51. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:158, and al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 668.

52. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:158.

53. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:156; Appendix, 1.d.

revitalizing the kin."[54] More broadly, building on the work of the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and the sociologists Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, Stetkevych argues that blood vengeance in Jāhilī poetry "performs the function of a rite of passage or of sacrifice" in that it represents the transition of the avenger from one ritual state to another.[55]

Thaʾr had an important social function in pre-Islamic Arabia. Robert Hoyland has noted that the threat of destructive retaliation in fact made the Arabs hesitate before they killed someone, and in this way it contributed to keeping order.[56] It is natural that in a society that lacks a more universal state authority, the family and the tribe must protect a person's life. The role of blood vengeance in maintaining order in society and preventing its disintegration has been observed in other times and societies as well. Plato, for instance, contends in his *Laws* that a potential murderer "in dread of such vengeances from Heaven [. . .] should refrain himself."[57] In certain aboriginal cultures in Australia, a ritualized version of the blood feud had a conciliating effect. When a killing took place, the two kin groups would hurl spears at each other, and once blood had been spilled and the blood vengeance satisfied, they would return to peaceful coexistence.[58] In the European context, the long tradition of dueling, fueled partially by ideas of chivalry born in the Frankish lands of northwestern Europe, serves as another parallel.[59] Like *thaʾr*, dueling was connected to notions of the honor of the individual and the class that he represented, and, as V. G. Kiernan points out, it reduced feuds "to symbolic proportions, confined them to individuals, and required only a limited number of victims."[60] Even in modern-day Upper Egypt, a region still connected to the practice of *thaʾr*,[61] substitutive rites are carried out that elucidate the institution's sacrificial nature and importance in maintaining social order. In some cases, the shroud of the deceased is spread on the floor and a sheep is sacrificed as an alternative. From this larger perspective, Abū Khirāsh's celebration of the virtue of *thaʾr* is not merely an empty boast but rather a proclamation of allegiance, perhaps unconscious, to an ancient cultural model that transcends temporal and geographical boundaries. In both ancient

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54. Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, 65.

55. The rite of passage has been theorized by van Gennep as (1) a "rite of separation" of the initiate from society, (2) a marginal state in which the initiate is temporarily outside society, and (3) a "rite of aggregation" in which he/she is brought back into society and a new social role. See Edmund Leach, "Against Genres: Are Parables Lights Set in Candlesticks or Put under a Bushel?," in *Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth*, ed. Edmund Leach and D. Alan Aycock, 89–112 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 99, quoted in Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, 56.

56. Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2001), 113–114.

57. Plato, *Laws*, 9:872e, 873a.

58. Jack David Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion: Culture to the Ultimate* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 114.

59. V. G. Kiernan, *The Duel in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1.

60. Kiernan, *Duel in European History*, 12.

61. It should be noted that the image of Upper Egypt as a traditional, backward society in which *thaʾr* is still practiced is partially created and perpetuated by modern Egyptian television shows, such as *Aunt Ṣafiyya and the Monastery* (based on Bahāʾ Ṭāhir's novel) and *Revenge.* See Lila Abu-Lughod, *Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 180–181.

and modern societies that rely on the law of blood vengeance, the failure to avenge blood may be perceived as a path to social dissolution. The ritual and sacrificial significance of blood vengeance and its social function are key to understanding the profound break with the past that Muḥammad's banishment of the practice of *thaʾr* represented and that Abū Khirāsh lamented in his poem.

However, vengeance could also spiral out of control and lead to excessive bloodshed. *Thaʾr* as could erase entire families and tribes, as a *khabar* involving Abū Khirāsh's family illustrates. According to the story, the Banū Liḥyān killed a protégé (*jār*) of one of Abū Khirāsh's brothers, Abū Jundub, "whom his people called ill-omened."[62] Abū Jundub went to Mecca, performed the rituals of the pilgrimage, gathered all the reprobates (*khulaʿāʾ*) present, and "killed many of their [Banū Liḥyān's] men and took captive many of their women and children."[63] The most famous example of the destructive power of *thaʾr* remains the legendary al-Basūs War between the tribes Bakr and Taghlib, which supposedly started over a killed camel and continued for forty years. Muḥammad's community was aware of this danger; Muḥammad feared *thaʾr* as antiestablishment force and as an expression of tribal *ʿaṣabiyya* and ruled strongly against it. The famous "farewell oration" (*khuṭbat al-widāʿ*) ascribed to Muḥammad contains an explicit prohibition of *thaʾr*: "The blood [revenge] of the Jāhiliyya is void" (*wa-inna dimāʾ al-jāhiliyya mawḍūʿa*).[64] Notwithstanding the possible later origin of this speech,[65] it shows that the early Islamic community saw *thaʾr* as an important and dangerous matter. The Qurʾān, a contemporary source, admonishes against taking revenge on anyone beyond the perpetrator of a crime. This condoned substitute practice is called *qiṣāṣ*:[66]

> [Do not] take life which God has made sacred—except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, We have given his heir authority [to demand *qiṣāṣ* or to forgive]: *but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life.* (Q 17:33; my emphasis)

But even in the case of this limited "just" punishment, the Qurʾān encourages forgiveness. In a similarly phrased verse, it adds that "if anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people" (Q 5:32). The new community rejected the ancient law as barbaric.

Furthermore, *thaʾr* must be understood as a part of a broader view of warfare and of the individual's role therein, which was to be irreversibly changed. Although it represented a deadly threat to society, *thaʾr* also emphasized the value of individual life because it provided a strong incentive not to kill. The death of just one person could result in the

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62. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:161.

63. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al- Aghānī*, 21:161; or so the narrators of the *Aghānī* imagine the incident that Abū Jundub mentions in his *fakhr* verses.

64. Al-Jāḥiz, *Kitāb al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1998), 2:31.

65. Generally, on the debates concerning the authenticity of classical Arabic oratory, see Pamela Klasova, "Empire through Language: Al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī and the Power of Oratory in Umayyad Iraq" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2018). The conclusions of this dissertation, however, concern only Umayyad oratory, and I make no claims about the authenticy of speeches ascribed to Muḥammad.

66. J. Schacht, "Ḳiṣāṣ," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

annihilation of a whole tribe. This appreciation of individual life also comes through in Jāhilī poetry in the rhetorical device of *inṣāf*, which highlights the qualities of the enemy. To praise one's enemy—since a weak enemy is not worth fighting—is a form of praising oneself, and as Suzanne Stetkevych points out, this device was often associated with blood vengeance.[67] In a parallel to the idea of equal enemies in *inṣāf*, according to the law of blood vengeance it was not enough to kill the killer: the subject of the retribution had to be the victim's equal. If the killer was not such a person, additional people belonging to the killer's kin would be killed. *Inṣāf*—widely used in the poetics of war in general—aptly illustrates the Jāhilī conception of warfare, in which the enemy is seen as an equal. Perhaps the most famous image of two warriors confronting each other in battle is captured in an elegy by Abū Khirāsh's fellow Hudhalī Abū Dhuʾayb.[68]

In the Jāhilī poetic imagination, wars, however cruel, also provided a space to demonstrate one's courage and achieve glory. The poetic Jāhiliyya, with its strong shame/honor element, presented tribal wars in terms of a competition for honor and glory. Johan Huizinga, in his *Homo Ludens*, exposed the affinity between war and play, explaining that especially in archaic societies, both were conceived of as a contest for glory. Huizinga sees the playful quality of war as transformative: it turns bloody violence into a cultural phenomenon that provides strong incentives for a civilization, informing it with ideas of chivalry and honor.[69] Fittingly, Montgomery Watt has noted that "raiding is the 'national sport' of the Arabs."[70] Jāhilī poetry conveys precisely this image of war, in which people fight not only out of necessity and for material gain but also for the noble strife itself. War equals excitement. We saw this excitement for war already in Abū Khirāsh's first elegy for Zuhayr. Elsewhere, Abū Khirāsh says, "So we incite those who rise up against them, for we say that the soul heals only at igniting war."[71] The frenzy of battle that possesses the soul can be healed only by taking up arms.

This perception of war as play was to change substantially with Muḥammad's ascendancy and the fast-paced building of the early Islamic state. The scale of wars grew beyond what many of the inhabitants of Arabia could imagine, and their very conception was transformed. As a means to achieving a higher good, war became an ideological enterprise. The existence of a higher good and the dichotomy of right and wrong (lamented by Abū Khirāsh, as seen earlier) automatically turned the enemy into a villain. Islamic wars were waged in the name of Islam, and as a consequence their opponents were dehumanized as infidels and no longer seen as equals. The play quality of war, as Huizinga explains, can be retained only as long as war takes place within a sphere whose members regard each other as equals, and with Islam's recasting of warfare in moral terms, this quality was lost. In the course of the Islamic conquests, men fought and died in great numbers and the value of

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67. Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, 63. For a collection of *munṣifāt*, see ʿAbd al-Muʿīn al-Mulūḥī, *al-Munṣifāt* (Damascus: Ministry of Culture, 1967).

68. Al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 4–41; al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, 849–892.

69. See "Play and War" in Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (New York: J. and J. Harper, 1970), 110–126.

70. William Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (1953; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 17.

71. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:153; al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1204.

individual life diminished. Various anecdotes testify to the shock experienced by the first generation of Muslims who saw great numbers of people die on the battlefield. To give one example, al-Ṭabarī narrates that a group of Arab Muslims who had converted to Islam from Christianity were so appalled by the merciless bloodshed and general low morals they witnessed during the Battle of Ṣiffīn that they decided to return to Christianity.[72]

To what extent Abū Khirāsh was aware of these crucial ideological changes is hard to tell. Though he was probably not able to put his finger on their exact nature, his annoyance is palpable. The following poem illustrates how the conquests impacted his life and what he thought of the *muhājirūn*, a term that in this context refers to Muslim soldiers:[73]

> [A thirsty man, i.e., the poet] calls him [his son Khirāsh]
> to give him his evening drink, but he doesn't come;
>> the boy has truly become foolish.
> And he [the poet] receives his cup back, empty,
>> as if the tears of his eyes were pearls.
> In the morning, in the evening, between him and his cup-bearer [son]
>> are the black mountains of Syria, as though burnt with fire.
> Know, Khirāsh, that only meager good
>> awaits the *muhājir* after his *hijra*.
> I saw you wishing for goodness (*birr*) without me,
>> like a dog daubed with blood to make it seem that he has hunted,
>> although he has not.[74]

In these lines, the poet bewails his abandonment in his old age. His son is campaigning with the Muslim army far from Mecca, further than the mountains of Syria, and there is no one to hand him his drink. His complaint sheds light on a larger social issue of the time: the demands of the established Muslim state and army disrupted traditional bonds within families. Hitherto, sons had been expected to take care of their aging parents, but now young men like Khirāsh had become *muhājirūn*, Muslim soldiers. Putting aside his loneliness and sense of abandonment, Abū Khirāsh clearly disapproves of his son's career choice. His words "only meager good awaits the *muhājir* after his *hijra*" (*khayr al-muhājir baʿd hijratihi zahīd*) offer a contemporary critique of the nascent Muslim army.

It is vital to understand the significance of the notion of *birr* that appears in the last verse, for it is presented in the poem as the main value of the Muslim soldiers. *Birr*, a

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72. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 5:125.

73. The term *muhājir* has two meanings. On the one hand, it refers to an individual who joined Muḥammad during his emigration (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina; on the other, it denotes someone who, at the time of the conquests, abandoned his home, registered in the *dīwān* to receive a regular stipend, and joined the army in a garrison city. For a discussion of this term, see Patricia Crone, "The First-Century Concept of 'Hiǧra,'" *Arabica* 41 (1994): 352–87; Khalil Athamina, "Aʿrāb and *Muhājirūn* in the Environment of *Amṣār*," *Studia Islamica* 66 (1987): 5–25.

74. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:162; Appendix, 1.e. Geert Jan van Gelder noted in private communication that *maḥṣūr* in this edition may be a misreading of *makhḍūb*. Al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1243, has this line with a different text: *ka-makhḍūbi l-labbāni wa-lā yaṣīdū*.

Qurʾānic concept usually translated as piety or godliness, has three different connotations relevant to the present context. Edward Lane, in his *Lexicon*, gives as the first meaning of *birr* general goodness: *barra* means to be pious, kind, or good. The second connotation is related to material goods as recompense. So *barrat bī silʿatuh* means "his article was easy of sale to me," that is, it recompensed me by its high price for my care of it. In this regard, it may also be pertinent that *burr* is "wheat." The third connotation of *birr* is most intriguing given its use in Abū Khirāsh's text: the phrase *birr al-wālidayn* refers to filial piety and to obedience to one's parents. In consideration of the full meaning of *birr*, the poet's words "I saw you wishing for *birr* without me" should be read as a subversion of the concept in whose name the Muslim soldiers fought. To Abū Khirāsh, *birr* stands not for godliness or piety toward God but primarily for obedience to one's father, expressed by lavishing him with goods as an honorable son does. We can understand Abū Khirāsh's argument to be that all the material gain that his son may attain in the Muslim army is useless, because he will not use it to fulfill his duty to his father.

The second hemistich of the last verse, in which Abū Khirāsh compares his son to "a dog daubed with blood to make it seem that he has hunted, although he has not," reveals the poet's contempt for his son's dubious claims as warrior and, by extension, the claims of the Muslim army he represents. The comparison to a hunting dog is a variation on a proverb about a dog whose throat and chest have been daubed with blood to make it look as if he has hunted successfully. In other words, the dog is held to be something that it is not. Abū Khirāsh uses the proverb in relation to Khirāsh and the other *muhājirūn* to say that despite all appearances, they are no warriors. As a brigand who has sung of battles and heroic fights, the poet has his own conception of the heroic warrior. The new state, however, has turned the heroic warrior of the poetic Jāhiliyya into a soldier of God and replaced individual glory with piety. Abū Khirāsh's poetry shows that its author is acutely aware of these shifts and does not hesitate to criticize them. The lines thus convey not only the poet's complaint about his son's absence but also his criticism of the son's chosen lifestyle and social circles.

Abū Khirāsh in the Akhbār

This section turns to the *akhbār* about Abū Khirāsh in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* as a way to understand how later generations dealt with the Jāhilī ethos and the occasionally anti-Islamic tone of the poet's verses. It is here that the interplay between poetry and *akhbār* comes to the fore, elucidating how the persona of Abū Khirāsh was transformed in Islamic memory from an unruly brigand to an Islamic martyr. But first, a few words on the provenance of these *akhbār* are in order.

A glance at the chains of narrators (*isnāds*) of the *akhbār* reveals that Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī took most of his material from al-Sukkarī. Abū Saʿīd al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sukkarī (d. 275/888) was a famous philologist who assembled the only extant *dīwān* of tribal poetry that has come down to us—the *dīwān* of the Hudhalīs, the tribe of Abū Khirāsh. It is noteworthy that the *isnāds* of these *akhbār* do not go all the way to the poets but end with early ʿAbbāsid philologists such as Ibn al-Aʿrābī (d. 231/845), Abū ʿUbayda (d. 209/824–25), and Abū ʿAmr al-Shaybānī (d. 206/821). Another important early ʿAbbāsid philologist

often mentioned as the last narrator (not through al-Sukkarī's *isnād*s) is al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 213/828). All these men were philologists and grammarians in Basra and Kufa who narrated much poetry and *akhbār* of the past, claiming that they had visited the tribes and had thus received much of their material directly from the Bedouins.[75]

The absence of longer *isnād*s may indicate different things. The *akhbār* are literary material, not *ḥadīth*, and as such they possess less of the authority required for, for example, the grounding of legal opinions, for which uninterrupted *isnād*s to the original sources would be necessary. The fact that the *isnād*s end with early ʿAbbāsid philologists may mean either that these men collected the stories orally from the Bedouins, as they claimed, or that they recorded them from earlier written sources.[76] Although the transmission process of the *akhbār* cannot be traced with certainty, I will suggest its probable stages in my concluding remarks.

The mechanisms through which the *akhbār* deal with the poetry of the unruly Mukhaḍram poet can be enumerated as follows.

1. Narrativization and dramatization: The most common technique of the *akhbār* is to develop the themes brought up in the poems into narratives. They fill in the gaps. At the beginning of Abū Khirāsh's entry in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, for example, a long narrative introduces Abū Khirāsh's boast in verse about his escape from his enemies. The *khabar* details his escape, adds suspense, and celebrates Abū Khirāsh's heroic ability to run faster than anyone else.[77] As we will see below, the *akhbār* on occasion introduce new narrative elements not present in the verses.

The *akhbār* also dramatize Abū Khirāsh's poetry by connecting his persona to salient figures of his age. We have already encountered him with al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra, the father of the great Muslim army commander Khālid b. al-Walīd, chief of the Qurashī clan of Banū Makhzūm and thus one of the most powerful men in Mecca. A second instance has Abū Khirāsh meet the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. He pleads with the caliph to let his son Khirāsh return from the army. When ʿUmar hears Abū Khirāsh's poetic lament about his loneliness and the distance that divides his son from him, he orders Khirāsh to go home and rules that any soldier with an elderly father can enter the army only with his father's permission.[78] Neither of these encounters is mentioned in Abū Khirāsh's poetry, and we can thus only speculate about their historicity. But whether or not the encounters happened, it is worth considering why they were narrated. In the case of the story involving ʿUmar, the intent may be symbolic. The narrative may be the result of a later act of memory that linked a

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75. Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlāʾ, the teacher of Abū ʿUbayda, and al-Aṣmaʿī are said to have developed the method of collecting material directly from the Bedouins as the pure carriers of the Arab tradition. Whether or not this was the main method, the speech of the Bedouins had cultural authority. For example, Ibn al-Aʿrābī reportedly claimed—as part of the Kufan vs. Basran rivalry among the grammarians—that he had heard a thousand Bedouins pronounce a particular word differently compared to al-Aṣmaʿī. Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1985), 10:687.

76. For a discussion of the sources of the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, see note 27 above.

77. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:147–149.

78. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:162.

concrete policy of protecting families to the verses of a brigand bemoaning the loss of his son for military service.

2. <u>Exculpation</u>: The *akhbār*, which usually comment on the salient motifs in poems, are conspicuously silent with regard to the most problematic verses. Take, for example, the two elegies for Zuhayr discussed above. The poet's grievances with the moralizing youth and his frustration with the impossibility of seeking vengeance on the Quraysh are ignored, a silence I consider deliberate.

An even more important strategy of exculpation is the manipulation of Abū Khirāsh's conversion chronology. This is where the organization of the *akhbār* in Abū Khirāsh's entry comes into play. The entry begins with a long narrative about the poet's heroic escape and almost mythical fleet-footedness, then moves to the stories that connect him with the custodian of the pagan shrine of al-ʿUzzā and continues with narratives about tribal feuds—his own as well as his brothers'. It is only toward the end of the entry that Abū Khirāsh's conversion is mentioned. This ordering reflects a narrative strategy that implies that he recited most of his poetry while still a pagan, which, in turn, would exculpate him for his un-Islamic outlook and allow for his later transformation to a righteous, exemplary Muslim. However, the chronology of events and Abū Khirāsh's references to Islam, discussed above, indicate that he had already converted by the time of their writing. His conversion is described laconically: "He submitted to Islam and his Islam was good,"[79] a typical formula used for the Mukhaḍramūn. In Abū Khirāsh's case, it simply conveys his tribe's collective pledge of allegiance to the Prophet after the conquest of Mecca in 8/630. However, in al-Iṣfahānī's entry, the moment of conversion acquires importance because it separates the preceding, "pagan" *akhbār* from the Islamizing end of the entry, to which we will now turn our attention.

3. <u>Islamization</u>: The most obvious example of an attempt to paint the poet in more Islamic colors is a *khabar* that concludes the entry. The *khabar* shows Abū Khirāsh selflessly setting out to bring water for Yemeni *ḥajj* pilgrims. A snake bites the poet on his way back, but he manages to return with water for his guests and then dies without telling them about his fatal wound. When the caliph ʿUmar hears the news, he reprimands the pilgrims for demanding the excessive favors that led to a Muslim's death and orders them to pay the *diya*.

Nothing of this detailed narrative—save for the snakebite—appears in the verses that the *khabar* accompanies:

> The fates (*manāyā*) are ever-victorious over man;
>   they climb up every hill.
> By your life, snake of the lowlands of Anf, you destroyed
>   a leg that leaves behind a severe loss for the companions.
> / . . . /
> Oh snake of the lowlands of Anf, you destroyed
>   a leg full of munificence for the companions.

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79. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:162: *Aslama Abū Khirāsh fa-ḥasuna islāmuh.*

> Between Buṣrā and Ṣanʿāʾ,
>> It did not leave a single enemy unavenged.[80]

It is fair to acknowledge that the story of the poet's death by snakebite could be a topos—a poetic imagining of the brigand's death. Of the various ways in which one might die—such as in bed or on a horse in battle—a lethal snakebite is a cause of death appropriate for a brigand who moves through the desert on foot. The famous Umayyad brigand Mālik b. al-Rayb is also occasionally said to have died this way, which supports the association of death by snakebite with brigandry.[81]

Whether a poem attributed later to Abū Khirāsh or his own authentic production, these verses contain the typically Jāhilī belief in the unpredictable nature of fate, which lurks at every corner, ready to take down a man, along with the Jāhilī theme of bravery in the face of this reckless force. Addressing the snake, his killer, Abū Khirāsh refers to himself synecdochally as a leg because he takes pride in his fleet-footedness—a typical brigand quality, as discussed earlier. He exults in his ability to inflict harm on his enemies and swears that he did not spare the life of a single enemy who had spilled the blood of his kinfolk "between Buṣrā [in Syria] and Ṣanʿā [in Yemen]"—that is, in the whole of the Ḥijāz. Whenever the law of *thaʾr* had called, he had answered its call.

The discrepancy between the verses and the narratives that accompany them is clear in this case. The dying poet, in his final words, evokes unmistakably Jāhilī tribal themes; in contrast, the *akhbār* depict him as a Muslim quasi-martyr who died serving Muslim pilgrims. ʿUmar's presence in the story strengthens Abū Khirāsh's new Islamic aura and at the same time illustrates an essential misunderstanding in terms of values. Whereas ʿUmar punishes the pilgrims for asking for favors to which they were not entitled, for Abū Khirāsh hospitality was a sacred duty, as seen in a previous poem. On a more symbolic level, the inclusion of an account in which the Muslim caliph enforces the payment of blood money (*diya*) at the end of a chapter steeped in the heat of vengeance may not be an accident. It may symbolize the transition of authority from tribal law to the caliph and from pagan blood vengeance to a more Islamic form of compensation. Overall, Abū Khirāsh's *akhbār* can be read as carrying the poet from his Jāhilī existence into Islam, thus transforming his life story into an epic conversion narrative.

As we have seen, the *akhbār* are more than just biographical notes. They have various functions—they dramatize and expand on the themes of Abū Khirāsh's verses; they raise his place in Islamic history; they exculpate the poet for his Jāhilī existence; and they transform him into a Muslim martyr. And so, they reveal how later audiences interpreted the old poetry. In the case of the second poet, Abū Miḥjan, who mainly spoke about wine and drinking parties, they facilitate his transformation into an exemplary Muslim warrior.

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80. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:163; Appendix, 1.f.

81. *Al-Aghānī* is silent about Mālik's death. Most sources, such as al-Baghdādī in his *Khizāna*, al-Bakrī in his *Muʿjam mā istaʿjam*, and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih in *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, record that Mālik was pierced (*ṭuʿin*). Only Abū Zayd al-Qurashī in *Jamjarat ashʿār al-ʿArab* claims that he was bitten by a snake.

3. Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī: From Drunkard to Muslim Warrior

The second of the three Mukhaḍramūn, Abū Miḥjan, attained fame as a wine poet and acclaimed warrior.[82] He was a member of Thaqīf, a major tribe in al-Ṭāʾif, the sister city of Mecca. Abū Miḥjan's poetry features the themes of wine, exile, imprisonment, and war; *akhbār* about him offer a view into a life full of unexpected twists. Abū Miḥjan reportedly first proved his warrior qualities in the Battle of al-Ṭāʾif (8/630) against Muḥammad's army, in the course of which he wounded one of Abū Bakr's sons. This story underlines his liminal position between the Jāhiliyya and Islam. In the Islamic period, Abū Miḥjan continued to drink excessively and to recite wine poetry until the caliph ʿUmar ordered him to be flogged and sent him to distant exile, from which the poet escaped. He joined the army of Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ (d. between 50/670–71 and 58/677), a Muslim commander on campaign against Sasanian forces. Saʿd imprisoned Abū Miḥjan at ʿUmar's command, but when the Muslim forces faltered in the Battle of al-Qādisiyya (15/636),[83] the poet convinced Saʿd to set him free. He then fought heroically on the Muslim side.

"When I die, bury me by the trunk of a grapevine . . ."

Abū Miḥjan's poetry is steeped in wine-related imagery, as is evident in his famous verses:

> When I die, bury me by the trunk of a grapevine,
>   so that its roots may water my bones after my death.
> Do not bury me in the desert, for I fear
>   that when I die [there] I will not taste it [the wine].
> May my grave be watered by the wine of al-Ḥuṣṣ,
>   for I am its captive after I was the one carrying it along.[84]

The poem is framed as a testament. Abū Miḥjan asks to be buried close to a grapevine that would quench his thirst for wine, fearing the absence of the sweet drink in the afterlife. He dreams about grapevine roots watering his grave and declares the power that wine has over him: even if he once had it under his control, he eventually became its captive. Such a declaration of loyalty to drink was a scandalous act at the time. It is true that wine poetry came to form an important element of Islamic culture,[85] but this was a later development. During the lifetime of Abū Miḥjan, both wine and poetry were still finding their place in society, as their Qurʾānic denouncement was very recent. Poetry that celebrated wine must still have been seen as an affront to the new social order.

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82. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:5–14. Abū Miḥjan also has his own *dīwān*: *Dīwān Abī Miḥjan*.

83. N. Rhodokanakis and Ch. Pellat, "Abū Miḥdjan," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

84. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:9; Appendix, 2.a. Al-Ḥuṣṣ is a place in Syria, near Homs, mainly famous for being mentioned in this poem.

85. Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 57–71.

Wine in the World of Abū Miḥjan

The Qurʾān forbids the drinking of wine and proclaims it a sin with the following words:

> They ask thee concerning wine and gambling (*maysir*). Say: "In them is great sin, and some profit for men; but the sin is greater than the profit." (Q 2:219)

> O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling (*maysir*), [dedication of] stones, and [divination by] arrows are an abomination of Satan's handiwork: eschew such [abomination], that ye may prosper. (Q 5:90)

The prohibition of wine represented another profound break with the poetic Jāhiliyya, in which the celebration of wine (often paired with women) constituted a classic motif, as seen in Ṭarafa's *muʿallaqa*. Wine was not only a tool of entertainment; it was also intimately connected with pagan beliefs in fate and the pursuit of specific religious practices.[86] The second of these Qurʾānic verses illustrates the connection by juxtaposing intoxicants with *maysir* (a game of chance involving arrows), the dedication of stones, and divination. Another Qurʾānic verse warns the Believers not to come drunk to prayer, intimating that drunkenness was a common phenomenon in Mecca in Muḥammad's time: "O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged (*wa-antum sukārā*), until ye can understand all that ye say" (Q 4:43).[87] Whether because of the symbolical connection of wine with the pagan world or because of the inappropriate behavior of inebriated companions during prayer, Muḥammad's mission challenged an important element of the familiar Jāhilī world.

Abū Miḥjan sometimes comments directly on the status of wine. The wine poem quoted earlier conveys fear of the lack of wine after death. This fear may represent distrust in the Qurʾānic promise of "rivers of wine" (Q 47:15) in Paradise. Another possibility is that the poet in fact alludes to the wine of Paradise but proclaims his preference for earthly wine. In another poem, Abū Miḥjan addresses the prohibition of wine explicitly:

> Though now wine has become rare and forbidden, and Islam
> and unease (*ḥaraj*) have come between it and me,
> back then, I used to . . .[88]

Here the poet comments on the changes he is witnessing in society: Islam has forbidden wine, and as a consequence wine has become rare. What is more, the Islamic prohibition has given rise to feelings of unease (*ḥaraj*). In the verses that follow, Abū Miḥjan contrasts this situation with his many memories of wine-drinking in the Jāhiliyya, accompanied by

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86. Sacrificial offerings using wine were well known in the ancient Near East. See W. Heimpel, "Libation," *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 7 (1987–90): 1–5. W. Montgomery Watt, for example, put forward the hypothesis that the prohibition of wine stemmed from its relation with *maysir*, which might have some connection with pagan religion. Watt, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 298.

87. A. J. Wensinck, "Khamr," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

88. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:10.

the sensual tone of a beautiful female server's voice.[89] Abū Miḥjan's experience of *ḥaraj* resembles Abū Khirāsh's annoyance with the stifling nature of the new Islamic morality. This *ḥaraj* that comes from God (referred to as al-Raḥmān) returns in another of Abū Miḥjan's poems. This time, the *ḥaraj* intervenes between him and Shamūs, which, according to the accompanying *khabar*, is a woman whom he saw as he was planting beans in Medina.[90] It should, however, be noted that *shamūs* is also a word for wine. I have translated it here as a reference to a woman:

> I looked at Shamūs, but the great unease (*ḥaraj*)
> > from the All-Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*) stands between us.[91]

Whether the object of the poet's desire is wine or a woman, in this poem as in the previous one *ḥaraj* hinders the desire's fulfillment. The Qurʾān, too, uses the term *ḥaraj*, but in the opposite context—to admonish the Believers *not* to feel *ḥaraj* when receiving God's message, marrying the wives of their adoptive sons, acknowledging an inability to give alms, and so on.[92] Through its employment of *ḥaraj*, the Qurʾān seeks to emphasize that God does not burden His Believers with unease: He is the sole law-giver, and they should not feel uneasy about doing something that is not forbidden. The poet thus turns the Islamic rhetoric upside down when he points to the unease, or moral scruples, that the new religion has caused him.

In the following poem, Abū Miḥjan clearly identifies the caliph as the one responsible for the sad state of wine in the present:

> Have you not seen that fate makes a young man fall,
> > that a man cannot avert his destiny?
> I endured the blows of fate, unjust in its judgment,
> > and I did not fear and I was not a coward.
> Indeed, I was endowed with fortitude when my brothers died,
> > but I cannot refrain from wine for a single day!
> The Commander of the Believers put it to death,
> > so its true friends now weep around the wine presses.[93]

These lines begin with the traditional Jāhilī theme of the might and inevitability of fate and with the poet's boasting about his ability to endure its blows. But then Abū Miḥjan

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89. For the first four lines of the poem, see the Appendix, 2.b.

90. This is how the *khabar* interprets the second line of the poem, in which the poet complains that he did not expect to come to Medina and plant beans. ("Among the people who came to Medina, I used to consider myself someone could most certainly dispense with planting beans.") Although an urbanite, Abū Miḥjan does not seem to have worked much in Ṭāʾif. Especially agricultural work was considered among the Arabs as not appropriate for them and this sentiment is evident in this verse. See Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:6; Appendix, 2.c.

91. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:6; Appendix, 2.c.

92. The word حَرَج appears in the Qurʾān fifteen times. For examples, see Q 4:65; 5:6; 7:2; 9:91; 22:78; 24:61; 33:37, 38, 50; 48:17.

93. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:13; Appendix, 2.f.

proclaims that although he can restrain himself on such tragic occasions as the death of his brothers, he cannot, even for a single day, restrain his desire for wine. He accuses the caliph of having "put it [wine] to death" and then paints a somber image of drinkers wandering around the defunct wine presses, mourning the sweet drink.

Exile, Imprisonment, and War in Abū Miḥjan's Poetry

In addition to the glorification of wine, Abū Miḥjan also dedicated many verses to the themes of exile, imprisonment, and war. According to the *akhbār*, he was exiled to the island of Ḥaḍawḍā, which is known in the Islamic tradition as a place of exile. The location of Ḥaḍawḍā is not clear, nor can we be sure that it was an island, but its appearance in Abū Miḥjan's poetry indicates that there was indeed a designated place of exile in early Islam.[94] In these verses, addressed to the caliph ʿUmar (Abū Ḥafs), the poet mentions his exile when he complains about a boat and sailing on the sea (or lake).[95] Though the main purpose of the poem is to boast of the poet's warrior skills, it also shows that the sailing experience left its mark on the native of the Ḥijāz desert:

> Praise be to God, who saved and delivered me
>> from Ibn Jahrāʾ when the boat (*būṣī*)[96] ran aground.
> Who takes it upon himself to sail the sea with the *būṣī* as his vessel to al-Ḥaḍawḍā:
>> what a terrible boat he has chosen!
> Let Abū Ḥafs, the worshipper of God, promptly know,
>> whether he is at war or at peace,
> that I attack the first horse of the enemy when others are afraid,
>> and I capture the enemy's horse under my banner.
> I plunge into the tumult of war and my iron armor protects me
>> when others lag behind.[97]

The poem strikes a defiant tone: Abū Miḥjan praises God, who allowed him to escape his jailers, and invites people to inform the caliph ʿUmar about his qualities as a warrior and his bravery in war. He provides evidence of his bravery by depicting a scene in which he fearlessly attacks the first fighter in the enemy's army, kills him, and seizes his horse. In such battle poetics we recognize, yet again, the traditional values inherited from the poetic Jāhiliyya. The presence of ʿUmar in the poem suggests that it may have been indeed he who

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94. It is not entirely clear where this island was located and whether it existed at all. According to Yāqūt, it is not an island but "a mountainous region (*jabal*) in the west, to which the pre-Islamic Arabs used to banish outcasts." He also mentions a certain al-Ḥāzimī, who said that Ḥuḍūḍ (or Ḥaḍūḍ)—without ā—was an island. However, if Ḥaḍawḍā were a mountain, it would be difficult to explain Abū Miḥjan's mention of the sea (*baḥr*) and a boat (*būṣī*) in connection with his sojourn there. In modern-day Saudi Arabia, the name is used for a mountain range in the region of al-Jawf. Interestingly, there is a large lake in this region; if this is the place that Abū Miḥjan talks about, the lake could explain his references to boats and the "sea."

95. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:5–6.

96. *Lisān al-ʿArab* identifies *būṣī* as a Persian loanword.

97. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:5–6; Appendix, 2.d.

sent the poet to exile. Abū Miḥjan was an urban poet, hailing from the city of al-Ṭāʾif, and he appears to have been closer to the establishment than was Abū Khirāsh. In any case, in these verses Abū Miḥjan openly addresses the caliph, showing off his valor in battle. As if trying to start a new chapter in their relationship, the poet wants to prove to the caliph that his service is invaluable.

Another poem, this one related to Abū Miḥjan's time in Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ's army and his imprisonment in that period, has a similar rhetorical goal, despite its much more humble and apologetic tone. It attempts to convince someone with authority over the poet to forget about the wine incident and set him free. The poem begins with a description of the poet's miserable captivity and ends with his promise that he will stop drinking if he is granted freedom:

> It is sad enough that horses are drumming the ground with their hooves,
> loaded with spears,
>   while I am left tied in chains.
> When I stand the iron tortures me, and the doors were closed behind me;
>   doors that [made such a deafening noise that it] would drown out
>   anyone's calling.
> I was once a wealthy man with many brothers,
>   but they abandoned me. I have no brother now.
> Every morning I have to deal with the tightly locked shackle;
>   it has devoured my body and worn me out.
> What a great man I am! Left behind, tied up,
>   while my family and tribesmen neglect me.
> Barred from the reignited war,
>   while others display their glorious deeds.
> By God, I vow that I will not breach His law
>   and I will no longer visit the taverns, if I am set free.[98]

Abū Miḥjan here poignantly describes two kinds of suffering. The first is psychological: he cannot join the battle and attain warrior glory, while "others display their glorious deeds." The second form of suffering is physical: the iron chains torture him with his every move and wear him down. A striking image is his memory of the deafening sound of the doors closing behind him, a sound so loud that it drowns out human screams. Al-Iṣfahānī records that Abū Miḥjan was held in the palace (*qaṣr*);[99] al-Masʿūdī specifies that at that point Saʿd resided in Ḥiṣn al-ʿUdhayb and that he kept Abū Miḥjan in the lower part of his palace there.[100] In addition, the poet repeatedly complains that he was abandoned by his family and tribe, a comment related to a general dissolution of tribal bonds. He sarcastically calls himself "a great man," one who is tied up and abandoned by his kin; he laments that he

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98. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:8; Appendix, 2.e.

99. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:7.

100. Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa-maʿādin al-jawhar*, ed. Charles Pellat (Beirut: l'Université Libanaise, 1965–73), 3:58, quoted in Anthony, "Domestic Origins of Imprisonment," 592.

used to have many brothers but now has none, and his family and tribesmen have cast him off. As in Abū Khirāsh's poems, the establishment, represented in this case by Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, prevents the tribe from carrying out the ancient duty of protecting its member.

Abū Miḥjan's verses offer a unique insight into the feelings of early Muslim prisoners. Imprisonment, as a state practice, appears to have spread quickly in early Islamic society.[101] Sean Anthony has described the shift of incarceration in early Islam from the domestic sphere to a more formalized state institution. According to Anthony, "no evidence survives attesting to the existence of formal prisons in this region before the Islamic conquests,"[102] and the earliest mentions of prison constructions seem to fall in ʿUmar's reign[103]—which is also the lifetime of Abū Miḥjan, who, as we have seen, experienced both exile and imprisonment (albeit in domestic style).[104] However, already during the rule of al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (r. 75–95/694–714) as governor of Iraq and the East, the sources attest to a widespread use of prisons. Ibn ʿAsākir, for instance, narrates on the authority of al-Aṣmaʿī and others that when al-Ḥajjāj died, 33,000 people were freed from his prisons.[105] The exaggerated number aside, the reference suggests that by the beginning of the second/eighth century, prisons had become a central institution of the state. Abū Miḥjan's testimony indicates that already in the early days of the caliphate, the Islamic community had a designated place of banishment—the somewhat enigmatic Ḥaḍawḍā.[106] And it conveys first-hand experience of imprisonment and the resulting despair in the early Islamic period.

It is in this condition of despair that the poet pledges to give up wine in exchange for freedom. On the whole, therefore, Abū Miḥjan's poetry displays a deep allegiance to Jāhilī themes and sentiments. He professes his love of wine, boasts of his bravery, and laments his banishment and imprisonment. His eventual forswearing of wine takes place only under strain. This is the image of Abū Miḥjan that emerges from his poetry; the *akhbār*, however, offer a very different one.

Abū Miḥjan in the Akhbār

An examination of the *akhbār* in relation to the verses they accompany shows that the *akhbār* wrestle with the legacy of Abū Miḥjan in different ways. In what follows, I discuss how the drunkard poet is—through the workings of the *akhbār*—both punished and exculpated, and finally endowed with the aura of a heroic Muslim warrior. It should be noted that the earliest recorded narrators of the *akhbār*, that is, the names at the ends

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101. For a bibliography on carceral practices in early Islam, see Anthony, "Domestic Origins of Imprisonment," 574, n. 13.

102. Anthony, "Domestic Origins of Imprisonment," 575.

103. Anthony, "Domestic Origins of Imprisonment," 586.

104. For Anthony's discussion of Abū Miḥjan's material, see his "Domestic Origins of Imprisonment," 590.

105. Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. ʿUmar b. Gharāma al-ʿAmrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995–2000), 12:184. On al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, see Klasova, "Empire through Language."

106. See note 94 above.

of their *isnād*s, belong to the same generation of early ʿAbbāsid philologists, *akhbārī*s, and historians as do the narrators of Abū Khirāsh's *akhbār*.[107]

1. Islamization: As in the case of Abū Khirāsh, the *akhbār* about Abū Miḥjan construct an Islamic image of the poet. One technique is to emphasize Abū Miḥjan's repentence for his drinking and his renouncement of wine later in life. In his poetry, we see a hint of renouncement only when he needs to get out of prison. But the narratives find a way to argue for a more substantial change of mind, even if this requires reinterpreting the verses. A good example of this strategy appears in connection with the verses quoted earlier, in which Abū Miḥjan observes that "now wine has become rare and forbidden." These verses open a long poem (not quoted in the *Aghānī* in full) whose *nasīb* reeks of nostalgia for the happy days of drinking. By contrast, the accompanying narrative carries a decidedly more Islamic flair. It recounts that after Abū Miḥjan's heroic performance in the Battle at al-Qādisiyya the Muslim commander Saʿd refused to implement the *ḥadd* punishment on him. This is when the poet decided to renounce wine. In the *khabar*, Abū Miḥjan explains that whereas previously the *ḥadd* punishment had purified him of his guilt, now he would have to carry his sins until the Day of Judgment.[108] The narrative echoes famous *ḥadīth*s about people who begged the Prophet to punish them for their sins in order to cleanse their souls.[109] Its rhetoric may also remind us of Plato's *Gorgias*, in which Socrates argues that the wrongdoer is better off when he is punished, because the punishment relieves his soul of the disease of injustice.[110] But this seems like an overly moral concern to come from a poet who, in his most famous verse, dreads the absence of wine after death. The idea that he renounced wine because he was deprived of the punishment for drinking is not consistent with the spirit of his poetry as a whole and should thus be ascribed to later narrators trying to boost Abū Miḥjan's Islamic credentials. Admittedly, Abū Miḥjan's renouncement of wine is supported by straightforwardly moralistic verses attributed to him. Yet we have reason to suspect that these verses were ascribed to him later precisely to polish his image as a Muslim. To give an example, the *Aghānī* quotes two lines in which Abū Miḥjan rejects wine

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107. One of al-Iṣfahānī's main sources for Abū Miḥjan's material is the Kufan philologist Ibn al-Aʿrābī, whose source, in turn, was his teacher (and father-in-law) al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī (d. ca. 164/781). Ibn al-Aʿrābī was a contemporary of the Basran scholars al-Aṣmaʿī and Abū ʿUbayda, whereas al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī was a contemporary of their teacher Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlāʾ. Other sources include the historians al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and al-Madāʾinī (d. 228/843), the *akhbārī* al-Haytham b. ʿAdī (d. ca. 209/821), and the *adīb* Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889).

108. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:10, 12.

109. One *ḥadīth* tells of a man by the name of Māʿiz who comes to the Prophet and asks the latter to purify him because he has sinned by engaging in illicit intercourse. The Prophet rejects the man's confession two times and then inquires about his mental health. When the man comes and asks for punishment for the third time, the Prophet orders that he be stoned for his crime. A similar episode takes place with a woman from Ghāmid, but the woman is pregnant. The Prophet insists on waiting until the child is old enough to survive without her and then has her stoned. These *ḥadīth*s illustrate the devotion and piety of Muslims who sinned but repented. See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut), no. 2087; Abū Dāwūd, *al-Sunan* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, AH 1430), 4442, and others.

110. Plato, *Gorgias*, 472eff.

because it "has qualities that destroy the mild-tempered man (*ḥalīm*)."[111] *Ḥilm* (forbearance, sobriety) is a value that is embraced and promoted in Islam and is seen as opposed to the pre-Islamic *jahl* (ignorance, fierceness).[112] However, although most of the verses attributed to him in the *Aghānī* can also be found in his *dīwān*, such is not the case with these lines. Conversely, similar moralistic verses appear in Abū Miḥjan's *dīwān* but are absent from the *Aghānī*. This asymmetry indicates that these two pairs of moralistic verses were probably added at a later stage.[113]

In Islamizing the poet, the *akhbār* also present him as an examplary Islamic warrior. They describe, in detail, his heroic deeds at the Battle of al-Qādisiyya. In these narratives, the poet escapes from Saʿd's prison with the help of Saʿd's wife, takes Saʿd's horse, and rides to the battlefield. He fights so valiantly that several *akhbār* compare him to the leader of the Muslim army at al-Qādisiyya, Hishām b. ʿUtba, as well as to Khiḍr (sometimes equated with St. George)[114] and even to angels.[115] After the battle, Abū Miḥjan returns to his cell and chains. In this framing, Abū Miḥjan's life story transforms into an odyssey from transgression and banishment to Islamic glory and submission to the establishment. It offers a moral example of an intractable drunkard who repents and turns into an Islamic warrior.

I do not mean to suggest that Abū Miḥjan did not take part in the Battle of al-Qādisiyya; my point is merely that the *akhbār* exaggerate his participation. Abū Miḥjan himself refers to the battle (as *laylat Qādis*) in his *fakhr* verses, which form the basis for this long narrative,[116] but a comment by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī is telling: "The Battle of Aghwāth, the Battle of Armāth, and the Battle of al-Katāʾib were famous battles [at al-Qādisiyya], and narratives about them are very long. But there is no mention of Abū Miḥjan in this material, except for what we report here."[117] Yet these few *akhbār* succeed in transforming a poet who dedicated his life to praising wine into a model soldier in the cause of Islam. Even today, leaders of Islamist groups—including the leader of a Lebanese terrorist group,[118] an al-Qaeda suicide bomber,[119] and an Aḥrār al-Shām commander[120]—choose the name Abū

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111. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:12; Appendix, 2.g.

112. For a discussion of *ḥilm* and *jahl*, see, for instance, Jaroslav Stetkevych, *Muḥammad and the Golden Bough* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 5–12.

113. See Abū Miḥjan, *Dīwān*, 16, and the Appendix, 2.h.

114. A. J. Wensinck, "al-<u>Kh</u>aḍir," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

115. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:8.

116. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:9.

117. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:7.

118. Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Saʿdī (b. 1969) was the leader of the Lebanese group al-Anṣār, which is considered a branch of al-Qaeda. This "Abū Miḥjan" has been accused of the murder of the well-known Lebanese shaykh Nizār al-Ḥalabī and has a Wikipedia entry in Arabic.

119. On February 29, 2012, the al-Qaeda suicide bomber Abu Miḥjan al-Sayārī caused the deaths of twenty-one guards at a presidential palace in Yemen. Hakim Almasmari, "Al Qaeda Claims Responsibility for Deadly Yemen Attack," CNN, February 29, 2012, http://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/29/world/meast/al-qaeda-yemen-attack/.

120. Aḥrār al-Shām is a Syrian opposition group; "Commander Abu Mihjan of the group Ahraar-ul-Sham"

Miḥjan as their *nom de guerre.* One such contemporary fighter, from the ranks of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), who gave a lecture at a two-day jihad seminar held by the organization and urged Muslims to wage war against the "Crusader [that is, Christian] minority" in the Sahara, was known as "Abū Miḥjan the Nigerian," and he delivered his lecture in the Hausa language.[121] The legacy of Abū Miḥjan has thus spread far and wide and is represented in multiple languages.

2. Exculpation: As in the case of Abū Khirāsh, the *akhbār* find excuses for Abū Miḥjan's scandalous verses. If with Abū Khirāsh the solution lay in chronology, with Abū Miḥjan it consists in drawing a clear line between speech and deed. A *khabar* in which the poet outlines the reason for his imprisonment subtly plays with arguments about the nature of poetry. Abū Miḥjan is reported to have explained his imprisonment thus: "By God, he did not imprison me for eating or drinking a forbidden substance. But I used to drink wine in the Jāhiliyya, and I am a poet onto whose tongue poetry would creep, and at times the tongue would spit it out."[122] In other words, the poet claims that he no longer drank wine *in reality* but merely recited verses about it. Furthermore, he argues that he does not have full control over what he says because he is a poet (*imruʾ shāʿir*) and verses sometimes crept onto his tongue, as if of their own will. The idea that poetry has powers of its own is related to the traditional view of eloquent speech as the result of a natural, spontaneous process, almost an inspiration. A definition of eloquence that al-Jāḥiẓ, in his *Kitāb al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, attributes to an esteemed orator from the famously well-spoken tribe of ʿAbd al-Qays illustrates this idea of the involuntariness of the creative process: "[Eloquence] is something that excites our hearts (*ṣudūranā*), which then throw it on our tongues."[123] In Abū Miḥjan's case, the *akhbār* use this conception of poetry to absolve the poet of blame: he could not control himself. The poet turns into a victim of his own poetry and of the Jāhilī past.

The same argument about the difference between speech and deed is used elsewhere in the entry. In one *khabar*, after the battle at al-Qādisiyya, Saʿd promises Abū Miḥjan that he will not blame the poet for anything he says, unless he carries it out. Abū Miḥjan answers: "Surely, by God, I will not follow my tongue to any evil deed."[124] Again, this story presents Abū Miḥjan as a good and obedient Muslim despite his immoral poetry. In another *khabar*, ʿUmar reacts furiously to the poet's verses, quoted earlier, about his inability to abandon wine. The caliph commands that Abū Miḥjan's punishment be increased, but ʿAlī steps in and reminds ʿUmar of the Qurʾānic verse: "And that they say what they practice not" (Q 26:226). This verse, mentioned earlier,[125] warns people about poets precisely because they

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is mentioned, for example, on an al-Qaeda-affiliated website: https://almuwahideenmedia.wordpress.com/2015/06/. Accessed May 16, 2017.

121. See Yossef Bodansky, "The Boko Haram and Nigerian Jihadism," *ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security* 318 (2015): 8.

122. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:9.

123. Al-Jāḥiz, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, 1:96.

124. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:9.

125. See note 20 above.

say something else than what they do. Here, by contrast, the same verse is used to improve Abū Miḥjan's image, suggesting that since poets usually do not translate their words into action, his provocative poems should not be taken seriously. The story thus provides an instance in which a Qurʾānic verse, originally meant as a condemnation of poetry, later helped to include some unruly poetry into the Arabic literary canon.

In sum, even though the central themes of Abū Miḥjan's poetry are wine, exile, prison, and war, and even though they express a certain unease with the Islamic moral code, the accompanying *akhbār* stress his renouncement of drink and his jihad for Islam. They make a strong distinction between the poet's actions and his words, implying that even if he sang about wine, it does not have to mean that he also drank it. The *akhbār* transform the poet, once exiled and imprisoned for his drinking excesses and wine poetry, into the ideal of an Islamic warrior and a Muslim hero. Notwithstanding their edifying tone, however, the *akhbār* can at times also display jovial indulgence in the Jāhilī aspects of the poet's persona. Haytham b. ʿAdī records that a person passing by Abū Miḥjan's grave in Azerbaijan saw three branches of a grapevine growing on it, all bearing fruit. The poet's plea for wine after death was fulfilled.

As a Thaqafī, Abū Miḥjan was the most urban of the three poets and the closest to the establishment, however strained his relationship with it was. He possibly met both ʿUmar and Saʿd and also composed elegies for some of the warriors who fought in the wars with the Sasanians. But he was certainly not speaking from the center of the early Islamic community: his poetry offended Islamic morality, perpetuated the poetics of the rejected Jāhiliyya, and at times expressed unease with the changes introduced by Islam. Abū Miḥjan himself did not acquire any position of power or influence; he was not patronized, he clashed with the status quo on multiple occasions, and he was exiled and imprisoned. The third poet to be discussed in this article represents a perspective even more marginal than those of the urban Abū Miḥjan and the Bedouin Abū Khirāsh. The inferior position of Suḥaym, a black slave, not only was reflected in his poetic production but also determined his view on the transition to Islam.

4. Suḥaym, the Slave of the Banū al-Ḥasḥās: A Sinner Punished

Suḥaym, or "Blackie," was one of the so-called Crows of the Arabs (*aghribat al-ʿArab*).[126] He was a black Abyssinian or Nubian slave,[127] bought and collectively owned by the Banū al-Ḥasḥās, one of the subtribes of Asad. He is mostly famous for his erotic poetry (*tashbīb*). He is said to have spoken Arabic with an accent due to his non-Arab background[128] and to

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126. *Aghribat al-ʿArab* were early Arabic poets of African descent, the most famous being ʿAntara b. Shaddād. For more information about them, see ʿAbduh Badawī, *al-Shuʿarāʾ al-sūd wa-khaṣāʾiṣuhum fī al-shiʿr al-ʿArabī* (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1973), and Bernard Lewis, "The Crows of the Arabs," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 88–97.

127. Bernard Lewis leans toward Suḥaym's having Nubian rather than Ethiopian origins because of a report that says that he was branded on his face. Lewis, "Crows of the Arabs," 94.

128. Abū ʿUbayda records that when Suḥaym wanted to express approval of his own verses, he said, "Ahshantu wa-llāhi," instead of "Aḥsantu wa-llāhi," that is, he mispronounced ḥāʾ (ح) and sīn (س). Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:213.

have been "ugly as a dog."[129] His lowly origin cast shadow on his whole life and determined its tragic unfolding. Suḥaym never succeeded in either joining the caliphal entourage or ridding himself of his slave status within his tribe, despite the numerous attempts recorded in his verses and *akhbār*. According to one story, an agent of the caliph ʿUthmān bought the famed slave-poet for his master, but the caliph sent him back because of his mistrust of slave-poets.[130] Another *khabar* portrays Suḥaym reciting a moralistic verse in front of ʿUmar in the hope of a reward, but the caliph rejects his poem. If Suḥaym indeed tried to enter the caliph's circle, he failed; he never attained any position of power, dignity, or wealth. However, Suḥaym's poetry suggests that his failure to reach the status of a free man was the true tragedy of his life.

I first present the most salient examples of Suḥaym's erotic poetry, then discuss how his poetry interacted with Islam, and finally interpret his boasting about his sexual conquests as defiance against his tribe and against the inferior position he held within it.

Carnal Love in Suḥaym's Poetry

Already in what was reportedly his first verse, Suḥaym fashions himself a black Casanova:

> I describe herbage whose flora is beautiful,
>   like an Abyssinian surrounded by girls.[131]

The *akhbār* claim that he uttered this line when he returned from a scouting mission, his tribe having sent him to assess the fertility of a new location. Instead of reporting on the conditions, he boasted about his ability to attract women.

Suḥaym's depiction of women is of particular interest. His heroines differ greatly from the typical beloved of the nostalgic *nasīb* (which he did not use).[132] They are women of flesh and bone, who initiate love affairs. They are typically scantily dressed and lust for the poet:

> Even an egg held tightly by a male ostrich
>   who lifts his breast as he is protecting it
> is not more beautiful than she on the day when she asked:
>   "Are you leaving with the riders or are you staying with us for some nights?"
> A cold north wind started blowing at the end of the night,
>   and we did not have any clothes but her cloak and my robe.

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129. Suḥaym mentions in a verse that some women compared him to a dog. Al-Iṣfahānī attributes this comparison to his ugliness. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:215.

130. ʿUthmān reportedly said: "Slave-poets, when full, recite erotic poetry about their [masters'] women and, when hungry, invective poems against them." Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:214. A similar statement appears again later, but instead of slave-poets (*ahl al-ʿabd al-shāʿir*) it speaks of poets in general. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:215.

131. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:214.

132. A. Arazi, "Suḥaym," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed.

> And my cloak retained the sweet scent of her clothes
>> for a whole year until it wore out.[133]

The first line compares the poet's lover to an "egg held tightly by a male ostrich," that is, a protected, precious object. This is a usual image in pre-Islamic poetry. It appears, for example, in Imruʾ al-Qays's famous *muʿallaqa*, where the poet's beloved is described as "an egg of the curtained quarters,"[134] a description that conveys the meanings of delicacy and purity and, as Suzanne Stetkevych has put it, "a description of the pale complexion of the woman who is constantly veiled and secluded."[135] We will return to the theme of the women's whiteness below; for now let us focus on the role of Suḥaym's social status with respect to his amorous escapades.

Unlike Imruʾ al-Qays, Suḥaym was no prince; as a slave, he stood at the opposite end of the social hierarchy. Seizing a woman, the delicate white egg, from her protected shelter would have constituted an affront to tribal society by itself. But in Suḥaym's case the affront was even graver because of his slave social status. In the second verse, Suḥaym's lover invites the poet to enter her private chambers and spend the night with her. The whole ambience is highly sensual, with the lovers being scarcely dressed by the end of the night. The last image is powerful: even once they have separated, the woman's scent stays with the poet for an entire year. The version that al-Iṣfahānī includes is only a short song text (*ṣawt*), representing a few lines (8, 11, 19–20) of a much longer poem of ninety-one lines that is recorded in Suḥaym's *Dīwān*.[136] The *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, after all, is a "book of songs," and al-Iṣfahānī's selection of verses was determined by the popularity of the songs based on the poems. This poem is, in fact, relatively moderate in comparison with other verses.

Al-Iṣfahānī, for example, also includes a poem in which Suḥaym describes the private parts of one of his ladies:

> Oh [that] memory, why do you remember her now,
>> when you are leaving?
> [The memory] of every white [woman] who has private parts
>> like the swaying hump of a young she-camel.[137]

As if to drive away an uncomfortable memory of an encounter with a lover, the poet recalls the event in detail, comparing his lover's private parts to a camel's hump. (Again, note the use of the color white in the description.) Other editions of the poem have the word "buttocks" (*kafal*) instead of "private parts" (*kaʿthab*),[138] which better fits the comparison

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133. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:211–12; Appendix, 3.a.

134. Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, 251, 267.

135. Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, 267.

136. Suḥaym, *Dīwān*, 16–33.

137. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:216; Appendix, 3.b.

138. I am using the edition of *al-Aghānī* by Iḥsān ʿAbbās; the earlier Egyptian edition and the *dīwān* both have *kafal*. See al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya, 1992), 22:308; Suḥaym, *Dīwān*, 34.

and the adjective "swaying." In either case, depicting a Muslim woman's physique was considered an outrageous act. Such an image was meant to shock.

Suḥaym does not hold back in the following verse either. He describes the sexual act explicitly. The *akhbār* confirm the scandalized reception of the verse when they comment that on its basis the caliph ʿUmar predicted that the poet would meet a violent death.

> She offers me her head as a pillow, embraces me with her wrist,
>   while her legs are behind me.[139]

Why such graphic language? Clearly, the poem represents rebellion against some social order. In what follows I explore two possible targets: the emergent Islamic community and Suḥaym's more immediate tribal society.

"Grey hair and Islam are enough to restrain a man"

We need to return, once again, to the value attached to piety as the core of Muḥammad's message to appreciate the effect of Suḥaym's words. The pietistic framework of Islam promoted chastity and moderation in sexual relationships and insisted on their regulation through stricter marital laws. The *ḥadd* punishment for adultery (*zināʾ*) illustrates the tightening social morality of early Islam: it could range from a temporary banishment to stoning. And although the Qurʾān does not mention the punishment of stoning for *zināʾ* it does disapprove of the promiscuity of the time and repeatedly condemns unlawful sexual intercourse.[140] For such newly minted Islamic sensibilities, Suḥaym's verses describing his amorous escapades in great detail were scandalous.

The entry in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* quotes Suḥaym speaking directly about Islam only in the following verse:

> Grey hair and Islam are enough to restrain a man.[141]

Although the line occurs in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* independently, it forms part of the opening line of a ninety-one-verse *qaṣīda*, some sections of which appear elsewhere in the *Aghānī*, albeit in fragmented form. The long ode begins with an introductory *nasīb* in which the poet bids farewell to his beloved and to the passion they shared.[142] He associates Islam with old age, because like old age it prevents a man from enjoying amorous play. The sentiment echoes Abū Khirāsh's complaint that the youth of his time indulge in moralistic rhetoric as if they were old men, as well as Abū Miḥjan's objection to Islam as a source of unease. Suḥaym, like Abū Khirāsh and Abū Miḥjan, understands Islam as an obstacle that separates him from pleasure.

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139. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:214–215.

140. See, for example, Q 24:33; 17:32; 25:68–69. See also R. Peters, "Zināʾ," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

141. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:215; Appendix, 3.e.

142. The entire line reads: "Bid farewell to ʿUmayra, if you are prepared to leave in the morning [to fight], for grey hair and Islam are enough to restrain a man [from youthful passion]." Suḥaym, *Dīwān*, 16. The entire poem in the *Dīwān* covers pp. 16–33.

Other verses by Suḥaym that are not present in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* mention the Prophet Muḥammad himself:

> I saw that the fates fear not even Muḥammad or anyone else,
>> and that they do not let anyone live forever.
> I see no one who lives forever despite fate,
>> nor anyone remaining alive without death's lying in wait for him.[143]

In spite of his reference to the Prophet, Suḥaym's attitude is deeply entrenched in the poetic Jāhiliyya: the fates, the master of the world, "fear not even Muḥammad or anyone else." At the same time, these verses should not be seen as anti-Islamic. Suḥaym simply wants to emphasize the power of fate by pointing out that it erases even people as magnificent as Muḥammad. Islamic doctrine stresses that the Prophet himself was only a human being in order to emphasize the oneness of God; Suḥaym does precisely the same to emphasize the power of fate. This is noteworthy for the poet treats Muḥammad in a manner similar to the way in which great men of the past were treated in early Arabic poetry with its frequent use of the *ubi sunt* motif. *Ubi sunt* is a nostalgic literary meditation on the transcience of life. In its Arabic version it often uses the great leaders and kings of the past, now dead and with their peoples having been dispersed, to make the point that nothing lasts in this world. Suḥaym's verses, then, express admiration for the Prophet while maintaining a Jāhilī worldview. The poet's favorable attitude toward Muḥammad, if authentic, suggests that the defiant tone and explicit eroticism in his verses may be primarily directed at another target—namely, the tribal society that denied him the rights and dignity of a free man.

Sex, Race, and Defiance against One's Tribe

Suḥaym's bawdy verses are, in my reading, primarily intended as an insult (*hijāʾ*)[144] against his own tribe, in reaction to his failure to negotiate a better social position for himself. This is where race comes in. The detail of the women's white skin, noted above, is relevant because it identifies the class that they represent—free Arab tribesmen. Suḥaym's love conquests can be understood symbolically as his attempt to retaliate against the tribe that denied him a dignified existence. Elsewhere, he speaks openly of his hope to improve his social standing:

> The poems of the slave of the Banū al-Ḥashās
>> outweigh a noble origin and wealth.
> Though I am a slave, my soul is free by virtue of its nobility;
>> though black by color, I am white of character.[145]

The poet's verses constitute an early comment on racial dynamics: he argues that despite his black skin color, his soul and character are those of a free white man. Suḥaym's

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143. Suḥaym, *Dīwān*, 40; Appendix, 3.d.

144. On the genre of *hijāʾ*, see van Gelder, *Bad and Ugly*.

145. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:214; Appendix, 3.c.

argumentation shows how deeply racial categories were ingrained in people's minds at the time, for he tries to prove not that all people are equal but that he—in the depths of his soul—is *in essence* white. A less explicit attempt to persuade the tribesmen to accept him as an equal member can be seen in other poems, which celebrate the battles of Asad. The motif of a black slave hoping to become a free man is reminiscent of the pre-Islamic heroic poet ʿAntara. ʿAntara's mother was an Abyssinian slave, and he allegedly earned his freedom after demonstrating bravery in battle. In Suḥaym's case, however, all his poetic efforts to become an equal member of his society seem to have come to nought. And so the poet rebelled against the unjust tribal society.

The *akhbār* provide important indications that Suḥaym's poetry was understood as tribal *hijāʾ,* when they claim that his tribe ultimately killed him over his poetry. This means that the poems must have been interpreted as insults to the tribe's pride. Regardless of how the poet actually died, these narratives thus shed light on the goal (*gharaḍ*) of his poetry. The following verses are reported to have instigated the chain of events that led to Suḥaym's death:

> How many dresses of double-threaded cloth did we tear apart
>> and how many veils [we pulled] from eyes that were not drowsy.
> When a robe is torn off the veil goes with it,
>> [and we continued] in this way until all of us were bare-skinned.[146]

In this scene, the poet and his lady, identified as a Ṣubayrī[147] girl, remove their robes and her veil so passionately that they tear them apart, emerging completely naked. The *akhbār* report that rumors about Suḥaym and the girl reached his master. He spied on Suḥaym and heard him recite the lewd verse about a white woman's private parts/buttocks quoted earlier. At that point, the tribe decided to punish Suḥaym, but one of its girls ran to warn him. The girl's arrival prompted the following verse, in which Suḥaym contemplates whether he should keep his affair with the girl hidden:

> Should she be kept a secret? May you be greeted
>> despite the distance by him who became infatuated with your love.

He then answers his own question:

> And you wouldn't have been kept a secret, if you did a disgraceful deed,
>> daughter of the tribe, nor if we engaged in a forbidden act.

The poet declares that it is not his custom to hide his affairs and proves his point by boasting about his conquests within the tribe:

> [For] many a girl like you I took out from the curtained quarters of her mother
>> to a party where she would trail her striped robe.[148]

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146. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:216; Appendix, 3.f.

147. Strangely, this tribe is related to Tamīm and not to Asad, the poet's tribe.

148. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:217; Appendix, 3.g.

He makes it clear that he seduced girls against the wishes of their mothers and literally snatched them from their homes. The *akhbār* portray him as defiant, as unwilling to renounce his lewd poetry even when his life is at stake. When Suḥaym is led to his execution and a former lover among the bystanders mocks him, he retorts with a bawdy image of penetration:

> Now you are mocking me, but how many a night
> I left you spread open, like a garment.[149]

The image is explicit: a woman "spread open like a garment" speaks for itself. But the climax of Suḥaym's *hijāʾ* is still to come:

> Fasten the bonds on your slave lest he escape you (*yuflitkum*),
> for surely life is close to death,
> indeed, once sweat and scent dripped
> from the foreheads of your girls (*fatātikum*) onto the bed's surface.[150]

According to the *akhbār*, Suḥaym exclaimed these lines when facing his imminent death. His principal sin was his defiance of the tribal customs and fearlessness of it.[151] The tribe was the main target of his hostility. It is impossible to ascertain whether this is in fact what happened, but, more importantly, the *akhbār* show that later readers understood these verses as the pinnacle of Suḥaym's provocation. In the poem, he challenges the tribesmen to fasten the bonds on his hands and insults them by attacking the honor of their women. He claims that "sweat and scent dripped" from the girls' foreheads, implying sexual intercourse. By targeting the tribe's women, he is undermining the honor of the tribe as a whole in retaliation for his failed attempts to ascend the social ladder. That Suḥaym's true target is his tribe can also be seen from his use of the second-person plural (*-kum*), because it shows that he is directly addressing his audience, the tribe ("lest he escape *you*"; "*your* girls"). Suḥaym, like ʿAntara b. Shaddād before him, protested his inferior position within the tribe, caused by his black skin and his slave status. But unlike ʿAntara, Suḥaym never, as far as we can tell, achieved the status of a free man, and he voiced the resulting bitterness and defiance in his poetry. Suḥaym's poetry, I argue, was thus aimed primarily at this tribe. Its openly licentious tone, however, was inconsistent with the ethos of the new Islamic community. The following section looks at how the *akhbār* dealt with this unruly figure.

Suḥaym in the Akhbār

The *akhbār* both Islamize and punish the slave-poet—both mechanisms that we have already seen at work on Abū Miḥjan. In Suḥaym's case, however, the emphasis seems to

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149. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:217; Appendix, 3.h.

150. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:217; Appendix, 3.i. See also Muḥammad b. Hāshim al-Khālidī and Saʿīd b. Hāshim al-Khālidī, *al-Ashbāh wa-l-naẓāʾir* (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1958–65), 2:25–26, on the line *Qad aḥsana l-kināya ʿan al-jimāʿ*.

151. Two lines from a poem referred above also reinforce the theme that the poet does not fear the tribesmen who are threatening him. See lines 5 and 6 in Appendix, 3.g.

be on the latter strategy. Again, the earliest narrators of these *akhbār* belong to the same generation of ʿAbbāsid scholars.[152]

1. <u>Islamization</u>: As in the previous cases, the *akhbār* attempt to Islamize the poet, which sometimes results in twisting the meaning of his poetry. The *akhbār*'s treatment of the verse "Grey hair and Islam are enough to restrain a man" is illustrative in this regard. As noted earlier, these words form the opening to a sensual poem in which the poet remembers his past amorous adventures and sets them against the restrictive reality of Islam. The *akhbār*, however, offer a very different interpretation. They depict Suḥaym reciting the line before the caliph ʿUmar as *praise* of Islam in the hope of a reward. But the caliph tells him: "If you had placed Islam before grey hair I would have rewarded you." The verse became so famous that it was adapted into an anachronistic[153] Prophetic *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet quotes Suḥaym but reverses the order of the two items ("Islam and grey hair" instead of "grey hair and Islam"), thereby breaking the rules of the meter. The Prophet is unable to recite the line properly even after Abū Bakr corrects him, whereupon the latter exclaims: "I bear witness that you are God's messenger!" This is a reference to the Qurʾānic argument (Q. 36:69) that God's messenger is no poet but simply a true, inspired prophet.[154] This *ḥadīth* reveals that later generations interpreted Suḥaym's verse as praise for Islam and as a sign of his repentance for his past scandalous behavior. The narrative thus transforms a nostalgic reference to pre-Islamic amorous pleasures into evidence of penitence. In the process, the black slave Suḥaym becomes a powerful model for all Muslims who have sinned.

2. <u>Punishment</u>: At the same time, the *akhbār* highlight harsh punishment of Suḥaym's sins to provide a deterring example. Suḥaym's poetry is naturally largely silent on his death, but the narratives about his life revel in the details of his bold defiance and violent death. They report that Suḥaym was killed in the most miserable way: the tribesmen murdered him and (contrary to Islamic precepts) burned his body. According to the variant telling of Ibn Daʾb, the tribesmen dug a trench, threw Suḥaym in it, and burned him alive.[155] The word "trench" (*ukhdūd*) may have resonated in the minds of the audience with the Qurʾānic mention of the "people of the trench" (*aṣḥāb al-ukhdūd*; Q. 85:4–8). They are generally believed to have been the Christian martyrs of Najrān, whom the Judaizing king of Ḥimyar, Dhū Nuwās, burned to death around 520 CE.[156] The description of Suḥaym's death may thus allude to the tragic fate of the famous Christian martyrs.

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152. Two names that recur often in these reports are Abū ʿUbayda, mentioned earlier, and Ibn al-Mājishūn (d. 185/801), who moved in Medinese circles but was a contemporary of most of the other transmitters.

153. The story does not fit Suḥaym's life chronologically, since he lived and earned his fame during the reigns of ʿUmar and ʿUthmān.

154. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:213.

155. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:217.

156. On the martyrs of Najrān see I. Shahîd, "Nadjrān," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; Shahid, *The Martyrs of Najran: New Documents* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1971); Monferrer Sala, Juan Pedro, *Redefining History on Pre-Islamic Accounts: The Arabic Recension of the Martyrs of Najrân* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010).

Therefore, if Suḥaym's verses themselves speak of his class and racial struggle, his *akhbār* are more interested in finding a place for his poetry within the framework of Islamic *adab*. Irrespective of Suḥaym's true life story, a poet who violated the norms of the new society in such a conspicuous way could not have been allowed to succeed with his obscenity, excesses, and defiance. Although he ultimately fell victim to pre-Islamic tribal customary law (if we are to believe the *akhbār*), his literary death happened in the name of the new world order. Suḥaym's poetry disrupted the new Islamic ethics and the message of moderation, and as such it had to be restrained.

Why was Suḥaym not redeemed through the workings of the *akhbār*, as Abū Khirāsh and Abū Miḥjan were? An explanation may lie in the fact that his lewd language was aimed directly at his tribe. The affront to tribal values was all the more serious because Suḥaym, in contrast to, say, Imruʾ al-Qays, was a black slave and thus at the bottom of the tribal social hierarchy. Therefore, we can imagine that whereas the later tribal narrators (*ruwāt*) of Hudhayl and Thaqīf were interested in redeeming their poets, those of the Banū al-Ḥasḥās were not keen on rehabilitating theirs. However, despite their harshness toward the poet, the *akhbār* show a modicum of empathy in the end. Having turned Suḥaym into a discouraging example of a punished sinner, they finally also make him victorious: although he was killed, the slave still managed to bring shame on the tribe of his killers.

5. Concluding Remarks

This study has addressed two main questions: What can the poems of Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhalī, Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī, and Suḥaym, the slave of the Banū al-Ḥasḥās, tell us about the period of the coming of Islam in the Ḥijāz? And how did later audiences receive these three poets? I have examined the entries for the three poets in al-Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī* and highlighted two types of tension that help answer these questions—first, a historical tension between the worldview of the poets and the emergent Islamic ideology, and second, a historiographical tension between the poetry and the accompanying *akhbār* in al-Iṣfahānī's entries. I have argued that this second tension results from the fact that whereas the poetry, for the most part, reflects the reactions of the poets themselves, the *akhbār* should be mainly understood as the attempts of later audiences to interpret the earlier poems. As such, the poetry can answer the former question and the *akhbār* the latter. In these concluding remarks I recapitulate my analysis of the poets' verses; consider two important side arguments regarding the historical value of Mukhaḍram poetry that my analysis implies; and offer a rough sketch of the possible stages of the transmission of this poetry's *akhbār*.

The Poetic Legacy of Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym

An examination of the poetry of the three Mukhaḍram poets reveals a worldview that was, in many ways, incompatible with the ethics of the gradually emerging Islamic religion and akin to the poetic Jāhiliyya, the principal discourse of pre-Islamic poetry. The poetic Jāhiliyya emphasized the present moment, whereas Muḥammad's new salvation model centered on the afterlife. Similarly, Abū Khirāsh's reckless and constant fighting

for the sake of tribal loyalty and honor stood in contrast to the new way of waging war—organized, controlled, and motivated by a higher good. Abū Miḥjan's celebration of wine, drinking parties, and loyalty to the drink clashed with the Islamic prohibition of wine and the prescription of restraint and moderation in life. And Suḥaym's detailed descriptions of women and his erotic encounters with them were incongruous with both the newly proclaimed Islamic moral code and the laws of tribal honor. The poets' sentiments, however, went beyond superficial hedonism. They bespoke belief in a merciless and unpredictable fate that cast its shadow on all living beings and a conviction that all that humans could do was to heroically stand up to it. In a world without the prospect of salvation, heroic poetry—which memorialized human bravery—was the only means by which to achieve immortality. Its tragic undertones may have had a profound emotional and purifying effect, in the sense of Aristotelian *katharsis*, on those who listened to it.[157]

Furthermore, the three poets comment directly on the new world in which they find themselves, most commonly expressing unease (*ḥaraj*) with it. They were indeed *mukhaḍramūn*, "split" or "cut in half" between two worlds, belonging to both and neither at the same time. In a sense, their vivid recall of the golden days of the Jāhiliyya can be considered a political act and a poetic rebellion at a time when a powerful new ideology, one whose worldview was contrary to this poetry, was establishing itself. Suḥaym's poetry displays an additional layer of defiance related to his inferior social standing within his tribe. Through his poetry, the black slave-poet attempted to improve his status, and when he failed, he attacked the honor of the tribe's women with his verses. While the Mukhaḍramūn's poetry is still Jāhilī in spirit, its context is pronouncedly Islamic, which is what makes it so fascinating.

A question inevitably arises: to what extent is the poetic Jāhiliyya representative of the reality of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia? Although the two are traditionally equated, this representation is misleading. Scholars such as Rina Drory and Peter Webb have noted that the Jāhiliyya as a concept was constructed in the Islamic era and crystallized during its first centuries.[158] It is absolutely not the point of this study to present the early Muslim poets and their society as "tribal, pagan, and barbaric," notions that, according to Webb's critique, tend to guide scholarly treatment of the Jāhiliyya.[159] Although the three poets do express tribal values, their occasional hedonism is not "barbaric" but underlined by a deeper existential(ist) framework. Finally, they were no "pagans," at least according to the

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157. I am referring to Aristotle's discussion of tragedy and its cathartic possibilities in his *Poetics*: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable, [. . .], performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification [katharsis] of such emotions." Aristotle, *Poetics*, 49b27f.

158. For varying accounts of the changing image of the Jāhiliyya, see Rina Drory, "The Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya: Cultural Authority in the Making," *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 33–49, esp. 35; Peter A. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 255–70; Webb, "Creating Arab Origins: Muslim Constructions of al-Jāhiliyya and Arab History" (PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2014); Webb, "Al-Jāhiliyya: Uncertain Times of Uncertain Meanings," *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (2014): 69–94.

159. Webb, "Creating Arab Origins," 16.

Muslim tradition. Judging by their poetry, they were simply not particularly interested by religion or, at times, were annoyed by it. Besides, I want to stress that the Jāhilī sentiments represent only one among various competing cultural models. Different monotheistic trends, as is now generally accepted, were far stronger in pre-Islamic Arabia than the Muslim tradition suggests.[160] It is impossible to determine what part of the population engaged in the production and reception of this type of poetry at the time of Islam's emergence. We know that in the sixth century poets such as Ṭarafa could achieve high social status and wealth by reciting their poetry at the court in Ḥīra, but by the time of Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym the court in Ḥīra had been silent for decades.[161] Though poetry most likely still played an important social role, Christianity and Judaism were well established in the regions adjacent to pre-Islamic Arabia, and these monotheists did not leave behind a body of literature that would be comparable to the body of Jāhilī poetry. Furthermore, poetry may be group-specific and may reflect mainly the ideals of Arabian nomads and seminomads, not those of the urban populations of the Arabian Peninsula.[162] Establishing the actual spread of the ideals of the poetic Jāhiliyya among the inhabitants of pre-Islamic Arabia is beyond the scope of this paper, but we can nonetheless identify two likely reasons these ideals were later selected to represent the "original" Arabic culture: the scarcity of sources to have come down to us from this period and the deliberate later reconstructions of the Jāhiliyya. An instructive comparison is the case of a community of Italian peasants, described by Carlo Levi and used by James Fentress and Chris Wickham to illustrate the formation of class and group memories.[163] In the year 1936, the peasants did not remember much of the First World War but passionately recalled brigand clashes almost seventy years earlier, which were significant for their community. If the history of the late nineteenth

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160. Even the *mushrikūn*, the Qurʾānic opponents of Muḥammad whom the tradition sees as "polytheists" or "associators," have now been recast as monotheists, most famously by Gerald Hawting. Patricia Crone, agreeing with him, concluded: "If we base ourselves on the evidence of the Qurʾān alone, the *mushrikūn* were monotheists who worshipped the same God as the Messenger, but who also venerated lesser divine beings indiscriminately called gods and angels, including some identifiable as Arabian deities, and perhaps also in some cases the sun and the moon. The *mushrikūn* saw the lesser divine beings as mediators between themselves and God, sometimes apparently only venerating one mediator figure, at other times several, sometimes including female ones." See Gerald R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Patricia Crone, *Collected Studies in Three Volumes*, vol. 1, *The Qurʾānic Pagans and Related Matters*, ed. Hanna Siurua (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 77. Chase Robinson has pointed out that the emergence of various prophetic figures, the most notorious being Musaylima b. Ḥabīb, confirms the general rise in monotheism in this period. Chase F. Robinson, "The Rise of Islam, 600–705," in *New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, ed. Chase F. Robinson, 171–225 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On monotheism before Islam, see Aziz al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

161. Khosrow II, the last Sasanian king, annexed Ḥīra to his empire in 602 CE.

162. Michael Lecker, "Pre-Islamic Arabia," in *New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 1, ed. Chase F. Robinson, 153–170 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Hoyland has also suggested that Arab identity was drawn mainly from tribal values, for the city, although strong in religion, was weak in identity. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 242.

163. See James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 87–88, and Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, trans. Francis Frenaye (London: Cassell, 1948), 137.

and early twentieth centuries were written on the basis of their memories, the First World War would appear a minor event in comparison to the war of the Italian brigands. The peasants thus passed on what had meaning for their group and what legitimized their present. Similarly, pre-Islamic poetry may have originally reflected the memories of one group and may have been chosen only later to bolster the collective identity of the new Muslim society.

The Historical Value of Mukhaḍram Poetry

My analysis gives rise to two important side arguments concerning the historical value of Mukhaḍram poetry. The first is that Mukhaḍram poetry is a fruitful source for the study of early Islam, as demonstrated by their historically bounded engagement with emergent Islam, on which this article focuses. Yet Mukhaḍram poetry is still a largely underexplored field. In addition to elucidating the sentiments of some early Muslims about the rapid spread of Muḥammad's message, this study illustrates the historiographical value of this poetry in other areas as well. With regard to key concepts of the time, one of Suḥaym's long odes offers a rare extra-Qurʾānic example of the term "Islam" used for a belief system.[164] On a broader level, the poetry of these three poets provides arguments against the skeptical revisionist position that doubts that Mecca and Medina were the true birthplace of the Believers' movement.[165] As noted earlier, the three poets belonged to tribes that lived in the hinterland of the two cities. Since the poets' direct commentary on the impact of this movement suggests their closeness to it, it also places the movement squarely in this region.

Furthermore, Mukhaḍram poetry provides an important insight into how individuals reacted to the changes that were taking place in society, and the sentiments it expresses contribute to our knowledge of the temporal and social context from which it emerged. Naturally, not all contemporary reactions to Muḥammad's message were negative; the most famous example of poetic cooptation may be Kaʿb b. Zuhayr's famous Mantle Ode, "Suʿād Has Departed" (*Bānat Suʿādu*)—a panegyric poem that Kaʿb is said to have presented to the Prophet on the occasion of his conversion to Islam.[166] The difference between Kaʿb's poem and, say, Abū Khirāsh's work is that the latter could not expect a reward for his verses from Muḥammad's community. In either case, their divergent voices represent the mixed reactions to the ascendancy of Islam, adding nuance to our understanding of the process. Whereas Muslim narratives depict Muḥammad's prophecy as a decisive break with the pagan Jāhiliyya, revisionist scholars have downplayed Muḥammad's role, depicting Islam as emerging gradually from the cultural milieu of the Judeo-Christian

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164. In the line "Grey hair and Islam are enough to restrain a man."

165. For a concise account of the skeptical approach, see Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 2006), 20–25. Although some important revisionists have altered and refined their views over time, questions about the location of the Qurʾānic community remain to be resolved. See, for instance, Patricia Crone, "How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?" in Crone, *Collected Studies in Three Volumes*, 1:1–20, esp. 12; Gerald R. Hawting, "Pre-Islamic Arabia and the Qurʾān," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*.

166. For an analysis of the poem, see Stetkevych, *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy*, 48–79.

Late Antiquity.[167] But even in nonrevisionist scholarship it has become commonplace to emphasize continuities rather than discontinuities, often fueled by the wish to see Islam as part of the larger late antique world and not as an isolated phenomenon.[168] Aziz al-Azmeh has recently sketched a middle way, arguing for a model of Islam in Late Antiquity in which Islam remains an autochthonous cultural product of Arabia but at the same time represents the culmination of long-term processes that the peninsula shared with the rest of the late antique world.[169] To stress the continuities and the embeddedness of the early Islamic state in the larger late antique world is extremely important; yet equally important for understanding this period is to pay attention to the tensions that Muḥammad's prophecy generated among his contemporaries, such as those that can be sensed in the the poetry of the three Mukhaḍramūn. The fact that the three men were poets is relevant because they were carriers of the values of the now-rejected cultural model of the poetic Jāhiliyya. Therefore, the poetry of Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym provides a window into a clash of competing cultural models and reveals how some marginal early Muslims from the Ḥijāz of the first/seventh century reacted to the epoch-making developments around them. Especially in view of the scarcity of early Islamic sources, we cannot afford to ignore their voices and the voices of others like them.

The second side argument arises from my analysis of the discrepancy between the poetry and the *akhbār*. This discrepancy provides further arguments in favor of the stability and historicity of this ancient (i.e., Jāhilī and Mukhaḍram) poetry. The question of the authenticity of this poetry has been debated for more than a century.[170] In 1925, the British orientalist D. S. Margoliouth and the Egyptian scholar Ṭāhā Ḥusayn published influential studies in which they undermined the authenticity of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.[171] They based their respective arguments on the poetry's contents and language, claiming that the

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167. The two most influential revisionist books, which changed the face of the field, are John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu* (1978) and Michael Cook and Patricia Crone, *Hagarism* (1977).

168. Peter Brown, the founder of this field of study, included the Islamic Umayyad period in Late Antiquity. Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971). See also Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Robert Hoyland, "Early Islam as a Late Antique Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, 1053–77 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). See also Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

169. Al-Azmeh, *Emergence of Islam*.

170. It should be pointed out that this debate concerns only pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry; there is consensus with regard to the authenticity of Umayyad poetry. Even D. S. Margoliouth, in his famous 1925 article of 1925, mentions that "it would be difficult to shake the genuineness of those [*dīwāns*] of the Umayyad poets." D. S. Margoliouth, "The Origins of Arabic Poetry," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 57, no. 3 (1925): 446. Chase Robinson, among other recent scholars, has drawn on Umayyad poetry as a primary source in his ʿAbd al-Malik (New York: Oneworld, 2012). Salih Said Agha and Tarif Khalidi called poetry "perhaps the most primary of Arabic sources" in "Poetry and Identity in the Umayyad Age," *Al-Abḥāth* 50–51 (2002–3): 55. On the historical value of poetry see also Saleh Said Agha, Ramzi Baalbaki, and Tarif Khalidi, eds. *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011).

171. Margoliouth, "Origins of Arabic Poetry"; Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Fī al-shiʿr al-jāhilī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1926). A. J. Arberry lays out the discussion clearly and sums up the counterarguments made in his *Seven Odes*, 228–245.

so-called Jāhilī poetry did not reflect the polytheistic world of the pre-Islamic poets but rather an Islamic environment and that all these poems from different parts of Arabia could not have been written in the language of the Qurʾān and the Quraysh. Many have attempted to refute the two scholars' claims, most notably Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Asad, who in his 1956 study focused on the transmission of poetry that he deemed to have had a larger written element than previously thought.[172]

Later, in the 1970s, James T. Monroe and Michael Zwettler provided a new understanding of the issue with the help of Parry-Lord's oral-formulaic theory.[173] In their older work on Homer, Milman Parry and A. B. Lord had argued that oral and written poetry can be distinguished from one another by their particular use of formulas: oral poetry is formulaic, while written verse is not. Monroe and Zwettler's turn to oral-formulaic theory revised the discussion about the authenticity of ancient Arabic poetry by recharacterizing orality as a mode to be studied on its own terms. The oral poet masters a large repertoire of themes, motifs, proper names, and formulas and recreates—that is, improvises—the poems with each new performance, which explains the resulting different versions of the poem. The poems are fluid, and the search for an "original text" is therefore pointless, as all of the versions are equally "authentic." As quoted earlier, Monroe nevertheless claimed that pre-Islamic poetry represents "a fairly close picture" of what was orally transmitted. Gregor Schoeler, in turn, presented the most influential critique of Monroe and Zwettler's application of oral-formulaic theory to pre-Islamic Arabic poetry.[174] He postulated, like al-Asad, the pre-Islamic existence of writing and written collections of poems already early on and rejected the idea that the great poems were largely improvised.[175] Though Schoeler's main theoretical contribution lies in a fresh understanding of the oral and written modes as coexisting and in the division of written "texts" into *hypomnēmata* and *syngrammata*, his refutation of the importance of improvisation and his argument for early writing further support the perception of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry as stable.[176]

The poetry of Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym examined in this article informs the debate regarding the stability and historicity of the poetry of this period in two ways. First, its direct engagement with emergent Islam places it historically. It would be absurd to

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172. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Asad, *Maṣādir al-shiʿr al-jāhilī wa-qīmatuhā al-tārīkhiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1962; first ed. 1956). Al-Asad produced the most detailed account of the *rāwī* and collected much evidence about the spread of writing in pre-Islamic Arabia and the existence of written collections of poetry in the first centuries of Islam. He relied on stories about the transmitters of poetry, their work, and their study circles, and on comments about writing found in the poetry itself. A particularly convincing part of his argument is his comparison of different versions of poems, which can be explained only with reference to written transmission (pp. 176–178).

173. Monroe, "Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry, and Zwettler, *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry.*"

174. For a critique of Zwettler (and Monroe), see Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl, ed. James Montgomery (London: Routledge, 2006), 87–110 (chap. 4).

175. See Schoeler, *Oral and Written*, 62–86 (chap. 3).

176. With regard to Schoeler's critique of Monroe and Zwettler, it is fair to point out that Monroe himself observed that pre-Islamic poetry is characterized by "a far greater textual stability" than the oral epic that served as his point of reference. Monroe, "Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry," 40.

suppose that later narrators fabricated verses with an anti-Islamic flair and ascribed them to poets whom they saw as Muslims. Second, the fact that the poetry expresses values that differ from those of the *akhbār* that accompany the poems suggests that the two bodies of literature come from different periods. The Mukhaḍramūn poetry's spirit, themes, and unease with the new religion point to a very early date, whereas the *akhbār*'s occasionally moralizing tone and misinterpretation of the verses are signs of a later reception of this poetry by an already Islamized audience. A different understanding of the ideological rift between the poetry and the *akhbār* is hard to maintain, for if we were to assume that both were fabricated later, as has once been claimed, would we not likewise expect that they would be in harmony with each other?

The Transmission of the Akhbār

This study has addressed the ways in which later audiences absorbed the verses of the Mukhaḍramūn by focusing on the *akhbār* about them. Consequently, we must ask what can be said about the transmission history of the *akhbār*. How did the memory of the unruly poets emerge, find its way to scholars, coalesce into larger narrative units, and acquire the archetypal contours that we have observed here (Muslim martyr, Muslim warrior, punished sinner)? I have examined specifically the *akhbār* in al-Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī* and highlighted the occasional discrepancies between the *akhbār* and the poetry. On the basis of these divergences, I have argued that the *akhbār* both recorded and mediated the reception of the three Mukhaḍramūn and their legacy after their poetry had already been stabilized. For the purposes of this argument, I have treated the *akhbār* as a homogenous body of material. Now, however, it is time to admit that such homogeneity is an illusion. Many factors point to a long and unwieldy process of collection. In what follows, I mention some of these factors and provide a possible sketch of the *akhbār*'s collection and transmission. The possible agents of this process are presented here in reverse chronological order:

1. Fourth/tenth century: Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī and his *Kitāb al-Aghānī*
2. Late second/eighth and early third/ninth centuries: early ʿAbbāsid scholars
3. Early second/eighth century: Umayyad scholars
4. First/seventh century: living tradition/social memory/communicative memory

1. Fourth/tenth century: Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī and his *Kitāb al-Aghānī*. The organization of the *Aghānī*'s entries as a whole offers insight into the work of an author harmonizing and interpreting his material. To be clear, I do not want to imply that Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī fabricated the *akhbār* that he included in his work. As already noted, he relied on earlier sources, which he meticulously quotes. But his auctorial intervention in the selection of the *akhbār*, their organization (an act that automatically participates in interpreting and creating their meaning), and his own occasional comments is clear. An illustrative example is al-Iṣfahānī's placement of the mention of Abū Khirāsh's conversion to Islam ("He converted to Islam and his Islam was good") *at the end* of his biography, which creates the semblance of a deliberate chronology. Through such organization of the *akhbār*,

al-Iṣfahānī implies that the poet engaged in his blood feuds and composed his anti-Islamic verses before converting to Islam and that, by virtue of his conversion, he subsequently rejected his Jāhilī past.

2. <u>Late second/eighth and early third/ninth centuries: early ʿAbbāsid scholars</u>. Most of the *isnād*s that accompany Abū Khirāsh's, Abū Miḥjan's, and Suḥaym's poetry end with this generation of scholars. At first glance, this fact leaves us with two possibilities: either these scholars created the *akhbār* as a way of embellishing and making sense of the old poetry, or they, as they claim, recorded a living oral tribal tradition. But we have reason to believe that there is yet another, third, option: that the ʿAbbāsid scholars were drawing on an older Umayyad scholarly literary tradition. I contend that the absence of oral informants or earlier Umayyad scholars from the *isnād*s may be explained by a methodological shift in early ʿAbbāsid scholarship rather than by the nonexistence of such earlier transmitters. In actuality, the *akhbār* are surely the result of a mix of all these possible scenarios. However, the first possibility (ʿAbbāsid creation of the *akhbār*) is likely to have been a rare phenomenon at this relatively late stage, when expertise in poetry was already established and reliability and precision were already scholarly trademarks, as the famous story about al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī and al-Ḥammād al-Rāwiya at al-Mahdī's court illustrates.[177] Therefore, I believe that most of the *akhbār* existed in some form already in the Umayyad era and were transmitted either as living tribal lore or through the Umayyad scholarly tradition.

The methodology of scholars underwent a major change in the ʿAbbāsid period, most easily noticeable in the new emphasis on collecting material directly from the Bedouins through personal visits. Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlāʾ (d. ca. 154/771) is seen as the first pioneer of this approach.[178] According to the Kufan grammarian Thaʿlab, his namesake, Abū ʿAmr al-Shaybānī (d. 206/821), likewise used to go to the desert with two big inkwells and would not return until they were empty.[179] Many of the early ʿAbbāsid scholars with whom Abū al-Faraj's *isnād*s usually end, including al-Aṣmaʿī, Abū Ubayda, and Abū ʿAmr al-Shaybānī, belonged to Abū ʿAmr b. al-ʿAlāʾ's circle. Appreciating the broader significance of this methodological shift is, in my view, more important for our understanding of scholarly society at that time than is determining whether al-Aṣmaʿī and the others recorded and

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177. The caliph al-Mahdī rewarded al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī over al-Ḥammād al-Rāwiya and revoked the latter's status as a transmitter because he had added a few lines to an ancient poem. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 6:89–91. On the emergence of the scholars' authoritative expertise in poetry, see Drory, "Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya." Drory and Suzanne Stetkevych also mention the story of al-Mahdī, and Stetkevych uses it to discuss the parameters of scholarly reputation and honesty. Suzanne Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ʿAbbāsid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 246. For other, similar stories, see also Ilse Lichtenstädter, "Al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.

178. For more details about the collection process, see Gregor Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam: From the Aural to the Read* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); Beatrice Gruendler, "Early Arabic Philologists: Poetry's Friends or Foes?," in *World Philology*, ed. Sheldon Pollock, Benjamin A. Elman, and Ku-min Kevin Chang, 92–113 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām*, 241–256; Ignaz Goldziher, "Some Notes on the Dîwâns of the Arabic Tribes," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 29 (1897): 325–334.

179. Al-Asad, *Maṣādir*, 193.

transmitted their material orally or in written form, which is what modern scholars investigating the transmission of early Islamic material have mainly focused on.[180] The methodological transition is related to the invention of expertise in poetry (*al-ʿilm bi-l-shiʿr*) as a legitimate field of learning and to the creation of a "body of authorized knowledge," a process described by Drory. In Drory's depiction, the transition entailed the scholars' assumption of professional authority over ancient poetry from the hands of poets and transmitters.[181] I disagree with Drory's excellent article on one point: its linear chronology. Admittedly, Drory herself rejects simple linearity in the three-stage transfer of authority on poetry (1. poets; 2. transmitters; 3. scholars), preferring instead to see the process as a competition of power between these three groups. Still, her conclusions suggest that scholars of poetry emerged as a group claiming independent professional authority in Ancient Arab poetry only in the last quarter of the second/eighth century.[182] I contend, however, that scholars claimed expertise in this field already in the Umayyad period and that we should therefore see the main question about this particular moment as consisting not of *who* (poets, transmitters, scholars) but of *how* (method).

The creation of a body of authorized knowledge and the emphasis on recording living tribal lore points to a shift in the method of scholarship that took place among the ʿAbbāsid scholars. A report quoted by al-Asad is illustrative of the shift. It records Ibn Salām al-Jumaḥī (d. 231–32/845–46) complaining about earlier scholars who relied solely on written sources and did not corroborate their material orally with a teacher: "People passed it on from book to book; they did not take it from the people of the desert and did not show it to their scholars."[183] Famously, Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833), in his redaction of the *sīra*, or biography, of the Prophet, expressed many misgivings about the authenticity of the materials used by his predecessor in this undertaking, Ibn Isḥāq (d. ca. 150–59/761–70).[184] These and similar reports suggest that ʿAbbāsid scholars, with their new methodology, looked at some earlier scholars as dilettantes who had collected material indiscriminately. The ʿAbbāsid scholars may thus have deemed it unnecessary to quote earlier scholars who had not adhered to their "scientific" method. What is more, they may have preferred to claim that they had heard their material directly from Bedouins, because that was what

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180. The use of oral vs. written modes in the transmission of early Islamic material has been discussed in modern scholarship since Goldziher's *Muhammedanische Studien* (1889–1890), which pointed to the oral tradition to argue that the *ḥadīth*s are a product of later centuries. For a survey of scholars who followed Goldziher's lead, see Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, 13ff. From a different perspective, Michael Cook tackles the early Islamic preference for oral transmission of *ḥadīth*s in his "The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in Early Islam," *Arabica* 44 (1997): 437–530. In his influential recent works on the transmission of early Islamic texts, Gregor Schoeler blurs the strict distinction between the oral and written modes, but he retains them as the two main operative categories. See his *Oral and Written* and *Genesis of Literature.*

181. Drory, "Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya," 46.

182. Drory, "Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya," 42–43.

183. Al-Asad, *Maṣādir*, 195.

184. With regard to Ibn Hishām's complaints about Ibn Isḥāq, the modern editor of the *Sīra*, Alfred Guillaume, makes the following comment: "Doubts and misgivings about the authenticity of the poems in the *Sīra* are expressed so often by I.H. that no reference to them need be given here." Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Hishām, *The Life of Muḥammad*, ed. and trans. Alfred Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), xxv.

counted for science at this time. Even in such cases, they would name their informants only occasionally—mostly if they were part of the story.

The method of visiting tribes and collecting their lore further signals a turn in the relationship between the scholars and their object of study. As Drory concludes, "from a living tradition [. . .] the texts of ancient poetry became like archival documents, representing the tableau of *distant* past."[185] The word "distant" is key. By this time, the urban scholars of Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad had become estranged from the world of ancient poetry, and a distance had opened up between them and their subject.[186] Traveling through the desert in search of "native informants" for old poetry and *akhbār*, they can be compared to modern ethnographers. The distance between observer and observed and the processes of selecting, recombining, and harmonizing the material entail unequal power dynamics between the scholars and their informants, much discussed in modern ethnographic writing but still waiting to be explored in the case of the early ʿAbbāsid scholars.[187] This case is further complicated by the scholars' ambivalent attitudes toward the Bedouins, who, over time, were transformed from marginalized secondary citizens to symbols of the great Arab past.[188] For the purposes of this article, however, we can simply conclude that the distance and unequal authority account for the observed discrepancies between the poetry and its commentaries and for the liberties that the scholars took in interpreting the old material according to their own sensibilities.

3. Early second/eighth century: Umayyad scholars. Although poetry is not the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of Umayyad scholars, we have reason to believe that these scholars did, in fact, engage in the collection and transmission of poetry and its *akhbār* and, what is more, did so with institutional backing. The reason this scenario seems counterintuitive lies in the long-assumed paradigm of pious Umayyad scholars vs. impious Umayyad rulers and in the presumption that Islamic piety has little patience with old Arabic poetry. This paradigm has, however, been disproved, most recently by Steven Judd, who has argued that scholarly culture was much more developed and much more intertwined with state structures than traditionally thought.[189] With regard to poetry specifically, Goldziher, in an early study, collected narratives testifying to the eagerness of the Umayyads to preserve both poetry and *akhbār*.[190] Ruth Mackensen has argued that literary activities took

185. Drory, "Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya," 48.

186. For an earlier discussion of the relationship between the poet and the scholar see H. A. R. Gibb, "Arab Poet and Arabic Philologist," *Bulleting of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12, no. 3/4 (1948): 574–578.

187. For a felicitous comparison of a late antique text (the Babylonian Talmud) with modern ethnographical writings and their respective representations of authority, see James A. Redfield, "Redacting Culture: Ethnographic Authority in the Talmudic Arrival Scene," *Jewish Social Studies* 22, no. 1 (2016): 29–80.

188. A key article on the topic is Athamina, "*Aʿrāb* and *Muhājirūn*." For a recent treatment of the issue of the Bedouinization of Arabness and a relevant bibliography, see Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, 294ff.

189. Steven C. Judd, *Religious Scholars and the Umayyads: Piety-Minded Supporters of the Marwānid Caliphate* (London: Routledge, 2014). On state-sponsored Umayyad historical writing, see Borrut, *Entre mémoire et pouvoir*, 33–60.

190. See Goldziher, "Notes on the Dîwâns." See also al-Asad, *Maṣādir*, 197.

place in that period on a much greater scale than the tradition acknowledges; and al-Asad, Schoeler, and others have shown that writing and written texts played a larger role in the transmission of poetry than was once believed.[191] All of this indicates that poetry and the *akhbār* that accompany it were collected, transmitted, and recorded during the Umayyad period.

Furthermore, a number of anecdotes seem to suggest that the Umayyad rulers themselves were concerned with collecting literary material. For instance, Abū ʿUbayda (and al-Aṣmaʿī in a similar story) narrates that when the Umayyads disagreed about a certain verse or *khabar* they would send a messenger to Iraq to seek an authoritative answer, and that a day would not pass without a messenger from the Umayyads knocking on the door of the famous scholar Qatāda (d. 118/736).[192] Regardless of its historicity, the anecdote is instructive in two ways: first, it portrays the Umayyads' concern for knowledge of poetry and *akhbār*, and second, it shows that the recognized authority on the subject was an urban scholar in Iraq rather than Bedouins in the desert. In the Umayyad period, it seems that expertise in poetry and *akhbār* was not only the domain of the exotic Bedouins in the desert but at least equally the prerogative of urban scholars. The distance between the scholars and their object of study was much smaller than it came to be in the ʿAbbāsid period.

At the same time, poetry and its *akhbār* were recited, enjoyed, and transmitted well beyond the scholarly circles, whether in the city or in the desert. We should not forget that the layout of the Umayyad garrison cities had the inhabitants distributed according to their tribal affiliation, and they could thus continue to share and transmit their literary lore. Poetry and *akhbār* in the Umayyad period were, to a large extent, still a "living tradition," in Drory's words. This observation applies also to the earliest stage in the process of the *akhbār*'s collection, to which we now turn our attention.

4. <u>First/seventh century: living tradition/social memory/communicative memory</u>. The core of the *akhbār*, then, originates in a time when it constituted a living tradition, comprising circles wider than those of the poets and the transmitters alone and including also the *akhbār*'s audiences and secondary, anonymous narrators. Al-Asad refers to this period as one of *al-tadwīn bi-l-ʿāmma*, "the writing down [of the tradition] by the general population" and specifically by *ruwāt* about whose lives we know little.[193]

Given the obscurity of this stage in the spread of the *akhbār*, it may be productive to consider what we know of the workings of memory in general. The early stage is characterized by what Aleida Assmann called "social memory," and Jan Assmann, "communicative memory." This type of organic collective memory stays alive for eighty to a hundred years

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191. Ruth Stellhorn Mackensen, "Arabic Books and Libraries in the Umaiyad Period," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 52, no. 4 (1936): 245–253; Mackensen, "Arabic Books and Libraries in the Umaiyad Period (Continued)," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 53, no. 4 (1937): 239–250; Mackensen, "Arabic Books and Libraries in the Umaiyad Period (Concluded)," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 54, no. 1/4 (1937): 41–61; al-Asad, *Maṣādir*; Schoeler, *Oral and Written*; Schoeler, *Genesis of Literature*.

192. Goldziher, "Notes on the Dîwâns," 326, n. 4.

193. See al-Asad, *Maṣādir*, chap. 3.

and is handed down through direct communication. It constitutes the intermediate step between individual memory, which vanishes quickly, and the lasting cultural memory that is supported though symbolic practices and material representations.[194] The earliest *akhbār* should be seen primarily as products of the natural human inclination to storytelling, which at the same time helped preserve the poetry in memory. As the verses were recited and passed from one narrator to another, so were the stories attached to them, because "a story is a sort of natural container for memory; a way of sequencing a set of images, through logical and semantic connections, into a shape which is, itself, easy to retain in memory."[195] Therefore, we should not see the *akhbār* simply as conscious manipulations of the material (though at times they may have been just that) but also as testimonies to the popular absorption of poetry within the structures of the social and communicative memory of early Islamic audiences, a process that at times produced clear discrepancies.

To summarize: I have treated the *akhbār* as a window into the multilayered process of the transmission of cultural heritage and the readjustments and reinterpretations that happen along the way. Later narrators, collectors, and commentators in these various periods lived in an age and a milieu that differed from those of the Mukhaḍram poets, and they approached the latter's poetry from their own perspective. Some *akhbār* redeemed the defiant poets by emphasizing their repentance and concern for Islam (Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, Suḥaym), by keeping silent about their anti-Islamic verses (Abū Khirāsh), or by turning them into Muslim warriors (Abū Miḥjan) or Muslim martyrs (Abū Khirāsh). Others emphasized the poet's violent death and eternal disgrace (Suḥaym) to convey a message of warning to obstinate sinners. Another technique of accommodation observed here was the drawing of a sharp line between a poet's deeds and his poetry, supported by a Qurʾānic verse; this strategy gave legitimacy to the preservation of even potentially scandalous verses. The organization of the *akhbār* in al-Iṣfahānī's compilation also proved significant in shaping a poet's later image and mitigating his un-Islamic demeanor (Abū Khirāsh). Although in this article I have focused on these tensions, it is clear that the later narrators also cherished the aesthetic of the old poetry and often made efforts to portray the poets candidly in their own contexts. The multifarious and often dialectical forces of later storytelling continued to mold the images of Abū Khirāsh, Abū Miḥjan, and Suḥaym and to reinterpret their poetry. At the same time, they made space for these three poets and their poetry in the Arabo-Islamic literary canon.

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194. Marek Tamm, "Beyond History and Memory: New Perspective in Memory Studies," *History Compass* 11, no. 6 (2013): 462.

195. Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 50.

Appendix

1. Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhalī

a) Elegy on Zuhayr

بذي فَجَرٍ تأوي إليه الأراملُ	١. فجَع أصحابي جميلُ بن معمَرٍ
إذا قام واستنَّت عليه الحمائلُ¹	٢. طويلُ نِجادِ السَّيف ليس بحَيْدرٍ
ومُهتَلِكٌ بالي الدَّريسَين عائلُ²	٣. إلى بَيتِه يأوي الغريبُ إذا شتا
لها حَدَبٌ تحتُّه فُيوائلُ	٤. تروَّحَ مقرورًا وراحت عشيّةٌ
من القُرِّ لمّا استقبلتْه الشَّمائلُ	٥. تكاد يداه تُسلمان رداءَه
وقد خفَّ منها اللَّوذعيُّ الحُلاحلُ	٦. فما بالُ أهلِ الدَّار لم يتصدَّعوا
لآبك بالجِزع الضِّباعُ النَّواهلُ	٧. فأُقسِمُ لو لاقيتَه غيرَ موثَقٍ
ولكنَّ ظهرَ القِرْن للمَرء شاغلُ	٨. لظلَّ جميلٌ أسوأَ القوم تَلَةً
ولكنْ أحاطت بالرَّقاب السَّلاسلُ	٩. فليس كعهدِ الدَّار يا أُمَّ مالكٍ
سوى الحقِّ شيئًا فاستراح العواذلُ	١٠. وعاد الفتى كالكهل ليس بقائلٍ
بحَليَةٍ إذْ نلقَى بها ما نحاولُ	١١. ولم أنسَ أيّامًا لنا ولياليًا
أهال عليْهم جانِبَ التُّرْبِ هائلُ³)	(فأصبَحَ إخوانُ الصَّفاءِ كأنَّما

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:151–152, meter: *ṭawīl*)⁴

1. Jamīl b. Maʿmar grieved my guests with the slaughter of a munificent man with whom widows sought refuge;

2. whose sword-belt was long, who was not corpulent, and whose sword-straps moved about on his body [as he was slender] when he stood up;

3. in whose house a stranger would take shelter in wintertime, even a destitute man dressed in worn-out rags, in need to feed his family,

4. who—suffering from cold, chased by the evening wind that made him call out for help—went to him [Zuhayr];

5. whose hands almost lose his cloak when the north winds blow in his face.

6. So what is the matter with the people of his tribe that they did not collapse when such a wise and noble man departed?

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1. Al-Sukkarī's version prefers to cast Zuhayr as not short rather than not plump. Al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1223.

2. Al-Sukkarī's version adds a line here: "For surely, had you met him in battle, you would have fought him or he would have fought you."

3. This last verse appears only in al-Sukkarī's version.

4. Cf. al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1221–1223.

7. And I swear, had you not found him tied up, thirsty hyenas would have come to drink your blood where the *wādī* bends.

8. Then Jamīl would have been the one among his people slain most ignominiously.

But a man's concern is his opponent's back [i.e., Zuhayr was slain unfairly].

9. Nothing is like the times of our [old] abode, Umm Mālik! Now, chains have encircled [our] necks,

10. and the youth has become like a middle-aged man, saying only the right things; the railing women are relieved.

11. But I have not forgotten our days and nights together at Ḥalya when we met with the ones that we desired.

(And our sincere friends now seem as if someone were pouring [sand] on them by a graveyard [i.e. burying them alive].)

b) Second Elegy on Zuhayr

١. أَفي كلِّ ممسَى ليلةٍ أَنا قائلٌ   من الدَّهر لا يبعَدْ قتيلُ جميلِ

٢. فما كنتُ أَخشى أَن تصيبَ دماءَنا   قريشٌ ولمّا يُقتلوا بقتيلِ

٣. فأبرحُ ما أَمَّرتُمُ وعَمَرتُمُ   مدى الدَهر حتى تُقتَلوا بِغَليلِ

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:152, meter: *ṭawīl*)[5]

1. Would I be saying every single night: "May he not depart, the one killed by Jamīl?"

2. I never used to doubt that if the Quraysh killed one of us we would take vengeance [lit. they would be killed for our killed].

3. And so I remain with a burning thirst, as long as you rule and prosper, until you are killed

c) Elegy on Abū Khirāsh's Brother ʿUrwa

١. لَعَمري لَقَد راعَت أُمَيمَةَ طَلعَتي   وَإِنَّ ثَوائي عِندَها لَقَليلُ

٢. وَقَالَت أُراهُ بَعدَ عُروَةَ لاهِيًا   وَذَلِكَ رُزءٌ لَو عَلِمتِ جَليلُ

٣. فَلا تَحسَبي أَنّي تَناسَيتُ فقدَهُ   وَلكِنَّ صَبري يا أُمَيمَ جَميلُ

٤. أَلَم تَعلَمي أَن قَد تَفَرَّقَ قَبلَنا   نَديمَا صَفاءٍ مالِكٌ وَعَقيلُ

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5. Cf. al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1229.

<div dir="rtl">

٥. أَبى الصَّبرَ أَنّي لا يَزالُ يَهيجُني   مَبيتٌ لَنا فيما خَلا وَمَقيلُ

٦. وَأَنّي إِذا ما الصُبحُ آنَستُ ضَوءَهُ   يُعاوِدُني قُطعٌ عَلَيَّ ثَقيلُ

</div>

(al-Iṣfhānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:159, meter: *ṭawīl*)[6]

1. By my life, my appearance has made Umayma worried; she doesn't see much of me.

2. She says: "I see him having a good time after the death of ʿUrwa." If only you knew how great an affliction this is [to me].

3. Do not believe that I forgot the loss, Umayma; yet my patience is a virtue.

4. Don't you know that before us the pure brothers Mālik and ʿAqīl were separated?

5. The view of our now-emptied home and resting place still disturbs me and robs me of my patience.

6. And so does the fact that I embrace every morning light with a deep, heavy sigh . . .

d) My Thirsty Lips

<div dir="rtl">

١. إِليكِ أَمَّ ذِبّانْ

٢. ما ذاك من حلبِ الضَّانْ

٣. لكن مِصاع الفِتيانْ

٤. بِكلّ لينٍ حَرّانْ

</div>

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:156, meter: *manhūk al-munsariḥ*)

1. My thirsty lips,

2. this is no sheep's milk.

3. Instead, it is a gathering of young men,

4. each with a refined spearhead, heated up [and yearning for blood].

e) Khirāsh in the Muslim Army

<div dir="rtl">

١. يُناديـه لِيَغْبِقَـه كَليبٌ   ولا يأتِي لقد سَفُه الوليدُ

٢. فردَّ إِناءَه لا شيءَ فيه   كأنَّ دموعَ عينيـه الفَريد

٣. وأصبحَ دون غابِقِه وأمسى   جبالٌ من حِرارِ الشام سُود

</div>

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6. Cf. al-Sukkarī, *Sharḥ ashʿār al-Hudhaliyyīn*, 1189.

٤. ألا فاعلم خِراشُ بأنَ خيرَ الـ   ـمهاجر بعد هجرتـه زهيد

٥. رأيتك وابتغاءَ البِرِّ دوني   كمحصور اللِّبـان ولا يصيد

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:162, meter: *wāfir*)

1. [A thirsty man, i.e., the poet] calls him [his son Khrāsh] to give him his evening drink, but he doesn't come; the boy has truly become foolish.

2. And he [the poet] receives his cup back, empty, as if the tears of his eyes were pearls.

3. In the morning, in the evening, between him and his cup-bearer [son] are the black mountains of Syria, as though burnt with fire.

4. Know, Khirāsh, that only meager good awaits the muhājir after his hijra.

5. I saw you wishing for goodness without me, like a dog daubed with blood to make it seem that he has hunted, although he has not.

f) By Your Life, Snake

١. لعمرُكَ والمنايا غالباتٌ   على الإنسان تطلُع كلَّ نجدِ

٢. لقد أهلكتِ حيّةَ بطن أنفٍ   على الأصحاب ساقًا ذاتَ فقدِ

...

١. لقد أهلكتِ حيّةَ بطن أنفٍ   على الأصحاب ساقًا ذاتَ فضلِ

٢. فما ترِكتْ عدوًّا بين بُصرى   إلى صنعاءَ يطلُبُهُ بذَحْلِ

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 21:163, meter: *wāfir*)

1. The fates are ever-victorious over man; they climb up every hill.

2. By your life, snake of the lowlands of Anf, you destroyed a leg that leaves behind a severe loss for the companions.

. . .

1. Oh snake of the lowlands of Anf, you destroyed a leg full of munificence for the companions.

2. Between Buṣrā and Ṣanʿāʾ, it did not leave a single enemy unavenged.

2. Abū Miḥjan al-Thaqafī

a) When I Die Bury Me

1. إِذا مِتُّ فادفِنّي إلى أصلِ كَرمةٍ   تُروّي عِظامي بعدَ مَوتي عُروقُها

2. ولا تدفِنَنّي في الفَلاة فإنّني   أخافُ إذا ما مِتَ ألّا أذُوقُها

3. لِيُروى بخمرِ الحُصّ لحمي فإنّني   أسيرٌ لها من بعد ما قد أسوقُها

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:9, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. When I die, bury me by the trunk of a grapevine, so that its roots may water my bones after my death.

2. Do not bury me in the desert, for I fear that when I die [there] I will not taste it [the wine].

3. May my grave be watered by the wine of al-Ḥuṣṣ, for I am its captive after I was the one carrying it along.

b) Forbidden Wine-Drinking

1. إن كانت الخمرُ قد عزَّت وقد مُنِعَت   وحال من دونها الإسلامُ والحَرَجُ

2. فقد أُباكِرُها صِرْفًا وأشربِها[7]   ريًّا وأطرب أحيانًا وأمتَزِجُ

3. وقد تقومُ على رأسي مُنَعَّمةٌ   خَودٌ إذا رَفَعت في صوتها غُنُجُ

4. تُرفَعُ الصَّوتَ أحيانًا وتخفِضُه   كما يَطِنُّ ذُبابُ الرَّوضةِ الهَزِجُ

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:10, meter: *basīṭ*)

1. Though now wine has become rare and forbidden, and Islam and unease have come between it and me,

2. back then, I used to drink from the morning, sometimes pure, and other times I used to drink my fill, and at times I am excited and at times I mix the wine [with water].

3. Above my head would stand a young, tender, and soft woman, and when she raised her voice it was an amorous gesture.

4. At times she would talk in a high-pitched voice and at times she would deepen it, like the garden flies making a buzzing sound.

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7. Though I generally rely on the *Aghānī*, this word is from Abū Miḥjan's *Dīwān*, as the *Aghānī* has *amzujuhā*. See Abū Miḥjan, *Dīwān Abī Miḥjan*, 20.

c) Forbidden Love

حَرَجٌ من الرَّحمن غيرُ قَليل   ١. ولقد نظرتُ إلى الشَّموسِ ودونها

وَرَدَ المدينةَ عن زراعة فولِ   ٢. قد كنتُ أحسبُني كأغنى واحدٍ

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:6, meter: *kāmil*)

1. I looked at Shamūs, but the great unease from the All-Merciful stands between us.

2. Among the people who came to Medina, I used to consider myself someone could most certainly dispense with planting beans.

d) About al-Ḥaḍawḍā

من ابن جَهراءَ والبوصيُّ قد حُبِسا   ١. الحمد لله نجّاني وخلّصَني

إلى حَضَوضى فَبِئسَ المَركبُ التَمَسا   ٢. من يَجشَمِ البحرَ والبوصيُّ مَركبُه

عبدَ الإلهِ إذا ما غارَ أو جَلسَا   ٣. أبلغْ لَدَيك أبا حَفصٍ مُغَلغَلَةً

يومًا وأحبس تحت الرّايةِ الفَرَسا   ٤. أنّي أكُرُّ على الأولى إذا فَزِعوا

من الحَديدِ إذا ما بعضُهم خَنِسا   ٥. أغشى الهِياجَ وتغشاني مُضاعَفةٌ

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:5–6, meter: *basīṭ*)

1. Praise be to God, who saved and delivered me from Ibn Jahrāʾ when the boat (*būṣī*) ran aground.

2. Who takes it upon himself to sail the sea with the *būṣī* as his vessel to al-Ḥaḍawḍā: what a terrible boat he has chosen!

3. Let Abū Ḥafs, the worshipper of God, promptly know, whether he is at war or at peace,

4. that I attack the first horse of the enemy when others are afraid, and I capture the enemy's horse under my banner.

5. I plunge into the tumult of war and my iron armor protects me when others lag behind.

e) Imprisonment during Battle

وأتَرَكَ مشدودًا عليَّ وثاقِيا   ١. كَفى حَزنًا أن تَردِيَ الخيلُ بالقَنا

مصاريعُ من دوني تُصِمُّ المُناديا   ٢. إذا قُمتُ عَنّاني الحديدَ وغُلّقَت

فقد تركوني واحدًا لا أخا لِيا   ٣. وقد كنتُ ذا مالٍ كثيرٍ واخوةٍ

أعالِج كَبْلًا مُصمتًا قد بَرانيا   ٤. وقد شفَّ جِسميَ أنّنَي كلَّ شارقٍ

وتذهَل عَنّي أسرتي ورجاليا   ٥. فلِلّه دَرّي يومَ أُترك موثَقًا

٦. حبيسًا عن الحَربِ العَوانِ وقد بدت   وإعمالُ غيري يوم ذاكَ العَواليا

٧. ولله عَهْدٌ لا أخيسُ بعَهدهَ   لئن فُرِجت ألّا أزورَ الحوانِيا

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:8, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. It is sad enough that horses are drumming the ground with their hooves, loaded with spears, while I am left tied in chains.

2. When I stand the iron tortures me, and the doors were closed behind me; doors that [made such a deafening noise that it] would drown out anyone's calling.

3. I was once a wealthy man with many brothers, but they abandoned me. I have no brother now.

4. Every morning I have to deal with tightly locked shackle; it has devoured my body and worn me out.

5. What a great man I am! Left behind, tied up, while my family and tribesmen neglect me.

6. Barred from the reignited war, while others display their glorious deeds.

7. By God, I vow that I will not breach His law and I will no longer visit the taverns, if I am set free.

f) Patience

١. ألم ترَ أنَّ الدهرَ يعثُر بالفتى   ولا يستطيع المرءُ صرفَ المَقادرِ

٢. صبرتُ فلم أجزع ولم أكُ كائعًا   لحادث دهرٍ في الحُكومة جائرِ

٣. وإنّي لذو صَبرٍ وقد مات إخوتي   ولست عنِ الصّهباء يومًا بصابرِ

٤. رماها أميرُ المَؤمنين بحتفِها   فخُلّانُها يبكون حول المَعاصِرِ

(al-Iṣfahānī, a*l-Aghānī,* 19:13, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. Have you not seen that fate makes a young man fall, that a man cannot avert his destiny?

2. I endured the blows of fate, unjust in its judgment, and I did not fear and I was not a coward.

3. Indeed, I was endowed with fortitude when my brothers died, but I cannot refrain from wine for a single day!

4. The Commander of the Believers put it to death, so its true friends now weep around the wine presses.

g) Forswearing Wine I

<div dir="rtl">

مناقبُ تُهلِك الرّجل الحَليما	١. رأيتُ الخَمر صالحةً وفيها
ولا أَسقي بها أبدًا نَديما	٢. فلا واللہ أشربُها حَياتي

</div>

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 19:12, meter: *wāfir*)

1. I considered wine to be good, yet it has qualities that destroy the mild-tempered man.

2. And by God, I will not drink it any more in my life, and neither shall I give it to a drinking companion to drink.

h) Forswearing Wine II

<div dir="rtl">

إذا القومُ نالوها أصابوا الغَنائما	١. يقولُ أناسٌ اشربِ الخَمر إنّها
أخاها سفيهًا بعدما كان حالِما	٢. فقلتُ لهم جهلًا كذبتم ألم تروا

</div>

(*Dīwān Abī Miḥjan,* 16, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. People say that drinking wine is as if one were granted spoils.

2. I told them: "You lied out of ignorance; did you not see that a reasonable man who drank it became silly after drinking it?"

3. Suḥaym ʿAbd Banī Ḥasḥās

a) The Smell of Her Clothes

<div dir="rtl">

ويرفعُ عنها جُوَجُوًّا مُتجافيا	١. فما بيضةٌ بات الظّليمُ يحفُّها
مع الرّكب أم ثاوٍ لدينا لياليا؟	٢. بأحسنَ منها يوم قالت: أظاعنٌ
ولا ثوبَ إلّا بُردُها وردائيا	٣. وهبَّت شمالٌ آخرَ اللّيل قَرَةٌ
إلى الحول حتى أنهَجَ الثّوبُ باليا	٤. ومازال بُردي طيّبًا من ثيابِها

</div>

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:211–212, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. Even an egg held tightly by a male ostrich who lifts his breast as he is protecting it

2. is not more beautiful than she on the day when she asked: "Are you leaving with the riders or are you staying with us for some nights?"

3. A cold north wind started blowing at the end of the night, and we did not have any clothes but her cloak and my robe.

4. And my cloak retained the sweet scent of her clothes for a whole year until it wore out.

b) Swaying Hump of a Young She-Camel

١. يا ذِكرةً ما لكَ في الحاضرِ   تذكُرُها وأنتَ في الصّادرِ

٢. من كلّ بيضاءَ لها كعثبٌ   مثلُ سَنام البكرة المائرِ

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:216, meter: *sarīʿ*)

1. Oh [that] memory, why do you remember her now, when you are leaving?

2. [The memory] of every white [woman] who has private parts large like the swaying hump of a young she-camel.

c) Black and White

١. أشعارُ عبد بني الحسحاس قُمنَ له   عند الفخار مقام الأصلِ والوَرقِ

٢. إن كنتُ عبدًا فَنفسي حرّةٌ كَرَمًا   أو أسودَ اللَّون إنّي أبيضُ الخُلُقِ

(*al-Aghānī,* 22:214, meter: *basīṭ*)

1. The poems of the slave of the Banū al-Ḥashḥās outweigh a noble origin and wealth.

2. Though I am a slave, my soul is free by virtue of its nobility; though black by color, I am white of character."

d) Fate Does Not Fear Even Muḥammad

١. رأيتُ المنايا لم تهبنَ محمّدا   ولا أحدًا ولم يدعنَ مخلّدا

٢. ألا لا أرى على المنون مخلّدا   ولا باقيًا إلّا له الموت مرصدا

(*Dīwān Suḥaym*, 40, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. I saw that the fates fear not even Muḥammad or anyone else, and that they do not let anyone live forever.

2. I see no one who lives forever despite fate, nor anyone remaining alive without death's lying in wait for him.

e) Grey Hair and Islam

١. عُميرةَ ودِّع إن تجهّزت غادِيا   كفى الشّيبُ والإسلامُ للمرءِ ناهيَا

٢. جنونًا بها فيما اعتشرنا علالةً   علاقةَ حبٍّ مُستسِرًّا وبادِيَا

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:213, 215 for only the "*kafā . . . nāhiyā*" part;
Dīwān Suḥaym, 16–17, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. Bid farewell to ʿUmayra if you are prepared to leave in the morning [to fight], for grey hair and Islam are enough to restrain a man.

2. [I recall my] obsession with her during the time we spent together, comforting each other, in a relationship that was sometimes hidden and other times shown.

f) Ṣubayrī Girls

١. كأن الصَّبيريَّاتِ يومَ لقينَا   ظباءٌ حنت أعناقَها في المكانسِ

٢. فكم قد شَققنا من رداءٍ مُنيَّرٍ   ومن برقعٍ عن طفلةٍ غيرِ ناعسِ

٣. إذا شُقَّ بردٌ شُقَّ بالبرد بُرقُعٌ   على ذاكَ حتى كلّنا غيرُ لابسِ

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:216, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. It is as if the women of Ṣubayr, on the day that they met us, were gazelles whose necks were bent in their coverts.

2. How many dresses of double-threaded cloth did we tear apart and how many veils [we pulled] from eyes that was not drowsy.

3. When a robe is torn off the veil goes with it, [and we continued] in this way until all of us were bare-skinned.

g) Should She Be Kept a Secret?

١. أتُكتَم حيّيتُم على النّأي تُكتمَا   تحيّةَ من أمسى بحبِّكِ مُغرَما

٢. وما تُكتمـين إن أتـيتِ دَنيَّةً   ولا إن ركبنا يابنةَ القوم مَحرما

٣. ومثلِكِ قد أبرزتُ من خِدرٍ أمَّها   إلى مجلسٍ تجرُّ بُردًا مُسهَّما

٤. وماشيةٍ مَشيَ القطاة اتّبعتُها   من السَّترِ تخشى أهلَها أن تكلَّما

٥. فقالت: صهٍ يا ويحَ غيرك إنّني   سمعت حديثًا بينهم يَقطرُ الدّمـا

٦. فنفضتُ ثوبيها ونظرت حولها   ولم أخشَ هذا اللّيل أن يتصرَّما

٧. أُعفّي بآثار الثّيـاب مبيتَها   وألقط رضًّا من وقوفٍ تحطَّما

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:217, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. Should she be kept a secret? May you be greeted despite the distance by him who became infatuated with your love. 2. And you wouldn't have been kept a secret, if you did a disgraceful deed, daughter of the tribe, nor if we engaged in a forbidden act.

3. [For] many a girl like you I took out from the curtained quarters of her mother to a party where she would trail her striped robe.

4. Many a girl walking like a sound-grouse I have observed from behind a curtain, for their family worried that they might speak to me.

5. And she said: "Shh, woe onto other than you! For I overheard a conversation among them that dripped with blood."

6. So I dusted off her clothes and I looked around her and I did not fear that the night would pass

7. while wiping the traces off her clothes in our overnight shelter and gathering the fragments of her bracelets.

h) Now You are Mocking Me

تركتُكِ فيها كالقَبَاء المفرَّج   **1**. فإن تضحكي منّي فيا رُبّ ليلةٍ

(al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 22:217, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. Now you are mocking me, but how many a night I left you spread open, like a garment.

i) Sweat and Scent

إنّ الحياةَ من المماتِ قَريبُ   **1**. شُدّوا وثاقَ العبد لا يُفلِتْكُمْ
عَرَقٌ على مَتنِ الفراش وَطِيبُ   **2**. فلقد تحدّر من جبين فَتاتكُمْ

(*al-Aghānī*, 22:217, meter: *kāmil*)

1. Fasten the bonds on your slave lest he escape you, for surely life is close to death,

2. indeed, once sweat and scent dripped from the foreheads of your girls onto the bed's surface.

4. Ṭarafa

فَدَعْنِـي أُبَادِرْهَا بِمَا مَلَكَتْ يَدِي	١. فَـإِنْ كُنْتَ لاَ تَسْطِيعُ دَفْعَ مَنِيَّتِـي
وَجَدَّكَ لَمْ أَحْفِلْ مَتَى قَامَ عُوَّدِي	٢. وَلَـوْلاَ ثَلاثٌ هُنَّ مِنْ عِيشَةِ الفَتَـى
كُمَيْتٍ مَتَى مَا تُعْلَ بِالمَاءِ تُزْبِـدِ	٣. فَمِنْهُنَّ سَبْقِـي العَاذِلاتِ بِشَرْبَـةٍ
كَسِيدِ الغَضَـا نَبَّهْتَـهُ المُتَـورِّدِ	٤. وَكَرِّي إِذَا نَادَى المُضَافُ مُجَنَّبَـا
بِبَهْكَنَـةٍ تَحْـتَ الخِبَـاءِ المُعَمَّـدِ	٥. وتَقْصِيرُ يَوْمِ الدَّجْنِ والدَّجْنُ مُعْجِبٌ
عَلَى عُشَـرٍ أَوْ خِرْوَعٍ لَمْ يُخَضَّـدِ	٦. كَـأَنَّ البُـرِينَ والدَّمَالِيـجَ غُلِّقَتْ

(translation from Arberry, *Seven Odes*, 86, meter: *ṭawīl*)

1. If you can't avert from me the fate that surely awaits me / then pray leave me to hasten it on with what money I've got.

2. But for three things, that are the joy of a young fellow / I assure you I wouldn't care when my deathbed visitors arrive—

3. first, to forestall my charming critics with a good swig of crimson wine / that foams when the water is mingled in;

4. second, to wheel at the call of the beleaguered a curved-shanked steed / streaking like the wolf of the thicket you've startled lapping the water;

5. and third, to curtail the day of showers, such an admirable season / dallying with a ripe wench under the pole-propped tent,

6. her anklets and her bracelets seemingly hung on the boughs / of a pliant, unriven gum-tree or a castor-shrub.

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A Newly Discovered Letter of the Early Arabic Alphabet: A Distinction between Final *Jīm* and Final *Ḥāʾ*/*Khāʾ* and Its Nabataean Origins*

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Abstract

This paper studies the letter shape of the final jīm, ḥāʾ, *and* khāʾ *in seven early Quranic manuscripts. Examination of the shape of these letters in these manuscripts reveals a graphemic distinction between the* jīm, *which lacks the typical curved tail, and the* ḥāʾ *and the* khāʾ, *which do have this tail. This distinction is lost in later Quranic manuscripts. I argue that the distinction between* jīm *and* ḥāʾ/khāʾ *is a continuation from the Arabic script's origins in the Nabataean Aramaic script, which had distinct letter shapes for these signs. Contrary to what has been previously thought, the evidence adduced in this article shows that the merger happened in the Islamic period rather than in the pre-Islamic period.*

Introduction

The Arabic script as we know it today can be thought of as an "archigraphemic" system, in which one letter shape may stand for a variety of different signs.[1] In a nonfinal position, for example, the single denticle may stand for *bāʾ*, *tāʾ*, *thāʾ*, *nūn*, or *yāʾ* depending on its dotting, though in a final position the *nūn* and the *yāʾ* are distinct. In early manuscripts, where the dots are very often not marked, these signs are fully homographic.

Traditionally, the *jīm*, the *ḥāʾ*, and the *khāʾ* have been considered to have a single archigraphemic representation as well. For example, in undotted script *zawj* 'spouse' and *rūḥ* 'spirit' are completely homographic:

$$\text{روح زوج}$$

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1. T. Milo, "Arabic Typography," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Lutz Edzard and Rudolf de Jong (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

However, close examination of several early Quranic manuscripts shows that this was not always the case. The manuscripts examined in this article clearly use different signs for final *jīm* and for final *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*. I initially discovered the distinction in the Codex Amrensis 1.[2] I then conducted a systematic search of words that contained a final *jīm* on the Corpus Coranicum website, identifying several additional manuscripts. Finally, I supplemented this step by looking through the manuscripts described by Déroche that belong to the Hijazi, Kufic A, Kufic B, and unclassified categories.[3] I examined Kufic C and D to see whether these display the relevant distinction, but I did not analyze every sample in detail, as a cursory look clearly showed that these latter styles lack the distinction. I will show the presence of this distinction in six early Quranic manuscripts and discuss one further fragment that may also show the distinction, but for which I did not have access to a sufficient number of folios to confirm its presence. I will then point to several examples of manuscripts that have lost this distinction. Finally, I will make the case that the distinction in these early Quranic manuscripts is best understood as a continuation of the distinction between the *gimel* and the *ḥet* in the Nabataean Aramaic script, which persists in the transitional Nabataeo-Arabic script and in the pre-Islamic Arabic script proper.

The manuscripts, some of them consisting of multiple, separately held fragments, that I analyze in this article are the following (each listed with the abbreviation subsequently used in the article):

- Codex Amrensis 1 (CA). All images taken from the PDF edition of Cellard, *Codex Amrensis 1.*

- Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 330g (A 330g). All images taken from the Gallica website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr).

- Chester Beatty Library, Is. 1615 II (B II). All images © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. Reproduced by permission.

- Chester Beatty Library, Is. 1615 I (B I). All images © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. Reproduced by permission.

- Doha Museum of Islamic Art, Ms. 68 (D). All images available on the Google Arts & Culture webpage.[4]

- A private folio published by Marcus Fraser (F). All images taken from Fraser, "Earliest Qurʾanic Scripts".

- Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 330f (A 330f). All images taken from the Gallica website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr).

- Cambridge University Library, Add. 1146 (CUL). All images taken from the Cambridge Digital Library website (cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk).

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2. É. Cellard, *Codex Amrensis 1* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

3. F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran: Aux origines de la calligraphie coranique* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1983).

4. https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/pages-from-a-qur-an-in-hijazi/uQGEtts3PWw22w.

- Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 6140b (A 6140b). All images taken from the Gallica website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr).

- Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Wetzstein II 1913 (W). All images taken from the Corpus Coranicum website (www.corpuscoranicum.de).

- Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 6087 (A 6087). All images taken from the Gallica website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr).

- Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus, Hand C (CPP). Photographic reproductions taken from the Gallica website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr); tracings based on images held by Michael Marx.

- Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi, ŞE 118 (ŞE). All images taken from Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads*, fig. 7.

In addition, I refer to the following manuscripts in my discussion of paleography:

- Cairo National Library, photos from the Gotthelf Bergsträßer archive, Qāf 47 (Q). All images taken from the Corpus Coranicum website (www.corpuscoranicum.de).

- Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 334a (A 334a). All images taken from the Gallica website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr).

- Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 325k (A 325k). All images taken from the Gallica website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr).

- Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 340f (A 340f). All images taken from the Gallica website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr).

- Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arabe 330c (A 330c). All images taken from the Gallica website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (gallica.bnf.fr).

The Typology of the *Jīm/Ḥāʾ/Khāʾ*

Fraser has provided a typological description of the letter form of the *jīm/ḥāʾ/khāʾ*, comparing its shape on coins to that in five different Quranic manuscripts (BL Or. 2165, BnF Arabe 328a, a private folio likely related to the fragment CBL Is. 1615 I, the upper text of the Ṣanʿāʾ manuscript, and Tareq Rajab Museum, Kuwait, Qur-001-TSR).[5] Within his typology, he focuses on the length of the letter's horizontal portion and the roundness of the hook. However, he does not comment on the fact that in several of the Quranic manuscripts he

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5. M. Fraser, "The Earliest Qurʾanic Scripts," in *Islamic Art, Architecture and Material Culture: New Perspectives*, ed. M. S. Graves, 121–32 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012).

examined the letter has a shape that is fully horizontal, without any hook at all (e.g., Hand B and Hand C in the CPP and the private folio that is part of Is. 1615 I).

Q7:56 *al-riyāḥ* (A328a, 32v. l. 10)   Q15:34 *fa-khruj* (F, v, l. 10)

Fraser highlights an interesting aspect of the development of the curved shape, which may have a large curve, a short curve, a long horizontal portion with a hook, or a very tight, short curve. His analysis will certainly be useful for further investigation into the typology of the development of the curved form.
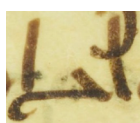
Q4:12 *ʾakh* (Arabe 330g 51r, l. 10)   Q9:31 *al-masīḥ* (CA1)   Q3:27 *tūliju* (A 328a, 3r, l. 7)
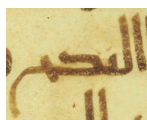
Q4:6 *al-nikāḥ* (Arabe 330g 50v, l. 12)   Q10:22 *[r]īḥ* (CA1)   Q33:5 *junāḥ* (A 6087 2v, l.22)

For our purposes, however, these subtle differences in the shape are unimportant, and the only difference that matters is that between the straight *jīm/ḥāʾ/khāʾ* and the curved one. For the straight shape, the baseline stroke can be variable in length. It is also the shape commonly found in Qurans of the Kufic C style.

Q4:100 *yakhruj* (Arabe 330g 53r, l. 10)   Q9:46 *al-khurūj* (Arabe 330g 64r, l. 14)

Q35:13 *yūliju* (Arabe 334a 7v, l. 6)

1. Codex Amrensis 1

The Codex Amrensis 1 (CA), recently edited and published by Cellard, is a Quranic manuscript written in a clear and rather regular style that Cellard identified as Late Hijazi ("Ḥijāzī Tardif") with elements similar to Kufic A.[6] Déroche classifies it as Hijazi I;[7] the Corpus

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6. Cellard, *Codex Amrensis 1*, 7.

7. Déroche, *Manuscrits*, 59, no. 1.

Coranicum website estimates that this manuscript should be dated to around the first half of the second/eighth century on paleographical grounds. It has a horizontal orientation and regular, equidistant twelve lines per page, set in a horizontal layout. The fragment consists of a total of seventy-five folios. Although Cellard observes that there are two shapes for the *jīm/ḥāʾ/khāʾ*, she does not connect the variance to a distinction between *jīm*, on the one hand, and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*, on the other.[8] Nevertheless, from the cases available, it is clear that there is a direct correlation: the straight shape is used for *jīm* and the curved shape is used for *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*.

The final *jīm* is attested twenty-four times, and on each occasion, it has the straight shape.

Table 1.1: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Straight *Jīm* (for Nos. 4–24, see Appendix 1.1)
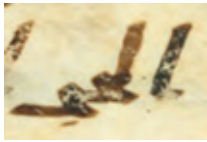
Q9:3 *al-ḥajj*

Q9:19 *al-ḥājj*

Q9:46 *al-khurūj*

The *ḥāʾ*, by contrast, appears in nearly all instances (thirty-nine times out of a total of forty) with a curved shape.

Table 1.2: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ* (for Nos. 4–39, see Appendix 1.2)

Q8:19 *al-fatḥ*

Q9:30 *al-masīḥ*

Q9:31 *al-masīḥ*

The *ḥāʾ* is written with a straight shape only once.

Q60:10 *junāḥ*

The *khāʾ* appears twice, once with a curve and once without.
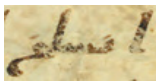
Q9:5 *insalakha*

Q45:29 *nastansikhu*

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8. Cellard, *Codex Amrensis 1*, 6.

Although the distinction is thus not quite absolute, with a single case each of a straight final *ḥāʾ* and *khāʾ*, it is clear that the distribution can hardly be due to chance. The statistical procedure known as Fisher's exact test[9] allows us to calculate the odds of the distribution, as attested above, having occurred by chance, rather than being the result of a distinction between *jīm* and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*. The resulting *p* value is the probability that the correspondence is due to chance. A *p* value of .05 is equivalent to a chance of one in twenty (.05 = 1/20). Taking a *p* value of .05 to indicate a statistically significant correlation, we see that this manuscript (and the others discussed below) demonstrate highly significant correlations. In this case, the *p* value is smaller than .0001, indicating a highly significant correlation; that is, it is extremely unlikely that the apparently link between the shape and sign in this manuscript is merely coincidental.

2. BnF Arabe 330g and CBL Is. 1615 II

Déroche has described the manuscript Arabe 330g, found in the collection of Arabic manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.[10] The manuscript is written in an unclassified script style, with some features recognizable as Hijazi. George identifies the manuscript as "intermediate between Hijazi and Kufic."[11] In an as yet unpublished study, Cellard contextualizes the script of the manuscript, noting clear similarities to manuscripts in the A.I style and in what she dubs the LH/A style (Late Hijazi/A.I). She proposes that this transitional style probably dates to the early Umayyad period.[12]

The fragment consists of twenty folios (folios 50–69 in the Arabe 330 collection). According to Cellard, the four folios of CBL Is. 1615 II, the twelve folios of the Saint Petersburg National Library's Marcel 16, and the six folios of Doha Museum of Islamic Art's MIA.2013.23 also belong to this manuscript.[13] I am very grateful to the Chester Beatty Library for providing me access to photographs of Is. 1615 II and permission to reproduce sections of these photos. Images from that portion of the manuscript are marked with B II below. I have been unable to examine the portions of the manuscript in Saint Petersburg and Doha. In the examined folios, the respective shapes of the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* are clearly distinct. The former generally does not curve downward and is somewhat shorter, whereas the latter does curve downward sharply and may even curve across one or several lines of text below it.

In eleven out of twelve instances, the *jīm* is written with a straight line, which sometimes is dotted and at other times is not. The straight shape occurs regardless of whether it is preceded by a connecting letter.

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9. R. A. Fisher, "On the Interpretation of χ² from Contingency Tables, and the Calculation of P," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 85, no. 1 (1922): 87–94.

10. Déroche, *Manuscrits*, 145–146.

11. A. George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy* (London: Saqi Books, 2010), 126, n. 88.

12. E. Cellard, "The Written Transmission of the Qurʾān during Umayyad Times: Contextualizing the Codex Amrensis 1," in *The Umayyad World*, ed. A. Marsham (Abingdon: Routledge, forthcoming).

13. Cellard, "Written Transmission."

Table 2.1: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Straight *Jīm*
(for Nos. 4–11, see Appendix 2.1)
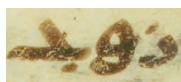
Q4:20 *zawj* (51v, l. 4)

Q4:20 *zawj* (51v, l. 4)

Q4:100 *yakhruj* (53r, l. 10)

There is a single instance of a curved *jīm.*

Q9:91 *kharaja* (66v, l. 13)

The final *ḥāʾ*/*khāʾ* occurs much more often (thirty-four times) than does the final *jīm.* Each time it has the curved shape. Given this extremely strong correlation between the two signs, there can be no doubt that they are, in fact, distinctive.

Table 2.2: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ/Khāʾ*
(for Nos. 4–34, see Appendix 2.2)
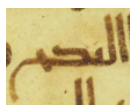
Q4:6 *al-nikāḥ* (50v, l. 12)

Q4:23 *junāḥ* (51v, l. 11)
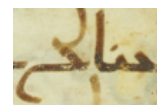
Q4:24 *junāḥ* (51v, l. 16)

The *khāʾ* is not distinct from the *ḥāʾ* and likewise has a curved shape in each of its five appearances.
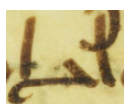
Q4:12 *ʾakh* (51r, l. 10)

Q4:22 *nakakha* (51v, l. 7)
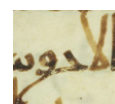
Q4:23 *al-ʾakh* (51v, l. 9)

Q7:175 *fa-nsalakha* (58r, l. 11)
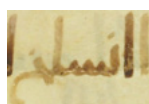
Q9:5 *insalakha* (62r, l. 13)

For this manuscript, too, the results of Fisher's exact test show that the correlation is highly significant, with a *p* value below .0001.

3. CBL Is. 1615 I, Doha Museum of Islamic Art Ms. 68, and a Folio from a Private Collection

The manuscript Is. 1615 I, held at the Chester Beatty Library, displays the same LH/A style as does Arabe 330g. It belongs to the same manuscript as does the single folio published by

Fraser,[14] along with a folio held in the private collection of Vahid Kooros in Houston under the name TR:490-2007 and fourteen other folios in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, listed under Ms. 68, 69, 70 and 699. I am very grateful to the Chester Beatty Library for granting me access to photographs of Is. 1615 I and permission to reproduce portions of them. I have included both Ms. 68 (marked with D) and Fraser's folio (marked with F) in the discussion below. I have not been able to examine the folio kept in Houston nor the folios labelled Ms. 69, 70, or 699 in Doha. This manuscript, too, shows a distinction between *jīm* and *ḥāʾ*/ *khāʾ*, although its distribution is somewhat different from that in the manuscripts discussed above.

In this manuscript, the shape of the *jīm* varies much more evenly between the straight version (twenty-two occurrences) and the curved one (seventeen). It is clear that in this codex both shapes were acceptable for the *jīm*.

Table 3.1: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Straight *Jīm*
(Example Nos. 4–22 in Appendix 3.1)

Q28:32 *takhruj* (1v, l. 11)   Q30:19 *yukhriju* (5r, l. 11)   Q30:19 *yukhriju* (5r, l. 12)
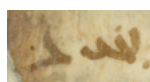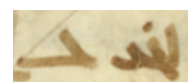
Table 3.2: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Curved *Jīm*
(Example Nos. 4–17 in Appendix 3.2)

Q30:48 *yakhruju* (6r, l. 1)   Q31:29 *yūliju* (7r, l. 2)   Q31:29 *yūliju* (7r, l. 2)
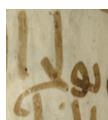
By contrast, the *ḥāʾ* appears mostly with the curved shape, forty times out of a total of forty-four.

Table 3.3: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ*
(Example Nos. 4–40 in Appendix 3.3)
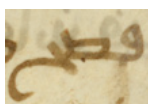
Q28:34 *ʾafṣaḥ* (1v, l. 14)   Q30:46 *al-riyāḥ* (5v, l. 21)   Q32:28 *al-fatḥ* (7v, l. 20)
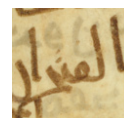
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14. Fraser, "Earliest Qurʾanic Scripts."

A straight *ḥāʾ* is found only four times.

Q28:76 *tafraḥ* (2v, l. 17)

Q30:4 *yafraḥu* (4v, l. 22)

Q33:7 *nūḥ* (8r, l. 10)

Q33:55 *junāḥ* (9v, l. 21)

The *khāʾ* occurs seven times, always with a curved shape.

Q36:37 *naslakhu* (14r, l. 7)
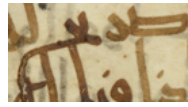
Q36:43 *ṣarīkh* (14r, l. 12)

Q36:51 *nufikha* (14r, l. 20)

Q39:68 *nufikha* (20r, l. 2)

Q39:68 *nufikha* (20r, l. 3)
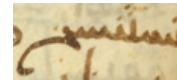
Q45:29 *nastansikhu* (29r, l. 15)
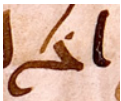
Q12:77 *ʾakh* (D, r, l. 6)

Although this manuscript shows more variance in the shape of the *jīm*, the straight shape nonetheless predominates, and the *ḥāʾ* and the *khāʾ* almost never use the straight shape; the distribution remains highly significant, with a *p* value below .0001. This manuscript seems to represent a transitional stage between manuscripts that keep the two shapes distinct and manuscripts in which they have been merged. The scribe of this manuscript seem to have had a choice regarding the shape to use for the *jīm*.

4. BnF Arabe 330f

The manuscript Arabe 330f, identified by Déroche as belonging to the Kufic A.I style,[15] is yet another manuscript that, despite its rather limited attestations, points to a distinction between the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ*. The distribution of the shapes of these two letters is similar to that of CBL Is. 1615 I: the *jīm* may be curved, but the *ḥāʾ* is always curved.

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15. Déroche, *Manuscrits*, 5, no. 12.

Of the six instances of *jīm* in this manuscript, four are straight and two are curved.

<div align="center">

<u>Straight</u>   **<u>Curved</u>**

</div>

Q33:37 *kharaj* (47v, l. 10)	Q33:37 *ʾazwāj* (47v, l. 11)	Q4:100 *yakhruj* (33v, l. 13)
Q33:50 *kharaj* (48v, l. 16)[16]	Q33:38 *[khara]j* (47v, l. 14)	Q9:64 *makhruj* (40r, l. 2)

The *ḥāʾ* appears eleven times, always with a hook.
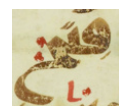
Q4:102 *junāḥ* (34r, l. 12)	Q4:141 *fatḥ* (36r, l. 6)	Q4:157 *al-masīḥ* (37v, l. 9)
Q5:3 *dhubiḥa* (38v, l. 6)	Q5:4 *al-jawāriḥ* (38v, l. 17)	Q9:70 *nūḥ* (40v, l. 9)
Q12:87 *rūḥ* (45r, l. 2)	Q12:87: *[r]ūḥ* (45r, l. 3)	Q12:94 *rīḥ* (45v, l. 5)
Q34:26 *yaftaḥu* (49v, l. 5)	Q34:26 *al-fattāḥ* (49v, l. 5)	

The number of examples in this manuscript is rather low in view of the amount of text it contains, but even in this limited sample there is a significant correlation between shape and sound, with a *p* value of .0063.

5. CUL Add. 1146 and BnF Arabe 6140b

A fifth manuscript that displays the distinction between *jīm* and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* is CUL Add. 1146 (CUL) combined with BnF Arabe 6140b (A 6140b). To my knowledge, the two fragments have not yet been identified as belonging together, but they clearly belong to the same quire, with the bifolios of Arabe 6140b forming the outer bifolios and those of Add. 1146 the inner bifolios (see Table 5.1 on the next page). One bifolio is missing between the two fragments. The original manuscript must have originally consisted of four bifolios with

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16. Although the letter here does have a hook, this hook clearly looks very different from the broad hook of the *ḥāʾ* below, and it seems possible that the hook was added when the text was retraced by a later hand.

flesh facing the hair (assuming that no fifth bifolio surrounded 6140b). The manuscript is written in a clear and stable Kufic B.Ib style.[17]

**Table 5.1: Comparison of the Dimensions and Contents of
CUL Add. 1146 and BnF Arabe 6140b**

Folio	Range	Flesh/hair side	Measurements[18]
A 6140b, 5r	Q33:10–20	Hair side	347 × 275 mm
A 6140b, 5v	Q33:21–24	Flesh side	347 × 275 mm
A 6140b, 6r	Q33:24–33	Hair side	347 × 275 mm
A 6140b, 6v	Q33:33–37	Flesh side	347 × 275 mm
[Lost bifolio]	33:37–52		
CUL, 1r	33:52–57	Hair side	349 × 276 mm
CUL, 1v	33:57–68	Flesh side	349 × 276 mm
CUL, 2r	33:68–34:3	Flesh side	349 × 276 mm
CUL, 2v	34:3–11	Hair side	349 × 276 mm
[Lost bifolio]	34:11–26		
A 6140b, 7r	34:26–34	Flesh side	347 × 275 mm
A 6140b, 7v	34:34–43	Hair side	347 × 275 mm
A 6140b, 8r	34:43–52	Flesh side	347 × 275 mm
A 6140b, 8v	34:53–35:6	Hair side	347 × 275 mm

All four occurrences of *jīm* have the straight shape.

Q33:33 *tabarruj* (A 6140b, 6v, l. 1)
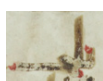
Q34:2 *yaliju* (CUL, 2r, l. 18)

Q34:2 *[yakhru]ju* (CUL, 2r, l. 19)

Q34:2 *yaʿruju* (CUL, 2r, l. 19)

17. Déroche, *Manuscrits*, 68, no. 17.

18. Déroche, *Manuscrits*, 68, says that the writing surface is 333 × 270 mm. I have been unable to reconstruct how he arrived at these measurements. Taking the dimensions of the page as the measure and then dividing the writing surface (height baseline to baseline; width rightmost stroke to leftmost stroke, ignoring backward-curving *yāʾ*), the measurements of the two fragments are almost identical and well within the measure of error one would expect using purely digital means to measure both.

Meanwhile, all three *ḥā*ʾs are curved.

Q33:55 *junāḥ* (CUL, 1r, l. 14)   Q33:81 *yuṣliḥ* (CUL, 2r, l. 5)   Q35:2 *yaftaḥ* (A 6140b, 8v, l. 9)

Because of the very small number of attestations, the correlation between shape and sound is not quite as significant in this manuscript as it is in the previous cases, but its *p* value of .0276 still falls well below the significance threshold of .05.

6. Wetzstein II 1913 and BnF Arabe 6087

Put together, the two fragments Wetzstein II 1913 and BnF Arabe 6087 contain about 85% of the Quranic text, and as such the combined manuscript one of the most complete early Quranic manuscripts. It was carbon-dated by the Corpus Coranicum project to 662–765 CE with 2σ (95.4%) probability. Déroche identifies Arabe 6087 as belonging to his Kufic B.Ia type.[19] This manuscript has undergone significant retouching on many of its pages. As a result, drawing conclusions regarding the distinction between *jīm* and *ḥā*ʾ/*khā*ʾ is somewhat more problematic.

Although the *jīm* still occurs fairly often with its straight shape, occasionally it features an extended horizontal line with a sharp hook at the end. Such instances of a *jīm* with a hook are almost certainly products of later retouching; this is quite visible, for example, in Q33:52, *ʾazwāj*. At other times, however, the distinction is not quite as clear.

Q33:52 *ʾazwāj* (A 6087, 5v, l. 8)

Even though the shape of the straight *jīm* has been corrected toward the general curved form, it is usually possible to distinguish it from the *ḥā*ʾ/*khā*ʾ, which, in this manuscript, usually has a very tight loop, as, for example, in Q32:28, *al-fatḥ*.
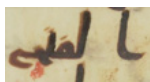
Q32:28 *al-fatḥ* (A 6087, 2v, l. 8)

Because the retouching added hooks to many straight shapes, I have decided to classify any final letter in which a significantly long horizontal line ends in a final hook as falling in the straight shape category, whereas final letters with a tight or large loop belong to the curved shape category. This method may mean that letter shapes that were originally straight with a final hook, not merely those that have been retouched to receive a hook, are

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19. Déroche, *Manuscrits*, 67, no. 16.

counted as straight. The overall result may be to overestimate the proportion of straight letters as opposed to curved ones in both groups (*jīm* and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*). Since the latter group is significantly more numerous, the distortion could have the effect of making the correlation appear weaker than it would have been before retouching. But despite this conservative approach, there is still an extremely strong correlation between the shape of the letter and the sound it represents.

Of the total 153 occurrences of *jīm*, 139 feature the straight shape.

Table 6.1: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Straight *Jīm*
(Example Nos. 4–139 in Appendix 6.1)

Q2:61 *yukhrij* (2r, l. 16)
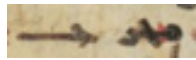
Q2:72 *mukhrij* (2v, l. 22)
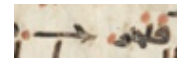
Q2:74 *fa-yakhruju* (3v, l. 3)

In only fourteen cases does the *jīm* have an unambiguously curved shape.

Table 6.2: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Curved *Jīm*
(Example Nos. 4–14 in Appendix 6.2)

Q2:158 *ḥajj* (5v, l. 17)
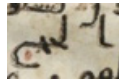
Q2:189 *al-ḥajj* (8r, l. 16)
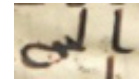
Q2:196 *al-ḥajj* (8v, l. 13)

The *ḥāʾ* occurs a total of 247 times, of which 237 feature the curved shape.

Table 6.3: Example Nos. 1-3 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ*
(Example Nos. 4–237 in Appendix 6.3)

Q2:76 *fataḥa* (3r, l. 9)

Q2:87 *bi-rūḥ* (3v, l. 8)

Q2:158 *[junā]ḥ* (6r, l. 18)

In ten cases out of 247, the *ḥāʾ* has a straight shape (which has in some cases evidently been retouched later).

Table 6.4: Example Nos. 1-3 of the Straight *Ḥāʾ*
(Example Nos. 4-10 in Appendix 6.4)
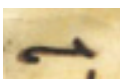
Q2:233 *[junā]ḥ* (11r, l. 20)

Q7:77 *yā-ṣāliḥ* (58v, l. 7)
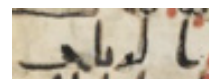
Q18:45 *al-riyāḥ* (114r, l. 2)

The *khāʾ* occurs twenty-five times, and twenty-four of these involve the curved shape.

Table 6.5: Example Nos. 1-3 of the Curved *Khāʾ*
(Example Nos. 4-24 in Appendix 6.5)
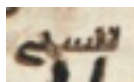
Q2:107 *nansakh* (4v, l. 15)
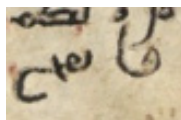
Q7:77 *yā-ṣāliḥ* (58v, l. 7)

Q4:22 *nakaḥa* (27v, l. 6)

There is a single instance of a *khāʾ* with what is likely to have been originally a straight shape.
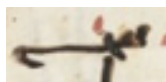
Q39:68 *nufikha* (159r, l. 4)

Because the number of attestations in the manuscript is so large, we can calculate the significance of the shape/sound correlation using the χ^2 test,[20] which requires a higher sample size, rather than Fisher's exact test. The distribution is once again highly significant, with a *p* value below .0001.

7. Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus (Hand C)

The manuscripts examined so far clearly make a distinction between *jīm* and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*. However, this is certainly is not the case for all early Quranic manuscripts. Even some very early manuscripts, such as the Hijazi Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus[21] (henceforth CPP), lack the distinction in some of its hands. For example, Hand A of the CPP uses the curved form for both *ḥāʾ* and *jīm*.[22]

Q2:282 *junāḥ*

Q3:27 *tūliju*

Q3:97 *ḥijj*

Q3:117 *rīḥ*

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20. K. Pearson, "On the Criterion That a Given System of Deviations from the Probable in the Case of a Correlated System of Variables Is Such That It Can Be Reasonably Supposed to Have Arisen from Random Sampling," *Philosophical Magazine*, ser. 5, 50 (1900): 156–175.

21. F. Déroche, *La transmission écrite du Coran dans les débuts de l'islam: Le codex Parisino-petropolitanus* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

22. For the identification of the different hands of the CPP, see Déroche, *Transmission*, 31–45.

Hand B, on the other hand, clearly displays the straight shape for both the *ḥāʾ* and the *jīm.*

Q6:143 *azwāj*

Q7:69 *nūḥ*
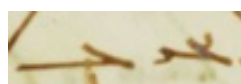
Q7:58 *yakhruju*
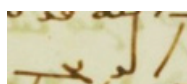
Q7:56 *al-riyāḥ*

Hand C, however, distinguishes the shape of the *jīm* from the shape of the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*, as the below overview shows. Part of Hand C belongs to the Saint Petersburg part of the CPP. I was granted access to photographs of these folios by Michael Marx, but I do not have permission to reproduce the photos. Instead, I provide black-and-white tracings of the letter shapes. These images are identified with M.

The *jīm* occurs thirteen times, all but once with the straight shape.

Table 7.1: Example Nos. 1–2 of the Straight *Jīm* (Example Nos. 4–12 in Appendix 7.1)

Q43:12 *al-ʾazwāj* (60r, l. 11)

Q45:33 *maʿārij* (60v, l. 16)

Q65:11 *li-yukhrija* (67r, l. 20)

There is a single instance of a curved *jīm.*

Q41:47 *takhruju* (57v, l. 7)

The *ḥāʾ* appears on twenty-one occasions, of which nineteen feature a curved shape.

Table 7.2: Example Nos. 1–3 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ* (Example Nos. 4–19 in Appendix 7.2)
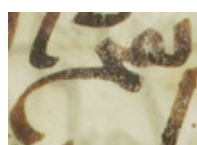
Q42:24 *yamḥu* (59r, l. 3)
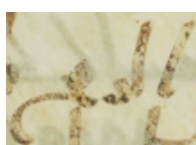
Q42:33 *al-rīḥ* (59r, l. 16)

Q42:40 *ʾa[ṣla]ḥa* (59v, l. 1)

There are two instances of a straight *ḥāʾ*.

Q60:10 *junāḥ* (65r, l. 10)

Q56:96 *fa-sabbiḥ* (M, 45v, l. 2)

The *khāʾ* is found twice, both times curved.
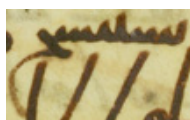
Q45:29 *nastansikhu* (64r, l. 17)

Q69:13 *nufikha* (69r, l. 8)

In Hand C of the CPP, as in the manuscripts discussed above, the correlation of shape and letter is highly significant, with a *p* value below .0001.

8. TIEM ŞE 118

I have identified a final potential manuscript that seems to display the distinction between *jīm* and *ḥāʾ*. This manuscript, ŞE 118, is housed at Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi (TIEM) in Istanbul. I have not been able to access the complete manuscript and was able to examine only a single page, 6r, which is reproduced by Déroche.[23] This page contains an exceptionally high number of final *jīm*s and *ḥāʾ*s for a single page, and their shape corresponds perfectly to the proposed distinction. Still, since the sample remains small in absolute terms, containing only five examples, it is impossible to be sure whether the correspondence is due to chance (Fisher's exact test yields a *p* value of .1). Additional folios would have to be examined to prove or disprove the presence of the distinction in the manuscript.

Both of the two *jīm*s are straight.

Q25:53 *maraj* (l. 15)

Q25:53 *[ʾu]jāj* (l. 16)

By contrast, all three *ḥāʾ*s have the curved shape.
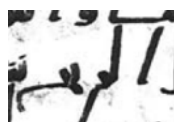
Q25:48 *al-riyāḥ* (l. 9)

Q25:53 *milḥ* (l. 15)

Q25:58 *sabbiḥ* (l. 22)

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23. F. Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads: A First Overview* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), fig. 7.

Notes on Paleography in Light of the Distinction

Above I have identified several manuscripts that feature a distinction between final *jīm* versus final *ḥā'*/*khā'*. Although the distinction is present in a fair number of relatively early manuscripts, these are nonetheless outnumbered by manuscripts without the distinction. Several paleographical observations can be made about the manuscripts. First, several of the manuscripts I have examined fall into the rather heterogeneous, but nevertheless distinct group of manuscripts written in the A and LH/A scripts and the LH/A-A hybrid style identified by Cellard.[24] The Codex Amrensis 1 belongs to the LH/A-A group, Arabe 330g and Is. 1615 I belong to the LH/A group, and Arabe 330f belongs to the A group.

These groups are distinct from each other but clearly share several paleographical similarities. Typical of manuscripts in this style group, for example, is the downward-curving tail on the final and isolated *ṭā'*.[25] One might, therefore, speculate that the distinction between *jīm* and *ḥā'*/*khā'* is also typical of this style. But although the distinction seems to be relatively more prevalent in manuscripts of this group, there are still manuscripts within it that clearly lack the distinction. The two other Kufic A.I manuscripts discussed by Déroche,[26] Arabe 330d and Arabe 330e, both use only the straight shape regardless of the consonantal value of the *jīm*/*ḥā'*/*khā'*. Arabe 326b, part of the hybrid LH/A-A style and very close to the Codex Amrensis 1, contains only a single case of *jīm* and a single case of *ḥā'*, but both have a long, straight shape with a final sharp curve, with no apparent distinction. In the LH/A group, the distinction is not present in Qāf 47 of the Bergsträsser photo archive,[27] even though it does employ both shapes:
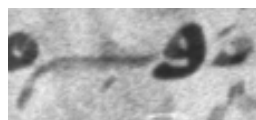
Q4:20 *zawj* (Q, 13v, l. 10)
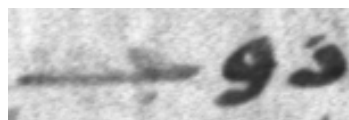
Q4:20 *zawj* (Q, 13v, l. 10)
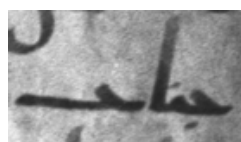
Q4:25 *junāḥ* (Q, 14r, l.6)
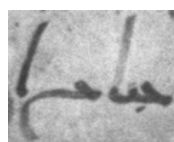
Q4:101 *junāḥ* (Q, 18v, l. 18)

Hand C of the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus is so far the only Hijazi hand with the distinction that I have identified, and strikingly none of the other hands in this manuscript maintain the distinction. This is a clear indication that the decision to make or ignore the distinction was up to the scribe.

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24. Cellard, "Written Transmission."

25. This similarity was already observed by Cellard (*Codex Amrensis* 1, 7; "Written Transmission").

26. Déroche, *Manuscrits*.

27. To this manuscript also belongs Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Ms.or.fol.4313.

The two manuscripts Wetzstein II 1913/BnF Arabe 6087, written in the B.Ia style, and CUL Add.146/BnF Arabe 6140b, written in the B.Ib style, are to my knowledge the only examples of manuscripts in these two respective styles to display the distinction.

Although the curved shape eventually came to dominate, yielding the modern shape of the *jīm/ḥāʾ/khāʾ*, both forms continued to coexist for some time. Even after the emergence of the later, calligraphic proportioned Kufic hands, we still see the straight shape in use, which suggests that scribes who did not differentiate between the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* in terms of shape continued to employ both. In fact, the shape used for the *jīm/ḥāʾ/khāʾ* is one of the factors that distinguishes the Kufic styles C and D, as Déroche has pointed out.[28] Style C uses the straight *jīm* shape for both *jīm* and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*, whereas style D uses a tightly curved *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* for both *jīm* and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*. BnF Arabe 334a, an example of a manuscript in style C.Ib,[29] always uses the straight *jīm* shape:

Q5:17 *al-masīḥ* (A 334a, 3v, l. 9)

Q35:13 *yūliju* (A334a, 7v, l. 6)

The style identified by Déroche as O.I, exemplified by the early Umayyad Qurans, seems in its ornamentation to have clear affinity with the Dome of the Rock inscription.[30] Manuscripts of this style, such as Marcel 13 and BnF Arabe 330e, likewise consistently have the the straight shape for *jīm/ḥāʾ/khāʾ*, but both shapes are still (indiscriminately) in use, as can be seen in Arabe 330c:

Q15:22 *al-riyāḥ* (A 330c, 11r, l. 10)

Q15:34 *fa-khraj* (A 330c, 11r, l. 25)

By contrast, BnF Arabe 325k, a manuscript in style D.I,[31] uses the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* shape:

Q12:87 *zawj* (A 325k, 106r, l. 4)

Q17:24 *janāḥ* (A325k, 110r, l. 6)

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28. F. Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition: Qurʾans of the 8th to the 10th Centuries AD* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 40, 43. This distinction is not absolute: some Quranic manuscripts in the Kufic C style have a curve, but their horizontal portion is still much longer than it is in style D, and thus quite distinct.

29. Déroche, *Manuscrits*, 79, no. 50.

30. Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads*, 80.

31. Déroche, *Manuscrits*, 84, no. 59.

The other very common Kufic style of later manuscripts, the B.II style, likewise exclusively uses the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* shape in all environments. See, for example, BnF Arabe 340f:[32]

Q7:32 *ʾakhraja* (A 340f, 80r, l. 16)
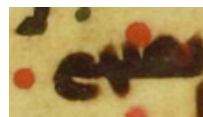
Q7:40 *tufattaḥu* (A 340f, 81r, l. 12)

Establishing how long the distinction between *jīm* and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* remained in use and when the curved shape superseded the straight one requires further investigation.

The Nabataean Origin of the Distinction

As seen above, the distinction between *jīm* and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* is clearly attested in several early Quranic manuscripts in a variety of styles, but it is permanently lost in later styles such as Kufic C, D, and B.II. The next question, then, is where the distinction between the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* comes from. It is clear, from the very earliest extant Quran manuscripts, that there were writing traditions that did not distinguish the two signs as well as others that did. There are two possible origins of the distinction. Either there was free variation between two shapes, and some scribes appropriated this free variation to make a distinction between the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*, or the distinction was carried over from an ancient scribal tradition that was eventually lost.

The first possibility has in its favor the fact that there are other letters whose shape in the final position can vary freely. As is well known, Arabic script has two different variants of the final *yāʾ*: a returning *yāʾ* and an s-shaped *yāʾ*. The two shapes seem to have had no apparent functional difference, and they can be found in the same text and even in identical words on a single page. See, for example, the two variant forms of the word *fī* on a single page (pg. 258) in the Codex Amrensis I:[33]

Q9:110

Q9:111

If the final *yāʾ* could vary freely between the two forms with no apparent difference in use, it is easy to imagine that the two shapes of the *ḥāʾ* might have represented a similar case, with the straight form and the curved form in free variation. However, there are some problems with this theory. First, there is no obvious explanation as to why some

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32. Déroche, *Manuscrits*, 72, no. 34.

33. This variation is already found in Nabataeo-Arabic, although in later texts the returning *yāʾ* seems thus far more common than the s-shaped *yāʾ*. See L. Nehmé, "A Glimpse of the Development of the Nabataean Script into Arabic Based on Old and New Epigraphic Material," in *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language*, ed. M. C. A. Macdonald, 47–88 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 51.

manuscripts would have appropriated this free variation in order to make a distinction between the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ*. If differentiation was truly a concern, one wonders why they did not employ a threefold distinction or, for example, treat *jīm* and *ḥāʾ* the same, as opposed to *khāʾ*. Second, all of these manuscripts already use dots, so it is not clear why a differentiated final form would have been necessary to distinguish the letters, as the dots would have served the same function (and in fact, the straight *jīm* is quite often dotted). Third, there are only very few words that are ambiguous if the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ/ khāʾ* are not differentiated (only the pair *rūḥ* and *zawj* comes to mind). A clear motivation to consciously distinguish these letters therefore seems to be lacking. And finally, there is no precedent of scribes' using the two variants of final *yāʾ* to make what would be a very sensible distinction—namely, that between final *ī* and final *ā*, which are otherwise homographic. Therefore, among early Islamic Arabic scribes, it does not seem to be the case that optional final variants were employed to make specific phonemic distinctions that the Arabic script had lost the ability to make (or that it never had, for that matter).

This brings us to the second possible explanation, the retention of a distinction from pre-Islamic times. Gruendler and Nehmé have shown conclusively that the Arabic script developed from the Nabataean Aramaic script and that we can trace the development of the script from Nabataean toward Arabic as a continuous evolution in the epigraphic record.[34] Therefore, it does not make much sense to speak of Nabataean *or* Arabic script: Arabic is quite simply the last stage in the development of the Nabataean script.[35]

In the history of the development of the Arabic script, the word-final position seems to be especially prone to retaining graphemic distinctions that are lost in other positions. The *yāʾ* and the *nūn*, which have both merged with *bāʾ* and *tāʾ/thāʾ* in the word-internal position, remain distinct from them in the final position. The same applies to the *qāf* and the *fāʾ*, which are distinct in the final position but homographic in the internal position. Both of these word-internal neutralizations can be observed in transitional Nabataeo-Arabic inscriptions.[36] It thus seems quite possible that an original distinction between the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* might have been neutralized in the word-internal position but retained in the word-final position, as we find in the manuscripts examined above.

In Classical Nabataean, as in other forms of Aramaic script, the *gimel* and the *ḥet* are distinct. Moreover, the *ḥet* is employed in Nabataean to write both the *ḥ* and *kh* sounds of Arabic (e.g., <ḥrtt> for *ḥāritha* and <ḥlyfw> for *khalīf* but <ʾbgr> for *ʾabjar*).[37] If, as I argue here, the distinction between *jīm* and *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* is inherited from Nabataean, this feature of Nabataean would explain why there is a graphemic distinction between the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ/ khāʾ* but not between the *ḥāʾ* and the *khāʾ*.

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34. B. Gruendler, *The Development of the Arabic Scripts: From the Nabatean Era to the First Islamic Century according to Dated Texts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); Nehmé, "Glimpse."

35. M. C. A. Macdonald, "Ancient Arabia and the Written Word," in *The Development of Arabic as a Written Language*, ed. M. C. A. Macdonald, 5–28 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 21–22.

36. Nehmé, "Glimpse," 52–53.

37. A. Negev, *Personal Names in the Nabataean Realm* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1991), nos. 448, 494.

In early forms of Nabataean, the *gimel* and the *ḥet* are fairly clearly differentiated, although both have a variety of forms, ranging from shapes quite close to those used in Imperial Aramaic to shapes quite similar to what we find in the Arabic script today. The image below shows the approximate development over time of the letter shapes attested in Nabataean, from left to right.[38]

Nabataean *gimel*　　　　　　　　　　　　Nabataean *ḥet*

Although the most advanced shape of the *ḥet* is identical to the least advanced shape of the *gimel*, the two signs remain distinct in the transitional Nabataeo-Arabic inscriptions, since these two stages never co-occur.[39] Nehmé does not comment specifically on the development of these two signs in the word-final position,[40] and it is clear that eventually they merge completely in the word-internal position. An examination of their evolution from transitional Nabataeo-Arabic into the Arabic script shows that—as far as we can tell from the incomplete epigraphic record—the originally upheld distinction in the final position appears to have developed eventually into the differentiated signs that we find in the manuscripts that I have discussed above.

Final *ḥet*

The final *ḥet* is much better attested than is the final *gimel*. The more or less classical shape of the final *ḥet* can be seen in JSNab 17 (267 CE) and LPNab 41 (3rd c. CE).[41]

JSNab 17: *b-yrḥ*
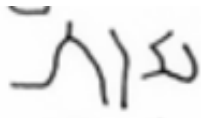
LPNab 41: *tnwḥ*

A more advanced form is attested in the inscription published by Stiehl (356 CE), where the shape of the *ḥet* is almost identical to the straight *jīm* in the early Islamic Quran

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38. Image taken from J. Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen: I. Notions générales, écriture, grammaire* (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller, 1978), 29.

39. Nehmé, "Glimpse," 49.

40. Nehmé, "Glimpse."

41. Tracings and photos taken from Nehmé, "Glimpse."

manuscripts, with the exception that the left leg stands at a somewhat oblique angle to the baseline.[42]

Stiehl inscription: *b-yrḥ*

When we then consider inscriptions that are recognizably closer to the Arabic script, such as Ḥimà-Sud PalAr 1, published by Robin, al-Ghabbān, and al-Saʿīd and dated to 470 CE,[43] we again find the phrase *b-yrḥ* 'in the month' with a similarly advanced shape, but here it has a distinct downward curve.[44]

Ḥimà-Sud PalAr 1: *b-yrḥ*

An even stronger downward curve occurs in the inscription Ḥimà-al-Musammāᵗ PalAr 5, which contains the name *ʿabd al-masīḥ*.[45]

Ḥimà-al-Musammāᵗ PalAr 5: *ʿbdʾlmsyḥ*

Finally, in an as yet unpublished pre-Islamic Arabic inscription found between Tabuk and Hegra and studied by the amateur epigraphist group Farīq al-Ṣaḥrāʾ,[46] we find the *ḥāʾ* in its

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42. R. Stiehl, "A New Nabatean Inscription," in *Beiträge zur alten Geschichte und deren Nachleben: Festschrift für Franz Altheim zum 6.10.1968*, vol. 2, ed. R. Stiehl and H. E. Stier, 87–90 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970). Tracings and photos taken from Nehmé, "Glimpse."

43. C. Robin, A. I. al-Ghabbān, and S. F. al-Saʿīd, "Inscriptions antiques de la région de Najrān (Arabie séoudite méridionale): Nouveaux jalons pour l'histoire de l'écriture, de la langue et du calendrier arabes," *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions 2014*, no. 3 (2014): 1087–1089.

44. Image taken from Robin et al., "Inscriptions antiques," 1044.

45. Robin et al., "Inscriptions antiques," 1125–1127. As this inscription is undated, it is not completely clear that it is pre-Islamic, but paleographically it seems early.

46. It is not absolutely certain that this inscription is pre-Islamic, but the formulae and orthography suggest that it is at least non-Islamic, and very early.

most advanced form with a clear loop, recognizable from the Islamic-period shape, in an inscription that mentions *wa-l-rumḥ* 'and the spear'.[47]
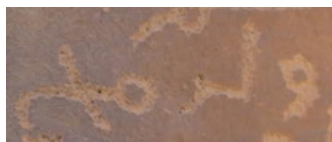
Farīq 4: *wlrmḥ*

Final *gimel*

The final *gimel* is significantly rarer, as there is no common Nabataean phrase parallel to *b-yrḥ* 'in the month' that would have this letter in the final position. The earliest attestation that I am aware of is once again an inscription found and photographed by the Farīq al-Ṣaḥrāʾ group, which was subsequently deciphered and published by Nehmé as UJadhNab 538.[48] The inscription contains the phrase *ḥajj al-faṭīr* 'feast of leavened bread' <ḥg ʾlpṭyr>. This inscription is written in a clear transitional Nabataeo-Arabic script and dates to 303 CE. In this inscription, we see that the *gimel* lacks the curve found in the transitional Nabataeo-Arabic *ḥet* and instead stands in a straight line parallel to the baseline.[49]
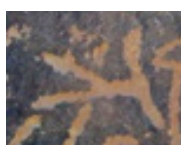
UJadhNab 538: *ḥg*

The next attestation is probably UJadhNab 486, an undated inscription written in the transitional Nabataeo-Arabic script.[50] Nehmé suggests that it should be read as ʾlḥzrʿ (or ʾlḥzry). I agree with her observation that it is possible and even probable that the word represents the name *al-khazraj* and that it is a clear example of the final *gimel* of Nabataeo-Arabic without a curve, as seen in early manuscripts. The *gimel* stands at a fairly sharp angle to the baseline, but it is distinct from the *ḥet* of, for example, the Stiehl inscription, which forms more of an upright triangle shape than do this *gimel* and the *gimel* in UJadhNab 538 above.

UJadhNab 486: *ʾlḥzrg*

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47. Image taken from http://alsahra.org/?p=17938.

48. L. Nehmé, *The Darb al-Bakrah: A Caravan Route in North-West Arabia Discovered by Ali I. al-Ghabban* (Riyadh: Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, 2018), 185. See also http://alsahra.org/?p=17692.

49. All images taken from Nehmé, *Darb al-Bakrah*.

50. Nehmé, *Darb al-Bakrah*, 182.

This name *al-khazraj* is attested two more times in pre-Islamic inscriptions written in Arabic in a script that can be called the Arabic script proper, rather than a transitional script. In one of the two inscriptions the *rāʾ* and the *zāy* have a clear lunate shape typical of the Islamic period, suggesting that this inscription was produced fairly close to the Islamic era, likely in the sixth century CE. These inscriptions also lack the distinct downward or even backward curve that we find in the *ḥet* in inscriptions from approximately the same period. These Arabic inscriptions, too, were discovered and photographed by the Farīq al-Ṣaḥrāʾ group and are reproduced below.[51]

Farīq 5: *ʾlḥzrg*
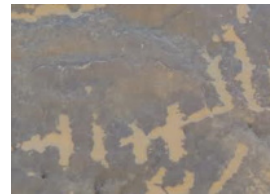
Farīq 6: *ʾlḥzrg*

It is clear from the examples I have presented, then, that the *jīm* and the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* were still graphemically distinct from each other in the pre-Islamic Nabataeo-Arabic script, and we can see a clear development toward the modern shapes. The pre-Islamic contrast between these two signs had simply not yet been lost in the early Islamic period, and traces of it can be found in the manuscripts that I have examined above. A schematic development of the letter shapes of the *ḥet* toward the *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* and those of the *gimel* toward the *jīm* is presented below with the *ḥet/ḥāʾ* on the top line and the *gimel/jīm* on the bottom one, running from the most archaic form on the right to the most advanced form on the left.
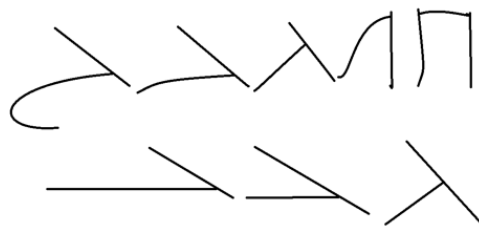
Conclusion

The examples above show clearly that while the shapes of the letters *ḥāʾ*, *khāʾ*, and *jīm* merged in the word-internal position, throughout the pre-Islamic history of the Arabic script, from its Nabataean Aramaic beginnings until the early Islamic period, the word-final *ḥāʾ/khāʾ* and the word-final *jīm* remained distinct graphemes, at least within certain scribal traditions. Even in traditions that did not observe the distinction, the script continued to use both forms well into the second if not third century CE, as the use of the two forms is one of the features that distinguishes the Kufic C and D styles. Given the proven presence of

51. Images taken from http://alsahra.org/?p=17938.

the distinction in early Quranic manuscripts, it seems unlikely that this spelling convention would be limited exclusively to Quranic writing. Future research should certainly be undertaken to examine the use of straight and curved *ḥāʾ/khāʾ/jīm* shapes in early papyri and inscriptions to establish whether they are used to distinguish these two signs.

It is also worth investigating how the distinction should be understood for paleographical dating of Quranic manuscripts. Although it is clear that scribes who distinguished the two letters coexisted with scribes who did not (especially in view of the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus), eventually the distinction was lost in most styles in which it appears (A.I, B.Ia, B.Ib, LH/A). It seems that manuscripts that retained this pre-Islamic contrast are likely to be earlier examples of these styles compared to manuscripts that no longer show the distinction. Determining how far we can take this conclusion and what it can tell us about the relative chronology of such early manuscripts will require further work.

Appendix 1.1: Codex Amrensis 1,
Example Nos. 4–24 of the Straight *Jīm*

Q9:64 *mukhrij*
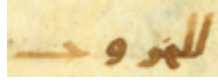
Q9:83 *li-l-khurūj*

Q9:91 *ḥaraj*

Q10:22 *al-mawj*

Q10:31 *yukhraju*

Q10:31 *yukhraju*

Q10:103 *nunji*

Q11:42 *mawj*

Q14:32 *fa-ʾakhraja*

Q15:34 *fa-ʾakhraja*

Q41:47 *takhruju*

Q43:12 *al-ʾazwāj*

Q46:17 *ʾukhraja*
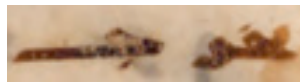
Q47:29 *yukhrija*

Q48:17 *[al-ʾa]ʿraj*

Q48:17 *ḥaraj*
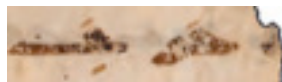
Q48:29 *[ʾa]khraja*

Q50:5 *[marī]j*

Q50:42 *al-khurūj*

Q57:20 *yahīju*

Q59:2 *ʾakhraja*

Appendix 1.2: Codex Amrensis 1,
Example Nos. 4-39 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ*
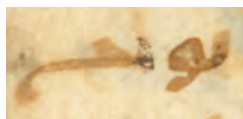
Q9:70 *nūḥ*

Q9:120 *ṣāliḥ*

Q10:17 *yufliḥ*

Q10:22 *[r]īḥ*

Q10:22 *bi-rīḥ*

Q10:71 *nūḥ*

Q10:77 *yufliḥu*

Q10:81 *yuṣliḥu*

Q11:10 *la-farḥ*

Q11:32 *yā-nūḥ*

Q11:34 *ʾansaḥa*
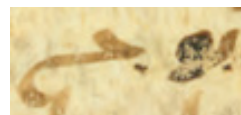
Q11:36 *nūḥ*

Q11:42 *nūḥ*
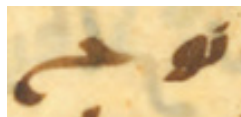
Q11:45 *nūḥ*

Q11:36 *yā-nūḥ*

Q11:36 *ṣāliḥ*

Q11:38 *yā-nūḥ*

Q11:62 *yā-ṣāliḥ*
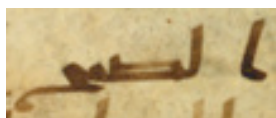
Q11:81 *al-ṣubḥ*

Q11:81 *[a]l-ṣubḥ*
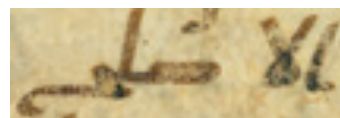
Q11:8 *al-ʾiṣlāḥ*
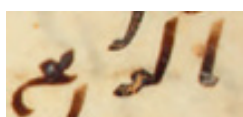
Q14:18 *al-rīḥ*

Q15:22 *al-rīḥ*

Q15:22 *lawāqiḥ*

Q15:85 *fa-ṣfaḥ*

Q15:85 *al-ṣafḥ*

Q15:99 *fa-sabbiḥ*

Q41:12 *bi-maṣābīḥ**

Q42:40 *[ʾaṣla]ḥa*

Q43:89 *fa-ṣfaḥ*
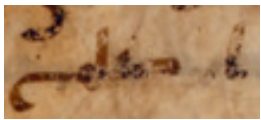
Q47:2 *ʾaṣlaḥ*

Q50:12 *[nū]ḥ*

Q50:39 *sabbiḥ*
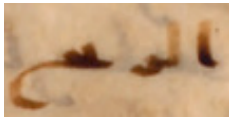
Q51:41 *al-rīḥ*

Q51:47 *nūḥ*

Q58:11 *yafsaḥ*

* Note that this word is missing a denticle. One would have expected مصــح .

**Appendix 2.1: BnF Arabe 330g and CBL Is. 1615 II,
Example Nos. 4-11 of the Straight *Jīm***

Q9:3 *al-ḥajj* (62r, l. 9)
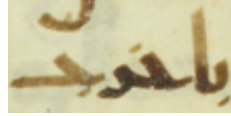
Q9:13 *bi-ʾikhrāj* (62v, l. 9)

Q9:19 *al-ḥājj* (62v, l. 19)
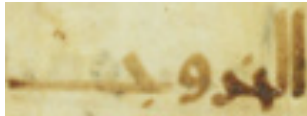
Q9:46 *al-khurūj* (64r, l. 14)

Q9:64 *mukhrij* (65r, l. 3)
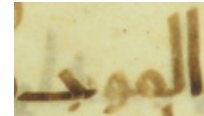
Q10:22 *al-mawj* (69v, l. 2)

Q86:7 *yakhruju* (B II, 1r, l. 12)

Q87:4 *ʾakhraja* (B II, 1r, l. 18)

Appendix 2.2: BnF Arabe 330g and CBL Is. 1615 II,
Example Nos. 4–34 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ/Khāʾ*

Q4:25 *yankiḥa* (51v, l. 17)
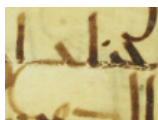
Q4:101 *junāḥ* (53r, l. 13)
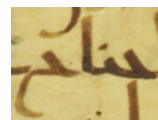
Q4:102 *junāḥ* (53r, l. 19)

Q4:114 *ʾiṣlāḥ* (53v, l. 18)
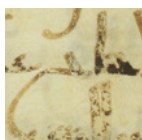
Q4:128 *junāḥ* (54r, l. 17)
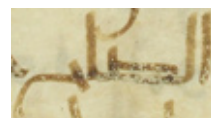
Q4:128 *al-ṣulḥ* (54r, l. 17)
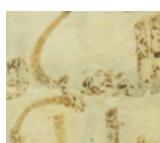
Q4:128 *al-shuḥḥ* (54r, l. s18)

Q4:141 *fatḥ* (54v, l. 16)
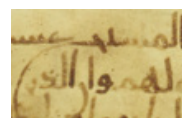
Q4:157 *al-masīḥ* (55r, l. 19)
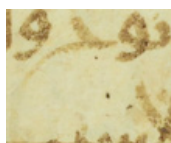
Q4:163 *nūḥ* (55v, l. 7)
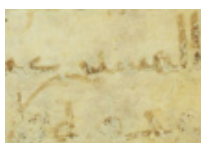
Q4:171 *al-masīḥ* (55v, l. 19)
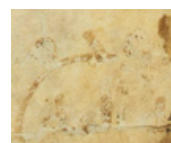
Q4:171 *[r]ūḥ* (55v, l. 20)
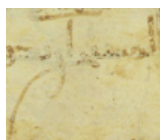
Q4:171 *al-masīḥ* (55v, l. 22)

Q7:142 *ʾaṣliḥ* (56v, l. 4)
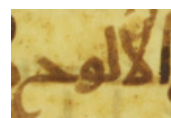
Q7:145 *al-ʾalwāḥ* (56v, l. 9)
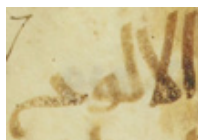
Q7:150 *al-ʾalwāḥ* (57r, l. 1)
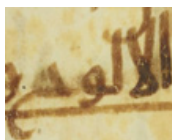
Q7:154 *al-ʾalwāḥ* (57r, l. 7)

Q8:19 *al-fatḥ* (59v, l. 18)
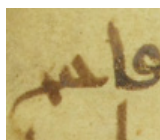
Q8:61 *fa-njaḥ* (61v, l. 1)
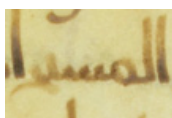
Q9:30 *al-masīḥ* (63v, l. 2)
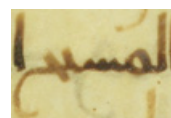
Q9:31 *al-masīḥ* (63v, l. 4)
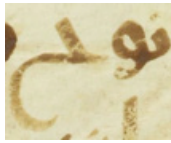
Q9:70 *nūḥ* (65r, l. 14)

Q9:81 *fariḥa* (66r, l. 16)

Q9:120 *ṣāliḥ* (68r, l. 11)

Q10:17 *yufliḥu* (69r, l. 12)

Q10:22 *bi-rīḥ* (69v, l. 1)

Q10:22 *rīḥ* (69v, l. 2)
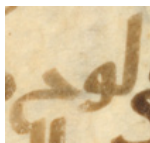
Q86:22 *lawḥ* (B II, 1r, l. 9)

Q87:1 *sabbiḥ* (B II, 1r, l. 17)

Q87:14 *ʾaflaḥa* (B II, 1v, l. 4)
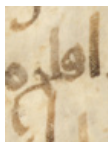
Q91:9 *ʾaflaḥa* (B II, 2v, l. 3)
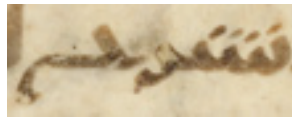
Q94:1 *nashraḥ* (B II, 3r, l. 1)

Q97:4 *al-rūḥ* (B II, 3r, l. 19)

Q110:1 *al-fatḥ* (B II, 4v, l. 18)

Appendix 3.1: CBL Is. 1615 I, Doha Museum of Islamic Art Ms. 68, and Folio from the Vahid Kooros Collection, Example Nos. 4–22 of the Straight *Jīm*
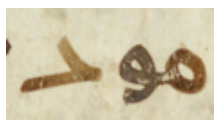
Q31:32 *mawj* (7r, l. 6)

Q32:5 *yaʿruju* (7r, l. 18)
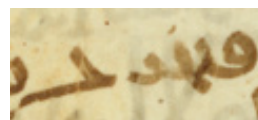
Q32:27 *fa-nukhriju* (7v, l. 10)

Q33:37 *ʾazwāj* (9r, l. 14)

Q33:38 *ḥaraj* (9r, l. 15)
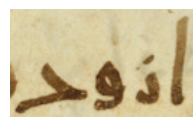
Q33:52 *ʾazwāj* (9v, l. 13)

Q34:2 *yaʿruju* (10v, l. 3)

Q36:36 *al-ʾazwāj* (14r, l. 5)

Q38:77 *fa-khruj* (18r, l.7)

Q40:11 *khurūj* (20v, l. 6)

Q43:12 *al-ʾazwāj* (26r, l. 1)
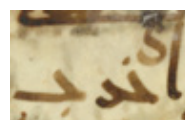
Q46:17 *ʾukhraja* (30r, l. 4)

Q47:29 *yukhrija* (31v, l. 14)

Q47:37 *yukhrij* (32r, l. 3)

Q48:17 *ḥaraj* (32v, l. 10)

Q48:17 *al-ʾaʿraj* (32v, l. 10)

Q48:17 *ḥaraj* (32v, l. 10)

Q48:17 *ḥaraj* (32v, l. 11)
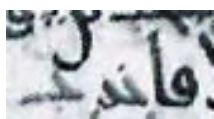
Q15:34 *fa-khruj* (F, v, l. 10)

**Appendix 3.2: CBL Is. 1615 I, Doha Museum of Islamic Art Ms. 68,
and Folio from the Vahid Kooros Collection,
Example Nos. 4-17 of the Curved *Jīm***

Q33:37 *ḥaraj* (9r, l. 14)
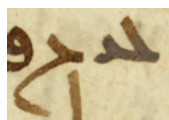
Q33:50 *ḥaraj* (9v, l. 9)

Q34:2 *yaliju* (10v, l. 2)

Q34:2 *yakhruju* (10v, l. 3)

Q35:12 *ʾujāju* (12r, l. 20)
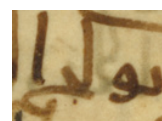
Q35:13 *yūliju* (12r, l. 22)
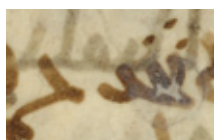
Q37:64 *takhruju* (15v, l. 8)

Q38:58 *ʾazwāj* (17v, l. 18)
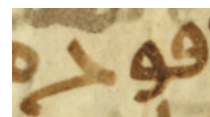
Q38:58 *fawj* (17v, l. 18)

Q39:21 [*yukhri*]*ju* (18v, l. 18)

Q39:21 *yahīju* (18v, l. 18)
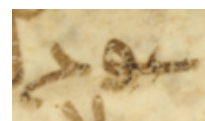
Q39:28 *ʿawij* (19r, l. 2)

Q41:47 *takhruju* (23v, l. 22)
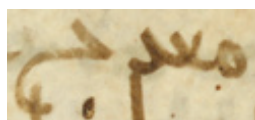
Q43:33 *maʿārij* (26v, l. 2)

Appendix 3.3: CBL Is. 1615 I, Doha Museum of Islamic Art Ms. 68, and Folio from the Vahid Kooros Collection, Example Nos. 4–40 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ*

Q32:29 *al-fatḥ* (7v, l. 21)
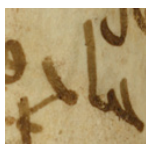
Q33:5 *junāḥ* (8r, l. 6)
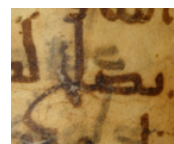
Q33:71 *yuṣliḥ* (10r, l. 18)

Q34:12 *al-rīḥ* (10v, l. 16)
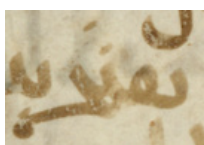
Q34:26 *yaftaḥu* (11r, l. 12)
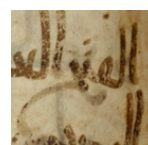
Q34:26 *al-fattāḥ* (11r, l. 13)

Q35:2 *yaftaḥ* (12r, l. 3)
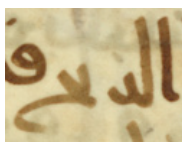
Q35:9 *al-riyāḥ* (12r, l. 13)
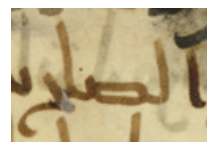
Q35:10 *al-ṣāliḥ* (12r, l. 15)

Q35:12 *milḥ* (12r, l. 20)

Q37:75 *nūḥ* (15v, l. 13)

Q37:79 *nūḥ* (15v, l. 15)
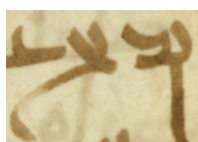
Q37:107 *bi-dhibḥ* (16r, l. 5)

Q37:177 *ṣabāḥ* (16v, l. 13)

Q38:12 *nūḥ* (17r, l. 1)

Q38:36 *al-rīḥ* (17v, l. 3)
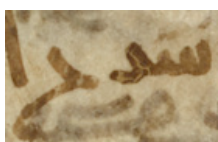
Q39:22 *sharaḥa* (18v, l. 19)

Q40:8 *ṣalaḥa* (20v, l. 2)
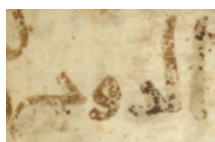
Q40:15 *al-rūḥ* (20v, l. 10)

Q40:31 *nūḥ* (21r, l. 10)

Q40:55 *sabbiḥ* (21v, l. 16)
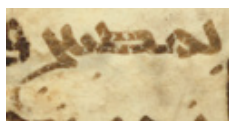
Q41:12 *bi-maṣābīḥ* (22v, l. 23)
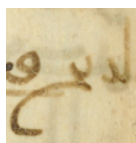
Q42:33 *[a]l-rīḥ* (25r, l. 9)
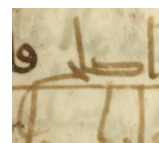
Q42:40 *ʾaṣlaḥa* (25r, l. 15)
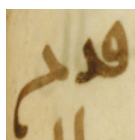
Q42:48 *fariḥa* (25v, l. 3)
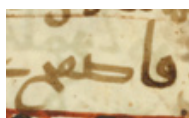
Q43:89 *fa-ṣfaḥ* (27r, l. 7)
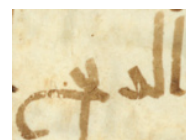
Q45:5 *al-riyāḥ* (28v, l. 6)

Q46:15 *ʾaṣliḥ* (30r, l. 1)

Q46:24 *rīḥ* (30r, l. 17)

Q47:2 *ʾaṣlaḥa* (30v, l. 19)
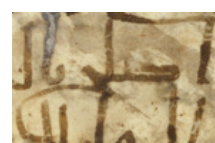
Q47:2 *ʾaṣlaḥa* (31r, l. 3)

Q15:22 *al-rīḥ* (F, v, l. 3)
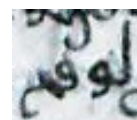
Q15:22 *lawāqiḥ* (F, v, l. 3)

Q12:80 *ʾabraḥa* (D, r, l. 12)

Q12:87 *rūḥ* (D, r, l. 21)

Q12:87 *rūḥ* (D, r, l. 21)

Q12:93 *rīḥ* (D, v, l. 5)

**Appendix 6.1: Wetzstein II 1913 and BnF Arabe 6087,
Example Nos. 4-139 of the Straight *Jīm***
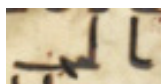
Q2:196 *al-ḥajj* (8v, l. 8)
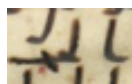
Q2:196 *al-ḥajj* (8v, l. 14)
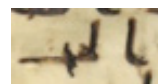
Q2:197 *al-ḥajj* (8v, l. 18)
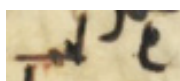
Q2:197 *al-ḥajj* (8v, l. 19)
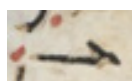
Q2:217 *[ʾikhrā]j* (10r, l. 2)
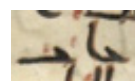
Q2:258 *ḥājj* (13r, l. 14)
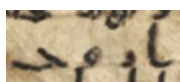
Q3:15 *ʾazwāj* (16r, l. 14)
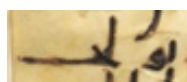
Q3:27 *tūliju* (16v, l. 17)

Q3:27 *tūliju* (16v, l. 18)

Q3:27 *tukhriju* (16v, l. 19)
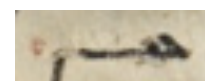
Q3:97 *ḥijj* (20r, l. 18)
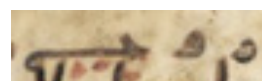
Q4:20 *zawj* (27v, l. 2)
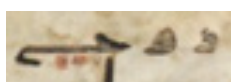
Q4:20 *zawj* (27v, l. 2)

Q4:57 *ʾazwāj* (29v, l. 24)

Q4:78 *burūj* (31r, l. 15)
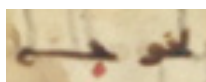
Q4:100 *yakhruj* (33r, l. 1)

Q5:6 *kharaja* (38r, l. 21)
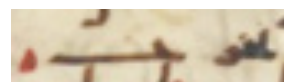
Q5:110 *tukhriju* (45r, l. 7)
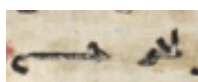
Q6:95 *yukhriju* (50r, l. 19)

Q6:95 *mukhrij* (50r, l. 20)

Q6:99 *nukhriju* (50v, l. 5)
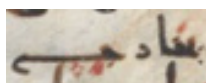
Q6:122 *bi-khārij* (51r, l. 17)
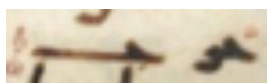
Q7:2 *ḥaraj* (54v, l. 15)
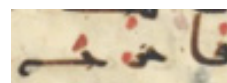
Q7:13 *fa-khruj* (55r, l. 9)

Q7:18 *ukhruj* (55r, l. 14)
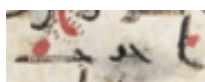
Q7:27 *ʾakhraja* (55v, l. 10)

Q7:32 *ʾakhraja* (55v, l. 24)

Q7:40 *yalija* (56v, l. 5)

Q7:57 *nukhriju* (57v, l. 7)

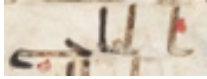Q7:58 *yakhruju* (57v, l. 8)

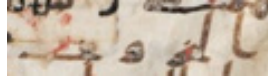Q7:58 *yakhruju* (57v, l. 9)
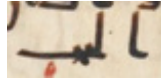
Q9:3 *al-ḥajj* (69r, l. 4)
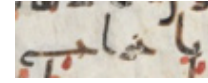
Q9:13 *bi-ʾikhrāj* (69v, l. 10)
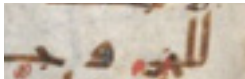

Q9:19 *al-ḥājj* (70r, l. 2)

Q9:45 *al-khurūj* (71v, l. 20)

Q9:46 *mukhrij* (72v, l. 20)

Q9:83 *li-l-khurūj* (74r, l. 7)

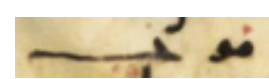Q10:22 *al-mawj* (78r, l. 22)

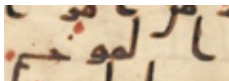
Q10:31 *yukhriju* (79r, l. 3)
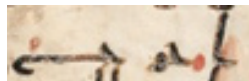

Q10:31 *yukhriju* (79r, l. 3)

Q10:103 *nunji* (82r, l. 20)

Q11:42 *mawj* (84v, l. 21)

Q11:43 *al-mawj* (85r, l. 3)

Q12:31 *ukhruj* (90r, l. 6)
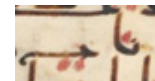
Q12:42 *nāj* (90v, l. 13)
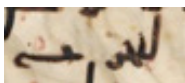
Q14:1 *li-tukhrija* (96v, l. 11)
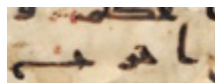
Q14:5 *ʾakhrij* (96v, l. 21)
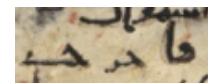
Q14:32 *fa-ʾakhraja* (98r, l. 23)
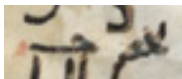
Q16:69 *yakhruju* (104r, l. 17)
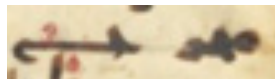
Q17:80 *mukhrij* (110v, l. 3)
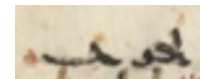
Q18:5 *takhruju* (111r, l. 1)
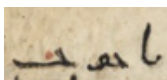
Q18:94 *yaʾjūj* (116r, l. 1)

Q18:94 *maʾjūj* (116r, l. 2)
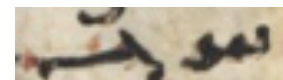
Q18:99 *yamūju* (116r, l. 12)

Q19:11*[fa-khara]ja* (116v, l. 23)

Q19:66 *ʾukhraju* (118v, l. 8)
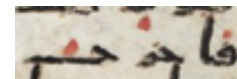
Q20:88 *fa-ʾakhraja* (121v, l. 18)
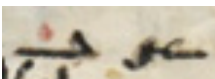
Q20:108 *ʿiwaja* (122r, l. 23)
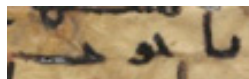
Q21:96 *yaʾjūj* (126v, l. 4)

Q21:96 *[maʾ]jūj* (126v, l. 5)
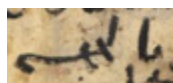
Q22:27 *bi-l-ḥajj* (127r, l. 22)
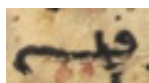
Q22:27 *fajj* (127r, l. 23)

Q22:61 *yūliju* (129r, l. 2)
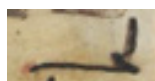
Q22:61 *[yūli]ju* (129r, l. 3)

Q22:78 *ḥaraj* (129v, l. 15)
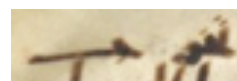
Q23:30 *takhruju* (130r, l. 19)
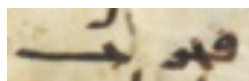
Q23:72 *fa-kharāj* (131v, l. 21)
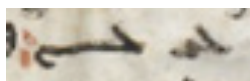
Q24:61 *ḥaraj* (135v, l. 8)
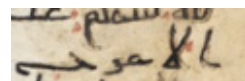
Q24:61 *al-ʾaʿraj* (135v, l. 9)

Q24:61 *ḥaraj* (135v, l. 9)
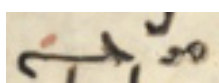
Q25:53 *maraj* (138r, l. 3)
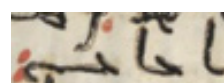
Q25:53 *ʾujāj* (138r, l. 4)
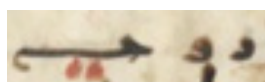
Q26:7 *zawj* (139r, l. 5)
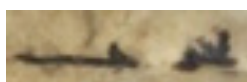
Q27:12 *takhruj* (143r, l. 16)
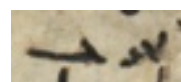
Q27:25 *yukhriju* (143v, l. 19)

Q31:29 *yūlij* (A 6087, 1r, l. 11)

Q31:29 *yūlij* (A 6087, 1r, l. 12)

Q31:32 *mawj* (A 6087, 1r, l. 19)

Q32:5 *yaʿruj* (A 6087, 1v, l. 14)

Q32:27 *fa-nukhrij* (A 6087, 2v, l. 5)

Q33:37 *kharaj* (A 6087, 4v, l. 21)

Q33:37 *ʾazwāj* (A 6087, 4v, l. 21)

Q33:37 *ḥaraj* (A 6087, 4v, l. 23)

Q33:50 *kharaj* (A 6087, 5v, l. 2)

Q33:52 *ʾazwāj* (A 6087, 5v, l. 8)

Q34:2 *yalij* (A 6087, 6v, l. 15)

Q34:2 *yakhruj* (A 6087, 6v, l. 15)

Q34:2 *yaʿruj* (A 6087, 6v, l. 16)
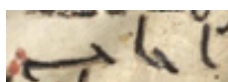
Q35:12 *ʾujāj* (146v, l. 21)

Q35:13 *yūliju* (146v, l. 23)
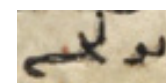
Q35:13 *yūliju* (146v, l. 24)
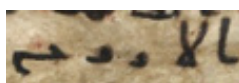
Q36:36 *al-ʾazwāj* (149r, l. 22)

Q37:64 *takhruju* (151v, l. 15)

Q38:58 *ʾazwāj* (155r, l. 12)

Q38:59 *fawj* (155r, l. 12)

Q38:77 *fa-khruj* (155v, l. 9)

Q39:6 *ʾazwāj* (156r, l. 9)
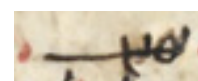
Q39:31 *yuhīju* (157r, l. 1)

Q39:28 *ʿawija* (157r, l. 18)

Q40:11 *khurūj* (160r, l. 1)

Q41:47 *takhruju* (165v, l. 1)
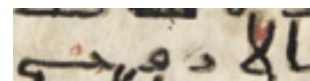
Q43:12 *al-ʾazwāj* (168v, l. 20)
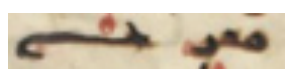
Q43:33 *maʿārij* (169v, l. 10)
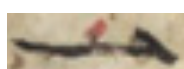
Q46:17 *[ʾukhra]ja* (175r, l. 2)
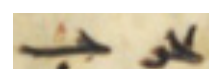
Q47:29 *yukhrija* (177v, l. 6)

Q47:37 *yukhrij* (177v, l. 24)
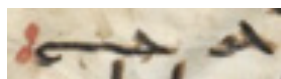
Q48:17 *ḥaraj* (179r, l. 2)
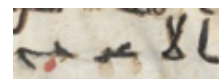
Q48:17 *al-ʾaʿraj* (179r, l. 3)

Q48:17 *ḥaraj* (179r, l. 3)
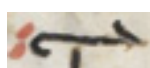
Q48:17 *[ḥara]j* (179r, l. 3)
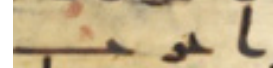
Q48:29 *ʾakhraja* (179v, l. 20)

Q49:5 *takhruju* (180r, l. 11)
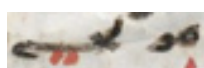
Q50:5 *marīj* (181r, l. 14)

Q50:6 *furūj* (181r, l. 16)

Q50:7 *zawj* (181r, l. 18)

Q50:7 *bahīj* (181r, l. 18)

Q50:11 *[al-khur]ūj* (181r, l. 23)

Q50:42 *al-khurūj* (182r, l. 13)
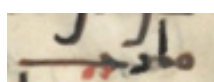
Q55:15 *mārij* (188r, l. 6)
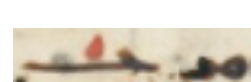
Q55:19 *maraj* (188r, l. 8)
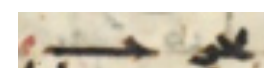
Q55:22 *yakhruju* (188r, l. 10)

Q57:4 *yaliju* (190v, l. 5)

Q57:4 *yakhruju* (190v, l. 5)
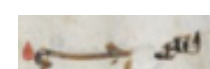
Q57:4 *yaʿruju* (190v, l. 6)

Q57:6 *yūliju* (190v, l. 9)
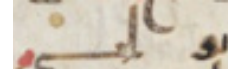
Q57:6 *yūliju* (190v, l. 10)

Q57:20 *yahīju* (191v, l. 8)

Q59:2 *ʾakhraja* (193v, l. 23)

Q65:11 *li-yukhrija* (200r, l. 4)

Q67:8 *fawj* (201r, l. 20)
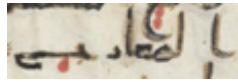
Q70:3 *al-maʿārij* (204r, l.3)
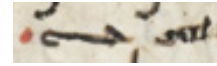
Q70:4 *taʿruju* (204r, l. 3)

Q79:29 *ʾakhraja* (207v, l. 2)

Q79:31 *ʾakhraja* (207v, l. 3)

Q86:7 *yakhruju* (209v, l. 15)

Q87:4 *ʾakhraja* (209v, l. 23)

Appendix 6.2: Wetzstein II 1913 and BnF Arabe 6087, Example Nos. 4–14 of the Curved *Jīm*
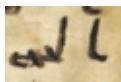
Q2:197 *al-ḥajj* (8v, l. 18)
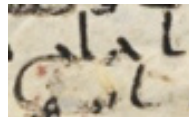
Q2:240 *ʾikhrāj* (11v, l. 23)
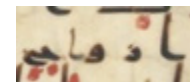
Q6:142 *ʾazwāj* (53r, l. 8)
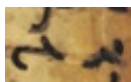
Q3:27 *tukhriju* (16v, l. 19)
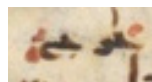
Q9:91 *kharaj* (74v, l. 4)

Q15:34 *fa-khruj* (100r, l. 9)

Q17:13 *nukhriju* (107v, l. 12)
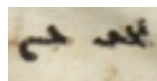
Q20:22 *takhruj* (119v, l. 24)
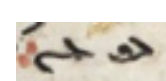
Q24:61 *ḥaraj* (135v, l. 9)

Q33:33 *tabarruja* (A 6087, 4r, l. 24)

Q39:31 *yukhriju* (156v, l. 24)

**Appendix 6.3: Wetzstein II 1913 and BnF Arabe 6087,
Example Nos. 4–237 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ***
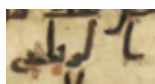
Q2:164 *al-riyāḥ* (6v, l. 8)
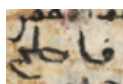
Q2:182 *fa-ʾaṣlaḥa* (7v, l. 11)
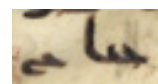
Q2:198 *junāḥ* (8v, l. 22)
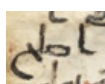
Q2:220 *ʾiṣlāḥ* (10r, l. 14)
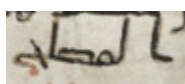
Q2:220 *al-muṣliḥ* (10r, l. 16)
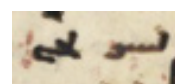
Q2:229 *tasrīḥ* (10v, l. 18)
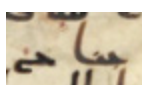
Q2:229 *junāḥ* (10v, l. 21)

Q2:230 *tankiḥa* (10v, l. 24)

Q2:230 *junāḥ* (10v, l. 25)
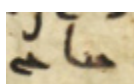
Q2:233 *junāḥ* (11r, l. 21)

Q2:234 *[junā]ḥ* (11v, l. 2)

Q2:235 *junāḥ* (11v, l. 3)
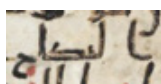
Q2:235 *al-nikāḥ* (11v, l. 7)
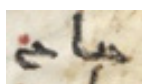
Q2:236 *junāḥ* (11v, l. 10)
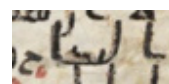
Q2:236 *al-nikāḥ* (11v, l. 16)
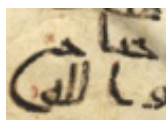
Q2:240 *junāḥ* (11v, l. 24)
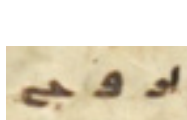
Q2:253 *bi-rūḥ* (12v, l. 18)
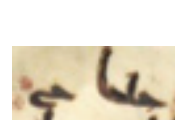
Q2:282 *junāḥ* (15r, l. 8)
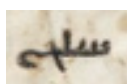
Q3:41 *sabbiḥ* (17v, l. 7)
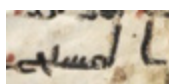
Q3:45 *al-masīḥ* (17v, l. 15)
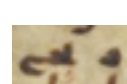
Q3:117 *rīḥ* (21r, l. 20)

Q3:140 *qarḥ* (22r, l. 23)
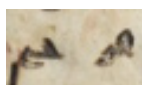
Q3:140 *qarḥ* (22r, l. 23)
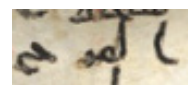
Q3:137 *al-qarḥ* (24r, l. 17)
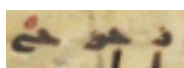
Q3:185 *zuḥziḥa* (25r, l. 5)
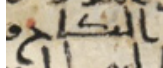
Q4:6 *al-nikāḥ* (26r, l. 15)
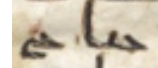
Q4:23 *junāḥ* (27v, l. 14)
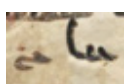
Q4:24 *junāḥ* (27v, l. 21)
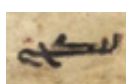
Q4:25 *yankiḥa* (27v, l. 24)
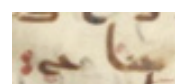
Q4:101 *junāḥ* (33r, l. 5)
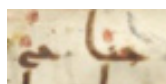
Q4:102 *junāḥ* (33r, l. 15)
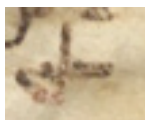
Q4:114 *[ʾi]ṣlāḥ* (33v, l. 24)

Q4:128 *junāḥ* (34v, l. 10)
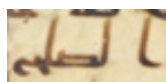
Q4:128 *al-ṣulḥ* (34v, l. 11)

Q4:128 *al-shuḥḥ* (34v, l. 11)

Q4:141 *fatḥ* (35v, l. 1)
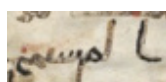
Q4:157 *al-masīḥ* (36r, l. 18)

Q4:163 *nūḥ* (36v, l. 10)

Q4:171 *al-masīḥ* (37r, l. 6)

Q4:171 *rūḥ* (37r, l. 7)
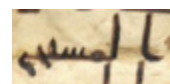
Q4:172 *al-masīḥ* (37r, l. 11)
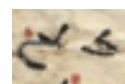
Q5:3 *dhubiḥa* (37v, l. 20)
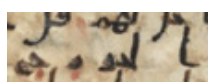
Q5:4 *al-jawāriḥ* (38r, l. 3)

Q5:13 *iṣfaḥ* (38v, l. 22)
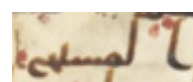
Q5:17 *al-masīḥ* (39r, l. 9)
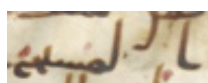
Q5:17 *al-masīḥ* (39r, l. 11)
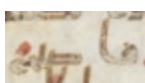
Q5:30 *fa-ʾaṣbaḥa* (39v, l. 21)
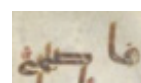
Q5:31 *fa-ʾaṣbaḥa* (40r, l. 1)
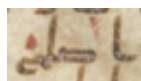
Q5:39 *ʾaṣlaḥa* (40r, l. 21)
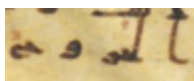
Q5:45 *al-jurūḥ* (40v, l. 24)

Q5:52 *bi-l-fatḥ* (41v, l. 2)
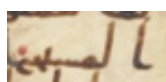
Q5:72 *al-masīḥ* (42v, l. 14)
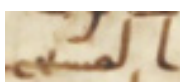
Q5:72 *al-masīḥ* (42v, l. 14)
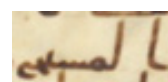
Q5:75 *al-masīḥ* (42v, l. 21)
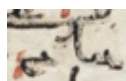
Q5:93 *junāḥ* (43v, l. 21)
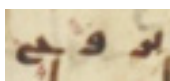
Q5:110 *bi-rūḥ* (45r, l. 2)
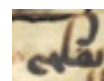
Q6:21 *yufliḥu* (46v, l. 7)
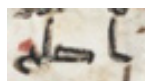
Q6:48 *ʾaṣlaḥa* (47v, l. 18)
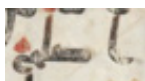
Q6:54 *ʾaṣlaḥa* (48r, l. 9)
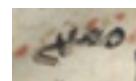
Q6:54 *mafātiḥ* (48r, l. 18)

Q6:93 *yūḥa* (50r, l. 8)
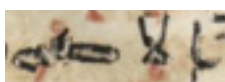
Q6:96 *al-ʾiṣlāḥ* (50r, l. 21)

Q6:125 *yashraḥ* (52r, l. 2)

Q6:135 *yufliḥu* (52v, l. 5)

Q7:35 *ʾaṣlaḥa* (56r, l. 10)
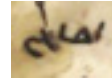
Q7:40 *yufattaḥu* (56v, l. 3)
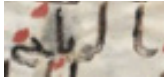
Q7:57 *al-riyāḥ* (57v, l. 4)
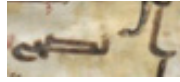
Q7:62 *ʾanṣaḥu* (57v, l. 16)
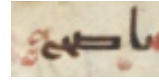
Q7:68 *nāṣiḥ* (58r, l. 4)

Q7:69 *nūḥ* (58r, l. 7)
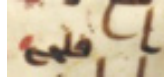
Q7:89 *iftaḥ* (59r, l. 15)
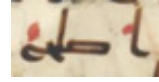
Q7:142 *ʾaṣliḥ* (61r, l. 16)
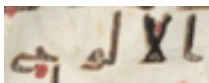
Q7:145 *al-ʾalwāḥ* (61v, l. 2)
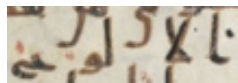
Q7:150 *al-ʾalwāḥ* (61v, l. 19)
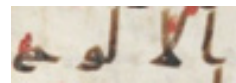
Q7:154 *al-ʾalwāḥ* (62r, l. 6)

Q8:19 *al-fatḥ* (65r, l. 22)
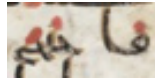
Q8:61 *fa-jnaḥ* (68r, l. 6)
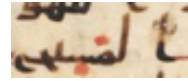
Q9:30 *al-masīḥ* (70v, l. 13)
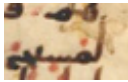
Q9:31 *al-masīḥ* (70v, l. 17)

Q9:70 *nūḥ* (73r, l. 14)
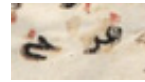
Q9:81 *fariḥa* (73v, l. 24)

Q9:120 *ṣāliḥ* (76v, l. 5)
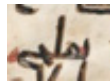
Q10:17 *yufliḥu* (78r, l. 7)

Q10:22 *bi-rīḥ* (78r, l. 21)

Q10:22 *rīḥ* (78r, l. 22)
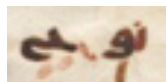
Q10:71 *nūḥ* (80v, l. 17)
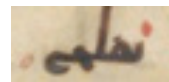
Q10:77 *yufliḥu* (81r, l. 11)
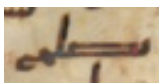
Q10:81 *yufliḥu* (81r, l. 17)
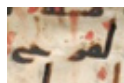
Q11:10 *la-farḥ* (83r, l. 13)

Q11:32 *yā-nūḥ* (84r, l. 23)
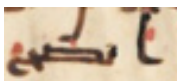
Q11:34 *ʾanṣaḥa* (84v, l. 4)

Q11:42 *nūḥ* (84v, l. 22)
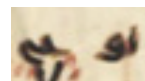
Q11:36 *nūḥ* (84v, l. 8)

Q11:45 *nūḥ* (85r, l. 7)

Q11:46 *yā-nūḥ* (85r, l. 9)

Q11:46 *ṣāliḥ* (85r, l. 10)
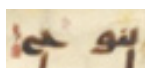
Q11:48 *yā-nūḥ* (85r, l. 14)

Q11:62 *yā-ṣāliḥ* (86r, l. 2)
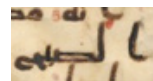
Q11:81 *al-ṣubḥ* (86v, l. 21)
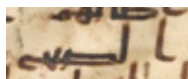
Q11:81 *al-ṣubḥ* (86v, l. 22)
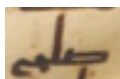
Q11:89 *ṣāliḥ* (87r, l. 15)
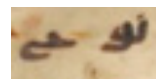
Q11:90 *nūḥ* (87r, l. 18)

Q12:23 *yufliḥu* (89v, l. 12)
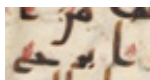
Q12:80 *ʾabraḥa* (92v, l. 4)

Q12:87 *rūḥ* (92v, l. 19)
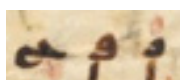
Q12:87 *rūḥ* (92v, l. 19)

Q12:94 *rīḥ* (93r, l.9)

Q13:13 *yusabbiḥu* (94v, l. 12)
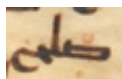
Q13:23 *ṣalaḥa* (95r, l. 24)

Q14:9 *nūḥ* (97r, l. 8)
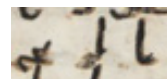
Q14:18 *al-rīḥ* (97v, l. 10)

Q15:22 *al-riyāḥ* (99v, l. 19)
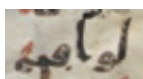
Q15:22 *lawāqiḥ* (99v, l. 20)
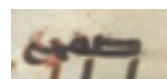
Q15:85 *[fa-]ṣfaḥ* (101r, l. 10)

Q15:85 *al-ṣafḥ* (101r, l. 10)

Q15:98 *fa-sabbiḥ* (101r, l. 21)

Q16:2 *bi-l-rūḥ* (101v, l. 3)

Q16:77 *ka-lamḥ* (104v, l. 16)

Q16:102 *rūḥ* (106r, l. 2)

Q16:106 *sharaḥa* (106r, l. 11)

Q17:3 *nūḥ* (107r, l. 14)

Q17:17 *nūḥ* (107v, l. 20)
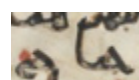
Q17:24 *junāḥ* (108r, l. 10)
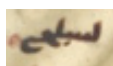
Q17:44 *tusabbiḥu* (108v, l. 21)
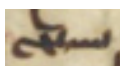
Q17:44 *yusabbiḥu* (108v, l. 22)
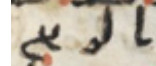
Q17:69 *al-rīḥ* (110r, l. 5)
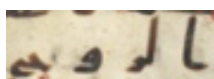
Q17:85 *al-rūḥ* (110v, l. 10)

Q17:85 *[al-rū]ḥ* (110v, l. 11)
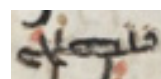
Q18:40 *fa-tuṣbiḥa* (113v, l. 17)
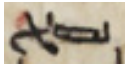
Q18:41 *yuṣbiḥa* (113v, l. 18)
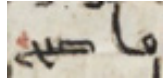
Q18:42 *fa-ʾaṣbaḥa* (113v, l. 19)
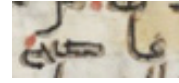
Q18:35 *fa-ʾaṣbaḥa* (114r, l. 2)
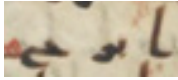
Q18:60 *ʾabraḥu* (114v, l. 17)

Q20:25 *ishraḥ* (120r, l. 3)
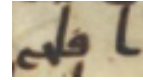
Q20:64 *ʾaflaḥa* (120v, l. 24)
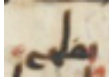
Q20:69 *yufliḥ* (121r, l. 6)
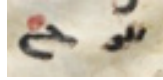
Q20:69 *nabraḥa* (121v, l. 24)
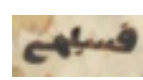
Q20:130 *fa-sabbiḥ* (123r, l. 11)
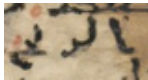
Q21:81 *al-rīḥ* (126r, l. 3)

Q22:42 *[nū]ḥ* (128r, l. 13)
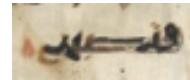
Q22:63 *fa-tuṣbiḥu* (129r, l. 6)
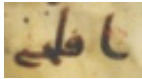
Q23:1 *ʾaflaḥa* (129v, l. 22)
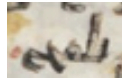
Q23:104 *taflaḥu* (132v, l. 12)
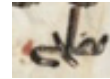
Q23:117 *yufliḥu* (133r, l. 5)

Q24:3 *yankiḥu* (133r, l. 14)
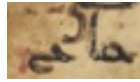
Q24:29 *junāḥ* (134v, l. 2)
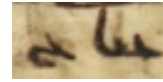
Q24:58 *junāḥ* (135r, l. 25)
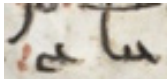
Q25:60 *junāḥ* (135v, l. 6)
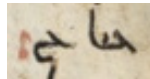
Q25:61 *junāḥ* (135v, l. 16)
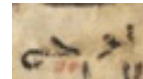
Q25:37 *nūḥ* (137v, l. 2)
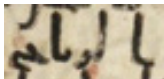
Q25:48 *al-riyāḥ* (137v, l. 20)
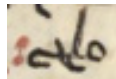
Q25:53 *milḥ* (138r, l. 4)
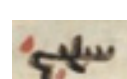
Q25:58 *sabbiḥ* (138r, l. 12)

Q26:105 *nūḥ* (140v, l. 18)
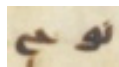
Q26:106 *nūḥ* (140v, l. 19)

Q26:116 *yā-nūḥ* (141r, l. 2)
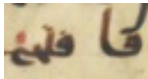
Q26:118 *fa-ftaḥ* (141r, l. 3)

Q26:142 *ṣāliḥ* (141r, l. 23)
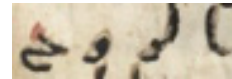
Q26:193 *al-rūḥ* (142r, l. 19)
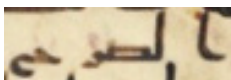
Q27:44 *al-ṣarḥ* (144v, l. 5)
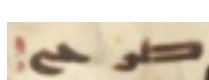
Q27:44 *ṣarḥ* (144v, l. 6)

Q32:28 *al-fatḥ* (A 6087, 2v, l. 7)
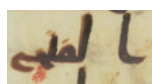
Q32:28 *al-fatḥ* (A 6087, 2v, l. 8)

Q33:5 *junāḥ* (A 6087, 2v, l. 22)

Q33:7 *nūḥ* (A 6087, 3r, l. 5)
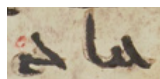
Q33:51 *junāḥa* (A 6087, 5v, l. 5)

Q33:55 *junāḥa* (A 6087, 5v, l. 22)

Q33:71 *yuṣliḥ* (A 6087, 6v, l. 2)
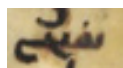
Q35:2 *yaftaḥ* (146r, l. 17)
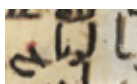
Q35:9 *al-riyāḥ* (146v, l. 9)

Q35:10 *al-ṣāliḥ* (146v, l. 13)

Q35:12 *milḥ* (146v, l. 20)
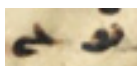
Q37:75 *nūḥ* (151v, l. 24)
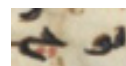
Q37:79 *nūḥ* (152r, l. 3)
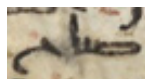
Q37:177 *ṣabāḥ* (153r, l. 23)

Q38:12 *nūḥ* (153v, l. 19)
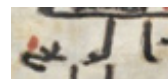
Q38:36 *al-rīḥ* (154v, l. 12)

Q40:5 *nūḥ* (159v, l. 7)
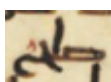
Q40:8 *ṣalaḥa* (159v, l. 18)

Q40:15 *al-rūḥ* (160r, l. 8)
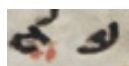
Q40:31 *nūḥ* (160v, l. 23)
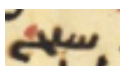
Q40:55 *sabbiḥ* (162r, l. 3)
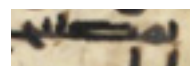
Q41:12 *bi-maṣābīḥ* (163v, l. 18)

Q39:22 *sharaḥa* (157r, l. 3)

Q42:24 *yamḥu* (167r, l. 13)
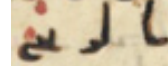
Q42:33 *al-rīḥ* (167v, l. 6)

Q42:40 [ʾa]*ṣlaḥa* (167v, l. 19)

Q42:48 *fariḥa* (168r, l. 15)
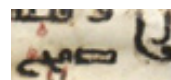
Q43:89 *fa-ṣfaḥ* (171r, l. 17)
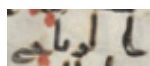
Q45:5 *al-riyāḥ* (172v, l. 7)
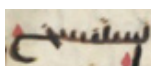
Q45:29 *nastansikhu* (173v, l. 10)

Q46:24 *rīḥ* (175r, l. 24)
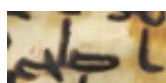
Q47:2 *ʾaṣlaḥa* (176r, l. 13)
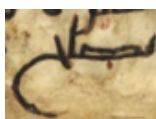
Q47:5 *yuṣliḥu* (176r, l. 24)

Q50:12 *nūḥ* (181r, l. 23)
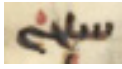
Q50:38 *sabbiḥ* (182r, l. 8)
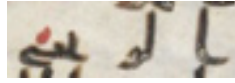
Q51:41 *al-rīḥ* (183r, l. 7)

Q51:46 *nūḥ* (183r, l. 12)
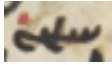
Q52:48 *sabbiḥ* (184v, l. 4)
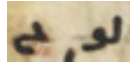
Q53:52 *nūḥ* (185v, l. 5)

Q54:9 *nūḥ* (185v, l. 22)
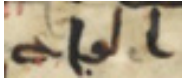
Q54:13 *ʾalwāḥ* (187r, l. 3)
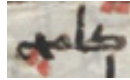
Q54:50 *ka-lamḥ* (187v, l. 15)
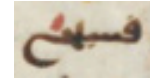
Q56:74 *fa-sabbiḥ* (190r, l. 6)

Q56:89 *fa-rawḥ* (190r, l. 16)
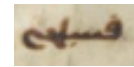
Q56:96 *fa-sabbiḥ* (190r, l. 21)

Q57:1 *sabbaḥa* (190r, l. 22)
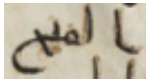
Q57:10 *al-fatḥ* (190v, l. 21)
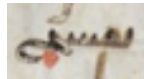
Q58:1 *yafsaḥ* (193r, l. 9)

Q58:22 *[bi-rū]ḥ* (193v, l. 17)
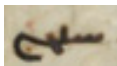
Q59:1 *sabbaḥa* (193v, l. 21)

Q59:9 *shuḥḥ* (194r, l. 4)

Q59:24 *yusabbiḥu* (194v, l. 19)
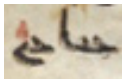
Q60:10 *junāḥ* (196r, l. 12)

Q61:1 *sabbaḥa* (196v, l. 5)

Q61:13 *fatḥ* (197r, l. 10)
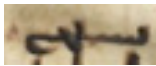
Q62:1 *yusabbiḥu* (197r, l. 17)

Q64:1 *yusabbiḥu* (198v, l. 3)
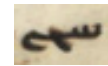
Q64:16 *shuḥḥ* (199r, l. 14)
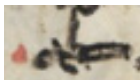
Q66:4 *ṣāliḥ* (200r, l. 24)

Q66:11 *nūḥ* (200v, l. 20)
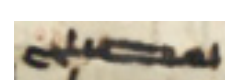
Q67:5 *bi-maṣābīḥ* (201r, l. 14)
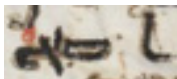
Q67:30 *ʾaṣbaḥa* (202r, l. 8)

Q69:6 *bi-rīḥ* (203r, l. 12)
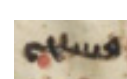
Q69:52 *fa-sabbiḥ* (203v, l. 23)

Q70:4 *[al-rū]ḥ* (204r, l. 4)

Q71:21 *nūḥ* (205r, l. 11)
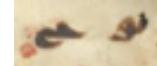
Q71:26 *nūḥ* (205r, l. 18)
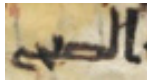
Q81:17 *al-ṣubḥ* (208r, l. 15)

Q84:7 *kādiḥ* (209r, l. 9)

Q85:22 *lawḫ* (209v, l. 11)
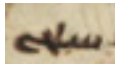
Q87:1 *sabbiḥa* (209v, l. 21)

Q87:14 *ʾaflaḥa* (210r, l. 3)
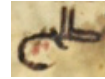
Q56:29 *ṭalḥ* (189r, l. 24)

Appendix 6.4 : Wetzstein II 1913 and BnF Arabe 6087, Example Nos. 4-10 of the Straight *Ḥāʾ*
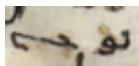
Q19:58 *nūḥ* (118r, l. 16)

Q20:130 *sabbiḥ* (123r, l. 10)
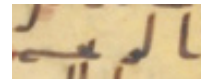
Q21:31 *al-rīḥ* (127v, l. 9)
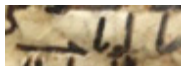
Q27:63 *al-riyāḥ* (144v, l. 17)

Q37:107 *bi-dhibḥ* (152r, l. 24)

Q46:15 *ʾaṣliḥ* (174v, l. 20)

Q78:38 *al-rūḥ* (207r, l. 4)

**Appendix 6.5: Wetzstein II 1913 and BnF Arabe 6087,
Example Nos. 4–24 of the Curved *Khāʾ***

Q4:12 *[ʾa]kh* (26v, l. 24)
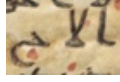
Q4:23 *al-ʾakh* (27v, l. 10)
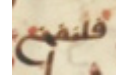
Q5:110 *fa-tanfukhu* (45r, l. 5)
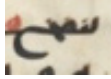
Q6:73 *yunfakhu* (49r, l. 9)
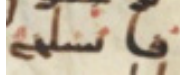
Q7:175 *fa-nṣalakha* (63v, l. 8)

Q9:5 *insalakha* (69r, l. 11)
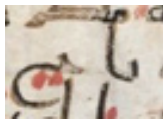
Q12:59 *bi-ʾakh* (91v, l. 2)

Q12:77 *ʾakh* (92r, l. 20)

Q18:99 *nufikha* (116r, l. 12)
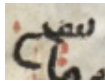
Q20:102 *yunfakhu* (122r, l. 16)
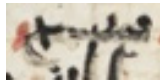
Q22:52 *fa-yansakhu* (128v, l. 7)
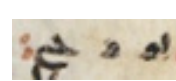
Q23:100 *barzakh* (132v, l. 8)

Q23:101 *nufikha* (132v, l. 8)

Q32:9 *nafakha* (A 1v, l. 18)

Q36:37 *naslakhu* (149r, l. 24)
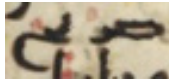
Q36:43 *ṣarīkh* (149v, l. 7)

Q36:51 *nufikha* (149v, l. 18)
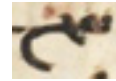
Q39:68 *nufikha* (159r, l. 2)
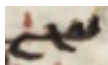
Q50:20 *nufikha* (181v, l. 9)
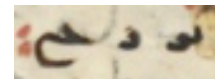
Q55:20 *barzakh* (188r, l. 9)
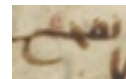
Q69:13 *nufikha* (203r, l. 20)

Appendix 7.1: Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus (Hand C),
Example Nos. 4–12 of the Straight *Jīm*

Q57:4 *yaliju* (M, 45v, l. 9)

Q57:4 *yakhruju* (M, 45v, l. 10)

Q57:4 *yaʿruju* (M, 45v, l. 10)

Q57:6 *yūliju* (M, 45v, l. 13)

Q57:6 *yūliju* (M, 45v, l. 13)

Q57:20 *yahīju* (M, 46v, l. 6)

Q67:8 *fawj* (68v, l. 1)

Q70:3 *al-maʿārij* (69v, l. 11)

Q70:4 *taʿruju* (69v, l. 11)

**Appendix 7.2: Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus (Hand C),
Example Nos. 4–19 of the Curved *Ḥāʾ***
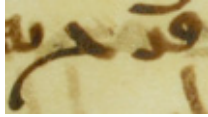
Q42:48 *fariḥa* (59v, l. 14)
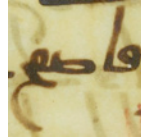
Q43:89 *fa-ṣfaḥ* (62r, l. 12)
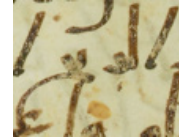
Q45:5 *al-riyāḥ* (63r, l. 20)

Q56:74 *fa-sabbiḥ* (M, 45r, l. 12)
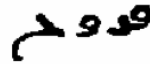
Q56:89 *fa-rawḥ* (M, 45r, l. 21)

Q57:1 *sabbaḥa* (M, 45v, l. 4)

Q57:10 *al-fatḥ* (M, 46r, l. 1)

Q61:1 *sabbaḥa* (65r, l. 23)
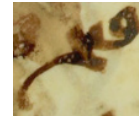
Q61:13 *fatḥ* (65v, l. 19)
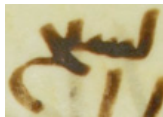
Q62:1 *yusabbiḥu* (66r, l. 2)

Q66:4 *ṣāliḥ* (67v, l. 13)
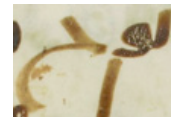
Q66:10 *nūḥ* (68r, l. 5)
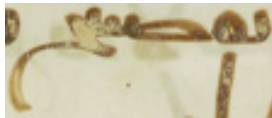
Q67:10 *bi-muṣābīḥ* (Q67r, l. 20)

Q69:6 *[bi-r]īḥ* (69r, l. 3)

Q69:52 *fa-sabbiḥ* (69v, l. 7)
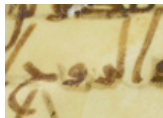
Q70:4 *al-rūḥ* (69v, l. 12)

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Nourishing the Noble:
Breastfeeding and Hero-Making
in Medieval Arabic Popular Literature

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Abstract

This essay examines the role of nursing experiences in the formation of popular heroes in Arabic literature of the medieval period, with a primary focus on the genres of siyar shaʿbiyya *and* qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ. *I show that the miraculous nursing of heroes—many of whom are foundlings—in popular texts tends to follow a providential meeting either with an animal or with a woman who is capable of nursing. Though such tale patterns are attested across many cultures, they are also elaborated in specific, linked ways in traditional Muslim sources, as in narratives of Moses's miraculous nursing and stories of Muḥammad's wet nurse, Ḥalīma. Whereas prophetic literature often depicts nursing solely as a human-human relationship, the heroic literature incorporates significant human-animal encounters. Using an exemplary anecdote about a hero's suckling found in manuscripts and early print editions of* Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma, *I sketch how one such instance can travel and shift across an epic tradition. I interpret the experience of the hero's foster mother through the lens both of traditional Islamic institutions of milk kinship and of a reading practice that attends closely to women's presences and agencies in the early lives of (mostly) male literary figures.*

Introduction

יא בנתי אנתי לאש האדא מנך חתא תרבי אלאיתאם אולאד אלזנא ומלקוט.
ואלחאל מא ענדך חאנא ביה וחליבך צאפי חלאל[1] ירגע חראם פי חראם.

يا بنتـي انـت لاش هذا منك حتـى تربـي الايتـام اولاد الزنـا وملقوط والحـال مـا عنـدك حاجـة بـه
وحليبك صافي حلال يرجع حرام في حرام

O my daughter, what's become of you that you're raising orphan bastards
and foundlings? Really, you have no need to do so, and your milk is pure and
sound. Sin is recompensed with sin. –*Sīrat al-Dalhama*[2]

One of the first acts in many newborns' lives is suckling at a breast—be it their mother's
or a wet nurse's. Instances of a decisive and often providential first encounter between a

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1. The Judeo-Arabic original uses the word גְלאל (جلال), *jalāl*, meaning glory or splendor, rather than *ḥalāl*, meaning sound or legitimate. However, in light of the context and syntax, this seems to be a transcription error on the part of the text's editor. I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers for this observation.

2. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own. *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, ed. Eliezer Farḥī and Ḥai Sitrūk (Tunis: Farhi and Sitruk, 1890?), 11.

child destined for heroic status and a woman capable of nursing occur throughout Arabic popular literature and folklore, and images of milk and lactation abound. In Islamic societies, milk kinship forms bonds that, in addition to implying a physical intimacy between woman and child, carry a legal status that mirrors that of agnatic ties by instantiating a prohibition against marriage among milk-siblings. In contemporary discourse, the choice of whether and how to nurse is conceived of either as a female biological imperative, and thus a foregone conclusion, or as something that has been taken from women and harnessed by patriarchal, sovereign forces and interests.[3] Nonetheless, in choosing to nurse certain children, women are theoretically able to exercise gatekeeping power over the constitution of their families and social worlds, and this prospect is reflected in a number of popular narratives.[4]

This essay uses an anecdote found in less well-known versions of the medieval Arabic frontier epic *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*—the Tunisian, Judeo-Arabic version printed in the 1890s/1307-1318 and MS Arabe 3840 at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (dated to the seventeenth or eighteenth/eleventh or twelfth century)[5]—as well as comparative materials from *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (stories of the prophets) and other *siyar shaʿbiyya* (popular epics) to show that the popular literary imaginary at times represents mother figures as wielding sizeable influence through their capacity to nurse. This ability allows them to determine the survival and loyalties of the text's protagonists well before the heroes first step into a political or military role. Moreover, nursing was commonly understood in the medieval period to impart not only nutrients but also traits, both physical and intellectual, to the child, making it even an essential feature of a hero's characterization. Ibn Qutayba captures this view—as well as the potentially negative subtext that nursing can cause a child to lose certain aspects of its pre-nursing existence—pithily with a few citations in the portion of his *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* concerned with the constitution of the human body:

> Abū Ḥatim relayed to me through al-Asmaʿī via Ibn Abī Ṭarfa al-Hudhalī via Jundab b. Shuʿayb that "When you see a newborn before he has been given his mother's milk, his face glows with pure clarity [ʿalā wajhihi miṣbāḥ al-bayān]," by which he means that women's milk changes this. For this reason, they say, "Milk forges resemblances," meaning that it renders the newborn similar to the wet nurse [yanziʿ bi-l-mawlūd fī shabah al-ẓiʾr]. The poet [al-Qaṭṭāl al-Kilābī] says, "I suckled from one teat, never more / for a fair-faced one better guards the door."[6]

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3. On the relation between breastfeeding and patriarchal and/or statist power structures, see Lia Moran and Jacob Gilad, "From Folklore to Scientific Evidence: Breast-Feeding and Wet-Nursing in Islam and the Case of Non-Puerperal Lactation," *International Journal of Biomedical Science* 3, no. 4 (2007): 251–57. See also Jonathan Wells, "The Role of Cultural Factors in Human Breastfeeding: Adaptive Behaviour or Biopower," in *Ecology, Culture, Nutrition, Health and Disease*, ed. K. Bose, 39–47 (Delhi: Kamla-Raj Enterprises, 2006).

4. On prohibited (*maḥram*) forms of marital relations predicated on kinship status, see J. Schacht et al., "Nikāḥ," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill Online), http://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0863. See also Q 4:23.

5. Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Arabe 3480.

6. Ibn Qutayba al-Dīnawarī, *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī al-ʿAdawī (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1925), 2:68. I am indebted to several colleagues for suggestions on the meaning of the final line.

Here, contact with milk and the nursing body from which it is dispensed alters the coloring of infants, who are here presumed to be born with fair skin that nursing darkens. In the quoted stich, the fairness of one's skin is tied not only to the abstract impression of childhood innocence alluded to in the *hadith*, but also to notions of aptitude that somatic qualities such as skin color are thought to suggest. Thus, viewing nursing as a formative feature in the lives of protagonists not only orients us toward a more gender-balanced reading of the texts in which they appear but also gives further insight into the forces to which the protagonist is subject socially and corporeally.

At the most basic level, portrayals of the early life of many popular heroes can be broken down into two main elements: a birth narrative—which tends to include descriptions of the hero's mother and her pregnancy as well as reference to the child's subsequent nursing circumstances[7]—and a description of what Peter Heath has dubbed the hero's "preparatory youth," usually involving the development of skills in martial arts and—if the hero is Muslim—Quran study.[8] This pattern means that at least half of the experiences that are considered staples of a typical heroic exposition are heavily influenced by a female presence, which has often gone unnoticed. This study aims to draw out the significance of such presences (or, when heroes nurse from animals, absences), using the hero's nursing experience as a focal point. Whereas the prophetic literature sets a precedent of self-sacrificing nurses who take on maternal duties often at their personal expense, heroic narratives can include a more tempestuous set of nursing dynamics, with children refusing human milk in favor of that of animals or with mothers enduring difficult feedings and weaning. Above all, popular sources expound further on the uncertainties engendered by a hero-child's often obscure *nasab* (genealogy), and characters visibly grapple with the social implications of bringing a strange child into their homes or raising children who look starkly different from themselves. In the male-dominated recitation tradition of the *sīra* literature, such tales may have conveyed insights into the norms and expectations of

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7. One common trope about pregnancies in the *sīra*s is the premonitory dream (called *nubuwwa*, or revelation, by some authors), in which the mother has a vision that foretells her child's heroic (or villainous) destiny. On this feature, see Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn al-Ḥajjājī, *Mawlid al-baṭal fī al-sīra al-shaʿbiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1991), 48–49; Nabīla Ibrāhīm, *Ashkāl al-taʿbīr fī al-adab al-shaʿbī* (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1966), 129.

8. On the "preparatory youth" of ʿAntar, see Peter Heath, *The Thirsty Sword: Sīrat ʿAntar and the Arabic Popular Epic* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996), 72–74. In the case of the hero Abū Zayd of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, his pious learning takes the form of a mystical initiation, in which the child falls under the tutelage of a Sufi shaykh. See Dwight Reynolds, "Abū Zayd al-Hilālī: Trickster, Womanizer, Warrior, Shaykh," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 49, nos. 1–2 (2018): 78–103. Preparatory youths are also a staple of heroic narratives in elite literature, including hagiographic works such as the *maqātil* (martyrdom) narratives of particular prominence in Shiʿi traditions, as well as in biographies of prominent historical figures embedded in projects such as universal histories and biographical dictionaries. On heroic youths in the *maqātil* genre, see Khalid Sindawi, "The Image of Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī in 'Maqātil' Literature," *Quaderni di studi arabi* 20/21 (2002–3): 80. As one reviewer of the present essay pointed out, narratives of preparatory youth are relayed with respect to caliphs and courtiers, too, as in al-Masʿūdī's account of the curriculum undertaken by al-Amīn at Hārūn al-Rashīd's bidding: he was taught (among other things) Quran, history, poetry, *sunna*, rhetorical arts, and how to convene meetings with respect to the rank of the persons involved, all of which are clearly intended to be the fundaments of a well-bred governor. Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-dhahab* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1965–66), vol. 4, 212. See also Michael Cooperson, *Al-Maʾmūn* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 22–23.

husbandly duties, the relationship between genealogical preservation and social class, and even certain aspects of family law.[9]

Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma, which deals in the main with the legendary Arabo-Muslim heroes who battled the Byzantines in the early period of Islamic expansion, is the only text of its genre to be named for a female military personality.[10] As a result, it has drawn significant scholarly attention, in particular in the work of Remke Kruk on the text's warrior women.[11] Most studies of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* make use of one of two printed versions, namely, the Cairo edition of 1909 (henceforth the "standard version") and its later Beirut reprinting, with some emendations, in 1980.[12] Venturing further afield from this version, however, we find some remarkable additions to the standard story of the text's first protagonist, Junduba, whose freeborn mother loses her husband, a chief of the tribe of Kilāb, and is then murdered by one of her slaves for refusing his sexual advances. The newborn Junduba is found still at his slain mother's side by Dārim, a leader from a neighboring tribe, who takes Junduba to his wife to be nursed and raised as one of the family. In the standard version of the text, this happens with some complaint about the uncertainty of the child's origins, and Dārim gives his wife monetary compensation in order to settle the debate. Upon her first nursing of Junduba, God immediately inspires her and her spouse with loving tenderness for the child (*alqā Allāh taʿālā muḥibbatahu fī qalbihā wa-fī qalb al-amīr Dārim*), and his early childhood proceeds without further incident.[13] However, the versions examined below

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9. Although there is very little evidence about who presided over the tradition of reciting these texts in the earliest period aside from all-male lists of *rāwī*s in various *sīra* manuscripts, modern accounts of sessions in which the *sīra*s were recited attest to almost solely male reciters and oftentimes predominantly male audiences. Remke Kruk notes that sessions held by the storyteller Sī Mlūd outside Morocco's Kutubiyya mosque were "almost exclusively male." In recording recitations of *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* in the Egyptian village of Bakātūsh, Dwight Reynolds participated in sessions in private homes with "one to two dozen men." Somewhat exceptionally, Cathryn Anita Baker records the presence of women in the audiences of *sīra* recitations throughout Tunisia's southern provinces, many of which occurred in the homes of government officials. She tells of mixed-age and mixed-gender groups, with the "littlest ones" in the sessions "peering wide-eyed from the shadows of their mothers' robes" as the stories are told. See Remke Kruk, *Warrior Women of Islam: Female Empowerment in Arabic Popular Literature* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 11; Cathryn Anita Baker, "The Hilālī Saga in the Tunisian South" (PhD diss., University of Indiana, 1978), 26; Dwight Reynolds, "Start," Sirat Bani Hilal Digital Archive, http://www.siratbanihilal.ucsb.edu/node/425, accessed September 18, 2018. See also Remke Kruk and Claudia Ott, "'In the Popular Manner': Sīra-Recitation in Marrakesh anno 1997," *Edebiyât* 10, no. 2 (1999): 183–98.

10. For background on the *sīra* and its provenance, see M. Canard, "Dhu 'l-Himma," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill Online), http://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0164. On the dating of the *siyar*, see Danuta Madeyska, "The Language and Structure of the Sīra," *Quaderni di studi arabi* 9 (1991): 193. For a full summary of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, consult Malcolm Lyons, *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Storytelling* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), vol. 3, 301-505.

11. See Kruk, *Warrior Women of Islam*. See also Remke Kruk, "Warrior Women in Arabic Popular Romance: Qannāṣa bint Muzāhim and Other Valiant Ladies," part 1, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 24, no. 3 (1993): 213–30; part 2, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 25, no. 1 (1994): 16–33.

12. I cite the Cairo edition throughout using a roman numeral for the *juzʾ* and an arabic numeral for the page number (e.g., IV:49); *Sīrat al-Amīra Dhāt al-Himma*, ed. ʿAlī b. Mūsā al-Maqānibī b. Bakr al-Māzinī and Ṣāliḥ al-Jaʿfarī (Cairo: Maktabat al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥusayniyya, 1909).

13. *Sīrat al-Amīra Dhāt al-Himma*, I:14.

provide a more detailed narrative, in which the wife's mother, suspecting that the child is illegitimate, proposes a novel method of testing his legitimacy: if the child consents to drink only from the right breast, he is of pure blood, but if he suckles from the left, he is a bastard. This test ends poorly when the child refuses both breasts outright, and as Dārim is unable to persuade his wife that the child is of noble birth, he promises her a monthly stipend as compensation for her breastfeeding. In this fashion, he effectively sponsors his wife during her period of nursing, assuages his harpy of a mother-in-law, and keeps his household's peace.[14]

Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma is a fitting text with which to begin an exploration of lactation myths and miracles in Arabic popular literature, first, because across its variations it incorporates a large proportion of the core motifs that attend nursing narratives in other works. Second, this *sīra* contains a seemingly unique pivotal element—the legitimacy test—that I have not encountered elsewhere in my preliminary survey of the literature.[15] I have worked with two variations of the story in addition to the standard version in order to underscore the ways in which the narrative has traveled and been tailored to various contexts, and I note differences of interest between them throughout.[16] I argue that in its various iterations, this anecdote illustrates views about the social, physiological, and psychological suitability of certain nurses and nursing contexts for certain children that can be found throughout prophetic lore and other heroic literature. In particular, these notions divulge concerns about parity of class or of "kind," that is, the fit between the respective ethno-racial or cultural groups of the child and his or her nurse; the best and highest expression of such parity is, typically, a mother-child nursing relationship. In the *sīra*, women are portrayed

14. In some versions, the mother-in-law's name is Shuʾm al-Zamān, "the ill omen of her age," though in Judeo-Arabic she appears as Umm al-Sharr, "the mother of evil." It is perhaps not coincidental that Shuʾm al-Zamān/Umm al-Sharr is juxtaposed with the character of Ḥusna, whose name evokes beauty or goodness. It is generally the case that major heroic figures of the *sīra* (unless based on historical personages whose names are predetermined) who receive more exposition are given conventional Muslim names, while sidekick characters (even those who loom quite large, such as al-Baṭṭāl, The Idle, who is the central trickster-friend in this text) or others who stand outside the text's ethnic or social norms are given more descriptive names, which perform much of their characterization. Thus the villainous crone in this vignette, whose speaking role is relatively minor, is named for the evil that she evokes. African warriors—often stock figures in the text— are given names such as ʿIfrīt (Demon) and Abū Zalāzil (Father of Earthquakes), evoking their intimidating, exaggerated size or strength. The same applies to warrior women whose cycles as sidekicks or enemies of the main characters are relatively brief. An example is *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*'s Qaṭṭalat al-Shujʿān (Murderess of the Brave), whose function and abrupt demise in the text have been discussed by Wen-Chin Ouyang, as have the symbolic portents of the *acquisition* of names (*alqāb*) in the *sīra*. See Wen-Chin Ouyang, "Princess of Resolution: The Emergence of al-Amira Dhat al-Himma, a Medieval Arab Warrior Woman," in *To Speak or Be Silent: The Paradox of Disobedience in the Lives of Women*, ed. Lena B. Ross, 197–209 (Wilmette, IL: Chiron, 1993).

15. To be sure, trials of a hero's legitimacy are common across the *sīra* corpus, but they are often mediated by a judge or another social institution rather than an at-home remedy. Black-skinned heroes born to white-skinned parents, such as *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*'s Abū Zayd and *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*'s ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, are presumed to be bastards, whose legitimacy requires verification shortly after their births. For more on paternity tests in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, see Rachel Schine, "Conceiving the Pre-Modern Black-Arab Hero: On the Gendered Production of Racial Difference in *Sīrat al-Amīrah Dhāt al-Himmah*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 48, no. 3 (2017): 298–326.

16. I differentiate the various versions of the story in citations by their titles: the Cairo "standard version" is *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, the Tunis version is *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, and the Paris version is *Sīrat al-mujāhidīn*.

not only as being aware of their stake in these questions but also as manipulating access to breastfeeding to their direct personal benefit. They are also shown to construe their domestic, maternal labors as having economic value, and this view is supported by certain precepts in Islamic scripture that are discussed below.

Legal and scientific views on breast milk and the kinship bonds it engenders in Islamic contexts have been well documented. The legal status imparted by *riḍāʿ* (suckling), which creates a relationship between biologically unrelated persons that is tantamount to fosterage, has been used to secure the positions of children within dynasties, to prevent unwanted marriages by rendering them legally incestuous, and to bring families or tribes closer.[17] Medical opinions on the health-improving qualities of breast milk and suggestions about timetables for weaning and the selection of nurses are present in some of the earliest traditional sources.[18] However, despite their frequency, which has merited their registration in motif indexes of Arabic folklore, relatively little attention has been given to the mechanics and meanings of literary representations of nursing compared to these more clinical references;[19] Kathryn Kueny's reading of accounts of the birth and nursing of Cain is a notable exception.[20] Nonetheless, nursing is a recurring element in the lives of central protagonists throughout the *sīra*s, the length and popular nature of which leads them to rove over significant swaths of everyday life even as they deliver narratives of extraordinary adventures. Moreover, fundamental biological changes that accompany maternity are exaggerated or rendered uncanny in much popular literature to foretell the coming of heroes. In her recent dissertation on women's roles in the *siyar shaʿbiyya*, Amanda Hannoosh Steinberg discusses the "heroic pregnancies" that typically predict a

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17. Legal adoption, in the sense of conferring one's family name to someone outside one's natal line, is prohibited in the Quran (Q 33:5, Q 33:37), but other types of fosterage are permitted, most typically that established through milk-kinship, which integrates an infant into a family through a biological process. Though cases of adults being adopted are infrequent, several Muslim legal schools permit "non-infant suckling" (*riḍāʿ al-kabīr*), typically using pumped milk, as a means of ceremonially brokering such a relationship later in an adoptee's life. For more on fosterage in Islamic law, see J. Schacht, J. Burton, and J. Chelhod, "Raḍāʿ or Riḍāʿ," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill Online), http://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0896. On adoption, see E. Chaumont, "Tabannin," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., http://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8913. On the prohibition against marriage and copulation between those related through milk kinship (*riḍāʿa*), which is equivalent to the prohibition pertaining to those who share blood kinship (*nasab*), see Soraya Altorki, "Milk-Kinship in Arab Society: An Unexplored Problem in the Ethnography of Marriage," *Ethnology* 19, no. 2 (1980): 233–44. See also Peter Parkes, "Fostering Fealty: A Comparative Analysis of Tributary Allegiances of Adoptive Kinship," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 4 (2003): 746. On milk kinship as a structure used to supplant or simulate adoption for political reasons in Islamic societies, see Balkrishan Shivram, *Kinship Structures and Foster Relations in Islamic Society: Milk Kinship Allegiance in the Mughal World* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2014).

18. On perceptions of maternal physiology in the medieval Islamic medical establishment, the most recent thoroughgoing study is Kathryn Kueny, *Conceiving Identities: Maternity in Medieval Muslim Discourse and Practice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013).

19. Hasan M. El-Shamy, *Folk Traditions of the Arab World: A Guide to Motif Classification* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 1:69, 2:87–89.

20. See Kathryn Kueny, "The Birth of Cain: Reproduction, Maternal Responsibility, and Moral Character in Early Islamic Exegesis," *History of Religions* 48, no. 2 (2008): 110–29.

hero's advent—pregnancies that are "unusual and challenging for the mother" and that are often accompanied by supernatural circumstances.[21] As seen below, lactation carries some of this magic and mystery as well.

With respect to household dynamics, nursing constitutes a domestic flashpoint of sorts. It is an everyday occasion in which the conventional power dynamics of the family are destabilized, with women providing a form of nourishment that men—usually the "breadwinners"—are unable to supply. In the words of Avner Giladi, "[nursing] plays a decisive role not only in ensuring the nursling's survival prospects, the first stages of his/her socialization, and, according to Islamic medical theories, the consolidation of his/her character traits but also in corroborating women's status vis-à-vis men and the power relations that reign within the family."[22] This renders breastfeeding a contested terrain between gendered factions.[23] In some circumstances, conventionalized steps such as *taḥnīk* (the administering of date pap by a father to a male child as his first food before he takes a sip of his mother's milk) intervene against the role of the woman as sole nurturer of a newborn, so that, as Kueny's puts it, "patriarchy continuously reasserts itself through a series of postpartum rituals."[24] The ability to lactate is also, of course, a defining element of our speciation (we are mammals) and sex differentiation (females have mammary glands) that is conditioned on what women *have* rather than what they lack.[25] Therefore, breastfeeding presents a ripe moment for the emergence of another aspect of the gender anxieties that figure in much premodern Arabic popular literature. Below, I give a preliminary assessment of the import of breastfeeding as a feature of popular literary sources. I begin with a brief survey of lactation and nursing imagery in related sources and then present the vignette from *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* along with my analysis.

The Versions of *Dhāt al-Himma*

Though the earliest evidence we have of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*'s existence dates to the twelfth/sixth century, its extant manuscripts are from several centuries later—a trait

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21. Amanda Hannoosh Steinberg, "Wives, Witches, and Warriors: Women in Arabic Popular Epic" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2018), 153.

22. Avner Giladi, "Liminal Craft, Exceptional Law: Preliminary Notes on Midwives in Medieval Islamic Writings," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 2 (2010): 192.

23. This tension perhaps conjures up associations with another common gender-differentiated issue evident in popular literature, namely, the *fitna*, or chaos and strife, that is often born out of a woman's sexualization and the distraction she poses to men. The management of male appetite, albeit appetite of a different nature, is at issue in debates over *fitna* just as it is in the matter of breastfeeding. On the role of *fitna* in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, see Remke Kruk, "The Bold and the Beautiful: Women and 'Fitna' in the Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma; The Story of Nūrā," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*, ed. Gavin Hambly, 99–116 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

24. Kueny, *Conceiving Identities*, 141.

25. As Robyn Lee reminds us, though, the category of "mammal" is, of course, itself a construct that bears some historical contextualization. She explains that one of Linnaeus's aims in "establish[ing] the mammary gland as the defining feature of animal classification in 1758" was a political one, as Linnaeus was strongly in favor of maternal breastfeeding and was an anti–wet nursing advocate. Robyn Lee, "Breastfeeding and Sexual Difference: Queering Irigaray," *Feminist Theory* 19 (2018): 78.

common to popular tales that circulated between oral and written modes.[26] *Sīra* texts are often lengthy, and their volumes were not necessarily kept consistently together. Consequently, the remnants of such works are frequently incomplete, consisting of a few manuscript volumes that are sometimes inconsecutive.[27] Having said that, MSS Arabe 3840–51 contain an extensive version of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* that, according to Georges Vajda's notes on the manuscript, consists of twelve volumes that have been patched with fragments in different hands to bridge lacunae in the text. Claudia Ott notes that the patching occasionally results in overlaps, or repetition of passages.[28] Vajda records the names of three readers of the text that appear at the start of different volumes, given with dates ranging from 1767–68/1180-82 to 1787/1201-02.[29] In her extensive work on the manuscript tradition of the *sīra*, Ott identifies this large, composite manuscript as the source from which a number of other manuscripts of the text were copied over the course of the nineteenth/thirteenth century.[30]

The Tunisian edition of the text was printed in Judeo-Arabic in the 1890s, and its provenance is better understood than that of MS 3840–51. This is in large part because one of the men who oversaw its printing and distribution, Rabbi Eliezer Farhi, was a prolific and well-networked member of the Tunisian Jewish intellectual elite of his era. His writings covered myriad topics and genres, from journalism to parables.[31] In particular, he was avidly

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26. As has been discussed by several scholars, the earliest mention of this *sīra* is found in the autobiographical section of Samawʾal al-Maghribī's (d. 1175) polemical treatise, *Ifḥām al-Yahūd* (Silencing the Jews), written after Samawʾal's conversion from Judaism to Islam. Strikingly, he refers to having "read" the story rather than hearing it told aloud. He encountered the story of Dhāt al-Himma as part of what Moshe Perlmann refers to as "the Arabic fiction literature of his day—stories, anecdotes, popular romances of knighthood." The "romances" that Samawʾal lists are *ʿAntar*, *Dhū al-Himma wa-l-Baṭṭāl*, and *Iskandar Dhū al-Qarnayn*. See Samawʾal al-Maghribī, *Ifḥām al-Yahūd: Silencing the Jews*, ed. and trans. Moshe Perlmann (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1964), 15, 100. The earliest dated portions of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, meanwhile, are from 1430–31/833-35, according to Claudia Ott. See Claudia Ott, "From the Coffeehouse into the Manuscript: The Storyteller and His Audience in the Manuscripts of an Arabic Epic," *Oriente Moderno* 22, no. 83 (2003): 444; Claudia Ott, *Metamorphosen des Epos: Sīrat al-Muǧāhidīn (Sīrat al-Amīra Ḏāt al-Himma) zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit* (Leiden: Leiden University, Research School CNWS, 2003), 67. For a more recent discussion of versions of the *sīra*, both handwritten and printed, see Melanie Magidow, "Epic of the Commander Dhat al-Himma," *Medieval Feminist Forum*, Subsidia Series no. 9, *Medieval Texts in Translation* 6 (2019): 3–5.

27. On the partitioning and condensing of popular *sīra* texts such as *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* in manuscripts used by reciters, see Ott, "From the Coffeehouse," passim. On the "lending economy" of popular texts, see Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 164–96.

28. Ott, *Metamorphosen des Epos*, 106.

29. Georges Vajda, "Notices des manuscrits Arabe 3630–3698," Manuscript (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Manuscrits, 1940-69), Ms. Arabe 7302, fol. 53–54. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8458430f (October 17, 2019).

30. Ott, *Metamorphosen des Epos*, 112.

31. On Farḥī's intellectual network, see Yosef Tobi, "Farḥī, Eliezer," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 2010), https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/farhi-eliezer-SIM_0007630; David M. Bunis, Joseph Chetrit, and Haideh Sahim, "Jewish Languages Enter the Modern Era," in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa*

interested in educational reform in the Jewish community, leading him to earn the moniker *maskīl* (enlightened individual, or participant in the *haskala*, a Jewish intellectual revivalist movement not dissimilar to the Arabic *nahḍa*).[32] Farhi was committed to producing Judeo-Arabic editions of the *siyar shaʿbiyya*, including the *Azaliyya*, the *ʿAntariyya*, and the *Tijāniyya*, and in part through them he came to be known as a father figure of Tunisian Judeo-Arabic popular literature. Although his partner in printing, Hai Sitruk, was widely published as well, his role in the dissemination of *sīra* literature is comparatively smaller: beyond a translation of the Alexander romance and his collaboration with Farhi on *Dhāt al-Himma*, he produced or coauthored translations of more contemporary works of derring-do, such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Eugène Sue's *Les mystères de Paris*. Both men also penned a number of creative works.[33] Eusèbe Vassel, who wrote an extensive catalogue of literature printed in Judeo-Arabic in Tunis throughout the second half of the nineteenth/thirteenth century, notes that at least for his first *sīra* publication, Farhi worked from a preexisting manuscript that he had purchased.[34] The occasional nearly verbatim overlap between his version of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* and other Arabic versions of the text suggests that he did likewise here. But the question of how much he emended the text in his possession remains. He seems to have made certain expurgations himself: the name of the prophet Muḥammad appears virtually nowhere in the text, being usually replaced by Ibrāhīm or Sulaymān, though some slips do occur, as in the occasional reference to al-Muṣṭafā, the Chosen One, an epithet for Muḥammad. Other differences, however, may be either his own doing or quirks in the manuscript he used; dialogue in the text takes place in Tunisian Arabic, and in at least one instance of importance to the present study, a gloss on an obscure word is embedded directly into the narrative. When explaining the naming of the protagonist Junduba, who is named after the type of bird that miraculously shelters him from the heat when he has been abandoned in the desert, the narrator states:

וכאן וקתהא חר שדיד יא אללה אלסלאמא וארסל אללה תעאלא אילא דאלך
אלצבי טיר יסמא ענד אלערב גֻנדבא ואחנא כיף מא נקולו עגّאב[35] או נסר וצֻלל
עלא האך אלגֻני בגﬞוﬡﬡחו

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in Modern Times, ed. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer, 113–42 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 131–32.

32. On the parallels between the *haskala* and the *nahḍa*, see Lital Levy, "The Nahḍa and the Haskala: A Comparative Reading of 'Revival' and 'Reform,'" *Middle Eastern Literatures: Incorporating Edebiyat* 16, no. 3 (2013): 300–16. See also Yosef Chetrit and Lital Levy, "Haskala Movement," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Tzivia Tobi, "Ha-Rav ha-Maskil Elʿazar Farḥi ye-Yetsirotav ha-Saṭiriyyot (Tunis 1851–1930)," in *Ben ʿEver la-ʿArav: Contacts Between Arabic Literature and Jewish Literature in the Middle Ages and Modern Times*, ed. Yosef Tobi and Yitsak Avishur, 127–44 (Tel Aviv: Afikim, 2015).

33. Several of Sitruk's contributions are enumerated in a booklist compiled by Yosef and Tsivia Tobi that covers a century of Tunisian Judeo-Arabic works. See Yosef Tobi and Tsivia Tobi, *Judeo-Arabic Literature in Tunisia, 1850–1950* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), 303–21.

34. Eusèbe Vassel, *La littérature populaire des Israélites tunisiens, avec un essai ethnographique et archéologique sur leurs superstitions* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1904–7), 108–9.

35. *ʿUqāb* (eagle) is here transliterated as *ʿugāb* to reflect local pronunciation and the Judeo-Arabic original.

وكان وقتها حر شديد يا الله السلامة وأرسل الله تعالى الى ذلك الصبي طير يسمي عند العرب
جندبة واحنا كيف ما نقوله عغاب او نسر وظلّ على هاك الجني بجوانحه

> At that time it was extremely hot—good Lord! God Almighty sent the young boy a bird, called a *junduba* among the Arabs, and we call it an *ʿugāb* or a *nasr* (eagle), and it shaded that newborn with its wings.[36]

In light of these ambiguities, I read the Judeo-Arabic version of the *sīra* under the assumption that it emerges from a similar context to other Arabic versions of the text, which is to say that it is the product of a primarily Muslim compositional context rather than having been noticeably tailored for a new, Jewish readership. However, as discussed below, there are some felicitous parallels between Junduba's tale and certain midrashic or *isrāʾīliyyāt*-derived representations of prophetic figures shared between Judaism and Islam.

Milk and Myth, from Moses to Muḥammad

In her work on *Sīrat Sayf b. Dhī Yazan*, Helen Blatherwick formulates a threefold typology under which references to the prophets—or, to use her term, the "prophetic intertext"—found in popular literature may be classified. Prophets make cameos in intra-diegetic, moral tales told among the protagonists of the text; they appear as the former owners of heirlooms or relics acquired by the protagonists (a device that Blatherford reads as a form of *waṣiyya*, or prophetic inheritance, following John Renard); and they are alluded to obliquely through the reproduction of motifs drawn from apocryphal stories and regional myths.[37] Thus, the precedent of miraculous, providential, or bizarre lactation scenarios in the corpus of anthological literature known as the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (stories of the prophets) bears some discussion here. The following is by no means an exhaustive list of the sorts of lactation miracles and nursing tropes that appear in Arabic tales of the prophets and hero legends. However, I have attempted to account for a number of the more prominent or exemplary motifs to guide the reading of the *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* excerpts below.

Perhaps the most famous case of a nursling refusing milk from an unfit source, like Junduba does, occurs in the story of Moses. According to al-Kisāʾī's collection of tales of the prophets,

> Once Mūsā, peace be upon him, was settled in the Pharaoh's house, [Āsiya's retinue] wished to nourish him by nursing. But he would not accept a breast, nor would he eat. They grew perplexed and made every endeavor to feed him, but he [still] would not eat—as God said, "We had prevented him from nurses previously" (Q 28:12)—so they sent him with the caravans and women to the marketplace, [hoping] that perhaps they would find someone who would agree to nurse him.[38]

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36. *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, 10.

37. Helen Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods, and Kings in Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan: An Intertextual Reading of an Egyptian Epic* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 67. See also John Renard, *Islam and the Heroic Image: Themes in Literature and the Visual Arts* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), 140–45.

38. Al-Kisāʾī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr al-Islāmiyya, 1997), 382–83.

The women happen upon Moses's sister, who brings them to his mother's abode, where he finally nurses. Here, the mother-child bond is preserved not only because they are drawn together by their natural connection but because of divine intercession precluding Moses's nursing during their period of separation. According to the *tafsīr* of Ibn Kathīr, the restoration of Moses to his mother for nursing after the divinely ordained hunger strike mentioned in verse 12 of *Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ* (*wa-ḥarramnā ʿalayhi al-marāḍiʿ min qabl*) had benefits not only for the child but also for the mother, because she was calmed after fearing for her child's wellbeing (*wa-hiya āmina baʿd mā kānat khāʾifa*).[39] In rabbinic readings of the Moses story, Moses rejects the breasts of Egyptian women not merely on the grounds that they are not his mother but because of his prescient sense of community-based notions of milk purity: *halakha* frowns on Jews using non-Jewish wet nurses except when necessary to preserve life. Moses, who is "destined to speak with the Divine presence," cannot place his mouth on an impure breast.[40] Perhaps because such rules about the correspondence of a nurse's faith with that of her nursling do not apply in Islam, Muslim thinkers do not, by and large, seem to have explicitly adopted such an interpretation. However, certain mystical readings of the verse do attribute Moses's lack of desire to nurse from Egyptian women to his emerging prophetic discernment rather than to an infant's yearning for his mother. Ibn ʿArabī, for example, interprets the phrase *min qabl* (previously) in the Quranic verse as indicating that Moses was prevented from satisfying his body's base, pleasure- and instinct-driven needs for nourishment and physical fortification (*al-taqawwī wa-l-taghadhdhī bi-ladhdhāt al-quwwa al-nafsāniyya wa-shahawātihā*) before his attainment of wisdom and purity of nature (*qabl istiʿmāl al-fikr bi-nūr al-istiʿdād wa-ṣafāʾ al-fiṭra*).[41] Other prominent Sufi exegetes, such as al-Sulamī and al-Baqlī, claim that Moses understood that had he nursed from a transgressor of God's commands (*mukhālifa*) or an animal (*waḥsha*), he would not have been fit for a close relationship with God, metaphorically represented as being on His carpet (*bisāṭ al-qurba*). They even imply that the nursemaid of a child must be human in order for the child to attain esoteric knowledge.[42]

Ibn Hishām, in his prophetic biography, connects God's intercession on Moses's behalf to promote nursing from a mother figure—and thus from a figure of a moral and cultural disposition that befits the prophet-child—with an experience in the Prophet Muḥammad's early infancy, involving his foster mother, Ḥalīma bt. Abī Dhuʾayb. Because of ongoing drought and malnutrition, Ḥalīma is unable to produce milk even for her own son. Nevertheless, she follows the custom of her tribe's women and rides through the environs of Mecca, seeking a child to nurse. All of the other women spurn Muḥammad because he is an orphan, not recognizing his impending significance. Failing to find a nursling and feeling

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39. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1998), 2:201.

40. Jordan Rosenblum, "'Blessings of the Breasts': Breastfeeding in Rabbinic Literature," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 87, no. 145 (2016): 172–73.

41. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Tafsīr Muḥyī al-Dīn b. al-ʿArabī* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Būlāq, 1867), 2:109.

42. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, *Ḥaqāʾiq al-tafsīr*, ed. Sayyid ʿUmrān (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001), 101; Rūzbihān al-Baqlī al-Shīrāzī, *ʿArāʾis al-bayān fī ḥaqāʾiq al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mizyadī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2008), 80.

remorse, Ḥalīma resolves to nurse Muḥammad despite knowing that she physically cannot do so at that time. Her husband advises her that "God may be on the verge of giving you a blessing through him," and Ḥalīma returns to her mount with the child and gives him her breasts, which fill with milk to the child's satisfaction. Even Ḥalīma's milch camel, whose milk supply had also dwindled because of the harsh conditions, suddenly yields milk again, enabling Ḥalīma, too, to drink and to replenish herself.[43] In the *sīra*, Ibn Hishām prefaces the narrative of Ḥalīma nursing Muḥammad with the Quranic verse about Moses's delayed suckling, creating a vivid similarity between the two infants.[44]

According to Kueny, such stories valorize nursing women who prioritize their children's nutrition or health over their own and thus promote an ideal of maternal self-sacrifice. But the stories may also be read to some extent as an exaggeration of the workings of the natural world, for in these tales it is not only the women who earn acclaim, but also the children whom they nurse.[45] Children who are able to nurse consistently and plentifully are likely to have better health and survival prospects. It is unsurprising, then, that super-strong champions and unblemished prophets alike should have legendarily superlative (even God-given) access to breast milk. For women, meanwhile, ample lactation is an affirmation of God's power and has the capacity to restore their faith—Ḥalīma's husband is quick to remark that she has been blessed by the boy, to which she replies, "Truly this is my hope (*wa-llāhī innī la-arjū dhālik*)!"[46] In this fashion, the mother-child bond becomes enveloped in a sacred or miraculous awareness.

Even when a child is consuming a mother's milk, though, environmental factors can intervene in the nursing experience, leaving an indelible mark on the child's traits that persists long after weaning. In her discussion of the birth of Cain, Kueny notes that al-Thaʿlabī, in his collection of prophetic lore, *ʿArāʾis al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, claims that Cain was nursed in the heavenly Garden prior to Eve's first menses (which is one of the punishments later visited upon her as she leaves the Garden). Most medieval thinkers believed breast milk and menstrual issue to be composed of the same material, channeled to different parts of the body.[47] The "pure milk" that Cain drank, in Kueny's reading, ironically sets him up not to be pure of heart but rather to have a nonnormative ethical constitution that reflects his nonnormative childhood, the dark implications of which come to fruition when Cain murders his brother.[48] Being born and suckled in the Garden has left Cain poorly adapted to the earthly realm in which he later finds himself. A supernatural nursing experience portends an unnatural and at times dangerous existence. Cain's tale is

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43. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya li-Ibn Hishām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1990), 188–89.

44. Ibid., 185.

45. Kueny, *Conceiving Identities*, 133–34.

46. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, 189.

47. This belief has roots in ancient Greek thought and has long been used to explain such phenomena as the disappearance of the menses during lactation. At times, heavy menstruation was treated with the application of cupping-glasses to the breasts. Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998), 34–35.

48. Kueny, "Birth of Cain," 115–17.

cautionary. In contrast, Moses's birth story and its citation in the Quran looms large as the guiding framework for idealizations of nursing in prophetic literature, informing narrations of Muḥammad's own struggles with nursing. The ideal of women caring for abandoned children despite adversity is visible popular literature as well.[49]

Milk from Humans and Beasts in Popular Sources

In addition to their robust prophetic intertexts, many of the *sīra* texts also make frequent reference to other texts of their genre and of neighboring genres of popular literature, such as the nighttime stories (*asmār*) found in *Alf layla wa-layla*.[50] In the case of nonprophetic popular works, supernatural nursing experiences arise not only through environmental influences and divine-human interaction but also through the appearance of nonhuman nurses. Although, as noted above, prophetic narratives tend to follow the Quranic precedent of Moses in promoting tales of mothers or foster mothers who are able to sustain their nursing regimens even in dire circumstances, and portions of the exegetical tradition even militate directly against suckling from animals, there are numerous attestations in popular literature in both Arabic and Persian of children being suckled by animals when human nurses are absent or have failed to provide milk for them.

As seen below, variations of the hero Junduba's narrative describe his nurturing by a variety of animals who ensure the newborn's survival. The *jundub* bird shades him from the desert heat, and in one variant a gazelle suckles him after his mother is killed. When prince Dārim retrieves the child, he takes it as a sign of Junduba's mother's apotropaic purity and goodness that the baby has not been carried off by a desert beast. Junduba is far from the only child in Arabic literature to be reared by wild animals rather than by humans. Perhaps the best-known occurrence of this motif is in the life of the feral man Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān, born from the ground itself and raised untouched by human contact; he is nursed by a female gazelle or deer (*ẓabiya*).[51] In the collection of stories that make up *al-Ḥikāyāt al-ʿajība wa-l-akhbār al-gharība*, recently translated from a sole surviving manuscript by Malcolm Lyons as *Tales of the Marvelous and News of the Strange*, a prince named Mauhub, who is born to king Shimrakh, a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, refuses to nurse from any of the palace

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49. The story of Moses as the archetypical foundling also provides the pattern for a number of heroic childhoods in popular Arabic and Persian lore, sometimes quite explicitly. For example, *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*'s Baḥrūn and the Persian *Dārābnāma*'s eponym, Dārāb both have names relating to their being transported by and found in the water; this naming pattern plays directly on the etymology of Moses's name, meaning "drawn from the water" (Exodus 2:10).

50. In the case of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, such borrowing is especially evident in the fact that parts of the triumphal chivalric legend of ʿUmar al-Nuʿmān (or ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd Allāh, as he is designated in the *sīra*) appear both in this *sīra* and in *Alf layla*. Following Wen-Chin Ouyang's logic, we may say that in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* this intertextuality has the effect of nesting a (mini-)*sīra* within the main *sīra*, whereas in *Alf layla* it perturbs the line between epic and romance given the star-crossed, romantic backdrop of the principal storyline. See Canard, "Dhu 'l Himma"; Wen-Chin Ouyang, "The Epical Turn of Romance: Love in the Narrative of ʿUmar al-Nuʿmān," *Oriente Moderno* 22, no. 83 (2003): 485–504.

51. Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1952), 52.

maids after his mother dies.[52] But when Shimrakh brings home a lioness captured on a hunt, the prince suckles from her alongside the lioness's two cubs, which endows him with the lion's archetypical courage and strength. The infant *sīra* hero ʿAlī al-Zaybaq is subject to a set of events that demonstrate how the nursing motifs sketched above can combine and compound: like Moses, he is removed from his mother immediately after birth, but unlike Moses he is swept off into the world of the *jinn*. When returned, he suckles from a lion rather than his mother.[53] Fosterage by *jinn* also occurs in *Sīrat Sayf b. Dhī Yazan*, though this time following willful maternal abandonment. As a result, the young Sayf acquires a *jinnīya* milk-sister, who becomes a key ally—a supernatural accomplice produced by the binding of Sayf's lineage to a magical realm.[54] Such tropes appear in Persian literature as well. For example, in the *Shāhnāma* the *sīmurgh* (who, despite being a birdlike creature, has mammary glands and feeds its young with milk) nurses the foundling Zāl, abandoned by his parents because of his albinism.[55]

In each case, a defining feature is once again the unique destiny of the child, who is set to attain the heights of heroism or, in the case of Ḥayy, of perspicacity and intellect. The cameoed animals often have associations that underscore the child's uniqueness and importance: a gazelle, in much Arabic literature, is the epitome of feminine grace and beauty, and so the gazelle-as-nurse in some ways not merely supplants but supersedes the image of a human woman. The nursing of a lioness—whose ferocity and role as the family's chief huntress invert norms of masculinity and femininity in human family structures—endows a male child with the lioness's qualities, which manifest as a ratcheted-up masculinity, rendering him dauntless, competent, and strong. By implication, rearing by two human, gender-normative parents may not confer such heroic traits in equal measure. And of course, the lion is a symbol of kingship, so nursing only from a lioness firmly marks a child's royal status.

Even in perfectly ordinary birth and nursing scenarios, an infant hero's response to nursing can sometimes presage his future as a fighter. This is especially evident in the *sīra* of ʿAntar b. Shaddād, whose comportment on occasions when his mother delays nursing him adumbrates his preternatural strength and pugnacity. At the two-year mark—the conventional time of weaning in Islamic societies[56]—ʿAntar's mischievous streak reaches an early apogee:

> If his mother Zabība ever prevented him from nursing, ʿAntar would grumble and wail and growl and reproach her, like the grousing of beasts of prey. His eyes would redden until they became like embers set ablaze. Every day he required a new swaddle because

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52. Malcolm Lyons, *Tales of the Marvelous and News of the Strange* (London: Penguin Classics, 2014), 399.

53. Lyons, *Arabian Epic*, 5. See also Malcolm Lyons, *The Man of Wiles in Popular Arabic Literature: A Study of a Medieval Arab Hero* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 2.

54. Blatherwick, *Prophets, Gods, and Kings*, 32, 192–96. I am indebted to Helen Blatherwick for her comments on earlier drafts of this paper and for bringing her work on Sayf's foster family to my attention.

55. See A. Shapur Shahbazi and Simone Cristoforetti, "Zāl," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed., ed. Ehsan Yarshater, updated July 20, 2009, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zal.

56. Q 2:233 (discussed below).

he would tear it apart, even if it was made of iron. When he reached two full years of age, he began to move and play around the camp, and he would grab tent pegs and uproot them so that the tents would collapse upon their occupants. Many times over he did this, and he would wrestle with dogs, take hold of their tails, and strangle their young to death, and he would assail young men and children. If he saw a small child, he would snatch at his face, throw him down on his back, and take what he wanted from him. If it was a big child, he would wrestle him until his limbs failed. He did not cease doing this until he was weaned and turned three years old, and he grew, developed, and matured. Then he set out, and mention of him began to spread.[57]

The significance of milk bonds and nursing practices looms large in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* also beyond Junduba. The text's central heroine, Fāṭima Dhāt al-Himma, is nearly killed in infancy by her father because he had so desperately wanted a son—indeed, he had staked his share of the tribal chiefdom in a pact with his brother on the prospect of having a male heir. A benevolent servant, named Suʿdā, takes her in. Suʿdā, who is elegized as a generous woman, is said to be of Turkish origin (*bādhila turkiyya*), but she is evidently black-skinned. This may be gleaned from the fact that when Fāṭima unexpectedly births a black child, she is accused of having had an affair with her milk-brother Marzūq, son of Suʿdā.[58] The scandal of Fāṭima's alleged dalliance is magnified by the notion that it may have been with her milk-kin, making her guilty not only of adultery but also of incest; her father-in-law connects the blackness of her child with her alleged sexual deviance in a line of satirical (*hijāʾ*) poetry that likens the boy's origins to those of dogs and his color to that of crows.[59] The epithet "son of Marzūq" follows Fāṭima's child, the hero ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, throughout his adventures and is often used as an instigating tactic by his enemies before battle. In this way, violation (or apparent violation) of the normative relationships imparted by bonds of milk—which are, in turn, underpinned by considerations of class and race—incurs castigation of both the mother and the child.[60]

In an abridgement of the *sīra*, written by Shawqī ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm and translated by Omaima Abou-Bakr, that is there described as a Palestinian epic, Fāṭima is so distraught at the existence of her newborn son—conceived during a sexual assault by her husband—

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57. *Sīrat ʿAntara b. Shaddād* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Būlāq, 1886), 1:127.

58. Suʿdā being portrayed simultaneously as a Turk and a black-skinned woman likely emerges from the common semiotic conflation of black people and slaves in Arabic popular literature. *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, VI:15, VII:18. On the historical development of the identification of blacks with slavery in theology, literature, and public discourse, see David M. Goldenberg, *Black and Slave: The Origins and History of the Curse of Ham* (Boston: de Gruyter, 2017).

59. *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, VII:36.

60. This treatment of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb raises another significant parallel between his story and that of Junduba, namely, the centrality to his early childhood of a trial to ascertain his legitimacy. Having been born a different color from his parents, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb must prove the nobility of his bloodline, though unlike the infant Junduba, he must do so when he is already on the precipice of warriorhood, and in his case it is his epidermal race that he must overcome, rather than his having been a foundling. See Schine, "Conceiving the Pre-Modern Black-Arab Hero."

that she refuses to nurse him and he must be removed from her.[61] This is another instance of carryover from the mother's experiences to those of her child, in that Fāṭima's sexual trauma renders her unable to nourish her son. To be sure, the idea of a milk-mediated bodily and spiritual connection between a nurse and an infant was supported by the medical discourses of the time, which held that the person from whom the child suckled, whether the mother or a wet nurse, would impart her traits to the infant, from skin color to physiognomy to general disposition. Like the uterine blood from which it was thought to be derived, breast milk was construed as a conduit through which traits were transmitted outside the womb, just as they had been transmitted through blood within it. Figures such as al-Jāḥiẓ carried this scientific analogy between milk and blood particularly far, arguing that just as blood tinctures the baby in the womb, milk clarifies and lightens the baby's skin in infancy. Ibn Qutayba noted that children would grow to resemble either their mothers or their wet nurses, depending on how they received their nourishment.[62] According to Ibn Sīnā, wet nurses therefore ought to be chosen for their appropriate age (*sinn*), comely appearance (*suḥan*), and moral rectitude (*akhlāq*).[63] Consequently, if a child passes from one nurse to another, these bonds and semblances may transform, which may explain, in part, the foundling Junduba's reticence to nurse from his new mother—a reticence that she reciprocates. Such concerns about the disposition and appearance of a wet nurse are compounded by the quality of her social standing, as with the anxieties produced by Fāṭima Dhāt al-Himma's association with the black Suʿdā and her son. Similar anxieties—though operating in the reverse direction—about Junduba's provenance and the effect that his dishonorable birth might have on his new family's social standing come to bear on the question of whether or not to take him in as a nursling.

Junduba the Foundling

Junduba, the first major hero to make an appearance in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, is the great-grandfather of the eponymous heroine, Fāṭima. His story begins with the death of his father, al-Ḥārith, chief of the tribe of Kilāb. Al-Ḥārith's pregnant widow, Arbāb (or Rabāb), begins to fear for her safety, knowing that al-Ḥārith had kept the other tribes in line and had successfully staved off raiding parties. She decides to abscond with the slave Sallām, who had remained a loyal member of her household even after his master's death. Sallām's loyalty had an ulterior motive, however, and while on the road he propositions her, asking

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61. Shawqī ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm and Omaima Abou-Bakr, *Princess Dhat al-Himma: The Princess of High Resolve* (Guizeh: Foreign Cultural Information Dept., 1995), 75–76.

62. On the function of milk in forging physical and psychological resemblance, see Schine, "Conceiving the Pre-Modern Black-Arab Hero," 14–15; Kueny, *Conceiving Identities*, 140; al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-ʿIbar wa-l-iʿtibār*, ed. Ṣābir Idrīs (Cairo: al-ʿArabī, 1994), 78; ʿAbd Allāh b. Muslim b. Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, 2:68-69. On ideas about the utility of animal milk in altering one's physical form, Aysha Hidayatullah cites a telling story in which ʿĀʾisha says that Muḥammad's son by Māriyya the Copt, Ibrāhīm, resembles his father only because he was fed camel and sheep milk, which lightened his skin and fattened him up. See Aysha Hidayatullah, "Māriyya the Copt: Gender, Sex and Heritage in the Legacy of Muḥammad's *Umm Walad*," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 21, no. 3 (2010): 233.

63. Ibn Sīnā, *Qānūn fī al-ṭibb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1999), 114.

of her "what men ask of women." Trying to elude him, Arbāb excuses herself to wash and immediately goes into labor, giving birth to a son. When Sallām sees what has happened, the text states:

> וכֿזר פֿיהא בעין אלגֿצֿב וקאל להא לאש האד אלמכרה יא עאהרא אלדֿי מכרת ואנתי מא לקית תולד אלא תווא? וקת אלדֿי אנא חאנתי ביך. לאנהו פֿי באלו אלדֿי אלמראה תולד עלא כיפֿהא וגֿבדהא מן נואצֿיהא וסתחהא אילא אלארץֿ ונֿבד אלכֿנגֿר וסקט עליהא מן אלגֿוזא ללאעטראד.

> **وخزر فيها بعين الغضب وقال لها لاش هاذ المكرة يا عاهرة الـذي مكرت وانت مـا لقيت تولد الا تـوَة؟ وقت الـذي انـا حاجتي بك. لانـه في بالـه الـذي المراة تولد عـلى كيفها وجبدها مـن نواصيها وستحها الـى الأرض وجبد الخنجر وسقط عليها من الجوزاء للاعطراد[64]**

He looked at her with an angry gaze and said, "What's this trick you've pulled, you whore, that you've only just given birth now, right when I wanted something from you?" Because he had it in his head that a woman could give birth of her own will.[65] He pulled her by her forelocks, laid her on the ground, and brought forth a dagger. Then he fell upon her, [going] from the Gemini to Mercury.[66]

Whether Sallām actually rapes Arbāb before killing her remains ambiguous. In the 1909 Cairo version, Sallām cuts off her head in a rage without fulfilling his desire, and she tumbles to the ground.[67] In MS Arabe 3840, however, Arbāb dies from the childbirth itself, with Sallām having run off in fear as soon as her labor began.[68] But all versions agree that immediately after the birth, just before she expires, Arbāb attaches to her newborn son's forearm a small locket-like case (*ḥirz*) detailing his *nasab* (genealogy). Some time later, a prince from the nearest *wādī*, named Dārim, happens upon the child while on a gazelle hunt, trying to distract himself from the loss of his own newborn son:

> ושאף אלמאליכֿא ארבאב מטרוחה מקתולה והאד אלמולוד ירצֿע מנהא ואלחליב פֿאיץֿ ויתבזע מעא קדרת צֿאחב אלקֿדרה [...] ואמהו תרצֿעהו והיא קתילא קדאם גֿנבהו ולמא נצֿר אלאלמיר[69] דארם אילא דֿאלך אלתֿפֿת אילא וזיֿרהו וקאל להו: איהא אלוזיר אנצֿר אילא האדֿי אלצֿבייה והאד אלנֿני אלדֿי בגֿנבהא והאד אלטיר יצֿלל עליה ואמהו תרצֿעהו והיא קתילה ואעלם ודמת אלערב

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64. Though the conventional spelling is *ʿuṭārid*, the term appears with this orthography in the original.

65. In the 1909 Cairo edition, the dialogue is more drawn out, and Sallām claims he was told by another man that women could give birth by "squeezing their bellies" and using sheer force. Arbāb rebuts this false assumption, saying that "this [would take] a stunning ability, and it is beyond [the capacity of] all humankind." *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, I:10.

66. This enigmatic idiom seems to connote the length of the cut he made on Arbāb's body with the dagger. *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, 9.

67. *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, I:10.

68. *Sīrat al-mujāhidīn*, fol. 6.

69. *Sic.*

וﬠׄצׄל שהר ר﬘ﬢ אידא לﬦ תכשׄף לי כבר האדי אלﬡׄבייה ושׁבשׁ קתל﬜הא נרמי ראסך מת﬜ﬥﬣא

وشـاف المالكـة ارﺑـاب مطروحـة مقتولـة وﻫاذ المولـود يرضـع منهـا والحليب فائـض ويتبزغ مـع قدرة صاحب القدرة وامـه ترضعه وﻫـي قتيلـة قدام جنبـه ولمـا نظر الامير دارم الـى ذلك التفت الـى وزيـره وقال لـه أيهـا الوزير انظر الـى ﻫـاذي الصبيـة وﻫـاذ الجنـي الـذي بجنبهـا وﻫـاذ الطير يظلّ عليـه وامـه ترضعـه وﻫـي قتيلـة واعلـم وذمـة العرب وفضـل شـهر رجـب اذا لـم تكشـف لـي خبر ﻫـاذي الصبيـة وسبب قتلهـا نرمـي راسك مثلها

He saw the princess Arbāb, left behind and slain, and this newborn was suckling from her. The milk was pouring out in excess, by the power of the Possessor of Power [...], and his mother was nursing him though she was dead at his side. When the prince Dārim saw that, he turned to his advisor and said, "O *wazīr*, look at this young woman and this newborn beside her, and this bird shading him. His mother is nursing him though she is dead! By the covenant of the Arabs, and the favor of the month of Rajab, know that if you don't find out what happened to this young woman and the reason for her death, I'll cut off your head just like hers."[70]

By contrast, in MS Arabe 3840, Dārim finds Junduba asleep at his mother's side:

فخرج في تلك الساعة الي الصيد والقنص ليفرج ﻫمـه ويكشف غمـه فراي الرﺑاب في تلك البريـة وﻫو[71] مقتولـة وذلك المولود نايم في جنبها

At that time, [Dārim] went out to hunt and shoot in order to relieve his grief and unleash his sorrow [at losing his son]. Then he saw al-Rabāb in that open space, and [s]he was dead, and that newborn was sleeping at her side [...][72]

Unbeknownst to Dārim, a gazelle has suckled the child before his arrival on the scene, a fact that becomes important later on. Whereas the phenomenon of suckling from animals is not uncommon in such stories, the image of a mother's corpse continuing to lactate is a rarer feature, yet it has some overlap with another, more prevalent notion: a hadith cited in Muḥammad al-Manbijī's *Tasliyat ahl al-maṣāʾib*, a work designed to console bereaved parents, promises that there is a tree in the Garden with teats for children to suckle at should they die in infancy.[73] Other variations on the idea of heavenly nursing in hadith narrations do not feature a tree but rather explain that because Muḥammad's son, Ibrāhīm, "died at the breast" of a *qayna*, or lady's maid, who had been suckling him, his suckling will continue

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70. *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, 9.

71. *Sic.*

72. *Sīrat al-mujāhidīn*, fol. 6.

73. See Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, kitāb al-faḍāʾil*, no. 2316; al-Manbijī, *Tasliyat ahl al-maṣāʾib* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), 185. See also Avner Giladi, "Concepts of Childhood and Attitudes towards Children in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Study with Special Reference to Reaction to Infant and Child Mortality," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 32, no. 2 (1989): 149.

in the Garden, and the same will be true of other infants in similar circumstances. The story of Junduba contrasts with these hadiths in that it is the mother who dies, not the child. And yet, it echoes the central theme of a child continuing to nurse after a family calamity in that the body of his dead mother continues to provide life-giving sustenance, even though it has become otherwise inert. Not unlike a tree with breasts, Arbāb is transformed through her death into a purely functional instrument for her child's survival. God's ability to revive the dead is, of course, manifest throughout the Quran, but this partial vivification of the portions of the female body essential for sustaining other life smacks of a certain alchemical reasoning that strips life down to its bare material constituents.[74] The amplification of the importance of the breasts—even to the point of neglecting the woman herself—perhaps foreshadows the gender-bending significance of breasts in the next section of the text, in which they assume a key role in adjudicating Junduba's paternity.[75]

The Test of Which Breast

Having received Dārim's threat, the vizier speculates that Arbāb was of a prominent family and had an affair, compelling her family to kill her and abandon her child to the desert. Dārim grows incensed and roundly rejects this theory, pointing to the many patent signs of Arbāb's enjoyment of divine favor, from the bird shading her child to the beasts of prey leaving him be. All versions of Dārim's poetic rejoinder to the advisor contain the remark, addressed to Arbāb, "If you were not a free-born woman, you would not have [been able to] nurse your son in death."[76] Confident that Junduba is from good stock, Dārim gives Arbāb a proper burial and takes the child home to his wife, Ḥusna, jokingly telling her, "I left to capture you some beast, but instead I took this boy for quarry!" (In the Paris version, he says, "I left to capture you some beast, but instead I've brought you a person [*fa-jibtuh lakī insī*]!").[77] He gives her the child, along with the locket on his wrist, and instructs her to feed the boy and raise him as her own. He thus implies that he wants her relationship to him to closely emulate that of a mother, rather than simply a temporary wet nurse. Providentially—in the sense of a *deus ex machina*—Ḥusna is lactating because she has recently given birth, though the child has died and so her breast milk is going unconsumed. In the Tunisian version, we are told:

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74. Q 2:260, Q 19:66–67, Q 22:5–7, Q 30:19.

75. A number of legal sources also deal with the prospect of *al-riḍāʿ min al-mayyata* (suckling from a dead woman), that is, a scenario in which a woman "lactates into a container and then dies, and the child drinks from her milk." The question is whether such "nursing" renders subsequent marriage between the child and a relative of the woman impermissible. In Arbāb's case, her lactation miraculously persists in death so that *she* remains the only necessary vessel for the milk. See, for example, Ibn Qudāma, *Kitāb al-Mughnī*, vol. 11, ed. ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbbād al-Muḥsin al-Turkī and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥalw (Riyadh: Dār ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1986), no. 6419. See also Avner Giladi, *Infants, Parents and Wet Nurses: Medieval Islamic Views on Breastfeeding and Their Social Implications* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 87–89.

76. *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, 10; *Sīrat al-mujāhidīn*, fol. 7.

77. *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, 11; *Sīrat al-mujāhidīn*, fol. 7.

וכאנת האדי חסנא ענדהא עגׄוזתהא תסמא אם אלשר יסתעוץׄ מנהא אבליס ולעיׄאדו
באללה תם קאלת להא: יא בנתי אנתי לאש האדא מנך חתא תרבי אלאיתאם
אולאד אלזנא ומלקוט. ואלחאל מא ענדך חאגׄא ביה וחליבך צׄאפׄי
[ח]לאל⁷⁸ ירגׄע חראם פׄי חראם. פקאלת להא חסנא ואנתי יא אמי באש ערפׄת?
ואשכון אלדׄי כברך אנהו האדא ולד זנא ולמקוט? קאלת להא אלעגׄוז אמאלא
תערפׄשי אש תעמל באש יבאן לך האדא מן האדא אבדא אעטי בזולתך אליסאר
ואידׄא שרב מנהא פהוא ולד זנא ואידׄא מא שרבשי מנהא אערף אלדׄי הו ולד
חלאל פׄענד דׄאלך גׄבת חסנא אלבזול ואעטאתו והיא מתע אלשׄמאל. וצׄאר
אלולד יבכי וידז פׄיהא בשפׄאיפו וירדהא בלסאנו ויטבק פׄמהו ומא חבשי ירצׄע
וצׄאר באכי פׄאחם ולמא אעטאתו תדי אלימין צׄאר ימגׄט עלא כיפהו ולם
חב ינפס

وكانـت هاذي حسـنة عندهـا عجـوزتها تسـمى ام الشـر يستعـوض منهـا ابليـس والعيـاذ هـو بـالله⁸⁰
ثـم قالـت لهـا يـا بنتـي انـت لاش هـذا منـك حتـى تربـي الايتـام أولاد الـزنا وملقـوط والحـال مـا عنـدك
حاجـة بـه وحليبـك صافـي صافـي يرجـع حـرام فـي حـرام فقالـت لهـا حسـنة وانـت يـا امـي بـاش عرفـت؟
واشـكون الـذي خبـرك انـه هـذا ولـد زنـاء وملقـوط؟ قالـت لهـا العجـوز امالـه تعرفشـي اش تعمـل
بـاش يبـان لـك هـذا مـن هـذا ابـدأ اعطـي بزولتـك اليسـار واذا شـرب منهـا فهـو ولـد زنـا واذا مـا
شريشـي منهـا اعـرف الـذي هـو ولـد حـلال فعنـد ذلـك جبـت حسـنة البـزول واعطـاته وهـي متـع
الشـمال وصـار الولـد يبكـي ويـدز فيهـا بشـفايفه ويردهـا بلسـانه ويطبـق فمـه ومـا حبشـي يرضـع
وصـار باكـي فاحـم ولمـا اعطـاتـه ثـدي اليمـين صـار يمغـط علـى كيفـه ولـم حـب ينفـس

This Ḥusna had an old [mother], named Umm al-Sharr, of whom Iblīs had made
an emissary—and truly God gives refuge! She said to her, "O my daughter,
what's become of you that you're raising orphan bastards and foundlings?
Really, you have no need to do so, and your milk is pure and sound. Sin is
recompensed with sin." Ḥusna replied, "What should you know, mother? And
who told you that he's a foundling bastard child?" The old woman said, "Do
you know what to do in order to bring the thing to light? Begin by giving him
your left teat, and if he drinks from it then he's a bastard. And if he won't drink
from it, you'll know that he's a legitimate (ḥalāl) child." With that, Ḥusna
pulled out her breast and gave it to him, supplying him with the left one. The
child began to cry, dodging it with his lips and refusing it with his tongue.
He clamped his mouth shut and wouldn't nurse, and then he began wailing.
When she gave him the right breast, he pulled at it but did not have a desire
to suckle [*lit.* inhale].⁸⁰

In MS Arabe 3840, the scene transpires similarly (though there, as in the standard version,
the mother's name is Shuʾm al-Zamān), except that when given the right breast,

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78. See note 1.

79. In the Judeo-Arabic, this phrase appears as ولعيـاذو بـالله.

80. *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, 11.

فشـرب منـه ثلاث جرعات وبكي لانـه كان معود بلبن الغزلان لان لبنها كان حلو ولبن هذه عذب
ومسكه عرق صياح من العشا الي الصباح

> He took three gulps from it and cried, for he was accustomed to the milk of
> gazelles, which is sweet, and their milk was [like] fresh water and musk. He
> started screaming and kept it up all night long.[81]

In the standard version, meanwhile, no such test is proposed, though Ḥusna does still call
the child's legitimacy into question after being egged on by a woman who is referred to
simply as an old woman (*ʿajūz*) but who we may presume is her mother because Dārim
eventually promises to support this woman financially during Ḥusna's nursing term.[82] The
"test of which breast" subverts gender norms in almost every way.[83] Because the question of
legitimacy typically amounts to the question "Who is the father?" it is conventionally men
who do the inquiring. The adjudication of the question effectively hangs on determining
which male sexual organ impelled the child's existence. Here, it is the women who want to
establish the identity of the child's father, and the organ that will reveal the child's pedigree
is not a penis, but rather a breast. The bodily fluid central to this paternity test is thus not
semen but milk, and the source from which it is drawn will either validate or invalidate the
child's legitimacy.

Recognition of the shared symbolism of the breast and the phallus as indicators of
fecundity, as well as of their morphological similarities, is evident across cultures and times.
As late as the nineteenth/thirteenth century, the overlapping symbolism of the breast and
the phallus was utilized as part of a grotesque iconography to argue for the regulation of
nursing practices. This rhetoric of analogy around the two organs, which Simon Richter
has referred to as a putative "physiological isomorphism," drew on the fact that the nipples
on a lactating woman, like the phallus, can become aroused to erection, ejaculate liquid,
and are an erogenous zone.[84] Etymologically, certain terms in Arabic (along with other
Semitic languages) bear an element of this reasoning—albeit in a far more distant and less
calculated fashion than in the analogies drawn in the early modern European works in
Richter's study. For example, *iḥlīl* denotes simultaneously the penis, the urethra (that is,
the orifice through which urine passes), and the nipple in a breast or udder, through which
milk passes.[85] In discussing the transmission of Muḥammad's intercessory capacity to his
descendants, Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi also notes that the relationship between milk

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81. *Sīrat al-mujāhidīn*, fols. 7–8.

82. *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, I:13–14.

83. I would like to thank Franklin Lewis for suggesting this nomenclature.

84. Simon Richter, "Wet-Nursing, Onanism, and the Breast in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7 (1996): 2.

85. Ashraf M. Fathy, "Identical Familial Terms in Egyptian and Arabic: A Sociolinguistic Approach," in *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century: Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists*, ed. Zahi Hawass (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2003), 3:186. See also the definition of *iḥlīl* in *Lisān al-ʿArab* as *makhraj al-būl min al-insān wa-makhraj al-laban min al-thadī wa-l-ḍarʿ*. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1955–56), 977.

and semen has been distilled into various common aphorisms that encapsulate dimensions of heredity thought to be activated by sharing these fluids:

> In terms of the qualities of saintliness, Islamic sources speak repeatedly about the power of transmission of the seminal substance from Muḥammad's ancestors, manifested by the "Light" and symbolized by the *ṣulb* (kidney, loins), an organ regarded as the repository of the semen. Passing via the uterus (*raḥim*) of the woman, the repository of her "seed," the man's semen forms the milk of the mother's breast, which in turn enables the transmission of the father's qualities to his child; whence the inseparable link between sperm and milk that one finds in such expressions as "milk is from man" (*al-laban min al-marʾ*), "the reproductive milk" (*laban al-faḥl*) or "the unique sperm" (*liqāḥ wāḥid*) that designate both the man's seminal fluid as well as the woman's milk.[86]

Absent from this symbolic web, though, is what makes the phallic image of Ḥusna's breasts particularly trenchant, and that is the influence her breasts exert over the perceived purity of her family. Ḥusna's mother posits that her "pure milk" would be wasted on a bastard, like semen spilled in an adulterous or impure relationship.[87] Moreover, because of the workings of milk fosterage, in controlling whom she suckles, Ḥusna effectively controls who is incorporated into her line of descent. Whereas the literature discussed by Richter evinces anxiety over the use by mothers of grotesque, unclean, often lower-class wet nurses, and whereas the milk-semen relationship discussed by Amir-Moezzi functions in a positive fashion to transmit noble paternal qualities, in Ḥusna's case the priority is to preserve her purity from the classed taint of a child of unknown *nasab*. The narrative could choose to relieve this tension by simply having Ḥusna open the locket bound to Junduba's wrist that contains information about his family. Instead, it leaves his identity unresolved, and the failure of the "test of which breast" perpetuates the withholding of information.

There is, perhaps, another, more oblique way in which this portion of the text reflects an ancient literary association, by evoking a test that Moses was compelled to endure in his infancy and that figures in collections of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* as well as in Midrashic literature.[88] Fearing that the child might grow up to be a usurper because he keeps grabbing for the Pharaoh's scepter, the Pharaoh permits his wife, Āsiya, to place two vessels before the child, one containing jewels and the other hot coals. Choosing the former will confirm Moses's lust for power; choosing the latter will certify his humility. Below is William Brinner's translation of the subsequent events as they appear in al-Thaʿlabī's anthology:

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86. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Reflections on the Expression Dīn ʿAlī: The Origins of the Shiʿi Faith," in *The Study of Shiʿi Islam: History, Theology, and Law*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda, 17–46 (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 39.

87. In some circumstances, this logic cuts both ways. Many Imāmī Shiʿi legal scholars as well as Mālik b. Anas advise against employing a woman known to have been born from an adulterous relationship as a wet nurse whenever it can be avoided. In actuality, however, as Etan Kohlberg notes, this rule seems "not to have been rigorously applied, perhaps because it was not always possible to find a wet-nurse the purity of whose origins could be ascertained." See Etan Kohlberg, "The Position of the *Walad Zinā* in Imāmī Shīʿism," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48, no. 2 (1985): 247.

88. Exodus Rabbah 1:26.

"I shall put in front of him a trinket of gold and sapphire, and I shall put in front of him a live coal. If he takes the sapphire, then he understands, and you may kill him; but if he takes the coal, you will know that he is only a lad." Thereupon she placed before him a basin in which were the gold and sapphire, and another basin in which was the coal. Moses stretched out his hand in order to take the jewel and seize it, but Gabriel turned his hand away to the coals, and he grabbed a coal and put it in his mouth.[89]

As with Junduba, at issue is whether the child is worthy of a place in a well-off household, and so the test becomes a determiner of the child's survival. However, whereas the apprehension about Moses stems from the prospect of his social ambition, the concern over Junduba centers instead on his possible social inferiority. Furthermore, whereas Moses's test produces a result, Junduba's situation is left unresolved. As a consequence, the test feature of the vignette is reduplicated and refracted, with Ḥusna facing a perceived choice between taking the route of the nurses who spurned Muḥammad or "sacrificing" her pure milk for the survival of a child whose importance will prove far beyond her immediate estimation.

Nursing at a Price

Dārim returns to find his wife crying. When he inquires after the cause of her distress, she poetically recounts her misgivings about the child while giving him an all-too-familiar account of a mother's sleepless night. Below I provide the original versions of the poem and then a translation that balances the two versions, as they are quite close, in rhythmic and rhymed English:

ואסהרת לילי ואלבחאר נואצֿירי	ואללה יא דארם קד כסרת בכֿאטרי
באבן לקיט נסל קום פֿואנירי	כֿרגֿת אילא אלבר ורגֿעת לי
מכֿצֿרא מא אכתשאת רבהא קאדירי	לקיט זנאת ביה אמהו פֿי אלפֿפֿא
וקד נחרוהא מתל נחר אלאבעירי	לא אבוהא רצֿא ולא אכֿוהא בפֿעלהא
ואלבן להו דאם עלא אלארץֿ פֿאירי	וגֿבתהו אליא וקלת ארצֿעיה לאנֹל כֿאטרנא
וזאד אלבכא מנהו ואליל עאכירי	ונאולתהו אלבז אלימין ולם רצֿא
אנוח ונבכי באלדמוע אלחואדירי	וצֿאר יטול אלנוסואני חזינא
לתאמל פֿיה אלוחוש ואלטאירי	ואחרמני אלנום מן כתרת נוחהו
לאקתל נפֿסי בסיוף אלבואתירי	אידא לם תדיה מכאנהו תרדהו

واسهرت ليلي والبحار نواظيري	والله يا دارم قد كسرت بخاطري
بابن لقيط نسل قوم فواجيري	خرجت الى البرء ورجعت لي
مخضرة ما اختشات ربها قاديري	لقيط زنات به امه في الفَّة
وقد نحرها مثل نحر الابعيري	لا ابوها رضى ولا اخوها بفعلها

89. Al-Thaʿlabī, ʿArāʾis al-Majālis fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ, *or "Lives of the Prophets*," translated by William M. Brinner (Boston: Brill, 2002), 286.

والبن لـه دام على الارض فائري وجبته اليّ وقلت ارضعيه لاجل خاطرنا

وزاد البكاء منـه والليل عاكيري وناولته البز اليمين ولم رضى

انوح ونبكي بالدموع الحواديري وصار يطول النوسواني حزينة

لتأمل فيـه الوحوش والطائري واحرمني النوم من كثرة نوحه

لاقتل نفسي بسيوف البواتيري اذا لـم تديـه مكانـه ترده

Sīrat al-mujāhidīn

واسهرت في الليل الطويل بذاكري الا يا ملك دارم قد كسرت خاطري

بابن لقيط نسل قوم فواجري خرجت الي البر الفسيح وعدت لـي

مخدرة مـا اختشت رب قادري لقيط زنت به امـه وهو في الخبا

لقد نحرها مثل نحر الاباعري ابوها ردي وبلي اخوها بفعلها

ومن اجل هذا الامر كدرت خاطري وجبته وقلت ارضعيه من اجلنا

وعاد اللبن منـه علي الأرض فايري أخرجت لـه الثدي الشمال فامتنـع

ومن اجل هذا الامر كدرت خاطري وناولته البز اليمين فلم رضي

لانه لقيط نسل قوم فواجري وقلبي يقول لـي ليس لـي بـه حاجة

انوح وابكي بالدموع الحوادري وسار ينـوح بالليل واني حزينة

ومن اجل هذا الامر دادت فكايري واحرمني النوم من كثرة نوحه

لياكلوا منـه وحشها والطوايري فخذه وارميه في مكان لقيته

لاقتل روحي بالسيوف البواتري اذا لـم توديه مكانا لقيته

> I swear to God, Dārim, I'm going mad
> I didn't sleep a wink, thoughts in a spin
> You headed to the countryside but then
> Brought me home an orphan born in sin
> A child whose mother must've whored around
> Inside her own home, heedless of the Lord
> The men of her house heard what she had done
> And, like a camel, put her to the sword
> You brought this child to make of me a nurse,
> But when I gave my left side, he abstained
> Its milk spilled, wasted, gushing on the floor
> And when I gave my right, he just complained
> He kept up crying through the whole dark night,
> And here's the thing that has me going mad—
> In my heart I know there's no good cause
> For taking in a boy who has no dad.
> He kept on wailing, whimpering in the dark,
> Until, at last, I started crying too
> And as his sobs were mounting ever higher
> My own mind's afflictions only grew

> Take him back and leave him where he lay,
> Exposed to hungry bird and beast alike
> If you don't dispose of the boy where he was found,
> I'll run myself through with your sharpest spike[90]

Two motifs recur throughout this poem, especially in the more repetitious Paris version: the deteriorating mental state of Dārim's wife and her suspicion that the child is from a "fornicating people" or, more literally, a nation of adulteresses (*qawm fawājir*). The former refrain captures the psychological and physical strain of motherhood, with its sleepless nights and difficult feedings, whereas the latter raises the question of value: is this exhaustion worth it for such a child? The main consideration that undermines the infant Junduba's value is the possibility that his *nasab* has been squandered—that is, that he is the product of an extramarital flirtation between a high-born woman and a strange man—and that Ḥusna might in turn squander her lineage by bringing the child into her family.

This concern over pedigree calls to mind a staple feature of foster relationships in reality and in narrative as analyzed by anthropologist Peter Parkes, namely, that in a number of societies many pathways of milk-based fosterage were exercised almost exclusively by elite families. These fosterage methods were a means to orchestrate allegiances, creating tributary relationships aimed at developing cliental ties or shoring up loyalties to the existing social hierarchy. Relationships of milk kinship thus often emanated from higher-ranked individuals to lower-ranked ones. In certain myths, such relationships serve to ennoble humble peasants who care for displaced future protagonists in their infancy.[91] In Ḥusna's account, we see that the prospect of a reversal of this directionality is abhorrent: an elite woman suckling a lowly nursling is anathema. Compounding this concern about the maintenance of social decorum are the physiological implications of Ḥusna's continuing to nurse the foundling, which are left implicit: it will likely suppress her menses and make it difficult for her to quickly conceive a new child of her own. Continuing to nurse may also injure Ḥusna's practical chances of conceiving a child, as both medical and religious authorities often cautioned against sexual intercourse during nursing.[92]

These considerations are perhaps not at the forefront of Dārim's mind when he responds to his wife, but he nonetheless does offer to compensate her for her suffering. In the poem below, Dārim's castigation of his wife for her ill-tempered speech against Arbāb is coupled with his seeming bafflement at her refusal to nurse such a clearly noble child. Both failings,

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90. *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, 12; *Sīrat al-mujāhidīn*, fol. 8.

91. Peter Parkes, "Fosterage, Kinship, and Legend: When Milk Was Thicker than Blood?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 3 (2004): 595.

92. Though there are reports of Muḥammad explicitly deciding not to prohibit intercourse while nursing "because the Byzantines and Persians nurse their children while sexually active or pregnant and it does no harm to their children," elsewhere there is a precedent cited by some legal scholars for not having sexual intercourse with a nursing woman (*ghīla*), due in part to Muḥammad's insistence that his wife, Umm Salama, cease nursing before they could consummate their marriage. See Giladi, *Infants, Parents, and Wet Nurses*, 31–32, 98–100; Ruth Roded, "Umm Salama Hind," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill Online), http://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7723; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *kitāb al-nikāḥ*, no. 2704.

he implies, call her own social mores into question. Again, both versions of the poem are fairly close:

ומן קול שר אלנאס כוני חאדירי הא יא בנת אלעם אקצרי דיאל אלתפכאירי

ובנת אמיר נסל קום אכאבירי מעא אם דא אלמולוד אלאמירא

לא חסן להו אלרחמאן וחש נאפירי פאן כאנת אמהו קד זנאת ביה כֿפﬞיא

ואן גֿמיע האדא בקדרת קאדירי ואמהו תרצֿעהו ואלטיר יצֿללהו

דכֿירא וצלח ללמלוך אלאכאבירי וחרז דא אלמולוד מרמי בגֿנבהו

פֿלא כֿייב אלרחמאן מן כאן צאבירי פֿמני כֿוד מאלא גֿזילא ואראֿעיה

ومن قول شر الناس كوني حاذيري ها يا بنت العم اقصري ديال التفكائري

وبنت امير نسل قوم اكابيري مع ام ذا المولود الاميرة

لا حسن له الرحمان وحش نفائري فان كانت امه قد زنات به خفيا

وان جميع هذا بقدرة قادري وأمه ترضعه والطير يظلّه

ذخيرة وصلح للملوك الاكابيري وحرز ذا المولود مرمي بجنبه

فلا خيّب الرحمان من كان صابيري فمني خوذ مالا جزيلا وارضعيه

Sīrat al-mujāhidīn

ومن قول شر الخلق كوني محاذري الا يا بنت عمي اقصري ذا التفاكري

وبنت امير نسل قوم اكابري فما ام ذي المولود الا اميرة

لما حسن الرحمن له وحش نافري فلو كانت امه زنت به

وان جميع هذا بقدرة قادري غزالا نرضعه وطيرا يظله

دخيرا ويصلح للملوك الاكابري وحرز ذا المولود مرمي بجانبه

فما خيب الرحمن من كان صابري فمني خذي المال الكثير ورضعي

O my cousin, how dare you think this way?
And surely you know better than to slander,
The mother of this child is noble-born!
When have princesses been known to philander?
If she had conceived the boy by whoring,
Would God have kept him from stampede and sun?
And would his mother's milk have flowed in death
[*alt.* would he have nursed from a gazelle],
Were it not the work of the Most Able One?
And beside the child was flung a locket,
Hewn from fine metal, fitting for a king,
So take my fortune and go nurse him, now
Surely God aids the long-suffering[93]

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93. *Sīrat al-Dalhama*, 12; *Sīrat al-mujāhidīn*, fols. 8–9.

Dārim then promises his wife thirty dirhams per month, with ten more for her mother. At this promise, "Ḥusna was gladdened and nursed," and, perhaps in light of her changed attitude, Junduba readily accepts her breast. Although it might seem that Ḥusna has won one over on her beleaguered spouse, the Quran explicitly prescribes payment to wives for nursing newborns as well as fair compensation for wet nurses (Ḥusna presumably acted in the former stead rather than the latter). Verse 233 of *Sūrat al-Baqara* reads:

> Mothers suckle their children for two whole years, if they wish to complete the term, and clothing and maintenance must be borne by the father in a fair manner. No one should be burdened with more than they can bear: no mother shall be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor any father on account of his. The same duty is incumbent upon the father's heir. If, by mutual consent and consultation, the couple wish to wean [the child], they will not be blamed, nor will there be any blame if you wish to engage a wet nurse, provided you pay her as agreed in a fair manner. Be mindful of God, knowing that He sees everything you do.[94]

Exegetes debate the exact nature of the provision that is due a nursing wife from her husband (called *rizq*, maintenance or sustenance). Though the Quran specifies material goods such as clothing and food, it does not name amounts beyond *bi-l-maʿrūf*, "according to what is known or intuitively correct." Al-Ṭabarī connects the quantity of *rizq* to the subsequent injunction against overburdening a parent, concluding that the amount must be in proportion to the husband's means: because God has created people rich and poor, He "commands the two alike to provide that which is required for his wife's provision, [according to] the measure of his wealth."[95] Ibn Kathīr adds a stipulation about local standards of living, saying that *bi-l-maʿrūf* should be interpreted as "taking the customs of similar people [i.e., other women] in their local community into consideration, [at a level that is] neither excessive nor privative," in addition to being within the husband's means.[96]

Interestingly, the Shiʿi commentator al-Ṭūsī takes a slightly more legalistic approach to this verse, arguing that the interpretation of *bi-l-maʿrūf* hinges on whether ceasing nursing when the child turns two is merely recommended (*mandūb*) or incumbent upon the individual (*farḍ*). In his view, payment is required only for an obligatory service. Therefore, if a woman continues nursing beyond the two-year mark in a supererogatory fashion, she may have no claim to further payment.[97] Al-Ṭūsī thus seeks to prevent wives from using prolonged nursing as a means of extracting excessive allowances from their husbands, though one may reasonably wonder how often such cases would occur. The anecdote in the *sīra* provides an opposing example of a husband initially withholding the requisite funds.

There are also precedents for supplementing a wife's income when she is caring for a newborn that perhaps deepened the resonances of this vignette for the Tunisian version's intended audiences. Masekhet Ketubbôt, the section of the Talmud most directly concerned

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94. Translation from *The Qurʾān*, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 26–27.

95. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1955), 5:44.

96. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 1:634.

97. Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1830), 2:255.

with contracts and contractual obligations in marriage, advocates that a wife's budget be increased and her other household chores and handiwork decreased while she is nursing.[98] And, of course, such precedents also emanate from nature, as the physical demands of nursing lend support to the idea that a nursing woman should enjoy increased access to food when possible.

These scriptural and exegetical passages posit breastfeeding as an exercise of social capital rather than a simple means of supplying nutrition and mandate the compensation of aspects of childrearing labor. Situating Ḥusna's interaction with Dārim within this framework complicates the superficial reading of Ḥusna as a minor villain whom an ominous old crone manipulates into showing callousness toward a newborn child. Dārim promises her a handsome amount of money, and as a tribal chief he can clearly afford it. Moreover, he is supposed to be sponsoring her financially as a new mother, and the exegetical consensus is that this funding should be in accordance with his ostensibly ample means. Such a reading transforms the scene from one in which a wife imposes on her husband to one in which she negotiates with him to have her needs met, leveraging the exclusive resources that she possesses in order to do so. Thus, although we could see Ḥusna as the anti-ideal, contrasted with the likes of Moses's tenacious mother and the self-sacrificing Ḥalīma, we can also recognize in her a more pragmatic and even necessary image of a wife and a new mother, namely, one who cares for her own mental and physical wellbeing, values her own labor, and ensures that her childcare burdens are understood and supported by her spouse.

Conclusion

The femininity of women has often been interpreted as a force of chaos and subterfuge in Arabic popular literature: using their womanly bodies and speech, they exercise *kayd* (wiles) and foment *fitna* (discord).[99] Many of the female figures in Arabic *siyar* that have drawn the most curiosity and admiration from modern audiences and scholars are those who embody what might be considered relatively androgynous or masculinized ideals, as the warrior women whom Remke Kruk has analyzed illustrate. However, as Amanda Hannoosh Steinberg has argued, there are also many quieter and more quotidian female exemplars in the *siyar*. I have argued that Ḥusna belongs to this type. Although she at first glance appears to be using her body's gendered capacities in a calculating manner reminiscent of the sexualized, wily, and chaotic women of the popular imagination, with her breasts playing the part of a phallus in Junduba's "paternity test," ultimately Ḥusna uses her ability to nurse to enforce the rights that the Quran guarantees to her as a caregiver. Furthermore, by calling attention to her bodily and mental hardships and needs, her behavior challenges the silent and solicitous ideal of maternal behavior embodied in the self-sacrificing women of prophetic literature.

As a nursing woman, Ḥusna is in good literary company, given the wealth of lactation and nursing motifs in prophetic and popular lore. However, there is a notable difference

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98. Masekhet Ketubbôt 5:9. See also Rosenblum, "'Blessings of the Breasts,'" 158.

99. On the significance of *kayd* in *Alf layla wa-layla*, see Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body, Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), passim.

between these two corpora on the issue of who does the nursing. Tales of the prophets are populated solely by human nurses (with the occasional angelic intercessor), who are celebrated for continuing to nurse even under difficult circumstances. By contrast, legendary heroes are often nursed by beasts in the absence of their human parents, and through their milk these creatures can impart certain animalistic qualities, affinities, and preferences to their nurslings. Both forms of nursing are found in variations of *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, with Arbāb continuing to nurse even in death in some versions and a gazelle taking up the task in others. Because such episodes are didactic or legendary, they often play with or actively reject the "real," in ways big and small. So, Muḥammad's wet nurse Ḥalīma seems completely unconcerned by the personal and financial ramifications of her actions, agreeing to nurse the prophet despite his family's inability to pay and implicitly censuring the other wet nurses of her tribe for not wanting to provide for an orphan at what would likely have been their personal expense.

By this metric, despite the miracle of his suckling in the desert, the auspicious coincidence of Ḥusna's lactation and childlessness, and the absurd test of his legitimacy, the story of the foundling Junduba nonetheless provides a realistic and candid portrayal of the considerations that accompany the nursing of others' children. Though the text primes us to see her as a bad actor by drawing a direct link between Ḥusna's behavior and the devilish inclinations of her mother, her conduct discloses anxieties about class, genealogy, and stigma as well as about the physiological and psychological logistics of nursing. These anxieties have echoes in traditional discussions of kinship structures and familial duties, suggesting that Ḥusna's trepidation reflects a broader social discourse. Moreover, her concerns underscore the social and legal problems inherent in nursing foundling children—an issue that is endemic to popular literature, which is rich with heroes who have been orphaned or estranged from their natal families. The circumstances of their displacement often mirror social plights typical to the stories' settings, from internecine warfare and practices of captivity and slavery to anxieties over disability and difference and even suggestive references to female infanticide and sex-selective family planning.[100] In this fashion, the story of Ḥusna and Junduba innovates on a common literary topos

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100. Regarding the uses of *siyar* as social allegory, Robert Brunschvig argues that *Sīrat ʿAntar*, in which the black-skinned ʿAntar is separated from his father because of the latter's rejection of his slave son, may be construed as a *roman à thèse*, advocating more complete recognition for children born from concubinage (the effect of which is compounded, in ʿAntar's case, by racial difference). See R. Brunschvig, "ʿAbd," In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill Online), http://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0003. A similar reading is possible in the case of Fāṭima Dhāt al-Himma, whose father initially wishes to kill her because of her gender but is forced to rethink his position upon confronting her later in life on the battlefield, where she proves her mettle as an elite warrior. These questions often have a transhistorical resonance, both at the emotive level and because of the intimate empathy brought about by personal experience. Dwight Reynolds notes that an episode in *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* in which the medieval hero Abū Zayd kills his Quran tutor for beating another student prompts "heated discussions" when recited to contemporary audiences. He speculates that rural listeners may harbor bitter memories of the physical brutality inflicted along class lines in Quran schools, with poorer children receiving the brunt of beatings, "whereas boys from rich and powerful families are left untouched." In this way, the demise Abū Zayd's Quran teacher distills elements of contemporary audiences' experiences of education and class—and perhaps their fantasies of vindication—into a single, brief episode. Reynolds, "Abū Zayd al-Hilālī," 93–94.

by showcasing one such issue. Ultimately, by speaking up—flouting her husband's initial demands, questioning his social judgment, and defying common assumptions about the absolute, universal nature of maternal instinct and affection—Ḥusna calls attention to her status as a new and hesitant foster mother and asserts control over her domestic realm. In the process, she guides her husband toward correct practice vis-à-vis a nursing spouse and positions herself as central to their new family arrangement.

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An Unexpected Romance:
Reevaluating the Authorship of the *Khosrow-nāma**

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Abstract

This article examines the authorship of the Khosrow-nāma, *a Perso-Hellenic romance traditionally attributed to ʿAṭṭār. Forty years ago, Shafiʿi-Kadkani laid out a complex argument against ʿAṭṭār's authorship. He claimed that the attribution was a result of a later forgery, basing his argument on internal chronological evidence, religious and stylistic markers, and the manuscript tradition. The present article systematically evaluates this argument, showing it to be less persuasive than it first appears. First, I introduce new manuscript evidence to demonstrate that the poem was circulating under ʿAṭṭār's name already before the time of the alleged forgery. I then reassess the internal evidence to show that the* Khosrow-nāma *could, in fact, fit into a plausible chronology of ʿAṭṭār's oeuvre. Next, I critique the stylistic and religious arguments against ʿAṭṭār's authorship, arguing that the romance does not deviate from ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works nearly as much as is often supposed. I conclude by suggesting that the available data are explained more easily by accepting ʿAṭṭār's authorship than by adopting the theory of a later forgery.*

F ew poets have had as far-reaching an influence as Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār (d. ca. 618/1221). The author of the famous *Manṭeq al-ṭayr* and several other important works, he is remembered both within the tradition and outside it as a critical figure in the development of Persian mystical poetry.[1] As is the case with many premodern Persian poets, as

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   1. Moḥammad Reżā Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, by Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1387/[2008–9]), 38–50; Julian Baldick, "Persian Ṣūfī Poetry up to the Fifteenth Century," in *History of Persian Literature: From the Beginning of the Islamic Period to the Present Day*, ed. George Morrison (Leiden: Brill, 1981); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Some Observations on the Place of ʿAṭṭār within the Sufi Tradition," in *Colloquio italo-iraniano sul poeta mistico Fariduddin ʿAṭṭār (Roma, 24–25 Marzo 1977)* (Rome: Accademia

his fame grew spurious works began to circulate under his name. With ʿAṭṭār, however, the number of spurious attributions is staggering: by the eleventh/seventeenth century, he was said to have composed a total of 114 works, equal to the number of *sura*s in the Quran.[2] Given the sacral significance of the number, it cannot be taken as an accurate count of all attributions, but it testifies to the scale of his supposed output. According to ʿAli Miranṣāri, who has produced a bibliographical survey of ʿAṭṭār's works, at least fifty-nine independent titles, many of them still extant, have at some point been attributed to him.[3] Some of these works were composed by other poets who went by the name of ʿAṭṭār, and their poems were inadvertently absorbed into the oeuvre of their more famous predecessor.[4] Others, however, were deliberate forgeries: the *Lesān al-ghayb* and the *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾeb*, for instance, were written by a ninth/fifteenth-century Shiʿi poet, ʿAṭṭār-e Tuni, who purposefully presented himself as Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, the author of the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*.[5]

In the twentieth century, with the advancement of textual criticism, scholars such as Qazvini, Sherani, Nafisi, and Ritter began to methodically whittle away at these spurious accretions to ʿAṭṭār's oeuvre.[6] Through their work, a stable scholarly consensus emerged: ʿAṭṭār was thought to have written four mystical-didactic *masnavi*s (the *Elāhi-nāma*, the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, the *Asrār-nāma*, and the *Moṣibat-nāma*), a *divān*, a collection of quatrains (the *Mokhtār-nāma*), and a prose hagiography (*Tazkerat al-awliā*). These scholars also accepted as authentic a *masnavi* romance that was commonly attributed to ʿAṭṭār and known as the *Khosrow-nāma*. Unlike ʿAṭṭār's mystical-didactic *masnavi*s, which comprise short anecdotes and homiletic exhortations, the *Khosrow-nāma* recounts the story of two royal lovers, tragically separated, as they seek to reunite; it is thus reminiscent of Greek novels and Perso-Hellenic romances such as *Varqa o Golshāh* and *Vis o Rāmin*. The work is a clear generic outlier in ʿAṭṭār's oeuvre; nevertheless, because ʿAṭṭār includes the title *Khosrow-nāma* in a list of his works, and because the author of the *Khosrow-nāma* identifies himself as ʿAṭṭār and as the author of the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, the abovementioned scholars accepted the poem as genuine.

Nazionale dei Lincei, 1978), 12–13; Husayn Ilahi-Gomeshei, "Of Scent and Sweetness: ʿAṭṭār's Legacy in Rūmī, Shabistarī, and Ḥāfiẓ," in *ʿAṭṭār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle (London: I. B. Tauris and Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2006).

2. Sayyed Nurallāh Shushtari, *Majāles al-moʾmenin* (Tehran: Ketāb-forushi-ye Eslāmiya, 1365/[1986–87]), 99.

3. ʿAli Miranṣāri, *Ketāb-shenāsi-ye Shaykh Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār-e Nayshāburi* (Tehran: Anjoman-e Āṣār va Mafākhar-e Farhangi, 1384/[2005–6]), 7–16.

4. Mirzā Moḥammad Qazvini, introduction to *Tazkerat al-awliā*, by Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, ed. Reynold Nicholson (London: Luzac, 1905), 1:14; Hellmut Ritter, "Philologika X: Farīdaddīn ʿAṭṭār," *Der Islam* 25 (1939): 157.

5. ʿAbduʾl-Ḳādir Sarfarāz, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Urdu Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Bombay* (Bombay: University of Bombay, 1935), 60–65; Saʿid Nafisi, *Jostoju dar aḥvāl va āṣār-e Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār-e Nayshāburi* (Tehran: Eqbāl, 1320/[1941]), 147–54; Hellmut Ritter, "Philologika XIV: Farīduddīn ʿAṭṭār II," *Oriens* 11, no. 1/2 (1958): 3–4.

6. Qazvini, introduction to *Tazkerat al-awliā*, 1:14; Sarfarāz, *Descriptive Catalogue*, 60–65; Nafisi, *Jostoju*, 70–73, 145–67; Hellmut Ritter, "ʿAṭṭār," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill Online), posted 2012, https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0074; Ritter, "Philologika X," 156–60; Ritter, "Philologika XIV," 1–8.

In 1979, however, the poet and scholar Shafiʿi-Kadkani laid out an erudite, intricate argument claiming that the *Khosrow-nāma* was a spurious attribution and that its preface, in which the poem's author identifies himself as ʿAṭṭār, was the work of a ninth/fifteenth-century forger.[7] This influential argument is now almost universally accepted, and it has conditioned nearly all of the major work on ʿAṭṭār produced since its publication. Leonard Lewison and Christopher Shackle, in their edited volume on ʿAṭṭār, deem Shafiʿi-Kadkani's rejection of the *Khosrow-nāma* definitive.[8] Newer reference works and editions, including the third edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, repeat Shafiʿi-Kadkani's conclusions.[9] Of the two most recent monographs on ʿAṭṭār, by Navid Kermani and Claudia Yaghoobi, the former dismisses the *Khosrow-nāma* with a citation to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, and the latter fails to mention it at all.[10] As far as the scholarship seems to be concerned, the case is closed: the *Khosrow-nāma* is spurious, and it has thus justly disappeared from the arena of ʿAṭṭār studies.

Shafiʿi-Kadkani's argument, however, although frequently cited as settled fact, has not been systematically evaluated.[11] In the present article, I will problematize Shafiʿi-Kadkani's analysis and propose a more plausible scenario, in which the *Khosrow-nāma* is indeed an authentic work by ʿAṭṭār. Although there can be no doubting Shafiʿi-Kadkani's brilliance, his argument is, as a whole, less convincing than the sum of its parts: he seems to have begun with the assumption that the *Khosrow-nāma* was forged, and then worked backward to determine how that could have been the case. As we shall see, his conclusions are not justified by the stylistic, religious, manuscript, and internal chronological evidence he provides. Ultimately, it is much easier to accept the *Khosrow-nāma* as an authentic work of ʿAṭṭār's than to imagine it was the product of a complex literary conspiracy, as Shafiʿi-Kadkani proposes.

If the romance were to be accepted as an authentic work, much of the scholarship on ʿAṭṭār's life and his place in literary history would need to rethought. One of the difficulties for ʿAṭṭār scholarship has been the dearth of biographical information, both within his

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7. Moḥammad Reżā Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, by Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1389/[2010–11]), 33–59.

8. Leonard Lewisohn and Christopher Shackle, editors' introduction to Lewisohn and Shackle, *Spiritual Flight*, xviii. See also Hermann Landolt, "ʿAṭṭār, Sufism, and Ismailism," in Lewisohn and Shackle, *Spiritual Flight*, 3.

9. Moḥammad Esteʿlāmi, introduction to *Taẕkerat al-awliā*, by Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, rev. ed. (Tehran: Zavvār, 1383/[2004–5]), xxv; Miranṣāri, *Ketāb-shenāsi*, 75, 232; Omid Safi, "ʿAṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill Online), posted 2016, https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23976.

10. Navid Kermani, *The Terror of God: Attar, Job and the Metaphysical Revolt*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 30; Claudia Yaghoobi, *Subjectivity in ʿAṭṭār, Persian Sufism, and European Mysticism* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2017).

11. ʿAbd al-Ḥosayn Zarrinkub agrees with Shafiʿi-Kadkani's conclusion that the *Khosrow-nāma* is spurious, but he criticizes some of the latter's specific arguments in a scattered fashion: *Ṣedā-ye bāl-e simorgh* (Tehran: Sokhan, 1386/[2007–8]), 69; *Ḥekāyat hamchonān bāqi* (Tehran: Sokhan, 1376/[1997–98]), 170–88. Cf. Shafiʿi-Kadkani's response in *Zabur-e pārsi: Negāhi be zendegi va ghazal-hā-ye ʿAṭṭār* (Tehran: Āgāh, 1378/[1999]), 84–90.

works and in the external sources. While the *Khosrow-nāma* is hardly effusive on the matter, it does provide some important biographical data not found in his other works, including an account of his mother's death and some information on the chronological order of his oeuvre. Especially interesting is ʿAṭṭār's praise of one Ebn al-Rabib as his formal spiritual guide, which challenges the current consensus that ʿAṭṭār was "more of an empathetic observer of Sufism than an active exponent."[12] By raising the possibility of the *Khosrow-nāma*'s authenticity, the present article aims to encourage scholars to take a fresh look at such issues, which have not been seriously reconsidered for a generation.

Even more significantly for our understanding of literary history, the *Khosrow-nāma* shows that ʿAṭṭār positioned himself against a wider range of poetic models than is usually thought. In contemporary scholarship, ʿAṭṭār is almost always seen as a stepping stone between Sanāʾi and Rumi; this teleological reading is particularly common in the literary criticism of Shafiʿi-Kadkani himself.[13] The composition of the *Khosrow-nāma*, however, complicates this picture and suggests he was working not just against Sanāʾi but also against versifiers of romantic tales such as Gorgāni, ʿAyyuqi, and even Neẓāmi. Indeed, if the *Khosrow-nāma* is authentic, then ʿAṭṭār composed five *masnavi*s, perhaps the earliest imitation of the *khamsa*.[14] The investigation into possible intertextual linkages between ʿAṭṭār and Neẓāmi has only barely begun, and I hope that this article will set the stage for wider-ranging analysis of ʿAṭṭār's literary models and his relationship to the romantic tradition.[15] Finally, ʿAṭṭār's authorship of the *Khosrow-nāma* troubles reductive notions of "mystical poetry" and "mystical poets," essentializing categories that have come to dominate discussions of ʿAṭṭār and that likely motivated the excision of the *Khosrow-nāma* from his oeuvre in the first place.

A Little Romance

The romance in question is most commonly known as the *Khosrow-nāma*, but it also circulated under the titles *Gol o Khosrow*, *Gol o Hermez*, and *Hermez o Golrokh*, in reference to the tale's two principal lovers—Gol also being known as Golrokh, and Hermez being the name given to Khosrow by his foster parents.[16] Although his name is often voweled as Hormoz in modern scholarship, it frequently rhymes with words such as *hargez* and *ʿājez*, meaning that its final vowel must be "e."[17] Shafiʿi-Kadkani further suggests that the

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12. Kermani, *Terror of God*, 26.

13. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, 38; Shafiʿi-Kadkani, *Zabur*, 19–20.

14. ʿAṭṭār wrote *masnavi*s only in the *hazaj* and *ramal* meters, so his five works, unlike later formal imitations, do not metrically match those of Neẓāmi.

15. Barāt Zanjāni, "Ḥakim Neẓāmi-ye Ganjavi va Shaykh Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār," *Āyanda* 2, no. 9 (Ordibehesht 1362/[April–May 1983]): 106–14.

16. Titles of this format (*X and Y*) are common for the romance genre: see Cameron Cross, "The Poetics of Romantic Love in *Vis & Rāmin*" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2015), 104.

17. Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār (attrib.), *Khosrow-nāma*, ed. Aḥmad Sohayli-Khwānsāri (Tehran: Anjoman-e Āsār-e Melli, 1339/[1961–62]), lines 1057, 1317. All references to the printed edition of the *Khosrow-nāma* are to Sohayli-Khwānsāri's edition.

name should be fully voweled as Hermez, which he links to the Greek name Hermes. This reading would be consistent with the Hellenistic roots of the romance genre as well as the geography of the story, which shifts between Constantinople and Khuzestān.[18] (One should note, however, that the name Hermes is usually transliterated with an "s," not a "z," in medieval Arabic and Persian).

The *Khosrow-nāma* trades in narrative structures and topoi that are characteristic of a group of fifth/eleventh-century Persian verse romances—including *Varqa o Golshāh*, *Vis o Rāmin*, and *Vāmeq o ʿAẕrā*—and that bear a striking resemblance to the Greek novels of the early Common Era. Both traditions can be traced back to the syncretic literary milieu of the eastern Mediterranean during the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods, which was characterized by a cross-fertilization of stories, narremes, and tropes between Greek and Persian literary cultures. In general, the heroes and heroines of these romances (whether written in Greek or in Persian) are young, of noble lineage, and hopelessly in love. They are separated by force or chance, and the bulk of the story is devoted to their quest to reunite and (especially in the woman's case) to maintain their chastity. Once reunited, they marry and live out the rest of their lives in happiness. Within this basic plot, numerous topoi and narrative structures reappear. The story often begins with the protagonists' conception; as youths they fall in love at first sight; they are afflicted by shipwrecks, imprisonment, and bandits; the woman, and sometimes also the man, is repeatedly propositioned and/or threatened by sexual violence but escapes with chastity intact; to evade danger, they often disguise themselves, and readers are treated to numerous scenes involving failed recognition and revelation. The lovers' peregrinations take them all over the eastern Mediterranean, reflecting the cultural heterogeneity and literary syncretism of the genre's origins.[19]

The *Khosrow-nāma* fits very comfortably into this generic model. The story begins with the Qayṣar (Caesar) of Rum, who has great wealth and power but no son. He owns a beautiful slave girl, and after a tryst she becomes pregnant, but Qayṣar must leave to fight invaders immediately after their encounter, so he does not learn of her pregnancy. The baby, who is born while the king is away, is named Khosrow; or, to be more exact, "They gave that heart-stealer a name in Greek [*rumi*] / Which in the Persian [*pārsi*] language is 'Khosrow-shāh.'"[20] The infant is then spirited out of the country to Khuzestān by a loyal servant to protect him from a cabal. He is raised by the king of Khuzestān's gardener, who gives him the name Hermez. He grows up to be a strapping young man, an expert in all realms of knowledge and skilled in the arts of war. One day, Gol, the princess of Khuzestān, is strolling on the roof of the palace, and she catches sight of Hermez napping in the garden and immediately falls in love. But she has already been promised in marriage to the king of Isfahan, and when she

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18. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, *Zabur*, 101. *Vāmeq o ʿAẕrā* also includes Greek names that were transliterated into the Perso-Arabic script: see Bo Utas, "Did ʿAdhrā Remain a Virgin?," *Orientalia Suecana* 3335 (1984–86): 429–41.

19. Dick Davis, *Panthea's Children: Hellenistic Novels and Medieval Persian Romances* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 2002); Cross, "Poetics of Romantic Love," 94–135; Tomas Hägg, "The Oriental Reception of Greek Novels: A Survey with Some Preliminary Considerations," *Symbolae Osloenses* 61, no. 1 (1986): 99–131.

20. ʿAṭṭār (attrib.), *Khosrow-nāma*, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Supplément persan 1434 (hereafter cited as BnF 1434), fol. 28v. Cf. Sohayli-Khwānsāri's printed edition, line 882.

has her father call off the marriage, the former raises an army to take her by force. Thus begins a long set of adventures featuring cannibals, bandits, disguises, cross-dressing, love triangles, betrayal, shipwrecks, and daring escapes. Although Gol and Khosrow are reunited at several points, circumstances always conspire to quickly separate them again. When Khosrow finally manages to defeat the king of Isfahan at the end of the story, the lovers are married in Constantinople along with several other couples of supporting characters who variously aided (and sometimes opposed) them during their trials, and they live happily for thirty more years until their deaths.[21]

ʿAṭṭār lists a work titled *Khosrow-nāma* as one of his own in the preface to the *Mokhtār-nāma*, and the author of the *Khosrow-nāma* identifies himself as ʿAṭṭār in the preface to the romance. However, Shafiʿi-Kadkani claims that the romance's preface is a ninth/fifteenth-century forgery that was fraudulently attached to the poem. He points out that just as the *Mokhtār-nāma*'s preface refers to the *Khosrow-nāma* as a completed work, so too does the *Khosrow-nāma*'s preface refer to the *Mokhtār-nāma* as a completed work. This fact leads to a chicken-and-egg problem that, according to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, no possible chronology could plausibly explain. On the basis of stylistic, religious, and manuscript evidence, he further argues for a ninth/fifteenth-century provenance for the poem and its allegedly forged preface. As for ʿAṭṭār's inclusion of the *Khosrow-nāma* in his list of previous titles, Shafiʿi-Kadkani reasons that the mention refers not to the romance in question but to the *Elāhi-nāma*, the authorship of which is not in doubt. He suggests that this mystical-didactic *maṡnavi* was originally known as the *Khosrow-nāma* and only later came to circulate under its present title.

Shafiʿi-Kadkani first advanced his argument in 1979 in the introduction to his edition of the *Mokhtār-nāma.* Since then, he has introduced several complicating lines of argumentation, first in 1999 in *Zabur-e pārsi* and more recently in 2008 in his introduction to his edition of the *Elāhi-nāma*.[22] These later additions and revisions are less systematic than the original argument, however, and it is not always clear how they are meant to be integrated into his previous claims. The 1979 version of his argument remains the most comprehensive and the most widely cited, so we must deal with its claims directly. Over the course of the following discussion, however, I will also mention the later variations and conclusions wherever relevant.

Manuscript Evidence

Many of ʿAṭṭār's authentic works exist in manuscripts dated as early as the end of the seventh/thirteenth century. According to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, however, the earliest manuscripts of the *Khosrow-nāma* do not appear until the ninth/fifteenth century, suggesting a much later composition; he further argues that this is consistent with the romance's stylistic and

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21. For a detailed summary of the entire tale, see Sohayli-Khwānsāri's introduction to the *Khosrow-nāma*, v–xxv; Ritter, "Philologika X," 161–71.

22. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, *Zabur*, 96–101; Moḥammad Reżā Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Elāhi-nāma*, by Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1388/[2009–10]), 48–63.

religious content, which also point to a ninth/fifteenth-century provenance.[23] The allegedly late appearance of the *Khosrow-nāma* relative to ʿAṭṭār's other works does seem a strong reason to be suspicious of its authenticity. But Shafiʿi-Kadkani's reading of the manuscript evidence is incomplete. In particular, he overlooks an early manuscript of the *Khosrow-nāma* held by the Bibliothèque nationale de France, which bears a colophon stating that it was completed on 29 Shawwāl 696/August 27, 1297, in line with the earliest manuscripts of ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works.[24] Shafiʿi-Kadkani cites only the handlist of Aḥmad Monzavi for his information on these manuscripts, and Monzavi does not include this early copy.[25] Nevertheless, it is surprising that Shafiʿi-Kadkani was not aware of it, since it served, along with the 1878 Lucknow lithograph, as the basis for Ritter's discussion of the poem in his seminal 1939 article on ʿAṭṭār.[26]

Written in a rough but legible *naskh*, this modest manuscript was likely produced for sale or for a minor collector, not a royal patron. It displays the archaic spellings that one would expect from a manuscript of this age, such as *ki* for *ke*, and it does not distinguish between the letters *be* and *pe*, *jim* and *che*, or *kāf* and *gāf*. Final *yay* is written with two points above the letter. The postvocalic *ẕāl*, which was fading over the course of the seventh/thirteenth century, has not been retained.[27] The text is framed by a rule-border of double red lines. According to Blochet's handlist, several of its folios were redone in the nineteenth century, and a dozen of its folios do seem to have been written in a different, and likely much later, hand; they are fully pointed and lack the rule-border.[28] The first three folios also appear to have been rewritten at some point. Although they more closely resemble the original in terms of style, they are much sloppier, and the rule-border seems to have been drawn freely without the aid of a straightedge.[29] Finally, a pair of folios closer to the end of the manuscript were written in yet another hand. They lack the rule-border, and the hemistichs are separated by (usually) three red marks.[30] The Arabic colophon appears to be written in the same hand as the original folios, with its distinctive ligatures between *yay* and *nun* and slating points, although it is more compact than the surrounding Persian text. The scribe may, therefore, have recut the pen before writing the colophon, or he may have focused more intently on his work as he switched from Persian to Arabic and from text to paratext.

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23. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 55–56.

24. BnF 1434, fol. 233r. I have examined the manuscript in digital reproduction, which can be accessed online at http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc1006349.

25. Aḥmad Monzavi, *Fehrest-e noskha-hā-ye fārsi-ye khaṭṭi* (Tehran: Moʾassasa-ye Farhangi-ye Manṭeqa, 1348–51/[1969–72]), 4:3084–85.

26. Ritter, "Philologika X," 144–46. Ritter treats the manuscript as an authentic early copy, although he hedges somewhat by initially introducing it as "supposedly (*angeblich*) written in 696 h" (145).

27. Ludwig Paul, "Persian Language i. Early New Persian," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed., ed. Ehsan Yarshater, updated November 19, 2013, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/persian-language-1-early-new-persian.

28. E. Blochet, *Catalogue des manuscrits persans* (Paris: Réunion des bibliothèques nationales, 1905–34), 3:87–88; BnF 1434, fols. 80r–91v.

29. BnF 1434, fols. 1r–3v.

30. Ibid., fols. 186r–187v.

In any case, there is no indication that the colophon has been altered, and the original folios are stylistically consistent with a late seventh/thirteenth-century provenance (fig. 1).
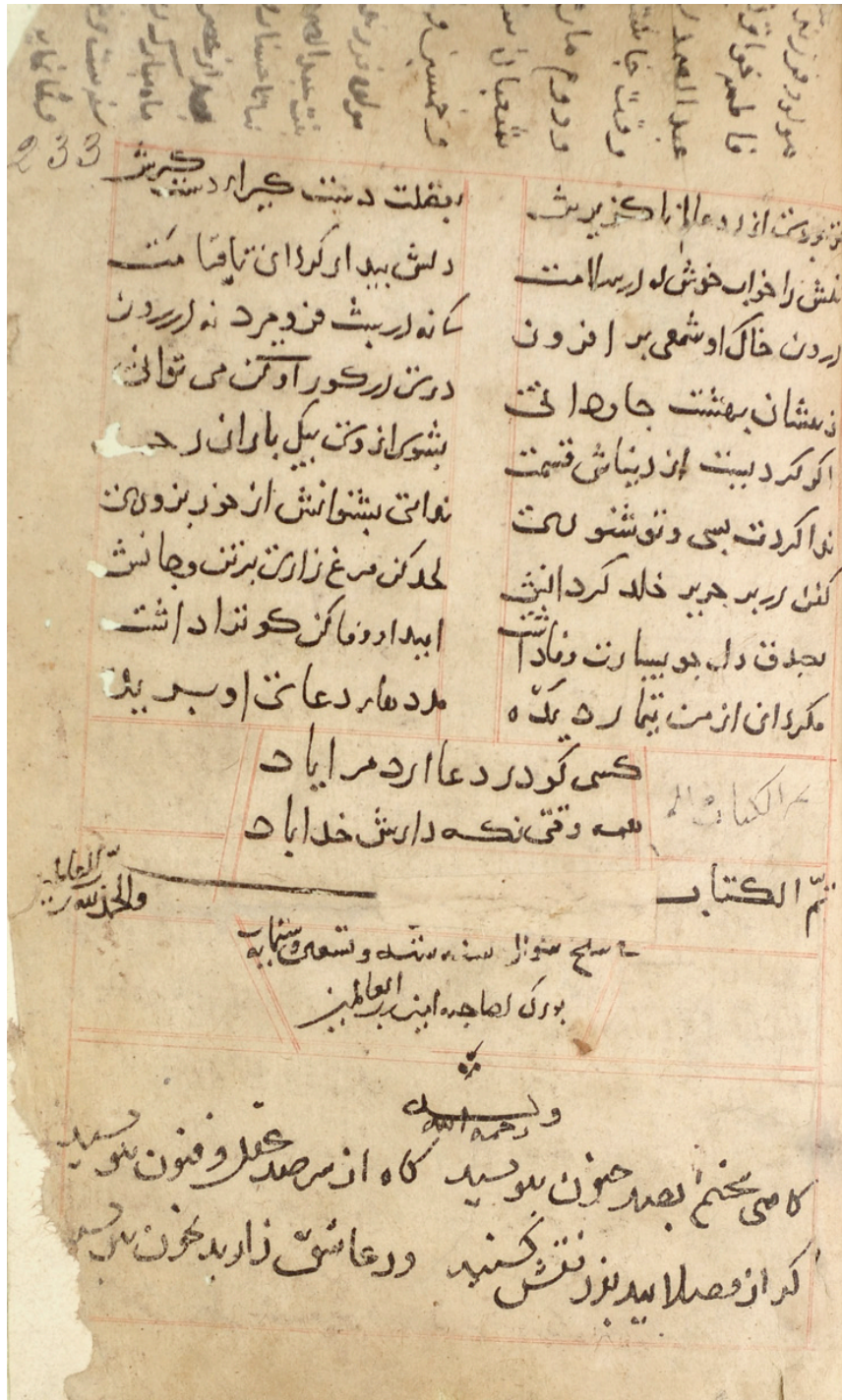
Figure 1. Conclusion and colophon of BnF 1434, fol. 233r.
Image courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France.

ʿAli Miranṣāri, who accepts the argument for the *Khosrow-nāma*'s spuriousness, lists this manuscript in his bibliographical survey of ʿAṭṭār's works but quotes Blochet's comment that some of its folios were rewritten in the nineteenth century. He claims, on this basis, that the alleged date of composition is not trustworthy.[31] These later folios, however, are clearly identifiable, and the vast majority of the manuscript appears original and unaltered, including the preface (with the exception of the title page and the first two folios) and the final page with the colophon.

On its own, of course, the existence of this manuscript does not prove that the *Khosrow-nāma* was composed by ʿAṭṭār. Likewise, we should note that for most of ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works, several manuscripts exist from the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries, whereas the *Khosrow-nāma* is attested only by this single copy.[32] Nevertheless, the Bibliothèque nationale manuscript shows that the *Khosrow-nāma* cannot be a product of the ninth/fifteenth century, as Shafiʿi-Kadkani claims in the 1979 version of his argument, since it was already circulating in the seventh/thirteenth century. In 1999, by contrast, Shafiʿi-Kadkani allowed that the romance may have been composed as early as the seventh/thirteenth century, but he still insisted that the work's preface was a later forgery attached to the poem during the eighth/fourteenth or ninth/fifteenth century.[33] However, this chronology, too, is disproved by the BnF manuscript, since it shows that the complete preface was already attached to the poem by the end of the seventh/thirteenth century. The BnF manuscript thus brings ʿAṭṭār's authorship back into the realm of possibility, at least from a chronological perspective.

Even though the romance and its preface were circulating in the late seventh/thirteenth century, their attribution to ʿAṭṭār may still very well be spurious. And even though this manuscript shows that Shafiʿi-Kadkani's dating of the poem and its preface to the ninth/ fifteenth century on the basis of stylistic and religious evidence was incorrect, there may still be good reasons to dismiss the attribution to ʿAṭṭār on such grounds. We must therefore carefully consider the stylistic and religious evidence, along with the alleged "contradictions" in the *Khosrow-nāma*'s preface.

An Ouroboric Oeuvre

Ironically, one of the main points adduced by Shafiʿi-Kadkani to prove the *Khosrow-nāma*'s spuriousness is one that led Ritter to believe that the work was authentic: it references ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works, and it is referenced by those undisputed works in turn. More specifically, in the introduction to his collection of quatrains, the *Mokhtār-nāma*, ʿAṭṭār enumerates his works and includes the title *Khosrow-nāma* in the list; likewise, the author of the *Khosrow-nāma* provides a similar enumeration in the preface to the romance, claiming the *Mokhtār-nāma* and other authentic works of ʿAṭṭār as his own. As Shafiʿi-Kadkani points out, however, acceptance of these statements at face value creates a chicken-and-egg problem that plagues any attempt to reconstruct the chronology of

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31. Miranṣāri, *Ketāb-shenāsi*, 234.

32. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 55.

33. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, *Zabur*, 99–100.

'Aṭṭār's oeuvre. If 'Aṭṭār finished the *Khosrow-nāma* before the *Mokhtār-nāma*, how could he reference the latter? And if he finished it after the *Mokhtār-nāma*, how could he mention it in the latter as a completed and disseminated poem? Shafi'i-Kadkani concludes that this "contradiction between the two introductions shows that the existing *Khosrow-nāma* . . . cannot be the *Khosrow-nāma* mentioned in the *Mokhtār-nāma*."[34] This circular situation, however, can also be explained by the fact that medieval authors would often disseminate multiple versions of their poems, revising and rewriting them even after their initial "publication." Such a solution was briefly proposed by Ritter in 1939, and, as I will argue here, it provides a more likely explanation for this literary ouroboros than does the theory of a later forgery.[35]

The *Khosrow-nāma*'s preface mentions the *Mokhtār-nāma* twice while recounting its own two-stage composition. According to an introductory section entitled "On the Reason for the Expounding of the Story" (*Dar sabab-e sharḥ dādan-e qeṣṣa*), the author was persuaded to compose the romance one spring night while sitting with a group of friends.[36] As the author tells it, one of his companions that night was something of a fanatic for his poetry; whenever the companion heard one of his verses, he would swoon or dance in ecstatic bewilderment as he contemplated its meaning.[37] This friend had memorized more than one hundred of his *qaṣida*s as well as nearly one thousand *ghazal*s and *qeṭ'a*s, and he was constantly quoting the *Javāher-nāma* and *Sharḥ al-qalb*. Most relevant for our present purposes, he had also memorized "the entire *Mokhtār-nāma* of quatrains."[38] These titles, of course, support the conclusion that the author who is speaking is Farid al-Din 'Aṭṭār, as does the fact that he explicitly calls himself "'Aṭṭār" at various points in the poem.[39] On that night, this particular friend allegedly implored 'Aṭṭār, who had apparently taken a three-year hiatus from versifying, to start composing poetry again.[40] More specifically, he recommended that 'Aṭṭār versify a prose romance from one Badr-e Ahvāzi.[41] Dehkhoda speculates that this may be the same Ahvāzi mentioned by Nāṣer-e Khosrow, who compares this Ahvāzi unfavorably with himself, insinuating that the former's poetry is devoid of religious wisdom.[42] In any case, since much of the *Khosrow-nāma*'s action takes place in Khuzestān, it makes sense that its source would be associated with Ahvāz, a major city in the region. 'Aṭṭār reports that his friend urged him to versify the story and thus make it new: "String the pearls of this speech beautifully on the thread / Make this old soul new

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34. Shafi'i-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 39.

35. Ritter, "Philologika X," 155.

36. BnF 1434, fol. 20r. In the printed edition, the heading reads "The Reason for the Versification of the Book" (*Sabab-e naẓm-e ketāb*); 'Aṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, 28.

37. 'Aṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, lines 601–2.

38. Ibid., lines 603.

39. Ibid., lines 2261, 5349, 6069, 8260, 8267.

40. Ibid., line 614.

41. Ibid., line 617.

42. 'Ali Akbar Dehkhodā, *Loghat-nāma-ye Dehkhodā*, ed. Moḥammad Mo'in and Ja'far Shahidi (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e Dāneshgāh-e Tehrān, 1373/[1993–94]), s.v. "Ahvāzi."

with meaning."[43] He immediately saw the wisdom in his friend's request and began setting verses down on paper.

But this was only the first stage of the poem's composition. The next section of the introduction, entitled "The Extraction of the Tale" (*entekhāb kardan-e dāstān*) details events that took place an indeterminate amount of time later, when some version of the *Khosrow-nāma* was already circulating.[44] According to the author, he was approached by a friend (whether this is the same friend who initially suggested the project is unclear) who criticized the poem for its excessive length and because it shared some of its homiletic content with the *Asrār-nāma*:

> I had a friend, to whom had accrued many benefits
> Of the soul; he was devoted to my verse.
> He said to me: "The *Khosrow-nāma* is, today,
> Endowed with a heart-illuminating, royal brilliance.
> Although the story is delightful—
> What can I say: shorter is better; it's long!
> If you would abbreviate this story,
> No thorn would remain in this garden.
> On the path, husks and kernels are two obstacles;
> If you would choose just the essential oils, it would be better.
> The *tawḥid*, praise, wisdom, and proverbs
> That were first found in the *Khosrow-nāma*
> You have placed in the *Asrār-nāma* as well,
> So you have begun the same thing in two places!"

<div dir="rtl">

بجان در کار من بسته دلی داشت · رفیقی داشتم کو حاصلی داشت

فروغی خسروی دارد دلفروز · مرا گفتا چو خسرونامه امروز

چگویم قصه کوته به درازست · اگر چه قصه‌ای بس دلنواز است

نماند هیچ خار این بوستان را · اگر موجز کنی این داستان را

همه روغن گزینی نغز باشد · دو بند راه قشر و مغز باشد

که خسرونامه را بود اول حال · دگر توحید و نعت و پند و امثال

دو موضع کرده‌ای یک چیز آغاز[45] · چو در اسرارنامه گفته‌ای باز

</div>

In other words, the *Khosrow-nāma* was too long, and some of the proverbs, religious praise, and homiletic material that it originally contained were later reused in the *Asrār-nāma*. The passage can even be read as implying that some of the romance's verses were repeated verbatim in the later didactic *maṡnavi*, perhaps in its opening doxology, which is conventionally dominated by this kind of content. Since the two poems share the same meter, it would have been easy to recycle lines from the former into the latter.

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43. ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, line 626.

44. BnF 1434, fol. 22r. In the printed edition, the section is titled "On the Completion of the Story" (*Dar pardākhtan-e in dāstān*); ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, 32.

45. BnF 1434, fol. 22v; cf. ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, lines 650–56.

The author of the *Khosrow-nāma* took this call for revision to heart, extracting a section (*bāb*) from each chapter (*faṣl*) and then stringing these "pearls of wisdom" together from the beginning with a new introductory doxology:

Because he spoke the truth of this story beautifully,
I did, in short, just what he said.
I extracted a selection from over here,
I removed a section from every chapter.
I composed separate verses of *tawḥid* and praise,
And then I strung the pearls of wisdom from the beginning.
If there was any defect in its brocade,
I repaired it from that state.
Some verses that were renowned like gold
I melted down in the furnace for golden ink.

چنان کردم هـمی القصه کو گفت	چو او این قصّه را الحق نکو گفت
بر آوردم ز یک یک فصل بابی	برون کردم از اینجا انتخابی
ز سردر درّ حکمت نیز سفتم	جدا نعتی و توحیدی بگفتم
بگردانیدم از طرزی کـه آن داشت	وگر چیزی طرازش را زیان داشت
در آتش بردمش تا آب زر شد[46]	سخن بعضی کـه چون زر نامور شد

Although more thorough philological work needs to be done, all known manuscripts of the *Khosrow-nāma* seem to reflect these revisions; the earlier version of the poem does not appear to have been preserved, or at least it has not yet been identified.[47] It thus probably did not enjoy wide circulation, since otherwise the author could not have suppressed it so completely. Although he claims that some of the verses in the first version of the *Khosrow-nāma* had gained wide currency before he set about revising the poem ("some verses… were renowned like gold"), the actual text was likely circulating only within a small community of his associates.

Finally, at the end of the section, the author again mentions his various other poems, including the *Mokhtār-nāma.* Such enumerations served an important function by informing readers about the author's other works and encouraging them to seek them out—a manuscript version of the "also by this author" page found at the back of many mass-market paperbacks:

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46. BnF 1434, fol. 22v; cf. ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, lines 661–65.

47. B. Reinert, "ʿAṭṭār, Farīd-al-Dīn," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed., ed. Ehsan Yarshater, updated August 17, 2011, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/attar-farid-al-din-poet; Ritter, "Philologika X," 144–46; François de Blois and C.A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey* (London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1992–94), 5.2:276. Several catalogers note highly abridged versions of the romance, but they are all quite late, and those that Ritter has examined all contain the same two-part story of the poem's composition. He thus believes that these abridgments reflect later editorial undertakings and do not represent an authorial version. Compare, for example, BnF 1434 with the later (and shorter) recension of the poem contained in BnF Supplément persan 811 (dated 1013/1605). Also see Bodleian, Elliott 204, and Asiatic Society of Bengal, 477, manuscripts that contain both the full *Khosrow-nāma* as it exists today and a much shorter précis.

> The *Moṣibat-nāma* is the sorrow of the world,
> The *Elāhi-nāma*'s secrets are manifest.
> I began both of them in the apothecary,
> And—what can I say—I finished both quickly.
> There were five hundred patients in the apothecary,
> Every day, for me to take their pulse.
> Among all the things that I've heard and said,
> I've seen no speech better than this.
> If there is any fault, cover it up;
> If you won't praise me, at least stay silent.
> Through the *Moṣibat-nāma*, atoms are animated,
> The *Elāhi-nāma* is the treasure of kings.
> The *Asrār-nāma* is the world of gnosis,
> The *Mokhtār-nāma* is paradise for the people of the heart.
> And as for the *Maqāmāt-e ṭoyur* [i.e., *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*], it is like
> An ascension of the soul for the bird of love.
> Because the *Khosrow-nāma* has a wondrous nature,
> Both the noble and the common have a share in it.

الهینامه کاسرارش عیان است	مصیبتنامه کاندوه جهان است
چگویم زود رستم زان و زین باز	بداروخانه کردم هر دو آغاز
که در هر روز نبضم می نمودند	بداروخانه پانصد شخص بودند
سخن را به ازین رویی ندیدم	میان آن همه گفت و شنیدم
چو تحسین نکنیم باری خموشی	اگر عیبی بود گر عیب پوشی
الهینامه گنج خسروان است	مصیبتنامه را ذرّه روان است
بهشت اهل دل مختارنامهست	جهان معرفت اسرارنامهست
که مرغ عشق را معراج جان است	مقامات طیور اما چنان است
ز طرز او که و مه را نصیب است⁴⁸	چو خسرونامه را طرزی عجیب است

We thus have a situation in which the *Khosrow-nāma* references the *Mokhtār-nāma* twice by name as a finished work, just as the *Mokhtār-nāma* cites the *Khosrow-nāma* as a finished work; this leads to a "contradiction" that, according to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, indicates the latter's spuriousness as a work by ʿAṭṭār. These circular cross-references, however, are not necessarily a sign of the *Khosrow-nāma*'s forgery; they can also be explained by the complex, multi-staged process in which works of the manuscript age were revised and circulated in new forms. Sanāʾi, for instance, circulated multiple drafts of his *Ḥadiqa*, and Najm al-Din Dāya revised, retitled, and repackaged his *Merṣād al-ʿebād* for a new patron.⁴⁹ Most significantly for our purposes, ʿAṭṭār himself testifies in the introduction to

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48. BnF 1434, fols. 22v–23r; cf. ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, lines 266–74.

49. J. T. P. de Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry: The Interaction of Religion and Literature in the Life and Works of Ḥakīm Sanāʾī of Ghazna* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 119–39; Barbara Flemming, "From Archetype to Oral Tradition: Editing Persian and Turkish Literary Texts," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 3 (1998): 7–11; Franklin Lewis, "The Modes of Literary Production: Remarks on the Composition, Revision and 'Publication' of Persian Texts in the

the *Mokhtār-nāma* that he altered several of his works after their initial "publication." For example, he explains that his *divān* originally contained three thousand quatrains, but at the urging of his friends, he created a new recension from which he removed all but five hundred. Of the excised quatrains, he organized two thousand in the *Mokhtār-nāma* and destroyed five hundred that "were not fit for this world."[50] Similarly, ʿAṭṭār refers to his *Javāher-nāma* and *Sharḥ al-qalb* as completed works in the *Taẕkerat al-awliā*, directing readers to them for further commentary on the sayings of the saints.[51] In the *Mokhtār-nāma*, however, we learn that ʿAṭṭār destroyed these two poems at some later point.[52] Thus, in the cases of the *divān*, the *Sharḥ al-qalb*, and the *Javāher-nāma*, ʿAṭṭār circulated finished works within his textual community in Nishapur before making further revisions or suppressing them entirely. The fact that ʿAṭṭār was able to control "published" texts in this way testifies to their limited circulation, the small size of his textual community, and the influence that ʿAṭṭār likely held as a spiritual leader. Given this background, the account of the *Khosrow-nāma*'s two-staged composition no longer seems illogical, contradictory, or far-fetched. The request from a friend is a common topos that need not be taken literally, but the preface's description of initial circulation followed by revision and a second "publication" not only is possible but also accords well with what we know of ʿAṭṭār's literary habits from his other works.

On the basis of ʿAṭṭār's testimony and literary cross-references, one can even construct a relative chronology for his oeuvre that would explain how the present versions of the *Mokhtār-nāma* and the *Khosrow-nāma* both came to cite each other as finished works. Ritter proposed one such possible chronology in 1939; I offer a similar one here that incorporates data from the *Taẕkerat al-awliā*:[53]

1. *Divān* [first recension], *Sharḥ al-qalb*, *Javāher-nāma*
2. *Khosrow-nāma* [first recension]
3. *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, *Moṣibat-nāma*, *Asrār-nāma*[54]

Medieval Period," *Persica* 17 (2001): 69–83.

50. Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, *Mokhtār-nāma*, ed. Moḥammad Reżā Shafiʿi-Kadkani, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1389/[2010–11]), 71. On the composition of the *Mokhtār-nāma*, see Austin O'Malley, "Poetry and Pedagogy: The Homiletic Verse of Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭâr" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2017), 58–68. It should be noted that none of the existing manuscripts of the *divān* contain anything near five hundred quatrains, and most contain none at all. ʿAṭṭār's second authorial recension thus must have undergone further revisions, either by ʿAṭṭār or at the hands of later scribes.

51. Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, *Taẕkerat al-awliā*, ed. Moḥammad Esteʿlāmi, rev. ed. (Tehran: Zavvār, 1383/[2004–5]), 4, 466.

52. ʿAṭṭār, *Mokhtār-nāma*, 70.

53. Ritter, "Philologika X," 151–52.

54. Some manuscripts of the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr* contain a verse claiming that the poem was completed in the late sixth/twelfth century. The verse does not appear in most manuscripts, however, including the earliest ones, and the actual date given in the manuscripts varies from 570/1174–75 to 583/1187–88. Most scholars therefore reject it as an interpolation. (On the other hand, it is difficult to see what would motivate a scribe to insert such a line.) See De Blois and Storey, *Persian Literature*, 5.2:281; Badiʿ al-Zamān Foruzānfar, *Sharḥ-e aḥvāl va naqd va taḥlil-e āṣ̱ār-e Shaykh Farid al-Din Moḥammad ʿAṭṭār-e Nayshāburi* (Tehran: Chāp-khāna-ye Dāneshgāh,

4. *Taẕkerat al-awliā*[55]
5. Destruction of the *Sharḥ al-qalb* and the *Javāher-nāma*
6. Revision of the *divān* and compilation of the *Mokhtār-nāma*
7. *Elāhi-nāma*
8. Revision of the *Khosrow-nāma*

The first recension of the *Khosrow-nāma* was allegedly composed at the instigation of a friend who often quoted the *Sharḥ al-qalb* and the *Javāher-nāma*, and who had memorized a large number of poems from the *divān* and all of the quatrains of the *Mokhtār-nāma*. The *Sharḥ al-qalb* and *Javāher-nāma* must therefore have already been written, and likely some textual version of the *divān* had been, too. The reference to the *Mokhtār-nāma* is more problematic because, at this point, the quatrains did not yet exist as a separate work outside of the *divān*. As Ritter suggests, however, there is a plausible explanation: if we accept the author's account of his revisions to the *Khosrow-nāma*, the reference to the *Mokhtār-nāma* could have been inserted during that process (indeed, the entire preface may have been reworked at that time) as a way of referring to the quatrains as a totality.[56] The aforementioned friend does not seem to have been familiar with ʿAṭṭār's mystical-didactic *maṡnavi*s, so they were likely written after the first version of the *Khosrow-nāma*. The *Taẕkerat al-awliā* is also difficult to place relative to the other works, but because it cites the *Sharḥ al-qalb* as if the latter still existed, it must have been compiled before that work's destruction. The *Mokhtār-nāma*, on the other hand, mentions the suppression of the *Sharḥ al-qalb* and the *Javāher-nāma*, so it must have been compiled after the *Taẕkerat al-awliā*. According to the *Mokhtār-nāma*'s preface, it was produced simultaneously with a new textual recension of the *divān*, and it references the *Khosrow-nāma* (which would have still been in its unrevised form), the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, the *Moṣibat-nāma*, and the *Asrār-nāma* as completed works. ʿAṭṭār then produced the *Elāhi-nāma*, which is not mentioned in the *Mokhtār-nāma*, before revising the *Khosrow-nāma*, in which he names the *Mokhtār-nāma* and all of the completed ethical-didactic *maṡnavi*s.

Such a career arc is consistent with the practices of poets with whom we are more familiar. Generally speaking, premodern Persian poets tend to begin with the monorhyme forms, which they continue to compose throughout their careers, and later in life turn to *maṡnavi*s along with the curation of earlier output.[57] ʿAṭṭār may have even anticipated that his reworking of the *Khosrow-nāma* would be his final work, and this fact (along with issues of genre) may explain why he was more willing to mention his previous titles in this poem

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1339/[1960–61]; repr., Tehran: Āsim, 1389/[2010–11]), 61–63; Ritter, "Philologika XIV," 50–56; Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, 74.

55. It is also possible that the *Taẕkerat al-awliā* was compiled before the *Asrār-nāma*, the *Moṣibat-nāma*, and the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, or even before the first recension of the *Khosrow-nāma*. All that is certain is that it must have been compiled after the composition of the *Sharḥ al-qalb*, but before its destruction.

56. Ritter, "Philologika X," 151–52.

57. Such a career trajectory is also consistent with Shafiʿi-Kadkani's dating of the *maṡnavi*s—he argues that the they were written after ʿAwfi's visit to Nishapur in 1206–7, when, by his reckoning, ʿAṭṭār had likely already entered late middle age. See Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, 72–74.

than he had been in his other *maṣnavi*s: at the end of his literary (and earthly) career, he felt the need to lay out his literary estate.[58]

It is thus chronologically possible for ʿAṭṭār to have written the *Khosrow-nāma*, both in terms of the manuscript tradition and in view of the development of his own oeuvre. Nevertheless, we may still be compelled to dismiss the traditional attribution for other reasons. In particular, Shafiʿi-Kadkani argues that the *Khosrow-nāma*'s literary style and religious outlook are inconsistent with ʿAṭṭār's literary and religious habits as known from his undisputed works. As we shall see, however, these arguments are also less convincing than they first appear.

Religious Reasons

According to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, the introduction to the *Khosrow-nāma* contains terms and concepts derived from Ebn ʿArabi's mysticism that are characteristic of a later period of Persian literary history; this, he argues, proves the introduction's ninth/fifteenth-century provenance and thus its spuriousness. However, although Ebn ʿArabi is often thought to mark a sharp dividing line in the history of mystical thought, he did not arise in a vacuum, and the terms and concepts that he developed were already percolating in the preceding centuries. Indeed, many of the ostensibly Akbarian terms and concepts identified by Shafiʿi-Kadkani in the *Khosrow-nāma* are, in fact, present in ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works as well. Their presence, as we shall see, is consistent with ʿAṭṭār's own style and religious outlook and thus does not necessitate a later provenance.

There are several passages in the *Khosrow-nāma* that allegedly exemplify the Islamic philosophical-mystical concept of "the unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wojud*); although Ebn ʿArabi himself never uses this term, he is seen as the intellectual fountainhead of the idea that it represents—namely, that divine unity underlies all creation.[59] Such an attitude is certainly evident in some of the verses in the *Khosrow-nāma*, although we must note that, as far as these things go, the verses in question are rather tame. The following is perhaps the most direct example:

> Of the unity of the two worlds there is no doubt,
> Since the true being is only one.
> There is God, and creation is but the light of God,
> But His light is never separate from Him.
> There is God and the light of God. What else is there?
> We must say God; besides God who could there be?
> Behind the curtain there is only one idol-image,
> Even if the light has a thousand forms.

58. Although he does not mention his other titles in his ethical-didactic *maṣnavi*s, ʿAṭṭār has no problem discussing his output in his prose introductions to the *Tażkerat al-awliā* and the *Mokhtār-nāma*.

59. William Chittick, "Rumi and *Waḥdat al-wujūd*," in *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rumi*, ed. Amin Banani, Richard G. Hovannisian, and Georges Sabagh (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 62.

<div dir="rtl">

که موجود حقیقی جز یکی نیست   در آن وحدت دو عالم را شکی نیست

ولی زو نور او هرگز جدا نیست   خداست و خلق جز نور خدا نیست

باید گفت حق جز حق دگر کیست   حقست و نور حق چیزی دگر چیست

ولی در پرده یک صورت نگارست⁶⁰   اگر آن نور را صورت هزارست

</div>

These verses explain worldly multiplicity as a manifestation of divine unity, a conceptualization that Shafiʿi-Kadkani considers foreign to the work of ʿAṭṭār, who, in his view, maintains a sharp separation between creator and creation.[60] Although the "unity of being" is certainly not the dominant metaphysics of ʿAṭṭār's works, he does, in fact, often meditate on the fundamental unity of all existence. For example, compare the above passage with the following quotation from the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*'s doxology:

> Look, this world and that world are Him;
> There is nothing other than Him, and if there were, it would be Him!
> Everything is one essence, just elaborated;
> Everything is one word with different vocalizations.

<div dir="rtl">

نیست غیر او وگر هست آن هم اوست   در نگر کاین عالم و آن عالم اوست

جمله یک حرف و عبارت مختلف⁶²   جمله یک ذات است اما متّصف

</div>

There are several other instances in ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works in which he treats this allegedly Akbarian theme of God's coextension with His creation.[62]

Shafiʿi-Kadkani further argues that the author of the *Khosrow-nāma* uses specific terms derived from Ebn ʿArabi's metaphysics of divine names, in particular "the named" (*mosammā*) and "the names" (*asmā*), indicating God's essence and its refraction in the world.[63] But these terms, too, appear several times in ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works with similar metaphysical significance.[64] This is not to suggest that ʿAṭṭār read Ebn ʿArabi, who composed his major works after ʿAṭṭār's probable death date.[65] Rather, it is another indication that many of the ideas and terms that we have come to associate with Ebn ʿArabi were already in the air as Sufi thinkers engaged and reworked the earlier tradition. Formulations that recall Ebn ʿArabi's teachings can be found in the works of several of his predecessors and

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60. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 48–49.

61. Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, ed. Moḥammad Reżā Shafiʿi-Kadkani, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1387/[2008–9]), lines 62–63.

62. Ibid., lines 1124–28.

63. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 49–50.

64. Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, *Divān-e ʿAṭṭār-e Nayshāburi*, ed. Mahdi Madāyini and Mehrān Afshāri (Tehran: Charkh, 1392/[2013–14]), *ghazal* 362, *qaṣida* 10; Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, *Moṣibat-nāma*, ed. Moḥammad Reżā Shafiʿi-Kadkani, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1388/[2009–10]), lines 418, 5085–87; Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, *Asrār-nāma*, ed. Moḥammad Reżā Shafiʿi-Kadkani, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1388/[2009–10]), lines 696–98.

65. Ahmed Ateş, "Ibn al-ʿArabī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill Online), posted 2012, https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0316. On ʿAṭṭār's death date, see O'Malley, "Poetry and Pedagogy," 32–34.

contemporaries, including Ebn al-Fāreż, Aḥmad-e Ghazzāli, ʿAṭṭār, and even Rumi, but these isomorphic parallelisms do not necessarily indicate any direct influence.[66]

More serious is Shafiʿi-Kadkani's claim that the *Khosrow-nāma* contains a *tażmin* (exact quotation of one author by another) from the *Golshan-e rāz* of Shabestari (d. 1340), a mystical poet who helped popularize Ebn ʿArabi in the Persian-speaking world. The verse in question justifies Ḥallāj's famous utterance "I am the Truth" by likening him to the burning bush through which God spoke to Moses:

> If "Verily, I am God" is allowed from a bush,
> Then why is it not allowed from a fortunate one?

<div dir="rtl">

چرا نبود روا از نیـک بختی[68] رواست انی انا الله از درختی

</div>

Obviously, if the author of the *Khosrow-nāma* copied this line from the *Golshan-e rāz*, he could not have been ʿAṭṭār, who had died more than a century earlier. This verse, however, is not found in the oldest manuscripts of the *Golshan-e rāz* or in the critical edition by Ṣamad Movaḥḥed, who traces it to the later commentary by Lāhiji.[68] It is thus entirely possible that the line actually originated with ʿAṭṭār and was later assimilated into the textual legacy of Shabestari, who was a self-confessed ʿAṭṭār superfan.[69] This scenario is made more likely by the fact that the line is found in the BnF manuscript of the *Khosrow-nāma*, which was copied before the *Golshan-e rāz* was even written. Furthermore, ʿAṭṭār's *Tazkera* contains a line of prose that makes exactly the same point with the same vocabulary: "[If] it is allowed [*ravā*] that the cry of 'Verily, I am God' [*enni anā allāh*] emerge from a bush [*darakhti*]—without the bush intervening—then why is it not allowed [*ravā*] for 'I am the Truth' to emerge from Ḥosayn [Ḥallāj]?"[70] Prose material included in the *Tazkera* is often found in poetic form in ʿAṭṭār's *masnavi*s, and this appears to be classic case of such transference.

Besides the alleged influence of Shabestari and Ebn ʿArabi, Shafiʿi-Kadkani also argues that the romance's praise of Saʿd al-Din b. al-Rabib, who seems to have been the author's

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66. Nasrallāh Purjavādi, *Solṭān-e ṭariqat: Savāneḥ, zendegi, va sharḥ-e āsār-e Khwāja Aḥmad-e Ghazzāli* (Tehran: Āgāh, 1358/[1979]), 104–7; Chittick, "Rumi and *Waḥdat al-wujūd*," 70–71, 91–97, 101–4; Th. Emil Homerin, ed. and trans., *ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ: Sufi Verse, Saintly Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 34–35. In his chapter's appendix, Chittick facetiously argues that ʿAṭṭār was influenced by Ebn ʿArabi. His purpose is to show that general formulations of the "unity of being" are common in the Persian poetical tradition, and if one believes that they are necessarily indicative of influence from Ebn ʿArabi, one must concede that even a poet like ʿAṭṭār, who died before Ebn ʿArabi's most important works were written, was somehow influenced by him.

67. BnF 1434, fol. 5r; cf. ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, line 141.

68. Maḥmud Shabestari, *Majmuʿa-ye āsār-e Shaykh Maḥmud Shabestari*, ed. Ṣamad Movaḥḥed (Tehran: Ṭahuri, 1365/[1986–87]), 135. The *Khosrow-nāma* also puns on the letter *mim* that separates Aḥmad (Muhammad) from Aḥad (God), and Shafiʿi-Kadkani argues that this punning is a direct response to a couple of lines in Shabestari. In this case, too, however, the most salient line is missing from the critical edition of the *Golshan-e rāz*, while such punning is well attested in ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works. See Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 46–47; Shabestari, *Āsār-e Shabestari*, 67, 123; ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, lines 332–35; ʿAṭṭār, *Moṣibat-nāma*, ed. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, lines 339–41, 440–41.

69. Shabestari, *Āsār-e Shabestari*, 69.

70. ʿAṭṭār, *Tazkerat al-awliā*, 510.

spiritual guide, contains terminology that was not applied to religious figures until the eighth/fourteenth century: specifically, the title *khwāja* and the honorific *qoṭb-e awliā* (pole of the saints).[71] Contrary to this claim, however, the term *khwāja* is attested in sixth/twelfth- and seventh/thirteenth-century texts—in fact, it is even used by ʿAṭṭār himself in his undisputed *maṣnavi*s in reference to religious leaders. In the *Elāhi-nāma*, two anecdotes are attributed to Abu ʿAli Farmādi, a mystical preacher from the fifth/eleventh century, who is referred to in the text as Khwāja Bu ʿAli.[72] We also find references to Khwāja Akkāfi, a Nayshāburi religious figure from the generation prior to ʿAṭṭār, and a story featuring Khwāja Bu ʿAli Daqqāq, the famed teacher of Qoshayri.[73] The title also appears in ʿAṭṭār's *Taẕkera*—not in the chapter headings, but within the anecdotes themselves, where students routinely call their teachers by this title. And in at least one case, the titled is affixed to a proper name (Khwāja ʿAli Sirgāni).[74]

ʿAṭṭār uses the term *qoṭb* relatively frequently as well, especially in the rhyming prose introductions to the biographies in the *Taẕkera*. Saints are often described as the axial pole (*qoṭb al-madār*), the axis of the age (*qoṭb-e vaqt*), the axis of the world (*qoṭb-e ʿālam*), and the axis of religion (*qoṭb-e din*).[75] Shafiʿi-Kadkani is correct that the specific compound *qoṭb-e awliā* does not appear, but I am reluctant to banish the *Khosrow-nāma* as spurious on the basis of this single unique phrase not found in other works of the corpus.[76]

Matters of Style

The *Khosrow-nāma* allegedly deviates from ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works in terms of style and literary norms, too. According to this argument, the *Khosrow-nāma* exhibits excessive repetition (*eltezām*) that is more consistent with the literary tastes of the ninth/fifteenth century than with those of the sixth/twelfth or seventh/thirteenth. More specifically, Shafiʿi-Kadkani points to a thirty-verse passage in the poem's opening praise of Muhammad that, in some manuscripts, contains more than sixty instances of the word "stone."[77] This passage, which begins with a divine voice addressing Muhammad, references the battle of Uḥud, during which several of the Prophet's teeth were allegedly knocked out by a

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71. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 51–52; ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, lines 540–60.

72. Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, *Elāhi-nāma*, ed. Mohammad Reżā Shafiʿi-Kadkani, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1388/[2009–10]), lines 2660, 6180.

73. ʿAṭṭār, *Moṣibat-nāma*, ed. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, lines 2071, 3823, 4613.

74. ʿAṭṭār, *Taẕkerat al-awliā*, 332.

75. Ibid., 118, 138, 248, 459.

76. Although *qoṭb-e awliā* appears only once, other distinctive words are found across the corpus. Particularly interesting is *chekāda*, an unusual variant of *chekād*, indicating the crown of the head. The word is found in the *Khosrow-nāma* (line 5801), as well as the *Elāhi-nāma* (line 1307) and the *divān*; see Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, *Divān-e ʿAṭṭār*, ed. Taqi Tafażżoli (Tehran: Enteshārāt-e ʿElmi va Farhangi, 1386/[2007]), *ghazal* 367. A search of ganjoor.net, the popular online database of Persian poetry, reveals no other instances of the word's use by poets other than ʿAṭṭār. Likewise, although *chekāda* is defined in the major Mughal-era and contemporary dictionaries (*Farhang-e Jahāngiri, Farhang-e Rashidi, Loghat-nāma-ye Dehkhodā, Farhang-e Sokhan*), these give no attestations of the word outside of ʿAṭṭār's oeuvre.

77. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 44–45.

rock.[78] Such repetition, which many modern critics find poetically unpleasing, is allegedly foreign to the style of ʿAṭṭār and his contemporaries. It is not confined to the doxology, either; the *Khosrow-nāma* contains several examples of the device throughout its eight thousand verses, which is one of the reasons that Shafiʿi-Kadkani, in the 1979 version of his argument, attributes the poem as a whole, and not just its introduction, to the ninth/ fifteenth century.[79]

The point is not especially convincing, however, because a close inspection of ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works shows similar instances of protracted repetition. For example, the famous Shaykh Ṣanʿān story from the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr* features a cluster of twenty verses that almost all contain some variation on the word "night."[80] The *Asrār-nāma*'s praise of the Prophet boasts a spectacular forty-line passage in which every verse contains one—and sometimes two—instances of the word "finger" (*angosht*) or closely related terms such as "ring" (*angoshtari*), "thimble" (*angoshtvāna*), or "charcoal" (*angesht*).[81] There are also several extended sections of anaphora (repetition at the beginning of the line) in the *Moṣibat-nāma*'s doxology, including a hundred verses that each ask "What is (*chist*) . . . ?" and then define a different religious concept.[82] According to Bürgel, who has identified a number of additional examples, anaphora and repetition are prominent features of ʿAṭṭār's work.[83] Given ʿAṭṭār's fondness for such devices in his undisputed works, the *Khosrow-nāma*'s use of repetition does not seem particularly unusual.[84]

The second point relates not to style but to ʿAṭṭār's broader literary habits. The *Khosrow-nāma* contains a line that, in Shafiʿi-Kadkani's reading, suggests the poem was titled in honor of a temporal ruler, which would seem to be at odds with the condemnation of

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78. ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, lines 258–61.

79. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 45.

80. ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, lines 1246–65.

81. ʿAṭṭār, *Asrār-nāma*, lines 200–41. See the translation in J. Christoph Bürgel, "Some Remarks on Forms and Functions of Repetitive Structures in the Epic Poetry of ʿAṭṭār," in Lewisohn and Shackle, *Spiritual Flight*, 208–11.

82. Farid al-Din ʿAṭṭār, *Moṣibat-nāma*, ed. Nurāni Veṣāl (Tehran: Zavvār, 1373/[1994]), 41–46. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, in his edition, expresses doubt that these passages are authentic. Although they are found in all known manuscripts of the poem, the hundred lines repeating "What is . . . ?" are crossed out in one of the earliest copies, where a marginal note claims that they were taken from the *Oshtor-nāma* (a likely spurious work attributed to ʿAṭṭār). See his introduction to the *Moṣibat-nāma*, 105, 112.

83. Bürgel, "Repetitive Structures in ʿAṭṭār."

84. Shafiʿi-Kadkani makes another argument in this section regarding a line in the *Khosrow-nāma*'s introduction that puns on the titles of Ebn Sinā's books: "Although medicine is found in the *Canon* (*Qānun*) / *Pointers* (*Eshārāt*) are found in poetry and riddles (*moʿammā*)" (line 615). According to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, such punning was not a common literary trope until the eighth/fourteenth century. Furthermore, Shafiʿi-Kadkani argues that riddles became a serious literary genre that could be reasonably paired with "poetry" only in the ninth/fifteenth century. However, ʿAṭṭār also puns on the titles of Ebn Sinā's books in his undisputed works, and the term "riddles" here seems to refer not so much to a fixed genre as to the spiritual secrets that ʿAṭṭār purports to explore through speech. See Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 45–46; ʿAṭṭār, *Moṣibat-nāma*, ed. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, line 865.

panegyric found in ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works. This anti-panegyric sentiment finds its strongest expression in the conclusion to the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*:

> Thank God that I am no courtier,
> That I am unbound to any reprobate.
> Why should I bind my heart to anyone,
> And take the name of some degenerate as lord?
> I have not eaten the victuals of a tyrant,
> Nor have I closed a book with a patron's name.
> My high aspiration suffices for my patron;
> Sustenance of body and power of spirit are enough for me.

<div dir="rtl">

بستهٔ هر ناسزاواری نیَم   شکر ایزد را که درباری نیَم

نامِ هر دون را خداوندی نهم   من ز کس بر دل کجا بندی نهم

نـه کتابی را تخلّص کردهام   نـه طعامِ هیچ ظالم خوردهام

قوتِ جسم و قوّتِ روحم بس است[86]   همّتِ عالیم ممدوحم بس است

</div>

ʿAṭṭār represents himself as untainted by participation in the patronage economy: he has not attached himself to the court, he has not dedicated a book to any patron, and he has received no reward for his verse.

The *Khosrow-nāma*, however, contains the following line in its preface, according to which the poem's title honors the "king of the face of the earth":

> In the name of the king (*khosrow*) of the face of the earth,
> I have named this the *Khosrow-nāma.*

<div dir="rtl">

نهادم نـام خسرونامه این را[86]   بـه نـام خسرو روی زمین را

</div>

According to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, such a line could not have been written by ʿAṭṭār given his strong denunciations of panegyric.[87] It is not immediately clear to me, however, that this "*khosrow*" necessarily refers to a historical potentate. The *khosrow* in question is not named, and he is praised only with a vague allusion to the universal scope of his rule. If this were intended as praise for an actual patron, one would expect something a bit more specific and extensive. It thus seems more likely that the *khosrow* referred to here is not a temporal ruler but the protagonist of the poem, who, as the emperor of Rum and Iran, can be appropriately styled the "king of the face of the earth."[88]

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85. ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, lines 4601–4.

86. ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, line 586.

87. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 40–41.

88. The passage continues with a vocative address to some "lord" (*khodāvandā*), enjoining him to keep the *Khosrow-nāma* illuminated by the eyes of the people of wisdom and protected from the malevolence of the ignorant (lines 587–91). Although one could also read this passage as an address to the patron, one can just as easily see it as a prayer to God to protect ʿAṭṭār's literary legacy.

In any case, even if this verse were intended to refer to a particular king, it would hardly disprove ʿAṭṭār's authorship. Such an argument assumes a stark binary between panegyric and non-panegyric verse, in which an allusive reference to an unnamed temporal ruler automatically qualifies as full-blown praise poetry (*madḥ*). But it is not at all clear that ʿAṭṭār would have accepted this characterization. He may have included the line to honor a prince for whom he felt some particular gratitude, but unless he had contacts in the court to introduce him into courtly literary circles, it is unlikely that he could have ever derived monetary benefit from a single verse.[89] Moreover, ʿAṭṭār's rhetorical condemnations of panegyric poetry should not be taken to mean that he never composed a single verse at any point in his life in praise of a political ruler. His condemnations are idealized projections, not statements of fact. Solṭān Valad, Rumi's son and successor, condemned "the poetry of professional poets" (*sheʿr-e shāʿer*) but still composed a number of panegyric poems in a classical vein.[90] Sanāʾi, too, pursued patronage relationships with political and religious authorities even as he criticized panegyric in much the same language as ʿAṭṭār.[91] If these poets entered into formal patronage relationships despite their criticism of the practice, I see no reason to assume that ʿAṭṭār could not have written the occasional verse that *evokes* panegyric poetry.[92]

Ultimately, the recent scholarly resistance to the authenticity of the *Khosrow-nāma* seems to be rooted in the assumption that a spiritually inclined writer like ʿAṭṭār would

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89. On the importance of having an introduction to the court—in a variety of periods—see Jerome Clinton, *The Divan of Manūchihrī Dāmghānī: A Critical Study* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1972), 29–44; Franklin Lewis, "Reading, Writing, and Recitation: Sanāʾi and the Origins of the Persian Ghazal" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1995), 165–68; E. M. Subtelny, "Scenes from the Literary Life of Tīmūrid Herāt," in *Logos Islamikos: Studia Islamica in Honorem Georgii Michaelis Wickens*, ed. Roger Savory and Dionisius Agius (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984).

90. Franklin Lewis, "Solṭân Valad and the Political Order: Framing the Ethos and Praxis of Poetry in the Mevlevi Tradition after Rumi," in *Persian Language, Literature and Culture: New Leaves, Fresh Looks*, ed. Kamran Talattof (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 24–25.

91. Lewis, "Reading, Writing, and Recitation," 124–25, 176–78; J. T. P. de Bruijn, "Comparative Notes on Sanāʾī and ʿAṭṭār," in *Classical Persian Sufism from Its Origins to Rumi*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), 362–63, 375–77.

92. There are several verses attributed to ʿAṭṭār that seem to have been dedicated to royal patrons. Shafiʿi-Kadkani argues that they cannot, for this reason, be authentic. In Tafażżoli's edition of the *divān*, the poems in question are *qaṣida*s 3, 9, 14, 15, and 27, and *ghazal*s 201 and 307. The ghazals are not included in Madāyeni and Afshāri's more recent edition, but two of the *qaṣida*s are reproduced in its appendix of doubtful attributions, where they are numbered 1 and 3. Furthermore, the rhetorical manual of Shams-e Qays attributes to ʿAṭṭār a verse that praises the Khwārazm-Shāh Moḥammad b. Tekish by name. This verse is not found in ʿAṭṭār's *divān*, but *qaṣida* 15 in Tafażżoli's edition is in the same rhyme and meter. Shafiʿi-Kadkani thus speculates that this verse was originally part of that poem, and that it was composed by a different ʿAṭṭār who was working as a panegyrist in the Khwārazm-Shāh's court. Furthermore, because the *qaṣida* in question contains some extended repetition, and the romance *Khosrow-nāma* contains extended repetition, he claims they are by one and the same poet. Needless to say, the argument is rather speculative. See Shafiʿi-Kadkani, *Zabur*, 95–99; Shams-e Qays, *al-Moʿjam fi maʿāyir ashʿār al-ʿajam*, ed. Sirus Shamisā (Tehran: Entesharāt-e Dāneshgāh-e Tehrān, 1373/[1994–95]), 276.

never write a "love story without the slightest relation to Sufism."[93] Such an attitude reductively draws a sharp, artificial border between the "secular" and the "mystical" and expects a uniformity of output from poets who were, after all, human beings endowed with multifaceted personalities. And the *Khosrow-nāma*, although a love story, does in fact display mystical and religious sensibilities, especially in its moralizing passages on the inevitability of death, the evils of material wealth, and the necessity of detachment from the world. Further, ʿAṭṭār's authentic "mystical" works also show an interest in romance narratives. The *Elāhi-nāma*, for instance, contains the tragic love story of Bektash and Rābeʿa, the daughter of Kaʿb.[94] Even more salient is the tale of Marḥuma, also from the *Elāhi-nāma*, which clearly recalls the narrative structures of Hellenistic romances. It relates the adventures of a woman who must preserve her chastity after being separated from her husband, and it includes familiar topoi such as a lustful male protector, mendacious accusations of infidelity, multiple instances of love at first sight, a sea voyage, a false death, and a failure of recognition before a final revelation.[95] Especially interesting is a scene in which Marḥuma, after a sea voyage, dons men's clothes in order to pass as a young man and thereby discourage further male suitors and assailants; in the *Khosrow-nāma*, Gol employs the exact same stratagem after she is shipwrecked in China.[96] In any case, ʿAṭṭār clearly displays an interest in long romantic stories in his authentic works, and the *Khosrow-nāma* could have easily emerged from the same set of authorial preoccupations.

Shifting Titles and Changing Claims

Let us presume, for a moment, that the *Khosrow-nāma* was not a product of ʿAṭṭār's pen. Why, then, does ʿAṭṭār list the poem as one of his own in the preface to the *Mokhtār-nāma*, which is generally considered an authentic work? Shafiʿi-Kadkani has an ingenious (but ultimately unsatisfying) answer to this knotty problem. Because the *Mokhtār-nāma* does not include the *Elāhi-nāma* in its enumeration of ʿAṭṭār's previous works, he postulates that its mention of the *Khosrow-nāma* refers not to the romance *Gol o Hermez*, but to that otherwise unmentioned *maṣnavi*.[97] According to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, the title "*Khosrow-nāma*" (literally "Book of the king") would actually be an appropriate name for the *Elāhi-nāma* because it recounts the pedagogical discussions of six princes with their wise royal father

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93. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 35–36; Zarrinkub, *Ṣedā-ye bāl-e simorgh*, 69.

94. ʿAṭṭār, *Elāhi-nāma*, lines 371–86.

95. Ibid., lines 484–792. The tale has been translated by Lewis as "Tale of the Righteous Woman (Whose Husband Had Gone on a Journey)," in *Converging Zones: Persian Literary Tradition and the Writing of History*, ed. Wali Ahmad (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2012). Also see Franklin Lewis, "One Chaste Muslim Maiden and a Persian in a Pear Tree: Analogues of Boccaccio and Chaucer in Four Earlier Arabic and Persian Tales," in *Metaphors and Imagery: Studies in Classical Persian Poetry*, ed. Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 164–87; Davis, *Panthea's Children*, 105–9.

96. ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, lines 6483–818.

97. My alternative explanation for this silence is that the *Elāhi-nāma* was composed after the compilation of the *Mokhtār-nāma*.

(who is referred to within the poem as a caliph [*khalifa*]).[98] He thus speculates that the poem was originally entitled the *Khosrow-nāma*, but that over time its title shifted to the more generic *Elāhi-nāma*.[99] This name change may have even been instigated by the same forger or forgers who repackaged the romance *Gol o Hermez* as the *Khosrow-nāma* of ʿAṭṭār.[100]

As Shafiʿi-Kadkani rightly observes, premodern titles display a remarkable fluidity. Even many of ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works have been known by multiple names: some manuscripts of the *Moṣibat-nāma* bear the title *Javāb-nāma*; the *Asrār-nāma* is occasionally labeled *Ramz-nāma*;[101] and ʿAṭṭār himself refers to the *Manṭeq al-ṭayr* not only by that name, but also as the *Maqāmāt-e ṭoyur* and the *Ṭoyur-nāma*.[102] Nevertheless, even though multiple titles are often attested for premodern *masnavi*s, there is no solid evidence that the *Elāhi-nāma* was ever known as the *Khosrow-nāma*. The latter title is not found at the head of any of manuscripts of the poem, and no later anthologists or bibliographers discuss it under that name. ʿAṭṭār makes no mention of such a title in the poem itself, even though he often explains the titles of his other works. If the *Elāhi-nāma* were originally known as the *Khosrow-nāma*, one would expect that some trace of the original name would remain, either in the manuscript paratexts, in the biographical tradition, or in the poem itself. The only major piece of evidence that Shafiʿi-Kadkani provides, however, is an early manuscript of ʿAṭṭār's collected works whose calligraphic frontispiece lists, in addition to the rest of ʿAṭṭār's titles, both the *Elāhi-nāma* and the *Khosrow-nāma*, even though it does not contain the text of the latter.[103] According to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, this discrepancy shows that the poem now known as the *Elāhi-nāma* was also known as the *Khosrow-nāma* when the manuscript was copied, but the scribe mistakenly thought each name referred to a separate work, so he listed them separately on the frontispiece.[104] But it is far from obvious how the mismatch between the frontispiece and the contents of the manuscript should be interpreted—it could have resulted from any number of confusions or miscommunications. Perhaps the scribe originally intended to include *Khosrow-nāma*, but then dropped it on the basis that it did not fit generically with the other works.[105]

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98. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 57–58; Shafiʿi-Kadkani, *Zabur*, 86–88; ʿAṭṭār, *Elāhi-nāma*, line 465.

99. On *Elāhi-nāma* as a generic title, see de Bruijn, *Piety and Poetry*, 128.

100. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Elāhi-nāma*, 51, 55.

101. Manuscripts bearing these alternate titles are listed in Ritter, "Philologika XIV," 10, 58.

102. ʿAṭṭār, *Mokhtār-nāma*, 70, 72; ʿAṭṭār, *Manṭeq al-ṭayr*, line 4487.

103. Ketāb-khāna-ye Salṭanati 327; see the descriptions in Badri Ātābāy, *Fehrest-e divān-hā-ye khaṭṭi-ye Ketāb-khāna-ye Salṭanati* (Tehran: Chāp-khāna-ye Zibā, 2535 sh./[1976]), 799–804; Mahdi Bayāni, *Fehrest-e nā-tamām-e teʿdādi az kotob-e Ketāb-khāna-ye Salṭanati* (Tehran: Chāp-khāna-ye Bānk-e Melli-ye Irān, 1970), 92–97.

104. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 56.

105. Shafiʿi-Kadkani also adduces two even more ambiguous pieces of evidence. First, Aḥmad Rāzi's *Haft eqlim* lists the *Khosrow-nāma*, the *Gol o Hermez*, and the *Elāhi-nāma* as three separate works, which, according to Shafiʿi-Kadkani, shows that throughout the tenth/sixteenth century there was still a memory of the *Khosrow-nāma* (i.e., the *Elāhi-nāma*) and the *Gol o Hermez* as different poems. To my mind, however, this mention is easily explained by the bibliographers' habit of treating variant titles as independent works; I do

It is not, moreover, readily apparent why someone would forge an elaborate introduction to attribute this particular romance to ʿAṭṭār. It is true that many spurious poems were attributed to him, sometimes through deliberate forgery. ʿAṭṭār-e Tuni, for instance, composed the *Lesān al-ghayb* and the *Maẓhar al-ʿajāʾeb* in the ninth/fifteenth century and falsely attributed them to ʿAṭṭār-e Nayshāburi. But by the time ʿAṭṭār-e Tuni was writing, ʿAṭṭār's reputation as a saintly poet was firmly established; Tuni seems to have been motivated by a desire to attract a wider audience for his own religio-didactic *masnavi*s, and perhaps also to co-opt the famed ʿAṭṭār as a Shiʿi poet.[106] It is difficult to see, however, what a forger could gain in the case of the *Khosrow-nāma.* The romance does not bolster or accord with ʿAṭṭār's saintly image among later generations, so it is unlikely that a devotee or a spiritual follower of ʿAṭṭār would have constructed the introduction. Likewise, if the author of the *Gol o Hermez* or one of his fans wanted to boost that poem's circulation, it would not make much sense to attribute it to ʿAṭṭār, who was celebrated not for romances, but for his didactic *masnavi*s.[107]

In the introduction to his 2008 edition of the *Elāhi-nāma*, Shafiʿi-Kadkani added a new, complicating layer to the argument: he suggested that parts of the *Khosrow-nāma*'s conclusion and some of its doxology may actually be authentic to ʿAṭṭār. According to this hypothesis, a group of forgers wanted to attribute the romance *Gol o Hermez* to ʿAṭṭār-e Nayshāburi; they thus prefaced the romance with a fake account of the work's composition, and to give this forged introduction an air of authenticity, they extracted part of ʿAṭṭār's genuine doxology from the poem now known as the *Elāhi-nāma*—including its opening praise of God and the Prophet—and attached it to the romance.[108] To make the forgery even more convincing, they also attached much of the *Elāhi-nāma*'s original conclusion to the *Khosrow-nāma*.[109] These forgers then replaced the *Elāhi-nāma*'s "missing" doxology with a set of forged lines and verses taken from ʿAṭṭār's *Asrār-nāma* and other parts of the *Elāhi-nāma*.[110]

Shafiʿi-Kadkani does not fully spell out the reasoning behind this new claim—the only concrete evidence he offers has to do with the relative lengths of the various doxologies and conclusions—but the argument as a whole seems to be motivated by his discomfort with the

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not see how it supports Shafiʿi-Kadkani's claim. Second, Shafiʿi-Kadkani also writes that the title page of the 1295/1878 Lucknow lithograph reads "*Hormoz o Golrokh*, famous as the *Elāhi-nāma*," but in my copy of the text I find only "*Hormoz o Golrokh*, famous as the *Khosrow-nāma*." It is possible, of course, that other title pages were produced, but in any case the evidence is rather late and likely not very reliable. See Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Mokhtār-nāma*, 58–59.

106. Many pre-Safavid Persian poets were later "claimed" as Shiʿis; see, for example, the case of Sanāʾi, discussed in de Bruijn, *Piety and Poetry*, 13, 73–74; cf. Lewis, "Reading, Writing, and Recitation," 183–85.

107. At one point, Shafiʿi-Kadkani suggests that literary agents collecting manuscripts for court libraries were behind the forgery, as it allowed them to collect fees for two manuscripts in place of one (introduction to *Elāhi-nāma*, 61). It is still not clear, however, why they would have attached the poem specifically to ʿAṭṭār, especially given the massive amount of work involved (see below).

108. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Elāhi-nāma*, 56–63.

109. Ibid., 59–60.

110. Ibid., 58, 69–71.

textual messiness of the *Elāhi-nāma*'s current doxology, whose multiple recensions cannot be easily reconciled into a single "authentic" authorial version.[111] Although he does not discuss the stylistic particulars, we should also note that the *Khosrow-nāma*'s conclusion exhibits striking similarities with the concluding sections of ʿAṭṭār's undisputed works. The speaker begins with self-praise regarding the beauty of his verses and their spiritual value and then shifts to self-criticism and confessions of hypocrisy, before concluding with a prayer for himself and his deceased mother, which recalls ʿAṭṭār's lament for his father at the end of the *Asrār-nāma*.[112] In any case, whereas previously Shafiʿi-Kadkani argued on the basis of stylistic and religious evidence that the entire doxology of the *Khosrow-nāma* was fabricated, he now suggests that much of it may be authentic, although he maintains that the lines he earlier identified as problematic are still later interpolations.[113] Furthermore, the new argument presupposes that the alleged forgery must have taken place before all extant copies of the *Elāhi-nāma* were transcribed, meaning before 729/1328–1329; he thus seems to have abandoned the claim that the poem is a Timurid-era forgery, although he does not make this explicit.[114]

However, the proposed forgery would have necessitated a literary conspiracy of truly epic proportions. Certainly we must acknowledge the philological messiness of the *Elāhi-nāma*'s introduction, but it is difficult to believe that the poem's original doxology can now be found in *Khosrow-nāma*, where it was transferred on a line-by-line basis by a group of later forgers. How could such a forgery have been perpetrated in the manuscript age on two circulating texts, one of which must have enjoyed some popularity, so completely that no trace of their original forms remains? No manuscript of the *Khosrow-nāma* has come to light without its allegedly forged preface, nor is there any extant manuscript of the *Elāhi-nāma* that retains its allegedly original title or doxology. I do not see how a group of forgers could have accomplished this feat without identifying, gathering, doctoring, and recirculating the majority of existing manuscripts of both poems across the Iranian world. And for such a project to have been worth undertaking, ʿAṭṭār must have been a well-known and desirable poet—in which case a great number of manuscripts of his *Elāhi-nāma* would presumably have been in existence, making the endeavor even more difficult.

Conclusion

Shafiʿi-Kadkani's argument for the spuriousness of the *Khosrow-nāma*'s attribution to ʿAṭṭār has, over the past forty years, exerted considerable influence on scholarship. Nevertheless, even though it is often cited and widely accepted, it has a number of weak points. First, the list of manuscripts used by Shafiʿi-Kadkani to argue for a later provenance is incomplete; he does not include the early Bibliothèque nationale manuscript, which was transcribed in the late seventh/thirteenth century and thus contradicts a ninth/fifteenth-century dating. Next, the circular cross-references that he identifies as contradictory could

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111. Ibid., 60–61, 63–67; Zarrinkub, *Ṣedā-ye bāl-e simorgh*, 70.

112. ʿAṭṭār, *Khosrow-nāma*, lines 8338–64; ʿAṭṭār, *Asrār-nāma*, lines 3282–301.

113. Shafiʿi-Kadkani, introduction to *Elāhi-nāma*, 64, 68.

114. Ritter, "Philologika XIV," 47.

easily have resulted from a process of authorial revision; in fact, the *Khosrow-nāma*'s introduction describes just such a process. Further, Shafiꜥi-Kadkani asserts that the poem (and especially its preface) diverges from ꜥAṭṭār's undisputed works in terms of style and religious terminology, but I have shown that these divergences are exaggerated. Finally, if the romance is forged, one must explain how ꜥAṭṭār came to mention it in the *Mokhtār-nāma*, and the theory of a title shift, although possible in the abstract, is not supported by any evidence in this specific case.

In short, although Shafiꜥi-Kadkani's argument is erudite and complex, its version of events is ultimately less likely than a much simpler alternative: namely, that ꜥAṭṭār actually did write the *Khosrow-nāma*. Certainly, this explanation is not without its own peculiarities. It means that ꜥAṭṭār tried his hand at the romance genre, and that he composed one version of the poem before the *Mokhtār-nāma*, only to revise it later. But this version of events is much easier to imagine than is a literary conspiracy in which forgers changed the titles of two poems, constructed a false preface attributing the *Khosrow-nāma* to ꜥAṭṭār, transferred the *Elāhi-nāma*'s doxology to the *Khosrow-nāma*, and then successfully suppressed the previous forms of both poems, all without any clear motivation. Unless new, contrary evidence surfaces, the most reasonable attitude toward the question of the *Khosrow-nāma*'s authenticity is thus one of circumspect acceptance.

The impact of Shafiꜥi-Kadkani's argument is difficult to overstate. Nearly all scholarly work on ꜥAṭṭār, for almost the past half century, has discounted the *Khosrow-nāma* on the premise that it is a spurious attribution. But as I have shown, the argument for its spuriousness is shaky at best. I thus hope that this article will spur scholars to reconsider their understanding of ꜥAṭṭār and his place in literary history given the likelihood that the *Khosrow-nāma* is, in fact, authentic. In particular, further investigations into ꜥAṭṭār's biography and authorial development that take the *Khosrow-nāma* into account are needed, as are reevaluations of conclusions about his relationship to Sufism, the scope of his poetic models, and possible intertextual ties with authors in the romantic tradition. More than this, however, the above examination testifies to the importance of continuing scholarly evaluation of basic, field-shaping arguments. Conclusions about attribution have the potential to shape generations of scholarship, and they thus must not be simply treated as "one and done." Rather, they must be carefully checked and rechecked, even when proposed by respected scholars and involving rather unglamorous, nitty-gritty philological work. Otherwise, through widespread citation, potentially misleading conclusions are easily canonized as accepted knowledge and scholarly consensus.

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Review Essay

Women, Identity, and Power:
A Review Essay of Antony Eastmond, *Tamta's World**

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Abstract

This article, a response to Antony Eastmond's monograph Tamta's World, *pays particular attention to women's history and identity at the intersection of cultural and religious interactions in medieval Georgia, Armenia, and Anatolia. It highlights the importance of the women in Tʿamtʿa's family—her mother and aunts—in shaping her identity, despite Eastmond's emphasis on the agency of men in this process. I argue that the lives and self-representation of these women were far more relevant to Tʿamtʿa than the numerous examples from various parts of the Islamicate world that Eastmond provides would suggest. The article critically examines the notion of "fluid identities" as applied to the medieval evidence. It does so by considering previous research that has rejected the historicity of Zakʿarid/Mxargrʒeli princes' Kurdish origin. Furthermore, it outlines the divergent Armenian and Georgian historiographical traditions on the naming of this dynasty, reveals their sources, and underscores that genealogical constructions and the choice of dynastic monikers were strategies of legitimation. The visual evidence likewise requires nuanced interpretation, as I demonstrate in treating the Axtala Monastery's frescoes. I conclude by emphasizing that research aimed at bridging different disciplines, like Eastmond's, is essential but highly challenging. Its challenges may be partially offset through collaborative efforts among specialists.*

General Remarks

Tamta's World is an imaginative reconstruction of the turbulent, fascinating story and the historical context of a thirteenth-century Armenian noblewoman's—T'amt'a's—life.[1] Eastmond takes the reader through the various circumstances that forced T'amt'a to move in 1210 from her native lands in the north of historical Armenia (the Province of Loṙi) to a city on the northwestern coast of Lake Van, Xlat' (Akhlat in Eastmond), which was then under Ayyubid rule.[2] From there she traveled to Jazīra and Syria, where she may have sojourned for a brief period of time. Soon going back to Xlat', she lived in and ruled over the city on behalf of her husband, al-Ashraf (d. 1254). A dramatic encounter with Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārazmshāh in 1230 likely forced her to return to her paternal family at some point in late 1230s. Subsequently, T'amt'a may have been forced to undertake a long journey to the Mongol court in Qaraqorum, where she resided as a hostage for nine years before she was granted permission to return once more to Xlat' in 1245. She was appointed the city's ruler, this time in her own name, but subject to Mongol overlordship. T'amt'a probably died in Xlat' in the mid-1250s.

Already the bare geography of T'amt'a's movements is extraordinary by any standard. The various peoples, religions, cultures, and languages that she encountered mark her life as anything but dull. Yet it would be reductive to describe the book's scope as merely a reconstruction of T'amt'a's life, in which the city of Xlat' serves as the "other main actor" (p. 124). Instead, Eastmond uses the very brief and fragmentary notices on this noblewoman in contemporary Armenian,[3] Georgian, Persian, and Arabic sources as triggers for delving into various aspects of courtly life and ruling practices; religion and interreligious contact and conflict; and pious foundations, their significance for the display of power, and the role of women as patrons, among others. Eastmond pays particular attention to visual and material culture, such as the urban environment and the landscape, including various types of buildings and their architectural features. Nor does he neglect trade, politics, or war, exploring their interreligious dimensions. The geographical sweep of the book is impressive: it covers portions of the Eurasian and African continents, stretching from the southern foothills of the Caucasus Mountains further south- and westward, through Anatolia and

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1. The scholarly transcription of her name, following the conventional system of Hübschmann-Meillet-Benveniste (HMB), is T'amt'a. Eastmond has opted for a simplified spelling—Tamta—for this name as well as other proper names, as he explains on p. xxii. In this review, all Armenian proper names are transcribed according HBM (adopted by *Revue des études arméniennes*), Georgian names according to *Revue des études géorgiennes et caucasiennes,* and Arabic, Persian, and Turkish names according to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam, 3rd ed. A*fter the first mention of each name, I indicate in parentheses the transliteration used by Eastmond. Any direct quotations from Eastmond reproduce his spelling. This paper is based mainly on Armenian and some Georgian sources. Within each of these traditions there are different dating systems. In order to avoid multiple conversions between these and other chronological conventions, this article will provide only CE dates.

2. The city is called Akhlāṭ/Khilaṭ in Islamic sources and Khilat/Khliat in Byzantine ones. In view of the diversity of spellings, Eastmond opts for Akhlat throughout the book.

3. Armenian sources are the most detailed on T'amt'a. Of prime importance is Kirakos Ganjakec'i, *Patmut'iwn hayoc'* [History of the Armenians], ed. K. Melik'-Ōhanǰanyan (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1961), finished ca. 1265. Kirakos is one of the few authors to mention T'amt'a by name.

Mesopotamia to Egypt, and eastward to the Mongol steppes, with the Great Khan's court in Qaraqorum at their center. Eastmond's aim is to recreate T'amt'a's world on the basis of all possible external evidence that has reached us. In the process, he masterfully transforms T'amt'a and Xlat' to anything but a mere "footnote in history" (p. 391). Ultimately, he makes a strong case for placing Armenian and Georgian medieval history within a multicultural and multireligious landscape as the most fruitful interpretative framework.

T'amt'a's odyssey started in 1210, when her father, Iwanē, of the Zak'arid/Mxargrʒeli family (Ivane Mqargrdzeli) was taken prisoner by an Ayyubid guard during his unsuccessful siege of Xlat' (pp. 3–7). Iwanē was a leading member of a new but powerful Armenian military nobility of Zak'arid lineage (I return to these denominations below) who pursued a brilliant military-political career at the Georgian court, then at the apogee of its power. To regain his freedom, Iwanē used T'amt'a as a diplomatic commodity, giving her in marriage to the Ayyubid ruler of Xlat', al-Awḥad, the nephew of the famous Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. Al-Awḥad's death only a few months later meant that his wives passed to his brother al-Ashraf, a much more ambitious ruler. As the wife of al-Ashraf, T'amt'a is thought to have remained in Xlat' until ca. 1237, with a possible short stay in Syria. Her husband was absent from Xlat' most of the time, since his political interests lay elsewhere, in Jazīra. While in Xlat', T'amt'a used her position to benefit the Christian inhabitants of the city as well as those of the historical region of Tarōn to the west. Sources credit her for having created propitious conditions for pilgrims passing through the territories around Xlat' and through Tarōn on their way to Jerusalem (p. 8). The Armenian historian Kirakos Ganjakec'i states that these policies were especially beneficial for Georgian Christians, which could equally denote ethnic Georgian Christians and Armenian Chalcedonians. Kirakos calls T'amt'a the "lord of the city [of Xlat']."[4]

After a forced and short-lived marriage to Jalāl al-Dīn Khwārazmshāh (ca. 1230), T'amt'a likely returned to her homeland, which was ruled by her brother Awag at the time. She witnessed the Mongol campaigns and conquest of these territories from 1236 onward, which had a profound effect on the power balance between Armenian military elites and the Georgian court. Awag now acted on his own behalf rather than as a representative of the Georgian kingdom, directly negotiating for peace with the Mongols through his complete submission. Thereupon T'amt'a became once more a valuable diplomatic tool, possibly undertaking a voyage to Qaraqorum and remaining there as a hostage to ensure Awag's loyalty to the Mongols. Her return to Xlat' around 1245 as the ruler of the city under the Mongols brought her life full circle. She probably died and was buried in Xlat', though there is no explicit evidence of this.

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4. Kirakos, *Patmut'iwn hayoc'*, 292. Kirakos uses the word *tēr*, literally "lord," rather than its feminine counterpart *tikin* ("lady"). There has been no study of the significance of gendered uses of this title in T'amt'a's time. Nevertheless, this period witnessed important transformations in traditional social structures, land tenure practices, and titles. These topics are discussed in S. La Porta, "'The Kingdom and the Sultanate Were Conjoined': Legitimizing Land and Power in Armenia during the 12th and Early 13th Centuries," *Revue des études arméniennes* 34 (2012): 73–118. One may speculate that *tēr* had stronger legal and political connotations than did *tikin*, which may have constituted an honorary title. Admittedly, the issue requires further research.

Given the paucity of direct information on T'amt'a, the various chapters of the book are digressions on themes that help us imagine her world. Eastmond explores such topics as the theory and practice of marriage at the Ayyubid court and other contemporary Muslim societies; public works, such as pious foundations established by high-standing wives or widows among the Ayyubids, Saljuqs, and Armenians; rivalry among women at court and in the harem; and the various options available to them for exerting influence or creating a public image, not least through the management of taxation. Eastmond then evokes the physical features that characterized T'amt'a's world, from palaces and objects therein to cityscapes. This portrait is based on other medieval Anatolian cities and palaces, which, for Eastmond, provide parallels to the now lost premodern structures of Xlat'. He thus explores the ways in which different ethnic and religious groups lived and displayed symbols of their faith within these other cities' internal topography and on their very walls. But the methodological soundness of this procedure is questionable.

Overall, Eastmond's reconstruction sets out two lines of argumentation that contribute to the study of medieval Georgia, Armenia, and Anatolia. First, he masterfully describes the multicultural landscape of these territories. They were inhabited or invaded by peoples speaking a multiplicity of languages, confessing different faiths, and organized according to varied social structures. Such diversity translated into intense interactions in the social, artistic, military, and religious spheres but could also give rise to conflict. It also meant, at least among military elites, the formation of multifaceted or even fluid identities with numerous shared features and a common language of rulership. The subject of identity politics is thus one of Eastmond's central themes. Second, he highlights the place of women in this world. He emphasizes the impact of patriarchal societies on the formation and transformations of women's identities. He forcefully argues that women's identities were largely imposed upon them by men, and he explores the impact of such gender dynamics on women's history. I believe, however, that both of these key themes—identity formation and women's agency within it—require more nuanced interpretations.

The individual topics and specific persons as well as single objects, buildings, and cities explored in this book are mostly well known, and many are well researched. Thus, Eastmond's purpose is not to break new ground but rather to bring this wealth of material together in a comparative perspective. His emphasis on visual culture and the material heritage is especially noteworthy. Such a painstaking collection of information in one book provides an overall vision and brings to life a vibrant but also violent world, one of close interaction among peoples of different faiths, languages, and social structures. This view helps us imagine how a woman like T'amt'a managed to survive and rule as she moved through these different social, cultural, and linguistic environments. Needless to say, her world was a male-dominated world, which makes T'amt'a all the more interesting as a historical figure. Whether these encounters resulted in "shifting identities" or even imposed "different identities" on T'amt'a is a subject I will explore below.

Because of the diversity of the material covered in the book, *Tamta's World* appears to be aimed at a broad readership, including scholars engaged in a variety of disciplines. Its fluid and clear style of writing is likely to attract also interested readers outside of scholarly circles. The courage to tackle such vast material, bridging multiple academic

fields and bringing scholarly traditions into conversation with each other, is praiseworthy. Projects with such ambitious sweep open up new vistas of research by juxtaposing multiple perspectives on the same problem. Yet the great breadth of the book is also what leaves several critical questions unanswered. Precisely because of its wide-ranging scope, it is perhaps inevitable that specialists in various more specific fields may find some of the author's interpretations of complex problems and unresolved hypotheses, as well as his use and presentation of certain sources, less convincing. Still, it is yet another merit of the book to have raised these questions, which then stimulate more specialized discussion. I will explore some of these questions below.

Remarks of an Armenologist

In his acknowledgements (p. xx), Eastmond recognizes the challenges of conducting research into T'amt'a's world caused by the variety of languages used in the primary sources and the near-impossibility of mastering them all. One could hardly disagree. Yet in view of the central subject matter—T'amt'a—and the available sources on her, knowledge of Arabic and Armenian, in particular, would seem indispensable, not only because of the importance of direct access to all available primary material, but also because the acquisition of these languages would also entail a thorough training in the relevant historiography (and, not least, in the fields' historiographic problems). Given my own specialization, I do not feel competent to analyze the author's use of sources in Arabic or Persian. My remarks are focused on the area I know and can judge best, namely, medieval Armenian history and the relevant sources, but I will also make a limited foray into the Georgian material when necessary. Through these reflections, some of which challenge Eastmond's overarching conclusions as well as his specific interpretations, I hope to emphasize the diversity of the Armenian sources, the importance of using them in full in order to appreciate the multiplicity of points of view, and the new interpretative possibilities these sources offer for attempts to reconstruct Christian-Muslim interactions in medieval Anatolia.

Shifting Identities and Methodological Concerns

As mentioned earlier, identity, and women's identity in particular, is a key concept in the book, viewed through the lens of T'amt'a's experiences. Indeed, we are informed already in the book's first pages that, through her life story and encounters with different peoples and languages, T'amt'a's "identity changed in consequence" (p. 2), and that "as her life was subject to such change and fluctuation, the transformations of her identity are central" (p. 20). Eastmond also duly notes that we will never be able to reach "T'amt'a's internal character and personality" but can explore only its "outward display" (p. 15). Various examples of individuals and groups whose identities were expressed in ways that seem ambiguous or fluid are cited in an effort to imagine how T'amt'a's own identity might have been transformed. The starting point for these transformations is her family. Eastmond reminds us that the family had a history of identity changes prior to and during T'amt'a's own lifetime. Thus, the Zak'arids, who were "of Kurdish origin," became Armenianized a few generations before T'amt'a, adopting the non-Chalcedonian form of Armenian Christianity

and the language. T'amt'a's father, Iwanē, then converted to the Chalcedonian confession of the Georgian (and Byzantine) Church as he pursued a military career at the court of the Georgian queen Tamar (r. 1184–1210). His elder brother Zak'arē (Zakare in Eastmond), however, remained in the fold of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In the twelfth century and the first three decades of the thirteenth, the Kingdom of Georgia was the strongest Christian state in the region, one that often portrayed itself as the protector of all the Christians in the face of the conquests and rule of various Islamic dynasties in historical Armenia and Anatolia. Zak'arē's and Iwanē's flexible religious strategy ensured the appeal of the brothers to their (Chalcedonian) Georgian and (non-Chalcedonian) Armenian subjects. This appeal was particularly vital for the command of their mixed Armeno-Georgian military forces. In their core territories—the border area of Armenian-Georgian settlements—there was also an important Armenian Chalcedonian community, which Iwanē may have wished to strengthen (pp. 21–65). Considering the fluidity of the brothers and those they ruled, Eastmond calls for abandoning "any simple 'national' categorisation" (p. 27).

It is beyond question that any discussion of medieval identities must be free of anachronistic notions and "national categorisation" based on the modern concept of a nation-state. I could not agree more with Eastmond on this point. At the same time, however, when challenging this outdated scholarly paradigm, which was, at any rate, the result of intellectual developments in a post-Enlightenment European context, the availability, complexity, and agenda of the sources should be given due credit. Although in some cases "changing identities" or at least shifts in their public display may be possible to trace, in others we should apply more caution in drawing conclusions. I will first make a few general methodological remarks before embarking on a more detailed analysis of certain specific cases presented by Eastmond as evidence of "fluid identities" in order to point out some of the inherent source-critical and historiographic problems. Naturally, it is not possible to discuss every single example offered by Eastmond. I focus on those that are directly relevant to the central topic of the book—T'amt'a's life—and on which my familiarity with the problems at hand allows me to make critical remarks.

To break free of a "national" or "nationalistic" outlook when analyzing medieval sources, Eastmond draws on two theoretical works: B. Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and A. Smith's "National Identities: Modern and Medieval" (p. 22).[5] Yet Anderson's book, as popular as it has been, is relevant to the process and methods of identity construction (or imagination, if one wishes) of only *some* nations in the modern era. Beyond the merits of his paradigm, which has been questioned on various grounds,[6] Anderson's model relies on an entirely different and much vaster set of sources, not to speak of the hardly comparable material and technological context of the period it tackles (nineteenth and twentieth centuries), than what is available to scholars who deal with the thirteenth

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5. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991); A. D. Smith, "National Identities: Modern and Medieval," in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. L. Johnson, A. V. Murray, and S. Forde, 21–46 (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1995).

6. For a recent criticism of the use of this model for understanding medieval concepts of "nation," particularly the "Roman" identity in Byzantium, see, for example, A. Kaldellis, "The Social Scope of Roman Identity in Byzantium: An Evidence-Based Approach," *Byzantina Symmeikta* 27 (2017): 200–201.

century. Anderson's treatment of the "Middle Ages" itself is so fragmentary, superficial, and stereotypical that his paradigm's utility for a medieval historian seems as questionable as that of paradigms based on concepts of a nation-state.[7] Similarly, Smith's oft-cited article's definition of a "nation" has been subject to criticism for its inapplicability to medieval societies.[8] A recent and even more thorough critique of Smith from an Islamicist's point of view—by J. Bray in a talk given in June 2016—emphasized the unreliability of Smith's model when brought to bear on medieval Islamic sources.[9] Unfortunately, this analysis was not available to Eastmond. But one hopes that every scholar would apply his or her critical judgment in evaluating the utility of a theoretical framework to be applied to the available source material.

Various studies by N. Garsoïan and B. L. Zekiyan, two of the few but illustrious contemporary scholars who have carried out extensive research on the premodern understanding and formation of Armenian identity, are regrettably absent from Eastmond's book. Garsoïan has focused mainly on Late Antiquity. However, her methodological considerations on the facets of Armenian identity and the tension between modern scholarly discourse limited by a "national" view and the available evidence would have added depth to Eastmond's own analysis.[10] Zekiyan, too, has explored the multiple components of medieval Armenian identity, emphasizing its "polyvalence." Particularly valuable given Eastmond's subject matter would have been two of Zekiyan's works that focus precisely on the Zak'arids/Mxargrʒelis, while his more recent magisterial treatment of the theme of cultural interactions in "Subcaucasia" represents a milestone in research on Armenian

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7. See, for example, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 15–17, where the author uses such problematic (and unexplained) concepts as the "unselfconscious coherence" that characterized (presumably) the European Middle Ages. For a more sustained discussion of Anderson, see Kaldellis, "Social Scope," and the bibliography cited there.

8. R. Davies, "Nations and National Identities in the Medieval World: An Apologia," *Journal of Belgian History* 34 (2004): 567–579.

9. J. Bray, "Vexed Questions" (paper presented at the conference "'And You Shall Be unto Me a Kingdom of Priests, a Holy Nation': Chosen Peoples from the Bible to Daesh," University of Oxford, June 20, 2016). Bray's talk is available as a podcast at http://torch.ox.ac.uk/role-religion-identity.

10. N. Garsoïan, "Reality and Myth in Armenian History," in *The East and the Meaning of History: Proceedings of the International Conference, Rome, 23–27 November 1992*, ed. G. Garbini and B. Scarcia Amoretti, 117–145 (Rome: Bardi, 1994); eadem, "Notes préliminaires sur l'anthroponymie arménienne du Moyen Âge," in *L'anthroponymie: Document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux*, ed. M. Bourin, J.-M. Martin, and F. Menant, 227–39 (Rome: École française de Rome, 1996); eadem, "The Two Voices of Armenian Medieval Historiography: The Iranian Index," *Studia Iranica* 25 (1996): 7–43; eadem, "The Problem of Armenian Integration into the Byzantine Empire," in *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire*, ed. H. Ahrweiler and A. Laiou, 53–124 (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998). These articles have been reprinted in N. Garsoïan, *Church and Culture in Early Medieval Armenia* (Ashgate: Variorum, 1999), as nos. XII, IX, XI, and XIII, respectively. See also N. Garsoïan, "Evolution et crise dans l'historiographie récente de l'Arménie médiévale," *Revue du monde arménien modern et contemporain* 6 (2001): 7–27, reprinted in N. Garsoïan, *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia* (Ashgate: Variorum, 2010), no. I, and eadem, "Mer hołer," in *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé*, ed. A. Mardirossian, A. Ouzounian, and C. Zuckerman, 369–76 (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2014).

identity and should have been consulted for the methodological tools it proposes.[11] Indeed, Zekiyan has long called for distinguishing the various facets that made up the identity of medieval personages, including ethnicity, state, religion, and class, and for revealing the combinations and displays of these facets in different contexts. By way of example, such a nuanced understanding is necessary when one wishes to evaluate the function of the art sponsored by the Zakʿarids and the message it conveyed, as well as the type of identity (ethnic? state-related? religious?) it represented.[12] Even if Eastmond had disagreed with Garsoïan's or Zekiyan's views, it would have been important to engage with previous scholarship that has treated the very same subjects and one of the most fundamental concepts of the book—identity.[13]

Identity Transformations and Women in Tʿamtʿa's Family

It is appropriate to start my exploration of the specific themes evoked in *Tamta's World* with its protagonist, the amazing Tʿamtʿa. Although the main purpose of the book is to follow Tʿamtʿa and try to see the world through her eyes, the lack of any direct information on her compels Eastmond to dedicate numerous pages, perhaps too many, to the reconstruction of the context of her life on the basis of possible parallel cases. The descriptions of marital practices, the activities of other high-standing Christian or Muslim wives (particularly their sponsorship of pious foundations), and the ways in which such women could wield power are meant to hint at the social environment in which Tʿamtʿa may have lived and acted. Accompanied by ample visual material, the descriptions are a feast for the eyes, but frequently it feels as though we lose sight of Tʿamtʿa herself. One is not always sure to what extent the various examples are applicable to or useful for understanding the main protagonist of the book. Meanwhile, other, in my view crucial material is absent.

The transformations of Tʿamtʿa's identity run through the book as one of its leitmotifs. In order to understand them, one has to form an idea of their different stages, including Tʿamtʿa's origins. Here Eastmond insists on the role of Iwanē in shaping his daughter's identity: "Tamta's identity before her first marriage was intimately bound up with that of her father" (p. 27). Given the absence of Tʿamtʿa's name in any inscriptions left by Iwanē and her anonymity before her marriage, he concludes: "This invisibility, this dependence on the father, ensures that we are right to think of Tamta as sharing her father's identity

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11. B. L. Zekiyan, "Prémisses pour une méthodologie critique dans les études arméno-géorgienne," *Bazmavēp* 139 (1981): 460–469, and idem, "Le croisement des cultures dans les regions limitrophe de Géorgie, d'Arménie et de Byzance," *Annali di Ca' Foscari* 25, no. 3 (1986): 81–96. For more general remarks, see his "Lo studio delle interazioni politiche e culturali tra le popolazioni della Subcaucasia: Alcuni problemi di metodologia e di fondo in prospettiva sincronica e diacronica," in *Il Caucaso: Cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI)*, 1:427–481 (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1996), and the various chapters in his *L'Armenia e gli armeni. Polis lacerata e patria spirituale: La sfida di una sopravvivenza* (Milan: Guerrini e associati, 2000).

12. Zekiyan, "Le croisement des cultures," 89.

13. The continued importance of this subject is attested by more recent publications. A new collected volume, unfortunately not yet available to Eastmond, is particularly noteworthy: K. Babayan and M. Pifer, eds., *An Armenian Mediterranean: Words and Worlds in Motion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

during this first stage of her life" (p. 84). Men's role in the evolution of T'amt'a's identity is stressed also after her marriage: "When Tamta transferred from her father's family to that of her new husband, she was forced to become part of a new family with a new identity" (p. 84); "to the core of being an Armenian-Georgian noblewoman she added the role of wife of an Ayyubid prince" (p. 172). Likewise, as Eastmond recounts the hypothetical physical structures of a palace in which T'amt'a may have lived, he argues that "the design and decoration of palaces suggest that her identity continued to be framed through the men who controlled her, just as it had been by her father before her marriage" (p. 264). These conclusions can be accepted only partially given the precious little evidence we possess. The sources also allow alternative readings and interpretations.

Eastmond emphasizes throughout the book that T'amt'a lived in a world in which gender lines were clearly drawn. If so, it would be unusual for a father who was away on military campaigns a great deal of time to develop such an intimate relationship with his daughter as to shape her identity in that most delicate period of personality formation: childhood and adolescence. Eastmond dedicates pages to the certainly interesting lives of other individual women at various Muslim courts from Cairo to Mosul to Tokat, but it is surprising that barely a line alludes to T'amt'a's mother or to other women of her family. Nor does he say anything about the activities or role of women among the Georgian nobility or at court beyond the exceptional cases of the queens Tamar and Rusudan and the latter's daughter Tamar. The second Tamar converted to Islam and appears as Gurji Khātūn in the sources.

T'amt'a's mother Xošak' (Khoshak) appears very briefly on p. 2 and then not again until p. 324. Although surely the information available on her in the sources is slimmer than that available on her husband, this fact should not discourage us from trying to form an image of her. She is far from invisible. It is reasonable to assume that Xošak' was T'amt'a's earliest model of behavior and probably taught her daughter rulership skills for her future life as a high-standing wife with at least some local power, and it is thus worth looking at what we know about Xošak'.

Eastmond remarks that the thirteenth-century monastic teacher, historian, and intellectual Vardan Arewelc'i briefly mentions Xošak' in polemical contexts. He first blames her for having instigated Zak'arē's son's conversion to "the Chalcedonian heresy." Vardan then accuses her of a bizarre blasphemous act: she burned a dog to eradicate a newly emerging cult of the priest Parkešt (pp. 324–325).[14] Certainly, Vardan's anti-Chalcedonian sentiments are evident. At the same time, his accusations cannot be taken as only expressions of misogyny. That it was Iwanē's wife who was held responsible for the religious orientation of Zak'arē's (her brother-in-law's) son implies, at least, that women's agency in such matters was credible to Vardan's readers, even if not endorsed by all of them. As long as this is not simply a narrative device to clear Iwanē's name, we may assume that Xošak' had just as much if not more say in the religious education and orientation of her daughter T'amt'a.

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14. Vardan Vardapet, *Hawak'umn patmut'ean* [Historical Compilation] (Venice: Mechitarist Press, 1862), 140 and 143.

Eastmond also includes a good summary of women's political involvement at the Mongol court, as well as of the participation of high-standing women in the new political chessboard (pp. 378–380). It would be pertinent to add that T'amt'a's mother, too, was part of that world. Indeed, she acted as a mediator between her son (T'amt'a's brother) Awag and the Mongol commander Č'ałatay (Chaɣatay). According to Kirakos Ganjakec'i, at a feast with his friends-in-arms, Awag, perhaps having drunk more than his fair share, boasted about rebelling against the Mongols. When the gossip reached Č'ałatay, he prepared for a punishing action. The situation was saved by Awag's mother, who "went to them and pledged for the faithfulness of her son." After due punishment and payment "for their heads," the Mongols left Awag alone.[15] This episode reveals a strong and willful woman acting as a high-profile ambassador to the representative of a new "foreign" power, something that was not as unusual as it appears at first sight.[16]

Xošak''s assertive personality and claims to power are evident also in earlier sources, such as inscriptions. As Eastmond rightly notes, inscriptions are one form of "outward display of . . . personality" (p. 15). Xošak' was hardly unique, in view of the importance of medieval Armenian women throughout the centuries as donors and founders of monasteries and churches, immortalizing their names on such buildings rather than merely representing the male power to which they were subjected.[17] In one inscription from Širakawan, slightly northeast of Ani, dated to 1229, Xošak' declares herself "the queen of the Georgians and the Armenians," while in another one from 1232 she appears as "the overseer of the Georgians and the Armenians and their queen."[18] Such audacious language vis-à-vis the Georgian court reflects the Zak'arids' independent-minded policy, which they pursued cautiously by various means throughout their rule in Armenia, but with greater confidence toward the end of Queen Tamar's rule and after her death.[19] Moreover, Xošak''s inscriptions echo pretensions to autonomy articulated in language that emphasizes female power: she claims to be a "queen." And there is another inscription in Širakawan from 1228 in which Xošak' is celebrated for exempting Širakawan's population from a certain tax. This tax break was obtained by the head of the community, Gurgēn, whose position appears subordinate to Xošak''s, underscoring the priority of class over gender hierarchies.[20]

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15. Kirakos, *Patmut'iwn hayoc'*, 319–320.

16. For other examples from an earlier period, see A. Vacca, "Conflict and Community in the Medieval Caucasus," *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 25 (2017): 66–112.

17. For early evidence of female patronage and agency, see T. Greenwood, "A Corpus of Early Medieval Armenian Inscriptions," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 27–91, esp. 68–69. For a late ninth/early tenth century case study, see Z. Pogossian, "The Foundation of the Monastery of Sevan: A Case Study on Monasteries, Economy and Political Power in IX–X Century Armenia," in *Le valli dei monaci: Atti del III convegno internazionale di studio "De Re Monastica," Roma-Subiaco, 17–19 maggio, 2010*, ed. L. Ermini Pani, 1:181–215 (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2012).

18. Ł. Ališan, *Širak* (Venice: Mechitarist Press, 1881), 10.

19. La Porta, "Kingdom and Sultanate," 92–95, 100–102, 105, 108. These centrifugal tendencies became more accentuated in Queen Tamar's final years and after her death in 1210.

20. L. Xač'ikyan, "XIV–XV dareri haykakan giwłakan hamaynk'i masin" [On the Armenian village community

Xošak''s name is recorded also in the monastery of Kečʻaṙis in northern Armenia, in an inscription on the western façade of the main church. She is listed after her husband, Iwanē, the latter's nephew Šahnšah (Zakʻarē's son, whom she "converted"), and her own son Awag, but she is given the title "patron." The same title is repeated (in the variant "paron") on the southern wall of the same church.[21] Although we may note that Xošak''s identity in these inscriptions was bound to her function as a mother, we may also argue that, given the wording of the inscription, she was important for Awag and Awag's own identity. The latter defined himself not only through his father but also through his mother. It is probably not by chance that Zakʻarē's son Šahnšah appears immediately after his uncle Iwanē, while the latter's son Awag is the third in line. Could we conclude that the presence of his self-confident mother's name buttressed his otherwise not very prominent position? These suggestions are hypothetical, and the inscriptions certainly need further analysis in light of kinship structures within these families.

However, as far as Tʻamtʻa is concerned, this evidence is essential. If we are to think that the intriguing experiences of Shajar al-Durr in Cairo (pp. 117–121, 184, and elsewhere) and of Māhparī Khātūn in Anatolia (pp. 197–205 and elsewhere) can give us clues to Tʻamtʻa's behavior and the challenges she faced, we are certainly entitled to postulate that her own mother was far more relevant. She must have had a direct influence on Tʻamtʻa's ideas of gendered power structures and the display of her own standing in the relevant hierarchies. Both textual and epigraphic sources converge in depicting Xošakʻ as a leading figure in her own right who knew how to convey her claims in appropriate language. It would be odd if she did not pass on this wisdom to her daughter or educate her in the same spirit.

Tʻamtʻa had also some formidable paternal aunts, through whom the brothers Zakʻarē and Iwanē established a whole network of connections both with newly emerging nobility made up of military men with no celebrated lineages and with "old blood."[22] Tʻamtʻa's case as a diplomatic bride was by no means unique in the Zakʻarid family. Moreover, a strong bond between women and their mothers and paternal aunts may be gleaned from an inscription commissioned in 1185 by Mariam, the daughter of the Bagratid king of Lōṙi-Tašir, Kiwrikē II, for her mother and paternal aunt.[23] These women were active one generation before Tʻamtʻa and in the same region in which she grew up. Incidentally, one of Tʻamtʻa's aunts

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in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries], *Patmabanasirakan handes* 1 (1958): 110–34, reprinted in idem, *Ašxatutʻyunner* [Opera], 2: 274–295 (Erevan: Gandzasar, 1999), 275.

21. H. Ełiazaryan, "Kečʻaṙisi vankʻə ev nra vimagir arjanagrutʻyunnerə" [The Monastery of Kečʻaṙis and Its Inscriptions], *Ējmiacin* 11 (1955): 45.

22. This process was masterfully described almost a century ago by G. Hovsepʻyan [Yovsēpʻean], *Xałbakyankʻ kam Pṙošyankʻ hayocʻ patmutʻyan meǰ: Patma-hnagitakan usumnasirutʻyun I.* [Xałbakyans or Pṙošyans in Armenian History: A Historical-Archaeological Study I] (Vałaršapat [Ējmiacin]: Pethrat, 1928), esp. 13–26. See also La Porta "Kingdom and Sultanate," 88.

23. For details, see S. La Porta, "Lineage, Legitimacy, and Loyalty in Post-Seljuk Armenia: A Reassessment of the Sources of the Failed Ōrbēlean Revolt against King Giorgi III of Georgia," *Revue des études arméniennes* 31 (2008–9): 133–34. See also the genealogical tables in C. Toumanoff, *Les dynasties de la Caucasie chrétienne de l'Antiquité jusqu'au XIXe siècle: Tables généalogiques et chronologiques* (Rome: n.p., 1990), 294–301; all of Tʻamtʻa's aunts are listed on p. 295.

married into the Kiwrikid family, as we shall see, and a process of intra-family transmission of pious behavior and its norms is not to be discounted.

Eastmond mentions two of Tʻamtʻa's aunts without identifying their relationship to her (pp. 216–217). One is Xorišah (Khorishah), who founded the monastery of Ganjasar together with her son, Hasan J̌alal Dawla, in 1216 (the building was completed in 1238). Eastmond cites her as one of the people who benefited from Tʻamtʻa's efforts to facilitate pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When imagining "Tʻamtʻa's world," we may well suppose that Xorišah even visited her niece on one of her three journeys to the Holy City.[24] The other aunt mentioned by Eastmond is Vaneni (or Nana), whom he qualifies as "possibly a relative of Zakare and Ivane" (p. 191). In fact she was their sister.[25] She was married to the last Kiwrikid (Bagratid) king of Loři, Abas II. Eastmond discusses the bridge she built over the Debed River to commemorate her husband and highlights the importance of such constructions as part of the "good works" that married (or widowed) women undertook. Yet the bridge displayed more than one layer and nuance of power. Indeed, Vaneni claimed the royal prerogatives of her husband for herself, too, since, according to the *Book of Judgments* of Mxitʻar Goš, a prominent monastic intellectual and jurist with close ties to the Zakʻarids, the construction of bridges was the "prerogative of kings."[26] Was Vaneni affirming her role as a "queen" even after her husband's death? Were such notions of rulership as a wife and a widow passed on to the younger members of the family, such as Tʻamtʻa? As with many similar questions posed throughout the pages of the book, we are as yet not in a position to provide definitive answers. However, the available material indicates that the effort to uncover them will surely be repaid.

Another of Tʻamtʻa's aunts, Dopʻ, was so influential that the entire dynasty issuing from her marriage to Hasan, a ruler from the historical region of Arcʻax, took her name and was known as Dopʻeankʻ. One modern historian goes as far as calling her the "founding mother" of the dynasty.[27] The historian Kirakos Ganjakecʻi calls their son Grigor "son of Dopʻ" rather than "son of Hasan."[28] Thus, although Eastmond may be right that in some cases women's identities were "completely transformed through marriage" (p. 92), in others the reverse was true. Women not only maintained a strong attachment to their pre-marriage identities

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24. Eastmond's statement (p. 217) that these three pilgrimages took place between 1216 and 1238 must be corrected. This assumption is based on an erroneous translation of an inscription on the two sides of the northern window in the main church of the Ganjasar monastery. Instead of "[she] went three times to Jerusalem," the relevant words should be translated as "she went for the third time to Jerusalem." Thus, we know the date of Xorišah's last visit to Jerusalem—between 1216 and 1238—but not the dates of the previous two.

25. This relationship is attested in her inscription on a *xačʻkʻar* (cross-stone) near the Sanahin bridge, which she built over the Debed River. See K. Łafadaryan, *Sanahni vankʻə ev nra arjanagrutʻyunnerə* [The Monastery of Sanahin and Its Inscriptions] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1957), 185–186; Hovsepʻyan, *Xałbakyans*, 15; Toumanoff, *Les dynasties*, 295; La Porta, "Kingdom and Sultanate," 94–95.

26. Mxitʻar Goš, *Girkʻ datastani* [Book of Judgments], ed. X. Tʻorosyan (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1975), 29; English translation by R. W. Thomson, *The Lawcode [Datastanagirkʻ] of Mxitʻar Goš* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000).

27. Hovsepʻyan, *Xałbakyans*, 16.

28. Kirakos, *Patmutʻiwn hayocʻ*, 280.

but also transmitted them together with their name to generations to come. It appears that in the fluid thirteenth-century social context the preeminence of a given lineage was of key importance in identity formation. It could challenge or even supersede gender hierarchies and expectations. Indeed, Dopʻ, who was married to a presumably promising military man with no important lineage, passed on *her* name to her offspring.

Like Vaneni, Tʻamtʻa's last aunt, Nerǰis, also married a representative of the old nobility who claimed Mamikonid descent.[29] She bore no children and became an ascetic. In this role she "nourished" a number of monks and female attendants (perhaps nuns), who left Nerǰis's name, with expressions of gratitude, on their own gravestones. She is given the title "patron" in a number of inscriptions, including on her own grave, where her brothers Zakʻarē and Iwanē appear with the identical title and nothing more.[30]

What does all of the above tell us about Tʻamtʻa, the women of her time, and her own marriages and rulership of Xlatʻ? We can draw one sure conclusion. She must have witnessed and presumably absorbed lessons and behavioral patterns from the variegated experiences of the women in her family. As the daughter of one of the leading nobles of the time, Tʻamtʻa must have been prepared for a marriage to seal one alliance or another. She probably expected to become a high-profile wife one day, just like her mother and aunts. The possibility of marriage to a non-Christian was certainly not excluded. For example, a second cousin of hers named Xawṙas was married twice. From a colophon in the celebrated *Bagnayr Gospels* we learn that Xawṙas commissioned the codex together with his second wife, Zmruxt, who was "Tačik by race." The colophon also records the name of Xawṙas's deceased first wife, Xutʻlu Xatʻun, who was "Persian by race." Both labels were used to denote Muslims in medieval Armenian sources, rather than reflecting ethnic belonging.[31] Presumably, both women converted to Christianity after their marriage to Xawṙas, given that Xawṙas and Zmruxt eventually commissioned a Gospel manuscript that commemorated Xutʻlu Xatʻun. It is likely that girls—whether Muslim or Christian, of whatever denomination or ethnicity—were taught early on how to behave also on such occasions, adapting the public display of their identity to the circumstances.

When Tʻamtʻa was given in marriage in exchange for her father's liberation she was probably no longer a tender adolescent. Eastmond assumes that she must have been thirteen or over in 1210, basing himself on Byzantine marriage laws and practices (p. 3). One wonders why he did not consult the Armenian *Book of Canons* or the already mentioned *Book of Judgments* of Mxitʻar Goš as a source of normative practice or theory on marriage among the Armenians. The latter source would have been especially pertinent, since it was finished only a couple of decades before Tʻamtʻa's marriage in one of the monasteries of

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29. Hovsepʻyan, *Xałbakyans*, 15–16.

30. Łafadaryan, *Sanahni vankʻə*, 171. See also S. Avagyan and H. J̌anpʻoladyan, eds., *Divan hay vimagrutʻyan*, vol. 6, *Iǰevani šrǰan* [Corpus Inscriptionum Armenicarum, vol. 6, Iǰevan Region], (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1977), 83; and S. Barxudaryan, ed., *Divan hay vimagrutʻyan*, vol. 10, *Širaki marz* [Corpus Inscriptionum Armenicarum, vol. 10, Širak Region] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 2017), 53.

31. Information and sources in K. Matʻevosyan and S. Boloyan, "The Scriptorium of Hoṙomos Monastery," in *Hoṙomos Monastery: Art and History*, ed. E. Vardanyan, 325–59 (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2015), 334.

T'amt'a's homeland, Loři. In any case, this was not the first time a marriage was planned for T'amt'a. According to the historian Step'anos Ōrbēlean (end of the thirteenth/beginning of the fourteenth century), whose own family had had a conflicted history with the Zak'arids, Iwanē had proposed an alliance between the two families to be sealed through the marriage of T'amt'a and Liparit Ōrbēlean around 1203.[32] The latter was the only surviving heir of the Ōrbēleans in Armenia at the time. The plan was never fulfilled, because Liparit chose a different wife. But this information implies that T'amt'a had reached the age of thirteen already in 1203, and by 1210 she must have been rather more mature. I believe that such details are not unimportant in reconstructing T'amt'a's life, her world, and the transformations of her identity. Indeed, leaving her father's home (and identity?) at the age of twenty or more would mean traveling with a heavier baggage of cultural and religious imprinting than if she departed as a teenager.

Certainly, to survive a life lived in such diverse contexts, T'amt'a had to adapt. But what is the basis for insisting that she had to transform her identity in the process? From the scant notices in the sources, even considering all their biases, it appears that T'amt'a maintained a strong connection to her roots and her Christian identity. Indeed, she used her role as the wife of consecutive Ayyubid rulers to benefit Christians in Xlat' and beyond it, in the region of Tarōn, where the majority were Armenians. Eastmond notes Kirakos Ganjakec'i's contention that Georgian Christians, particularly pilgrims to Jerusalem, benefited even more from T'amt'a's interventions. This suggests that T'amt'a was, in a way, an ally of her father, and her choices buttressed his policies and position at the Georgian court. It is thus problematic to correlate the experiences and changes of identity of other originally Christian wives of Muslim potentates in the region with T'amt'a's possible identity transformations.

For various reasons—and Eastmond enumerates a few rather plausible ones—T'amt'a followed a different path from that, for example, of the Georgian queen Rusudan's daughter Tamar, who married the Saljuq sultan Kaykhusraw II (1237–1246). Tamar converted to Islam and is known as Gurji Khātūn (Gürcü Hatun) in Islamic sources. She became a patron of the celebrated Sufi intellectual, mystic, and poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. Gurji Khātūn's devotional practices show significant mingling of Christian and Muslim religious elements, attesting to a vibrant environment of exchange and interactions in medieval Anatolia (pp. 225–228). The religious development of Māhparī Khātūn occurred along similar lines. Originally an Armenian Christian, she converted to Islam upon her marriage to the sultan ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn

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32. Manandyan dates the liberation of Liparit Ōrbēlean to the time immediately after Zak'arē and Iwanē's conquest of Dwin in 1203: H. Manandyan, *Erker* [Opera], vol. 3 (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1977), 143 and 163. The failed marriage plan is mentioned in Step'anos Ōrbēlean, *Patmut'iwn Nahangin Sisakan* [History of the Region of Sisakan] (Tiflis: Ałaneanc' Press, 1910), 396. In this edition the text reads erroneously "Iwanē's sister T'amt'i," but such a sister is otherwise not known. Moreover, Liparit is described as a young boy, whereas a sister of Iwanē must have been much older. The modern Armenian translation, which is based on a comparison of two published versions and one manuscript of this *History*, in fact corrects "sister" to "daughter." S. Ōrbelyan, *Syunik'i patmut'yun* [History of Syunik'], trans. A. Abrahamyan (Erevan: Sovetakan Groł, 1986), 319. On the conflict between the Zak'arid and Ōrbēlean families, see La Porta, "Lineage, Legitimacy and Loyalty."

Kayqubād I (1219–1237).[33] By contrast, T'amt'a's first husband, al-Awḥad, is said to have built a church for her (p. 133). We may speculate that this indicates a respect for (or indifference to?) her identity and an admission that he would not expect or require her to change it.

Similarly, although the practice of establishing and supporting pious foundations among high-standing Ayyubid and Saljuq women provides a fascinating backdrop for T'amt'a's own activities, her mother and her aunts surely gave her first-hand examples of or even instructions for such work. They must have also taught her her first lessons in how a woman could survive and rule in their turbulent world. We may wonder, with Eastmond, whether T'amt'a painted a portrait of herself in one of Xlat''s churches following the example of Queen Tamar of Georgia (p. 121), or whether she left her name in inscriptions on the walls following the example of her mother, aunts, and numerous other elite Armenian women throughout the centuries. Perhaps she did both. The lack of archaeological data from Xlat' precludes not only an accurate appraisal of its urban structure, but also of T'amt'a's impact on the cityscape, despite Eastmond's efforts to fill this gap by appealing to the features of other Anatolian cities.

Kurdish Zak'arids vs Kurdish Ayyubids and "Fluid" Identities

In his monograph, Eastmond often joins the key term "identity" to the notion of "fluidity." The "fluidity" of identities, however, is a concept inspired by a contemporary context and concerns, our fast-paced world, and the possibility of tracing how movements between cultures, countries, languages, and religions—for whatever reason or purpose—impact individuals and groups, including their identities. We are in a position to evaluate such fluidity thanks to the overabundance of information. But this is hardly the case with medieval sources, which are more limited in terms of both quantity and quality. In the next three sections I assess the basis on which Eastmond postulates the "fluid identity" of the other important actors in his book—members of T'amt'a's family, the Zak'arids. In doing so, I hope to point out the dangers of imposing notions taken from the contemporary globalized world on the medieval source evidence, as well as to highlight the methodological pitfalls of such an exercise. The discussion above sought to make it clear that in the case of women, individual situations could be complex and diverse, and not always fit for generalization. In some cases we may detect strong cultural consistency and attachment to "one's roots," whereas in others profound transformations of identity may have taken place. I argue below that the same attention to detail and context is required when studying multiple identities regardless of the gender of the individuals involved.

Eastmond starts his discussion of the "fluidity" of Zak'arid identity (p. 21) by referring to the family's presumed Kurdish origins. At some point they then morphed into "Armenians" and, at least in the case of Iwanē, to "Georgian Chalcedonians." There is certainly a neat

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33. P. Blessing, "Women Patrons in Medieval Anatolia and a Discussion of Māhbarī Khātūn's Mosque Complex in Kayseri," *Türk Tarih Kurumu Belleten* 78, no. 282 (2014): 475–526; S. Yalman, "The 'Dual Identity' of Mahperi Khatun: Piety, Patronage and Marriage across Frontiers in Seljuk Anatolia," in *Architecture and Landscape in Medieval Anatolia, 1100–1500*, ed. P. Blessing and R. Goshgarian, 224–252 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

symmetry in Eastmond's statement that "[t]he common Caucasian, Kurdish roots of the Ayyubids and the Mqargrdzelis underline the capacity of medieval people to reinvent themselves: two families from the same region rising to power in different states, using different languages and professing different religions" (p. 81). However, as Margaryan has convincingly argued, the Zak'arid claim to "Kurdish" origins, mentioned by Kirakos Ganjakec'i and repeated by Vardan Arewelc'i and uncritically accepted by many modern scholars, was one of the strategies of legitimation that the Zak'arids adopted in the second half of the thirteenth century. [34] Reported by a historian positively biased toward the Zak'arids, the myth of a Kurdish origin was aimed at bestowing a luster of antiquity and "exoticism" on the family. Moreover, in describing this primordial exotic origin, Kirakos followed the narrative strategy and was inspired by the very wording of Movsēs Xorenac'i. The latter had been enshrined as the "father of Armenian historiography" by Kirakos's time.

Margaryan's painstaking analysis of the possible context of such a Kurdish migration to northern Armenia, of the "memory" of this event (or rather its invention), and of the linguistic and conceptual problems in Kirakos's passage describing these "Kurds" has further strengthened the conclusion that the claimed genealogy is unreliable from a historical point of view and must be treated as fictitious. [35] On the other hand, in Zak'arid inscriptions, many of which predate Kirakos Ganjakec'i's *History*, a different strategy of legitimation and search for origins is also visible, one tied to the "glorious" old Armenian royal dynasties of the Arcrunids and the Bagratids. These, too, were tendentious claims, as Margaryan has demonstrated. Therefore, due caution must be exercised when positing a "fluid identity" for the Zak'arids on the basis of their transformation from "Kurds" to "Armenians" and then comparing and contrasting their experiences with those of the coeval Ayyubids. Another example of Zak'arid claims to an ancient genealogy as a legitimation strategy is encapsulated in the family's Georgian moniker, Mxargrzeli, to which I turn next.

Zak'arid or Mxargrzeli?

To emphasize the Zak'arids' simultaneous engagement in the Georgian and Armenian "worlds," Eastmond explores various aspects of their identity and points out that its inherent complexities have been insufficiently recognized in modern scholarship:

The conflicting claims of the brothers, as vassals in Georgia but as independent kings in their own lands, are reflected in the modern disagreement about their family's name: Mqargrdzeli in medieval Georgian sources, Zakarian in modern Armenian histories. No

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34. Kirakos, *Patmut'iwn hayoc'*, 162.

35. H. Margaryan, "Zak'aryanneri cagman avandut'yunə miǰnadaryan hay patmagrut'yan meǰ" [The Tradition on the Origin of the Zak'arids in Medieval Armenian Historiography], *Patmabanasirakan handes* 2-3 (1992): 139–52, esp. 164–173 on the family's "Kurdish" origins; and idem, "Zak'aryanneri cagumə" [The Origin of the Zak'arids], *Patmabanasirakan handes* 1-2 (1994): 156–75. For a French version of his work, see H. Margarian, "Autour des hypothèses de l'origine Kurde de la maison princière arménienne des Zakarids," *Iran and the Caucasus* 1 (1997): 24–44. Margaryan's findings are brilliantly summarized with further in-depth analysis of the function of such fictitious genealogies in La Porta, "Kingdom and Sultanate," 77–81, 92–94. Surprisingly, although this article seems to be known to Eastmond, he apparently did not take its contents fully into consideration.

compromise seems possible in the modern histories of Georgia and Armenia. Although most of the evidence I draw on about the brothers comes from the modern-day territory of Armenia, I have used their Georgian surname in this account in order to hint at their ambivalent position within Armenia and to stress the way they lie outside any simple "national" categorisation. (p. 27)

Eastmond thus argues forcefully that the discussion of Zak'arid/Mxargrʒeli identity has been distorted by the prism of national or nationalistic thinking. However, the actual situation of the secondary literature is far more complex than the above quotation concedes. First, it is curious that Eastmond contrasts "medieval Georgian sources" with "modern Armenian histories" and then posits divergent views in "modern histories of Georgia and Armenia." Beyond the differences in language, perspective, and specific names employed in Georgian versus Armenian sources, the sources themselves are not homogenous. They vary in nature, weight, and credibility.

In the secondary literature, too, scholars' approach to the family is far from monolithic. Zekiyan, for example, uses the appellation "la dynastie des Erkaynabazukk' ou Mxargrdzeli."[36] In a general, collected volume *Histoire du peuple arménien*, Dédéyan refers to the Zak'arids as "une grande famille féodale arménienne (peut-être d'ascendance kurde), celle des Mekhargrdzéli."[37] More than a century ago, presumably at the height of the spread and popularity of national and nationalistic sentiments, Šahnazareanc' had similarly no qualms in discussing the meaning and origin of the name Mxargrʒeli, with no hint of polemic.[38] The relevant volume in one of the most standard reference works, *History of the Armenian People*, published by the Armenian Academy of Sciences in the 1970s, includes quotations from the Georgian *Kartlis Cxovreba*, transliterating the name as "Mxargrjeli" in reference to Sargis, Zak'arē, and Iwanē.[39] It would be tedious to list all of the modern (Armenian) scholars who acknowledge and employ both names—Mxargrʒeli and Zak'arid. The concept "Armenian" itself is as complex today as it was in the thirteenth century, if not more so. Consequently, there is presumably room to argue that Zekiyan's, Dédéyan's, and others' studies also constitute "modern Armenian histories." I leave it to Georgianists to

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36. Zekiyan, "Le croisement des cultures," 93. "Erkaynabazukk'" is the Armenian version of the nickname "long-armed," which is the meaning of the Georgian name "Mxargrʒeli." I discuss the origin of the name below.

37. G. Dédéyan, ed., *Histoire du peuple arménien* (Toulouse: Édition Privat, 2007), 329. The Kurdish origin of the Zak'arids is debated, as discussed above.

38. A. S. Šahnazareanc', "Zak'arean (Erkaynabazuk) tohmi cagumə, gałt'ə dēpi Joraget ew naxordnerə: ŽA/ŽB dar" [The origin of the Zak'arid (long-armed) dynasty, [its] emigration to Joraget, and [its] forefathers: Eleventh–twelfth centuries], in *Sołakat': S. Ēǰmiacni Hayagitakan Žołovacu* [Sołakat': Collection of [works] on Armenian studies of St. Ēǰmiacin], book 1, 66–83 (Vałaršapat/Ēǰmiacin: Holy Ēǰmiacin Publishing, 1913). For a synopsis of genealogical information on the Zak'arids based on the historiographic and epigraphic evidence available to Šahnazareanc', see p. 75. Šahnazareanc' noted that the name Mxargrʒeli was translated into Russian as "Dolgorukij" and had been employed since the seventeenth century. He further explained that a more accurate translation of the term from Georgian to Armenian would be "erkarat'ikunk' kam erkar us," that is, "long-shouldered." The Armenian and Georgian names are both calques from the original Greek; see below.

39. C. Ałayan et al., eds., *Hay Žołovrdi patmut'yun* [History of the Armenian People], vol. 3 (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1976), 530.

accept or refute Eastmond's evaluation of the reluctance of "modern Georgian histories" to employ the name Zak'arid, as opposed to Mxargrʒeli, and its possible reasons.

The sources themselves appear to contain and justify the use of both names, Mxargrʒeli and Zak'arid. In Armenian history, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were characterized by tectonic shifts in the structure and the very identity of noble dynasties (traditionally called *naxarar*s in the sources, a term that may no longer be applicable for this period) that had dominated the territories inhabited by the Armenians up until the mid-eleventh century.[40] The Zak'arids were newcomers on the scene and could boast no ancient lineage or old name compared to such illustrious but no longer politically viable lines as the royal Bagratids or Arcrunids, for instance. Hence, they adopted different strategies of legitimation, such as tracing their line of descent to a (real) ancestor (e.g., Zak'arē or Awag-Sargis) to showcase the dynasty's longevity, listing various honorific military titles conferred on them by the Georgian court to emphasize their preeminence, and creating myths of distant and exotic origins—Kurdish or ancient Persian—to extend their ancestry even further back in history, to the quasi-mythical past of the Achaemenids.[41] Of course, these strategies of legitimation were neither new nor specific to the Zak'arids: the Bagratids, for example, claimed Jewish origins, an assertion that no researcher today would accept as a historical fact.[42] An illustrious seventh-century Bagratid figure, Smbat, proclaimed his (non-Chalcedonian) orthodoxy and support of the Armenian Church while at the same time proudly carrying the Iranian title—*Xosrov Š[n]um*, the "Joy of Xosrov"—bestowed on him by the Zoroastrian King of Kings.[43]

Let us return to the Zak'arids. Kirakos Ganjakec'i, who is our best informant, traces the ancestry of Zak'arē and Iwanē to their grandfather Zak'arē/Zak'aria (I will refer to him as Zak'arē I to avoid confusion).[44] Kirakos's friend and study companion Vardan Arewelc'i, who for this portion of his own *Historical Compilation* relies heavily on Kirakos, mentions Zak'arē I's father, Awag-Sargis, in an effort to trace the family's genealogy further into the past. Of course, the fame and fortunes of the Zak'arids were built by Awag-Sargis's grandson Sargis II (the son of Zak'arē I) and the latter's two sons, the celebrated Zak'arē II, often mentioned with the epithet Great, and Iwanē, at the service of the Georgian king Giorgi III

40. R. Bedrosyan, "Armenia during the Seljuk and Mongol Periods," in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 1, *The Dynastic Periods: From Antiquity to the Fourteenth Century*, ed. R. Hovannisian, 241–71 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004); La Porta, "Kingdom and Sultanate," 74–77.

41. Margaryan, "Zak'aryanneri caguma."

42. Movsēs Xorenac'i, *Patmut'iwn hayoc'* [History of the Armenians], ed. M. Abełean and S. Yarut'iwnean (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1991), 68 (book 1, chap. 22).

43. Sebēos, *Patmut'iwn* [History], ed. G. Abgaryan (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1979), 101–3.

44. Kirakos, *Patmut'iwn hayoc'*, 162. Eastmond (p. 19) is surprised at the multiple orthographies of the name Zak'arē/Zak'aria/Zaxaria, particularly in inscriptions. However, this is a common feature not only of inscriptions (and not only with regard to Zak'arē) but also of manuscripts, and no particular significance can be attached to it, unless clearly argued.

(1156–1184) and his daughter, the formidable queen Tamar.[45] The historian Vardan calls Sargis II "Sargis Zakʿarean."[46] The use of the appellation "Zakʿarean" in modern Armenian historiography follows this tradition and may be justified as being based on the name of Zakʿarē and Iwanē's grandfather, but with convenient reference also to Zakʿarē II, "the Great," paying tribute to his exalted status in medieval Armenian historiography.

The Georgian appellation Mxargrʒeli is also well attested, but in Georgian sources, such as the relevant portions of *Kartlis Cxovreba*, the *Life of Queen Tamar*, and other later narratives.[47] As Margaryan has demonstrated, this designation was based on yet another of the family's origin legends, transmitted in Georgian by the *First Chronicle of Queen Tamar*. Its author claims that Zakʿarē was a kinsman of the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes I (465–425 BCE). The latter appears as "Erkaynajeṙn" ("long-handed") or "Erkaynabazuk" ("long-armed") in Armenian sources predating the thirteenth century.[48] For example, the tenth-century historian Stepʿanōs Tarōnecʿi (Asołik) mentions Artaxerxes once as Erkaynajeṙn and another time as Erkaynabazuk. The names are Armenian calques for the Greek Makrocheir (Latin: Longimanus). This nickname originated in classical sources and was transmitted through Late Antique authors, such as the fifth-century Armenian translation of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Chronicle*, which employs the form Erkaynabazuk.[49] The corresponding Georgian calque is Mxargrʒeli, which served to substantiate the family's claim to an ancient royal Iranian pedigree. Georgian sources may have either relied on knowledge of earlier Armenian traditions or tapped directly into Greek sources (perhaps in Georgian translation).

As Eastmond rightly mentions (p. 19), no medieval Armenian narrative sources employ the name Mxargrʒeli. It is not clear why this is so, nor does Eastmond discuss it. Not only the Armenian historians but also the inscriptions commissioned by the Zakʿarids generally refrain from using the name Mxargrʒeli as a dynastic self-appellation, though they have no

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45. We may observe the repetitive onomasticon, particularly the names Sargis, Zakʿarē, Iwanē, and Awag, as another strategy of creating a sense of continuity and, thus, of lineage in the early generations of the Zakʿarids.

46. Vardan, *Hawakʿumn patmutʿean*, 127. A brief, schematic presentation of the earliest Zakʿarids' genealogy may be found in Šahnazareancʿ, "Zakʿarean (Erkaynabazuk) tohmi cagumə," 68, and in Margaryan, "Zakʿaryanneri cagumə," 165. Margaryan notes the confusion and inconsistency of the Armenian sources, indicating that by the time the Zakʿarids began to pass down a deliberate genealogical construction, precise memory of anything beyond the third generation had already been lost. The most extended family tree, though not without some problems, has been drawn up by Toumanoff: C. Toumanoff, *Manuel de généalogie et de chronologie pour l'historie de la Caucasie chrétienne (Arménie-Géorgie-Albanie)* (Rome: Edizioni Aquila, 1976), 290–301 (including the family's Gageli branch), and idem, *Les dynasties*, 294–301. See also La Porta, "Kingdom and Sultanate," 77–78.

47. *Kartlis Cxovreba* names the male members of the Mxargrʒeli family. I have consulted the Georgian sources in translation: *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'au XIXe siècle*, trans. M. Brosset (St. Petersburg: Imprimerie de l'Académie impériale des sciences, 1849); *Kartlis Tskhovreba: A History of Georgia*, trans. R. Metreveli, S. Jones, et al. (Tbilisi: Artanuji Publishing, 2014). For the *Life of Tamar* I have used the Russian translation: *Žizn' Cʿaricʿy Caricʿ Tamar* [Life of the Queen of Queens Tamar], trans. V. D. Dondua, comm. Berdznišvili (Tbilisi: Mecniereba, 1985).

48. Margaryan, "Zakʿaryanneri cagumə," 163, with further references to the relevant Armenian and Georgian sources.

49. La Porta, "Kingdom and Sultanate," 79; *The "Universal History" of Stepʿanos Tarōnecʿi*, trans. T. Greenwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 40, 107, 116.

qualms about proclaiming the family's Georgian court titles. Among the dozens of extant inscriptions by the Zakʻarids, there are four exceptions to this silence; however, these reveal a very different perspective. Chronologically the earliest and the most important is an inscription by Zakʻarē II on the interior of the western wall of his church in Ani, in which he calls himself the "son of the great prince of princes, *amirspasalar*, *Mxargrceli* Sargis." Yet when listing his own appellatives, he uses the terms "*mandatortʻuxucʻēs*, *amispasalar*, *šahnšah* Zakʻarē," listing his titles without availing himself of the moniker Mxargrʒeli.[50] Three other inscriptions use the Armenian transcription of "Mxargrjel/Mxargrcel," but they refer to the *personal* name of Zakʻarē's grandson. Mxargrjel does not signify a dynastic marker in these inscriptions. Rather, it seems that it was taken as the title of Sargis II and then became a personal name, a process attested on other occasions, too.[51]

In sum, the difference in the Armenian and Georgian historiographic conventions for naming a family that belonged to both worlds is not a mere product of nationalistic sentiments. Although such sentiments may well have inspired some scholars, they are not necessarily uniform. Both appellations stem from the relevant sources transmitted in the two languages, and one may compare this usage to the similar case of *die Staufer* versus *gli Svevi* in reference to one and the same medieval family in German and Italian historiography, respectively. Whether modern scholars opt for Zakʻarid or Mxargrʒeli, they inevitably imply one or the other perspective on the family's origins or origin myths or, if one wishes, one or another form of bias. Indeed, Eastmond's choice of consistently applying the "surname" Mxargrʒeli is no more neutral than using the name Zakʻarid would be.[52] Even the notion of a "surname" for a medieval dynasty is questionable, and the term "moniker" seems more appropriate in this case.

In view of the above discussion, Eastmond's approach of adopting the name "Tamta Mqargrdzeli" throughout his book is less than satisfactory. First, and most importantly, this name never appears in the sources. Second, it is unclear whether the moniker, with its obvious military implications, was ever applied to any female member of the family. Third, the use of the "name and last name" format leaves the impression that despite her three marriages, her extensive travels, and her many presumed shifts of identity during her long and eventful life, Tʻamtʻa maintained a monolithic attachment to her paternal line of

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50. H. Orbeli, ed., *Divan hay vimagrutʻyan*, vol. 1, *Ani kʻałakʻ* [Corpus Inscriptionum Armenicarum, vol. 1, The City of Ani] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1966), 58.

51. Barxudaryan, *Širaki marz*, 66, on an inscription dated to 1222 on the western arm of the cross-in-square Church of St. Gēorg in Artʻik; 108, on a fallen slab currently preserved in the Regional Museum of Širak in Gumry (both in the Republic of Armenia). The third inscription is from Hałbat and is published in K. Łafadaryan, *Hałbat: Čartarapetakan kaṙucʻvackʻnerə ew vimakan arjanagrutʻyunnerə* [Hałbat: Architectural Constructions and Epigraphic Inscriptions] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1963), 171. There are other attested cases in which a title becomes a first name. For example, *šah[ə]nšah* ("king of kings"), employed by the Bagratids as a title, became a personal name among the Zakʻarids: Zakʻarē's son (Tʻamtʻa's cousin) was named Šahnšah.

52. To overcome this impasse, the art historian Lidov ecumenically notes that "one branch of the family bore the name Mkhargrdzeli," which is only partially true, as discussed above. See A. Lidov, *Rospisi monastyrja Axtala: Istorija, ikonografija, mastera / The Wall Paintings of Akhtala Monastery: History, Iconography, Masters* (Moscow: Dmitry Pozharsky University, 2014), 34, 340. The book, published in both Russian and English, is available online at http://hierotopy.ru/contents/AhtalaBookAll2014.pdf.

descent. The notion of "fluid identities" upheld throughout the book is hardly reconcilable with such solidity and constancy. Moreover, Eastmond provides a negative assessment of T'amt'a's relationship with her family, particularly with her father, Iwanē. The latter appears to have used his daughter as a diplomatic tool to advance his own military and political goals, not unlike other potentates of his time.[53] Although I do not necessarily share his evaluation, Eastmond's assumption that the relationship was unpleasant would have provided another reason to avoid using an appellation not attested in the medieval sources.

Fluid Identities and Further Source-Critical Problems

According to Eastmond, the conversion of Iwanē, T'amt'a's father, to Chalcedonian Orthodoxy was an expression *par excellence* of his "fluid" identity. Iwanē's construction of the Church of the Mother of God, perhaps replacing a preexisting structure, as his "mausoleum church at Akhtala" (p. 28) was consequently one of the most important public statements of his new faith.[54] Thus, the theological message that may be deduced from its architectural features, its external decorations, and the fresco cycle in its interior are of paramount importance for getting as close as possible to Iwanē's personal beliefs. Eastmond highlights the blending of Georgian, Byzantine, and Armenian cultural elements and theological ideas, heavily emphasizing Iwanē's efforts at "Georgianization." These interminglings are extremely intricate, something that stands out even in Eastmond's brief, perhaps too brief, descriptions.[55] But as in his treatment of the written sources discussed above, so in the analysis of the visual material of Axt'ala Eastmond overlooks some important circumstances that lie at the intersection of art, theology, and key concepts in *Religionsgeschichte.* Let me provide some examples that illustrate the need to add further nuance to Eastmond's assumptions and conclusions.

Eastmond makes a good case that the external sculptural decoration of the east façade of the main church in Axt'ala fits contemporary Georgian style and tastes much more closely than it does any other models, to the point that "as much as stones could speak, those at Akhtala shouted out for the triumph of Georgian Chalcedonian orthodoxy" (p. 34). Yet inside the church, a central scene, immediately below a disproportionately large Virgin Enthroned, is the Communion of the Apostles, which runs along the whole apse.[56] I am not sure whether "the scene subtly emphasises ... the converts' desire to adhere to trends from the centre of the Orthodox world," or whether it also, in a different way, "shouted out the triumph of... [Byzantine?] Orthodoxy." Given such a central position, the scene was

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53. To mention two examples, Eastmond describes her as "a bargaining chip in the ransom negotiations for her father" (p. 2) and underscores "how little regard for Tamta the rest of her family ever publicly displayed" (p. 343).

54. The name Axt'ala is attested only in the fifteenth century; until the fourteenth century, the settlement was referred to by its Armenian name, Płnjahank' (lit. "copper mines"). A. Lidov, "Plindzaxank-Axtala, istorija monastyrja, ktitor i datirovka rospisi" [Plindaxank-Axtala, the History of the Monastery, Its Founder, and the Dating of Its Wall Paintings], in *Armenia and the Christian Orient*, 266–278 (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences "Gitut'yun" Press, 2000), 270.

55. A more detailed analysis may be found in Lidov's bilingual *Wall Paintings.*

56. See the relevant illustrations in Lidov, *Wall Paintings*, 63, 68–69, 250–258.

hardly a subtlety, and as Lidov has argued, the entire program of the apse "adhere[s] to the strictest Byzantine models… [and] was not at all characteristic of contemporary Georgian churches."[57]

Eastmond, too, duly notes that the scene was not a common one in contemporary Georgian churches and that the painters "had to look further west to Byzantium" for inspiration (p. 43). He, too, brings forth the only other contemporary Georgian parallel, at Q'inc'visi, but fails to specify that there the scene is depicted not in the center of the apse but on the wall of the bema.[58] Lidov, on the other hand, whose study on Axt'ala is the most detailed to date, remarks that the same compositional choice—the Communion of the Apostles—and the same location within the space of the church as in Axt'ala may be observed in five other churches that have been classified as "Armenian Chalcedonian."[59] Thus, the elements of fluidity and the interpenetration of different pictorial and sculptural traditions in the Church of Axt'ala appear to be rather more complex than Eastmond allows.

Eastmond is unsure of the utility of the category "Armenian Chalcedonians" as theorized by Marr and Arutyunova-Fidanyan, since it would denote "a distinct confessional group" with a high level of self-consciousness and cohesion (p. 45). He questions these characteristics, since, according to him, the thirteenth-century conversions were driven also by "cynical motives: to seek promotion at the Georgian court" (p. 46). This may be true for such high-standing figures as Iwanē, but even so, the sincerity of a conversion is one thing, the public display of that conversion through the deliberate choice of certain themes and iconographic programs quite another. This distinction would be especially important if Iwanē wished to appeal to an already existing community of Chalcedonian Armenians *and* Georgians at the same time. We may thus wonder whether Iwanē really set out to "attempt to forge a clearer Georgian identity among worshippers" (p. 41). It may instead be the case that the older interpretation of Iwanē as seeking to strengthen a Chalcedonian Armenian community that had a tendency to distinguish itself from Georgian models by appealing to Byzantine ones still holds a grain of truth, regardless of the sincerity of the conversions.[60] This possibility would also imply that Iwanē was enacting a carefully thought-out policy toward the various constituencies whose support he needed for controlling the territories he conquered. Indeed, the depiction of the Communion of Apostles with its accompanying Greek inscription (on which see below) in the central register of the apse seems to indicate that Iwanē was engaged in a careful balancing act between different priorities and perhaps chose not to favor one group too much over the other when commissioning the decorations of his church.

The sophisticated art-historical evidence and the theological message of Axt'ala's wall paintings go beyond this one scene, of course. They cannot all be explored here, but a few

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57. Ibid., 62, 362.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. More detailed consideration of the Axt'ala paintings in relation to the juridical status of the Armenian Chalcedonian Church may be found in Lidov, *Wall Paintings*, 63–64, 362–363.

further points will highlight the necessity of paying sufficient attention to the intricacies at hand.

I find Eastmond's discussion of the inscription accompanying the scene of the Communion of the Apostles so laconic as to be confusing at best and misleading at worst. Eastmond indicates that the inscription is in Greek, and he reads it as saying, "This is my blood."[61] He observes that the citation is "unusual" but that it "stress[es] this element of liturgy," without specifying *what* element in the liturgy is being considered. We are then provided with a parallel example from a very different context: "The blood is similarly stressed in the image of the Crucifixion in the Red Gospels, highlighting the different interpretations the [Armenian and Georgian] Churches had of the mixing of wine and water in the Eucharist" (p. 43).[62] Eastmond makes no further comments regarding, for example, the implications of these differences, the usage of each church, and their divergences. He simply goes on to speculate on how the image and its inscription might have been perceived by the congregation.

Even a reader who is well versed in medieval Armeno-Georgian (and Armeno-Byzantine) polemical literature has a hard time following the logic of these statements and understanding the message of this specific inscription in Axt'ala and the kind of parallel that the Red Gospels yield. Despite the very different medium and audience of a church fresco compared to the more private view that a manuscript affords, did they both assume a clearly Chalcedonian position on a specific liturgical practice, namely, the mixing of water with wine in the Eucharistic chalice? This seems to be the unstated argument, especially since Eastmond affirms elsewhere that the Red Gospels were "probably made for a Chalcedonian (i.e. Georgian Christian) patron" (p. 38). Furthermore, he diminishes the importance of the theological message of the inscription in Axt'ala by stating that "[t]hese fine theological differences may have been lost on many of the congregation" (p. 43). However, this interpretation cannot be accepted and requires revision, particularly if the congregation was composed of monks. Eastmond should also have clarified whether it is possible to decipher what the frescoes and the accompanying inscription wished to convey or which liturgical tradition they upheld.

The uniquely Armenian liturgical praxis of not mixing water with wine during the Eucharistic celebration was one of the major causes of the endless discussions and polemic that raged between the Armenian and Imperial (Byzantine) as well as the Armenian and Georgian Churches over centuries.[63] The difference in praxis was also raised in negotiations

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61. The allusion is to Matt. 26:28. Lidov specifies that the inscription appears along the rim of the Eucharistic chalice and, again, above the entire composition, but that it does not reproduce Matthew verbatim. Lidov, *Wall Paintings*, 69–70, 375–376.

62. The Red Gospels, also called the Ganjasar Gospels, is a thirteenth-century manuscript currently held in the University of Chicago Library, Goodspeed ms 949. It can be viewed online at http://goodspeed.lib.uchicago.edu/ms/index.php?doc=0949.

63. Among the many studies on this issue, see B. L. Zekiyan, "La rupture entre l'Église géorgienne et arménienne au début du VIIe siècle," *Revue des études arméniennes* 16 (1982): 155–174, and N. Garsoïan, "Le vin pur du chalice dans l'Église arménienne," in *Pratiques de l'eucharistie dans les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (Antiquité et Moyen-Âges)*, vol. 1, *L'institution*, ed. N. Bériou, B. Caseau, and D. Rigau, 249–271 (Paris: Institut

over a possible church union between Armenian and Roman churchmen since the twelfth century. It is unthinkable that monks or even common people who lived in a region with a mixed population and were aware of different liturgical usages would miss such an unmistakable reference to the divergent traditions. Miaphysite Armenian theologians had interpreted the liturgical peculiarity in a Christological sense since the sixth century. For them, the use of unmixed wine symbolized Christ's pure blood, on the one hand, and his one nature, on the other.[64] It is thus highly intriguing that a Greek inscription in an unapologetically Chalcedonian church would emphasize a verse about Christ's blood in a Eucharistic context, with no hint of water or mixture. Did it endorse the Armenian Church's contested usage of pure wine as a symbol of Christ's blood? This is hardly conceivable. Was it then a deliberately ambiguous reference? A more circumstantial interpretation of the scene and its inscriptions would be a fascinating topic of research, especially in view of the many other "Armenianizing" elements in the decorations of the Axt'ala church that Lidov has pointed out.[65] In his analysis of the scene, Eastmond should have at least clarified what the verse could imply regarding Armenian or Georgian liturgical usages.

The miniature of the Red Gospels, presented by Eastmond as a parallel case, has a very different iconographic scene and is not comparable to the frescoes of Axt'ala. In the Crucifixion scene on fol. 6v, it appears that blood and water issue from Christ's rib and flow into what may have been intended as a Eucharistic cup.[66] Presumably, this was a symbolic reference to the mixing of water and wine during the Eucharist and thus endorsed a Chalcedonian tradition. I have not viewed the image *in situ*, and the digital reproduction, especially the blue color of the water in contrast to the red of the blood, is not as clearly visible as one would wish. My analysis is consequently tentative. Nevertheless, the issuing of blood *and* water from Christ's rib when he was on the cross was not in itself debated in the Armenian theological tradition. Rather, Armenian theologians insisted on the interpretation of the blood as referring to the (pure) Eucharistic wine and the water as symbolizing the water of baptism.

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d'études augustiniennes/Brepols, 2009); reprinted in eadem, *Studies on the Formation of Christian Armenia* (Ashgate: Variorum, 2010), no. XI.

64. On the basis of John 19:34, medieval Armenian theologians argued that blood issuing from Christ's rib prefigured the Eucharistic (pure) wine, whereas water signified baptism. For discussion, see the sources cited in the previous note as well as P. Cowe, "An Armenian Job Fragment from Sinai and Its Implications," *Oriens Christianus* 76 (1992): 123–157, and idem, "Armenian Christology in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries with Particular Reference to the Contribution of Yovhan Ōjnec'i and Xosrovik T'argmanič'," *Journal of Theological Studies* 55, no. 1 (2004): 30–54.

65. Lidov interprets this inscription as a rejection of a Roman liturgical usage introduced in the Armenian Church in Cilician Armenia, namely, the taking of only the host during the communion, and as an endorsement of the Byzantine Orthodox practice of taking both the bread and the wine. Lidov, *Wall Paintings*, 376. This subject, however, is not an important theme in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Armenian theological discussions, whereas the use of mixed versus unmixed wine is one of the most prominent. It is thus in this direction that I believe research may yield interesting results.

66. This image can be viewed at http://goodspeed.lib.uchicago.edu/view/index.php?doc=0949&obj=016.

The "Chalcedonian" nature of the Red Gospels has been questioned on the basis of its trilingual inscription.[67] More importantly, the unanswered questions regarding the commissioner(s), scribes, miniaturists, and time periods involved in the creation of this manuscript are in need of more thorough investigation before any conclusions may be drawn. As Yovsēpʻean's pioneering study of this manuscript in 1940 indicated, the codex is composed of three distinct parts, written in three different hands and illuminated by at least two other miniaturists. The text of the Gospels, with ornamental headpieces and marginal decorations, was likely copied earlier. To this, folios with full-page miniatures by two different artists were later added. Furthermore, canon tables were traced by yet another hand than those that produced dominical scenes. In addition, the tables were executed on parchment of different quality, according to Yovsēpʻean.[68] Given the multilayered process of the manuscript's production, making any comments on the Christological orientation of the manuscript's commissioner (and was there only one commissioner?) appears premature. Similarly, a better-informed analysis of the fresco cycle of Axtʻala may lead to very different conclusions, highlighting a much more complex religious/confessional situation.

An overly zealous desire to affirm the hegemony of Georgian or Georgianizing tendencies in the decorations of Axtʻala leads Eastmond to yet another curious conclusion. He reveals that paintings of "particularly celebrated Georgian saints" were executed "to either side of the west door, a location where everyone leaving the church must see them" (p. 43). He then compares this placement to the "less prominent" position of two saints "particularly venerated in Armenia, Sts. Gregory the Illuminator and Jacob of Nisibis," because they appear "among the sixteen Church Fathers in the lowest register of the apse of the church. Uniform in dress and appearance with the other Church Fathers, and hidden from view behind the templon screen... " (p. 45). But the implied contrast completely overlooks the so-called sacred hierarchy within a holy site. In a number of religious traditions it is the "Holy of Holies" that is concealed from general view and accorded the greatest awe and veneration. In a Christian context, the location in the center of the apse is anything but "less prominent." On the contrary, it is where the culmination of the liturgical service—the Eucharist—takes place, accessible only to the few who administer it, a fact that heightens its mystical significance. Here, too, one is bound rather to agree with Lidov: "The choice of the holy bishops in the altar apse also reveals the intentions of those behind the programme. In one of the most prestigious locations, to the right of the synthronon in the centre of the first tier, we find Gregory the Illuminator."[69] Lidov goes on to emphasize the importance

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67. I. Rapti, "Art chrétien en Anatolie Turque au XIIIe siècle: Les Évangiles rouges de Chicago (University Library, Goodspeed 949)," in *Mélanges Catherine Jolivet-Lévy*, ed. S. Brodbeck et al., 473–98 (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2016), has interesting reflections on this matter despite the curiously anachronistic title of the article.

68. G. Yovsēpʻean, "Mi jeṙagir Awetaran" [A Gospel manuscript], *Hayastaneaycʻ ekełecʻi* 1, no. 11 (1940): 15–29, reprinted in idem, *Nyutʻer ew usumnasirutʻiwnner hay arvesti ew mšakuytʻi patmutʻyan* [Materials and research on Armenian art and culture], book 2, 45–59 (New York: n.p., 1943), and in idem, *Nyutʻer ew usumnasirutʻiwnner hay arvesti patmutʻyan* [Materials and Research on Armenian Art History], 2:108–115 (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences Press, 1987).

69. Lidov, *Wall Paintings*, 79, 81, illustrations at 265, quotation from 373.

of the cult of St. Gregory the Illuminator among Armenians of various confessions, both Chalcedonian and not. These nuances are, unfortunately, missing from Eastmond's discussion of Axtʻala's fresco cycle.

Eastmond also points out various architectural and topographic features of the Axtʻala monastic complex that were created deliberately to emphasize visually its different theological orientation compared to the nearby non-Chalcedonian Armenian monasteries. One of these features was the arrangement of the buildings. In Axtʻala the main church built by Iwanē stood alone in the center of the complex, in contrast to the more clustered arrangement of ancillary buildings around the main church typical of Armenian monasteries in the region (p. 30). In order to support this point, Eastmond would have been well advised to provide the ground plan of Axtʻala, as he did for Gošavankʻ (p. 32) and Hařičavankʻ (p. 49), including the date of the construction of various buildings within the complex. Since these were built at different points in time, Eastmond would have made a more convincing case had he considered how such deliberate choices in the arrangement of the buildings could be sustained or developed over the medium to long term.

The above discussion shows that in employing art-historical and architectural evidence as indicators of cultural interaction, just as in the use of written sources, one must pay due attention to the various details that make up the whole picture. The exploration of seemingly contradictory elements cannot be left to overly succinct descriptions that blur these elements' most substantial features. Consequently, a reliable comparative approach requires knowledge and application of methodologies not only from the field of art history but also, for example, from theology and the history of interactions among the various relevant groups. Only then can we appreciate the full range of issues that were at stake and defined cultural interactions and entanglements, particularly those crossing ethnic and religious boundaries.

Parvus error in principio ...

I would like to round off this essay with some minor critical remarks. Although the presence of certain errors or the presentation of some not unanimously accepted hypotheses (such as the "Kurdish origin" of the Zakʻarids) as established facts may seem inconsequential to the overall argument of the book, they can give rise to ambiguities and, possibly, further hypotheses, particularly among nonspecialist readers. As Doctor Angelicus admonished centuries ago: "Parvus error in principio magnus est in fine."[70]

Eastmond's citations of primary sources are not always clear, especially when more than one edition or translation of a work is included in the bibliography but the footnotes contain only the name of the author or the title without further details. For example, if one wishes to consult the references to *Kartlis Cxovreba* (first cited on p. 3, n. 7) or Stepʻanos Ōrbēlean (first cited on p. 37, n. 22), one cannot be sure which edition Eastmond is citing, since the bibliography contains three items under "Kartlis Tshkovreba" and two under "Stepanos Orbelian" (both on p. 397).

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70. "A small mistake in the beginning is a big one in the end". Thomas Aquinas, "Prooemium," in *De ente et essentia*, consulted at http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/oee.html.

Armenologists will experience some cognitive dissonance when reading the caption of an illustration from the famous Hałbat Gospels (p. 52, fig. 17, and the color plate between pp. 132 and 133). The figure on the lower left with fish appears as "Sahak," instead of the name reported in the manuscript, the rather nonbiblical Šeranik. The confusion is likely due to a transposition of the commissioner's name, which was indeed Sahak. On the other hand, Šeranik was probably the same person as a homonymous soldier recorded in one of the inscriptions of Ani. This illustration is noteworthy, since it represents a unique feature of the Hałbat Gospels, in which numerous depictions of daily life have made their way even into dominical scenes.[71]

I wonder if it is wise to use a nineteenth-century engraving of walls or a gate in Konya (p. 148, fig. 43; p. 151, fig. 46) to draw conclusions about the use of *spolia* in their thirteenth-century reconstruction. One would wish to be better informed of the context of the engraving and the reliability of such a visual source. On a different occasion, Eastmond does not fail to note that even photographs and their "staging" require a critical eye before they can be used as sources (pp. 158–59, figs. 50 and 51).

When discussing war and relics as booty during the Mongol campaigns in Anatolia and the participation of Armenians in these campaigns, Eastmond makes an unclear remark with regard to the "island monastery of Aghtamar [which] was known as the seat of St. Bartholomew" (p. 374). It might be useful for non-specialists to explain the implications of this reference. Eastmond probably wished to indicate that the Catholicosate of Ałt'amar (which lasted from 1113 to 1895) claimed to represent the true center of the Armenian Church as the heir to Apostle Bartholomew's seat. A few words on the centrality of Apostle Bartholomew in buttressing the apostolic claims of the Armenian Church—not only the "island monastery of Aghtamar"—would have significantly clarified the importance of his relics and of their transfer to the monastery of Hałbat.[72]

The book closes with a note on the importance of conducting studies that cross "modern political and academic frontiers" (p. 393) and briefly touches on the possible biases and problems involved in doing so. This is a conviction that I fully share, but I insist that such research be done with a thorough knowledge of the disciplines that one wishes to bridge. Eastmond then asserts that "Armenians are… reluctant to place their culture within a broader framework of Islamic/Turkish culture," a statement whose terms contradict his very premises and aspirations. It is anachronistic to apply the blanket term "Turkish culture" to the medieval Turkic peoples that inhabited Anatolia, and it does not do justice to the diversity that Eastmond sets out to highlight in his book. If we are to abandon categorizations that emerged from outdated notions of nation-states, as Eastmond persuasively advocates throughout the book, why subsume the great variety and vibrancy

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71. K. Mat'evosyan, *Hałbati avetaranə: Anii manrankarč'ut'yan ezaki nmuš* [The Hałbat Gospels: A Unique Example of Miniature Illumination from Ani] (Erevan: Nairi, 2012), 12–25, and idem, "The History of the Monastery of Hoŕomos," in *Hoŕomos Monastery: Art and History*, ed. E. Vardanyan, 17–53 (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, 2015), 44.

72. On this subject, see, most recently, V. Calzolari, *Les Apôtres Thaddée et Barthélemy: Aux origines du christianisme arménien* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

of Turkic cultures in medieval Anatolia under the label "Islamic/Turkish," which echoes a twentieth-century political formation—the nation-state?

Moreover, Eastmond's statement also neglects the legacy of numerous noteworthy scholars. I would like to mention just one prominent historian who was far from a marginal figure: Levon Xač'ikean, the director of the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran, Erevan) from 1954 until his death in 1982. A cursory look at the titles in his *Opera*, collected in a three-volume publication, is enough to highlight his engagement with the history of medieval Anatolia and the different peoples that inhabited it, as well as the place of the Armenians therein and their multifaceted interactions with Turkic and other peoples throughout the Middle Ages.[73]

To support the thesis of "Armenian exceptionalism," Eastmond cites two exhibitions dedicated to Byzantine art and contrasts the unwillingness of Armenian lenders to participate in them with such lenders' interest in exhibitions dedicated entirely to Armenian art and culture. Even leaving aside the supposition that it would be logical to expect more Armenian lenders and objects to be present in an exhibition that focuses on Armenian rather than Byzantine art, I am not sure how Armenian participation or lack thereof in Byzantine art exhibitions illuminates tendencies in the study of Armenian history outside the "framework of Islamic/Turkish culture." Eastmond should have provided further remarks to clarify his criticism.

Concluding Thoughts

As the saying goes, "the devil is in the details," and it is not the details that make Eastmond's book interesting. Rather, it is his courage not to be boggled by them and to look beyond them, to outline the big picture and try to make sense of a world in which, despite difference and conflict, peoples, goods, and ideas moved and enriched each other. This vision the book manages to convey with great force, but the precise delineation of the various movements with their complexities and a rigorous analysis of the sources remains to be done.

Despite its shortcomings, Eastmond's monograph is an important contribution to the study of multicultural interactions in a part of the world that is usually not explored from this perspective. Viewed as marginal from the centers of the great empires, the homeland of T'amt'a in northern Armenia and her new base in Xlat' on the shores of Lake Van were, nevertheless, part of an interconnected world with specific local configurations. Bridging these two dimensions requires a scholar to overcome research paradigms tied to "national histories" or specific academic disciplines. This is an arduous task and admittedly difficult to complete by one individual. Eastmond's willingness to face a challenge of this magnitude is commendable. The monograph marks an important step in raising greater awareness about the untapped potential of research on entangled histories, and it will certainly encourage specialists in various relevant fields to develop this approach further.

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73. L. Xačikean, *Ašxatut'yunner* [Opera], 3 vols. (Erevan: Gandzasar, 1995–2008).

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Conference Report

Mysticism and Ethics in Islam
(American University of Beirut, 2–3 May 2019)

Conference Organizers:
Bilal Orfali, Mohammed Rustom, and Radwan Sayyid

Report by:
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Held at the American University of Beirut over two intense days and sponsored by the Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan Chair for Islamic and Arabic Studies (marking one hundred years since the birth of Sheikh Zayed), this conference was organized by Bilal Orfali (Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies and Chair of the Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Languages at AUB), Mohammed Rustom (Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at Carleton University and Library of Arabic Literature Senior Fellow at NYU Abu Dhabi), and Radwan Sayyid (Visiting Professor and current Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan Chair for Islamic and Arabic Studies).

The conference was dedicated to exploring the relationship between Islamic ethics and Islamic mysticism, usually known as Sufism—though the debate as to whether "mysticism" is equivalent to "Sufism" or to the Arabic *taṣawwuf* remains open. It brought together well-known scholars in the field from around the world. The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Nadia El Cheikh, opened the conference along with the organizers, reminding the audience of the history of scholarship in Islamic studies at the American University of Beirut that has been enabled by the creation of the Sheikh Zayed Chair in 1972. Bilal Orfali stressed the importance of encouraging research on and around Islamic mysticism, or *taṣawwuf*, and especially on its relevance to Islamic ethics, a subfield that remains understudied to this day. One of the goals of this conference was to challenge the widely held idea that ethics in Islam and Islamic civilization are mainly inherited from previous or neighboring civilizations, without any notable indigenous contribution. Radwan Sayyid considered the conference a first answer to last year's conference "Towards a Reconstruction of Islamic Studies," also held at the American University of Beirut, while Mohammed

Rustom provided the audience with an overview of the conference's themes and panels.

The conference program consisted of seven panels and a keynote address delivered by Jamal Elias of the University of Pennsylvania, who presented a scholarly discussion on an Ottoman author's reading of Rūmī's *Mathnawī*.

May 2, 2019

Panels 1 and 2: Defining Boundaries

The first two panels, chaired, respectively, by Ramzi Baalbaki (American University of Beirut) and Atif Khalil (University of Lethbridge), opened the conference bilingually, as the first panel's speakers presented in Arabic and the second panel's in English.

Suad al-Hakim (Lebanese University) presented a paper entitled "Ethics in Sufism: Between the Refinement of the Soul and the Refinement of Behavior," based on the works of three Sufi personalities: al-Qaṣṣāb (ninth century CE), al-Jarīrī (d. 923), and al-Kittānī (d. 933). The paper amounted to a reflection on the idea of ethics as public performance and not only as a set of internal qualities.

Chafika Ouail (Orient Institute Beirut) presented "The Ordering of Knowledge to (Re)Produce Ethical Concepts in Sufism," tracing the gradual transformation of ethical values from communally inherited concepts to ontological ideas that bear different meanings and practices from their original forms. The paper also explored the varying social repercussions of such values and their production and practice between the personal and the communal and in relationship with their evolving sociohistorical context.

The paper of Issam Eido (Vanderbilt University), read by Bilal Orfali, was titled "Shades and Hues of Sufis and the Concept of Ethics in Sufi Literature," and it explored and analyzed the two basic Sufi concepts of "station" (*maqām*) and "state" (*ḥāl*) within the nuances of the ideas of fixity and instability, using the theoretical works of Foucault and his analysis of Greek ethical categories.

Concluding the first panel was a paper by Khaled Abdo (*Muʾminūn bilā ḥudūd* Institute), "From Criticism of Sufism to the Reform of Sufi Ethics: Discovering the works of al-Daylamī." The paper presented the interesting case of a scholar who veered from a critical stand on Sufism in general to its adoption, while trying to pave the way to its reformation. This paper explored the works of al-Daylamī (d. 1192), focusing in particular on his book *The Reformation of Ethics* (*Iṣlāḥ al-akhlāq*), which deals with Sufi ethics and the reformation of Sufism as well as the Sufi stance toward philosophy; al-Daylamī's book has been so far overlooked as a potentially theoretical grounding work on this subject.

The second panel began with Michael Arnold (American University of Beirut), who presented a paper entitled "Sufism as an Ethical Panacea? Situating *Taṣawwuf* in Islamic Ethics." Acknowledging that no exact equivalent of ethics as a philosophical category can be found within the Islamic intellectual heritage, and recognizing that Muslim scholars have not methodically studied this category as defined today, this paper explored the place of the Sufi tradition in dealing with ethical considerations in the Sunni intellectual tradition while challenging the commonly held view that the latter

took an antiphilosophical and antirational turn after al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) critique of philosophy.

Following on the discussion of al-Ghazālī's heritage in the previous presentation, Sophia Vasalou (Birmingham University) presented a paper entitled "Does al-Ghazālī Have a Theory of Virtue?" Focusing particularly on al-Ghazālī's works, the paper shed light on the dynamic between philosophy and Sufi discourse and on how virtue (*faḍīla*) is problematized within the broader concern with the "ethics of virtue" as found in the works of thinkers more closely associated with philosophy, such as al-Farābī (d. 950) and Miskawayh (d. 1030).

Concluding the second panel, Jeremy Farrell (Emory University) presented "A 'Value Theory' of Obligations: Early Sufi Approaches to *Zuhd*." Understanding *zuhd* as supererogatory ethical practice in the context of early Sufism, this paper showed that "value theory" allows us to better understand why early Sufis adopted such practices. It traced the reasoning behind such practices in the works of al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857) and late tenth-century Sufi handbooks.

Panel 3: From Grief to Love

Chaired by Sebastian Günther (University of Göttingen), the third panel was opened by Riccardo Paredi (American University of Beirut) with his paper "To Grieve or Not to Grieve? The Concept of *Ḥuzn* in Early Sufism." Tracing the notion of *ḥuzn* and its evolution from the Quran through the first three centuries of Islam, when it was initially viewed as a negative emotion (as in the Quranic "Do not grieve"), the paper showed that in early Sufi

literature, this emotion is seen as positive and its virtuous merits are discussed, as, for example, in the chapter dedicated to *ḥuzn* in *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya.*

Then Atif Khalil (University of Lethbridge) presented "On Patience in Early Sufi Ethics," which dealt with a quality with obvious virtuous dimensions that has played a central role in Islamic piety. The paper analyzed the importance of the notion of patience, which is one of God's qualities but did not become a subject of wide discussion until the work of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240). Along the way, Khalil explored the works of Sarrāj (d. 988), Kalābādhī (d. 990), Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 998), al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), Hujwīrī (d. 1072), and Sirjānī (d. 1077) and their approaches to *ṣabr.*

Kazuyo Murata (King's College) presented a paper titled "Sufism and the Pursuit of Happiness." Whereas the Greek concept of *eudaemonia*, translated in Arabic as *saʿāda*, is heavily discussed by Sufi writers versed in *falsafa*, this paper argued that the Sufi discourse on happiness as a goal of human life is not a simple carryover of this Greek antique term. Rather, it covers different ideas and their associated notions, such as *riḍā*, *surūr*, and *faraḥ*, all under the generic umbrella of "happiness." These various notions have been explored by the likes of al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), Khwāja ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī (d. 1087), and Rūzbihān al-Baqlī (d. 1209).

Mohammed Rustom (Carleton University) concluded this panel with his paper "*Theo-Fānī*: ʿAyn al-Quḍāt and the Fire of Love" on the famous Sufi martyr ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī (d. 1131), who belonged to the Persian Sufi "school of passionate love" (*madhhab-i ʿishq*).

The paper explored ʿAyn al-Quḍāt's multifaceted understanding of love as it pertains to the Divine-human relationship and the lived human experience of love.

Keynote Address

Jamal Elias (University of Pennsylvania) presented a keynote lecture entitled "Revisiting Rūmī's *Mathnawī* as the 'Persian Qurʾān' through the Lens of Anqarawī." The lecture provided a glimpse into a commentary on Rūmī's *Mathnawī* by one of the most influential Mevlevi shaykhs, Ismāʿīl Rusūkhī Anqarawī (d. 1631). Entitled *Majmuʿat al-laṭāʾif wa maṭmūrat al-maʿārif* (Collection of subtleties and treasure of knowledge) and consisting of seven volumes, it is usually known as *Sharḥ-i Mathnawī.* It curiously contains a commentary on what is supposed to be a seventh volume of Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, which Elias analyzed in the context of the frequent reference to the *Mathnawī* as the "Persian Quran" by classical scholars and authors such as Jāmī (d. 1492)—although it should be noted that this comparison is not to be understood in the sense of a formal resemblance to the Quranic text but is rather is to be seen as emphasizing its great importance in and impact on the Persianate world.

May 3rd, 2019

Panel 4: Late Pre-Modern Sufism

The conference's second day opened with a panel chaired by Bilal Orfali (American University of Beirut). Matthew Ingalls (American University of Dubai) began with his presentation, "Al-Shaʿrānī's *Laṭāʾif al-Minan* and the Virtue of Sincere Immodesty." This work addresses the tension between the virtue of hiding one's spiritual accomplishments in order to preserve their pure intention and the role of a Sufi master in showing his students the different blessings bestowed by God upon him as a guiding example for them. The paper explored this tension and the author's knowledge of it, his way of dealing with the problem, the possible cynicism that future readers of this work may have, and the attendant ethical stand the reader would adopt in order to avoid this potential pitfall.

The paper by Rizwan Zamir (Davidson College), presented by Mohammed Rustom, was entitled "'Dogs Are Better than You!' Mockery in Punjabi Sufi Poetry." The paper analyzed the poetry of three well-known South Asian Sufis, Shah Husayn (d. 1593), Sultan Bāhū (d. 1691) and Baba Bulleh Shah (d. 1758), focusing on the aspect of mockery, which Zamir sees as reflecting ethical, mystical, social, and personal discussions in a Punjabi society whose hollowness and hypocrisy the poets decried.

Then Alexandre Papas (French National Center for Scientific Research) presented "Sufism and Ethics in Central Asia: Ṣūfī Allāhyār's *Thabāt al-ʿĀjizīn* and Its Legacy," a paper exploring the work of Ṣūfī Allāhyār (d. 1721), a Naqshbandī Mujaddidī Sufi from Samarqand whose influence was greater as an author than it was as a Sufi shaykh. Composed in *mathnawī* form, his work became popular in Central Asian madrasas, exposing a sober Sufi view on faith, observance, morals, and ethics.

Marcia Hermansen (Loyola University Chicago) presented a paper titled "Shāh Walī Allāh and the Virtues," which discussed the different frameworks for conceiving of the relationship between mysticism and ethics that can be found in

the work of Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762) of Delhi at the juncture between premodern and early modern Islam. The paper uncovered his formulation of the virtues one needs to cultivate in order to attain felicity, and his view of how these virtues are related to the four Platonic virtues in a Sufi ethical context.

Concluding this panel was a presentation by Paul Heck (Georgetown University), "Mystical Traditions of Prophetic Ethics in Moroccan Sufism: The Case of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dabbāgh (d. 1719)." Starting with the works and example of this Moroccan mystic, this paper presented the ethical aspects of the spiritual path in the late premodern Islamic West, with a focus on how spiritual sovereignty interacts with worldly power.

Panel 5: Literary Engagements

Chaired by Enass Khansa (American University of Beirut), this panel was opened by a presentation in Arabic by Lina Jamal (American University of Beirut), "Sufi Dreams," which discussed the influence of Greek thought on oneiric Sufi writings and their symbols. The paper analyzed the symbolism of wool (*ṣūf*) in dreams from Artemidorus (second century) to al-Nābulsī (d. 1731) and demonstrated how this symbol was adopted by Sufis for their own concerns. This adoption represents an example of a Greek element used and modified within the Islamic tradition.

Richard McGregor (Vanderbilt University) presented a paper titled "Beauty, Vision, and the Disciplines of Bodies in Sufi Aesthetics." With an emphasis on Egyptian traditions, this paper delved deeper into the relationship between ethics and visual practice in Sufism and into the discipline of the mind and body in the pursuit of "beauty" geared toward the development of a virtuous self.

Concluding this panel, Vahid Behmardi (Lebanese American University) presented "Social Ethics in Rūmī's *Mathnawī*." Discussing Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) for a second time in this conference, this paper explored the social ethics that can be read in his *Mathnawī*, which is not restricted to a purely personal mystical dimension but also gives the reader social values to be developed in society so that the spiritual and religious being can simultaneously flourish.

Panels 6 and 7: Sufism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

The sixth panel was chaired by Lyall Armstrong (American University of Beirut) and started with a presentation by Ahmed El Shamsy (University of Chicago) entitled "Modernist Appropriations of Sufi Ethics." Looking beyond the existing view of Muslim reformers' criticism of Sufism, this paper described how, on the contrary, such reformers embraced and promoted certain aspects of classical works of Sufism, a prime example being the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* by al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), which was used by reformers such as Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935) and Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) in driving home their own ethical concerns.

Leila Alzamova (International Relations Kazan Federal University) presented "Sufism and Modern Muslim Ethics in 20th Century Russian Islamic Thought," which explored the differing views of two Muslim scholars in twentieth-century imperial Russia, Ziyaaddin Kamali (d. 1942) and Musa Bigiev (d. 1949), and their divergent criticisms of Sufi shaykhs and

their practice in the context of the great changes brought by modernity and the perceived backwardness of the Islamic world vis-à-vis the West.

Oludamini Ogunnaike (University of Virginia) presented a paper titled "The Existential, Epistemological Ethics of *Tarbiyah*: Ibrahim Niasse's *Maqāmāt al-Dīn al-Thalāth*." This presentation focused on the branch of the Tijāniyya Sufi order that is the largest in in the world and the most popular one in sub-Saharan Africa thanks to the significant influence of Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse (d. 1975). Analyzing his works, the paper shed a great deal of light on Niasse's spiritual training, tracing its origins and exploring the relationship it postulates between ethics, epistemology, ontology, and Sufi anthropology.

The seventh and final panel of the conference was chaired by Bashshar Haydar (American University of Beirut), with two presentations in Arabic. The first of these was by Mohammed Helmi, "The Question of Sufism on the Contemporary Horizon: History and Destinies." It presented an overview of the last century's criticisms of Sufism, from internal criticism by practitioners of Sufism to external criticism from non-Sufis, according to different religious approaches and currents identified by Helmi.

Then Adbelouahab Belgherras (Centre de recherche en anthropologie sociale et culturelle) presented "Sufi Ethics in Contemporary Discourse: The 'Perfect' Man and World Citizenship." This paper discussed the contemporary relevance of the Sufi understanding of the "perfect human" in regard to the idea of "world citizenship" through examples such as the International Day of Living Together in Peace on May 16 of each year, which was recently adopted by the United Nations as the result of an initiative by Shaykh Khaled Bentounes of the ʿAlawiyya International Association.

These intense two days gave the audience a window into trends in the current scholarship and research being conducted on Islamic mysticism—both on its established themes, such as Rūmī's works and heritage, and less known but promising fields, such as early Sufi texts and non-Arabic works from different parts of the premodern Islamic world.

The particular focus on ethics, an area that is overall not yet systematically researched in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, helped bring together scholars specialized in different time periods and different Islamic languages, which made for fruitful exchanges among participants and with the public.

The conference also proved to be a logical step in the context of a growing interest, both scholarly and otherwise, in the subject of Sufism. This is hopefully the beginning of regular exchanges and organized discussions around Sufism in particular and Islamic studies in general at the AUB, an institution uniquely situated to bring together scholars from different traditions and disciplines. Indeed, the AUB can help foster a rare dynamic and discussion between scholars from within and outside of the Islamic world.

Book Review

Daniel Alan Brubaker, *Corrections in Early Qurʾānic Manuscripts: Twenty Examples* (Lovettsville: Think and Tell Press, 2019), xxv + 102 pp. ISBN 978-1-949123-03-6. Price: $35 (paper).

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This book is a popular-level publication containing material from Daniel Alan Brubaker's PhD dissertation (Rice University, 2014); it is aimed at both the general reader and the scholar. Its stated purpose is to introduce the audience to a facet of textual criticism of the Quran, namely scribal corrections, through a series of examples from early Quranic manuscripts. The first of its kind, Brubaker's book represents the sole accessible work on scribal changes in manuscripts and one of only a few on Quranic manuscripts as a whole. It is therefore frustrating that it suffers from a number of critical flaws in methodology, analysis, and discussion.

It is not lost on anyone remotely familiar with Quranic manuscripts that the field is going through a transformative period. The plethora of early manuscripts at our disposal combined with digital technologies making them accessible has reawakened a fervor among both scholars and the public. Radiocarbon dating of Quranic fragments has also pushed some manuscripts back to the mid-first/ seventh century or before, giving us an unprecedented window into the scripture as it was written, handled, and received by the earliest generation of Muslims. We are told that a survey of these manuscripts in a little more than a hundred pages will "challenge the traditional assertions about the transmission of the Quran in several ways" (p. xxi) and have much to say about the "pious enhancement of the Quran's textual history" (p. xxii). Unfortunately, the bold claims are left unsubstantiated.

Apart from a twenty-five-page introduction and a ten-page conclusion, the bulk of this book is dedicated to enumerating, in very systematic fashion, scribal changes found throughout various Quranic manuscripts. There is very little to fault in the presentation of the material; manuscript photographs are provided for each example along with the corresponding text from the Cairo edition, and the accompanying

descriptions focused on word and letter placement, ink color, and paleography are very thoughtful and easy to follow. The author also provides a material description of the change, precisely how the original or corrected text differs from the Cairo edition, and, in some instances, an explanation of the change in meaning. The inclusion of useful "trivia" for most of the featured manuscripts, such as the folkloric attribution of the Topkapı *muṣḥaf* to the caliph ʿUthmān (p. 28), is also a very nice addition. Since scribal changes are the focal point of this book, I follow its structure closely in this review. My assessment of both the broader context and the thesis set forth in this work is followed by a detailed appraisal of the scribal changes, grouped by similarity. In light of my reevaluation, I revisit Brubaker's thesis, which I have not found convincing.

Brubaker introduces Quranic manuscripts by mentioning some of the major nineteenth- and twentieth-century figures largely responsible for the major manuscript collections in Western institutions. He also provides useful context to explain why manuscripts from the first/seventh century have survived until today—primarily because of the use of parchment as writing material and because of political circumstances. In contrast to the scripture of the early Christian community, he correctly states, the Muslim scripture enjoyed an elevated status under a dominant political hegemony from an early period and thus was not subject to censorship or destruction.

Discussing manuscript dating, Brubaker highlights the importance of paleography and, in particular, the classification of scripts by François Déroche, adding the important caveat that script classifications do have overlapping timelines. However, he erroneously states that some of the earliest Quranic manuscripts, and in particular those in the Hijazi style, were written without diacritical marks (p. 5). This is a common misconception, due not least to medieval Muslim scholars, who attributed the invention of such marks and their addition to *muṣḥaf*s to several prominent figures.[1] In reality, the very earliest Hijazi manuscripts contain occasional diacritical marks.[2] Brubaker then makes the strange and equally incorrect assertion that the later development of script grammar allows for precise disambiguation of identical archigraphemes in lieu of diacritics. "Script grammar," a concept introduced by Thomas Milo, defines how the letters of a given script are drawn, how they stack, and how denticle heights of adjacent letters vary. However, it cannot disambiguate a single undotted word form; it can only distinguish similar skeletal forms from one another.[3] Brubaker also discusses two

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1. See ʾAbū ʿAmr al-Dānī's (d. 444/1053), *al-Muḥkam fī ʿilm naqṭ al-maṣāḥif*, ed. Ghānim Qaddūrī al-Ḥamad (Damascus: Dār al-Ghawthānī li-l-Dirāsāt al-Qurʾāniyya, 2017), 57ff., where the author dedicates to this subject an entire chapter, entitled "Discussion of *muṣḥaf*s and how they used to be free of dots."

2. Marijn van Putten, "Hamzah in the Quranic Consonantal Text," *Orientalia* 87, no. 1 (2011): 95.

3. The precise term is archigrapheme. See Thomas Milo, "Towards Arabic Historical Script Grammar through Contrastive Analysis of Qurʾān Manuscripts," in *Writings and Writing: Investigations in Islamic Text and Script in Honour of Dr. Januarius Justus Witkam*, ed. Robert M. Kerr and Thomas Milo, 249–92 (Cambridge: Archetype, 2013), and Thomas Milo, "Arabic Typography," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Lutz

other forms of dating, codicology and radiocarbon dating, the latter of which he calls "not foolproof." This skepticism towards radiocarbon dating is reminiscent of the discussion regarding the Dead Sea scrolls; there we find that the consensus has indeed converged on the method being foolproof.[4]

The introduction to consonantal variants contains significant errors, which will undoubtedly leave the novice with a confused distinction between the *rasm* (consonantal text) and the reading traditions that interpret it. Brubaker states that "the readings are different from the *rasm* and in most cases the one is not affected in the least by the other" (p. 8). The distinction between the two is important to point out, but it is incorrect to state that they are entirely independent. The reading traditions are exactly that: different traditions for reading the same consonantal text. Although there is a degree of tension between the two, evident in some instances as slight deviations from the standard *rasm*, the reading traditions are in large part dependent upon the consonantal text.[5]

It is all the more surprising that Brubaker makes this distinction between the readings and *rasm* explicit since he proceeds to conflate the two[6] when discussing several *muṣḥaf*s edited by Tayyar Altıkulaç. He states that these codices do not reflect a single reading, leading their editor to describe them in terms of adherence to the various readings. What Altıkulaç is actually referring to are the consonantal (read: *rasm*) differences between the regional *muṣḥaf*s and not the reading traditions. In fact, the Cairene *muṣḥaf* mentioned is not vocalized, which is necessary for identification of the reading.

Before presenting the evidence, Brubaker prematurely asserts that the thousands of corrections he has documented appear to have nothing to do with the reading tradition literature and thus must be explained by another phenomenon, such as a greater degree of perceived flexibility in the Quranic text in the early centuries (p. 9). However, one does not expect that mere scribal errors would be featured in the reading tradition literature, and the same applies to orthographic variants that do not affect pronunciation (of which there are many). Brubaker makes no mention of these two reasonable possibilities,

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Edzard, Rudolf de Jong, Ramzi Baalbaki, James Dickins, Mushira Eid, Pierre Larcher, Janet Watson, et al. (Leiden: Brill Online), http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1570-6699_eall_EALL_SIM_000043.

4. See R. E. Taylor and Ofer Bar-Yosef, *Radiocarbon Dating: An Archeological Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2014), 38ff., esp. 41. On the dating of Quranic manuscripts using ^{14}C and its consistency with paleography, see Michael J. Marx and Tobias J. Jocham, "Zu den Datierungen von Koranhandschriften durch die ^{14}C-Methode," *Frankfurter Zeitschrift für islamisch-theologische Studien* 2 (2015): 9–43.

5. See Yasin Dutton, "Orality, Literacy and the 'Seven Aḥruf' Ḥadīth," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 23, no. 1 (2011): 1–49, and Yasin Dutton, "Two 'Ḥijāzī' Fragments of the Qur'an and Their Variants, or: When Did the *Shawādhdh* Become *Shādhdh*?" *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 8, no. 1 (2017): 1–56.

6. He is not alone, however. See Yasin Dutton, "Some Notes on the British Library's 'Oldest Qur'an Manuscript' (Or. 2165)," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2004): 43–71, for an example of conflating manuscript *rasm* with the reading of Ibn ʿĀmir, and Intisar A. Rabb, "Non-Canonical Readings of the Qur'ān: Recognition & Authenticity," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2006): 84–127, for a corrective response.

leaving the reader with the impression that there are thousands of heretofore unknown yet consequential orthographic variants in early *muṣḥaf*s—a claim that, if true, is significant enough to demand substantiation.

Brubaker's general observations on manuscript corrections in the introduction contain perhaps the most significant methodological flaw that permeates his book. He notes that most often, changes in manuscripts result in "conformity of that manuscript at the point of correction with the *rasm* of the now-standard 1924 Cairo edition" (p. 10). Brubaker sees this as a pattern, which shows "a general movement over time toward conformity, though not immediate complete conformity" (p. 10). There are two major problems with this conclusion.

The first is the evident anachronism of centuries-old manuscripts corrected to conform to a text from 1924 (in all cases the corrections predate the Cairo edition). In effect, this is a teleological argument for an end goal that did not exist at the time. The second is the presupposition that whatever standard the 1924 Cairo edition is based on differs from the standard that existed at the time the early manuscripts were written. However, corrections apparently in the direction of conformity to the Cairo edition are not evidence of a changing standard, but evidence of the existence of a standard in the first place! Demonstrating the evolution of a standard over time is another matter entirely.

Both of these problems stem from Brubaker's apparent lack of understanding of the nature of the Cairo edition. In the edition's postface we find that its editors relied on works by two figures, Abū ʿAmr al-Dānī (d. 444/1053) and his student Abū Dāwūd b. Najāḥ (d. 496/1103), to fix its orthography, with preference given to the latter in the event of conflict. It becomes immediately apparent that (a) variations in Quranic orthography exist within the Muslim tradition and (b) the orthography of the Cairo edition is dependent on a choice made by a committee in 1924 to give precedence to one text over another. Furthermore, a cursory examination of Quranic manuscripts across the centuries reveals the rapid classicization of the text's orthography.[7] By contrast, the Cairo edition's reliance on *rasm* works results in a text that is substantially more archaic and indeed more archetypal than many manuscripts over a millennium older. Therefore, the Cairo edition in fact breaks away from the orthographic standard of classical Arabic that characterized nearly all *muṣḥaf*s prior to its conception. Recognizing this aspect of the Cairo edition, which belies its use as a standard toward which Qurans evolved, makes

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7. Classicization is an orthographic reform toward classical Arabic standards that includes hamza and *scriptio plena*. The classicization of Quranic orthography early on was recognized by Muslim jurist Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), who was asked about the commission of a new *muṣḥaf*: "Should it be written according to the orthographic practices [*hijāʾ*] people have innovated?" His response: "No, I do not see that as appropriate. Rather, it should be written in the original manner [*ʿalā al-katba al-ūlā*]." Abū ʿAmr al-Dānī, *al-Muqniʿ fī maʿrifat marsūm maṣāḥif ahl al-amṣār*, ed. Bashīr al-Ḥimyarī (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2016), 1:352–353.

apparent the anachronistic nature of the approach adopted by Brubaker.[8]

The book also presents a brief survey of difficult issues relating to different aspects of the Quran, including an apparent disconnect between the topography of Mecca and descriptions within the text, archeological problems with Mecca as an ancient center of civilization, and the *qibla* (direction of prayer) of the early Muslim community. Given the latter issue's irrelevance to Quranic manuscripts and their transmission, Brubaker's raising of it is surprising, as is the length at which he discusses it in comparison to other issues raised and his reliance on Dan Gibson's work to the exclusion of that of David King, who is a specialist in early Muslim *qibla*s and who has written at length to debunk the thesis advertised by Gibson.[9] As the work is primarily focused on scribal changes in Quranic manuscripts and aimed at a general audience, more care should have been put into not misrepresenting the state of Western scholarship on matters ancillary to the primary focus of the book. Once again, in raising the well-known and important issue of the reliability of the

prophetic biography and hadith, Brubaker makes no reference to the work of Gregor Schoeler or Harald Motzki, both of whom have made seminal contributions in these areas.

The final difficulties that Brubaker addresses concern the ʿUthmānic standardization. Given the monumental nature of the ʿUthmānic project, he contends, "it is odd that no copy existing today has been reliably identified as one of these actual authoritative copies" (p. 19). Why is it odd that of the thousands of *muṣḥaf*s that surely existed in the first/seventh century, most of which were lost to time, four very specific ones did not survive? Moreover, if one were to concede the traditional narrative concerning the ʿUthmānic project involving the large-scale destruction of other *muṣḥaf*s, the sheer amount of traffic and handling that the regional exemplars would have received from subsequent copying efforts would almost certainly have compromised their integrity. However, one does not have to concede the traditional narrative. Harald Motzki has analyzed reports of this event and dated them to the late

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8. One might raise the objection that the works used for the Cairo edition are from the fifth century AH. However, no two *rasm* works are in complete agreement, there is no evidence that any standard existed in the fifth century despite the composition of these *rasm* works, and manuscripts continued to diverge from the ʿUthmānic standard through the Ottoman period. A second possible objection might concern the degree of variation: *rasm* works are largely (though not exclusively) concerned with orthographic variants, whereas the monograph under review is concerned with more substantial variation. However, if one wishes to argue for the development of a later standard, one must also explain an apparent conundrum. Scribes across the entire Muslim world, for centuries prior to the 1924 Cairo edition, were entirely comfortable with orthographic fluidity yet somehow managed to refrain from making more significant changes. In other words, as orthography continued to diverge, substantive variation simultaneously continued to converge.

9. David A. King, "The Petra Fallacy: Early Mosques Do Face the Sacred Kaaba in Mecca but Dan Gibson Doesn't Know How" (unpublished paper, December 1, 2018), https://www.academia.edu/37957366/KING_2018_-_The_Petra_fallacy_-_Early_mosques_do_face_the_Sacred_Kaaba_in_Mecca_but_Dan_Gibson_doesnt_know_how, and David A. King, review of Early Islamic Qiblas, by Dan Gibson, *Suhayl* 16–17 (2018–2019): 347–66, https://www.academia.edu/40110039/KING_2019_-_Review_of_GIBSON._Earliest_Qiblas.

first/early eighth century.[10] Nicolai Sinai has evaluated the evidence for various positions regarding the codification and concludes that the traditional dating of 30/650 or earlier "ought to be our default view."[11] Additionally, both Theodor Nöldeke[12] and later Michael Cook[13] (whose work is cited by Brubaker elsewhere in the book) have analyzed in greater detail reports of regional variants from the purported ʿUthmānic exemplars and find that the pattern in the variant data forms a "family tree" known as a stemma.

The fact that these shared variants form a neat stemma lacking signs of contamination leads Cook to conclude that "this must count against any suggestion that the variants were invented…. We can accordingly infer that we have to do with genuine transmissions from an archetype."[14] Marijn van Putten has recently demonstrated that a series of orthographic idiosyncrasies in the earliest Quranic manuscripts can be explained only as the results of copying from a single archetype.[15] Given that the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus is dated to the third quarter of the first/seventh century[16] and contains

these orthographic idiosyncrasies, the standardization must have taken place before that time. In a forthcoming article, I further show that data collected from many of the same manuscripts surveyed by Brubaker produce a stemma that predicts four regional exemplars, consistent with the findings of Cook and Nöldeke. This is to say that by all indications, the manuscript evidence is consistent with the traditional narrative regarding the ʿUthmānic standardization. The utility of the ʿUthmānic exemplars to the early Muslims, rather than some inconsistency with a backprojected notion of veneration as suggested in Brubaker's book, is most likely responsible for their loss.

In his additional comments on the ʿUthmānic standardization, Brubaker appears unaware of the scholarly history on the text's standardization; he is seemingly informed more by modern Muslim apologetics than by knowledge of the Arabic sources. He tells the reader that the presence of later corrections in otherwise finely produced manuscripts challenges "the notion that there was strict uniformity and widespread agreement

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10. See Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qurʾan: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments," *Der Islam* 78, no. 1 (2001): 1–34.

11. See Nicolai Sinai, "When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure?," part II, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 3 (2014): 509–521, and part I, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 2 (2014): 273–292.

12. Theodor Nöldeke, *The History of the Qurʾān*, trans. Wolfgang H. Behn (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 392–402.

13. Michael Cook, "The Stemma of the Regional Codices of the Koran," in *Graeco-Arabica 9–10: Festschrift in Honour of V. Christides*, ed. George K. Livadas, 89–104 (Athens: Institute for Graeco-Oriental and African Studies, 2004).

14. Ibid, 103–104.

15. Marijn van Putten, "'The Grace of God' as Evidence for a Written Uthmanic Archetype: The Importance of Shared Orthographic Idiosyncrasies," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 82, no. 2 (2019): 271–288.

16. François Déroche, *La transmission écrite du Coran dans les débuts de l'islam: Le codex Parisino-petropolitanus* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 177.

about every detail, every word and letter, such as one would expect to find if there were widespread agreement upon a standard from a very early date, such as the time of ʿUthmān's caliphate" (p. 19). Although this is not an uncommon notion among modern-day lay Muslims, when it comes to scholarly works, as early as we can peer into the Islamic past, we find widespread recognition of orthographic variation among *muṣḥaf*s. Al-Farrāʾ's (d. 207/822) *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* is brimming with reports of regional and nonregional *rasm* variants. Abū ʿUbayd (d. 224/838) traveled the Muslim world collecting such differences first-hand; these find their way into his *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān* and later works. Ibn Abī Dāwūd's (d. 316/928) *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif* is dedicated to collecting reports of so-called Companion codices and other orthographic idiosyncrasies. The canonical hadith collections also make note of contentious *rasm* variants, with several disagreements attributed to Companions themselves. What Brubaker does, then, instead of elaborating the scholarly perspective, is to set up a straw man, which he attempts to reinforce with the false notion that anything short of printing press–level agreement constitutes evidence against early standardization.

The second chapter represents the majority of the book's contents, containing the titular examples of corrections in early Quranic manuscripts. Immediately before these examples, Brubaker provides readers with a helpful series of questions to help them think through scribal changes: What was changed? Is there a simple explanation for the change? Does the pen

used for the change match the original writing? Can we identify the original text if it was overwritten? And so on. A glaring omission here is a discussion of the various causes of scribal errors. The lay reader is unlikely to appreciate the challenges involved in hand-copying manuscripts, which are different from those that attend the modern production of printed books. In terms of the manuscripts featured, Brubaker draws on a wide selection of *muṣḥaf*s, including several famous ones such as the Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus, the Topkapı *muṣḥaf*, the Umayyad Fustat codex, and the Ḥusaynī *muṣḥaf*.

Brubaker's observations are generally sound, with the exception of a few oversights including example 6 (p. 52), where Brubaker describes the secondary addition of an *alif* to *wa-ʿamilū* in Q 5:93, which itself is part of an interlinear scribal insertion in the manuscript. The relevant portion of the verse, with square brackets marking the insertion, reads, *idhā ma ttaqaw wa-āmanū* [*wa-ʿamilu l-ṣāliḥāti thumma ttaqaw wa-āmanū*] *thumma ttaqaw wa-aḥsanū*, which translates to "so long as they are reverent and believe, [and perform righteous deeds, then are reverent and believe,] and then are reverent and virtuous." Needless to say, the repetition in the verse can be very confusing. The inserted portion was squeezed between two lines, and within it the phrase *wa-ʿamilū* appears to have had its otiose *alif* added in later with a different pen. This *alif*, however, actually belongs to the word *wa-anfaqū* from the line below, which has been retouched.[17] Given the spatial constraints and repeated

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17. There are already two *alif*s to the left of the supposed insert: one for the plural *wa-ʿamilū* and the other for the definite article of *al-ṣāliḥāt*; counting the third would yield one too many.

shapes, overlooking one of them is not an unexpected mistake. The other oversights I address later.

Along with the issues associated with conceiving of the Cairo edition as a targeted standard for the changes surveyed in the book—an issue that is brought up in nearly every example—the second major problem has to do with Brubaker's analysis of the changes themselves. Apart from a few interesting variants, which I highlight later, the majority of the changes are best explained as scribal errors. Even those that can be considered intentional still, as I demonstrate below, do not indicate late standardization. I have done my best to explain each example as clearly as possible and relegated more technical matters to the footnotes, but as Brubaker notes, this is inherently a highly technical subject. The most important points to glean from the examples below are the causes of the errors I elaborate; these causes offer alternative explanations for the scribal changes to those proposed by Brubaker.

I begin with assimilation of parallels, which refers to the assimilation of the wording of one passage to the slightly different wording in a parallel passage.[18] Given the highly formulaic nature of the Quran, such errors are relatively common. Example 1 shows a missing *huwa* in the verse-end formula *dhālika huwa l-fawzu l-ʿaẓīm* ("that is the great triumph") of Q 9:72 in the Topkapı *muṣḥaf*. There are exactly six verses containing the precise formula with *huwa* and another six without

(*dhālika l-fawzu l-ʿaẓīm*).[19] Earlier *muṣḥaf*s containing the standard text include Saray Medina 1a, Wetzstein II 1913, Arabe 328a, and BL Or. 2165. Example 7 shows Q 23:86 in Arabe 327 with the nonstandard word *al-arḍ* crossed out and the addition of *al-sabʿ* above the line. Whereas the standard verse reads, *qul man rabbu l-samāwati l-sabʿi wa-rabbu l-ʿarshi l-ʿaẓīm* ("say, 'who is the lord of the seven heavens and the lord of the great throne?'"), the phrase *qul man rabbu l-samāwāti wa-l-arḍ* ("say, 'who is the lord of the heavens and the earth?'") occurs in Q 13:16, and more generally in the non-interrogative *rabbu l-samāwāti wa-l-arḍ* ("lord of the heavens and the earth") in ten other locations. The standard text with *al-sabʿ* occurs in every other manuscript I could find. If Brubaker wishes to make the point that there was early fluidity and that manuscripts move toward the standard text over time, he would have to explain why the standard text is ubiquitous in manuscripts that are evidently paleographically older as well as those that are newer. Example 19 shows Q 34:27 in Marcel 5, where the words *huwa llāhu* ("he is God") are written over an unidentifiable erasure. The original gap is small enough that it is reasonable to expect that it originally contained *huwa* alone; this is suggested in the book (p. 82). What is not suggested however, is the cause: the formula *huwa l-ʿazīzu l-ḥakīm* ("he is the mighty, the wise") occurs more than a dozen times throughout the Quran, and this is the only

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18. Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press; 2005), 257ff. For assimilation of parallels and other scribal errors within the context of the Quran, see Behnam Sadeghi and Uwe Bergmann, "The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qurʾān of the Prophet," *Arabica* 57, no. 4 (2010): 343–436.

19. Verses with *huwa*: Q 9:72, Q 9:111, Q 10:64, Q 40:9, Q 44:57, and Q 57:12. Verses without *huwa*: Q 4:13, Q 5:119, Q 9:89, Q 9:100, Q 61:12, and Q 64:9.

instance where there is an additional *allāh*, making such a mistake entirely expected.

A number of errors best explained as omissions due to eye skip (usually from inadvertently looking to the side), known as parablepsis, are also apparent in the chosen examples. The last subexample of example 3 involves the omission of *allāh* from Q 9:78 in DAM 01-20.4. Brubaker states that the omission of *allāh* from the phrase *wa-anna llāha ʿallāmu l-ghuyūb* gives the reading "and that *he* knows fully the things that are unseen" (emphasis his), but this is incorrect. The omitted *allāh* does not have in its place the pronominal *wa-annahū*, but rather the original *wa-anna* is maintained—rendering the phrase ungrammatical. Therefore, the best explanation is parablepsis. Example 6 is rightly recognized as homeoteleuton, eye skip due to a repeating *wa-āmanū*, and I have already mentioned the mistake in the associated discussion above.

Example 11 is remarkable in demonstrating the lengths to which Brubaker goes in order to avoid suggesting scribal error as an explanation. In the Topkapı *muṣḥaf*, the phrase *tūbū ila llāhi tawbatan naṣūḥā* ("repent to God with sincere repentance") in Q 66:8 is missing the *lām lām hāʾ* graphemes of *allāh*, with only its initial *alif* written at the end of a line; the next line begins with *tawbatan*. Brubaker starts considering alternative readings of the consonantal text[20] before conceding: "It is not clear to me what was intended by the original version, or whether it could have been read viably" (p. 65). It

seems pretty reasonable to me that the scribe wrote the first letter of *allāh*, began a new line, and accidentally forgot to complete the word. That such a scenario is not suggested deprives the reader of a perfectly valid and indeed better explanation.

Examples 8 and 16 are parablepses that may also be assimilations of parallels. In both examples, the verse-ending formula *inna llāha kāna* ("truly God is") is missing *kāna*, and example 8 appears to have been corrected by the original scribe, as acknowledged in the book (pp. 58–59). There are many verses that end in this common prototypical formula, either with or without *kāna*, depending on the rhyme. Importantly, *kāna* takes its predicate in the accusative, whereas otherwise the predicate would be nominative, so its omission renders the formula ungrammatical.[21] Brubaker seemingly recognizes this in his explanation of example 8, but he then proceeds to imply that the insertion of *kāna* serves no function other than to conform to the standard *rasm* (p. 59). Example 16 presents an identical issue, and here Brubaker explicitly and incorrectly states that *kāna* "is not grammatically necessary" (p. 76). Its ungrammaticality is the obvious reason Brubaker "found no mention of an issue at this spot in the *qirāʾāt* literature" (p. 59). Ironically, another interesting example that *is* mentioned in the *qirāʾāt* literature (discussed below) does not receive any attention.

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20. Brubaker notes that alternative readings are difficult to propose because of the dotting of the *bāʾ* in the word *tawbatan*, which does not afford a lot of flexibility (p. 65).

21. For example, in Q 4:148, the standard text is *fa-inna llāha kāna ʿafuwwan qadīran*. Without the correction we would have the ungrammatical *fa-inna llāha ʿafuwwan qadīran* rather than *fa-inna llāha ʿafuwwun qadīrun*.
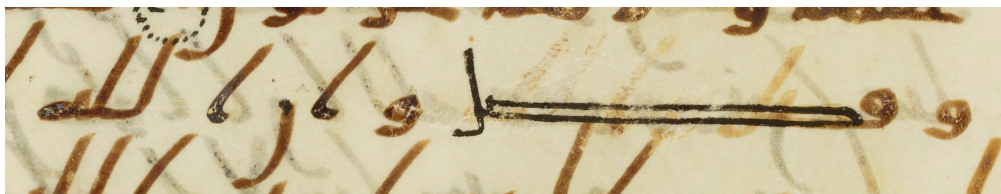
Figure 1: BnF Arabe 328, fol. 8r[22]

Examples 9 and 18 are also standard parablepses, with the former omission resulting in a severe disruption in rhyme and a break in a standard formula, as Brubaker acknowledges (pp. 60–61). The latter omission of *al-sāʿa*, "the hour," in Q 6:40 results in a redundant, nonsensical sentence (square brackets mark omission):

> *qul araʾaytakum in atākum ʿadhābu llāhi aw atatkumu* [*l-sāʿa*]

> "Think to yourselves: were the punishment of God to come upon you or were [the hour] to come upon you."

Example 12 is an interesting case of parablepsis in which multiple changes can be seen, and I have reproduced an image of the relevant passage above.

The text of Q 3:171 (with the erasure in brackets) reads:

> *yastabshirūna bi-niʿmatin mina llāhi wa-faḍlin* [*wa-llāhu*] *wa-anna llāha lā yuḍīʿu ajra l-muʾminīn*

> "They rejoice in blessing and bounty from God [and God] and that God does not neglect the reward of the believers."

What appears to have taken place here, as can be seen in the image above, can be described in the following steps:

1. The scribe writes *wa-faḍlin wa-llāhu*, accidentally skipping *wa-anna*.

2. Rather than squeeze in the forgotten word, the scribe decides to rewrite the phrase *wa-faḍlin wa-anna llāh* after the mistake.

3. The erroneous *wa-faḍlin wa-llāhu* is erased, leaving a gap.

An alternative scenario is also possible:

1. The scribe writes *wa-faḍlin wa-llāhu*, accidentally skipping *wa-anna*.

2. The scribe inadvertently repeats the phrase (known as a dittography), but this time correctly, as *wa-faḍlin wa-anna llāh*.

3. After proofreading, the scribe realizes the mistake and erases it, leaving a gap.

At a later stage, after either of these two scenarios, someone then erases the *ḍād* and the *lām* of the word *faḍl* and draws an elongated *ḍād* to cover up the gap, likely for cosmetic reasons.[22] We can tell this

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22. There are numerous examples throughout this manuscript in which the scribe with the black ink erases and rewrites sections for purely cosmetic reasons. This is apparent since the erased text is perfectly readable and matches the rewritten text.

took place from the clear difference in the scraping of the original mistake, which was much more thorough and less precise, and the later erasure. None of this is discussed by Brubaker nor is a reading of the original text offered.

The presentation of example 14 as described in the book is entirely unconvincing. Brubaker asserts that Q 4:167 in the Topkapı *muṣḥaf* has an erasure that takes the verse *away* from conformity with the standard text. He then opines that "the reason for this erasure is unclear, but its precision in taking out the selected words is evident" (p. 71). There are several reasons to question this conclusion, not the least of which is a total lack of precision in the supposed erasure. The first relevant line ends in *wa-ṣaddū ʿan sabīli* ("and who turn from the way of") with an additional erased *alif* belonging to the next word, *allāh*.[23] The second line, which is partially and unevenly faded (in brackets) but still readable, continues: [*llāhi qad*] *ḍallū ḍalālan baʿīdā* ("[God have certainly] wandered far astray"). The faded passage, which includes part of the *ḍād* of the word *ḍallū*, contrary to Brubaker's claim of precision erasure, simply appears to have been worn out.[24]

Examples 4, 15, and 20 are instances in which the significant degree of erasure makes it effectively impossible to know what was originally written. In example 4, Brubaker makes some suggestions to fill a gap left in Q 30:9 between *ʿāqibatu* and *alladhīna*.[25] Since the gap is at the end of the page and the size of the gap is a good match for *allādhīna*, a dittography is a sensible proposition: the scribe accidentally wrote the word twice, once at the end of the first page and again at the beginning of the second. The expression *kayfa kāna ʿāqibatu lladhīna* is a common Quranic formula, which makes it even more unlikely that the erased word was something else. Although Brubaker makes no suggestion for the gap in example 15, the space and context are also consistent with a dittography. The phrase *ḥattā yughnihimu llāhu min faḍlih* ("until God enriches them from His bounty") in Q 24:33 is followed by an erasure. Since the preceding verse contains the exact same phrase and then ends with the formula *wa-llāhu wāsiʿun ʿalīm* ("and God is all-encompassing, all-knowing"), it is quite possible that the scribe accidentally reproduced this formula in the next verse. Example 20 shows Q 8:3 in MIA.2014.491

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23. This practice of splitting a word between lines is a feature of *scriptio continua* and common in early *muṣḥaf*s.

24. It is only the *alif* on the first line that seems to have been erased, possibly by someone who did not want to retouch the *muṣḥaf* but at the same time did not want to confuse the reader. This is not a farfetched suggestion, since we can see the vocalization on both the clear and the faded words as *ʿan sabīli llāhi*. We learn two things from the vocalization: (a) the fading occurred after vocalization and (b) if someone had intended to eliminate the words *allāh* and *qad*, it is odd they did not adjust *sabīli* to *sabīlin*. Without this second adjustment, the reading is ungrammatical. In addition, the translation offered in the book for the passage without the faded words reads, "*... and hinder from the way have strayed into error*" (p. 71), but this is not supported by the text because of the lack of a definite article on *sabīl* and the absence of *qad*. A more accurate translation of the remaining text would be, "*... and hinder from a way, wandered far astray.*"

25. Two of the suggestions made by Brubaker are not grammatical, since the possessor of the construct, *ʿāqiba*, is genitive. Also, *kullu min* should be *kullin min* and *kathīran min* should be *kathīrin min*.

with an entire line erased and overwritten with the standard *wa-mimmā razaqnāhum yunfiqūn* ("and spend from that which we have provided them"). As Brubaker notes, "the different writing on this line is somewhat stretched out to fill the space, an indication that what was first written here was longer" (p. 83). The space is consistent with an assimilation of parallels error involving the addition of *wa-yuʾtūna l-zakāh* ("and give alms"). The correction is in the Kufic B.II script, which matches the original and indicates that the change was made not long after the initial writing, although the ink is distinct, pointing to a different scribe.

Brubaker's description of the correction of *niʿmata llāh* ("grace of God") in example 17 is inaccurate. Despite what is stated in the text, there is no erasure, and the original text has simply been overwritten. Beneath the additions, one can clearly read *niʾma*, as opposed to *niʿmatahū*, which Brubaker proposes.[26] This makes it far more likely that the original scribe forgot the word *allāh*, rather than that he replaced it with the pronominal form. It is also apparent that the original correction was done much earlier and then was retouched later in black ink (best seen on the *alif* of *allāh*). In examples 2 and 13, it is simply impossible to know whether the existing text was written deliberately by the original scribes or whether it reflects inadvertent errors. Example 2 from Q 42:21 in Codex Parisino-Petropolitanus, an early manuscript from the first/seventh century, has the singular *lahū* in place of the plural *lahum* in *am lahum shurakāʾ*

("or do they have partners"), and example 13 has the singular *wa-qāla* in place of the plural *wa-qālū* ("and they said") in a third/ ninth-century Kufic B.II manuscript.

The broader issue behind these two examples is their implication for Brubaker's thesis. He insists that every deviation from the standard *rasm* encountered in a manuscript is a deliberate one. This stance leads him to conclude, based on the evidence I have reviewed, that the perception of the standard *rasm* changed over time, or that the standardization later became more thorough—though the meaning and mechanics of the alleged shift are not entirely clear. He also speculates that the extent of the flexibility may have varied between regions, but that it *did* exceed the bounds of what is reported in the *qirāʾāt* literature (p. 95).

The problem is that the two elements necessary to demonstrate the early textual fluidity asserted by Brubaker are missing. First, one would have to show that the incidence of orthographic deviations is greater in earlier manuscripts than in later ones. A survey of Qurans copied after the fourth/tenth century would tell us whether there are fewer mistakes or deviations in these Qurans compared to earlier ones. Ignoring this necessary step, as Brubaker does in his book, would lead one to conclude, for example, that the recently auctioned Quran from ninth/ fifteenth-century Mamluk Egypt, which contains a haplography resulting in the omission of multiple verses, is evidence of even later fluidity.[27]

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26. More precisely, he suggests *niʿmatihi*, which is incorrect as the word is the object of the preceding verb and therefore should be in the accusative.

27. Image 6 in the auction listing at https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/books-manuscripts/quran-

Second, one should show multiple attestations of the same variant in different manuscripts. Otherwise, as with examples 2 and 13, mentioned above, in which the cause of error is inconclusive, one cannot make the case that an intentional deviation is more likely than a mistake. Therefore, even though example 13 occurs in CPP, which is a very early manuscript, the fact that no other manuscript, even among those from the same deposit, contains this variant makes it impossible to prove that the difference was intentional. We also find that other first/seventh-century manuscripts contain the text as found in the Cairo edition today.[28] Example 2, of course, occurs in a third/ninth-century Quran, while there are many earlier *muṣḥaf*s containing the standard text.

This is not to say that nonstandard *rasm* variants do not exist, only that Brubaker has not demonstrated their existence. Alba Fedeli has written about the word *ṭuwā* in Q 20:12, which appears as *ṭāwī* in multiple early manuscripts[29] and is also recorded as such in *qirāʾāt* literature. Yasin Dutton has also studied the evolution of noncanonical *rasm* variants in early manuscripts.[30] Example 10 is possibly an instance of such variance, with the variant *āmanū bimā* ("believe in that") present in Q 2:137 in Arabe 331 rather than the standard *āmanū bi-mithli mā* ("believe

in that which is similar to"), but this possibility goes unmentioned. This variant is recorded as being found in the *muṣḥaf*s of the Companions Ibn Masʿūd and Anas b. Mālik and the Successor Abū Ṣāliḥ. Ibn ʿAbbās is also reported to have disliked the ʿUthmānic reading, which contains *bi-mithl*, as he considered God to have "no equivalent (*laysa lahū mathīl*)."[31]

Brubaker reaches a similarly frustrating conclusion regarding standardization in example 3, a collection of nine scribal insertions involving the word *allāh*, one of which I have already addressed. The first seven subexamples belong to the same famous Umayyad Fustat codex. The omissions of *allāh*, Brubaker states, highlights "the apparent late standardization of a number of instances of *allāh*" (p. 36). Yet in subexamples 6 and 7 from the same codex, the omission of *allāh* results in ungrammatical phrases. So clearly an accidental omission should be considered the most likely explanation, and it is unclear why Brubaker refuses to acknowledge this possibility. Brubaker also tells us in example 17, which comes from the same codex, that "this particular fragment has a very high density of corrections" (p. 77). Given the frequency of corrections in this manuscript, the resultant ungrammatical phrases in two of the examples, and the fact that *allāh*

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signed-tanam-al-najmi-al-maliki-al-ashrafi-mamluk-6195211-details.aspx shows Q 47:25–31 inserted in the margin. An eye skip resulted in the scribe jumping from Q 47:24 to Q 47:32, which, like Q 47:25, starts with *inna lladhīna.*

28. Early manuscripts containing the standard *lahum* in Q 42:21 include BL Or. 2165, Wetzstein II 1913, Saray Medina 1a, and DAM 01-25.1.

29. Alba Fedeli, "Relevance of the Oldest Qurʾānic Manuscripts for the Readings Mentioned by the Commentaries: A Note on Sūra 'Ṭā-Ḥā,'" *Manuscripta Orientalia* 15, no. 1 (2009): 1–10.

30. Dutton, "Two 'Ḥijāzī' Fragments."

31. See Abū al-Fatḥ Ibn Jinnī, *al-Muḥtasab fī tabyīn wujūh shawādhdh al-qirāʾāt wa-l-īḍāḥ ʿanhā*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1998), 1:113.

is a high-frequency word, what reason do we have to suppose that this is more than just the work of a sloppy scribe? It behooves Brubaker, if he wishes to prove that more than carelessness is at work, to show us that the frequency of corrections involving *allāh* relative to the frequency of the word's occurrence in the manuscript exceeds that of corrections involving other words or phrases. Until such evidence is produced, the only reasonable explanation is accidental omission, as I have stated. It is also obvious by this point that the standard text, with *allāh*, is present in multiple earlier and contemporary manuscripts.[32]

The remaining example, no. 5, comes from a truly fascinating manuscript held at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, which contains multiple significant deviations from the standard text. In the single page featured, Brubaker identifies eight points at which the *rasm* diverges and five later corrections. What is particularly interesting is that despite later changes, the page is still not in conformity with the standard text. This fact raises many questions: Is the divergence the result of dictation from faulty memory, a sloppy scribe, or a deliberate deviation from the ʿUthmānic text? Alternatively, does it represent a pre-ʿUthmānic tradition? The manuscript itself certainly postdates

standardization, but the written tradition it represents may be more ancient. Are any of the variants present attested in the Muslim tradition? Are they attributed to Companion(s)? For comparison, we know that many of the variants in the undertext of the Sanaa palimpsest correspond to ones reportedly found in various Companion codices.[33] Although these questions may well lie beyond the scope of an introductory book, this example certainly leaves the reader wanting more and looking forward to a follow-up.

In addition to the points made above, there are a number of other errors throughout the book. Under example 7, Brubaker notes the addition of an *alif* to *li-llāh* in Q 23:87 to yield *allāh*, which, he says, "comports with Abū ʿAmr's reading (and another)" (p. 56). Brubaker then cites Michael Cook as observing that this reading aligns with the codex sent by ʿUthmān to Basra, which was one of the four regional exemplars. Brubaker also states that al-Dānī ascribes the insertion to al-Ḥajjāj. Both of these statements are inaccurate: Cook explicitly rejects this variant as belonging to the Basran exemplar,[34] while al-Dānī very strongly rejects reports of this variant being a later addition.[35] Nowhere in this discussion is al-Ḥajjāj

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32. Q 33:18 and Q 33:24 have the standard *allāh* in BL Or. 2165, Tübingen Ma VI 165, DAM 01-27.1 (upper text), and Saray Medina 1a. Q 33:73 has the standard *allāh* in Saray Medina 1a, BL Or. 2165, DAM 01-29.1, and Tübingen Ma VI 165. Q 41:21 has the standard *allāh* in Saray Medina 1a, Wetzstein II 1913, BL Or. 2165, DAM 01-25.1, and DAM 01-27.1 (upper text). Q 22:40 has the standard *allāh* in Saray Medina 1a, Wetzstein II 1913, BL Or. 2165, Arabe 328c, DAM 01-29.1, and Tübingen Ma VI 165. The two remaining examples are ungrammatical.

33. Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, "Ṣanʿāʾ 1 and the Origins of the Qurʾān," *Der Islam* 87, no. 1–2 (2012): 1–129. See esp. 115ff.

34. Cook, "Stemma of the Regional Codices," 94.

35. Al-Dānī, *al-Muqniʿ*, 2:317–318.

mentioned.[36] On the basis of the stemma and a number of reports in *al-Muqniʿ*,[37] it seems most likely that this variant was not in the original Basran exemplar and was a later addition; I discuss the variant in more depth in a forthcoming publication. Brubaker cites the Sanaa palimpsest and a second Birmingham palimpsest as examples of highly nonstandard texts (p. 96). However, it is not clear what he means by the Birmingham palimpsest. Half of a folio of the Mingana-Lewis palimpsest is housed in the University of Birmingham library, but its text is standard.[38] The other possibility is the claim by Qasim Al-Samarrai that Birmingham 1572a is a palimpsest. However, this claim has not been accepted by the scholarly community, and no actual text has been uncovered or produced.

Brubaker's addendum, discussing coverings identified in the Cairene *muṣḥaf*, is also problematic. He notes that in many instances, the text beneath the tape extends beyond it so that it can be read, and that it conforms with the standard text (pp. 86–87). He also mentions that he did not inspect the manuscript in person and is reliant on photographs, which do not permit careful investigation. It is therefore puzzling that Brubaker includes this example only to suggest that "the tape might be serving another purpose, such as selective concealing of

something that is written on the page" (p. 87). The photographs included in the book very clearly show the irregularity of the coverings, which often obscure letters only partially and rest in between lines of text. Such taping could well be the result of improper storage or conservation, and it is irresponsible to suggest otherwise when (a) concealment of nonstandard text would be a significant discovery in such a (relatively) late manuscript, and (b) the author has given no indication that he has attempted to contact the curator to ascertain further information about the coverings.

If the objective of Brubaker's book is to demonstrate the humanity of the scribes involved in transmitting the Quranic text, it certainly succeeds. It is well presented and accessible, and does an admirable job guiding the reader through a nuanced and technical subject using a series of photographs and clear descriptions. Where it falls short, however, is in its methodology and analysis. Although Brubaker states that he always gives scribal error first consideration, this is not apparent from the book. In fact, the vast majority of examples in the book are best explained through simple scribal error. The main thesis, namely, that the flexibility of the Quranic text persisted centuries beyond its standardization (p. 95), remains unproven. That is not to say that cataloging and

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36. An unreliable report attributing this variant to al-Ḥajjāj is found in Abū Bakr Ibn Abī Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, ed. M. al-Sayyid and J. Sharīf (Tanta: Dār al-Ṣaḥāba li-l-Turāth), 347. The issue is also discussed in Omar Hamdan, "The Second Maṣāḥif Project: A Step Towards the Canonization of the Qurʾanic Text," in *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, 795–835 (Leiden: Brill, 2011). This may be the source of the confusion.

37. Al-Dānī, *al-Muqniʿ*, 2:317–318.

38. A transcription of the Quranic undertext by Alba Fedeli can be found here: http://cal-itsee.bham.ac.uk/itseeweb/fedeli/start.xml.

presenting these scribal changes is without merit. Brubaker rightfully recognizes the importance of stemmatics in reconstructing relationships between manuscripts (p. 97), and that requires meticulous documentation of orthographic variations. Nevertheless, tantalizing manuscripts such as MS.474.2003 and the promise of more such finds to come leave one hoping that upcoming works will be based on a sounder methodological footing.

Book Review

Jennifer A. Cromwell, *Recording Village Life: A Coptic Scribe in Early Islamic Egypt*. New Texts from Ancient Cultures 8 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), xxiv + 287 pp. ISBN 978-0-472-13048-1. Price: $90.00 (cloth).

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This book makes use of the largest corpus of Egyptian documents dating to the early Islamic period. Written in Coptic and Greek on ostraca (pottery or limestone) or papyrus, these documents originate from the Theban village of Djeme, which was built in and around the ruins of the temple of Rameses III at Medinet Abu "with a population between fifteen hundred and two thousand" (p. 3). Dating from the late sixth to late eighth centuries CE, there are "1,877 texts from Djeme, out of a total of 3,559 texts from the wider Theban region... Almost 20 percent of published Coptic texts are from Djeme alone" (p. 2, n. 1). These texts have, however, attracted less interest from the wider research community concerned with the history of the early Islamic period than has the early eighth-century corpus of Aphrodito. This is probably because unlike the latter corpus, the Djeme texts are mainly written in Coptic. There are no known Arabic documents preserved from the Theban region in this period, and the preserved communications involve exclusively local actors. The Djeme writings contain no texts written by the central administration in Fusṭāṭ in the name of the governor, like the famous letters of Qurra b. Sharīk to the village of Aphrodito. Nevertheless, the documentation of Djeme did not escape examination in Chris Wickham's *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (2005),[1] and it has been the focus of rich research production by papyrologists, with a particular focus on village life and gender studies.[2] Jennifer Cromwell's book aims to reconstruct the work and world of one of the scribes of

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1. Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

2. Most notably, Terry G. Wilfong, *Women of Jeme: Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

the Djeme corpus and a member of the village elite: Aristophanes son of Johannes. He was active in the second quarter of the eighth century—that is, the late Umayyad period. The book places a spotlight on the use of Coptic documents in the administration of the later Marwanids. This lens allows us to drastically reconsider a certain understanding of language use in Umayyad administration that has been oversimplified by references to the so-called language reform under ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705). Cromwell creates a link between papyrological studies, on the one hand, and the history of Late Antiquity and the early Islamic period, on the other, by concentrating on several hot topics in those fields, in relation to which the present review is structured: administration and taxation; scribal practices and literacy; and microhistory.

Administration and Taxation

Chapter 1, entitled "A Scribe in His Time and Place," introduces the geographical, political, and literary environment in which Aristophanes wrote: the Theban region, its documents, the village of Djeme as known though archaeological excavations, and its place in the administrative structure of early Islamic Egypt. Cromwell notes that the main feature of Islamic rule that is visible in the texts of Djeme is the payment of the poll tax in addition to less well documented taxes also characteristic of the new administration: forced labor and expense taxes for officials such as the governor or the *amīr al-muʾminīn*, all discussed in Chapter 4. Islamic rule

also appears in a few mentions of titles, names, and a handful of Arabic protocols that were not written locally (pp. 8–9). Most notably, an *amīr*, that is, an Umayyad administrator, was appointed over the local capitals of Luxor and Esna. He had a fiscal and legal role, as he was petitioned for travel permits and the settlement of village disputes (cf. Chapter 5). The first chapter also confirms that the use of Coptic for administrative texts was an innovation of the Umayyad period.

Chapter 4, "Recording Taxes," shows that Aristophanes was first involved in drawing up fiscal documents in 724, when he wrote tax demand notes for the office of the *amīr* of Luxor and Esna, Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh.[3] He then wrote 106 tax receipts on ostraca between 727 and 730. In those three years he drew up six other texts relating to tax payments (safe conducts and travel permits). Different writing supports were utilized for fiscal communications with the *amīr* (papyrus) and at the village level (ostraca).

The tax documents are for the principal money taxes (poll tax, expense taxes) and for forced labor. *P.CLT* 6, dated 724, is of particular interest, as it records an unusual declaration of seventeen men on their contribution to naval duty, stating that they would provide a sum of money to the authorities if they were not able to contribute to the raids. Cromwell puts forward a convincing interpretation: the signatories were "great men" of the village "with the ability to buy their way out of the cursus" (p. 92). Less convincing is her categorization of this document as reflecting a communal burden. This claim

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3. Cromwell gives him the title of pagarch, though to my knowledge this title never appears for administrators with Arab names.

is not discussed at length, but one wonders whether this unique document, the only one mentioning forced labor in the Theban region, really reflects a fiscal system that functioned regularly with both communal and personal liability at the village level. The document is so uncommon that the scribe utilized up to three different names for it in the text (*homologia n-koinônikon*, *symphônon n-koinônikon*, *koinê homologia* [p. 90]). It seems to have been an ad hoc initiative that does not necessarily reflect the functioning of the fiscal system of the 720s as a whole.

Most of the fiscal texts written by Aristophanes (p. 103) are concerned with the poll tax, called *diagraphon* in Theban documents. He wrote receipts for a total of sixty-seven men, issuing multiple receipts for nine of them. Payments were made in instalments (*katabole*) in the first part of the fiscal year (between May and September). The five travel permits written by Aristophanes were drawn up at the same time, after taxes had been paid. The fixed formulary of these receipts is presented in detail. All but two of the receipts for the poll tax were written in Coptic and those for the expense tax in Greek. Cromwell hypothesizes that the choice of languages depended on the destination of the receipt (p. 98), but she does not say what those different destinations could have been.

The chapter reveals that the drafting of tax documents was a closely regulated process in the twenty or so years in which they are attested at Djeme and that only one scribe at a time was involved in drawing up such texts. Aristophanes

was the last of five attested official scribes issuing tax receipts. After him there is no evidence of tax recording in Djeme. Receipts mentioned up to five men: Aristophanes as scribe, a fiscal official (*strategos*), two signatories, and sometimes a countersignatory. All of them except the *strategos* signed the receipts in their own hand. Cromwell suggests that Aristophanes might have gone around to different areas of the village to write up to sixteen receipts in one day, going from house to house, possibly with the signatories. Another possibility is that inhabitants would come to him (or them) each day from various parts of the village.[4] The latter arrangement would have saved Aristophanes the trouble of wandering around a village of two thousand souls carrying up to sixteen potsherds with him. Cromwell also convincingly shows that the tax receipts were kept by Aristophanes or the village administration as a record of tax collections, as they were the ones liable for this revenue vis-à-vis the higher administrative authorities (cf. Chapter 5, pp. 179–180). The ostraca were kept together, as is evident from their acquisition history. A good number of them were bought together, and today they are housed in a limited number of collections.

The research presented in Chapter 6 is the most innovative work on Umayyad administration to appear in the past decade. Cromwell provides a fascinating demonstration of the official training of Coptic and Greek scribes for the production of certain types of key

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4. The spread of areas represented by the villagers can be inferred from the mention of different *strategoi* on receipts drawn up on the same day, as Cromwell offers a convincing hypothesis that *strategoi* were the fiscal officials for the different quarters of the village (pp. 107–108).

documents in the Umayyad fiscal system—namely, those concerned with "collection of taxes and requisitioning of goods and labour" (p. 176). Such training began in the last decade of the seventh century, and it was still in full force at the time of Aristophanes in the second quarter of the eighth century. Cromwell does acknowledge the increasing number of Arabic papyri in the same period, but, as she shows, this went hand in hand with an increase in the number of Greek and Coptic documents and with centralized training for scribes in these two languages. The new training is visible in the script and formulary of administrative documents. It can be initially observed in documents drawn up in the local district capitals of the Nile valley, and by the time of Aristophanes it had reached the village level. He was not the only scribe with this training who was active in Djeme, as texts written by Cyriacus son of Petros, who was active at the same time, show the same features. It is not known where the training took place, but the district capitals would have been a logical choice. Cromwell sets the time of the eventual replacement of Coptic by Arabic after the 730s, though the change is not documented in Thebes. She adds that Greek was still utilized for administrative documents, at least in some regions, into the Abbasid period. She infers from this shift in the 730s a change in the fiscal system, but the nature of the change remains murky. She connects the situation to the difficulties encountered by the caliphate of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 105–125/724–743).

Scribal Practices and Literacy

The first three chapters will be of interest to anyone interested in late antique scribal practices and literacy. They reveal the fascinating mechanisms though which the literate and the illiterate functioned at the level of the village community. In a village context in which we would expect literacy levels to be the lowest, we find an impressive range of literate practices: forty-one different writers can be discerned in this dossier alone, in texts written over approximately thirty-five years, with evidence of younger scribes helping older ones, individuals developing scribal skills,[5] and simple crosses used as signatures. Cromwell paints a picture of literate groups in which professional scribes "stand in contrast to a greater abundance of writers who were less proficient. Such writers—to set them apart from scribes as a professional category—range in ability from those barely able to sign their own names to proficient writers who could write short texts, including letters, and who occur frequently as witnesses to legal documents or amanuenses signing on behalf of others" (pp. 20–21). These nonprofessional writers included two women.

Chapter 1 ends with an overview of the identification of scribes in Theban texts. It reveals that professional scribes were not identified by specific titles, though such titles appear for other individuals (Greek: *grammateus*, *logographos*, *nomikos*, *notarios*; Coptic: *sach*, *sacho*). The most technical portions of the book are chapter 2, "Building Aristophanes' Dossier," and chapter 3, "Putting Pen on

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5. Isaac son of Constantine went "from barely able to write his name to being able to write longer statements for others as well and for himself" (p. 48).

Papyrus: Scribal Practices and Processes." They show how texts from Djeme can be assigned to Aristophanes and conclude that 142 texts were written in his hand, some of them featuring his name as witness or amanuensis. He acted as both an official and a private scribe: of his writings, 115 documents are connected to taxation (106 tax receipts, a few tax demands, protection passes, a travel permit, and a tax agreement), while others are private documents (deeds of sale, dispute settlements, donations of children, property parcels, lists, and a few texts harder to characterize). A total of 120 texts are straightforwardly signed by Aristophanes, and 22 others are assigned to his hand. Cromwell provides a careful demonstration for this last group, stressing that texts cannot be connected to Aristophanes based on a single criterion, such as the context of the document or linguistic features and paleography, and she notes that paleographical similarities can be highly subjective, sometimes present only in the eyes of the papyrologist. This is why she presents the 22 texts without signature—or where the signature is lost in fragmentary documents—together. The text is here punctuated by several illustrations showing Aristophanes's hand. The evidence indicates that individuals and families in Djeme requested the expertise of various scribes. Aristophanes did not hold a monopoly on literacy for certain parts of the village or for certain types of document (see p. 36: four scribes writing for a single family).

The dating of the corpus and of the individual texts is also addressed in Chapter 2. Cromwell utilizes three dating systems. The most common is the indiction system, as is usual for fiscal documents; otherwise, the Era of the Martyrs and Hijri systems each appear once. Here, again, Cromwell is careful in assigning dates to problematic documents, which are presented consecutively. She establishes a new chronology for the dossier with absolute dates between 724 and 758, correcting a good number of previous datings established largely by Walter Till.[6]

The most innovative part of Cromwell's approach is tracking the effect of old age on Aristophanes's writing in the 750s: the tracing of letters becomes clumsy, the ink pressure varies, and he displays difficulties in maintaining a straight line. Some of his late documents are even corrected by another scribe. These texts can nonetheless be attributed to Aristophanes either because he signed them or because his hand is still recognizable in the form of individual letters and especially of ligatures. Cromwell identifies a document that was written by another scribe, possibly under Aristophanes's guidance, and only the signature is in Aristophanes's hand. Information on old age and the ensuing need for corrections is scattered across Chapters 2 and 3 and could have been consolidated.

Chapter 2 ends with a consideration of dossiers and archives. The documents relating to Aristophanes are compiled as a dossier. They were not archived together by him or anyone else, and they were not his personal papers. In one he appears only as the seller of a parcel of land; this text seems to have been archived by the buyer. The discovery of these texts is not documented in archaeological records, and

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6. Walter C. Till, *Die koptischen Rechtsurkunden aus Theben* (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus Nachf, 1964).

we cannot infer anything of their original arrangement in the absence of accounts of their discovery. Acquisition records, however, prove useful. A few sentences in the texts also allow us to reconstruct some of the archival practices in the village and the surrounding monasteries. Older deeds of sale are mentioned in new ones and were certainly kept by individual families. Documents of child donation were kept in the *bibliotêkê* of the monastery of Apa Phoibammon, though it is not clear what exactly this meant. Overall, half of Aristophanes's dossier can be attached to a private or monastic archive. Private archives are presented together in a single section. These relate to an individual or to an entire family; approximately ten texts can be linked to each on the basis of the content of the documents and their acquisition history.

In Chapter 3, Cromwell focuses on Aristophanes's writing style, which differed among the types of documents and between his writing of Coptic and Greek. Just as Aristophanes appears as a witness, amanuensis, or signatory in documents that were written in the hands of others, references to other individuals commonly appear in his writings. Some of these other people are identified by their titles (*dioiketes*, *lashane*—two titles for village officials—or deacon). Cromwell confirms that status and literacy were not systematically connected in Late Antiquity, giving the example of a *dioiketes* who could not write his own witness statement.

Microhistory

Chapter 6, "Aristophanes' Personal and Professional Lives," reconstructs the stages of Aristophanes' career, his neighborhood,

and his family. Cromwell demonstrates the difficulty of assessing what is in a name. Since Aristophanes's father's name, Johannes, is extremely common, it is difficult to ascertain who he was in the long list of homonyms attested in the village. She makes a strong case, however, for the identification of Aristophanes's brother, Johannake son of Johannes. Despite the very common patronymic, her argument is based on property acquisitions and similarity in scribal training. She also identifies a student of Aristophanes to whom he taught the writing of legal texts, using the social context of their respective documents and their chronology, paleography, and formularies.

In Chapter 5, "Recording Private Lives," Cromwell reconstructs neighborhood life using about thirty documents that Aristophanes wrote concerning personal property (houses, courtyards, land, dress, equipment, marriage gifts) and money. These texts were written for the transactions and legal issues of the wealthiest of the village. Large amounts of money are at stake (between one and twelve *holokottinoi*, or gold coins; see table 5.1, p. 147), which justifies the drawing up of a document by a professional scribe. On the other side of the spectrum, texts were also written for the transactions of those who were possibly among the poorest, though their status is difficult to establish: Aristophanes is the scribe of three documents of child donation out of the twenty-five such documents known for eighth-century Djeme, mostly from the 760s and 770s. Young boys were donated to the monastery of Apa Phoibammon, built on the ruins of the temple of Hatshepsut in Deir el Bahari, to serve the monastery, but

they were not destined to become monks.[7] Cromwell shows that the monastery could not act as the issuing authority for donation documents or travel permits. Monks needed to go to the village for an administrative scribe such as Aristophanes to write a petition to the *amīr* for them.

As for immovable property, Aristophanes's dossier shows that houses or even rooms within houses were legally divided between members of the same family, multiple houses shared the same front courtyard, and streets in Djeme were named (Culol Street, People of Pshumare Street, Palikene Street). The sale of a loom reached the considerable sum of one *holokottinos*, certainly because it was a source of income. Two *holokottinoi* were loaned for the purchase of a house. Scandalous affairs were brought before the *amīr* in the local capital when 10 2/3 *holokottinoi* were stolen from a house. These documents systematically involve women as share owners, buyers, sellers, or thieves.

Texts drawn up by Aristophanes mostly belong wider personal archives such as that of Aaron son of Shenoute, "the most prolific property buyer in the records from Djeme" (p. 135), with nine sale documents and a testament. The descriptions of the properties sold also show that Aristophanes was the neighbor of some of his clients. Transactions took place only in the village and with the surrounding monasteries of Apa Phoibammon and Apa Paul. The inhabitants of Djeme did not seem to invest outside of the immediate surroundings.

Conclusion

Cromwell's book is punctuated by very useful heuristic tools for the specialized and the nonspecialized reader alike: there are numerous lists and tables of documents and, most importantly, an initial aid for the reader on dating systems, technical terms, and papyrological conventions. Appendices comprise high-quality images of ten ostraca, a catalogue of Aristophanes's texts (p. 142) and of six others in which he acted as amanuensis, new editions of ten ostraca, tables with information gleaned from tax receipts, and corrections to published texts. The final index is rather short. For instance, it does not include personal names.

In all, Cromwell masters the art of reading and studying ancient texts, overlooking no aspect of the scribal process (formulary, various handwritings, effects of old age, use of Greek and Coptic). She analyzes texts as objects that were handled by different people, stored, disregarded, rediscovered, and sold, and she tracks down the acquisition history of documents using the methodology of museum archaeology established by Sarah Clackson.[8] A strong case is made in this

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7. Arietta Papaconstantinou has shown that these documents allow us to reconstruct the pressure the monasteries put on the Christian population to elicit such donations at a time when the new fiscal burden imposed by the Umayyad administration was causing increased economic difficulties for monasteries: "Theia Oikonomia: Les actes thébains de donation d'enfants ou la gestion monastique de la pénurie," *Travaux et mémoires* 14 (2002): 511–526.

8. Sarah J. Clackson, "Museum Archaeology and Coptic Papyrology: The Bawit Papyri," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium*, Vol. 1, *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August–2 September 2000*, ed. Matt Immerzeel and Jacques Van der Vliet, 477–490 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).

book for attention to detail when it comes to ancient documents, and the wealth of information that Cromwell extracts from a restricted number of texts is astonishing. The added value of this research is that it also firmly establishes the documents of Djeme as a corpus for the study of the early Islamic period that ought not escape the attention of historians of that period, thanks to the title on the cover and the focus in several chapters on administration and the payment of the poll tax. The book places a spotlight on the rich contribution of Coptic documents to the history of early Islamic Egypt, a contribution that has been clouded by a narrative of Marwanid reform that considers only the highest levels of the administrative hierarchy. Cromwell expertly achieves the critical balance of being thought-provoking for specialists in Coptic papyrology while remaining accessible to the wider research community and students of Late Antiquity. This book is a must-read for scholars and students interested in early Islamic Egypt and late antique history.

Book Review

Mathieu Tillier, *L'invention du cadi: La justice des Musulmans, des Juifs et des Chrétiens aux premiers siècles de l'Islam*. Bibliothèque historique des pays d'Islam, 10 (Paris: Sorbonne, 2017), 704 pp. ISBN 979-10-351-0000-1. Price: €45 (cloth).

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In this substantial tome, Mathieu Tillier provides an exhaustively researched, carefully argued discussion of the origins of the Islamic office of *qāḍī*. His earlier work, *Les cadis d'Iraq et l'État abbasside*, focused exclusively on Abbasid *qāḍī*s. Here, Tillier delves into the more ambiguous and less well-documented Rashidun and Umayyad periods, on which, as he acknowledges, the available sources are few and (at best) problematic. Tillier eschews discussion of the political aspects of the *qāḍī*ship, about which anecdotes are more abundant, choosing instead to focus on judicial procedures and institutional structures, such as they were. As Tillier notes, details about these more mundane but ultimately important matters appear rarely in the narrative and biographical sources. Although later legal manuals discuss legal procedures more extensively (some might say ad nauseam), these are plagued by back-projections, creating illusions of continuity between later Abbasid practice and early Islamic precedents. Tillier is quite aware of the hazards and is generally cautious in his reading of the sources, inserting all of the necessary caveats along the way.

In an effort to elude the pitfalls the sources impose, Tillier augments the narrative and legal sources with a careful study of legal papyri, arguably the only truly primary source available. Tillier was able to identify thirty-eight papyri dealing with legal procedures in the collections catalogued in the Arabic Papyrology Database (https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp). Of these, thirty-five originate from Egypt, while the remaining three are from Palestine. The small number and limited geographic distribution of the papyri are problematic, as Tillier acknowledges. Moreover, their usefulness for verifying or challenging later narrative sources is diminished by the fact that they originate in places about which written sources are largely silent. Despite these difficulties, Tillier carefully avoids reading too much

into limited, sometimes cryptic documents but is still able to glean a surprising amount of useful data from the papyri.

Tillier presents evidence of at least a rudimentary legal structure in which the governor is the ultimate legal authority. He also shows that local Christian authorities played a central role in dispensing justice, but that their role diminished over time. He also notes that later papyri included more Islamic vocabulary, though references to the Quran were only implicit. While a hierarchy of authority is evident in the papyri, they reveal less about actual procedures. Letters from governors to local authorities do not include details of the cases being litigated or even indicate whether the governor's involvement took place at an early stage or was the result of protests or appeals against local rulings. Even letters commanding witnesses to appear offer no clear indication of the witnesses' role in the proceedings, nor do they specify whether the summoned individuals were in fact witnesses or the actual litigants. Given the brevity of the documents and their lack of context, none of this is surprising. The most curious finding, which adds support to Tillier's overall thesis, is that the title of *qāḍī* does not appear in pre-Abbasid papyri.

In the second part of the work, having extracted as much evidence as possible from the papyri, Tillier turns to the literary/narrative sources with which most specialists are more familiar. He acknowledges and discusses the limitations from which such sources suffer, particularly their tendency toward legendary accretions about particular *qāḍī*s and back-projection of later practices. His focus on procedures makes the former

issue less prevalent, though it perhaps exacerbates the latter.

Tillier addresses a variety of aspects of legal procedure, focusing primarily on the functioning of judicial audiences or hearings. He offers descriptions of the location, spatial dynamics, and staffing of the *qāḍī*'s tribunals, noting how these aspects appear to have evolved over time. Tillier uncovers a surprising array of details about the treatment and scrutiny of various types of evidence and legal proofs. Specifically, he describes procedures related to witness testimony, the scrutiny of witnesses' veracity, and the number of witnesses required (or allowed) to testify. He describes the various uses to which oaths were put and the many combinations of witness testimony and oaths noted in the sources. Tillier also addresses the occasional appearance of "expert" testimony and its significance, as well as the uneven admission of written material. He notes differences in local practice and a long-term trend toward stricter, more formal rules of evidence. His analysis draws heavily on biographical anecdotes and *akhbār al-qāḍī* works, as well as on later legal manuals, especially that of the Ḥanafī scholar al-Khaṣṣāf (d. 261/874).

The third part of the work examines other legal institutions with which early Islamic justice coexisted and which, to an extent, shaped the context of its evolution. Tillier begins with a general explanation of the prevailing legal systems in pre-Islamic times, contrasting the Sasanian and Eastern Roman legal landscapes while also describing the rudimentary system of justice in the Arabian Peninsula. He then turns to the impact Islamic expansion had on non-Muslim communities' systems

of justice. Although minority religious communities had a degree of legal authority under both the Sasanians and Byzantines, the Islamic empire granted them a higher degree of judicial autonomy and eventually formalized *dhimmī* communities' spheres of influence. Tillier describes the minimal impact the change of regime had on Jewish law, arguing that the community already had a sophisticated legal system and was accustomed to functioning as a relatively isolated, autonomous minority community. For Christians, the impact was more substantial and was marked by distinctions between the Eastern and Western Syriac communities that resulted from their contrasting imperial status before Islam. Tillier describes how each of these communities handled judicial hearings, witnesses, and other procedures, illustrating similarities to and differences from the emerging Islamic system while also underscoring the subtle changes these communities implemented in response to their new circumstances.

Based on his analysis, Tillier draws a number of significant conclusions. He argues persuasively that the office of *qāḍī*, its procedures, and the parameters of its authority developed later than the narrative sources suggest and that the *qāḍī*ship was not particularly relevant or defined until the Marwānid period. He also emphasizes that early Islamic society accommodated multiple dispensers of justice, including especially governors and existing Christian arbiters. Tillier convincingly refutes the theory advanced by Hallaq, Simonsohn, and others that the *qāḍī*ship had its origins in the vaguely defined pre-Islamic Arabian office of *ḥākim*, emphasizing the distinction between the *ḥākim*'s role as a mediator

and the *qāḍī*'s ability to declare judgment. He also rejects Schacht's widely accepted regional-school paradigm, pointing to more localized distinctions and correctly noting that any image of unity in places such as Iraq, or even more narrowly in Kufa or Basra, is a later myth. Tillier takes a cautious stand regarding the influence of earlier legal practices on emerging Islamic justice. He notes similarities between some Islamic and Byzantine practices and evidence of interaction and perhaps influence between Islamic, Christian, and Jewish legal procedures, but does not go so far as to suggest direct borrowing. Tillier's cautious approach is to be appreciated. Where he does make bold conclusions, they are defensible. Where he hesitates, he demonstrates recognition of the limitations the evidence imposes.

In this work, Tillier has examined copious sources and has gleaned a surprising level of detail from sources that tend to resist such harvesting. At times he has cast his net a bit broadly. For instance, although it is interesting to explore Zaydi and Shiʿi literature on the *qāḍī*ship, these communities' procedures must be seen as purely hypothetical, even speculative, given their inability to appoint *qāḍī*s during the period in question. While Tillier is careful in his use of sources, nagging questions remain. The papyri are few and have narrow geographical origins, raising questions about whether they can be considered representative and precluding their use for larger regional comparative analysis. Tillier notes the possibility that many of the anecdotes about certain *qāḍī*s, such as Shurayḥ b. al-Ḥārith and Iyās b. Muʿāwiya, are exaggerated or legendary, yet they still form the basis for significant parts of his analysis. The image

of earlier times presented in the later Ḥanafī legal works Tillier cites also merits skepticism. Tillier generally includes the necessary caveats and approaches these sources with caution. However, the difficulties the sources present remain. Perhaps they are ultimately intractable.

Tillier's focus on the Umayyad era as a crucial phase of legal and institutional development is welcome, as is his recognition of continuities between the Umayyad and Abbasid eras. However, his decision to focus exclusively on procedure and institutional developments and to largely ignore the political environment, while understandable, is also potentially limiting. Tillier argues that the second half of the Umayyad period and the transition to Abbasid rule saw substantial procedural and institutional development and standardization. Such transformations require a high degree of political stability and rulers' support. Unfortunately, the lack of any significant evidence (papyrological, narrative, or otherwise) on the functioning of the judiciary in the Umayyad imperial capital of Damascus makes it especially difficult to determine the extent of caliphal involvement. However, it is clear that at times the Umayyads could provide support, but often they could not. The turmoil of the last decade of Umayyad rule cannot have been conducive to bureaucratic and institutional advances.

This reality should not be ignored. It is quite possible that the growing importance of the *qāḍī* reflected his status as the last bastion of stability in a polity crumbling into factions. Political turmoil might also suggest alternative explanations for some of the changes Tillier documents. For instance, the growing importance of the mosque as the *qāḍī*'s venue, which Tillier attributes principally to a growing separation between Islam and other faiths, may also reflect the status of the mosque as a refuge from the chaos in the streets. Similarly, the more frequent mention of guards accompanying the *qāḍī* may reflect considerations that are less ceremonial than pragmatic in troubled times.

The questions raised here should not detract from Tillier's achievement. Indeed, they may be impossible to answer, barring the appearance of additional sources. Tillier has examined a great deal of material carefully and cautiously and has made great strides in explaining the emergence of the office of *qāḍī*. Unfortunately, this review cannot touch on all of the many interesting and important details he includes in this comprehensive work. Combined with his earlier work on Abbasid *qāḍī*s, *L'invention du cadi* clearly establishes Tillier as the leading contemporary scholar on Islamic *qāḍī*s and as a worthy successor to Emile Tyan in this regard.

Book Review

Hans-Peter Pökel, *Der unmännliche Mann: Zur Figuration des Eunuchen im Werk von al-Ǧāḥiẓ (gest. 869)*. Mitteilungen zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der islamischen Welt, 36 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2014). ISNB 978-3956500282. 390 pp. €48.

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There seems to be no end to the scholarly fascination with al-Jāḥiẓ. The book under review attests to that, as it is one of several recent studies devoted to this author.[1] Hans-Peter Pökel's 2014 monograph is centered on al-Jāḥiẓ's treatment of eunuchs, the "unmanly man" (*der unmännliche Mann*) to whom the title refers, paying special—though not exclusive—attention to al-Jāḥiẓ's magnum opus, the *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (The book of living beings).

For an author captivated by the infinite wonders of God's creation, it does not come as a surprise that al-Jāḥiẓ, in addition to analyzing men and women, horses and donkeys, wolves, cocks, dogs, phoenixes, ants, flies, bees, and other creepy-crawlies, devoted many pages of his *K. al-Ḥayawān* to the physical and ethical characteristics of eunuchs. Despite the Islamic condemnation of castration, eunuchs have always been present in premodern Islamic societies, most often as holders of important positions at the court. The historical and social relevance of eunuchs in Islam has been well known since Ayalon's pioneering research on the "eunuch institution,"[2] which paved the way for further studies, including this one. But this book is not only a work of social history. Pökel's main interest is to explore the relationship between body and sexual identity in the formative period of Islam in the light of al-Jāḥiẓ's understanding of animal and human nature; in this regard, this study is also an example of the intellectual history of gender.

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1. At least two other monographs have been published recently: Thomas Hefter, *The Reader in al-Jāḥiẓ* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); and James E. Montgomery, *Al-Jāḥiẓ: In Praise of Books* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), which will be accompanied by a second volume entitled *Al-Jāḥiẓ: In Censure of Books*.

2. David Ayalon, *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Hebrew University, 1999).

In the introductory first chapter, Pökel discusses the methodological principles that guide his analysis of al-Jāḥiẓ's texts and his research on eunuchs. For Pökel, a proper understanding of the relationship between gender and body should take into account, on the one hand, the Greek and late antique theories of humoral pathology that informed Abbasid notions of human nature and their discourses on the body (*Körperdiskurse*), and, on the other hand, the moral implications that result from this conceptualization, since these shape contemporary conceptions of love and sexuality and even core principles of Arab societies such as *murūʾa.*

In chapter 2, Pökel reviews the figure of al-Jāḥiẓ and surveys the corpus of Jāḥizian works on which he bases his study. The most important of them is, of course, the *K. al-Ḥayawān*, which is discussed vis-à-vis Aristotle's *Opus Animalium.* Pökel also lists other works that deal—sometimes only tangentially—with the nature of eunuchs, gender, humoral theory, or manly virtue, namely, *K. al-Bighāl, K. al-Muʿallimīn, K. al-Radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā, K. al-Nisāʾ, Risālat al-qiyān, K. Fakhr al-sudān ʿalā al-bīḍān, K. al-Tabaṣṣur bi-l-tijāra, Manāqib al-Turk, K. al-Ḥijāb, Risāla fī al-nābita, Maqālat al-ʿUthmāniyya,* and *K. Kitmān al-sirr.*

Chapter 3, which opens with a general overview of slavery in Late Antiquity and early Islam, is centered on the eunuch body and its modification. Pökel provides here a detailed discussion of the castration techniques that al-Jāḥiẓ describes in intricate detail in his *K. al-Ḥayawān* and that might involve surgical excision (*khiṣāʾ,* gonadectomy, and *jibāb,* penectomy) or contusions that result in testicular atrophy (*wijāʾ,* the Latin *ablatio*). Chapter 4 is focused on the physical consequences of castration as understood by al-Jāḥiẓ and his contemporaries. In this chapter, Pökel surveys the physiological principles that framed the Abbasid understanding of human nature, paying special attention to the Aristotelian tradition and the Galenic synthesis of humoral theory. Because of their relevance for the study of eunuchs, Greek theories on the production of semen are discussed at length. Al-Jāḥiẓ, who traces the origin of castration back to Byzantium (*Ḥayawān*, 1.125), denounces the practice in the context of his polemics against Christians.

Chapter 5 explores this accusation and the treatment of eunuchs in Islam vis-à-vis Roman, Byzantine, and early Christian attitudes toward castration, the loss of manliness, and the protection of the body's integrity. One of the examples treated in this section is that of the famous Origen of Alexandria, who allegedly castrated himself and whose legend seems to have been known to al-Jāḥiẓ. Chapter 6 continues this inquiry into the religious and moral implications of manhood and manliness by problematizing the relationship between emasculation and asceticism, but it soon evolves into a lengthy discussion of sexual preferences and gender identity. In this chapter, which contains the most theoretical sections of the book, Pökel discusses the emotions and "unmanly sexuality" of eunuchs, their contrasts with heterosexual and homosexual models, and the treatment of these problems in an Islamic context.

Chapter 7 centers on the ethnicity of the eunuchs, mostly Slavs (*ṣaqāliba*) and Black Africans (*sūdān*), and the implications that geographical determinism and ethnic stereotypes have for al-Jāḥiẓ's typologies. The eighth and final chapter deals only

occasionally with al-Jāḥiẓ's texts. In it Pökel discusses the liminality of the spaces occupied by eunuchs in Abbasid society and explores the role they played at the court, especially as holders of offices (such as that of the *ḥājib*) that gave them direct access to the rulers, as harem attendants, and within the armies of the caliphs. This chapter also contains a thoughtful critique of the conceptualization of harems in Orientalist scholarship and its reduction of the figure of the eunuch to a mere harem servant.

This brief summary has hopefully made clear the ambitious scope of Pökel's thorough and well-researched study. It embodies, without doubt, the most illuminating approach to the figure of the eunuch in the first centuries of Islam, and it also constitutes a valuable contribution to the study of al-Jāḥiẓ; in the latter regard, Pökel's research on the influence of humoral theory and dietetics in the Jāḥiẓian understanding of human nature is particularly insightful. The difficulties of al-Jāḥiẓ's meandering prose are also solved competently and, apart from minor mistakes, Pökel's translation is reliable.

The centrality of al-Jāḥiẓ in the study, however, is not always evident. The sources used in the book are reviewed in chapter 2, and Pökel devotes several pages to the most important of them, *K. al-Ḥayawān*, but he does not say much about how al-Jāḥiẓ conceived of the long section on eunuchs in his work (*K. al-Ḥayawān*, 1:106–181) or about how the section is connected with the rest of the chapters. Finding the underlying logic of the *K. al-Ḥayawān* is not an easy task, as James Montgomery's recent book on the work shows, and the section on eunuchs is a quintessentially Jāḥiẓian example of apparently digressive

prose. Pökel methodically discusses all the questions tackled by al-Jāḥiẓ, but it would have been useful for the reader to have a detailed inventory of the topics and themes that al-Jāḥiẓ addresses in these pages, which include, alongside the consequences of castration in humans and animals, digressions on horse-breeding, the differences between domestic and wild animals, and the nature of the giraffe. The relationship of this section with the rest of the *K. al-Ḥayawān* and with the *K. al-Bighāl* also deserves more attention, since the unnamed addressee lambasted by al-Jāḥiẓ in the introduction had critical opinions about hybrid categories and interbreeding (*Ḥayawān*, 1:102–106), which are the main topic of al-Jāḥiẓ's book on mules.

Pökel is, however, very careful when it comes to contextualizing the physiological notions that underlie al-Jāḥiẓ's discussion of human nature in the *K. al-Ḥayawān*. Al-Jāḥiẓ's acquaintance with Aristotle's *Opus Animalium* and Galen's humoral theories is addressed in various instances, and Pökel is right to stress the importance of understanding these influences in the context of the late antique tradition. But the way in which al-Jāḥiẓ has become familiar with this legacy is an entirely different matter. Al-Jāḥiẓ's elaborate paraphrases often render the exact identification of his sources a rather difficult—if not impossible—task. The Greek origin of the philosophical and medical ideas discussed in the *K. al-Ḥayawān* is evident, as is the weight of Aristotle's works on animals, but Pökel's insistence on the late antique context sometimes contributes to obscuring relevant aspects of the study of al-Jāḥiẓ's reception of the Greek tradition. If we look at the indexes of the Aristotelian and Galenic corpora, we

find, in fact, very few mentions of eunuchs in their works. By contrast, eunuchs seem to have held a particular fascination for Abbasid scholars, so much so that they made their way into Arabic translations of Aristotelian works that in their original versions made no mention of eunuchs at all. The Arabic translation/adaptation of the *Parva Naturalia* is a good example, for it includes discussions on eunuchs that are not present in the original Greek. Eunuchs are even more relevant in the *Problemata* tradition, which Pökel does not discuss. The *Problemata Physica Arabica* contain questions concerning eunuchs' sexual desire (v, 3), their change toward a female nature (xi, 34), the occurrence of gout (xi, 35) and sores (xi, 40) in eunuchs, and the tone of their voice (xii, 16);[3] the *Problemata Arabica Inedita* include three further questions on eunuchs, two of which address the differences between the *khaṣī* and the *khādim*.[4] The reception of the Aristotelian *Problemata* by al-Jāḥiẓ and, in general, by the Basran Muʿtazila is a complicated matter that awaits further research, but I cannot help but wonder whether many of the notions and argumentations that we can read in the *K. al-Ḥayawān* might not have come, in fact, from this tradition.

These remarks, however, should not distract from the importance of Pökel's study. This book is a masterly contribution to the scholarship on al-Jāḥiẓ and on the history of sexuality that will be of interest not only to specialists on the Islamic world but also to scholars working on Late Antiquity, comparative history, and gender studies.

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3. See Lou S. Filius (ed. and trans.), *The Problemata Physica Attributed to Aristotle: The Arabic Version of Ḥunain ibn Isḥāq and the Hebrew Version of Moses ibn Tibbon* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

4. Lou S. Filius, "The Genre *Problemata* in Arabic: Its Motions and Changes," in *Aristotle's Problemata in Different Times and Tongues*, ed. Pieter De Leemans and Michèle Goyens, 33–54 (Leuven: University Press, 2006), 46–47.

Book Review

Scott Savran, *Arabs and Iranians in the Islamic Conquest Narrative: Memory and Identity Construction in Islamic Historiography, 750–1050*. Culture and Civilization in the Middle East, 57 (London: Routledge, 2018), x + 248 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-74968-8. Price: $145 (cloth).

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The last decade has seen a considerable increase in studies focusing on the issues of identity and identity formation in the early Islamic period. To this valuable and growing number of studies, we can add Scott Savran's *Arabs and Iranians in the Islamic Conquest Narrative*. It is important to note that Savran defines the Islamic conquest narrative in a broader than usual way. Rather than simply concentrating on the Arab-Islamic conquests themselves, the book dedicates the bulk of its attention to the pre-Islamic past and the buildup to the first/seventh-century conquests through a focus on the Sasanian state. The modern analysis of the events sees the movement begin late in the career of the Prophet Muḥammad. Although there is often a discussion of the late antique milieu in which the conquests began and the long-standing conflict between the Roman/Byzantine and Sasanian Empires, the spotlight has been firmly on the first–second/seventh–eighth centuries.[1] Many of our surviving sources, however, are written centuries after the events they purport to describe and do not begin their historical recollection with Muḥammad alone. Instead, a large number of Arabic and Persian sources also recall the pre-Islamic period and highlight the inevitability of the conquerors' success over the Sasanians. They reflect on Sasanian rule and the foreshadowing of what was to come following the rise of Muḥammad's community. Yet this material is often omitted from modern reconstructions, and Savran seeks to place the period of the conquests themselves

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1. See, for instance, the coverage of the conquests in Robert G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests: How the Spread of Islam Changed the World We Live In* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2007); and Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

within this wider recollection of events. He puts forth the idea of two distinct phases of Islamic historiography that are identifiable in the surviving sources from the period between 132 and 442 AH/750 and 1050 CE, a notion that fits in well with the recent work of Sarah Bowen Savant.[2] He ultimately argues that in this wider Islamic conquest narrative, Iran and the Persians were cast as part of a salvific process. In this story, Iran needed to fall to the Arab-Islamic conquerors before it could rise, as God had intended, in an "enlightened Islamic form"; it underwent a process of defeat and the cleansing of hubris that strengthened the greater whole.

The introduction and chapter 2 provide a strong theoretical framework for the larger issues of identity construction and collective memory that the book tackles. Additionally, there is a detailed contextual discussion of the Persian-influenced court culture of the Abbasid state and the shift it reflected against the earlier *akhbāriyyūn* and their focus on justifying the rise of the Arabs over the non-Arabs (*ʿajam*). Initially, in the first phase of this two-phase process, we find accounts that promoted a unified and noble Arab identity even during the *jāhiliyya*, and the Iranians depicted in these sources serve as little more than foils to further highlight the positive qualities of the Bedouin and the inevitability of their success. In the second phase, later Iranian-descended writers combined these traditions with the material of the Sasanian royal chronicles to highlight how the depravity of their ruling ancestors led to their demise "in order that [Iran] might be purified of the imperial arrogance

which had marred the Sasanians" (p. 26). As Savran argues, the "Arab versus *ʿajam*" literary discourse thus played out through an evolving narrative that saw Iran ultimately reborn in a stronger Islamic context and in which the Iranians were one of the primary audiences of the texts rather than the subject alone.

From chapter 3 onward, Savran traces these two phases chronologically through the Islamic historical record, utilizing a wide variety of sources in both Arabic and Persian. He begins with the first instances of interaction between the Arabs and the Persians in the narrative sources, with particular emphasis on the reign of the Sasanian ruler Shāpūr II. He highlights the discrepancy between the harshness of Shāpūr's punishment of Arab transgressions and the overall positive recollection of his reign. Two reports of Shāpūr's interaction with selfless Arab elders provide "a kerygmatic conversation between representatives of Arab and Persian civilization" (p. 67); Shāpūr reveals a prophecy that the Arabs would come to rule over the Persians, and the severity of his retaliation against the Arab raiders is aimed at preventing this outcome. Savran then moves into the fifth century CE, with a discussion of the Lakhmids of al-Ḥīra and of the ways in which the rearing of the legendary Sasanian ruler Bahrām Gūr by these Arabs contributed to his positive qualities as reflected in the sources. It is through the figure of Bahrām, Savran contends, that "the destinies of the Arabs and Sasanians... begin to converge" (p. 91). He continues by discussing the defeat of the later ruler Pīrūz by a central

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2. Sarah Bowen Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Asian confederation, which served as a forewarning of the vulnerability of the Sasanians to a smaller force—like the Arabs—that occupied a moral high ground. Moving into the sixth century, the focus shifts to Khusraw Anūshirwān's reign, which tends to receive noticeably more coverage in early Arabic sources than do the reigns of other Sasanian rulers. This discussion furnishes an opportunity for Savran to introduce the "audience trope" that is such an integral part of the depiction of the Sasanians in Islamic sources (and a key part of the book's final three chapters). Here, he considers multiple instances in which Arab emissaries arrive to the court of the Sasanians for an audience with the *shāhānshāh*. The Arab dignitaries resist the pomp of the court and the disdain of the Bedouin on behalf of the Persians, and the Arabs grow in standing as time (and each chapter) passes, first in the form of the Yemenis, then as the Lakhmids, and finally, as the Arab Muslims on the eve of the Battle of al-Qādisiyya. Savran articulates the differences in the appearances, characteristics, and attitudes of these Arab emissaries at the times of Anūshirwān, Parvīz, and Yazdagird and the literary role these accounts play in the Arab-versus-ʿ*ajam* theme.

It is only the final chapter that concerns the Islamic period proper, addressing the Arab-Muslim victory over the Sasanians and the replacement of the dynasty. This is also the chapter that is the most limited in its conclusions. Many of the narrations discussed here—including the qualities of the Persian Salmān al-Fārisī (the Companion of Muḥammad) and the decisive Battle of al-Qādisiyya—are more than competently discussed. They have already been thoroughly covered in recent years, however, by Savant (rightly relied upon by Savran throughout the book) and Gershon Lewental.[3]

This widening of the definition of "Islamic conquest narrative" makes Savran's work unique in the field of early Islamic historiographical studies, and it is where the greatest value in his work lies. Savran builds on the scholarship of people such as Albrecht Noth, Lawrence Conrad, and Tayeb El-Hibri, who have previously reviewed the later narrative sources' depiction of the foundational period of Islamic history in order to identify a literary editorial process at work.[4] Savran continues this approach in convincing ways by looking beyond the Abbasid, Umayyad, and *Rāshidūn* periods to apply this analysis to the pre-Islamic era. In the process, he integrates this earlier era more fully into the wider arc of the Arab-Islamic conquests. He treats the entire narrative as a literary-historical process whose earlier content should not be passed over in our modern analyses, but rather, should be more fully appreciated as part of the wider recounting of Abbasid-era authors. Through such an approach, this material is intricately linked to the Abbasid context in which earlier accounts were being compiled, redacted, and

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3. Savant, *New Muslims*; D. Gershon Lewental, "Qādisiyyah, Then and Now: A Case Study of History and Memory, Religion, and Nationalism in Middle Eastern Discourse" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 2011).

4. Albrecht Noth and Lawrence Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1994); Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); and Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

published in an intentional form, and we can consequently identify more clearly the authorial processes involved in the creation of the narrative. Savran's analysis and identification of these phases of the historiographical process is compelling, and it reminds us that authors bring certain traditions together as coherent works for a reason.

This book might have benefited from a chapter that more fully addresses the challenges of early Arabic and Persian historiography. Further discussion of the limitations of identifying these two phases of writing within the historical record would have been especially useful, given how little survives in an unredacted form from the first phase. Chapter 2 serves as a very useful thematic and contextual overview, but there are only some three pages dedicated to direct discussion of the sources in the introduction (pp. 14–17) with a brief return to the infamous *akhbārī* Sayf b. ʿUmar in chapter 7 (pp. 161–162). In a book that is so focused on the issues of memory and almost exclusively on the historiographical tradition, this would have been a valuable opportunity for expansion. This is not to disparage the use of sources within the monograph, however, as the author makes excellent use of a substantial swath of both Arabic and Persian writings to considerable effect. But there are also a number of occasions on which greater analysis of the transmission of and variation in the accounts used would

have been meaningful for the reader. For instance, in discussing accounts of the Yemeni Arabs' coming to Khusraw for aid against the Abyssinians (pp. 109–110), the author notes differences in the narratives of al-Ṭabarī and Balʿamī. He does not explain, however, why these differences might matter and what they might say about the form and content of these texts in comparison to one another. Might such differences not point to underlying variations in approach or the sources that these compilers used in creating their texts and narratives? Separately, Savran does an admirable job of discussing collective memory and the significant contributions to memory studies made in recent years in the introduction, but it then largely fades into the background for the rest of the book, appearing as something of an afterthought.

Our understanding of what it meant to be "Arab" or "Persian" in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods has been augmented by important new research over the last several years. The growth in studies of epigraphic evidence from Arabia and portions of the Levant continues to be hugely enlightening, and Peter Webb's recent study on the making of Arab identity has been greatly instructive, too.[5] We can confidently add *Arabs and Iranians in the Islamic Conquest Narrative* to the ongoing discourse concerning Islamic identity formation and early Islamic historiography more generally.

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5. Peter Webb, *Imaging the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

Book Review

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In one of his many indispensable observations about the development of premodern Arabic poetry's genres and themes, Adam Talib states that litterateurs "documented, parodied, celebrated, repurposed, and recast [...] tropes constantly over more than a millennium and every literary sophisticate was expected to have a comprehensive knowledge of these tropes" (p. 77). And so, I hope it will be taken as a mark of formal knowledge and not of unoriginality when I begin this review by saying that Talib has given the field an important volume in *How Do You Say "Epigram" in Arabic? Literary History at the Limits of Comparison.* In the book, he shows that from approximately the seventh/thirteenth century onward, short and pithily written poems called *maqāṭīʿ* constituted a genre of poetry that had significant commonalities with the epigram—a form of short poem frequently associated with displays of arch wit or keen observation. Talib makes his case by presenting extensive paratextual

and poetic evidence. *Maqāṭīʿ* poems were not explicitly discussed as a genre by premodern literary critics. Rather, their coherence as a genre is derivable, according to Talib, from a set of readily observable factors: in a significant number of anthologies from the period under consideration, sections dedicated to *maqāṭīʿ* by name abound, and the poems within them all share certain qualities. In addition to being short (many of two lines, some of three, and still fewer of four and up), they tend to focus on a single theme—though the theme may vary wildly, as discussed below. Many also end with a pointed finale that engages in double entendre (*tawriya*), a shared reference, or what we might call an inside joke.

The book is divided into two large sections. The first part, "On Wholeness," consists of two chapters and presents textual evidence to argue for the status of the *maqṭūʿ* (or *maqṭūʿa*, pl. *maqāṭīʿ*) as a poetic genre of which authors and critics were widely conscious by the seventh/

thirteenth century, and through the collection of which they performed specific artistic functions. The second part, "Arabic Poetry, Greek Terminology," is divided into three further chapters, and it queries, with *maqāṭīʿ* in mind, how the term epigram has been used in Western studies of literature around the globe. In particular, it discusses how the understanding of epigrams has been animated by a few major political and scholarly trends: the privileging of Greco-Roman "classics" (in which the epigram has been defined historically by such figures as Catullus and Martial), the stacked divide between the study of *qaṣīda* and *qiṭaʿ* compositions in Arabic, and even racial theories about the lack of rationality and unity in Eastern thought. In light of all this, Talib asks, can we (or should we) use the term "epigram" to describe *maqāṭīʿ*? After all, how *do* you say epigram in Arabic? Ultimately, Talib walks us through the stakes of this question not to simply give us an answer. Rather, he makes the case for the usefulness of drawing comparisons between different genres and genre hermeneutics while underscoring the perils of doing so without a firm grounding in textual evidence, historical context, and legacies of interpretation.

Talib's preamble to the monograph outlines three "aporias"—seemingly contradictory statements that are all nonetheless valid—concerning poetry and its classification. Each of these aporias contains kernels of truth that follow the reader throughout the book. In one aporia, Talib explains that Arabic poetry simultaneously has strict rules of form and defies strict definition according to form. Though this may seem contradictory, he reminds us that Arabic poetry is "formalistically promiscuous."

Formal promiscuity is a phrase repeated often throughout the volume, and it is used to mean that any given theme can be rendered in any of the possible meters and rhymes at the poet's disposal while still being recognizable as located within a particular literary type and tradition. The other two aporias address the subjectivity of genre classification among critics and the flexibility of its uses among composers. Already in the introduction, the reader is made aware that the name assigned to a given genre can only do so much to illuminate the contents of the works that the genre subsumes. The first chapter, "A Bounding Line," then turns to the historical trajectory through which *maqāṭīʿ* poems came to prominence under a formal designation throughout the seventh/thirteenth century. In tables of contents, biographical notices, and standalone collections, authors highlighted their *maqāṭīʿ* poetry or were accorded recognition for the same. Talib amply demonstrates the term's explicit use to describe poets' talents and to define their collections, citing, for example, an eighth/fourteenth-century copy of Ibn Nubāta al-Miṣrī's *al-Qaṭr al-Nubātī* that refers to the poems as *maqāṭīʿ* in a subtitle. The "formalistic promiscuity" of the *maqāṭīʿ* is on full display in this chapter, thanks in large part to Talib's translation of the table of contents of Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī's *Dīwān al-mathālith wa-l-mathānī fī al-maʿālī wa-l-maʿānī*; the poems therein range in topic from advice on etiquette to invective and from erotic pieces to riddles, while all being (as the title implies) two or three lines in length. Al-Ḥillī's collection is also a prime example of *maqāṭīʿ* without explicit designation: there is no indication that al-Ḥillī ever used the term to describe his

collection. Therefore, not only did *maqāṭīʿ* constitute a genre in al-Ḥillī's time, but there was sufficient general awareness of the genre for it to be recognizable without certification (one need not put the word "mystery" in bold type across the cover of an Agatha Christie novel to know, through readerly intuition, that it is one). Talib does, however, identify a pattern of the term's increased usage throughout the century, saying that "later poets and anthologists were, if anything, more enthusiastic about using the term *maqāṭīʿ* to describe their work and to situate it within a flourishing genre" (p. 50). Indeed, as he argues in the second chapter, it is in a consciously situated, anthologized form that the *maqāṭīʿ* reach their apogee.

In chapter 2, "The Sum of Its Parts," Talib explains that large compendia of *maqāṭīʿ* began to be produced in the eighth/fourteenth century. Most *maqāṭīʿ* have made their way to us today in this form. Talib declares the anthology the place where *maqāṭīʿ* "come into [their] own" as a genre primarily because anthologists engage in a creative process when they curate these small poems, drawing them together or dividing them up in accordance with their own interpretations and ambitions. Of particular interest in this regard are the gestures that Talib makes toward dynamics of literary exchange in this period that foreground the appearance of *maqāṭīʿ* in these anthologies; several of the poems appear first in correspondence between authors, sometimes in ways that uncannily parallel a modern call for papers. In one instance, a group of Aleppan poets compose *maqāṭīʿ* elegizing a comely young man and then invite their Damascene colleagues to do so as well. Talib also makes passing mention of the

more spontaneous use of *maqāṭīʿ* both in musical events and in literary salons, or *majālis.* As he states, many composers of *maqāṭīʿ* during the Mamluk period were in contact with one another, and thus one can speak of a "discernible cluster" of such authors. Leading figures included the aforementioned Ibn Nubāta, al-Ṣafadī, Ibrāhīm al-Miʿmār, and Badr al-Dīn b. Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī, and these individuals are but one part of what seems to have been a far wider, networked field (p. 90). These allusions to patterns of exchange sketch a possible way in which Talib's study could be broadened further to account for the social context of the *maqāṭīʿ* and their circulation.

A key feature of this chapter is Talib's presentation of a series of artfully translated "micro-collections" found in anthologies that span the ninth/fifteenth through twelfth/eighteenth centuries. Through these, the reader can gain a sense of the aesthetic and interpretive logic behind the ordering of *maqāṭīʿ* into an anthology by examining how each piece of poetry fits with its immediate neighbors as well as with the micro-collection as a whole. The micro-collections range from one comprising poems on myrtle berries to one with more than forty poems on sex (this latter collection speaks to an apparently commonplace coincidence, namely, the use of the *maqṭūʿ* form for writing *mujūn*, or ribald verse). Read together, these poems substantiate Talib's argument that there is a significant problem with centering a definition of the *maqṭūʿ*/epigram on its "pointed" thrust, as has been done in descriptions of epigrams in Latin or Greek. The poems are densely intertextual throughout, rather than being linked with one another only through a

common terminal witticism or their single, shared theme; stock phrases, quotations, and puns echo across the different poems from beginning to end. The fact that these often playful discursive features are made so visible in the micro-collections lends credence to Talib's representation of anthologists as carefully "re-casting" *maqāṭīʿ* in an array that illuminates and entertains through the positioning of each poem in relation to the next. I was struck by the fact that Talib barely discusses the poetry's brevity as a factor in its anthological success and exchangeability. Rather, he seeks to define the *maqṭūʿ* as distinct from other types of short poem in Arabic, and this perhaps leads him to gloss over some of the ramifications of their shortness in itself. It would have been interesting to see the genre's characteristic concision discussed in the context of other works that fall under the more nebulous domain of the *qiṭʿa* (fragment, short piece) but are not classified as *maqāṭīʿ*.

Chapter 3, "Epigrams in the World," moves us from part 1 ("On Wholeness") to part 2 ("Arabic Poetry, Greek Terminology"). Per the title, Talib reviews the use of "epigram" as an orienting term for describing other types of poetry, from its earliest Greek forerunners to the Japanese tanka and haiku. Talib points out that the term "epigram" has itself undergone connotative shifts over time, moving from its original meaning of a brief inscription to that of a brief poetic composition that one would find in a codex, and developing yet further from there. Of particular interest in this chapter is the section "Epigram Goes Global," which takes an incisive look at how thirteenth-/nineteenth- and fourteenth-/twentieth-century European scholars—in

this case Japanologists—began the trend of applying the term "epigram" to short poetry encountered in other cultures, often with the result that these short poems were regarded not as full-fledged works but as fragmentary and deficient; such conclusions fit all too neatly with then-prevalent views on the inferiority of the "Eastern mind."

Chapter 4, "Hegemonic Presumptions and Atomic Fallout," shows that Arabists have historically hardly been free of similar biases about the faulty nature of non-Western verse. It takes aim in particular at the bromide that Arabic poetry, from stich to stich, is "atomistic" and discontinuous. Talib lays out the arguments both for and against the unity of Arabic poetry, as well as those for and against a scholarly search for unity. He applies these discussions to the *maqṭūʿ* because many scholars ascribe the rise of short poetic works (*qiṭaʿ*), sometimes referred to as "epigrams," to the breaking apart of classical Arabic poetry's signature form, the polythematic *qaṣīda*. This way of thinking privileges the *qaṣīda* and dooms short poems to being understood as fragmentary, which, Talib argues, has slowed the study of short poems in Arabic. He does not fully clarify the relationship of this understanding of the *qiṭʿa* to understandings of the *maqṭūʿ*, though he hints (p. 199) that a reason he refrains from comparing the *qiṭʿa* and the *maqṭūʿ* in detail is that discourse on the *qiṭʿa*, a broad category, is far more ambiguous and far-ranging than that of the *maqṭūʿ*, which is just one form of short poem. Moreover, rather than wading into theoretical arguments about generic interrelation, Talib advocates an "evidence-based" method. His evidence

drives the conclusion that using "epigram" for any *qiṭʿa* regardless of context is a misapplication that hinges on an arbitrary concern with length. Because one of the defining features of an epigram is in fact its anthological setting, the term is more appropriate to the *maqṭūʿ*. Even so, Talib expresses serious misgivings about putting the Greek (or English) before the Arabic, as is the current modus operandi of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*'s third edition. Rather, the epigram and the *maqṭūʿ* are "cognate forms," the different histories and epistemologies of which must be held in mind.

In the fifth and final chapter ("Epigrams in Parallax"), we move from the hazards of "atomic fallout" to the handy notion of "parallax," or, to paraphrase Žižek's definition as quoted in the text (p. 215), the seeming movement of an object that results from a change in perspective, which provides a novel sightline for viewing a thing. Talib explains that the new realizations brought on by the perspectival shift of parallax are analogous to the discoveries made when navigating between the abstract paradigm of genre and the concrete data provided by a single text. In this vein, he asserts throughout the concluding pages of the book that his use of the term epigram in conversation with *maqāṭīʿ* offers a relativistic interpretation rather than a prescription. His closing remarks distill a theme that has recurred throughout the book: the anxiety of naming a genre as such and thus isolating it or making it conform to a "world-literary" term without regard for context. The conclusion is followed by a useful appendix that expands on the source work done in the first chapter, offering

a number of paratextual items such as chapter headings, biographical glosses, and introductory remarks that attest to the use of the term *maqāṭīʿ* to describe various authors' and anthologists' bodies of work. Finally, Talib provides a detailed annotated bibliography of primary sources, featuring numerous unpublished manuscripts.

There is much to praise in this book's approach: the placing of literary evidence front and center, the exploration of "postclassical" works that are rarely given the same attention as, say, ʿAbbasid poetry, and the care with which Talib asserts the existence of a distinct genre while balancing the essential questions of what a genre is and how we talk about it in the first place. Also worthy of highlighting is Talib's frequent use of contemporary Arabic-language literary criticism. At times in the first half of the book, further analysis would have better demonstrated how the *maqāṭīʿ* operate as a genre; in his presentation of the micro-collections, Talib largely leaves their close interpretation to the reader. Though there is much that might appeal to a wide audience of literary comparativists in the book's second half, the initial framing renders it most likely to be read by Arabists and few others. We find in the conclusion that the starkness of the separation between the volume's two parts is intentional. The author states: "This, the first history of the *maqāṭīʿ*-genre, could have been a 'sterile historical cataloguing,' and because I know that some may have preferred that, I have tried to inoculate the first half of this study from the 'political judgment of knowledge effects produced' that permeates the second half" (p. 221). To prospective readers I will therefore simply say this: You will be worse off for

not reading and taking to heart the second half; in exemplary fashion, this portion of the book broadens a study of works in a single language into a conversation across several fields, laying bare often invisible aspects of each discipline's boundaries and tenets. To someone with literary interests outside of Arabic wishing to approach the book, I would say: read on; it will be well worth it.

Book Review

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Louis IX's crusading efforts have been a central part of his historical legacy.[1] In this meticulously researched and highly readable book, however, William Chester Jordan shifts the focus from crusade to conversion. Jordan argues convincingly that the conversion of Muslims (and, to a lesser extent, of pagans) was among the chief goals of Louis IX's thirteenth-century crusades. He situates the king's enthusiasm within the broader thirteenth-century vogue for converting both Muslims and Jews. This was a period when, for example, the newly created Dominican and Franciscan orders established convent schools to teach their friars Arabic and Hebrew. The goal was not only for the friars to preach to Jews and Muslims in Europe and abroad without needing an interpreter, but also for them to read Jewish and Islamic scripture and theology in their original languages, so that the friars might use their prospective converts' own doctrines to prove the superiority of Christianity.[2] Louis IX himself encouraged ecclesiastical efforts to convert domestic unbelievers, such as French Jews, Christian heretics, and prostitutes. But when faced with the question of whether Louis IX's evangelical efforts among Muslims actually produced converts, or what might have become of such converts after their baptisms, most historians would demur; given the limited

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1. On this subject, Jordan's own first book is still required reading: William C. Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade: A Study in Rulership* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).

2. See, for example, Robert Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Benjamin Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches Toward the Muslims* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Christoph T. Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Robin Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

documentation that survives, how could such questions be answered? Nevertheless, Jordan has answered them.

The Apple of His Eye mines thirteenth-century records to reveal that Louis IX's efforts did result in the conversion of a modest but substantial number of Muslims from North Africa and Acre. Some were captives from Louis IX's first crusade, the so-called Seventh Crusade of 1248–1254, in which the king conquered Damietta, was captured and held for ransom by the Ayyubids, and subsequently established himself in Acre, then the capital of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Other converts were residents of Acre who were attracted to Christianity by lavish royal gifts and the promise of more to come. Still others were slaves purchased by the king, to whom he promised freedom (and more material rewards) in exchange for baptism. The chronicler Geoffrey of Beaulieu proudly reports that Louis not only oversaw the conversion of "many" Muslims during his stay in Acre but promised them financial support and resettled them in France. Although at first glance this claim seems dubious—why would the king send his converts to France, and why would they agree to go?—Jordan demonstrates that Louis IX did exactly as Geoffrey reports and continued to provide for his immigrant converts out of royal funds for as long as they lived.[3]

Jordan does this largely through fiscal accounts, which show royal outlays for the maintenance of "converts from overseas" beginning in 1253. Local administrative records indicate that the converts were dispersed among the cities and towns of northern France—but, notably, only those within the royal domain. The crown's agents in those regions paid out regular sums for housing, clothing, and pensions for "Saracens converted to the Christian faith." On the basis of the numbers of convert households listed in the records, Jordan estimates that Louis IX resettled somewhat more than a thousand recently baptized people—men, women, and children—in France. This was not, in other words, a negligible group, and it could only have been the result of sustained conversionary efforts.

Needless to say, the records of Louis IX's reign have been mined for all kinds of information before now, and Jordan is not the first to have noticed references to "newly baptized" individuals. But previous scholars have assumed that the people in question were all either converted French Jews, who did suffer considerable pressure to accept baptism under Louis's regime, or, at most, orphaned Muslim infants. Jordan clearly shows that this was not the case: that there were in fact Muslim converts, that they had come from "overseas," and that they included people of all ages. He thus makes this group of people visible again in the history of France.

To demonstrate the existence of the resettled Muslim converts through references in geographically scattered records is already an achievement. But Jordan goes further, using inference and historical imagination to reconstruct the immigrants' lived experience—from their adjustment to northern winters to the sorts

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3. The book's title, a biblical phrase, was used by the chronicler William of Chartres to characterize Louis IX's attentiveness to all his subjects. Jordan adopts it to represent a key part of his argument: that Louis not only engineered the conversion of these people but also ensured financial and social support for them thereafter.

of lifestyles they might have maintained on their royal pensions. He is careful to distinguish between documentary evidence and creative induction, as well as to explain the basis for assertions that cannot be traced to the archival record. The result is a book that would make an excellent addition to a graduate syllabus in historical methodology. For example, it utilizes some of the techniques of microhistory in its approach to the converts' lives. We encounter, among others, an unmarried and newly baptized woman named Margaret, who lived in the city of Tours with her mother; Jordan suggests that her mother was physically or mentally disabled, since it was Margaret who drew the king's pension. Margaret may later have married another convert from Islam, baptized as Martin. A third Muslim convert, Dreux of Paris, received ten pounds from the king for his wedding in 1256—a rather spectacular sum, since, as Jordan points out, the pensions of converts like Margaret and Martin ranged from six to twelve pounds a year. Why was Dreux so specially favored? Jordan marshals evidence that Dreux became the king's agent, bringing royal largesse to other converts living in his region and serving in the process as a kind of walking advertisement for the opportunities available to Louis's cherished converts. But the book is not strictly a microhistory; the documentation is too spare to make that approach feasible. Instead, it draws on onomastics, environmental history, and prosopography, among other disciplines, to fill in documentary gaps. Graduate students are likely to find ample material for discussion in Jordan's blending of evidence and inference.

One of the most intriguing implications of the documents Jordan describes is that not all of the king's treasured converts bloomed where he had planted them. Some of their children seem to have struggled economically, and a few converts may have come to regret leaving their homelands. A 1260 document from Orléans notes that the number of convert households there had dropped by six; the heads of those six households, it reports, had either died or "fled." Jordan sensitively explores the reasons such converts might have had for "fleeing" (were they hoping to return to Islamic lands and resume life as Muslims? had they committed crimes for which they sought to evade justice?) and the recourses they might have found.

The Apple of His Eye is a short book, consisting of only three chapters with an introduction and an epilogue. The introduction establishes the thirteenth-century context for Louis IX's conversion program—one in which the Latin Church had grown steadily more interested in efforts to convert both Muslims and Jews to Christianity. Chapter 1, "The Crusade of 1248–1254," focuses on Louis IX's first crusade to Egypt and his subsequent visit to Acre, where he put his conversion program into practice. Chapter 2, "The Resettlement of the Converts," traces the journeys and destinations of the converts from the eastern Mediterranean to the French royal domains and interrogates how royal policy shaped both the settlement of converts and their livelihoods. Chapter 3, "Living in France," examines how the converts and their children may have adapted to their new homes. Regrettably, after the second generation, almost all trace of the converts disappears from the record. In the brief

epilogue, "The Last Crusade," Jordan argues that Louis IX carried his dream of conversion even into his 1270 campaign in Egypt, the so-called Eighth Crusade—though very little came of it.

Apart from its methodological innovation, *The Apple of His Eye* is likely to appeal to scholars of religious interchange in the Mediterranean, as well as to historians of France, the Crusades, and conversion in general. Jordan deftly uses the converts' experience to evoke questions about cultural and religious identity, alterity, migration, and the larger goals of crusade and conversion in the Middle Ages. What made a person "French" in the thirteenth century, when regional dialects and cultures even within the kingdom varied so widely as to be mutually incomprehensible? Did dispersing new converts among different towns and regions encourage or impede their assimilation to Christian society? Would it have been possible for a disillusioned ex-Muslim not only to flee France but to reach and reintegrate into a Muslim community elsewhere? Did the faltering of crusade efforts in the later thirteenth century, when the conquest of Jerusalem was an ever more clearly unattainable goal, help fuel enthusiasm for conversion as an alternative means of extending Christendom? Jordan's book invites a reexamination of all these topics from an entirely novel perspective: that of Louis's prized but previously unrecognized converts and immigrants. In doing so, it also makes a noteworthy contribution to the history of nonelites, who are often omitted—but sometimes merely overlooked—in the documentation.

Book Review

Joel Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary across a Millennium* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2018), 288 pp., 13 b/w images, 3 maps, 2 tables. ISBN 978-0-52029-594-0. Price: $34.95 (cloth).

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This is not a book about a prophet called Saïd. Instead, it is an eloquently written, skillfully researched study of the mechanics of writing commentaries on hadith collections. The title and blurb are eye-poppingly ambitious, speaking of such breadth and depth that, in fact, we may conclude that it would be unfair to take them at face value. I would suggest we even ignore Blecher's own characterization of his book as a "survey [...] to track change and continuity in the slow-moving, cumulative tradition of commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*" (p. 182) and instead take the book to describe the craft of commenting on hadiths, specifically in the case of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. The all-encompassing approach, both historically and geographically, is part of the argument: there is a fundamental stability in this craft. This fact becomes all the more clear in the epilogue, where Blecher discusses the use of hadiths by members of ISIS.

If you read the epilogue after having read everything before it (that is, the actual book), then this discussion does not read as a section that merely describes what people from ISIS do with hadiths. Rather, it is as though Blecher is saying that *even people from ISIS* use hadiths in a way that is customary, with due regard for the unwritten rules of this craft. As such, Blecher makes a very compelling case for the craft's stability.

Blecher does a superb job of describing the craft itself, though again not without boldly arguing for two main theses. One is that commentary writing in the field of hadith studies is "a social practice, in which the competition for everyday social and material rewards was entangled with the achievement of certain interpretive excellences" (p. 28). In chapter 1, Blecher provides anecdotal evidence of this by presenting the case of the Andalusian scholar al-Bājī (d. 474/1081). Al-Bājī interpreted a hadith that speaks of Muḥammad signing a document as

evidence that Muḥammad was literate. This claim had theological implications about the status of the Qurʾān, and al-Bājī thus had to defend himself against accusations of heresy. The other thesis is that commentators also had to negotiate a "connection to a transtemporal and transregional community" (p. 171), namely that of "tradition" as understood by, for example, Talal Asad. Consequently, commenting on a hadith did not entail simply reading it and giving your opinion. In fact, the first step was recognizing that "simply reading" was not always possible. In chapter 2, Blecher discusses the example of a hadith that restricts the number of lashes for non-ḥudūd offenses to ten. The problems with the hadith were manifold: (1) there are different versions of basically the same hadith, (2) they have inconsistencies in their transmission chains, and (3) they seem to contradict Mālikī jurisprudence. In dealing with these problems, scholars were expected to use and discuss previous interpretations of these aspects or of this hadith in general. As Blecher says, "hadith commentaries sometimes had as much or more to say about the exegetical history of the hadith than about the hadith upon which it claimed to comment" (p. 44). At the same time, it should be noted that as the history of this commentary tradition grew, the craft of commenting increasingly relied on "strategic omissions" (p. 133). In this way, out of the materials supplied by the source text and its tradition, endless varieties of new and original positions could be maintained.

In the subsequent chapters, Blecher gives evidence that "the site of commentarial authority was not relegated to the quiet surfaces of the written commentary but was performed by living people in the limits of space and time" (p. 96). In chapter 3, he describes how commentators negotiated their intellectual work with their patrons and their students. He does this by focusing on two great commentators in ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo: the rivals Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) and Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451), who competed over shared patrons as well as mutual students. Chapter 4 digs into what their rivalry meant in terms of commentary writing: through a draft copy and other copies, we can reconstruct how Ibn Ḥajar went back to the same hadith and rewrote or added materials to the commentary that he was steadily producing. This continuous rewriting was also fueled by the structure of hadith studies, which owed much to the reading of the entire Ṣaḥīḥ each year in the month of Ramadan. Chapter 5 focuses on what went on in that month—namely, live commentary and debates at the court of the sultan. One incident, in which Ibn Ḥajar bested another scholar in a debate about the number of people who get to enjoy shade in Paradise, is discussed at length. By comparing the accounts of this incident in Ibn Ḥajar's historical work Inbāʾ al-ghumr and in his commentary Fatḥ al-bārī, we learn more about what was typical of the craft of writing a commentary on a hadith collection. Chapter 6 continues to draw on the case study of Ibn Ḥajar and al-ʿAynī to give an impression of how authority was established. Here we get acquainted with the importance of the "genealogical connection to a canonical collection" (p. 108), which one can imagine as an isnād from the commentator back to al-Bukhārī.

The interplay between hadith studies (*ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is once more highlighted.

The next two chapters examine subgenres of hadith commentary. Chapter 7 shifts the focus back to the unique challenges posed by *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. Its chapter headings can be mystifying; sometimes there are even headings but no actual chapter, that is, no hadiths. Knowledge of these problems and their solutions became part of becoming a skilled, authoritative commentator. In fact, this issue had such a strong pull that it gave rise to a subgenre of commentaries on the chapter headings alone. In Chapter 8 we meet another subgenre, that of ever more concise commentaries in summary form. For this chapter, Blecher moves on to another great scholar, al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). In general, such commentaries address the bare essentials of reading correctly and understanding the meanings of rare words. The skill involved seems haphazard; at times important pieces of the commentary tradition are left out, while at times seemingly unimportant parts are discussed at length.

The final two chapters discuss the impact on commentary writing of a situation in which the commentator is removed from the majority of previous commentaries by hundreds of years and thousands of miles. Notably, Blecher shows the influence of print technology, modernity, and a local language other than Arabic by focusing on Deobandi and Urdu-speaking commentators.

As I am not an expert in hadith studies, I leave it to others to double-check the book's factual correctness. I do, however, wish to raise some issues regarding Blecher's discussion of the phenomenon of commentary writing. Take, for example, chapter 4. Blecher goes into great detail in reconstructing the work process of Ibn Ḥajar, and in this sense the chapter is convincing. At the same time, however, he left me craving more—such as recourse to more manuscripts to triangulate more of the intermediate steps Ibn Ḥajar took to write the commentary, or the use of *samāʿ* notes to establish a clearer picture of who was there and why, and what role they played in the formation of the commentary. Indeed, a whole book on just the writing, revision, and early reception history of Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ al-bārī* would have made for a thrilling read on its own. The same goes for the phenomenon of commenting on the chapter headings of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* or the problems pertaining to the very first hadith of that collection; Blecher's passion for these subjects is contagious and left me wanting more. Thus, when Blecher claims he writes "thick history" (p. 195), I would love to see it a whole lot thicker. Where this succinctness actually hurts the argumentation is in chapter 8, in which Blecher is able to show that al-Suyūṭī preferred short commentaries but comes up short in explaining exactly why and what impact this preference had. These questions are raised but not satisfactorily settled. The same problem arises sometimes at the sentence level. For example, Blecher starts a quantitative argument about the difference in word count between the draft and final versions of Ibn Ḥajar's commentary, but then cuts it short and concludes that "more research needs to be done" (p. 69). He promises that the numbers he gives are consistent with some other numbers that he has found, but he does not actually provide those numbers or a description of how he

Commentaries on the Six Canonical Hadith Collections

Year in AH
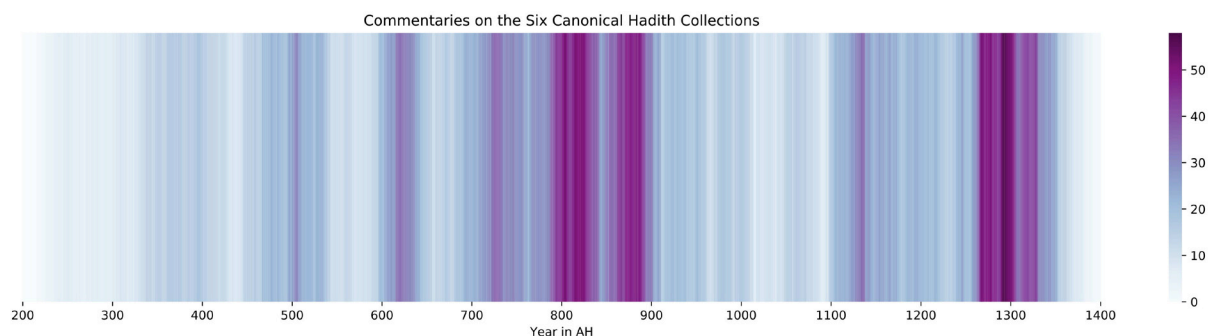
Data and code available at: https://GitHub.com/LWCvL/Plotting-All-Hadith-Commentaries

arrived at them. In another place, Blecher says that "the first three hadith [. . .] sparked wide disagreement [. . .] despite or perhaps because of the clarity of their apparent meaning" (p. 31). As a reader I am left bewildered: which one is it, despite or because? Nevertheless, I would advise reading past these minor blemishes and focusing on the core topic—the craft of hadith commentary—which Blecher demonstrates that he understands inside and out.

A cursory comparison between this book and the dissertation on which it is based reveals that a lot of thought and care went into the production of the former. So, if something in the dissertation is not in the book, the omission must have been strategic. Nevertheless, given the thought-provoking analysis and conclusions Blecher provides, I would like to provide some counterpoints in the hope that these will foster a continued interest in hadith-commentary writing. I would like to introduce my thinking with the graphic above.

This is a heat map showing the lifespans of hadith commentators. I created this graphic using *Jāmiʿ al-shurūḥ wa-l-ḥawāshī* by ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Ḥibshī as my source, looking up the entries for the six canonical hadith collections and noting

the death dates for all the commentators in a spreadsheet. I thus discarded some entries that had no (or an uncertain) death date. Using only this resource meant that I almost certainly did not catch all commentaries, and given that some entries do not show manuscript evidence I may also have included some that never existed. For our purposes, however, such minor noise does not detract from a generally sound picture of historical reality.

From the death dates I extrapolated the commentators' lifespans by assuming an average life of forty years. The average is certainly not true of everyone: al-Suyūṭī was 60 when he passed away, Ibn Ḥajar 76, al-ʿAynī 93, and Zakariyyāʾ al-Anṣārī an astonishing 101 years old. We may assume, however, that out of the hundreds of commentators, the majority did not grow this old. Further, we may think of the forty-year span as a floruit, presuming that it was, on average, the last forty years of a scholar's life in which the scholar was active. I would argue that it is important to use a range like this rather than just the death date because if there is one thing we know, it is that commentators did not write their commentaries when they were dead. Thus, plotting death dates would significantly shift the shape of the graphic to the right. As Blecher convincingly

argues, hadith-commentary writing was a process that took many years, sometimes decades, so plotting a range is a more precise way to visualize when the writing of commentaries itself was popular.

On the basis of this data, I plotted a heat map for all commentaries combined. Below I also provide a heat map comparing commentaries on al-Bukhārī with those on Muslim, but I did not produce individual heat maps for the other four collections since they had comparatively few commentaries. The index on the right shows that in the combined heat map, dark purple marks a time at which more than fifty hadith scholars were alive and busy writing a commentary.

From these maps, some results are readily available. First, to plot all commentators, a millennium was not enough; I had to use a span of 1,200 years. Further, we see that hadith commentary in general really took off in the mid-fourth/ tenth century. We observe six notable concentrations; apparently, commentary writing had its ebbs and flows. Perhaps there were certain circumstances that promoted the writing of hadith commentaries. The first peak is right around AH 500 (ca. 1100 CE), the second in the early seventh/thirteenth century, and the third in the early eighth/fourteenth century, and then the indisputable explosion of commentary writing took place throughout the ninth/fifteenth century. A discernible bump is visible in the mid-twelfth/eighteenth century, but finally we see an extraordinary concentration around AH 1300 (ca. 1900 CE).

Blecher's book nails both high points of commentary production: his part on the Mamluks is about the ninth/fifteenth century, and his part on early modern India is about the thirteenth. In this sense, Blecher has chosen well. But because of his focus on case studies and anecdotal evidence, the aptness of his choices would not have been clear from the book itself. Blecher emphasizes the importance of live commentary sessions organized by the ruler. These may indeed have been a decisive factor in the remarkable surge in the popularity of commentaries in both time frames, and I hope we will see further studies about the relationship between staged debates at the court and literary production.

Comparing Blecher's case studies with the enormous number of 634 dated commentators (see table below) prompts the question how representative his conclusions are for commentary writing in general. I do not have an answer, other than to say that Blecher has strategically chosen a variety of commentaries and commentators and that his conclusions are in line with what we are finding out about commentary writing in other genres.

I alluded earlier to a great variety in the number of commentaries each hadith collection received. They are listed in the table below.

Collection	Number of Dated Commentators
al-Nasāʾī	14
Ibn Māja	19
Abū Dāwūd	32
al-Tirmidhī	36
Muslim	189
al-Bukhārī	344
Total	*634*

When did they write commentaries on the Sahihayn?
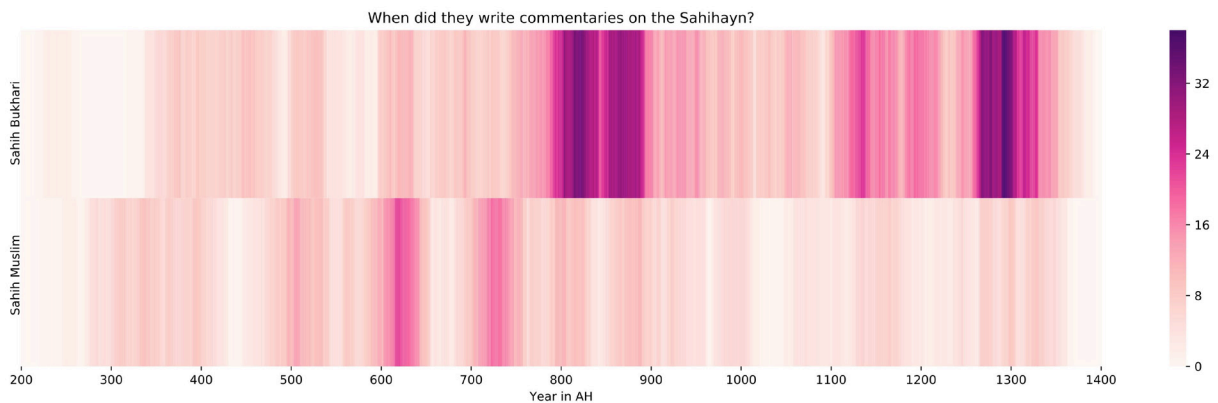
From the preceding table, it is clear why Blecher uses only *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in his book; it already seems to define the genre by itself. Yet it is instructive to look at the heat map above, showing the distribution of commentators on Muslim and al-Bukhārī. Note that dark red-purple means that more than thirty commentators lived at the same time.

Two notable results emerge. First, the writing of commentaries on Muslim started quickly after the collection was created. By comparison, al-Bukhārī's collection received commentaries only after a century or so had passed. Further, we see that Muslim's collection was generally popular in the first few centuries after its compilation, with spikes in the early seventh/thirteenth and early eighth/fourteenth centuries. At that point, attention to Muslim's collection peters out and al-Bukhārī's collection begins to predominate. I do not know whether this trajectory is well known among scholars of hadith studies, but it surprised me, as it is not discussed by Blecher. A significant shift such as this begs for explanation. Further analysis of this issue would also shed more light on how representative commentaries on al-Bukhārī are of hadith commentaries in general.

I would like to make some final comments regarding commentaries on al-Bukhārī specifically. First, I suspect that more can be said about the phenomenon of hadith commentary stacked upon commentary, sometimes several layers deep. The clearest example of such stacking is al-Sanūsī's (d. 895/1490) *Mukammal Ikmāl al-Ikmāl*, a commentary on al-Ubbī's (d. 827/1424) *Ikmāl al-Ikmāl*, which is a commentary on al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ's (d. 544/1149) *Ikmāl al-Muʿlim*, which is a commentary on al-Māzarī's (d. 536/1141) *al-Muʿlim bi-fawāʾid Muslim*, a commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Examples abound in the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* commentary tradition, too. Second, given the importance of the summary of Ibn Abī Jamra (d. 695/1296) and the extensive commentary of al-Qasṭallānī (d. 923/1517), both of which spawned supercommentaries, it is a shame they do not receive attention in Blecher's book. And third, al-Ḥibshī lists the commentaries on al-Bukhārī in groups that function as subgenres. Without drawing too much attention to it, Blecher touches on most of these but notably does not mention three: (1) the so-called *thulāthiyyāt* subgenre, which collects and comments on only those hadiths that have an *isnād*

of three transmitters; (2) what al-Ḥibshi calls *ruwāt al-Bukhārī wa-tarājimuhum*, that is, studies of the reception and transmission of the text after al-Bukhārī; and (3) commentaries whose main task is to rearrange al-Bukhārī's collection, for example according to each hadith's first letter.

Whether this last subgenre is to be accepted as commentary will be a crucial question for future studies of hadith commentary. I am thinking, in particular, of an entirely different phenomenon: the so-called *arbaʿīniyyāt* collections, in which hadith scholars worked with a self-imposed limit of forty hadiths, no more. These could be on the same topic, or come from the same narrator, or have another commonality. The point is that a great degree of creativity in this operation should be acknowledged. It was "strategic inclusion and exclusion as commentary" in a radical form. To this end, I suspect Blecher's book will be provocative enough to foster a discussion on methodology and the theoretical framework appropriate for the study of hadith commentary. Blecher engages with modern literary theory, and from this starting point I imagine that scholars in hadith studies could engage with recent theoretical reflections on postclassical Islam (e.g., those of Shahab Ahmed and Thomas Bauer) or theoretical and methodological treatments of commentary writing (e.g., recent special

issues of *Oriens*, *MIDEO*, and *Philological Encounters*) to yield interesting new approaches or analyses. Likewise, this book left me wondering how similar or different the genres of hadith commentary and Qurʾān commentary are. Lastly, I think that quantitative analysis could bolster our understanding of what went on in such large bodies of literature. Hadith literature is ripe for such analysis, since many books in the genre are available in plain-text format.

I suspect this book will attract a wide readership, including outside of academia. Not only will the subject be of interest to many, but Blecher's clear and accessible writing style will on its own attract readers. In that regard, however, I think it is fair to warn that a certain level of knowledge is expected. I could imagine that the book might be just a little too much for an undergraduate student left to his or her own devices. Including this book in a graduate seminar on hadith should work out well, however, especially if students are asked to compare Blecher's ideas with their own experience reading bits and pieces of hadith commentaries. Scholars working on a variety of topics will benefit from this book, including those working in hadith studies, book history, and postclassical Islamic intellectual history and postclassical Islamic intellectual history, in particular those focusing on commentary writing.

Book Review

Thomas A. Carlson, *Christianity in Fifteenth-Century Iraq.*
Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (New York: Cambridge
University Press, 2018), xx + 322 pp. ISBN 978-1-107-18627-9.
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For this groundbreaking study Thomas A. Carlson directed his attention to one of the major, if still often overlooked, Christian communities of the Middle East, the Church of the East.[1] Furthermore, he chose to work on one of the most obscure periods of the church's history, that of the tumultuous, politically fragmented, and poorly documented ninth AH/fifteenth CE century. Carlson's labors have resulted in a work that contributes significantly to the historiography of both late medieval Christianity in the Middle East and the murky period marked by post-Timurid Türkmen domination while making a plea for more works in a similar vein. Of recent works that take non-Muslims in the Islamicate world as their primary subjects,[2] Carlson's has arguably faced the most challenging path to realization, given the limitations of his source base and the historiographical obscurity of the period. Despite such issues and a few shortcomings in execution,

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1. Perhaps more than with any other Middle Eastern Christian community during the medieval period, naming conventions for the Church of the East are decidedly confusing. For centuries the Church of the East was known to most outsiders as the Nestorian Church, an appellative usually rejected by members of the ecclesial community itself. Meanwhile, scholars have often employed the moniker "East Syriac" to distinguish it from the Western Miaphysite Syriac tradition (the Church of the East being Diaphysite, confessing two distinct natures to Christ). In more recent years, "Assyrian" and "Chaldean" have emerged as signifiers of aspirational national identities attached to East Syriac communities, names that have also been used for the proliferation of separate churches coming out of the medieval Church of the East thanks to new connections with the Catholic Church and Protestant bodies. On the issue of terminology, see Sebastian P. Brock, "Nestorian Church: A Lamentable Misnomer," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 78 (1996): 23–53.

2. Such as Jack Boulos Victor Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), or Antony Eastmond, *Tamta's World: The Life and Encounters of a Medieval Noblewoman from the Middle East to Mongolia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), on which see Z. Pogossian's review essay in this issue.

the study is a fine piece of historical scholarship and will hopefully lead to more rethinkings of the late medieval and early modern history of the Middle East that take religious and other forms of diversity more seriously. In the following review I consider in more depth Carlson's subjects, source base, arguments, and overall contributions chapter by chapter, concluding with some critical observations and further suggestions both to supplement Carlson's approaches and to extend his findings in additional directions.

Few religious communities of the Islamic Later Middle Period (roughly, 656–960/1258–1550) are as little known and poorly integrated into historical scholarship as the Church of the East. Whereas the East Syriac tradition from Late Antiquity up to the rule of the Mongols is relatively well known, the period that stretches from the waning of the Ilkhanids to the dominance of the Ottomans and Safavids is much less well represented in the historiography.[3] The situation changes in examinations of the much more recent past, during which East Syriac Christians came under the gaze of Western European missionaries, travelers, diplomats, and others, even as the overall situation of the Church of the East became increasingly precarious and tragic.

Much of the obscurity of the post-Mongol Church of the East's history is due to the region-wide troubles of the post-Ilkhanid age. The conquests of Timur soon gave way to political fragmentation and continual competition, marked by the oscillating dominance of two Türkmen dynasties, the Āqqūyunlū and the Qarāqūyunlū, with other regional and local powers and strongmen carving out their own spaces as well. As Carlson notes, Timurid rule over this region was at most nominal, if that, while the adjacent Mamluks and the Ottomans generally exerted little to no control over these competing dynasties. On the whole the ninth/fifteenth century was markedly tumultuous and violent, no empire or world-conqueror giving shape or order to the clash of polities and violent political entrepreneurs. Literary, artistic, and architectural production continued among the various religious and cultural communities of the region, but it did so in a diminished state, which, along with the sheer political fluidity and confusion of the period, has tended to discourage sustained historical analysis. Carlson's helpful overview of the overarching political history of the region in chapter 1 is therefore in itself a welcome intervention even apart from the rest of the book.[4]

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3. Among the significant recent works dealing with the Church of the East during the earlier period are Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Philip Wood, *The Chronicle of Seert: Christian Historical Imagination in Late Antique Iraq* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2013); and Joel Thomas Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

4. Consider that before this book, the only full-length study of the Āqqūyunlū in English was Woods's book, which is by now quite old, even in its updated edition, while perhaps the most extensive discussion of the Qarāqūynulū in a Western language is a series of articles by Minorsky from well over half a century ago! John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire*, rev. and expanded ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999). For Minorsky's own listing of his varied contributions over the years, see V. Minorsky,

Carlson lays out the challenges in terms of the available sources early in the book. Muslim sources are of limited help in reconstructing Christian affairs given the general lack of interest ʿulamāʾ authors took in their non-Muslim neighbors. That said, Carlson draws on Islamic sources in both Arabic and Persian insofar as they aid in establishing the wider political and social context as well as for their occasional bursts of interest. Although the Church of the East is his main focus, Carlson also draws on sources produced by both the Miaphysite Syriac and the Armenian Orthodox. As for the Church of the East itself, Carlson's source base is relatively small and consists mostly of sources rarely utilized by historians: liturgical and theological didactic poetry, books of ritual, and around three dozen colophons to various manuscripts—an especially important source for Carlson given that no Church of the East chronicle literature was produced during this period.

The book is divided into three sections. The first third deals with the wider political and cultural context of the Church of the East in the ninth/fifteenth century, addressing both its relations with its Muslim neighbors and its own internal social structure and position vis-à-vis other Christians. Chapter 1 sets up the complex political situation as well as the internal conditions of the Church of the East, which were marked by the dominance of clergy, with the highest "secular" leaders being village chiefs (*rēshānē*). Chapter 2 examines the interplay between Muslim rulers and their diverse Christian subjects. Carlson demonstrates that the rulers of the period did not follow a single consistent approach toward their *dhimmī* subjects. Rather, they alternated between stances that ranged from outright patronage of Christians to outright persecution, neither precisely conforming to the theoretical constructions of the ʿulamāʾ nor entirely ignoring them. Chaper 3 continues on a similar tack, working to uncover the relations between members of the Church of the East and their Muslim and Miaphysite Christian neighbors. Carlson argues that although violence was endemic through much of this period, it rarely seems to have been of a determinedly "confessional" nature. Instead, an uneasy coexistence tended to prevail, with occasional points of sustained contact and even cultural sharing in evidence (such as hereditary practices of religious hierarchical succession). A similarly fraught but mostly nonconfrontational coexistence seems to have been the norm among the various Christian communities as well. This chapter might have also benefited from consideration of another recent work on (among other things) relations among Christian and Muslim groups, Tijana Krstić's *Contested Conversions*; in particular, her discussion of the "neo-martyrdom" genre might have helped illuminate why such accounts appear in the Armenian context but not in the Syriac one during this period.[5]

"Jihān-Shāh Qara-Qoyunlu and His Poetry (Turkmenica 9)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 16, no. 2 (1954): 271-272.

5. Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011). See also the discussion of Coptic neo-martyrdom in Febe Armanios, *Coptic Christianity in Ottoman Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Chapter 4 is an "interlude" transitioning to a more focused discussion of the Church of the East's internal affairs. Carlson opens this section with a discussion of theoretical approaches to defining "community" in the premodern world, and the subsequent chapters examine how the Church of the East constituted itself as a distinctive community in a religiously plural world. He notes that on the whole the church's theology, ritual, and communal life were not massively different from previous periods or even from those of other Christians in the region. The "payoff" of his findings, he argues, "is not a story about theological change, but an account of how these people understood their social group, in theological terms" (p. 115). Some of his findings do point to slight modifications from previous centuries: there was little emphasis in this period, he contends, on the unique Diaphysite Christology of the Church of the East, and the greater perceived threat was not losses to Miaphysite churches but apostasy to Islam. Where chapters 5 and 6 deal primarily with doctrinal and theological constructions, chapter 7 takes the reader through the ritual life of the church. Carlson is especially interested in how different people, lay and clergy, men and women, participated in these rituals and constituted themselves as belonging to the wider community. Although Carlson's discussion of "community concept" in chapter 4 is theoretically informed, the chapter on ritual and belonging could have benefited from engagement with the burgeoning field of ritual studies, which

might have allowed Carlson to draw out additional conclusions from a challenging and primarily prescriptive source base.[6]

Finally, chapters 8 and 9 return to issues of change and adjustment within the fraught circumstances of the ninth/ fifteenth century. Chapter 8 examines the failed attempt of the Church of the East to resist hereditary succession to the patriarchal throne as well as other measures to reinforce clerical authority. Chapter 9 deals with the church's sense of time and of its place in sacred history. Here Carlson describes the unsurprising centrality of salvation history, while somewhat more surprisingly noting that although the Church of the East placed much emphasis on devotion to saints during this period, it neither produced new saints nor venerated any from after the rise of Islam. The work ends with a recapitulation and a plea for future historiography to better attend to the "polyphony" of the Middle East in all its complexity and texture.

On the whole this is a well-crafted and historiographically overdue study. It demonstrates that even for such troublesome periods it is possible both to recover non-Muslim voices and histories and to make them a part of the larger historical narrative. Carlson is to be commended for his interpretive ingenuity and his ability to move back and forth across linguistic divides as well as all the other divides and disparate bodies of literature, secondary and primary, that map onto them. It might be argued that the middle third of the book restates matters

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6. For relatively recent overviews of the field from two different persepectives, see Catherine M. Bell and Reza Aslan, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), and Ronald L. Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

rather obvious to anyone with a passing acquaintance with any form of Orthodox Christianity, but Carlson's object here is in fact praiseworthy, in that his stated goal is to recover how members of the Church of the East saw themselves in relation to God, the wider world, and one another in the theological terms and ritual work that were continually present to them.

Although Carlson's chronological framing is largely effective, it might have been helpful to include discussion of slightly later periods and their literary production, such as the early modern vernacular Syriac didactic poetry (*durekṭā*) studied by Alessandro Mengozzi.[7] As Carlson notes, there is little sense of doctrinal development or change in the sources he is considering, and indeed it would be hard to detect significant change given the limitations of that source base. Extending the chronological frame at points, if only for comparative purposes, might have helped surmount this issue while retaining the focus on the ninth/fifteenth century and the relative stability of doctrine and practice inherited from earlier periods.

In a similar vein, it is not so much a criticism of Carlson's findings as a caution to point out that a number of his conclusions rest upon one or two works by a single author, which, Carlson implicitly argues, ought to be taken as representative of the wider East Syriac

community. Carlson is, of course, not to be faulted for low rates of textual production or survival. But the small available source base could call into question some of his findings, such as the otherwise fascinating suggestion, discussed further below, that the production of "new saints" seems to have been suspended in the Church of the East during this period. Might it simply be, for instance, that more recent saints' cults (in this case, any postdating the rise of Islam) took place in social milieus and literary contexts other than those represented in the surviving literature?

Throughout his study Carlson rightly emphasizes the diversity of this region, in general and particularly in the ninth/fifteenth century. By "diversity" he means primarily the diversity of non-Muslim groups. The book (and any future research along similar lines) could have benefited, however, from a more robust sense of the considerable internal diversity that marked expressions of Islam in the ninth/fifteenth century across Afro-Eurasia but especially in the region with which Carlson deals. This intra-Muslim diversity was hardly confined to, or even well expressed by, the conventional bifurcation of Sunni and Shiʿi. The ninth/fifteenth century saw widespread experimentation in religious life, from the relatively "mainstream" elaboration of saints' cults and centers of power[8] to the effloresence of Ḥurūfī thought and action

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7. Alessandro Mengozzi, *Israel of Alqosh and Joseph of Telkepe: A Story in a Truthful Language; Religious Poems in Vernacular Syriac (North Iraq, 17th Century)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002); idem, "Neo-Syriac Literature in Context: A Reading of the Durektha On Revealed Truth by Joseph of Telkepe (17th Century)," in *Redefining Christian Identity: Christian Cultural Strategies Since the Rise of Islam*, ed. J. J. van Ginkel, H. L. Murre-van den Berg, and Theo Maarten van Lint (Leuven: Peeters and Departement Oosterse Studies, 2005); idem and Emanuela Braida, *Religious Poetry in Vernacular Syriac from Northern Iraq (17th–20th Centuries): An Anthology* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011).

8. For instance, the ultimately very successful cultus of Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Valī (d. ca. 835/1431), for which

and to the transformation of the Ṣafavī *ṭarīqa*.[9] Often condensed into a narrative of "heterodoxy" or "Shiʿism," this epoch of religious experimentation resists neat categorization, yet is significant both for its effect in the ninth/fifteenth century and as a key component in the formation of the empire-dominated early modern world of the tenth/sixteenth.[10]

A greater awareness of this diversity within ninth/fifteenth century Islam itself (such that even referring to a unitary, if only notional, "Islam" becomes rather problematic if probably unavoidable) could provide insight into additional points of contact and cultural sharing akin to the shared concepts and practices of hierarchical inheritance discussed in chapter 3. For instance, Carlson briefly mentions an Armenian *vardapet* and eventual bishop Mkrtič Nałaš, who is described in a decidedly hagiographic colophon from 853/1449 as, among other things, being venerated by Muslims of various ethnic backgrounds, even by the local Muslim ruler Shāh Qarā Yoluq ʿUthmān. The treatment that the author of the colophon says was bestowed by the ruler and other Muslims upon Mkrtič is highly redolent of how a saintly Sufi shaykh would be treated: gifted with various votives and sought out for *baraka*-bestowing activities such as bodily veneration, recitation, and clothing exchanges.[11] Such a description, as well as those of other, similar figures to whom Carlson alludes (p. 75), suggests at the very least a cross-confessional commensurability in understandings of what constituted a holy person.

The presence of widespread Islamic "religious experimentation," in which confessional boundaries were often rendered more permeable (or at least perceived by others resistant to such experimentation as such), might also help explain why, for instance, a figure such as the Qarāqūyunlū ruler of Baghdad Shāh Muḥammad b. Qarā Yūsuf (r. 814–36/1411–33) was reported by some to have become a secret Christian. He was said to have queried the *ʿulamāʾ*, "'Who is better: the living or the dead?' and when they gave preference to the living, he wound up saying: 'and Jesus is alive, and Muḥammad is dead.'"[12] Might such admittedly hostile reports reflect genuine religious experimentation or attempts at articulating a new sacral identity on the part of Türkmen rulers? One need only look at the poetry of the first Safavid shāh, Ismāʿīl, who emerged out of this broader milieu, to see decided parallels (the poetry of the Qarāqūyunlū Jihān Shāh, as Minorsky noted many years ago, bears some resemblance to Ismāʿīl's theophanic

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see Jean Aubin et al., *Matériaux pour la biographie de Shâh Niʾmatullah Walí Kermânî: Textes persans publiés avec une introduction* (Tehran: Département d'iranologie de l'Institut franco-iranien, 1956).

9. See, for instance, Shahzad Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), esp. 85–108.

10. The claims to saintly, messianic, even apocalyptic significance and standing on the part of or on behalf of Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal rulers (to limit ourselves to the most prominent examples) that mark the tenth/sixteenth century have their roots in the religious ferment and productivity of the ninth/fifteenth.

11. Avedis K. Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts, 1301–1480: A Source for Middle Eastern History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 209–214, esp. 210–211.

12. Minorsky, "Jihān-Shāh Qara-Qoyunlu," 274.

verse).[13] That the clergy and ritual of the Church of the East may not have played an active or deliberate role in such theological maneuvers and sacral self-stylings, may have served does not preclude the church having been a resource and a reference point for rulers, shaykhs, and others intent on their own elaborations of Islam.

Finally, an expanded sense of Islamic diversity might help to further explicate one of Carlson's more striking discoveries, concerning the East Syriac sense of time and practices of saint veneration. As noted above, the panoply of saints venerated by the late medieval Church of the East consisted of figures from the late antique past who were nonetheless perceived as close and living by their devotees and supplicants. The sense of an almost mythic communal past, in which saints of ten centuries earlier loom up as if they were contemporaries, was not entirely unique to the church. A similar rendering of time and sanctity can be found among neighboring groups such as the Yazīdīs, the Ahl-i Ḥaqq, and the Kākāʾī, religious communities that are perhaps best described as "Islam-adjacent" and that probably took their decisive shapes during the period in question. For our purposes, it is notable that although these communities venerate a range of saintly, even divine, figures, the latter have usually been framed in highly fluid chronological terms, with relatively little discernable "new" saintly production in relation to

the foundational holy figures.[14] For all of these communities, localized hierarchies perpetuate the memory of this distant yet immanent sacralized past, with new elaborations tending to take the form of liturgical poetry, often set to song and incorporated into the collective ritual life of the community.

Herein lies another possible parallel and even point of contact with the Church of the East during this period—a church also perpetuated in no small part by localized religious hierarchies carrying out rituals and producing poetic liturgical material. Like their "heterodox" neighbors, the Church of the East was a minority community, predominantly rural, and usually pressed for resources and political clout. Such shared circumstances might help explain similar dynamics, even as other Christian communities and some "heterodox" Muslim groups, such as the early Safavids, went in ultimately quite different directions. The Armenian Orthodox Church, for instance, continued to produce a wide range of literature and artistic material while also generating "new" saints, particularly in the form of the so-called neo-martyrs, into the early modern period and beyond. Even as (albeit in this period relatively rare) martyrdom marked the Armenians off from their Muslim neighbors, traces of the shared Islamicate milieu are visible everywhere in the ninth/fifteenth century and beyond in Armenian culture, from the new

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13. V. Minorsky, "Jihān-Shāh," 276–283 and passim; for Ismāʿīl's verse, see V. Minorsky, "The Poetry of Shāh Ismāʿīl I," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10, no. 4 (1942): 1006a–1053a.

14. See, for instance, the prose narratives given in the Persian Ahl-i Ḥaqq text edited by Wladimir Ivanow, *The Truth-Worshippers of Kurdistan: Ahl-i Haqq Texts Edited in the Original Persian and Analysed by W. Ivanow* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953). Although evidence of refashioning appears (tobacco is mentioned, as are Ottoman officials), the stories of the Ahl-i Ḥaqq holy "pantheon" are set in a largely undifferentiated and undated past, a rendering that makes them feel very immediate to the participant in the present.

and vibrant styles visible in Armenian manuscript illumination to common naming practices, displaying different sorts of dynamism and engagement with Islamicate culture.[15] At issue here are differing strategies, possibilities, and ensuing dynamics. Whereas the Church of the East could only occasionally boast the patronage of Muslim rulers, otherwise depending on support from its largely rural peasant and mostly nonelite members, an elite of Armenians survived into the Ottoman and Safavid periods, supporting churches and monasteries as best they could. Such elites, who also embodied "Islamicate" cultural forms by choice and necessity, could serve as conduits for the traces of the Islamicate within Armenian "religious" works as well.

In conclusion, as both Carlson's study and my remarks above suggest, much work remains to be done in understanding the social, religious, cultural, and indeed political parameters of this period in relation to both Muslims (with a stress on the plural) and non-Muslims in all their diversity. As Carlson argues, the one ought not to exist in our reconstructions of the period without the other. Groups such as the ninth/fifteenth-century Church of the East have a recoverable history, and that history was and should be seen as part of the story of their more powerful and historiographically central Muslim rulers and neighbors—not just as a casual appendage to be mentioned as a manifestation of clichéd Middle Eastern diversity but as a central and indeed irreplaceable aspect of the larger story.

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15. For a fine distillation of these trends in brief, see, for instance, the magnificent miniature of the enthroned Theotokos and Christ Child in an Armenian Gospel book completed in 1455 at the monastery of Gamałiēl in Xizan by the scribe Yohannēs Vardapet, illuminated by the priest Xačʻatur: Walters W.543, fol. 14v (http://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W543/). Here as in much other fifteenth-century Armenian artistic production, the artistic style is highly evocative of contemporary production, particularly in Baghdad; fol. 14v shows and labels the priest, Pʻilipos who commissioned the manuscript, as well as his brothers Yusēpʻ and Sultanša, both bearing names drawn from the surrounding Islamicate milieu.

Book Review

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The modern academic study of philosophy in the Islamic world has, since its nineteenth-century inception, privileged works written in Arabic from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. To some extent, this focus makes intellectual-historical sense. For one thing, the period hinges on the floruit of an inarguably central figure, the philosopher and scientist Avicenna (d. 428/1037). For another, if origins are important, the ninth century certainly deserves scholars' attention. Philosophy (*falsafa*) performed in Arabic by self-identified philosophers living in Islamic lands begins only in the ninth century, a movement in part conditioned by and in part conditioning the translation of Aristotle and other ancient Greek authors into Arabic, sometimes via Syriac Aramaic or, less commonly, Middle Persian. At least until the modern period, all subsequent philosophers who lived in Islamic societies

and wrote in Arabic, New Persian, Ottoman Turkish, and other languages were in dialogue with a tradition inaugurated in this formative century.

Yet the focus on the ninth through twelfth centuries has rested on several far less defensible assumptions as well. First, European and Middle Eastern scholars alike have long designated the first two centuries of the Abbasid caliphate as a "Golden Age" or a "classical period" of "Islamic civilization."[1] Scholarship has unduly privileged philosophy in this period and in its immediate aftermath just as it has privileged the period's theology, science, belles-lettres, historiography, and other fields of literary production. Second, scholars writing in European languages long labored under the nineteenth-century theory that the twelfth-century theologian al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) criticism of Aristotelian *falsafa* marked a turning point in the history of Islamic

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1. See Michael Cooperson, "The Abbasid 'Golden Age': An Excavation," *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 25 (2017): 41–65.

philosophy. A new spirit of narrow-minded orthodoxy allegedly spelled an end to rational inquiry across the Islamic world, especially in Sunni quarters.[2] All of the post-twelfth-century Islamic word's philosophical output, according to this theory, is necessarily inferior and hence less worthy of study. Until at least the 1960s, scholars' cursory examination of later materials seemed to bear out this "al-Ghazālī theory." For instance, many later contributions to Islamic philosophy come in the form of commentaries or even versifications, which were often dismissed as derivative or unoriginal on the basis of inadequate study. This narrative of decadence has long since been exploded in scholarly circles, though it continues to influence some popular narratives of the development of philosophy in the Islamic world. Nevertheless, the long-held assumption that the ninth through twelfth centuries are uniquely worthy of consideration has meant that the bulk of monographs and articles, not to mention critical editions and translations, have covered texts from this period. Even after scholars realized the shortcomings of this historical focus, the imbalance has been hard to correct. In a sort of inexorable snowball effect, the disproportionate amount of resources facilitating the study of the ninth through twelfth centuries has

ensured that philosophy from this period continues to receive disproportionate attention.

The excellent new *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke, sets out with the aim, made explicit in its introduction, to correct this disproportionate historical emphasis. As such, the volume supersedes the shorter and less comprehensive, though still valuable, *Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (2005). The new *Oxford Handbook* treats philosophy in the Islamic world from the ninth through twentieth centuries, across thirty chapters contributed by an international and intergenerational group of scholars, with roughly equal weight given to each century. The volume is clearly intended as a companion or follow-up to the *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* (2014), also edited by Schmidtke.[3] Yet the volumes are quite different in structure and purpose. Where the *Theology* volume structured its chapters according to themes and case studies, followingly a loosely chronological order, the editors of the *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy* explicitly eschew organization according to theme or even according to author. They argue, convincingly, that the present state of research precludes

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2. This mistaken attitude is exemplified by the statement of Edward Sachau in the introduction to his translation of al-Bīrūnī's *Kitāb al-āthār al-bāqiya*: "The fourth [Islamic] century is the turning-point in the history of the spirit of Islâm, and the establishment of the orthodox faith about 500 sealed the fate of independent research for ever. But for Alashʿarî and Alghazzâlî the Arabs might have been a nation of Galileos, Keplers, and Newtons"; see Sachau's introduction to al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, trans. Edward Sachau (London: Allen and Co., 1879), x. One factor underlying this attitude is surely a Eurocentric narrative of the history of philosophy, as the editors of the volume under review note (p. 1). Once the progress of Islamic philosophy had been mapped up until the twelfth century, the point of its reception by western Europe, its continued development was deemed unimportant.

3. Reviewed in this journal; see John Renard, review of *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, edited by Sabine Schmidtke, *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 25 (2017): 240–242.

a thematic organization. Moreover, they fear that an author-based approach would yield overwhelmingly diffuse chapters. Instead, they have opted to give the reader a representative taste of Islamic philosophy's thousand-year development by centering each chapter on a single work by a single author, ordered chronologically from the ninth-century Plotinian *Theology of Aristotle* (ch. 1, Cristina D'Ancona) to the twentieth-century Egyptian philosopher Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd's (d. 1993) *Naḥwa falsafa ʿilmiyya* (ch. 30, Muhammad Ali Khalidi).

The result is impressive, a wide-ranging and detailed yet still readable presentation of the field. The works overviewed treat not only logic, metaphysics, and epistemology but also ethics and physics. After a summary of the philosophical work in question and a brief biography and historical contextualization of its author, chapter contributors are free to explore the work however they wish. Some, such as Emma Gannagé (ch. 2, on al-Kindī's *On First Philosophy*) and Ayman Shihadeh (ch. 14, on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's commentary on Avicenna's *Pointers*), give detailed analytical philosophical outlines of the contents, highlighting certain sections to make broader points about the author's philosophical system or to reorient our understanding of his thought. Others, such as Sarah Stroumsa (ch. 4, on a lost work by Ibn Masarra [d. 319/931]), perform painstaking philological and intellectual-historical detective work—a favorite scholarly genre of this particular reviewer. Still others, such as Peter Adamson (ch. 3, on Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's [d. 313/925] *Spiritual Medicine*), Khalil Andani (ch. 8, on Nāṣir-i Khusraw's *Jāmiʿ al-ḥikmatayn*), and Taneli Kukkonen (ch. 11, on Ibn Ṭufayl's

[d. 581/1185] *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān*), offer accessible and engaging chapters that will be of interest to experts but would also not be out of place on an advanced undergraduate syllabus.

As strong as the early chapters are, the standout stars of the volume are the explorations of later Islamic philosophy, and not just by virtue of their quality. The unjustly understudied subject matter itself makes for fascinating reading, as in the case of Khaled El-Rouayheb's chapter (ch. 23) on the Egyptian scholar al-Mallawī's (d. 1181/1767) versification of al-Sanūsī's influential logical handbook, or Fatemeh Fana's study (ch. 35) of the post–Mullā Ṣadrā *ishrāqī* philosopher Sabzawārī's (d. 1295 or 1298/1878 or 1881) *Ghurar al-farāʾid.* Beyond such later developments in metaphysics and logic, the volume also includes later works of natural philosophy. For instance, Asad Q. Ahmed and Jon McGinnis (ch. 24) highlight the Indian scholar Faḍl-i Ḥaqq Khayrābādī's (d. 1295/1861) *al-Hadiyya al-saʿīdiyya*, which they characterize as "perhaps the last independent work written within the Arabic-Islamic tradition of physics" (p. 535) and which includes a critical engagement with the Copernican system. One laments, with the editors in the introduction, that external factors prevented the inclusion of further chapters on several important Ottoman, Safavid, and post-Safavid authors. The volume concludes, in an exciting first for the field of Islamic philosophy as traditionally conceived, by discussing four twentieth-century philosophers— Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1938), Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (d. 1979), ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī (d. 1981), and Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd, treated respectively by Mustansir Mir (ch. 27), Saleh J. Agha (ch. 28), Sajjad H. Rizvi and

Ahab Bdaiwi (ch. 29), and Muhammad Ali Khalidi (ch. 30).

Beyond their individual quality, the millennium-spanning array of chapters provokes an important question—and this is the perhaps the *Handbook*'s greatest contribution. What features unite the works and figures that the volume encompasses? In other words, what is the "Islamic philosophy" of the *Handbook*'s title? Regarding the second part of that phrase, the editors clearly state that they are interested in "philosophy" or "*falsafa*" in the general, modern sense of those English and Arabic words, not merely in the more restrictive premodern Arabic sense of *falsafa*.[4] Hence their inclusion of a chapter on a figure like al-Ghazālī (ch. 9, Frank Griffel), who would emphatically have rejected the title of "philosopher" (*faylasūf*). Nevertheless, most of the chapters do treat texts dealing with *falsafa* in the restrictive, premodern sense of the word—namely, as the particular Neoplatonizing Aristotelianism that the Islamic world received from Graeco-Roman late antiquity and creatively developed.[5] Might it have been helpful to include more borderline figures? One thinks especially

of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), who, in his works against Aristotelian logic, is clearly "doing philosophy" in the modern sense of the word, even if he disavows *falsafa* in the premodern sense.[6] Even more boldly, might someone like Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), also no friend to premodern *falsafa*, have been included on the grounds that he is engaging in "philosophy of history"? There are no easy answers to these definitional questions, and the volume's strength lies in its refusal to offer any, preferring instead to let readers think through the problem themselves.

Perhaps more interesting than the word "philosophy" in the title is the label "Islamic." What do the editors mean by this term? Whereas the 2014 *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology* did not need to justify its inclusion of the modifier "Islamic," the editors of the present volume are aware that many readers will find the phrase "Islamic philosophy" problematic. Responding to proponents of the equally popular "Arabic philosophy," El-Rouayheb and Schmidtke point out that the term excludes philosophical works written in other languages, such as Persian and Turkish. Quite rightly, "Arabic philosophy"

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4. For a statement of the difference between the modern and premodern understandings of "philosophy" or "*falsafa*," see Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna and After: The Development of Paraphilosophy; A History of Science Approach," in *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century*, ed. Abdelkader Al Ghouz, 19–72 (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2018), at 20–21. It should be noted, of course, that *falsafa* ("philosophy") and *faylasūf* ("philosopher") do occasionally appear in the generic sense of "wisdom" and "wise man" even in premodern Arabic and that various Islamic philosophers give their own abstract or tendentious definitions of *falsafa* and related words.

5. It should also be noted, however, that from the beginning, some self-identified *falāsifa*, such as Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, could nevertheless consciously reject central Aristotelian tenets.

6. On the perception that Ibn Taymiyya is "doing philosophy" or "*falsafa*" in the modern sense, see Anke von Kügelgen, "The Poison of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle for and against Reason," in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, 253–328 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), especially at 283–284. Von Kügelgen argues, moreover, that Ibn Taymiyya was more influenced by the medieval *falāsifa* than he would have cared to admit.

was inappropriate given their volume's scope. Yet as the editors themselves admit, "Islamic philosophy" runs the risk of excluding Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, or even "freethinking" philosophers writing in Islamic lands—some of whom, such as Abū Bakr al-Rāzī and Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī (d. 364/974), receive dedicated chapters in the *Handbook* (ch. 3, Peter Adamson, and ch. 6, Sidney H. Griffith). What the editors clearly mean by "Islamic philosophy" is philosophy as it was practiced historically and today in Islamic lands. Why not "philosophy in the Islamic world," then, or the increasingly popular "Islamicate philosophy"? El-Rouayheb and Schmidtke argue that the former is unwieldly and the latter obscure, liable to render an already difficult field still more inaccessible to general readers. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a marketing team at Oxford University Press greenlighting a volume entitled *The Oxford Handbook of Islamicate Philosophy.*

Of course, many scholars prefer "Islamicate philosophy" to "Islamic philosophy" for another reason, one not raised by El-Rouayheb and Schmidtke when discussing the volume's scope. To use the term "Islamic philosophy," the argument goes, is to imply, intentionally or not, that there is something essentially "Islamic" about the philosophy under discussion. That is, beyond merely describing philosophy written in lands where Islam predominated, the term "Islamic philosophy" appears to assume a fact not immediately in evidence: that

Islam influenced the essential character of this tradition.[7] By way of illustration, a critic might object that a companion to European philosophy including such diverse thinkers as Abelard (d. 1142), Descartes (d. 1650), Nietzsche (d. 1900), and Derrida (d. 2004) would never receive the title *The Oxford Handbook of Christian Philosophy.* All four philosophers hailed from Christian-majority countries, but it is highly debatable whether they all participate in something that could meaningfully be described as "Christian philosophy." Use of the term "Islamic"—though perhaps unavoidable in a volume of this scope—inevitably risks invoking monolithic notions of culture that postcolonial and other theorists have worked to deconstruct.[8]

Such controversy over the term "Islamic" gets at the heart of the volume's central, if unspoken, question, alluded to above. Even if the philosophy under discussion is not essentially "Islamic," what essential features unify the volume's disparate chapters? Since the volume is arranged chronologically, is there a central historical narrative that unites all the thinkers whom *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy* brings together? Take, for example, the Iraq-, Syria-, and Egypt-based al-Fārābī (d. 339/950–951) (ch. 5, Damien Janos), the Andalusian Ibn Ṭufayl (ch. 11, Taneli Kukkonen), and the Iranian Sabzawārī (ch. 25, Fatemeh Fana). All three philosophers clearly belong to the same tradition inaugurated in ninth-century Baghdad, a tradition that, for

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7. By contrast, for a defense of the term "Islamic philosophy" on the grounds that philosophy as practiced in Islamic lands is meaningfully "Islamic," see Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 10–19.

8. Of course, at the end of the count, terms such as "Islamicate" and "Islamic world" run these same risks.

convenience, we might choose to label "Islamic philosophy," whether or not we view it as Islamic in essence.[9] Although geographically and chronologically disparate, al-Fārābī, Ibn Ṭufayl, and Sabzawārī shared many preoccupations and consulted many of the same texts and authorities, albeit sometimes through commentaries and other filters. By contrast, a figure like Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd, featured in the volume's final chapter, engaged in an analytic philosophy that was closely in dialogue with his twentieth-century contemporaries in Britain, where Maḥmūd studied, and elsewhere across the world. This global school of logical empiricism has its own distinct history and is connected with ninth-century Baghdad only at many removes.

In other words, one could readily posit an unbroken historical through-line, passing via Avicenna (ch. 7, Amos Bertolacci) and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1045 or 1050/1635–1636 or 1640–1641) (ch. 21, Cécile Bonmariage), that connects al-Fārābī with Sabzawārī. The *Handbook* includes chapters on every major link in that chain. By contrast, to situate Maḥmūd's logical empiricism fully in its intellectual-historical context, the reader would require chapters covering Austria's Ludwig Wittgenstein (d. 1951), Britain's A. J. Ayer (d. 1989), and China's Hong Qian (Tscha Hung, d. 1992), among others. From a historical or philological perspective, is it useful to describe both al-Fārābī and Maḥmūd as "Islamic philosophers" in

the same way that it useful to assign that label to both al-Fārābī and Sabzawārī? Alternatively, are historical through-lines and textual traditions reductive and unhelpful ways of approaching "Islamic philosophy" in the first place? Might a theoretical perspective that emphasizes hybridity and historical rupture or an ahistorical focus on philosophical themes be more fruitful?

Again, the *Handbook* does not attempt to answer such questions, nor should it, given the current state of research. It would in any case be inappropriate, not to say offensive, for the volume to exclude a set of Islamic-world philosophers on the basis that they were somehow less "Islamic"—even if the term "Islamic philosophy" were couched in a historically restrictive, nonessentialist sense. Instead, the volume opts for a refreshingly maximalist spirit of inclusivity, one that challenges future scholars to consider and reimagine precisely what we mean when we use terms like "Islamic philosophy" or even "Islamicate philosophy." In the end, one feature that undeniably unites the figures and works in El-Rouayheb and Schmidtke's volume is their long and inexcusable exclusion from Eurocentric histories of philosophy. The two editors, and indeed all of the volume's contributors, are to be thanked for producing a book that treats so many understudied philosophical works so expertly. *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy* will serve as a definitive reference for years to come.

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9. This philological approach based on textual traditions and authorial influence is exemplified by Dimitri Gutas, "The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 29 no. 1 (2002): 7, although Gutas uses the term "Arabic philosophy" rather than "Islamic philosophy."

In Memoriam

Remembering Speros Vryonis, Jr.
(1928–2019)

On March 11, 2019, Speros Vryonis, Jr., a towering figure in Byzantine history, Hellenic studies in general, and related Islamica, passed away in Sacramento, California. In anticipation of many tributes to him and commentaries on his astonishing scholarly legacy, I will limit my remarks here to a sketch of his life and some personal recollections.

Vryonis was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on July 18, 1928. It was then a semi-rustic urban center on the Mississippi in the segregated South. He always spoke with a slight Southern accent. His parents were immigrants from the island of Cephalonia (various spellings) off the west coast of Greece. His father established a large bakery and meat processing plant in Memphis, and as a boy Vryonis worked in both. He had fond memories of his childhood. He and his father frequently went fishing in the lakes and streams around the city.

He grew up bilingual in Greek and English. From early in his life, his parents impressed upon him the delights of Greek culture and civilization from Homer to the present. He would sit enraptured, listening to relatives and members of the Greek community in Memphis discuss the glories and tragedies of Hellenism. He learned of the Greco-Turkish war of 1919–21 and began to wonder how Anatolia had become Turkish.

In 1937, a few months before his tenth birthday and having just participated in a

State of Tennessee piano competition in Nashville, his parents took him from school to visit relatives in Cephalonia. They sailed on the *Queen Mary* to Southampton and then crossed Europe to Venice, where he had his first introduction to Byzantine art. From there they continued to Athens, where his parents took him to visit the Acropolis and Parthenon, a site that left an indelible impression on him. This visit was instrumental in determining his future professional and emotional life. Later, when he was a student for a year at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens, he visited the site at least five to ten times a month. Later still, when he taught at the University of Athens, he continued to visit it repeatedly. It was his intellectual and spiritual lodestone.

Vryonis spent three delightful months in Cephalonia, thoroughly immersed in the life and language of the island and exploring every square meter of it. A year after he returned to America, his parents separated. At the age of ten, he was sent to Castle Heights Military Academy, a private school in Lebanon, Tennessee, which closed in 1986. There he excelled in athletics, especially basketball and boxing, but he was cut off from Greek life and culture. At the age of sixteen he returned to Memphis and attended Southern Law University for a year (he once thought of becoming a patent attorney) before enrolling at nearby Southwestern College, now Rhodes College. He had high praise for his teachers there and graduated in 1950 with an honors thesis entitled "The History of Cephallenia from 3000 BC to 313 AD." After graduation he spent a year on a Fulbright Scholarship at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens and completed a project entitled "A Historical

and Archaeological Survey of Cephallenia" (1951), which is held in the library of that institution.

Afterward Vryonis entered Harvard, earning an MA in 1952 and a PhD in 1956 with a dissertation entitled "The Internal History of Byzantium during the Time of Troubles, 1057–81." In 1960, after doing postdoctoral work at Dumbarton Oaks and teaching at Harvard, he became professor of Byzantine history at UCLA, where he remained for twenty-eight years. In 1972, following the death of Gustave E. von Grunebaum, who had founded the Center for Near Eastern Studies at UCLA, he replaced von Grunebaum as director, serving twice until 1982. Between 1976 and 1984 he also held the chair of Medieval and Modern History at the University of Athens. In 1985 he founded the Speros Basil Vryonis Center for the Study of Hellenism, which housed much of his library, in Los Angeles and served as its director until 1988. In that year he left UCLA to become Alexander S. Onassis Professor of Hellenic Culture and Civilization at NYU and the director of the Onassis Center for Hellenic Studies (1988–1993). In 1995 he left NYU and returned to the Vryonis Center, which had meanwhile been relocated to Rancho Cordova south of Sacramento. Between 1996 and 2000 he again directed the Center until he retired to his home in El Dorado Hills, California, east of Sacramento. Upon his retirement the Vryonis Center was closed, and in 2002 its library was transferred to California State University Sacramento, where it became the Tsakopoulos Hellenic Collection.

Vryonis's scholarship was of extraordinary breadth and depth. A testament to this was the two-volume Festschrift in his honor, *TO EΛΛHIKON:*

Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr. (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas, 1993), presented to him on his sixty-fifth birthday. In reflection of his own work, the contributions ranged over Hellenic Antiquity, Byzantium, Byzantinoslavica, Armeniaca, Islamica, the Balkans, and modern Greece. The first volume contains a twenty-page bibliography of his publications. But the Festschrift by no means marked the end of his scholarly career. Indeed, he continued to publish on many subjects for another twenty-five years. An updated bibliography would probably reach forty pages.

Vryonis is most renowned, of course, for his unprecedented work *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971). The question of how Asia Minor had been transformed from a Christian Byzantine region into a Muslim Turkish one had long intrigued him. In 1959 he mentioned to Helmut Ritter in Istanbul that he wanted to write a history of this transformation, but Ritter discouraged him, saying it would be impossible. Vryonis took this response as a challenge. The result was a work that revolutionized the study of medieval Asia Minor. By a thorough analysis of both Greek and Muslim sources, he reached a series of conclusions about the causes and consequences of the transformation. His arguments have proven fundamental to our understanding of medieval Asia Minor. In the introduction to the second revised edition (New York: Greekworks. com, 2011), he reviewed scholarship by others on the subject after the first appearance of his book and noted that its basic theses had not been challenged.

Decline was translated into Greek and two attempts have been made to translate it into Turkish, but the task has proven too daunting. *Decline* won the Haskins Medal of the Medieval Academy of America for the most outstanding book in medieval studies in 1975. Vryonis would go on to receive many other prestigious awards and honors during his career, including fellowships (grants), honorary doctorates, election to learned societies, and decorations.

Vryonis adhered to the highest scholarly standards. He had no tolerance for academics who did poor work or, above all, did not have command of the languages required for their research. This attitude was epitomized by his critique of the first volume of Stanford Shaw's *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). Shaw was a colleague at UCLA, but when his work was published Vryonis considered it an affront to scholarly excellence, academic freedom, and the integrity of UCLA's evaluative process and standards. He did not feel free to discuss it until after giving up the directorship of UCLA's Near East Center, which he had renamed in honor of von Grunebaum, for whom he had the highest respect. He then published an exhaustive and devastating dissection of Shaw's book in *Balkan Studies* 24 (1983): 163–286. He demonstrated in painful detail that, apart from its countless mistakes, it was not an original work based on research in primary sources, as was claimed, but largely plagiarized from or based on secondary publications. Before Vryonis's critique, Shaw's book had already been harshly reviewed by Rifaat Abou al-Haj (*AHR* 82 [1977]), V. L. Menage (*BSOAS* 41 [1978]), and Colin Imber (*EHR* 93 [1978]). In Turkey, Aydoğan Demir (*Tarih*

Incelemeleri Dergisi 1 [1983]) considered the book worthless. I once asked Vryonis what Halil Inalcık thought of his criticism of Shaw's work. He replied that Inalcık had agreed with him but said, "We need him"—meaning that Shaw would help promote Ottoman studies.

I first met Vryonis in 1985, when I passed through Philadelphia while he was attending a conference at the University of Pennsylvania. I introduced myself and gave him a box of pistachios from Gaziantep, which greatly pleased him. In 1989 my wife and I moved from Ankara to Vacaville, California, which turned out to be only about forty-five minutes from the Vryonis Center in Rancho Cordova. I frequently visited the Center to use its remarkable library, and Vryonis and I soon became good friends. He was kind and helpful and always encouraged me in my work. Eventually we began to meet monthly for lunch. I always looked forward to these lunches because each time was like a tutorial on Byzantine or Turkish history, or on the state of the art of Middle Eastern studies in the United States. He was candid in his criticism of certain academics, including a few at UCLA in addition to Shaw. He felt they were frauds because they published little or mediocre work or had a poor command of the necessary languages. As director of the Center at UCLA and privy to the quality of the publications of its members, he was in a good position to judge. Vryonis could do research in more than a dozen languages. For him, competence in the necessary languages was the *sine qua non* of solid scholarship. This he found lacking even at Harvard in the early 1950s. He would recall that his professor of Byzantine history

would ask him to translate Greek for him and that instruction there in Middle Eastern languages was terrible. This was before H. A. R. Gibb arrived in 1955 and established the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard.

In the course of his life, Vryonis had to face a number of physical challenges. He suffered from seizures as a boy. He overcame two bouts of cancer, and near the end of his life, several vertebrae in his neck fused so that he could not raise his head. But the worst thing to befall him was the loss of the oldest of his three sons, Basil, who suffered from schizophrenia and took his own life while in his twenties. Vryonis never got over his son's death and named the Center in Rancho Cordova after him. Our older son suffers from a similar condition, and Vryonis always offered a sympathetic ear to our dilemmas.

Vryonis was not religious, nor were his parents in any strict or deep sense, although they were a family of fourteen generations of priests. The Greek Orthodox Church was simply a part of their cultural upbringing. Its festivals were markers of the seasons and bonds of community.

Vryonis had a wicked sense of humor. I once asked him to recommend a Greek restaurant in Sacramento for lunch. He replied that the Greek restaurants in Sacramento ranked among the minor Greek tragedies. He was the only person I know who had met M. F. Köprülü. This meeting occurred when the Turkish scholar and politician came to Harvard in 1956. Vryonis found Köprülü arrogant and described him as someone who "could see around corners." Certain graduate students, including Shaw, served as his "*ghulām*s". Curiously, when Vryonis was

teaching at the University of Athens, he said certain people there accused him of being a Turkish spy.

Like that of any scholar, his home was full of books. Numbering, he guessed, around nine thousand, they were stacked from floor to ceiling in every room. His garage contained forty file cabinets stuffed with papers. They included correspondence, files from his time at UCLA, research notes, and even a rare set of court records of the Menderes's trial at Yassıada in Turkey (1960–61). He also left behind a completed manuscript on the Greek sources for the Battle of Manzikert. One hopes that it will see its way to press as the final contribution to his remarkable legacy. As a great scholar, Vryonis was indeed *sui generis*. But more than that, he was a good teacher and friend.

— Gary Leiser
Independent Scholar
(leiser.gary@gmail.com)

"May His Memory Be Blessed"

Remembering Kenneth G. Holum
(1939–2017)

Reminiscences by:

Gideon Avni, *Israel Antiquities Authority and Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

Elizabeth Conner, *University of Maryland*

Alan Walmsley, *Macquarie University*

The ruins of Ruheibeh—Rehovot in the Negev, located in a remote corner of the Negev desert—are an impressive example of the Byzantine-period "Dead Cities." Back in the 1980s, when Yoram Tsafrir, my teacher and mentor at the Hebrew University, began excavating in Ruheibeh, revealing its churches, buildings, alleys, and water cisterns, I frequently visited this romantic desert site. Ruheibeh could be reached only by a four-wheel-drive vehicle on a rough dirt road. That was the setting of my first encounter with Ken, who joined Yoram in the 1986 excavation season. It was an interesting combination of Israeli and American scholars and students, all staying together in an outdoor camp near

the site. Ken, then a young professor of classical history at the University of Maryland, headed the American team.

As a young Israeli archaeologist at the time, I had a very clear stereotype about how a distinguished American professor of history should look and behave in the unwelcoming conditions of the Negev desert, with its intensive summer heat and occasional bursts of dusty winds. To my great surprise, however, I found Ken to be the absolute opposite of my predicted images. It was clear from first sight that he was not an ordinary academic with an urban educational background but rather well acquainted with open-air surroundings, outstandingly familiar with harsh desert conditions, and even enjoying living in a tent in the middle of nowhere. I was specifically impressed by Ken's great abilities in outdoors camping, equipped with his sophisticated Swiss Army pocketknife always in his immediate reach.

Ken was helpful in solving all kinds of practical difficulties in the camp, very much attached to his students and taking care of every detail of their unique desert experience. The tall figure of Ken with his perennial smile and good humor, surrounded by his young American students and knowing precisely his way in the desert and within the ruins of Ruheibeh, is still vivid in my mind after all these years. Only years later did I discover where all this knowledge originated, as I listened to Ken's stories about his childhood on a farm in the prairies of South Dakota, a descendant of Norwegian immigrants who settled in the American West, living in conditions that were not so much different from those in the Negev camp.

Another thing that impressed me deeply during the excavations at Ruheibeh was the deep friendship that had developed between Ken and Yoram Tsafrir, as if springing from the bottom of their hearts. This long-lasting friendship was further strengthened when Ken spent a sabbatical at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Jerusalem and when Yoram was a fellow at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC.

Looking back, I believe that this was one of Ken's great qualities—the ability to make true and long-term friendships with colleagues. In his many years of excavations in Israel he forged such relationships many times: first with Yoram and then with Avner Raban from Haifa University, Ken's partner in the excavations at Caesarea Maritima. Ken's experience in Caesarea began in 1978, when he was a member of the Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima (JECM), headed by R. B. Bull on behalf of the American School of Oriental Research, with the participation of twenty-two colleges, seminars, and universities in the United States and Canada. Ken was part of the Caesarea excavations from 1978 until his last years, and the study of the capital of Palestine Prima in Roman and Byzantine times became one of his primary interests. He excavated with JECM between 1978 and 1984, and later, between 1989 and 2004, he co-headed, together with Avner Raban and Joseph Patrich, the Combined Caesarea Excavations (CCE), as a joint project of the University of Maryland and Haifa University.

Ken also directed the excavations at the Temple Platform and the warehouse quarter north of the Inner Harbor, while Avner Raban headed the Inner Harbor excavations and those in other areas to the

south. The Temple Platform excavations proved to be a meticulous enterprise, as the different phases of the Roman temple, the octagonal Byzantine church, the invisible early Islamic mosque, and the Crusader church revealed a stratigraphic nightmare for archaeologists. But Ken, although he was first and foremost a historian of the Byzantine period, proved to be an excellent archaeologist as well. For years he invested all his efforts in deciphering the phases of building and development of this unique complex. In his preliminary publications of the excavations he succeeded in the interpretation of the transformation from temple to church, one of the very few such cases in Roman and Byzantine Palestine.

This multiyear project, which revealed some of the most important complexes of Caesarea that demonstrated the long sequence in the city's history from the early Roman period to early Islamic and Crusader times, was the height of Ken's archaeological work in Israel. It would be no exaggeration to say that Ken was falling in love with Caesarea. In 1988 he participated in mounting a major exhibition on the city and its history, named, after its founder, "King Herod's Dream." It seems that this was one of the outcomes of the "love affair" between a scholar of history and archaeology and the capital of Roman and Byzantine Palestine.

The long friendship between Ken and Avner Raban also proved very fruitful in terms of publications, featuring articles and archaeological reports, among them Ken's initiative of the series of "Caesarea Papers" in the *Journal of Roman Archaeology* supplements. These detailed archaeological reports and scientific publications, including Ken's interpretations of Caesarea's economy and

society in Late Antiquity, constitute one of the finest examples of a detailed evaluation of a major city on the Mediterranean coast.

Ken's love for Caesarea continued during his last decade. After ending his excavations at the Temple Platform, he continued to visit the site annually, working on the publication of the final reports and advising the young generation of Israeli archaeologists. His open mind and good spirits led him to foster another collaboration, this time with the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) expedition at Caesarea, headed first by Joseph Porat and in recent years by Peter Gendelman, who continued to excavate the vaults beneath the Temple Platform. Ken's last visit to Caesarea took place in 2016, when he spent several days with Peter and his staff, discussing stratigraphic questions following their latest excavation at the site. It was a joy to follow these consultations, in which, once again, Ken's great mind and open heart were so vividly expressed.

Ken was primarily a historian, much interested in archaeology and material culture but not trained as an archaeologist. Nevertheless, he was devoted to archaeological fieldwork and interpretation, spent time and effort to study these new fields, and became a very fine and qualified archaeologist.

Some years after our first encounter in Ruheibeh, I met Ken and Marsha during their sabbatical year in Jerusalem, when Ken joined the research group at the Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) at the Hebrew University. This group, organized by Yoram Tsafrir, focused on the cities of Palestine in Late Antiquity, following the large-scale excavations in Scythopolis-Baysan and Caesarea. The meetings included a weekly seminar in Jerusalem

and occasional tours to archaeological sites throughout the country, providing an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with Ken's vast knowledge of the relevant historical background. This combination of deep knowledge of historical sources and practical archaeological experience was unique among the scholars. The addition of Ken's good humor and friendliness, together with his common sense and practical abilities, established him as one of the main "pillars" of the IAS group.

My friendship and interactions with Ken and Marsha became more significant in the last years, when they spent their summer terms in Jerusalem. Ken was working on the publications of the Caesarea excavations, and Marsha spent her time at the National Library at the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University, working on her research on modern Jewish history. We would meet in the morning or late afternoon at their modest B&B behind the central Jerusalem bus station. Ken and Marsha became good friends with the Jerusalemite owner of the B&B, and apparently both sides were very pleased with and looking forward to these summer encounters. In our meetings, we spent lovely times talking about what was new in archaeology here and there, and then touring the excavations in and around Jerusalem together. As usual, Ken was very enthusiastic and full of new ideas and knowledge on whatever he was looking at. Exploring new excavations in Jerusalem, he would make the connections and present the "big picture" of whatever was exposed in the corners of the Old City.

Over the years I also had the privilege of meeting Ken and Marsha at their house in Silver Spring during my occasional visits to Washington, DC, and I especially recall their warm and welcoming hospitality. This was the time, many years after our first encounter in Ruheibeh, that I learned about Ken's years as a child and young adult on the family farm in South Dakota. In these encounters I also heard about Ken's early years as a student in the big city, the change he experienced when he became attached to a young Jewish lady (Marsha), and his gradual absorption into the world of Judaism. The good humor that emanated from his stories and experiences triggered bursts of laughter: just imagine a nice protestant farm boy of Norwegian origin becoming a prominent member of the Jewish community in Maryland! In the vocabulary of his acquired Jewish tradition, Ken was first and foremost a "mensch"—a true human being with a big heart open to the world and to all his friends and fellows. As is customary to say in the Jewish tradition: may his memory be blessed, יהי זכרו ברוך.

— Gideon Avni

It is my great honor to write about my dear doctoral adviser, my Doktorvater—as the Germans still say today—and my friend and mentor, Ken Holum. It seems fitting to begin with the *proemium* with which Choricius of Gaza, a teacher of rhetoric who flourished in the mid-sixth-century city of Gaza in Roman Palestine, dedicated his funeral oration to his beloved mentor, Procopius:

> The oration laments the fact that we have the necessity for a speech of this kind; for it [the oration] honors the funeral rites of my deceased teacher, offering him this repayment insofar as it is possible.

Like Choricius, I have no doubt about the impossibility of repaying my Doktorvater for all that he has given me over the years. As ancient rhetoricians of the Greek tradition were fond of observing, experience, like the world of sense of perception, will always exhaust the capacity of speech.

My relationship with Ken Holum spanned almost half of my life and was one of the most important relationships of my life. As a means of expressing some small measure of my gratitude to this very dear friend, I wish to speak about his work as a highly influential and wide-ranging scholar, a cherished teacher of undergraduate and graduate students alike, and an outstanding and irreplaceable mentor to graduate students. My Doktorvater was a rare combination of prolific scholar and truly kind human being.

Ken was an unusual scholar. He was unusual because he was both an excellent philologist, particularly in the study of late antique Greek, and a highly accomplished archaeologist. Ken's first book, *Theodosian Empresses*: *Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*, a pioneering study of women and dynastic politics in the fifth century CE, remains a foundational analysis of the construction of imperial authority through the person of the empress. For more than thirty years, Ken was one of the leading archaeologists of the Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima in northern Israel. He published multiple excavation reports of his findings and was still writing a final volume of these reports with steady care when he became sick in February 2017. Ken also endeavored to make the site accessible to a more popular audience, coauthoring a popular history

of the site with colleagues, contributing to articles on Caesarea in popular publications such as *National Geographic*, organizing exhibits at the Smithsonian, and appearing on programs on the site that aired on the Discovery Channel. His genuinely kind and gentle ways made his engagement with the interested public all the more successful.

Ken's amazing mastery of the ancient languages—as well as his remarkable facility with German—was thoroughly impressive to me as a graduate student who met with him weekly to translate hitherto untranslated late antique Greek letters from Gaza. More on this shortly. My Doktorvater had first learned Greek and Latin from German philologists in German—no small undertaking—while working for several years in Munich in the mid and late 1960s.

Ken's breadth as a historian of the sub-epochs of the Ancient Mediterranean was also remarkable. He was as comfortable teaching and speaking about classical Greece or imperial Rome as he was teaching and discussing his specialty, Late Antiquity. Strong as his technical skills in the ancillary disciplines of ancient history were, Ken was keen to deconstruct for his students many of the received scholarly categories set by some of the leading figures who, alongside Ken himself, had been pivotal in developing the academic field of Late Antiquity. In my experience, this interpretive caution, particularly in the study of the triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire, distinguished my adviser from many of the early architects of our field.

Following his relatively recent illness and up until his illness and afterward, Ken continued to be as active a scholar as ever, writing the archaeological reports

for Caesarea, articles, and book reviews and advising his eager gaggle of advanced graduate students.

Ken was devoted to his scholarly community of specialists working on Late Antiquity and the Ancient Mediterranean, and to scholars at all career stages as well as independent scholars and researchers. As a senior scholar, Ken was a most supportive adviser to younger colleagues. When I was a teaching fellow at the University of Tübingen in Germany (2017–18) in the Seminar für alte Geschichte, I learned in the course of several conversations with Aaron Johnson, a rising star in our field who spent the summer of 2017 in the Theology Seminar at Tübingen, that my mentor had played a key role in helping Aaron develop his first book and his approach to his sources. Aaron's description of his long discussions with Ken at Dumbarton Oaks was vividly reminiscent of my experience with my Doktorvater, and his recounting of this story about Ken—who was already quite ill by this point in mid-July—made it feel as though he were present with us on those hot, air-conditionless days in the Swabian summer sun.

Ken loved teaching, and he especially loved working with his graduate students. I remember most fondly my years as his teaching assistant, impressed by Ken's clarity as a lecturer, the conceptual apparatus undergirding each of his courses, his beautiful slideshows filled with his own pictures of various sites and antiquities, and his warmth and genuine respect for his students. Ken's courses demonstrated to students that the study of classical history contributed to the development of cognitive toolkits that had use in the interrogation of information in everyday life. Militating against "alternative facts," Ken taught that not all arguments are equal. In my mentor's classroom, the classical world was shown to be vibrantly alive in our living culture and institutions. In courses such as his "Athens as the Mirror of Democracy," students used the organization of radical democracy in classical Athens to examine their expectations and assumptions about their own representative democracy.

I began to learn to teach by watching Ken teach and by working as his apprentice. For years, he mentored me in how to teach, guiding me through various situations—the dreaded plagiarism of Wikipedia entries on the assigned book!—and teaching me how to lecture and how to teach students to read and understand ancient texts in translation. I was always asking for all sorts of advice, on my work and my teaching, and I feel and will always continue to feel the loss of this mentorship. I know it was a mentorship that was his great joy to give, a mentorship that he would never abandon, a mentorship whose values and lessons I will always carry with me. I will be looking for this mentorship and friendship the rest of my life, and it will never be replaced.

Ken was an irreplaceable adviser and teacher of graduate students. All members of my cohort will fondly recall our graduate seminars, which took place weekly in Ken and Marsha's dining room, the participants seated around the table, often nibbling on delicious cookies Marsha had baked. These lively sessions were always so exciting to me. I remember vividly how energized and exhilarated I left these discussions, unable to quiet my mind, flipping back through various issues the rest of the night,

perceiving how my thinking was changing, and drawing immense pleasure from the experience.

But the highlight of my week for years and the cornerstone of my graduate work with my Doktorvater was our weekly translation meeting. We met for a couple hours a week to read very challenging Greek texts, and, to my knowledge, we were the first to translate these texts into English. The texts we read—a couple hundred virtually ignored Greek letters written by late antique teachers of rhetoric in Roman Palestine—were a study of intellectual friendships and mentoring relationships between teachers and students in the late ancient Greek East. These letters are compact gifts of antiquarian erudition, which showcase, in particular, the art of constructing expressions of intimacy and friendship in the language of classical texts. We spent long hours meditating about the nature of the relationship between teacher and student, trying to unpack the classical models of this most important relationship as expressed in late antique letters.

The letters were an ancient mirror of the remarkable relationship between mentor and advisee. They offered a familiar yet different series of registers to represent this intellectual friendship and virtual parental relationship. Not unlike the adoptive intellectual families created and the kinship language used to depict intellectual friendships in early modern European literati circles, in the rhetorical culture of late antiquity, teachers considered themselves fathers to their adopted children, their students. The term Doktorvater, in my eyes, is thus an ancient usage.

I learned the love of sources—which is the heart of philology—from Ken. Ken loved reading Greek aloud and puzzling through the constructions. For him, such activity was sheer joy. But what we both loved most was putting the letter back together again after applying the translator's razor. What were we really looking at? How was a given text a source? For what was it a source? These were wonderful conversations; they constituted the art of doing history.

In my estimation, such experiences are highly unusual among advisees. It seems rare to find such a devoted mentor who would give such individualized attention to a student, every week offering her a workshop on philology and source criticism. Upon graduating, I mourned the loss of these regular sessions, although Ken and I continued to read amazingly rich texts from late antique Gaza up until the month before I left for Germany.

I am deeply grateful for the time and training my Doktorvater has given me these many years. But above all I am grateful for Ken's loving support and kindness, which provided such a positive context for learning and growth. From my earliest acquaintance with my mentor, his learning combined with his faith in my ability inspired me to do my very best work for him. I never wanted to let down this most kind and learned friend.

I grieve for this loss. Thank you, my dear Doktorvater, for all you have given me. Thank you for our walks through ancient Attic meadows. You are missed, and we will always miss you.

— Elizabeth Conner

Middle Eastern archaeology can boast of only the occasional protagonist of the highest standing, unlike the many professed archaeologists of mediocrity or, every so often, infamy drawn to the region in the past. Not only does Ken Holum indisputably belong at the top of the protagonist category; he was also a great bloke. He stood in stark contrast to his peers and, empowered with a questioning mind and unshackled thinking, confronted head-on the rigid opinions assumed to be true by his colleagues. My introduction to Ken was through his scholarship, most notably through his pioneering work at Caesarea Maritima (Qaysāriyyat al-Shām), the onetime capital of Byzantine Palaestina Prima and a district center of early Islamic Filasṭīn. Caesarea was no inconsequential town. Located on the Mediterranean coast, its administrative and commercial strengths gathered people and attracted investment through much of the first millennium CE, and it was thus an ideal case study on the evolving social and economic conditions of Palaestina/Filasṭīn during one of the most important periods in the history of the east Mediterranean.

Early excavations by the Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima during the 1970s and 1980s took as read existing assumptions on occupational profiles at the site in the lead-up to and following the arrival of Islam, then viewed negatively as a catastrophic and fatal rupture point in history. Publications of the Joint Expedition in the 1970s state that the excavations uncovered destruction levels interpreted as caused by early seventh-century CE attacks by the Sasanids and, after them, a Muslim siege and conquest. Absolutist terms, such as "complete" and "irretrievable," were readily applied to the supposed fate of Caesarea, with "permanent desolation" the outcome. This view was widespread among archaeologists in the 1970s, yet it stood in stark contrast to that held by historians of Islam, which caused great reputational damage to archaeology among historical studies. At first, by his own admission, Ken was party to this disingenuous interpretation of Caesarea's history, but by the 1980s significant doubt as to the validity of this view began to appear in a number of Ken's publications, culminating in his ground-breaking *BASOR* publication of 1992 entitled "Archaeological Evidence for the Fall of Byzantine Caesarea." It was a remarkable, courageous, and timely turnaround by a senior member of the Joint Expedition that not only put Caesarea in a new light but also had wider consequences for understanding the archaeological reading of sites in the mid-first millennium CE.

Just about everyone trying to unravel the complexities of late antique and early Islamic history and archaeology in the region suddenly took note of the Caesarea discoveries. In my case, having already uncovered contrary evidence to unchallenged paradigms while excavating an extensive late antique/early Islamic residential quarter at Pella (Ṭabaqat Faḥl) in Jordan (1979–82), Ken's paper was a revelation; here was a significant, yet politically charged, questioning and rebuttal of a prevailing narrative widely accepted in the archaeological establishment on the nature of the Muslim takeover of Caesarea and the consequences of that occupation on the town and its people. More personally, Ken freely acknowledged the insufficiency of earlier uncritical views adopted by the

Joint Expedition to which he had initially contributed, drawing on historical sources to question them while introducing into his rebuttal fresh archaeological evidence from Caesarea, including important material compiled by Cherie Lenzen for her 1983 doctoral thesis at Drew University.

Archaeological interpretations are usually easy to dispute because of the inherent intricacies and, on the face of it, often conflicting outcomes of archaeological research. However, while demolition is easy, building an alternative explanation is notoriously difficult and time-consuming. Ken's research and publications into the 2010s sought new ways of understanding under the banner of "transitions," a concept prominent in late antique and early Islamic studies of the east Mediterranean since the 1990s. On occasions our paths crossed, and his openness and friendly disposition were immediately apparent, but it was not until

a two-day conference hosted in April 2005 by Ken and Hayim Lapin at the University of Maryland that I witnessed first-hand Ken's deep understanding of the period and the breadth of his scholarship (the University of Maryland's library record of the conference publication lists more than twenty subject keywords in English alone, from ethnicity to antiquities). In the "who's who" of scholars Ken gathered for the occasion, such as Oleg Grabar, Irfan Shahîd, Sidney H. Griffith, Donald Whitcomb, and Gideon Avni, Ken's eclecticism was on full display, with papers addressing, as one catalog keyword defines it, the "intercultural communication" of the time, as different religious, ethnic, and cultural elements forged new understandings of their socially diverse world. Yes, his reach was wide, and his scholarship progressive: Ken Holum was, indisputably, a scholar of great distinction.

— Alan Walmsley

In Memoriam

REMEMBERING MICHAEL BONNER

(1952–2019)

Reminiscences by:

Steven Judd, *Southern Connecticut State University*

Alison Vacca, *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*

Robert Haug, *University of Cincinnati*

Noah Gardiner, *University of South Carolina*

Antoine Borrut, *University of Maryland*

It is hard to fathom the impact that Michael Bonner had on my life and hard to accept that he is no longer with us. I first met Michael in December of 1990. We had an hourlong meeting in his Spartan yet disorderly office in the now defunct Frieze Building at the University of Michigan. Somehow, after this nervous, unstructured encounter, I came away convinced that I should pursue my graduate studies at Michigan, and he came away persuaded that I should be his first incoming PhD student. Despite his cautious nature, Michael took a tremen-

my research agenda was vague, idealistic, and unrealistic. Had I been more attuned to the dynamics of academia, I would have realized that I also took a risk on him. I abandoned a successful career track to tie my academic future to an untenured assistant professor who had yet to prove himself to his colleagues. It was ultimately one of my best decisions. Despite his precarious position, Michael was always able to secure funding for my work and insulate me from the peculiarities of academic politics, despite my occasional urge to enter the fray. He encouraged me and enabled me to finish my studies in a timely manner and never exploited my labor to advance his own research agenda.

As a mentor, Michael's guidance was always understated. He allowed and encouraged his students to pursue their own research passions. In retrospect, I nonetheless somehow ended up exploring topics that were compatible with his own interests. The exception to his subtle approach to mentoring came when I briefly but actively entertained the possibility of shifting my focus to modern Middle Eastern politics. At that point, Michael organized a multifaceted intervention. I suspect that his efforts were far more extensive than my knowledge of them. I regret that I never found the opportunity to thank him for saving me from modernist follies.

While Michael's approach to mentorship was gentle, when it came to actual academic work he was rigorous and exacting, particularly in regard to language. As native Francophones will attest, his French was impeccable. He was always reticent to acknowledge that his German, which was sufficiently agile to produce publishable translations of Heinz Halm and Albrecht Noth, was essentially self-taught. Michael had little patience for linguistic sloppiness and expected grammatical precision from himself and his students. In Arabic text classes, we quickly learned never to skip a final vowel or to try to mumble past an uncertain dipthong. One memorable encounter with Michael's meticulousness occurred when several of us were reading a complicated Arabic prose text that I've long since forgotten. Midway through my recitation of the text, Michael stopped me abruptly, tossed his reading glasses on the table, and challenged me to "defend that *kasra*!" After I stumblingly explained my thinking, his scowl turned to puzzlement and he begrudgingly concluded that I *might* be correct and we moved on. A few minutes later, he stopped the next student midway through the subsequent passage to point out that "Steve's *kasra*" would make the next sentence utterly incoherent. I stood belatedly corrected, and we learned a valuable lesson about paying attention to minute detail while also remembering the broader picture.

During my time at Michigan, Michael was less outgoing with his students than he would become later in his career when he was relieved from the pressures of the tenure clock. On occasion, though, his sense of humor and his élan would surface. I recall one autumn lunch together when we were sharing news of our summer travels. After attentively listening to details of my dissertation progress, it was Michael's turn to report. He began to describe in great detail and with increasing animation the Italian TV game show he had watched daily while visiting Daniela's family. When he noticed my bewilderment, he quickly explained that

he was watching the show to improve his colloquial Italian and to master regional accents. However, he admitted that the show was also surprisingly entertaining. Coming from anyone else, this would have sounded like a dubious excuse to justify the diversion of vapid television, but from Michael, I knew it was the truth. Every moment was an opportunity to learn, and learning languages was especially exciting for him.

Michael was an urbane yet down-to-earth man, a brilliant yet humble scholar, and an excellent teacher and mentor. His infectious thirst for knowledge, the high standards he set for himself and others, and his unfailing kindness made him an exemplar both as a scholar and as a friend. He greatly enriched the lives of those who knew him and were privileged to work with him. He will be sorely missed.

— Steven Judd

It seems like I should have a clearer memory of the first time that I met Michael. I vaguely remember that we talked about my background in learning Arabic, what classes I should take, and the research interests of some of the other students in the program. But I do not remember the details. Instead, when I think about my time studying with Michael, the smaller moments predominate. I think of my memories of Michael as a geniza of sorts: unorganized and unrelated snapshots of the past in a variety of languages, some more comprehensible than others, each preserving moments that may or may not have deserved to be saved for posterity. I remember him looking at our seminar with some exasperation once

when we did not match his enthusiasm for the topic of the day. I remember a departmental reception at which Michael played his violin and paused to remind us that we should try the wine. He once told me that I could just learn Russian over a summer, as if I could walk out of the classroom in April only to return in September knowing Russian (I've tried this, but remain unsuccessful). I remember that in 2007, nearly anytime we entered into a tangent—regardless of topic—we would somehow end up talking about *Ibn Khaldun et les sept vies de l'Islam*. I remember when a classmate pitched an idea for a MESA panel on frontiers in early Islam and Michael responded, wholly unexpectedly, "Hot diggedy dog!" He once paused in a lecture in front an undergraduate class, turned to me, asked a question about Caucasian history, and segued neatly into his discussion on the Mamluk slave trade. I remember his feedback as he read through my book proposal at MESA over several glasses of wine and a surprisingly good Thai pizza. He was overjoyed to learn I was pregnant with my first child and celebrated instead of talking about how to survive graduate school with offspring. He emailed me back immediately when I had a suggestion about the correct vocalization of a Caucasian Albanian toponym in Ibn Ḥawqal. I remember that he once spoke of his interest in learning an ancient language, leaving me concerned because I had never even heard of it. I remember my French exam, when he turned to his bookshelf and had me read from a book chosen at random. Come to think of it, I think he chose Martinez-Gros, so perhaps it wasn't quite random.

When I think through these disjointed snippets in light of conversations I have

had with others since Michael passed in May, a few common threads emerge to force cohesion on the rambling and unpredictable memories. He was enthusiastic, supportive, and frequently surprising. Every single one of his students and colleagues has a story of Michael's polyglotism. Yet he paired a mastery of languages with unparalleled humility. I once brought Michael a particularly torturous text. I do not remember which one it was, but I assume it was something in Arabic or the *Sectarian Milieu.* I told Michael that I simply did not understand a certain passage. He looked it over and nodded: "Huh, yes, that's difficult, isn't it? Let's muddle through it together." That stands out to me as the most important anecdote I could recount to explain my appreciation for Michael. He made me read the passage aloud and then signaled where I needed to rethink the topic. He did not tell me the answer, but helped me get there on my own. I recognized then, and perhaps even more now, that Michael never found that particular passage difficult. He would not have had to "muddle through" it alone. He created an opportunity for me by framing learning as a collaborative space between student and teacher. It was never about proving knowledge or ability and it was never about figuring things out at first glance. Michael taught me that research is about muddling until things make sense, about conversations that we generate together when we read texts closely and bring ideas to the table. For that lesson, I remain grateful.

Michael taught courses on historiography, geography, and biography in early Islam. I still have hard copies of the syllabi, even though they are more than a decade old now. Over the years, I have come to appreciate how Michael's teaching has created a community. In my first year as an assistant professor, I submitted an abstract to MESA independently. When I received the notification that the paper was accepted, I checked who else was on the panel. I was placed with Michael himself and another one of his recently finished advisees. The apples did not far fall from the tree. In the time since, I have had the opportunity to exchange papers and present on panels with other members of the Banū Bonner, and we do not struggle to find common interests. In part, this community was formed through conversations in Ann Arbor, spread over years. But I like to think that it emerged because we all inherited some small portion of Michael's enthusiasm, bringing us all back to the table around topics that he introduced to us over a glass of wine or in seminars.

— Alison Vacca

When I remember my time in Ann Arbor, one image that always comes to mind is Michael Bonner laughing, leaning back in his chair, hands raised as he directs his point like an orchestral conductor, his entire face enmeshed in a smile. This is an image I can place in his office during one-on-one meetings to discuss dissertation chapters, in a seminar room while we unraveled some particularly stubborn classical Arabic text, or over a drink following a day spent attending panels at a meeting of the American Oriental Society or MESA. I think many of us can even picture him taking on this pose while presenting a conference paper. While people who knew Michael only from his work might think first of the scholar

with such exacting standards for his own work as well as the work of his students—I can also remember how quickly that laugh turned back toward the business at hand—and a polyglot's linguistic mastery, those of us who had the advantage of studying under and working alongside Michael knew him as a warm and funny man whose enthusiasm for his work and learning in general drew many of us away from other pursuits to study the history of the medieval Islamic world with him.

I first met Michael in the fall of 1999, freshly landed in Ann Arbor in pursuit of an MA from the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Michael was director of the center at that time, and therefore one of my first appointments upon arriving was with him to discuss my plans and ambitions and plot out the next couple years of my life. At that time, I had only the haziest of ideas about my academic interests—a trip to Morocco a few years earlier had left me enthusiastic for early modern North Africa, and it was my intention to use the MA program to explore the field a bit and, at the very least, learn Arabic. Michael sussed out the situation and got me enrolled in the survey of early Islamic history he co-taught with Rudi Lindner. Once my Arabic was ready for classical texts, he had me in a seminar reading geographic and economic texts. When he learned of my background in Geographic Information Systems, he got me involved in a project to map pilgrimage and trading routes that eventually fed into his work on the markets of the Arabs. Along the way, Michael's enthusiasm for the field drew me earlier and earlier until I decided to pursue a PhD with him in early Islamic history.

In the classroom, I often felt like Michael was another student—albeit an exceptionally advanced student who was far, far better prepared than the rest of us. While reading Arabic texts, Michael would sit at the head of the seminar table, surrounded by his legal pads filled with detailed notes, and when one of us would get stuck on a particularly tricky passage, he would just smile and wag his finger to notify us of the mistake. Instead of simply telling us what was wrong or what was right, he was always excited at the possibility we could figure it out ourselves. He never told us the answer directly, even though sometimes I was left guessing until I thought I had run out of possibilities; there aren't *that* many case endings in Arabic, after all. Instead, he pointed us toward the necessary tools to discover the solution for ourselves. Everyone is rightfully impressed with Michael's command of languages—he claimed working knowledge of ten on his CV, but I'm certain that was a modest underestimate—but his talents always felt encouraging, a model, rather than intimidating. If he can know ten, why I can't I learn a fourth and then a fifth? He made it seem possible. Michael would fondly tell tales of his own graduate student days, often phrased in terms of jealousy for those of us who, in his words, could still get together in a colleague's apartment and pull an all-nighter reading for our seminars. From experience, I know he and his seminars could bring students together like this . . . though I don't know whether any of us enjoyed staying late in the department library and shifting through *ṭabaqāt* in quite the same way he did.

Then again, I don't know whether many of us can enjoy research, learning, and exploring the way Michael did. I remember times when he would get a mischievous

look in his eye, lower his voice, and act like he was about to confess a terrible sin, only to reveal that his greatest transgression was staying up late reading Icelandic sagas or attempting to learn Egyptian hieroglyphs. Exploring something new for the sake of it.

Thinking back on the decade I spent working closely with Michael in Ann Arbor—as an MA student and office assistant in CMENAS, as a research assistant on the Mapping Arabia project, and as his PhD advisee—one thing that keeps coming back to me is how easy it was to get lost in a conversation with him. I would head to his office with plans to talk about a dissertation chapter, but first we had to chat about whatever was on his mind. Sometimes it was Mozart's birthday. More often it was baseball (his dislike for the Big Red Machine of the 1970s was made abundantly clear when I accepted a job in Cincinnati). There were very few topics, it seemed, that he couldn't engage in conversation on or, at the least, wasn't willing to ask questions and learn something about. Eventually our talk would turn back toward work, but first we had to have a laugh.

Michael's passing was too sudden for many of us to believe, but I am happy about the many memories and the lessons he taught me over the years. I am also happy about the opportunity to share these stories with others who knew him and were likewise influenced by his passion.

— Robert Haug

I first met Michael Bonner when I was a new graduate student at Michigan's Department of Near Eastern Studies, and I lived largely in fear of him for the next two years. After a mediocre training in Modern Standard Arabic at my previous institution (taught with a "communicative" approach that dismissed the importance of such archaisms as iʿrāb), I was almost entirely unprepared for the series of classical Arabic reading courses that I was to take with him. I was certainly unaccustomed to being stopped at every erroneous semi-vowel or failure to properly elide the *alif*, each instance being met with Michael's implacably wagging finger and grunts of displeasure. Semester after semester, these classes were a boot camp in learning to read with precision and something approaching complete comprehension. However strict, Michael was a model of joyful philological inquiry, of the drive to comprehend something written a thousand years ago as if it were the most pressing problem the world faced. Class meetings were occasionally derailed by the need to discern the meaning of a single phrase, a whole shelf of dictionaries being pulled down in the process. After one lengthy discussion of some obscure point of grammar, Michael said cheerfully, "It's sheer pedantry, of course, but that's what we're here for, isn't it?"

These weren't just language classes, of course; they were also focused on the content of the histories, geographies, biographical dictionaries, and other texts that we read. One had to understand the genre in order to understand the text, Michael insisted, whatever labors that entailed. Working with biographical dictionaries, for instance, we were

forbidden from using the conveniently searchable online copies that were beginning to appear, and were instead consigned to hours in the stacks, leafing through the physical texts so as to grasp the logic of their arrangement. The classes were often grueling, but they were also replete with moments of levity, and with awe at the scope of Michael's knowledge. Class time was peppered with anecdotes about his own professors, corny polyglot jokes that were often lost on those of us who were merely tri- or quadrilingual, and impromptu lectures of stunning depth—not necessarily on medieval Islamdom. Something in al-Idrīsī about the Italian city-states was the occasion for a disquisition on medieval Italian politics that occupied most of a class session, Michael protesting that he was really a dilettante on the topic while producing from memory the names of countless minor rulers and their ministers and mistresses, the precise dates of coronations and deaths. Reading al-Masʿūdī (or someone similar), some detail of a battle in Central Asia in the ninth century reminded him of a similar situation in Canada in the nineteenth, also recounted in minute detail. Canada! Any reference to music could occasion lessons on the lives and works of European composers, Michael being a concert violinist in addition to his other accomplishments. For a while he threatened to put together a course on poetry for us. "Threatened," I say, because I was sure that meeting his standards of understanding prosody would be the death of me. At the time, I was relieved that the course never materialized, though I now count it among my great regrets. As recently as last year I daydreamed about convincing him to

let me come back to Ann Arbor for a few weeks one summer to do an informal version of such a class. Entirely selfishly, the closure of that fanciful possibility was one of my first thoughts when I learned of his death. I have regularly caught myself in imagined conversations with him since, accompanied each time by the pang of loss. There is something deeply sobering about such a wealth of knowledge blinking suddenly out of our world, even despite the monumental efforts he made to share it.

"I need some advice on how to conduct a *fitna*."

"You're a Mamlukist," Michael said to me once, shortly after becoming chair during a difficult period in the department's life; "I need some advice on how to conduct a *fitna*." His tenure as chair wasn't easy, but it was in those years that I grew past my initial intimidation, becoming much closer with him. That my research interests veered off into Sufism and the postclassical era did nothing to diminish our relationship, as I was now becoming versed in subjects that he (ostensibly) knew less about and thus was all the more eager to discuss. As a mutual friend once pointed out, one of the wonderful things about Michael was that he always treated us as if we were his intellectual equals. He wasn't teasing, she insisted, when he'd offhandedly suggest that we "pick up" some language or another, even if he made it sound like something one does over a weekend. Indeed, he took us seriously and sought out our advice in matters great and small—about the department, about something he was writing or thinking of

teaching. Through his generosity of mind and attention, he made it clear that a field like ours is a communal endeavor rather than the purview of lone geniuses, a running conversation that stretches back centuries and is sometimes best conducted over martinis.

I dreamed of Michael in September, a couple of months after his death. In the dream, I was back in Ann Arbor for something called a "post-defense defense"—an apparently mandatory interrogation of my scholarly contributions since finishing my degree—over which he was presiding. I'll admit this suggests that I've never completely overcome my anxieties about him or about my ability to ever meet the standards he set for us. Nevertheless, I was immensely pleased to see him again, and I hope such visitations never cease.

— Noah Gardiner

Michael spent the month of May 2001 in Paris as an invited professor at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS). On May 18, he gave a talk on the "economy of poverty" in early Islam in his impeccable French ("L'économie de la pauvreté dans l'islam des premiers siècles"). At the end of the paper, the chairperson congratulated him for "une présentation très riche," to which Michael immediately objected: "Non, on ne peut pas dire ça!" I would discover that this response was quite typical of Michael's wit and sense of humor.

It was my very first encounter with Michael, at a time when I was a beginning PhD student working on early Islamic Syria with only a vague sense of what I was actually doing. After his talk, he kindly agreed to chat over a drink, and I vividly remember spending a couple of hours discussing the pitfalls of early Islamic history, medieval Syria, and caliphal frontiers, among other things. Michael gave me invaluable advice on how to navigate the meanders of graduate school and provided me with a full panorama of the US academic landscape. He notably mentioned the then unpublished dissertation of one of his first doctoral students, Steven Judd, as a work that would be helpful to my own project. Michael was back in Paris in May and June of 2007 (again as an invited professor at the EHESS), only a few months after my defense, and he proved particularly supportive at a time when job prospects were grim.

After my move to the University of Maryland in the summer of 2008, I regularly met Michael at various conferences in Europe and in the United States. I had many occasions, therefore, to enjoy his friendship and good company. Discussions with Michael were never restricted to scholarship and would always stray into modern-day politics, literature, or food. I fondly remember an animated discussion about Italian wines at a conference near Milan while seated on the terrace of the spectacular Villa Cagnola, overlooking Lago di Varese.

I also invited Michael to the Washington, DC, area to one of our "First Millennium" workshops in February 2016. He was delighted to be paired with Chris Wickham to discuss the economy of the First Millennium. When I picked him up at the airport he immediately told me that I should not have wasted my precious time driving him around since university professors are so busy. He added that

he was glad I had done it, though, as the period was particularly difficult for him on a personal level. Indeed, we had intensely moving discussions during his brief stay in DC, as his father was then dying. At the end of the workshop, Michael drove straight to New York for what would be his father's last days. Michael's humanity, profound kindness, and generosity was more evident than ever during these challenging times.

Everyone who knew Michael had to be amazed by his linguistic skills. Our conversations regularly revolved around the vexing issue of non-Anglophone scholarship being increasingly ignored on this side of the Atlantic. Michael was particularly concerned about this trend, and we often lamented the situation while trying to imagine strategies for translating more foreign scholarship into English. Michael had himself contributed tremendously to such an effort by translating German, French, and Russian scholarship, on top of Arabic texts (including a yet to be published translation of Ibn Ḥawqal's *Kitāb ṣūrat al-arḍ*). He was particularly keen on the prospect of translating Gabriel Martinez-Gros's book *Ibn Khaldûn et les sept vies de l'islam* (2006), not only because of the significance of the work but also as a necessary corrective to the existing Anglophone scholarship on Ibn Khaldūn.

Much to my surprise, Michael, who had regularly written letters on my behalf as one of my referees, once asked me to reciprocate, as he was applying for a fellowship in Europe. I happily (but also anxiously) agreed and penned the strongest letter (or, more aptly, hagiography) I had ever written. It is not every day that you get to recommend Michael Bonner, after all! Much to my dismay, Michael ended up not getting the fellowship (and I still blame myself for that). I thought for a minute that I should have written my little hagiography in Syriac, as one does. I am confident that Michael would have laughed and concurred.

We exchanged several emails on May 23, 2019, as he was working on the final revisions of his article "In Search of the Early Islamic Economy," published in this issue of *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā*. The following day, he was gone. I never was a student of Michael's, but I benefited tremendously from his insights and support over the years. At the 2010 MESA meeting in San Diego, I recall walking into a restaurant and finding Michael laughing at a table with his former students who had attended the conference that year. He had taken them all out for dinner and immediately invited me or, in fact, summoned me to crash the party. I never was a member of the Banū Bonner, but I was happy to have become a *mawlā*. Michael was an exceptional scholar, a wonderful mentor, and a great friend. His passing is a tremendous loss for the field. He will be sorely missed.

— Antoine Borrut

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