Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy

Studies in the History and Culture of the Middle East

Edited by Stefan Heidemann, Gottfried Hagen,
Andreas Kaplony and Rudi Matthee

Volume 31

Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy

Edited by Alireza Korangy, Wheeler M. Thackston,
Roy P. Mottahedeh and William Granara

DE GRUYTER

A festschrift presented to our beloved teacher, mentor and friend Professor Ahmad Mahdavi Damghani on the occasion of his 90th Birthday.

Acknowledgments

This volume of essays honors Professor Ahmad Mahdavi Damghani's long and distinguished career as a teacher and a scholar. It is a product of the admiration, not only of the editors but, more importantly, of all the contributors who so diligently met our many deadlines and demands. Therefore, we would be remiss not to thank first the contributors, who took time out of their busy schedules to commemorate the accomplishments of one of their teachers. Their contributions serve as a reminder to all in the academy of the importance of such volumes, both for generating rigorous scholarship, and for providing a platform from which to appreciate effective and affecting pedagogy. We would like to thank each and every one of them for their scholarly spirit and their patience throughout the editorial process. We would also like to thank the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University for having afforded the contributors to this volume the chance to have Professor Mahdavi as their teacher and mentor during their studies at Harvard (with the exception of Lynda Clarke, who was advised by Professor Mahdavi through the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania). To the peer reviewers of this volume a sincere note of gratitude is due as well. Their attention to detail was instrumental to this project's timely completion. We owe a debt of gratitude to Jason Eversman for his careful copy editing and his willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty. Many thanks go to Dr. Gertrud Grünkorn of Walter De Gruyter whose patience, constant encouragement and help in every step of this book's production made our concept a reality. We also like to thank the editors of the present series (Studies in the History and Culture of the Middle East), Stefan Heidemann, Gottfried Hagen, Andreas Kaplony, and Rudi Matthee for their helpful editorial comments and recommendations regarding all aspects of the final manuscript. Finally, I would like to thank Professor Mahdavi, who has been a source of inspiration for so many of us, always humbly, selflessly, rigorously, and kindly.

Alireza Korangy, et al.
September 2015

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Part IV: **Islamic History and Historiography**

Alireza Korangy
Introduction

This volume was initiated by soliciting contributions primarily[1] from the students of Professor Ahmad Mahdavi Damghani during his tenure at Harvard University and Center for Middle Eastern Studies (1987–2014).[2] Professor Mahdavi has had a significant influence on a great many Ph.D. students and others at different stages of their studies in different universities. He has taught and advised at Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, and a number of Canadian, Iranian and European universities. Many of his former advisees and students are now established scholars in Islamic studies and its broader fields such as Arabic language and literature, Iranian and Persian languages and literatures, Islamic Jurisprudence, Islamic history, and Islamic theology. This volume brings together a small group of Professor Mahdavi's former Ph.D. students to commemorate his influence on the fields to which he has dedicated himself as a teacher and a scholar for over sixty years and presents him with a small token of their appreciation for his ninetieth birthday in 2016.

Ahmad Mahdavi Damghani was born on September 5, 1926, in Mashhad to Ayatollah Muhammad Kazim Mahdavi Damghani and Siddiqa Mahdavi Damghani. At a very young age—only five years old, in fact—Professor Mahdavi undertook the task of memorizing the Qur'an and he accomplished that task by the age of six. At the age of fourteen he was sent to the Hauza-i Ilmiyya of Mashhad, where for five years he studied under the supervision of some of the most prominent scholars of the Arabic language and linguistics, Islamic theology, Islamic philosophy, and Islamic jurisprudence in Iran. The first of these teachers was Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Nishaburi, also known as Adib-i Duvvum, who was in turn the student of the legendary Shaykh Abd al-Jawad Nishaburi, known as Adib-i Avval and also as Adib-i Mutlaq. Professor Mahdavi was a classmate of the Grand Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Ali Sistani and he often reminisces about the time they studied *Kitāb-i al-Mughnī wa al-Muṭawwal dar Ṣarf wa Naḥw wa Maʿānī va Bayān*, *Sharḥ-i Niẓām dar ṣarf*, and *Sharḥ-i Manẓūma-i Sabzavārī* in philosophy and logic with Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Nishaburi, Shaykh Hasan Shams al-Vaʿizin, and Shaykh Sayfullah Aysi, respectively. His other studies of philosophical treatises were under

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1 Dr. Clarke was advised by Professor Mahdavi through the Middle East Center at the University of Pennsylvania.
2 Professor Mahdavi started his teaching career at Harvard University at Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies in 1987 and fondly remembers Professor Keenan's instrumentality as regards his employment at Harvard.

the tutelage of Mirza Abu al-Qasim Ilahi and Shaykh Muhammad Rawhani with whom he delved into *Sharḥ-i Shamsiyya dar Manṭiq*. He also studied *fiqh* and *usul* with Sayyid Mahmud Razavi Ka'ini, Shaykh Muhammad Reza Turabi, and his own father Ayatollah Kazim Mahdavi Damghani. These early pedagogical experiences were the auspicious beginnings of his education in rhetoric, linguistics, and philology.

In 1945, Professor Mahdavi matriculated at the University of Tehran's division of theological studies (*Ilahiyyat*). While pursuing his bachelor's degree, he also intermittently attended hundreds of seminars by many of the established Islamic scholars of the time, some of whom were in Qom, not far away, and some of whom came to Tehran to hold private seminars. In 1948 and 1949, Professor Mahdavi studied *Kitāb-i Miṣbāḥ al-'Uns dar Taṣawwuf* with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Qom. In those same years, he studied *usul* with Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Ali Ha'iri Kirmani. Between 1953 and 1955, he further studied *fiqh* under the tutelage of Hajj Shaykh Muhammad Taqi Amuli. These extracurricular seminars shaped Professor Mahdavi's future scholarship and approach to pedagogy as much as his formal education.

He names the following individuals as his most important influences: his father, Ayatollah Kazim Mahdavi Damghani, Badi' al-Zaman Furuzanfar, Badi' al-Zamani Kurdistani, who was known as a 'walking encyclopedia' of Arabic texts and with whom he studied Arabic literature for twenty-five years,[3] and the renowned poet Sayyid Karim Amiri Firuzkuhi (see Figure 2). He has been bestowed with 'the permission to interpret and authenticate hadith' literature from Ayatollah Mar'ashi Najafī[4] (see Figure 3), Ayatollah Shaykh Muhammad Baqir Ayatullahzada Mazandarani, Ayatollah Shaykh Muhammad Salih Allama Ha'iri Simnani, and Ayatollah Muhammad Kazim Mahdavi Damghani, who was also a teacher to Hajj Sayyid Ali Sistani from 1956 to 1958.

He studied divinity with Furuzanfar for three years and literature for seven. His studies with him have left a unique impression on Professor Mahdavi. It is a fact that no one has had more schooling from Furuzanfar than Professor Mahdavi,

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3 His letter of *ijāza-i tadrīs* (Permission to commence mentorship) to Professor Mahdavi, after he completed his readings with him, reflects the level of protocol that existed during Professor Mahdavi's tenure as a student and in turn exemplifies the degree of rigor to which he is so accustomed (see Figure 1). Professor Mahdavi considers this and several other *ijāzas* by these scholars "more important to him than a hundred Ph.D.'s": *az ṣad dukturā bīshtar mī'arzand!*

4 Ayatollah Mar'ashi Najafi is considered an institution when it comes to studies of *fiqh*, *hay'at*, Islamic Medicine, and Islamic history and historiography. He is the author of over 148 books and articles, and his students included among many others, notable Islamic scholars such as Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari, Ayatollah Muhammad Mahdavi Kani, and Imam Musa Sadr.

and regardless of how prodigious the extent of his own publishing and his own accomplishments, he considers his greatest accolade the recognition that Furuzanfar bestowed on him on page 69 of his *Sharḥ-i Risāla-i Qushayriyya*, when the teacher referred to his student as "my most learned friend." This level of respect for mentors long gone reminds one of these immortal lines in Saʿdī's *Gulistān*:

Pādshāhī pisar bi maktab dād
Lawh-i sīmīnash bar kinār nahād
Bar sar-i lawh-i ū nibishtand bi zar
Ki jawr-i Ustād bih az mihr-i pidar

A king sent off his child to school
And as was the custom gave him a tabula and a writing tool
Upon the top of that tabula they had written for the child in gold,
"Consider less favorable your father's kindness to your master's scold!"

There are many other scholars he names as the pedagogical foundations of his academic life: Dhu al-Majdayn, Ahmad Bahmanyar, Ali Akbar Fayyaz (once dean of the School of Literary Studies at Mashhad University), Mahmud Shahabi, Shaykh Mahdi Ilahi Ghomshei, Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Arabshahi, Muhammad Muhammadi, who was the dean of the School of Divinity after Badiʾ al-Zaman Furuzanfar, Zabihullah Safa, Dr. Lutfali Suratgar (Sukhansanji), Dr. Khanlari, Husayn Khatibi, Ehsan Yarshater, Sadeq Kia, and Mudarris Razavi, among others.

Professor Mahdavi's Ph.D. thesis directors were Jalal al-Din Humaʾi, the author of many seminal works (*Tarikh-i Isfahan, Divan-i Uthman-i Mukhtari*, etc.), Abd al-Azim Gharib, Saʿid Nafisi, and Ibrahim Purdavud. The title of his dissertation was "*Taṣḥīḥ va Taḥshiyya-i Kitāb-i Kashf al-Ḥaqāʾiq-i ʿAzīz Nasafī*." He received his Ph.D. with the highest distinction in 1963.

Professor Mahdavi's success in teaching runs so deep that many, including his own students, sometimes forget the breadth of his scholarship and in fact how philologically complex it is—even though his teaching and his scholarship are not mutually exclusive at all. A number of well-known figures in Islamic studies have reviewed his scholarship very favorably. One among many was Ayatollah Qasim Khuʾī, the predecessor to Ayatollah Sistani as the spiritual leader of much of the Shiite world, and undoubtedly one of the most highly regarded scholars of Shiism, who highly commended Professor Mahdavi's edition of *Al-Majdī fī Ansāb al-Ṭālibīʾīn* (see Figure 4).

Professor Mahdavi's scholarship, with respect to poetics and literature, falls under the rubric of comparative philology. His impressive memory is highlighted in his treatment of literature, history, historiography, and *kalām* both in his writ-

ings and his classes.[5] While there are far too many examples that could speak to his memory and his scholarly rigor, here I will allude to one instance.

In an article entitled "Maḍāmīn-i Mushabbah-i Shāhnāma va Dīgar Marāji'-i Adabī yā Madhhabī Pīsh az Firdawsī,"[6] he explains how some of the themes in the *Shāhnāma* can be cited in other works; what follows is an example from the *Shāhnāma* followed with Professor Mahdavi's efficacious explanation. His students witnessed this kind of philological 'tracing' in every class and were amazed that he relied entirely on his memory for what always turned out to be a long list of cross-references:[7]

Biyāmad parīchahra'ī maygusār
Yakī jām bar kaf bar-i shariyār
Jahāndār bistad bikhurd ān nabīd
Bulūr az may-i surkh shud nāpadīd

An angel-faced beauty bearing wine came forth
Took a cup of wine to the king [at his court].
The all powerful took hold of wine and with one gulp
The crystal was left empty of crimson, not left one pulp.[8]

Professor Mahdavi then goes on to say:

"And before Firdawsī, Buḥturī and Ṣāḥib [aka Ṣābī] and Kishājim[9] have said as well":

Buḥturī:

Yukhfī az-zujājata lawnuhā fa ka-annahā
Fi k-kaffi qā'imatun bi-ghayri 'inā'i

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5 Kristen Brustad says the following in her essay: "My favorite part of our lessons was when Professor Damghani would read aloud a line from the poem at hand, pause, look off, say, '*hāzā yuzakkirnī bi bayt* ...' ('this line reminds me of the line by ...'), and recite a line by another poet from memory."

6 Aḥmad Mahdavī Dāmghānī, "Maḍāmīn-i Mushābih-i Shāhnāma va Dīgar Marāji'-i Adabī yā Madhhabī-i Pīsh az Firdawsī." *Gulistān* 4 (1376): 45–59.

7 All Arabic and Persian poems are translated by Alireza Korangy.

8 This is of course a double entendre. The other poetic intention is to imply that "the wine's purity made the crystal cup look invisible." This is the meaning Professor Mahdavi alludes to in the ensuing explanations.

9 Maḥmud b. al-Ḥusayn Kishājim (d. 350/961).

You'd say the wine hides the color of the cup;
Or standing up without a cup is wine and its every drop.

Kishājim:

Lastu adrī min raqqatin wa ṣafā'in
Hiyya fī ka'sihā umma 'l-ka'sū fīhā

A wine so clear that it is indeed hard to know:
Is it the wine embracing the cup or the cup in it has the wine aglow?

Ṣābī or Ṣāḥib:

Raqqa 'z-zajjājū wa raqqati 'l-khamrū
Fa tashabahā wa tashākala 'l-'amrū
Fa ka-'nnamā khamrun bi lā qadaḥin
Fa ka-'nnamā qadaḥun wa lā khamrū

From the transparent wine and the clarity of the vessel
I don't know which is the cup and which the wine;
As though there is wine standing without a crystal nestle
Or there is a cup upright and of the wine in it there is no sign.

Professor Mahdavi also has had an accomplished career as an editor, serving as the editor-in-chief of the literary journal *Gulistan* from 1997 to 2002. In other capacities, between the years of 1961 and 1974, he was Iran's chief tribunal justice of Civil Registry, and from 1974 until 1980 he was the president of Iran's Civil Registry.

The contributions in this volume are divided into four thematic sections, with each addressing one of the fields in which Professor Mahdavi Damghani has been so influential during his long career: 1) classical Persian literature and philology; 2) classical Arabic literature and philology; 3) Islamic theology, Islamic jurisprudence, and Islamic philosophy; and 4) Islamic history and historiography. Although these fields can often overlap, it was thought more advantageous to organize the collection along these lines.

Classical Persian Literature and Philology

Although when asked Professor Mahdavi would almost always refer to himself as a "student of Arabic philology," he is no less versed—and no less recognized—as a

scholar of Persian literature. The articles herein engage some of the writers, poets, and poetics that have interested Professor Mahdavi over the course of his life as a teacher and a scholar. Matthew Smith's article "Moving toward the Modern: The Nationalist Imagery of Malik al-Shuʻarā Bahār" explores the parallels that Bahār perceived in his political and poetic lives and argues that Bahār the poet and Bahār the social conscience are one and the same. Rahim Shayegan's philological investigation addresses the "Old Iranian motifs in *Vīs o Rāmīn*." He treats some of the text of *Vīs o Rāmīn*, to elucidate some of the connections between the Old and the New and does in fact highlight some never-before-examined aspects of the well-known epic. Elaheh Kheirandish's essay "Astronomical Poems from the 'Four Corners' of Persia (ca. 1000–1500 CE)" is a chrestomathy of poems, which detail astronomy and astrology and their broader themes in greater Persia. As Kheirandish puts it, "These poems include content that correspond to concepts and expressions within early astronomical and related traditions that raise specific, and often unexplored, historical questions."

Classical Arabic Literature and Philology

In this section, Alexander Key's article "Moving from Persian to Arabic," discusses the poems in Raghib's manual of *adab* that are described as "*manqūla min al-fārisiyya*." Through a comparative philological investigation, he treats both Arabic and Persian proverbs under the auspices of the tradition of medieval translations from Persian to Arabic. "The Iconic Sībawayh" by Kristen Brustad is an eye-opening probe into the annals of Arabic grammar and the life of legendary grammarian Sibawayh. It highlights the importance of milieu and its role in Sibawayh's creation of an enduring grammar. She argues that "he and his teacher al-Khalīl, author of *Kitāb al-ʻAyn*, wrote their books aiming to describe the ʻArabiyya, and that this project ultimately resulted in the rise of an ideology of language that survives today." Furthermore, Kristen's treatment and account of Sibawayh's struggles as a non-Arab grammarian of Arabic gives us insight into xenophobia in a different time and place. Last in this section is an article by Sarah Savant, "Naming Shuʻūbīs." Sarah Savant investigates whether the Shuʻūbiyya movement has been overanalyzed in the past—or rather overemphasized—at the expense of studies that might have better engaged the other non-Arabs in early Islam. She argues that this overestimation of the movement has allowed for a strong polemic of nationalist "approbation" against the 'Iranian element' of early Islam.

Islamic Theology, Islamic Jurisprudence, and Islamic Philosophy

I can say with confidence that reading the essays in this section was a timely learning experience for me, and although I feel quite pedestrian in my understanding of much of the terminology and discourse, I felt the deft writing presented me with a pedagogically facile primer. The essay topics in this section range from *taṣawwuf* to *fiqh*. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri's piece, "Prioritizing Metaphysics over Epistemology: Divine Justice (*'Adl*) and Human Reason (*'Aql*) in al-Shaykh al-Mufīd's Theology," explores Shiite intellectual history by examining Shaykh Mufīd's conception of justice (*'adl*) and contextualizing it in other theological discussions of justice in the tenth and eleventh centuries by such contemporaries as 'Abd al-Jabbār, Ibn al-Baqillānī, and Miskawayh. It parses at a macro level the language of the ideologies of these theologians. GhaneaBassiri demonstrates the importance of heeding the minutiae in language in understanding Islamic theology in general and Shiite theology in particular. Ahmed El Shamsy's "Returning to God through His Names: Cosmology and *Dhikr* in a Fourteenth-Century Sufi Treatise," uses the *Sirr al-Asrār* (*Sirr al-Bayān*) as its central text for tracing the more general development of the *dhikr* tradition in the institutionalized Sufi orders. He demonstrates how *dhikr* was understood as a "graded process that could lead its practitioner back to humanity's divine origin through various layers of existence." Appropriately titled "Friendship in Islamic Ethical Philosophy," Roy Mottahedeh's essay addresses friendship as engaged by Miskawayh and Ṭūsī. Mottahedeh writes:

> Interestingly, both these highly learned men, who no doubt taught students in some fashion or other, acknowledge friendship between teacher and student. Ṭūsī, who is particularly fulsome on the subject, places "the love of the teacher in the student's heart" between the love of God—the strongest love—and love of children for parents. Parents nurture the bodies of their children whereas teachers nurture their souls. "Likewise," adds Ṭūsī, "the love by the teacher for the student in a good way is superior to the love of the father for the son, for the teacher nurtures [the student] with complete virtue and sustains [him] with pure wisdom.

In this section we also have David Owen's "The Poetic Syllogism: Foray into an Inductive Research Proposal." Easily the most technical of all the essays in this section, it is of particular value for those interested in Arabic logic and its Greek correlations. Elias Muhanna contributes an article the erudition of which belies the brevity of its composition. In his essay, "The Scattered and the Gathered: Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's Infrequently Asked Questions," Elias translates about a hundred of the questions asked of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Miskawayh (d. 1030) by Abū Hayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 1023). He elucidates the philosophical categories in

Tawḥīdī's work with his "system of classifying his questions according to philosophical categories." Elias also offers his own topical index. Lynda Clarke's "'*Aql* (Reason) in Modern Shiite Thought: The Example of Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya (1904–79)" is the other essay in this section that addresses *'aql* in Shiite thought. However, she points to a modern tendency to re-institutionalize Shiism as a "religion of reason." She does so by going beyond the borders of Iran, to which every Shiite thought and Shiite controversy seems to be traced. Her examination of reason through the works of Maghniyya, the Lebanese jurisprudence scholar, is a poignant treatment of the modern understanding and articulation of reason in Shiite thought and philosophy. Sarah Eltantawi's "Ṭūsī Did Not 'Opt Out': Shiite Jurisprudence and the Solidification of the Stoning Punishment in the Islamic Legal Tradition" questions Ṭūsī's treatment of stoning and takes up the question of authority and legality in accordance to the broader Islamic law and jurisprudence. This article brings to light the intricate minutiae that make Islamic law so intriguing and often so exegetically challenging. Finally in this section, Tahera Qutbuddin's article, "'Alī's Contemplations on this World and the Hereafter in the Context of His Life and Times," challenges and complicates an otherwise clear dichotomy in 'Ali b. Abī Tālib's sermons. She contextualizes both those sermons that castigate the world and those that defend it. It goes to show how philosophical, social, and other factors present in the milieu influenced the composition of these *khutbas* and were in turn influenced by them.

Islamic History and Historiography

This section provides a prudent platform for further novel investigations into and dialogues about both 'Abbasid and South Asian history. In his essay, "al-'Aṭṭāf b. Sufyān and Abbasid Imperialism," Chase Robinson asks, "In what ways does speaking of empire advance or impede our understanding of how social and political power was exercised in the late eighth century, the very heyday of Abbasid power?" What follows is a careful examination of al-'Aṭṭāf b. Sufyān and the events that unfolded in 793–94 when he made Mosul fall outside the administrative periphery of the Abbasids. In the essay, "An Early Arabic Conversion Story: The Case of al-Faḍl b. Sahl," Michael Cooperson discusses Faḍl b. Sahl, the Abbasid vizier, and uses two primary texts—*Kitāb al-Wuzarā wa'l-Kuttāb* (Book of Viziers and Scribes) by al-Jahshiyārī (d. 331/942) and *Tārīkh al-Ḥukamā* (Biographies of Philosopher-Scientists) by Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1248)—in order to articulate his thesis that the case of Faḍl b. Sahl is "a partial exception to the rule of second- and third-century indifference to conversion stories." Here is an example of the kinds of peculiarities Cooperson explores:

> Not long after his conversion from Zoroastrianism to Islam "al-Faḍl was visited by the Christian physician and fellow Persian speaker Jibrīl ibn Bukhtīshū, who finds him reading the Qur'an and asks him what he thinks of it. 'Not bad,' says al-Faḍl. 'It's like Kalila and Dimna.'

Cooperson goes on to say: "This report raises several questions. Had al-Faḍl never heard or read the Qur'an before? What about Jibrīl? What is meant by comparing the Holy Book to a collection of animal fables? And why is the dialogue given in Persian?" By exploring these questions "this essay ... sheds light on ethnicity, conversion, and language contact in the early Abbasid period." *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī* is an important history of South Asia for so many reasons, and while some are reasons that make any historical source valuable, in "A Translation of the Prolegomena to Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī's *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*," Blair Auer suggests how a prefatory text can clarify considerably its author's later history. Baranī's introduction to his *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhi* is an occasion where he rationalizes his understanding of the interrelations among history, historian, historiography, historiographer, and historicity.
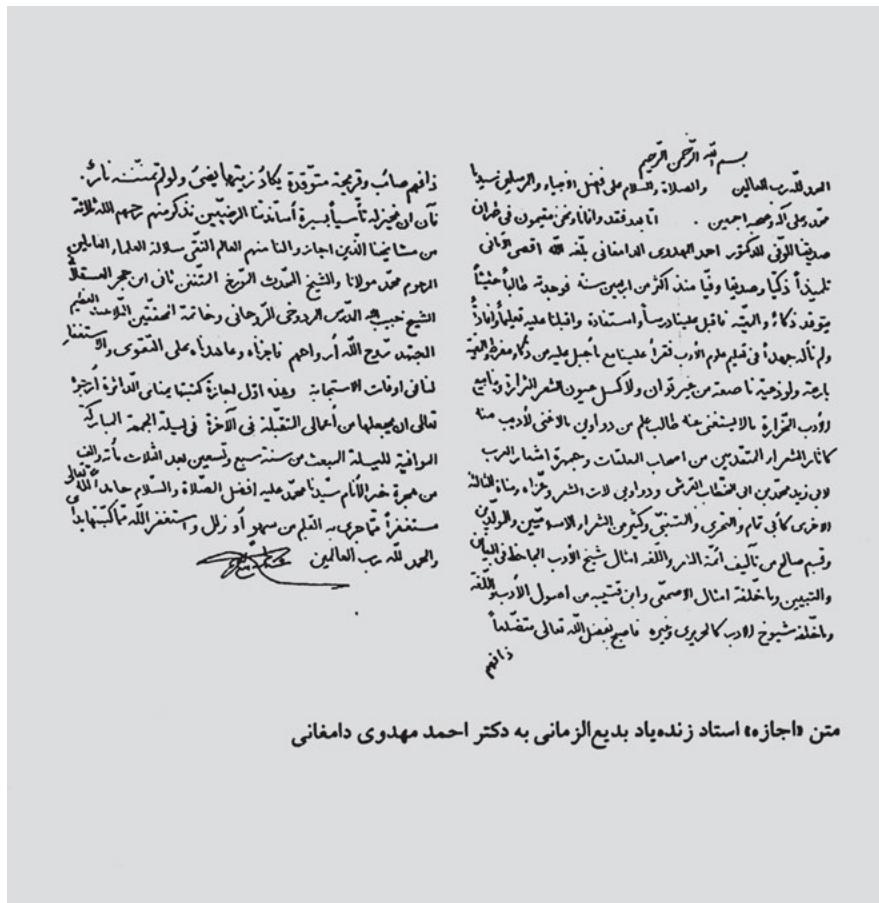
Figure 1. *Ijāza-i Tadrīs* of ʻAllāma Badīʻ al-Zamānī Kurdistānī to Professor Mahdavī.

Figure 2. *Ijāza-i Ravāyat va Darāyat* of Amiri Firuzkukhi to Professor Mahdavi as regards his *Divān*.

Figure 3a. *Ijāza-i Ravāyat* from Ayatollah Marʿashi Najafi to Professor Mahdavi.

اجازهٔ مرحوم آیة الله العظمی مرعشی نجفی ﴿قدس﴾ به محقق کتاب

Figure 3b. *Ijāza-i Ravāyat* from Ayatollah Marʿashi Najafi to Professor Mahdavi.
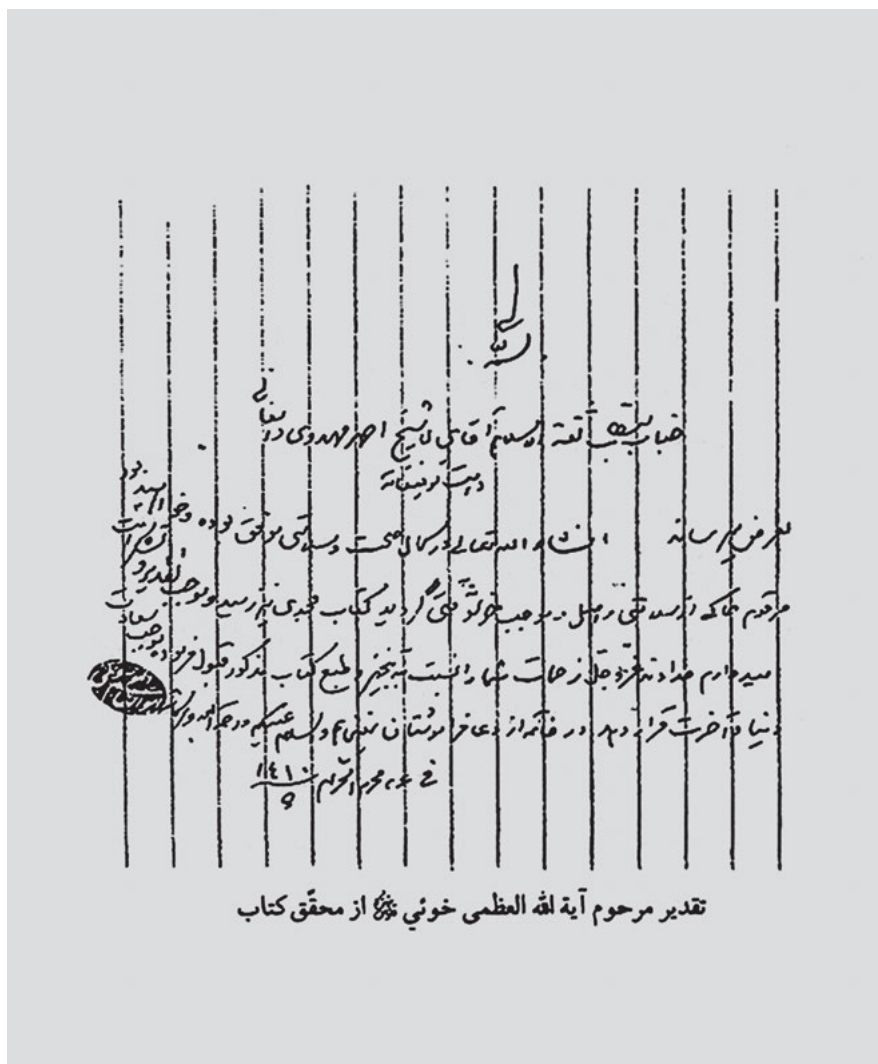
Figure 4. Ayatollah Khu'i's reception of Professor Mahdavi's critical edition of *Al-Majdī fī Ansāb al-Ṭālibī'īn*.

Tabula Gratulatoria

Ghazal Abbasy-Asbagh
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Ghulam Ali Haddad Adil
Hasan Ha'iri
Ismail Hakimi-Vala
William L. Hanaway

Wolfhart P. Heinrichs[†10]
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Reza Inzabi-Nizhad
Ahmad Iqtidari
Muhammad Ali Islami Nadushan
Hamid Izadpanah
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Alexander Matthew Key
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Elaheh Kheirandish
Ali Sadra'i Khu'i
Baha al-Din Khurramshahi
Alireza Korangy
Hasan Lahuti
Heshmat Moayyad
Roy Parviz Mottahedeh
Elias Muhanna
Mahdi Muhaqqiq
Sayyid Mustafa Muhaqqiq Damad
Reza al-Mukhtari

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10 Wolfhart Heinrichs's spirit will be felt on every page of this volume. Even while not feeling well at all, he offered to write an essay for Professor Mahdavi. Tragically, he was taken away from us too soon.

Mazahir Musaffa
Shankar Nair
Sayyid Muhsin Naji Nasrabadi
Abdullah Nasiri Tahiri
Muhammad Yusuf Nayyiri
David Owen
Roger Owen
Manuchihr Parsadust
Nasrollah Pourjavadi
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Sa'id Va'iz
Ali Reza Zakavari Qaraquzlu
Ali Akbar Zamani Nizhad

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Matthew C. Smith

Moving toward the Modern: The Nationalist Imagery of Malik al-Shu'arā Bahār

The literature of early-twentieth-century Iran is characterized by the emergence of modernist thought within a framework of classical formalism in an era of political upheaval, war, and a struggle for democracy. Poets gave voice to those who fought to reform Iranian government and expand political participation in the face of centuries of traditional autocratic rule, just as the writers themselves were breaking free from the strictures of classical forms and images. Heroes were called forth from ancient legends to battle against modern-day foes; in love poems, the beloved was replaced by the nation and political freedom. The very shape of poetry was transformed as poets experimented with new styles and forms, fueled in part by a growing awareness of foreign literature, and began to try their hand at satirical essays, drama, and short fiction.

One of the most compelling voices belonged to Muḥammad Taqī Bahār, often referred to by the title *Malik al-Shu'arā*, or poet laureate. Born in 1265/1886 in Mashhad, just as ideas of nationalism and popular representation were gaining currency among Iran's elite, Bahār was the son of Muḥammad Kāẓim Ṣabūrī, the poet laureate at the famous Shiite shrine of Imam Riḍā. After Ṣabūrī's death, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh (who would later grant Iran its first constitution) appointed Bahār to the post of *Malik al-Shu'arā-i Āstān-i Quds-i Raḍavī* in his father's stead. Though the events of his life carried him far from his home and his duties at the shrine, the title stuck and came to represent a much broader obligation to the Iranian nation as a whole.

"Poet" is the most apt description of Bahār's persona, though it neglects a great deal of his résumé. He was at times a journalist, an essayist, a long-standing Member of Parliament, a scholar and professor. Yet poetry was his first love. It informed every part of his life and imbued his political activism with a profound sensitivity. Steeped in traditional Iranian culture and religion and determined to see Iran take a leading role in global modern society, Bahār was an ideal representative of the struggles taking place within the country. His poetry undoubtedly belongs to the classical tradition, particularly in terms of form, yet Bahār gradually turned those traditional forms towards the expression of nationalist ideals in order to depict the struggles gripping the country. It was his ability to manipulate and at times subvert the stringent demands of classical formalism without sacrificing its aesthetic beauty that distinguished Bahār from his peers and made him Iran's voice of liberty and patriotism.

Nationalism, modernity, and Westernization were symbiotic forces in Iranian society at the turn of the century.[1] As political reformers pushed for changes in the military and government in an attempt to make Iran competitive with European powers,[2] poets sought to modernize the artistic discourse by turning from their traditional patrons at the court and religious circles to address their fellow Iranians. Poetry, as an integral part of Iranian cultural life, could not help but move with the intellectual currents of the time, particularly because many of the poets associated with the constitutional revolution and its aftermath were, like Bahār, active in a variety of endeavors with nationalist aims.[3]

The nationalistic themes found in the poetry of Bahār and many of his contemporaries were shaped by a number of factors, including incursions by foreign powers into Iranian territory,[4] a renewed interest in pre-Islamic culture, and

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1 As Chehabi notes, "Modernism and nationalism were closely linked, and self-conscious modernizers were also nationalists." H. E. Chehabi, "From Revolutionary Taṣnīf to Patriotic *Surūd*: Music and Nation-Building in Pre-World War II Iran," *Iran* 37 (1999): 143–54.

2 Afary emphasizes the importance of economic factors as Iran moved "from a subsistence economy to one with a greater reliance on cash crops, the increasing export of raw materials" along with a "growing rate of unemployment among peasants and artisans." She concludes, "For many intellectuals and merchants the central question became how to modernize the nation along European lines while at the same time curbing the destructive impact of European commerce and politics on Iran's industry and economy." Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 17.

3 Adīb al-Mamālik Farāhānī, for instance, was both a prominent journalist and poet whose work anticipates Bahār's in its use of classical forms to express nationalist themes. Mīrzāda ʿIshqī is well known for his fiery essays, his forays into composing plays and opera, and as an outspoken journalist. ʿAlī Akbar Dihkhudā began his career as a diplomatic secretary and translator before delving into journalism and satire and later being elected to the Majlis.

4 Some of Bahār's early political activity was spurred by Russian influence and aggression in his native Khurāsān and he voiced his opinions openly in his newspaper *Naw Bahār*, established in 1909 as the official paper of the Democrat Party of Mashhad. He later wrote:
The Democrat Party saw danger approaching the young Constitution from two directions. First, they considered the Tsarist government of Russia to be the enemy of the nation, constitutional government and the liberals. It was believed that because the Russian government had considered the deposed Muḥammad ʿAlī Shāh its own creature, it would be displeased with his losing the throne. Furthermore, Russia would not like having a democratic government for a neighbor; they could not abide an Iran with a national government on the road to political awakening and progress, which would become known in Europe as an orderly and law-abiding nation. Such a thing would be a difficult insult for Russia to swallow, since it had fixed its greedy stare on the northern parts of Iran, an area in which, according to the 1907 agreement with Britain, they were the major power. Muḥammad Taqī Bahār, *Arjnāma-i Malik al-Shuʿarā Bahār* (Tehran: Markaz-i Pizhūhishī-i Mīrāth-i Maktūb, 1385), 40.

modern interpretations of the mythic history of Firdawsī's epic poem, the *Shāhnā-ma*.[5] However, the poetic image of the nation was malleable and subject to a variety of competing forces. Scholars have traced the development of the vocabulary used to express the concept of nationhood itself: words like *vaṭan*, *mulk*, and *millat*, whose original meanings were substantially altered as they were applied to increasingly modern concepts of political participation and patriotism. Shafī'ī Kadkanī, for instance, writes that prior to the Constitutional Revolution, the word *vaṭan* did not mean "nation" in the sense that we would apply to "the great French Revolution," but instead was defined either in a provincial context as "the town or city where one was born," or in an internationalist, pan-Islamic sense to mean "the entire Islamic world, of which we find a good example in Iqbāl Lāhawrī." It wasn't until the Constitutional Revolution that the term *vaṭan*, "one of the fundamental themes of the period," came to encompass "love of country" and nationalism.[6]

Kadkanī describes the impact of nationalism and modern thought on Persian poetry by dividing early-twentieth-century literature into two categories, patriotism (*mīhanparastī*) and social criticism (*intiqād-i ijtimā'ī*), represented by the poetry of Bahār and Īraj Mīrzā respectively.[7] He further divides Bahār's work under two headings: nation (*vaṭan*) and freedom (*āzādī*):

> The best [examples] of encomiums on freedom … are found in the works of Bahār and the most beautiful panegyrics concerning the concept of the nation can also be found in his

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5 "The selective remembrance of things pre-Islamic made possible the dissociation of Iran from Islam and the articulation of a new national identity and political discourse." Tavakoli notes that nationalist fascination with the *Shāhnāma* had its roots in the nineteenth century and continued to influence the political discourse well into the mid-twentieth century under the Pahlavi dynasty. Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, "Refashioning Iran: Language and Culture During the Constitutional Revolution," *Iranian Studies* 23 (1990): 77–101.

6 Muḥammad Riḍā Shafī'ī Kadkanī, *Advār-i Shi'r-i Fārsī* (Tehran: Ṭūs, 1359), 38. For examples in Arabic and Turkish, see Bernard Lewis, "Watan," *Journal of Contemporary History* 26 (1991): 523–33. This gradual transformation can be easily traced within Bahār's work, as he often referred to Khurāsān as his *vaṭan*. The musician 'Ārif Qazvīnī wrote, "When I started composing national (*millī*) songs, not even one among 10,000 Iranians knew what the word *vaṭan* (homeland) meant: they thought *vaṭan* was the village or the town where they had been born. When a Kirmani went to Isfahan, he felt forlorn, and … neighborhoods fought like France and Germany over Alsace-Lorraine." Chehabi, "From Revolutionary Taṣnīf to Patriotic *Surūd*," 145.

7 Kadkanī, *Advār-i Shi'r-i Fārsī*, 36. He notes throughout that Bahār expressed a "bourgeois patriotism," which "differed from the patriotism of Lāhūtī," a more populist author. This becomes more relevant in Kadkanī's discussion of workers' literature, a topic which he brings to the attention of graduate students looking for a dissertation subject as "worthy of a separate study all its own."

> *dīvān*. Bahār, by reason of his broad awareness of Iran's past and his passion and affection-ate fascination for ancient Iran, is ... the premier panegyrist of freedom and nation.[8]

In effect, Kadkanī is saying that Bahār's classical training allowed him to express modern concepts within the larger context of Persian literature. He recognizes the shift of the panegyric's object from ruler to nation but reminds us that the basic function of the poet remained constant.

While this approach provides a useful starting point for deciphering the nationalist discourse, it overlooks the extratextual context of these terms and so neglects certain underlying trends. To remedy this situation, both Najmabadi and Tavakoli, among others, have approached the topic from a sociological viewpoint, describing the thematic shift as an example of "matriotism," or the envisioning of the national homeland in feminine terms; "motherland" replaced "fatherland" and citizens were urged to defend the feminine honor of the nation. The approach teases out some of the complexity of the nation as portrayed in nationalist writings. Najmabadi's article "The Erotic *Vatan* [Homeland] as Beloved and Mother" describes how the image of Iran underwent a dramatic shift in the popular imagination. "From the late eighteenth through the first decades of the twentieth century," she writes, "Iranian modernity was discursively shaped by the re-articulation of such pivotal concepts as nation (*millat*), politics (*siyāsat*), homeland (*vaṭan*), and knowledge (*'ilm*)."[9] The process was carried out in part by portraying the nation in feminine terms in poetry and prose. For instance, describing the redefinition of the word *vaṭan* from "birthplace" to "nation," she describes how the nation came to replace the beloved in nationalist poetry:

> The discursive production of *vatan* as a female body was achieved through the rearticulation of the classical literature of love into patriotic poetics. This made possible notions of *vaṭanparastī* [adoration of *vatan*, often translated as patriotism] and *vaṭandūstī* [love of the homeland]. It also made the whole discourse of protection of woman ... and defense of honor available to nationalism. ... This modernist move also led to the reinvention of folkloric love songs (*tasnīf-i 'āshiqāna*) as nationalist lyrics (*tasnīf-i millī*), which in turn produced innovations in Iranian popular music.[10]

The shift of themes of love away from the beloved and onto the nation had consequences for formal poetic aspects:

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8 Ibid., 38.
9 Afsaneh Najmabadi, "The Erotic Vatan [Homeland] as Beloved and Mother: To Love, To Possess, and to Protect," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39 (1997): 443.
10 Ibid., 445.

> The re-articulation of erotic love as the love of vatan carved a literary space for the pro-duction of patriotic poetry [*shi'r-i vaṭan*] that put love to the work of producing nationalist sentiment. *Qaṣīdah*, classically used to eulogize men of power, was now used to eulogize vatan. *Ghazal*, a form most often associated with love poetry, was similarly incorporated.[11]

Newspapers, she notes, played a large role in publishing the new "vaṭanī poetry," adding that "Adīb al-Mamālik, and later, Bahār, 'Ishqī, Lāhūtī, and Farrukhī, produced some of the memorable pieces of patriotic poetry."[12] Najmabadi adds that the feminine imagery of the nation was not confined to the beloved, but also emerged in depictions of Iran as a mother, sometimes ill, who desperately required the aid of her family to protect her. Thus, male citizens were urged to fight for the honor of their beloved and mother, while female citizens were charged with caring for the sick mother.[13]

When it came to poetry, the nationalistic themes that emerged so readily in the relatively new genre of essay writing had to compete with centuries of estab-lished poetic forms, topoi, and imagery whose signification had long since been "immutably fixed in the tradition."[14] As a result, the poetic image of the modern nation was greatly informed by the classical tradition, some times constrained and some times empowered in its expression of Iranian nationalism. Bahār and his contemporaries to conform to the strictures of classical forms manipulated the image of the nation and in turn the forms themselves were altered to accom-modate the modern imagery.

Bahār best demonstrated his skill in combining classical formalism and modern narrative in the *qaṣīda*,[15] a monorhythmic poem similar in structure to the shorter *ghazal*, differing "mainly in subject and length."[16] Browne describes the *qaṣīda* as a "purpose-poem," a "rather vague appellation absent from the

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11 Ibid., 458.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 446.

14 Wheeler M. Thackston, *A Millennium of Classical Persian Poetry* (Bethesda, MD: Iranbooks, 1994), x.

15 'Ābidī voices the consensus when he writes, "Bahār's area of artistic expertise was the com-position of *qaṣīda*. Even in his *mathnavīs*, we can find evidence of limitations in his skills of poetic composition." Kāmyār 'Ābidī, *Bih Yād-i Mīhan* (Tehran: Nashr-i Salīs, 1376), 269. Much of the argument concerning the didactic function of the *qaṣīda* can also be applied to the *mathnavī* form, particularly when considering Meisami's description of the analogical role of the romance, which provided a model of ethical and moral behavior. For examples, which touch on the topics addressed here, see *Ṭabībān-i Vaṭan* (Bahār, *Dīvān*, 2:212) and *Sāqīnāma* (Bahār, *Dīvān*, 2:289).

16 Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 2:26.

English literary tradition."[17] Vague though it is, Browne was obviously aware of the limitations of a formal definition and sought to distinguish the *qaṣīda* through its use as a mode of public address. The term includes a class of poems, which can be applied to a specific social function, "a panegyric, or a satire, or it may be didactic, philosophical, or religious."[18] Later scholars have argued for a redefinition of the *qaṣīda*, as its widespread use throughout the Islamic world has led to such a variety of permutations that reference to the *qaṣīda* "form" cannot adequately capture the breadth and depth of changes it has undergone while still retaining the epithet "qaṣīda." Karimi-Hakkak, for example, refers to the *qaṣīda* "genre" while Glünz uses the term "class," pointing out that

> the only criterion by which a *qaṣīda* can be clearly distinguished from other forms of poetry (*shi'r*), such as *rubā'ī* (quatrain), *ghazal*, and *qit'a* (fragment) is its length while the distinctive feature of the *qaṣīda* vis-à-vis the *masnavī* (poem composed of rhyming couplets), which can comprise any number of verses, is its rhyming scheme.[19]

The point being that a description of the *qaṣīda* that only takes into account formal criteria such as length and rhyme scheme is clearly inadequate for distinguishing it from other forms.

Glünz builds on Browne's description by identifying the multiple functions of the *qaṣīda* as the elegiac, panegyric, gnomic, and didactic, both in religious and secular contexts.[20] These functions are not exclusive, particularly in the case of the didactic mode, which often worked in conjunction with the panegyric. As the vehicle of the panegyric, the *qaṣīda* was traditionally used to address kings and rulers, serving a number of functions, including immortalizing the good name of the patron and enriching the poet. Along with this, however, came a deeper purpose which was didactic in nature: the transmission of a "code of moral values," both to the object of praise and the audience at large.[21] As Clinton notes, "Islamic monarchy is being praised, not an Islamic monarch."[22] To emphasize the

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17 Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, "Preservation and Presentation: Continuity and Creativity in the Contemporary Persian Qasida," in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, ed. Sperl, Shackle, and Norris (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1:254.
18 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 27. As opposed to the "generally erotic or mystical" ghazal, which "seldom exceeds ten or a dozen bayts."
19 Michael Glünz, "Poetic Tradition and Social Change: The Persian Qasida in Post-Mongol Iran," in Sperl, Shackle, and Norris, *Qasida Poetry*, 2:183–84.
20 Ibid., 184.
21 Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, v. 2, 4.
22 As quoted in Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 44.

didactic function, Sperl and Shackle divide the "determinants" of the *qaṣīda* genre into a number of core features, including "[p]urpose," which includes "praise of wielders of God given power who uphold the [moral] code" and "admonishment of mankind to respect the code," implying that the moral code ultimately predominates over the ruler.

As the genre was altered to respond to twentieth-century events, these core features gave way to "peripheral features," including "praise of non-canonical recipients (e. g. common people)" and "admonishment to respect modernist codes."[23] Since the major poets of the constitutional era worked outside the realm of courtly power and even, in many cases, in opposition to it, the king largely ceased to be the object of the panegyric's praise. This role was often filled by the nation itself, whether imagined as an ideal state or as a community of Iranians sharing a common identity. In the process, the content of the panegyric *qaṣīda* was altered substantially. For example, the function of offering praise was often subsumed in Bahār's work by expressions of pity and rage at the sorry state of his homeland. What remained unaltered and, in fact, was brought to the fore was this very underlying didactic role, the "code of moral values." No longer bound by courtly traditions and reliance on the capricious whims of an arbitrary ruler for subsistence, poets like Bahār were free to openly proclaim themselves the moral and political guides of the Iranian people. Bahār expressed this newfound power (which one can witness in the poet's transformation from shrine functionary to political activist) through the theme of nationalism, which was rooted in the classical tradition, yet flexible enough to accommodate contemporary concerns.

Bahār's emphasis of his role as teacher and guide shaped the way in which he expressed the theme of nationalism. When adhering most closely to the classical norms, Bahār addressed the king as an object of praise. The virtues he associated with good rulership did not differ greatly from classical themes (justice, wisdom, piety, etc.) though they are assumed to be in the service of creating a modern nation-state rather than just constraining arbitrary power. Moving towards the modern, Bahār imagined the nation itself as an individual, although it was not always an object of praise. More often the nation was weak and abused, a woman in distress or crippled with disease, a perfect example of the "matriotic" imagery discussed above. Invoking the "discourse of protection of woman ... and defense of honor" allowed Bahār to use the qaṣīda as a rallying cry to his fellow Iranians. Finally, drawing on imagery that reflected the most modern conceptions of the nation-state, the poet addressed the nation as a collective enterprise embodied in a physical object, a house or a boat, for example, fostering a sense of community

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23 Sperl, Shackle, and Norris, *Qasida Poetry*, 34.

and collective fate. The purpose of the *qaṣīda* was no longer praise of kingship, but rather an exhortation to his fellow Iranians to realize the common goal of modern statehood. The didactic function of the form had come to the fore, superseding the panegyric function altogether.

The presentation of nationalist imagery on a spectrum ranging from classical to modern is not meant to be a strict guideline but rather a strategy for recognizing how Bahār used the classical form and content of Persian literature, and the *qaṣīda* in particular, to incorporate the modern theme of nationalism. It should not be considered a chronological scale, although Bahār's earlier works generally adhere more closely to classical norms. A single poem can contain images which can be placed on varying points in the spectrum, reflecting the fact that Bahār and his contemporaries were truly engaged in creating a modern idiom even while working within the traditional corpus of Persian letters.

This phenomenon can be demonstrated by a close reading of several of Bahār's *qaṣīdas*. The first of these is entitled *'Adl va Dād* and was written, the editor tells us, in 1283/1904–5 to honor Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh for his granting of the constitution. Since the National Consultative Assembly (*Majlis-i Shūrā-i Millī*) did not open until August 1906, it is possible that this poem was meant to honor the establishment in January 1906 of an earlier representative body known as the House of Justice (*'adālatkhāna*), which perhaps inspired the title of the poem.[24] Even so, before we begin the poem, we are made aware of the dual purpose at work: praising the king and celebrating the creation of representative government. This is not so unusual; a cursory glance at Bahār's early work shows that panegyric *qaṣīdas* were regularly composed in conjunction with an external event, such as the New Year or the birth date of an Imām. In this case, however, both the king and the event are the object of praise. Bahār is acutely aware that his poem is marking the transition from the classical world to the modern and while he offers praise to the Shāh, he also acknowledges that a new era is at hand.

باد خراسان همیشه خرم و آباد * دشت و دیارش ز ظلم و جور تهی باد

دشت و دیارظلم و جور تهی گشت * ملک بماند همیشه خرم و آباد

ملک یکی خانه‌ایست بنیادش عدل * خانه نپاید اگر نباشد بنیاد

داد و دهش گر بنا نهند به کشور * به که حصاری کند ز آهن و پولاد

خصم ببستند و شهر و ملک گشودند * شاهان از فر و نیروی دهش و داد

وان کاو باد جفا و جور به سر داشت * سرش به خاک اندرست و ملکش بر باد

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24 Bahār, *Dīvān*, 1:91. The poem is preceded in all three editions of the *Dīvān* by this sentence: "This poem is one of Bahār's old works and a selection from a *qaṣīda* recited in 1283/1904 after the signing of the Constitutional Decree of Iran."

شکر خداوند را که داد و دهش را * طرفه بنای نهاد پادشه راد

خسرو گیتی‌ستان مظفر دین شاه * آن که ز عدلش بنای ظلم برافتاد

داده خدایش خدایگانی و شاهی * باز نگیرد خدای آنچه به کس داد

ملک عروسی است عدل و دادش کابین * در ده کابین و شو مر او را داماد

طایر دولت که هر کسش نتوان بست * بال و پر خویش جز به سوی تو نگشاد

مسند شرع و سریر حکم تو داری * خصم تو دارد غریو و ناله و فریاد

اینک بنگر بهار را که شدش طبع * شیفته بر مدح تو چو کاه به بیجاد

داند کش طبع را چه پایه و مایه است * آن که بداند شناخت شاهین از خاد

بود در این آستان پدرش صبوری * چندی مدحت سرای و داد سخن داد

May Khurāsān always be joyful and flourishing
May its pastures and fields be free of oppression
The plains and fields of tyranny are arid and dead
The kingdom (*mulk*) will be joyful and flourishing
The kingdom is a house; its foundation, justice
The house will not stand without a foundation
If the country (*kishvar*) is supported by justice and generosity
It is better than building a fortress of iron and steel
Kings have subdued their enemies and conquered cities and kingdoms
With the glory and power of generosity and justice
Those who favored cruelty and oppression
Lie in the dust and their kingdoms have gone with the winds
Thanks to God that the brave king has placed
A new foundation of Justice and liberality
The world-conquering Muẓaffar al-Dīn
He whose justice toppled the foundation of injustice
God gave him godliness and kingliness
God does not take back that which he bestowed
The kingdom is a bride, justice is its dowry
Give the dowry and become her groom
The bird of governance, which no one can catch
Does not display its feathers to anyone but you
You possess the authority to govern
Your enemies wail and cry
Look and see that it has become Bahār's nature
To be caught up in praising you like a straw in amber
One knows what his nature is founded on and made of
He who can tell the hawk from the crow
His father, Ṣabūrī, was at this shrine
Often singing your praise with great eloquence[25]

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25 Ibid., 1:91.

The imagery is clearly rooted in traditional tropes. He opens the poem with a reference to his homeland of Khurāsān rather than Iran, something not uncommon in his earlier works composed in Mashhad. Furthermore, his vocabulary has not yet incorporated the modern terminology of nationhood. Words like *mulk* and *kishvar* were not among those commonly used to mean "nation" in the modern sense (*vaṭan* and *millat* eventually took that role), which is why I have translated them in the more neutral terminology of "kingdom" and "country" respectively. These terms are more appropriate since the object of praise is at least on the surface the king himself, not the Iranian people or nation. The attributes he lauds in the king (justice, wisdom, might) are common subjects of the classical panegyric.

The poet's true intent, however, is revealed in the analogous relationship between the *nasīb*, or introductory passage, and the *madīḥ*, or praise passage. By Bahār's era, the *nasīb*, a remnant of classical Arabic poetry, had largely been dispensed with or if employed, substantially altered from its original theme, "the painful memory of a former love."[26] Meisami and others have described how the *nasīb* interacts with other portions of the *qaṣīda*, particularly in the case of the praise of the ruler. Rather than being just formulaic necessities, each section of the *qaṣīda* informs the whole through the use of analogy. Meisami writes:

> The polythematic *qaṣīdah* [that is, one consisting of multiple sections, including but not limited to the *nasīb* and *madīḥ*] affords opportunities for greater subtlety and complexity, particularly in the potential furnished by parallelism between *nasīb* and *madīḥ* for the introduction, in the context of love, of motifs essential to understanding the panegyric proper.[27]

In Bahār's poem, the *nasīb* (or its modern equivalent) plays a prominent role, consisting of nearly half the entire work, yet differs greatly from the classical model. Often in Persian poetry, the Arabic form was adapted to a more urban sensibility, with descriptions of gardens or courtly life rather than depictions of the beloved's abandoned camp in the desert.[28] Bahār, however, chose to emphasize his didactic role by instructing the audience in the ways of proper governance. He lets it be known immediately the king is being praised for no reason other than his participation in the advancement of representative government. By the time the king's name is introduced into the poem, the audience has an image of the ideal ruler in mind and expects Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh to live up to it.

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26 Sperl, Shackle, and Norris, *Qasida Poetry*, 9.
27 Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, 48.
28 Ibid., 40.

In Bahār's later works, the image of the house is often associated with more modern concepts, since the addressee of those poems is the public, not the ruler. Here the potential modernism of that image is subsumed in the larger traditional context; the authority and responsibility in the "house" clearly lies with the king, not the people. However, by opening the poem with an overtly didactic passage stressing the responsibility of the ruler to the populace, Bahār made clear the intent of his praise. While he recognizes the king's role in bestowing the constitution, doing so is something he describes as being a natural aspect of sound rule.

The *madīḥ* stresses the king's individual responsibility in carrying out the greater plan of social justice. The image of marriage again emphasizes the responsibility of the king to the populace, yet leaves the monarch in the dominant position. Since it is only he who holds power, it is his duty to use it wisely. Bahār's description of a good ruler is not a radical departure from traditional thinking. He emphasizes the idea that a king who looks after his subjects will be rewarded with a peaceful kingdom and lasting fame.

In the final lines, which traditionally often included the "*du'ā* or prayer for the well-being of the patron, which often incorporates the poet's suit as well,"[29] Bahār takes the opportunity to remind the audience of his exceptional powers of discernment, which enable him to see the king's true nature. This can be read as a veiled warning of the poet's power in elevating or debasing the king's stature in the public mind, ensuring the poet's position as moral and ethical guide to humanity.

The analogous relationship between the *nasīb* and *madīḥ* is shown even more clearly in another poem written either in celebration of the establishment of the House of Justice or lauding the granting of the constitution.[30] Here the *nasīb* encompasses more than half the poem, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh's name not being mentioned until the last five lines. It opens with a rapturous description of the season's turning to summer and flowers in bloom, an obvious metaphor for Iran's emergence into the modern world. Following well-established conventions, the idyllic depiction of natural beauty becomes a reason for celebration in itself and the poem turns to images of leisure and dalliances with rose-cheeked beauties.

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29 Ibid., 48.

30 The poem is preceded by the statement that "Bahār recited this poem in Mashhad in 1284/1905 giving thanks for the signing of the Constitution." While this seems unambiguous, several factors cast doubt on the dating. First, if read literally, the poem was composed in the month *Khurdād*, while the constitutional decree was issued two months later and the final document was not signed until the month of *Day*, a full six months later. Second, this poem shares several lines with '*Adl va Dād* above, leading one to believe they were composed within a short time of each other. While not conclusive, it bears noting.

بگذشت اردیبهشت و آمد خرداد * خیز که باید قدح گرفت و قدح داد

اول خرداد ماه و وقت گل سرخ * وقت گل سرخ و اول مه خرداد

آمد خرداد ماه با گل سوری * داد بباید کنون به عیش و طرب داد

بر گل سوری خوش است بادهٔ سوری * ویژه ز دست تو ماهروی پریزاد

گل شکفد بامداد از بر گلبن * چون دو رخ لعبتان خلخ و نوشاد

صبح دوم کآفتاب خندد بر کوه * بر سر یک شاخ گل بخندد هفتاد

باد به شبگیر چون زند ره بستان * تاب در افتاد به زلف سنبل و شمشاد

چون سر زلفین دلبری که ز جورش * رفته بر و بوم عمر من همه برباد

جور پسندند خوبرویان بر من * فریاد از جور خوبرویان فریاد

ای ز جفایت شده خراب دل من * هم به وفا روزی این خراب کن آباد

بیداد اکنون نه درخوراست که گشته است * گیتی از عدل شاه پردهش و داد

ملک یکی خانه ایست بنیادش عدل * خانه نپاید اگر نباشد بنیاد

داد و دهش گر بنا نهند به کشور * به که حصاری کنند ز آهن و پولاد

شکر خداوند را که داد و دهش را * طرفه بنای نهاد پادشه راد

پادشاه دادگر مظفر دین شاه * آن که ز عدلش بنای ظلم برافتاد

ظلم برون شد چو او در آمد بر تخت * فتنه فرو شد چو او ز مام جهان زاد

فرّ و بزرگی بیامد از بر عرش * دست به کش پیش تخت شاه در استاد

خرّم و شادیست بخت شاه که گشته است * کشور از او خرّم و رعیت از او شاد

ارجو کز این بنای فرّخ قانون * ملک بماند همیشه خرّم و آباد

Urdībihisht has passed and Khurdād has come
Arise, for now we must pass the wine goblet around
It is the first of Khurdād and time for roses
It is time for roses and the first of Khurdād
Khurdād has come with red roses
Now thoughts should turn to pleasure and music
The feast's wine cup is a delight among the red roses
Especially in your hand, fairy-born beauties
The rose blooms at dawn on the bush
Like the cheeks of the beauties of Khallukh and Nawshād[31]
The next morning when the sun laughs on the mountain
Seventy flowers burst into laughter on a single branch
The breeze, which makes its way nightly to the garden
Braids the locks of the hyacinth and the boxwood
Like the fetching locks of a heart-stealing one
From whose cruelty all I own has been obliterated
The beautiful ones have seen fit to oppress me
Cry from the oppression of these beauties, cry!
O, you by whose cruelty my heart has been turned into ruins

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31 The inhabitants of the cities of Khallukh (in Turkistan) and Nawshād (near Balkh) were renowned for their beauty in the classical poetic tradition.

Promise that one day these ruins will be rebuilt by your beneficence
Injustice now has no place here
For the world is filled with the Shāh's justice and liberality
The kingdom is a house; its foundation, justice
The house will not stand without a foundation
If the country is supported by justice and generosity
It is better than building a fortress of iron and steel
Thanks to God that the brave king has placed
A new foundation of Justice and liberality
O just king, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh,
He who through his justice uprooted tyranny
Tyranny was wiped out when he ascended the throne
Chaos fled when the earth brought him forth
If greatness and splendor has been bestowed [on the king] from heaven
Stretch out your hand and stand before the king's throne
Joyful and happy is the Shāh's fortune
For because of him, the country is joyful and the subjects are happy
From the good fortune of this lawful foundation
May the nation always flourish and be of good cheer[32]

Far from merely aping classical idioms, Bahār is establishing the analogical basis for his praise of the king as well as the underlying instructive message of proper government. He does so by introducing the trope of the beloved's cruelty towards the lover. In lines eight and nine, he repeats the word "oppression" (*jawr*) three times. While perfectly in keeping with classical imagery, the idea of oppression of any sort could not help but have political associations for Bahār. In the classical topos, the beauty's cruelty and the suffering of the lover is an essential relationship. There is no remedy because such a thing would destroy the means by which the tormented lover reaches his goal, particularly in the case of mysticism, the lexicon of which had established itself as the norm long before Bahār's era. In this case, though, Bahār provides a solution to the problem of the distant, unwilling beloved, thus distancing his poem from the classical corpora. The "Shāh's justice" topples the fortress of oppression and creates a happy and prosperous kingdom. The language Bahār uses to laud the ruler's actions is lifted directly from the previous poem, specifically the image of the house whose foundation is justice. In conjunction with the *nasīb* that conforms more closely to classical norms, the tone of the poem is much more laudatory and less didactic than *'Adl va Dād*, incorporating the concern of political oppression within the classical imagery of the cruel beloved. Given that, the underlying message is still clear: the

32 Bahār, *Dīvān*, 1:102.

success of the ruler and his kingdom is directly proportionate to the well-being of his subjects.

To understand how the image of the nation is addressed more directly, we turn to a more modern piece written not to praise Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh, who had died in January of 1907, but to excoriate his successor, the anticonstitutionalist Muḥammad 'Alī Shāh. *Kār-i Īrān bā Khudāst* is one of Bahār's earliest poems dealing specifically with nationalistic topics. In his autobiographical notes, he writes

> In the year 1324 [1906] at twenty years of age, I took my place among the constitutionalists of Khurāsān. My friends and I were members of the revolutionary center and we published the newspaper *Khurāsān* in secret, I going by the name *Ra'īs al-Ṭullāb*. My first literary works in the propagation of freedom (*tarvīj-i āzādī*) were published in that paper. The most famous of these was a *qaṣīda-i mustazād* recited in 1325 [1908][33] in the era of the Lesser Despotism of Muḥammad 'Alī Shāh. It was published in Mashhad and Tehran when the people had taken refuge in the embassies.[34]

با شه ایران آزادی سخن گفتن خطاست * کار ایران با خداست

مذهب شاهنشه ایران ز مذهبها جداست * کار ایران با خداست

شاه مست و شیخ مست و شحنه مست و میر مست * مملکت رفته ز دست

هردم از دستان مستان فتنه و غوغا بپاست * کار ایران با خداست

هر دم از دریای استبداد آید بر فراز * موجهای جانگداز

زین تلاطم کشتی ملت به گرداب بلاست * کار ایران با خداست

مملکت کشتی حوادث بحر و استبداد خس * ناخدا عدل است و بس

کار پاس کشتی و کشتی‌نشین با ناخداست * کار ایران با خداست

پادشه خود را مسلمان خواند و سازد تباه * خون جمعی بی‌گناه

ای مسلمانان در اسلام این ستمها کی رواست * کار ایران با خداست

شاه ایران گر عدالت را نخواهد پاک نیست * زان که طینت پاک نیست

دیدهٔ خفاش از خورشید در رنج و عناست * کار ایران با خداست

باش تا آگه کند شه را از این نابخردی * انتقام ایزدی

انتقام ایزدی برق است و نابخرد گیاست * کار ایران با خداست

سنگر شه چون به دوشان تپه رفت از باغ شاه * تازه‌تر شد داغ شاه

روز دیگر سنگرش در سرحد ملک فناست * کار ایران با خداست

باش تا خود سوی ری تازد ز آذربایجان * حضرت ستارخان
آن که توپش قلعه کوب و خنجرش کشورگشاست * کار ایران با خداست
باش تا بیرون ز رشت آید سپهدار سترگ * فر دادار بزرگ
آن که گیلان ز اهتمامش رشک اقلیم بقاست * کار ایران با خداست
باش تا از اصفهان صمصام حق گردد پدید * نام حق گردد پدید
تا ببینیم آن که سر ز احکام حق پیچد کجاست * کار ایران با خداست
خاک ایران بوم و برزن از تمدن خورد آب * جز خراسان خراب
هرچه هست از قامت ناساز بی‌اندام ماست * کار ایران با خداست

Speaking with the Shāh of Iran about freedom is an egregious error
Iran's business is with God [God know what will become of Iran!]
The religion of Iran's king of kings deviates from all others
Iran's business is with God
The Shāh is drunk, the shaykh is drunk, the policeman is drunk and the prince is drunk
The nation is out of control
At every moment, drunkards give rise to chaos and confusion
Iran's business is with God
At every second, from the sea of despotism
Come waves that erode the soul
And from this tumult, the ship of the nation is drawn into the terrible maelstrom
Iran's business is with God
The nation is a ship, events an ocean, despotism a weed
The captain is Justice and that will suffice
Watching over the ship and its passengers is the captain's task
Iran's business is with God
The Shāh calls himself a Muslim, yet wreaks havoc
On the blood of the innocent
O Muslims, since when does Islam sanction such cruelty?
Iran's business is with God
If the Shāh of Iran does not fear justice
It is because his nature is not pure
The sun brings only pain and agony to the bat's eyes
Iran's business is with God
May God's vengeance make the Shāh aware
Of this foolishness
God's vengeance is lightening and foolishness a weed
Iran's business is with God
When the Shāh's fortress moved from Bāgh-i Shāh to Dūshān Tappa
The Shāh's wounds opened anew
The next day his fortress was annihilated on the nation's border
Iran's business is with God
May Lord Sattār Khān[35] race towards Rayy from Azerbaijan

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35 The following lines name prominent revolutionaries. Sattār Khān led the fight against the siege of Tabrīz in 1908. Muḥammad Valī Khān Naṣr al-Salṭana, known as *Sipahdār*, though a

He of the fortress-pounding cannon and the dagger that liberates nations
Iran's business is with God
May the wrathful Sipahdār emerge from Rasht
Spreading glory in his wake
He whose efforts have made Gīlān the envy of the world
Iran's business is with God
May the [sword of truth] appear from Isfahan
Making clear the name of justice
So that we may see what becomes of the head that turns away from the judgment of truth
Iran's business is with God
All the soil of Iran and its people and towns have tasted civilization but for the ruined Khurāsān
Whatever comes of our sickly countenance
Iran's business is with God.[36]

The first thing that strikes one upon reading this poem is the form, a *qaṣīda-i mustazād*, as Bahār states above. Invented by Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān (d. 1121), the court poet of Lahore and Ghazna best known for developing the *ḥabsiyyāt*, or prison poetry, genre during his eighteen years of imprisonment in various Ghaznavid prisons, the form resembles the typical *qaṣīda* form in that each *bayt* contains two *miṣra'*s and adheres to a monorhyme scheme. It differs in that the second *miṣra'* of each *bayt* behaves like a refrain, being shorter in length than the first and often repeating a thematic phrase, in this case, *kār-i Īrān bā khudāst*. Bahār often made use of variant *qaṣīda* forms beginning with his introduction into the political life, leading one to speculate that he was seeking a new form to suit the needs of his political message.[37] Certainly, in this case, the repeated refrain creates a lyrical effect more suited to easy memorization and recitation by the readers of the newspaper, perhaps the reason for its popularity. Looked at in another light, it lends the feeling of litany and entreaty to God.

The term *āzādī* appears in both the poet's preface and the opening *miṣra'*. As indicated by his description of the poem, Bahār recognized a certain portion of his work as distinct from his more traditional poems and he identified it by

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leader of royalist forces in Tabrīz, allied with the Constitutionalists and was named leader of the army in Gīlān. Samsām al-Salṭana (Bahār makes a pun of his name) was a leader of the Bakhtiyārī tribe who joined the Constitutionalists, captured Isfahan, and advanced on Tehran from the south as the other forces approached from Rasht in the north (see Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution*).

36 Bahār, *Dīvān*, 1:183.

37 This certainly seems to be the case with his most modern works, which often marry unusually self-reflective content with an invented form, most often a series of rhymed couplets. See the poems *Surūd-i Kabūtar* and *Afkār-i Parīshān* for examples.

its object, political freedom. As was mentioned above, Kadkanī refers to Bahār's use of the term *āzādī* as a distinguishing characteristic and here we see it in the context of one of his "most famous" pieces. The actual word *āzādī* is used only in the first line but it is defined by the remainder of the poem, as will be described.

For Bahār, political freedom and religion were complimentary concepts. In the first *miṣra'*, the Shāh equates the concept of freedom with error, so any discussion of the subject must be addressed directly to God, the ultimate arbiter. In the second *bayt*, the king is shown to be a religious deviant, making the message clear: God favors liberty. In two lines, Bahār has both stripped the king of any claims to divine favor and dismissed him as a legitimate political power, replacing him with the concept of representative government. In effect, he has established a religious basis for his argument in favor of the constitution, something he perhaps felt compelled to do by his personal beliefs as a functionary of the Mashhad shrine and the general atmosphere of the city, where religious traditionalism and support for the monarchy reigned. In any event, the tone of the piece works well with the *mustazād* form, as the refrain *kār-i Īrān bā khudāst* takes on an almost prayer-like quality.

Having impugned the king's religion, he then criticizes his political leadership. In fact, he broadens his attack to the entire bureaucracy and its supporters: the "king, shaykhs, police, and prince" who have let the nation fall into chaos. Chaos, or the perception that society has fallen off the tracks of orderly, enlightened progress, was an important theme in early-twentieth-century Iranian literature and in modern literature in general. "Crisis," writes Michael Levenson in his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, "is inevitably the central term of art in discussions of this turbulent cultural movement." Iran was certainly subject to a succession of domestic and international crises, including the Constitutional Revolution and domination by British and Russian forces. The poetic expression of political chaos in Bahār's poetry in general served the purpose of spurring the audience into action. One can view it as an attempt on the part of the poet to exert influence over an increasingly chaotic world.[38] In the context of this particular poem, the image of political chaos serves a triple purpose. Firstly, by equating the king's religious deviancy with his political ineptitude and liberty with good religion, Bahār makes it clear that the king's failure to support the constitution had thrown the country into chaos. Secondly, it prepares the reader for the exhortation to action since these are worldly matters and must

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38 Farzin Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Modernity* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 29.

be dealt with by the members of society. Thirdly, it nicely sets up the metaphor of the ship, which follows.

Bahār conveys the chaotic environment of his country through the image of a ship cast about against its will, while the waves represent the arbitrary will of the monarch. It is an interesting choice of imagery. The nation as a ship is a passive construct, requiring a guiding hand.[39] There is no active role for the common Iranian, the presumed audience, to play in this scenario. This image of helpless passivity is counteracted by a second theme, the need for a qualified captain. Thus, the ship distinguishes within the poem between the nation, or collective group of Iranians, and its ruler. This differs from the previous poem, in which Iran and the king were more or less one. Here, even though they are adrift without him, the people are participants and the ruler, in whatever form, is one among many.

The role of the ruler is further limited, however, in the same way as the previous poem, by the fact that true rule must be based on justice. "The captain is Justice," he writes, "and that will suffice." Bahār gives a succinct description of his view of proper government; it is the king's job to protect the innocent masses represented by the ship itself. He should derive his power from just rule, which ultimately is derived from God's will. Thus he writes

> The job of protecting the ship and its passengers lies with the captain/
> Iran is in God's hands.

This brings us back to the idea of liberty, for liberty and justice are always connected in Bahār's poetry. It follows that a king who has veered from the path of true religion will no longer dispense justice according to God's law, and under an unjust ruler, liberty or even speaking of liberty is a crime, if not a sin.

The remainder of the poem draws upon this idea of God's will being enacted through human agency. The Shāh, who "calls himself a Muslim yet wreaks havoc," is helpless before the "lightning bolt" of God's justice. Bahār celebrates the revolt by various groups in cities throughout Iran, led by men such as Sattār Khān of Tabrīz, who in effect were doing God's will by struggling to overthrow the reigning power.

In the poem *Vaṭan dar Khaṭar ast* (*The Nation is in Peril*), Bahār again draws on a stanzaic form of the *qaṣīda*, the *tarjīʿband*, to create a sense of urgency and spur his countrymen to action. The *tarjīʿband* form "consists of a series of stanzas,

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39 It is also gender neutral, reminding us that the matriotic themes discussed above, prevalent though they were, competed with both classical tropes and the poet's imagination.

each containing a variable, but equal, or nearly equal, number of couplets, all in one rhyme," and separated from each other by a refrain.[40] Bahār often relied on this form when writing on political subjects to convey messages of hope or directly issuing warnings to his audience.

مهرگان آمده و دشت و دمن در خطر است   مرغگان نوحه برآید چمن در خطراست

چمن از غلغله زاغ و زغن در خطر است   سنبل و سوسن و ریحان و سمن در خطر است

بلبل شیفته خوب سخن در خطر است

ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

خانه‌ات یکسره ویرانه شد ای ایرانی   مسکن لشکر بیگانه شد ای ایرانی

عهد و پیمان تو ایفاء نشد ای ایرانی   عهد بشکستنت افسانه شد ای ایرانی

عهد غیرت مشکن عهد شکن در خطر است

ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

وزرا باز نهادند ز کف کار وطن   وکلا مهر نهادند به کام و به دهن

علما شبهه نمودند و فتادند به ظن   چیره شد کشور ایران را انبوه فتن

کشور ایران ز انبوه فتن در خطر است

ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

کاردانان را بیرون ز سخن کاری نیست   غیر لفّاظی در سرّ و علن کاری نیست

علما را به جز از حیله و فن کاری نیست   جهلا را به جز افغان و حزن کاری نیست

ملک از این ناله و افغان و حزن در خطر است

ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

کار بیچاره وطن زار شد افسوس افسوس   جهل ما باعث این کار شد افسوس افسوس

یار ما همبر اغیار شد افسوس افسوس   باز ایران کهن خوار شد افسوس افسوس

که چنین کشور دیرین کهن در خطر است

ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

خرس صحرا شده همدست نهنگ دریا   کشتی ما را رانده است به گرداب بلا

آه ازین رنج و محن آوخ ازین جور و حفا   هان به جز جرأت و غیرت نبود چاره ما

زان که ناموس وطن زین دو محن در خطر است

ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

رقبا را به هم امروز سر صلح و صفاست   آری این صلح و صفاشان ز پی ذلّت ماست

بی خبر زین که مهین رایت اسلام به پاست   غافل آن قوم که قفقاز و لهستان به بلاست

غافل این فرقه که لاهور و دکن در خطراست

ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

ما نگفتیم در اول که نجوئیم نفاق   یا بر آن عهد نبودیم که سازیم وفاق

به کجا رفت پس آن عهد و چه شد آن میثاق   چه شد اکنون که شما را همه برگشت مذاق

کس نگوید ز شما خانه من در خطر است

ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

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40 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 2:39.

شرط ما بود که با هم همه همدست شویم   به وفاق و به وفا یکسره پابست شویم
از پی نیستی از همّت حق هست شویم   نه کز اینان ز نفاق و دودلی پست شویم
که مرا خانه و ملک و سر و تن در خطراست
ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

بذل جان در ره ناموس وطن چیزی نیست   بی وطن خانه و ملک و سر و تن چیزی نیست
بی وطن منطق شیرین و سخن چیزی نیست   بی وطن جان و دل و روح و بدن چیزی نیست
بی وطن جان و دل و روح و بدن در خطر است
ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

در ره حفظ وطن تازید الله الله   بیش از این فتنه میندازید الله الله
خصم را خانه براندازید الله الله   ای خلایق مددی سازید الله الله
کاین مریض کسل تلخ دهن در خطر است
ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

وطنیاتی با دیده تر میگویم   با وجودی که در آن نیست اثر میگویم
تا رسد عمر گرانمایه به سر میگویم   بارها گفته ام و بار دگر میگویم
که وطن باز وطن باز وطن در خطراست
ای وطن خواهان زنهار وطن در خطر است

Autumn has come and the fields and plains are in danger
The birds are lamenting, the meadow is in danger
The din of crows threatens the meadow
The hyacinth, lily, sweet basil, and jasmine are in danger
The eloquent nightingale is in danger
O patriots, beware! The nation is in danger

Your house was destroyed in an instant, Iranian
It has become a barracks for foreign armies
Your oaths and promises were never fulfilled, Iranian
Your promises are no more than fantasies since you broke them

Do not break your promise of zealotry; perjury is dangerous
O patriots, beware! The nation is in danger.

The ministers have neglected the affairs of the nation
The representatives have sealed up mouths and their wishes, as well
The *ulamā* show doubt and have become suspicious
The unruly mob runs victorious over Iran

Iran is in danger from the unruly mob
O patriots, beware! The nation is in danger

Knowledge without speech accomplishes nothing
Reticence in private and in public does nothing
The *ulamā* know nothing but trickery and deceit
The ignorant know nothing but wailing and despair

The nation is in danger from all this crying, wailing, and despair
O patriots, beware! The nation is in danger

The work of the helpless nation has become deplorable, alas, alas!
Caused by our own ignorance, alas, alas!
Our beloved is off embracing strangers, alas, alas!
This ancient Iran is miserable again, alas, alas!

The bear of the steppe has allied with the crocodile of the sea
Our ship has been steered for the whirlpool of calamity
O, the pain and suffering! Ah, this oppression and injustice!

Take heed! In naught but our bravery and zeal our remedy lies
O patriots, beware, the nation is in danger!

Our rivals today dwell in peace and pleasure
Indeed, this peace and pleasure comes from our suffering
Ignorant of the fact that Islam is on the rise
They do not know that the Caucasus and Poland are in turmoil

This faction is unaware that the Deccan and Lahore are in danger
O patriots, beware, the nation is in danger!

Didn't we say from the beginning that we do not seek discord?
O, did we not pledge ourselves to harmony?
So what has become of the promise and what happened to that alliance?
What happens now that you say it is not to your liking?

Let no one say to you "My house is in danger"
O patriots, beware, the nation is in danger!

Our condition was that we all ally ourselves
That we pledge to rise up as one
Having been nothing, we aspired to the right of existence
The hypocrites and sowers of discord shall not weaken us

For my house and nation, head and body are in danger
O patriots, beware, the nation is in danger!

Giving up one's soul on the path of the nation's virtue means nothing
Without the nation, home, property, head and body are nothing
Without the nation, sweet logic and speech are nothing
Without the nation, heart and soul, spirit and body are nothing

Without the nation, heart and soul, spirit and body are in danger
O patriots, beware, the nation is in danger!

Make haste to defend the nation,—*Allāh Allāh*
You overwhelm this sedition—*Allāh Allāh*
The house has been toppled by the enemy—*Allāh Allāh*
O people, lend your assistance—*Allāh Allāh*

For this sick and weary [person] is in danger
O patriots, beware, the nation is in danger!

I sing of the nation with tears in my eyes
Of an existence on which nothing has left a mark, I sing
Until precious life has reached its end, I sing
Many times have I said it and I say again

That the nation, I repeat the nation, the nation is in danger
O patriots, beware, the nation is in danger![41]

At first glance, the refrain is straightforward: "O patriots, beware, the nation is in danger!" Yet further investigation reveals hidden complexities. The nation, *vaṭan*, is obviously the central concept. According to the original editor of the *Dīvān*, the poem was composed in 1911, at which time, "Iran's constitutional foundation was still not well-established." Thus, the term *vaṭankhwāhān* is directed at a specific group of people, not necessarily to Iranians in general. This is followed, however, by the use of *vaṭan* in its most modern sense to indicate the nation of Iran. This usage is made clear by the opening stanza, which draws on the garden imagery of the classical Persian *nasīb*. The garden is equated directly with Iran: both are "in danger." The garden—and the imagery of nature—reinforces the notion that what constitutes Iran is part of the natural order and ultimately a product of divine power, beyond the reach of man to alter fundamentally, as is the constitution, for Bahār presumes that the *vaṭan* as imagined by its supporters already exists. The dual usage of the term, used both to address a select group of Iranians and to address the Iranian nation as a whole, is indicative of Bahār's "bourgeois patriotism" as described by Kadkanī, or perhaps even a sense of political elitism.

In the second stanza, he broadens his address somewhat, shifting from the classical imagery of nature to the more modern image of the house. It is instructive to compare this usage of the house metaphor with that in the first poem we examined, *ʿAdl va Dād*. *Vaṭan dar Khaṭar ast* is clearly not a panegyric, as it does not even address Ahmad Shāh, who had taken the throne in July of 1909. Even if Bahār's rhetoric is aimed at an elite group of Iranians, he believed this group

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41 Bahār, *Dīvān*, 1:228.

to be representative of the national Iranian spirit: a quasi-vanguard. Therefore, the house image takes on a more populist cast. In *ʿAdl va Dād*, Bahār is urging Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh as head of the household to look after his belongings. He instructs the king in the proper administration of justice to provide a firm basis for his rule. Here, in *Vaṭan dar Khaṭar ast*, the poem is addressing patriots and more broadly, "Iranians," as he states in the first *miṣraʿ* of the second stanza. Furthermore, rather than the impersonal equation of "the nation is a house," here Bahār warns of the danger to "your house" which has been invaded by foreigners. The house in this context is clearly a metaphor for common enterprise on the part of Iranians. This is further emphasized by the lines that follow, which tell of broken oaths and promises. The promise in this case hearkens back to Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh's granting of the constitution and the hope of a new political order of representative government. Bahār is implicitly condemning those whom he had earlier praised for their lack of faith in the modern political process.

Interestingly, we see further repetition of the same metaphors for the nation. The ship again makes an appearance and has clearly been altered in the same manner as the image of the house. Firstly, the threat to the ship is from outsiders, foreign armies, not the unjust ruler. This alters the instructive tone of the piece, as it is no longer based on classical models of didacticism. The intent is not so much to instruct but rather to excite the audience to action in defense of the nation. Given the immediacy of the danger as he perceived it and the need to mobilize an entire body of people, the imagery of the ship had to be radically altered from the passive notion it represented in the earlier poem. The solution is simple: shift responsibility for the craft's well-being away from the captain and onto the crew. Thus, safe passage requires the "bravery and valor" of all "true" Iranians.

The house image also makes another appearance. This time he begins by recalling the promises "we" (his compatriots, presumably) made to band together in pursuit of national glory, but warns that the "house, property, head and body are in danger." The stanza that follows emphasizes the essential nature of the nation, which underlies, according to the author, all other aspects of society. Thus giving up one's soul on the path of the nation's virtue means nothing. "Without the nation, home, property, head and body are nothing."

Here the appeal is to the individual Iranian, as Bahār urges them to consider the well-being of their homes and families. This is essentially the same metaphor as above but on a smaller scale. Having already established the nation as house metaphor, he now drives the point home by referring to the actual homes, property, and family of the audience. Bahār was not merely trying to frighten his listeners into action. He also points out that without the nation all of these things, even life itself, are meaningless:

> Without the nation, sweet logic and speech is nothing
> Without the nation, heart and soul, spirit and body are nothing
> Without the nation, heart and soul, spirit and body are in danger

In a sense, Bahār is anthropomorphizing the nation of Iran through the listener himself. The individual with his house and family as well as his inherent Iranian identity is a microcosm of the nation. In order to protect himself, he must defend the nation. Thus, the metaphor of the house links the individual Iranian to the greater mass of Iranians he will surely never meet, giving them a common cause and a shared point of reference for understanding the modern Iranian nation.

Comparing the latter two poems to the former, we can see a marked difference in how the poet perceives his role. *'Adl va Dād* is clearly a panegyric, even if the poet takes advantage of the form to emphasize his message of proper rule. It is clear that Bahār, being acquainted with addressing men of power, knew his lesson in kingship would be better received if couched in classical language. Something that cannot be overlooked, however, is that these earlier poems are aimed not only at Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh, but also the heir apparent and soon to be king Muḥammad 'Alī. This shifts the emphasis further toward the sphere of didacticism, the example of Muẓaffar's just rule being held up for his heir as a paradigm of proper kingship. This view is confirmed by the large number of explicitly didactic *qaṣīdas* Bahār wrote addressing Muḥammad 'Alī Shāh directly when the young king took the throne.[42] As the relationship between the Shāh and the constitutionalists became increasingly contentious, Bahār's work moved toward outright criticism.

Eventually, the poet shifted his focus still further away from the king and onto the public. It is this voice that we see in the latter two poems. These pieces express a desire to act and a frustration with empty rhetoric. Although the tone of *Kār-i Īrān bā Khudāst* appears somewhat fatalistic, the poet makes a point of celebrating the achievements of militant constitutionalists. By the time he writes *Vaṭan dar Khaṭar ast*, there is no doubting his will to action. The metaphor of the house becomes much less abstract; it is not just a theoretical construct based on justice, but a macro scale version of the actual homes of common Iranians. Thus, his goal in these poems is not so much intellectual stimulation as it is a call to arms and he alters the traditional imagery to suit his needs. In either case, however, the poet's role as a leader and guide is highlighted.

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42 For example, see *Ā'īna-i 'Ibrat* (literally "Mirror of Examples," meaning the poem itself allows the Shāh to compare his actions against those of his predecessors) and *Pand-i Sa'dī* (Sa'dī's Advice), *Dīvān*, 1: 118 and 1:169 respectively.

It becomes clear that while classical elements still had a vital role to play, Bahār's primary goal was to provide guidance and leadership to the Iranian populace confronted with principals of representative government for the first time. At first, he adhered to the classical formula, addressing the king within the strictures of the panegyric. Eventually, he learned to adapt the classical form to contemporary events, using the *qaṣīda*, particularly in its variant forms, to exhort his countrymen to action. It is not enough to say that he replaced the king with the nation as the object of praise because doing so required a fundamental transformation of classical imagery to cope with modern themes. Bahār and his peers inhabited a liminal stage, clearly seen in their efforts to adapt long-held notions of what constituted proper literature to a society that was encountering pressures to modernize on all fronts, both literal and figurative. It is this mingling of classical and modern that distinguishes the Constitutional Revolution and its aftermath as a key moment in Persian literary history, indelibly joined with Iran's struggle for political self-determination.

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Rahim Shayegan
Old Iranian Motifs in *Vīs o Rāmīn**

Introduction

The main subject of the Bisotun inscription is the accession of Darius the Great in the first half of the sixth century BCE. It narrates how, following the demise of King Cambyses on an Egyptian campaign, a magus by the name of Gaumāta usurped the Achaemenid throne, by pretending to be the Achaemenid prince Bardiya, Cambyses's brother, before being eventually eliminated in the wake of an aristocratic coup d'état led by Darius.[1]

Early Greek authors, such as Dionysus of Miletus,[2] Hellanicus of Lesbos,[3] Aeschylus,[4] and Herodotus have all reported on this episode, as has the Roman historian Pompeius Trogus, who relies upon earlier sources, and whose *Historiae Philippicae* although lost, has been preserved in the summaries provided by the Byzantine author Justin.

What the majority of these classical sources have in common is the reduplication of Bisotun's main character in those of two (magian) brothers. Whereas in the Bisotun, the single magus Gaumāta is vilified as the usurper, responsible for illegitimately seizing the throne of Cambyses under the pretense of being Bardiya, in the main classical sources that is, Herodotus[5] and Pompeius Trogus/Justin,[6] the usurpation of Cambyses's throne is ascribed to two magi. Herodotus calls them

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1 On this topic, see now Shayegan, *Aspects of History and Epic in Ancient Iran*; and Shayegan, "Bardiya and Gaumāta: An Achaemenid Enigma Reconsidered."
2 On Dionysus of Miletus, a contemporary of Darius I, see Shayegan, *Aspects of History and Epic in Ancient Iran*, 13.
3 On Hellanicus of Lesbos, see most recently Lenfant, "Les histoires perses de Dinon et d'Héraclide," 16–24; on the scholion FGH IIIC, 687a, F8, 414, ascribing two brothers to Cambyses: "Cyrus' son Cambyses had, according to Hellanicus, two brothers: Maraphis and Merphis," see Ambaglio, *L'Opera storiographica di Ellanico di Lesbo*, F 110, 83; and Caerols Pérez, *Helánico de Lesbos: Fragmentos*, F180, 169.
4 Aeschylus *Persae* 773–80. See edition by West, *Aeschyli Persae*.
5 Herodotus 3.61; 3.79. For Herodotus' text, see Rosén, *Herodoti Historiae*.
6 Justin 1.9.4–23. For Justin's text, see Seel, *Iustini Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi*.

Smerdis and Patizeithēs, while Justin names them Cometes and Oropastēs. The story pattern and the functions of the magian brethren are comparable in the two accounts: in each couple, one magus serves as the crown bestower and the other as the puppet king who, due to his physical resemblance to Bardiya, could be substituted, through the subterfuge of Patizeithēs or his Justinian counterpart Oropastēs, for the defunct prince and hence usurp the throne.

The Two Brothers in Early Persian (Epic) Literary Traditions

Among the many attestations of evil brothers in early Persian (epic) literature, several show remarkable parallels with the story of Bisotun as reflected in versions known to us from classical sources.

The Iranian epic *The Book of Kings*, the *Šāhnāme*, which was put into writing by the end of the first millennium, depicts the campaign of the hero-king Fereydōn (Avestan *Θraētaona-*) against the archetypal evil Zahāk (Avestan *Aži- Dahāka-*).[7] In his victorious campaign against the personified dragon Zahāk, Fereydōn almost suffers annihilation at the hand of his two (older) brothers, possibly twin brothers (*dō farrox hamāl*) called *Katāyōn and Barmāye*. These brethren, known to us also from their brief mention in the *Bundahišn* as Kadāyōn and Bramāyōn,[8] suddenly emerge into the story. They are envious of Fereydōn's fortune, and design his demise through treachery:

> *barādar dō būd-aš dō farrox hamāl*
> *az-o har dō āzāde mehtar be sāl*
> *yekī būd az ēšān Katāyōn-(a)š nām*
> *degar nām Barmāye-ye šādkām*

> He [Fereydōn] had two brothers, blessed twin brothers,
> the two highborn ones were older than him in years.
> One of them was called *Katāyōn*,
> and the name of the other [was] the gay *Barmāye*.[9]

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7 On Aži Dahāka, see Skjærvø, "The Story of Aži Dahāka," 533–49.

8 Bundahišn 35.9–10: "*ān 1000 sāl Dahāg duš-pādixšāyīh būd. Az Aspīyān ī Purr-gāw Frēdōn zād kē kēn ǰam xwāst. Anīz frazend Barmāyōn ud Kadāyōn. Frēdōn az awēšān purr-xwarrahtar būd.*" (Those thousand years belonged to the evil rule of Dahāg. To Aspīyān Purr-gāw Frēdōn was born, who sought to avenge ǰam; also the other children [of Aspīyān] were Barmāyōn and Kadāyōn. Frēdōn was bestowed with more [royal] glory than them). For a critical edition of the Bundahišn, see now Pakzad, *Bundahišn: Zoroastrische Kosmogonie und Kosmologie*.

9 Khaleghi-Motlagh, *Šāhnāme* 1:70, vv. 253–54.

barādar-aš har dō barō xāstand
tabah-kardan-aš rā bēyārāstand
be pāyān-e koh šāh xofte be nāz
šode yek zamān az šab-e dērāz
yekī sang būd az bar-e borz kōh
barādar-aš har dō nehān az gorōh
davīdand bar kōh o kandand sang
bedān tā be-kōband sar-aš bē-derang
vo-z-ān kōh yalṭān ān forō-gāštand
mar-ān xofte rā košte pendāštand
be farmān-e yazdān sar-e xofte-mard
xorōsīdan-e sang bīdār kard
be afsōn hamān sang bar ǰāy-e x^ēš
bebast o naǰonbīd ān sang bēš[10]

The two brothers raised an eyebrow,
and planned for his demise.
The king was peacefully asleep in the mountain's foothills,
some time had passed from the long night.
There was a stone on top of that tall mountain,
his two brothers moved away in secret from the group,
they ran towards the mountain and detached the stone,
so that it may crush his [*Fereydōn*'s] head at once,
rolling it, they threw it down from that mountain [top],
they were [already] deeming the sleeping one killed,
[but] by order of the gods the clamor of the stone
awakened the sleeping man.
Through magic he [*Fereydōn*] bound the stone in its place,
And no further did that stone move.

Another example, which shows the prevalence of the theme of *two* evil brothers/evildoers in the Iranian epic tradition is provided by the medieval (tenth/eleventh century CE) Persian variation on the Alexander romance, called the *Dārāb Nāme*, penned by Abu Ṭāher-e Ṭarsōsī.[11] In this *Book of Dārāb*—which refers to the last Achaemenid king, Darius III, who, having been defeated by Alexander the Great, was eventually murdered by his closest retinue—Dārāb's murderers are depicted as two brothers, called Māhyār and ǰānōsyār.[12]

In the hope of preserving their status and finding riches, Māhyār and ǰānōsyār kill Dārāb, but Alexander, repenting his incitement to crime, turns into Darius's

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10 Ibid., 1:72–73, vv. 285–91.
11 See Gaillard, *Alexandre le Grand en Iran*, 9–17, 149.
12 Ṣafā, *Dārāb Nāme*, 1:461.

avenger. Eventually, the two evildoers are put to death in a manner reminiscent of the punishment afflicted upon rebels by Achaemenid kings:

> *Pas Eskandar befarmūd tā Māhyār o ǰānōsyār rā beyāvardand o ān har dō ḥarāmzāde rā bar dār kardand o tīr-bārān sāxtand o īšān rā čandān bar dār bemāndand ke moryān o magasān īšān rā bexᵛardand. Baʿd az ān īšān rā be-xᵛārī bar zamīn beyandāxtand.*

> Then Alexander ordered that <u>Māhyār</u> and <u>ǰānōsyār</u> be brought to his presence and these two bastards were taken to the gallows, they showered them with arrows, and let them hang for so long on the gallows that the birds and flies devoured them. Then, they abjectly threw them on the ground.[13]

In the prose epic *Samak-e ʿAyyār*, most likely put into writing in the second half of the twelfth century, having been possibly transmitted orally for some time before its redaction, we hear of the exploits of the young prince *Xōršīd* (*Xᵛaršīd*) *šāh*, son of the ruler of Aleppo, *Marzbān šāh*, who is aided in his adventures by an *ʿayyār* called Samak.[14]

In the course of a hunting game, *Xōršīd šāh* has a brief encounter with the daughter to the ruler of Čīn, *Mah-parī*, with whom he falls in love. He then sets out to find her in the company of his trusted brother Farrox-rōz, and two "paladins" (*dō pahlavān*), called Alīyān and Alīyār, sent along by the king to watch over the princes' expedition.[15] However, while crossing a particularly daunting desert, still in search of *Mah-parī*, the paladins Alīyān and Alīyār, frustrated by their subservience to a child and his whims, are seized by the demon of envy, which eventually induces them to bring about the demise of the two princes:

> *Pas rōy dar biyābān nahādand. Biyābānī dar pīš-e īšān āmad ke pendāštī ke hargez ādamī [rā] dar ān rāh nabūde ast bī āb o bī xāšāk zamīn-ī sāde narm o ǰāygāhī garm ǰāygāh-e dīvān o yōlān-e sahmnāk. Tarsande dar čenīn biyābānī mi-raftand tā yek nīme az biyābān beg-zaštand. Šeyṭān-e ḥasad beyāmad o garībān-e Alīyān o Alīyār begreft o aṣl-e bad dar nahād-e īšān be-ǰoš āmad. Feʿl-e bad o harām-zādegī dar kār āvard. Bā ham goftand čerā dar farmā-e kōdakī bāšīm. Ō rā qahr gardānīm o īn māl-e farāvān bar-gīrīm o xᵛad farmānde o pādšāh bāšīm. Dēgar bā Farrox-rōz če konīm. <u>Bā ham mašverat kardand ke har dō rā bar bāyad dāšt ke laškar xᵛad bā mā-and o har-ke dar ʿahd-e mā nayāyad ō rā be-košīm. Har dō bar-īn ettefāq</u>*

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13 Ibid.

14 On the *Samak-e ʿAyyār*, its narrative genre, and aspects of orality, see Gaillard, "Samak-e ʿAyyār"; Gaillard, *Le livre de Samak-e ʿAyyâr*; also Razavi, *Faramarz, fils de Khodadad: Samak-e Ayyar*, 7–10; and Nātel-Khānlarī, *Samak-e ʿAyyār: Taʾlīf-e Farāmarz b. Xōdādād b. ʿAb-dollāh-al-Kāteb al-Arǰāni*, 1:v-xii.

15 For a synopsis of the story, see Gaillard, "Samak-e ʿAyyār"; also Gaillard, *Le livre de Samak-e ʿAyyâr*, 55–83 (*les articulations du texte*); and Gaillard, "Samak-e ʿAyyâr et Xoršid-šâh: Héros réel et héros apparent," 199–200.

dādand o mī-sāxtand tā če-gōne īšān rā halāk bāyad kard. Bar ān qarār oftād ke īšān rā be zahr halāk konand.[16]

Then they entered the desert. They encountered a wasteland, which, one would think, a human had never crossed: arid and barren, covered with soft sand, a torrid place, the den of devils and terrifying demons. Fearful, they traversed this desert until they had covered the better half of it. [Then,] the demon of envy appeared, seized their [*Alīyān and Alīyār'*s] collar[s], and the root of evil arose in their mind. It prompted evil deeds and perversion [in them]. They said to each other: "why shall we be at the command of a child? Let us subdue him, take possession of this abundant wealth, and become commander[s] and king[s] ourselves. But what to do with Farrox-rōz?" They consulted among themselves [and decided] that they ought to eliminate both, for 'the army is with us, and whoever does not take side with us, him we shall strike down.' Both agreed on this [plan of action], and were in agreement as on how to put those [Xōršīd Šāh and Farrox-rōz] to death. They decided on putting them to death by means of poison.

Although they initially connived with a trusted servant of the two princes, the steward Tamar-Tāš, to assassinate them, however, while feigning to assent to their plot, he eventually denounced Alīyān and Alīyār to his master, who put them to death as common criminals:

Čōn be šarāb xᵛardan mašqūl šodand ān har dō pahlavān ḥāżer āmadand bā xāṣagīyān o Tamar-Tāš īstāde būd o šarāb dar mī-dād o pahlevānān bar ān omīd ke šāhzāde bekošand o šāhzāde sar dar pēš afkande o qavām bar mī-gereft. Agar če īmen būd yāfel na-būd tā šarāb dar īšān kār kard. Har dō pahlevānān ešārat be yolām kardand. Šāhzāde bedīd. Dārū dar qadaḥ-e šarāb afgand čenānke kasī nadīd o dar nōšānōš āmad. Bēyāmad o be Alīyān dād Alīyān bāz xᵛard. Dar ḥāl qadaḥ-e šarāb dar kard o dārū dar afgand o be Alīyār dād. Bāz xᵛard. Pas šarāb dar dādan greft. Hanōz šarāb be šāhzāde naresīde būd ke har dō bēyoftādand. Tamar-Tāš xedmat kard o goft ey šāhzāde došmanān-e tō hame hamčenīn xār oftāde bād. Ey šāhzāde [sar-e] īšān rā bar bāyad dāšt ke došman-and o došman sar kōfte beh bāšad. Pas šāhzāde bar Tamar-Tāš āfrīn kard. Pas aḥvāl bā laškar be-goft. Hamegān ʿajab dāštand o bar īšān nefrīn mī-kardand. Pas šāhzāde befarmūd tā har dō rā sar az tan jodā kardand.[17]

When they began drinking wine, those two paladins appeared together with their favorites/ intimates, and Tamar-Tāš was standing and serving wine. The champions were hopping to kill the prince, who kept his head bent, albeit managing the events. And although he was safe, he was not inattentive, until the time that the wine would take effect. The two champions made a sign to Tamar-Tāš. The prince saw it. He [Tamar-Tāš] cast the drug into the goblet of wine, in a way no one saw, and served it. He came towards Alīyān and offered the goblet of wine to him. Alīyān swallowed it [the wine]. At once he produced [another] goblet of wine, placed therein the drug, and offered it to Alīyār. He swallowed it [the wine] down.

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16 Nātel-Khānlarī, *Samak-e ʿAyyār*, 1:18–19, ll. 30–33 and 1–7.
17 Ibid., 1:20, ll. 8–19.

Then, he began to serve wine [to others]. He had not yet served the prince that the two [Alīyān and Alīyār] collapsed. Tamar-Tāš bowed and said: "o prince, may your foes all fall that abjectly. O prince they should be beheaded, for they are enemies and a beheaded foe is best." Then, the prince praised Tamar-Tāš, and revealed the matter to the army, the peers were stupefied, and were cursing them. Then the prince ordered their heads to be taken off.

The (Two Evil) Brothers in *Vīs o Rāmīn*

An intriguing variation on the theme of two evil brothers in the Iranian traditions may be seen in the eleventh-century Persian verse romance attributed to Faxr al-Dīn Asʿad Gorgānī, *Vīs o Rāmīn*, whose pre-Islamic substratum has been adequately described in the scholarship.[18]

In the romance, which depicts the vicissitudes of a love triangle with two brothers—the king of kings of Irān and Tūrān and his younger brother, lord of Xorāsān, vying for the favors of the queen Vīs—a complicated pattern regulates the relationship of the three brothers: King Mobad Manīkān, Zard, and Rāmīn.

The king of Marv, who is also called the *šāhanšāh*, that is, overlord of Irān and Tūrān (*bar Īrān o Tūrān šāhanšahī*, "you are king of kings of Irān and Tūrān"[19]) is said to have two brothers. His (older) half-brother Zard (< Pth. *zard*?

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[18] For an essential discussion of the romance, see Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance," on the story pattern in particular, 745–53; also Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance (Conclusions)"; Minorsky, "Vīs-u-Rāmīn (III)"; Minorsky, "Vīs-u-Rāmīn (IV)." Also of interest the remarks by Hedāyat, "*Čand nokte dar bāre-ye Vīs o Rāmīn*" [*A Few Remarks on Vīs o Rāmīn*], 381–413. More recently also Davis, "Vis o Rāmin"; de Blois, *Poetry of the Pre-Mongol Period*, 141–45; and de Blois "Pre-Islamic Iranian and Indian Influences on Persian Literature," 342–43. For an excellent and close translation of the text (based on Mīnovī's edition), see Massé, *Le roman de Wîs et Râmîn*; for a recent English translation, see Davis, *Vis & Ramin*.

[19] Todua and Gwakharia, *Vīs va Rāmīn of Fakhr al-Dīn Gorgānī*, 214, vv. 48–51 (hereafter TG):

šabī mādar bedō goft ey nīyāzī
čerā az ranǰ o andoh mī-godāzī
čenīn yamgēn o darmānde čerāyī
na bar īrān o tūrān pādšāyī
na šāhān-e ǰahān bāžat gozārand
del o dīde be-framān-e tō dārand
ǰahān az Qayrūvān tā Čīn dārī
be har kāmī ke x^vāhī kāmgārī

One night the mother told him: "o beloved
why are you melting away from pain and sorrow;
why are you thus sorrowful and forlorn,
aren't you then the king of Irān and Tūrān,

"old; infirm"[20]) is his (evil) right arm, an accomplice in his romantic entangle-ments, vizir and viceregent,[21] but also one of the king's foremost commanders (*be dargāhaš ze pēšān-e sepāham*, "at his court I am among the army's leaders").[22]

King Mobad's younger brother Rāmīn, however, is the romance's heroic figure, to whom the king is an older brother, rival, and father figure. With each of his brothers king Mobad forms a different couple: together with Zard they con-stitute a duo of (evil) brethren; and with Rāmīn the hero, they form a couple that remains, in spite of innumerable conflicts, infrangible, since the dynastic princi-ple regulates its very core, with one (Rāmīn) bound to succeed another, as long as Mobad remains bereft of an offspring.

Intriguing is the name/title of the king of Marv, that is, Mobed (< **magu-pati-*, "[chief] magus, priest,") which possibly was used in order to cast doubt upon the legitimacy of the king's rule.[23] This tendency is further observed in the occa-sional use of the title *dastūr*, "(priestly) scribe." Strikingly, the king's manhood is also being questioned (*mardat mī-nadārand*) in the romance[24]—thus for example after Zard's return from the kingdom of Māh (Media), reporting to his king on the prevailing opinions on him (and his virility) at the Median court. Questioned also were—still according to Zard—the king's rectitude or benevolence, for he was either called a *mobad-e drō*, "magus-liar," or *mobad-e dūr* and *mobad-e zūr*, depending on how the final word of the hemistich is to be read, whether as درو (*drō*), "lie," or alternatively دور (*dūr*), "far-away," and زور (*zūr*), "violence; force."[25] If the lesson درو were to be retained—representing a Middle Persian

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are the kings of the world not bearers of tribute to you,

are their hearts and eyes not fixed on you;

you rule over the world from Kairouan to China,

whatever you desire you may fulfill."

20 See Durkin-Meisterernst, *Dictionary of Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*, 384: "infirm (from old age)."

21 TG 34, v. 28: *čō Zard ān rāzdār-e šāh-e kešvar//mar-ō rā ham vazīr o ham barādar* ("like Zard, the confidant of the king of the land[s], both his vizir and brother").

22 See in particular TG 56, vv. 87–92; also Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance," 753–54.

23 See also Minorsky "Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance," 753–54.

24 On the association of magi with eunuchs, see Shayegan, *Aspects of History and Epic in Ancient Iran*, 12n11.

25 TG 61, v. 173, and Rošan, *Vīs o Rāmīn*, 60, v. 48 read دور; Mīnovī, *Vis and Rāmīn*, 55, v. 45, fa-vors زور, that is, *mobad-e zūr*, "the oppressive Mobad," all in an attempt to rhyme it with *dastūr*. It is not immediately clear to me what the meaning of *mobad-e dūr* is, possibly "the far-away Mobad," whose rule is felt lightly? The alternate lessons, be it *mobad-e dūr*, or be it *mobad-e zūr*, appear to be endeavors to make sense of the formula, or/and to accommodate the rhyme. The Georgian version of *Vīs o Rāmīn*, that is, *Visramiani*, does not permit to decide on the choice

archaism *drō*—one ought to presume that *mobad-e *drō* may have been the reflex of an older inherited formula, of which we find traces in the Bisotun inscription:[26]

> *torā na-ze šahryārān mīšmārand*
> *grōhī xᵛad be mardat mī-nadārand*
> *grōhī mobadat xᵛānand o dastūr*
> *čō xᵛānandat grōhī mobad-e *drō*[27]

> They do not consider you from among the princes,
> some do not even deem you to be a man;
> some do call you a magus and scribe,
> as others do call you a magus-liar.

Occasionally, King Mobad's association with sorcery and dark forces is mentioned. Following the first undecided battle between Vīrō—Vīs's brother and (first) betrothed—and King Mobad, the former makes a speech to his champions aimed at rallying them for one final confrontation with the king of kings, whom Vīrō calls a sorcerer (*mobad-e ǰādū*):

> *šomā az bāmdādān tā be aknūn*
> *basī ǰang-āvarī kardīd o afsūn*
> *hanūz īn peykar-e vārōn be pāyast*
> *hanūz īn mobad-e ǰādū be ǰāyast*[28]

> From dawn to the present, you
> have battled much and have done wonders,
> [but] still this crooked figure is afoot,
> still this magus-sorcerer is (looming) at large.

Yet in another passage, that is, in the context of Vīs conveying her (second) refusal to the advances of the king of kings (through the intermediary of an herald), the latter is once more accused of witchcraft (*ǰādūy ōstād bāšī*):

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of the right word in this context: "Some insult you by calling you 'rotten,' some speak of you as 'Moabad who was'"; see Wardrop, *Visramiani*, 21. On the *Visramiani*, still Wardrop, "The Georgian Version of the Loves of Vis and Ramīn"; and more recently Giunashvili, "Visramiani."

26 So for example in the passages: *aiva martiya maguš āha Gaumāta nāma … Hauv karāhạyā avaθā [a]durujiya* ("One man, a magus, named Bardiya … he thus lied to the people"). See Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions of Darius the Great*, 1.36–39.

27 TG 61, vv. 172–73.

28 TG 70, vv. 67–68.

nagar tā to napandārī ke hargez
marā zende bezīr ārī az-īn dez
va yā hargez to az man šād bāšī
va-gar če ĵādūy ostād bāšī[29]

Be mindful not to think that you ever
shall force me to descend alive from this fortress,
or that you ever shall take pleasure in me,
even though you are <u>master in witchcraft</u>.

On another occasion, it is Vīs's nursemaid who calls the king of Marv a demon-sorcerer (*dīv-e ĵādū*). Indeed, the nursemaid,[30] in response to Vīs's pleas to render King Mobed impotent—as well as reproaching the nurse of duplicity—replies to her in following terms:

do čašm-e dāye bar vey mānde xīre
ĵahān bar har do čašmaš gašt tīre
bedō goft ey čarāy o čašm-e dāye
nabīnam bā to dād az hēc māye
sīyah-del gaštī az ranĵ āzmōdan
sīyāhī az *sīyah[31] natvān zedūdan
sepāh-e <u>dīv-e ĵādū</u> bar tō rah yāft
tō-rā az rāh-e dād o mehr bar tāft[32]

With her two eyes the nursemaid gazed at her,
and the world grew dark in front of her two eyes.
To her she said: 'o your nurse's eyelight,'
I don't see any measure of justice in you,
you have turned black-hearted from suffering,
one may not wipe clean the blackedness from the black.
The army of the <u>demon-sorcerer</u> has found its way to you,
and has diverted you from the path of justice and love.

Thus, themes that most persistently define the king of Marv—beyond his being a magus—are his falsehood and association with witchcraft and demons, as he is indiscriminately called: *mobad-e drō*, "magus-liar"; *mobad-e ĵādū*, "magus-sor-

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29 TG 76, vv. 12–13.
30 On the importance of the nursemaid, see Milani "The Mediatory Guile of the Nanny in Persian Romance," in particular (pertaining to *Vīs o Rāmīn*), 185–86, and 193–94.
31 The Paris manuscript reads *sīyah*, whereas TG 110, v. 27, and Rošan, *Vīs o Rāmīn*, 93, v. 27, have chosen the lesson with *šabah*.
32 TG 110, vv. 25–28.

cerer"; *ǰādūy ostād*, "master of sorcery/witchcraft"; and *dīv-e ǰādū*, "demon-sorcerer."

Numerous parallels exist between the depiction of King Mobad as a sorcerer and liar and other literary (and historical figures), whose reigns are rejected as wicked. A case in point is the story of Zahāk's evil-rule in the *Šāhnāme*. Here the deeds of the wise (*kardār-e farzānegān*), virtue (*honar*), and goodness (*nīkī*) are contrasted with the (foul) design of madmen (*kām-e dīvānegān*), sorcery (*ǰādūyī*), and wrong and evil (*badī*) at the devils' hands (*bar badī dast-e dēvān derāz*), which the following passage illustrates:

> *čō żaḥḥāk bar taxt šod šahriyār*
> *barō sāliyān anǰoman šod hazār*
> *sarāsar zamāne bedō gašt bāz*
> *bar-āmad barīn rōzgārī derāz*
> *nehān gašt kardār-e frazānegān*
> *parākande šod kām-e dīvānegān*
> *honar xᵛār šod ǰādūyī arǰomand*
> *šode bar badī dast-e dēvān derāz*
> *be nīkī nabūdī saxon ǰoz rāz*[33]

> When Zahāk became master of the (royal) throne,
> he ruled for a thousand years,
> the whole world lay open to him,
> he was granted a long age,
> the deeds of the wise were eclipsed,
> (and) madmen's desire became widespread,
> virtue was despised, and sorcery held dear,
> absent (was) rectitude, manifest the wrong,
> the devils reached for evil,
> there was no word of goodness, unless in secret.

The selfsame ideas may also be found in Darius's Bisotun inscription, when describing the emergence of lie and evil after the usurpation of Gaumāta. Indeed, lie (*drauga-*) and disloyalty (*arīka-*) are reported to have arisen following the alleged assassination of Bardiya at the hand of his brother Cambyses, but evil reached its climax with the seizure of power by Gaumāta, who lied (*adurujiya-*) to the people:

> *Kaᵐbūjiya nāma Kurauš puça amāxam taumāyā ha[uv] [par]uvam idā xšāyaθiya āha. Avahạyā Kaᵐbūjiyahạyā brat[ā Bạrdi]ya nāma āha hamātā hamapitā Kaᵐbūjiyahạyā. Pasāva Kaᵐb[ū-*

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33 Khaleghi-Motlagh, *Šāhnāme*, 1:55, vv. 1–5.

jiya] avam Bạrdiyam avāja yaθā Kaᵐbūjiya Bạrdiyam avāja kārahạy[ā naiy] azdā abava taya *Bạrdiya avajatā. Pasāva Kaᵐbūjiya Mudrāyam [ašiyav]a. Yaθā Kaᵐbūjiya Mudrāyam ašiyava pasāva karā **arīka** abava [utā] **drauga** dahạyuvā vasiy abava utā Parsaiy utā Mādaiy ut[ā a]niyāuvā dahạyušuvā ... Pa[sāva] aiva martiya maguš āha Gaumāta nāma hauv udapatatā hacā Paiši[yā]uvādā Arakadriš nāma kaufa hacā avadaša Viyaxanahạyā mā[h]ạyā XIV raucabiš θakatā āha yadiy udapatatā. Hauv karāhạyā avaθā **[a]durujiya** adam Bạrdiya amiy haya Kurauš puça Kaᵐbūjiyahạyā br[ā]tā.*³⁴

The son of Cyrus, Cambyses by name, of our family, was formerly king here. That Cambyses had a brother, Bardiya by name, of the same father and the same mother as Cambyses. Afterwards, Cambyses killed that Bardiya, when Cambyses killed Bardiya, it did not become known to the people that Bardiya was killed. When Cambyses went to Egypt, then the people became **disloyal** and the **lie** became great, in Persis, as well as Media and the other countries ... Thereafter, there was one man, a magus, Gaumāta by name, he rose up from Paišiyāuvāda, a mountain by name of Arakadri, from there, of the month of Viyaxna 14 days were past, when he rose up. He **lied** to the people thus: "I am Bardiya, son of Cyrus, brother of Cambyses."

In another passage of the Bisotun inscription, Darius exhorts his successor to shield himself from the (effects of) lie (*drauga-*), and to combat sternly the liar (*draujana-*):

Θātiy dārayavaʰuš xšāyaθiya tuvam kā x[šāyaθiya ha]ya aparam āhạy hacā **draugā** dạršam patipayaʰuvā mart[iya haya drau]jana ahatiy avam ʰufraštam pạrsā yadiy avaθā man[i-yāhạy] dahạyāušmaiy duruvā ahatiy³⁵

Said Darius the king: you who shall be king afterward, protect yourself much from the **lie**, and the man who shall be a liar, him punish well when you thus think to yourself: "may my country be safe."

And:

Tuvam kā xšāyaθiya haya aparam āhạy marti[ya] ha[ya] **draujana** ahatiy hayavā [zū]raʰkara ahatiy avaiy mā daustā [bi]yā ʰufraštādiš pạrsā³⁶

You who shall be king afterward, the man [who] shall be a follower of **lie**, or who shall be a wrong-doer, to them you may not be a friend, punish them well.

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34 Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions of Darius the Great*, 1.28–40.

35 Ibid., 4.36–40.

36 Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions of Darius the Great*, 4.67–69.

Thus, the depiction of King Mobad's rule seems to be perfectly in line with those of other evil rulers in the Iranian literary tradition, and, intriguingly, *Vīs o Rāmīn* seems to represent the only other literary instance—aside from the Bisotun inscription and its depiction of Gaumāta as a magus—wherein the king/ruler is qualified as a magian unfit to rule.

Another interesting aspect of King Mobad's rule is the hitherto unresolved issue of his titulature. Mobad's patronymic name is said to be *Manīkān*, which may have derived from **manīg* (< **manya-ka-*), that is, he "who has authority,"[37] possibly another title for the king, made into a patronymic (in *-ān*), or alternatively the title of Mobad's (claimed) ancestor. It is only attested once in the entire romance, when the king moves against the kingdom of Māh, where Vīrō is receiving on the occasion of his marriage with his sister a number of guests, all called lords and grandees (*mehtar gozīnān o mehān čand*):

> *čō gaštand āgah az <u>Mobad-e Manīkān</u>*
> *ke laškar rānd xᵛāhad sōy-e īšān*
> *be nāme har yekī laškar be xᵛāndand*[38]

> Upon being informed that <u>Mobad, [the] Manīkean [son of Manīk]</u>
> will be driving his forces towards them [the grandees],
> in writing, each summoned (his) army.

If the title/patronymic *Manīkān* were to be read as one "who is bestowed with authority," then it would contrast with the king's name and title, *Mobad* and *dastūr*, which hint at his ineptitude to assume rulership. It is not facile a task to reconcile these divergent names and titles with one and the same person; their contradictory nature may indicate that different functions were amalgamated for one actor. Here, the striking parallelism between the king of Marv and his name and title/patronymic—*Mobad* "magus"; *dastūr* "who has (religious) authority"; and *Manīk(ān)* "(son of one) with (political) authority"—with the names and titles ascribed to the magus Gaumāta in the accounts of Herodotus and Justin are worthy of attention.

We may recall that the role of the usurper Gaumāta in Bisotun is assumed by two magian brothers in Herodotus and Justin, both being usurpers of Cambyses's throne.

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37 On the possible meaning of **maṇia-(ka-)*, "who has authority," see Benveniste, *Titres et noms propres en Iranien ancien*, 77 and 87; and Tavernier, *Iranica in the Achaemenid Period*, 240, no. 4.2.1049. Compare also Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance (Conclusions)," 28, 31.
38 TG 65, vv. 7–8.

In Herodotus, one magian brother, called Patizeithēs, is depicted as the driving force in the plot, and was reportedly Cambyses's "head of the royal household" (τῶν οἰκίων μελεδωνός);[39] whereas the other, a certain Smerdis, Patizeithēs's brother and partner in crime, although subordinate to him, impersonated the real prince Bardiya. In Justin, the functional division among the brothers is identical with the one prevailing in Herodotus's narrative, only the names of the magi differ: the magian mastermind is called Cometes, and his brother, the substitute, Oropastes.[40]

This division is not without similarity with the duo Mobad and Zard in *Vīs o Rāmīn*. Mobad corresponds to the Herodotean Patizeithēs, and Zard to the subservient Smerdis. It is true that there is no substitution plot at work in *Vīs o Rāmīn*,[41] but this is also not the point for the purposes of the present study, but rather the concept of the two (evil) brothers, which is well represented in the traditions captured by Herodotus and Justin.

What is more, as we have demonstrated elsewhere, the name of Patizeithēs in Herodotus most likely signifies "viceroy" and corresponds to the reported function of the magus being "steward of the royal household." In the same vein, the name of the subordinate magus in Justin is Oropastes, which is a religious epithet meaning "with Ahura (Mazdā)'s support."[42]

Although in Herodotus's account, the political title "viceroy" serves as name to *one* magus, namely, the mastermind, and in the narrative of Justin the religious epithet "with Ahura's support" is attributed to *another*, this one being the subordinate magus, in *Vīs o Rāmīn*, Mobad is bestowed with both the political and religious titles: *manīk(ān)* and *dastūr*, as the following table illustrates:

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39 Herodotus 3.61.

40 For a discussion of the magi's functions and titles, see Shayegan, *Aspects of History and Epic in Ancient Iran*, 27–33.

41 For a brilliant discussion on the substitution plot in the Bisotun inscription and the Cyrus Cylinder, see Nagy, "The Idea of an Archetype in Texts Stemming from the Empire Founded by Cyrus the Great."

42 The name of *Patizeithēs* < **pati-xšāyaθiya-*, "viceroy," as well as the magus's reported function as the "steward of the royal household" in Herodotus must have originally belonged to Cambyses's brother, Bardiya. The title and functions of Prince Bardiya seem to have been amalgamated in later traditions and erroneously attributed to the magus who in Herodotus corresponds to the personage of Gaumāta. See Shayegan, *Aspects of History and Epic in Ancient Iran*, 27–33; compare also more recently Pirart, "Le Mazdéisme politique de Darius Iᵉʳ," 144–45, 147; Werba, *The Title of the Achaemenid 'King': Etymology, Formation and Meaning of Old Persian xšāyaθiya-*," 274–75, and Schmitt, *Iranische Personennamen in der griechischen Literatur*, 298–99.

Vīs o Rāmīn	Herodotus	Justin
Mobad — Zard	**Patizeithēs** — Smerdis	Cometes — **Oropastes**
Mobad's political title: *manīk(ān)* "(son of one) with (political) authority"	magus's Political title: **pati-xšayāθiya-* "viceroy?"	magus's religious title: **ahura-upasta-* "with Ahura's support"
Mobad's religious title: *dastūr* "who has (religious) authority"		

Thus, although in *Vīs o Rāmīn* the function of the two (evil) brothers is well attested, the distribution of the political and religious titles, which originally were divided among the two brothers, are amalgamated in one person, that is, King Mobad.

However, another relationship exists, this one regulating the interactions between Mobad and his younger brother Rāmīn, who is both rival and heir to the king. In a number of letters addressed to the two brothers, their mother seeks to reconcile them, and dissuade Mobad from killing Rāmīn. Since the latter's illicit relationship with the king's bride Vīs has been the cause of much grief to Mobad, he is being vigorously reminded by their mother that Rāmīn remained the king's most trusted champion (*ō bovad pošt o panāh-at*), and the only one to ensure the royal line:

> *ǰavāb-aš dād mādar goft hargez*
> *do dast-e xᵛad na-borrad hēč gorbez*
> *makoš ō-rā ke ō hast-at barādar*
> *to-rā čōn ō barādar nēst dēgar*
> *na dar razmat bovad ambāz o yāvar*
> *na dar bazmat bovad xᵛaršēd-e anvar*
> *čō bē Rāmīn šavī bē kas bemānī*
> *na xūš bāšad(a)t bē ō zendagānī*
> *čo benšīnī nabāšad hamnešīn-at*
> *hamān ambāz o pošt-e rāstīn-at*
> to-rā īzad nadādast ēč frazand
> *ke rōzī bar ǰahān bāšad xodāvand*
> *bemān tā kō bovad pošt o panāh-at*
> *be dast-e ō bemānad ǰāygāh-at*[43]

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43 TG 189–90, vv. 16–22.

The mother responded to him [Mobad], saying that: never
shall a wise man cut his own two hands.
Don't kill him [Rāmīn], for he is your brother,
and you don't have another one like him,
[and won't have] a companion and aide in your battles,
or a luminous sun at your banquets.
Deprived of Rāmīn, you shall remain without kin,
you shan't enjoy life without him.
When seated, you shan't have a companion,
the selfsame associate and true pillar of yours.
The gods haven't granted you [o Mobad] an offspring,
who shall rule over the world one day;
let him be, so he be a pillar and refuge to you,
and by his hands your throne be preserved.

Thus, returning once more to the story of Gaumāta's usurpation, we may observe that the relationship between Cambyses and his younger brother Bardiya offers some parallels with Mobad's conflicted relation with Rāmīn.

As we have seen above, the Bisotun inscription clearly states that Bardiya was of the same father and mother as Cambyses (*hamātā hamapitā Kaᵐbū-jiyahạyā*), very much like Mobad and Rāmīn who, as opposed to Zard born to another mother, are form the same womb (*be-ham būdand az-īn pākīze mādar*), and selfsame parents (*bā man ham az yek mām o bāb-ast* "he is of the same father and mother as I"). These themes are clearly expressed in the following verses:

ze-Rey Rāmīn be-mādar nāme-ī kard
ze šādī ǰān-e ō rā ǰāme-ī kard
koǰā Rāmīn o šah har dō barādar
be-ham būdand az-īn pākīze mādar
va-z-īšān Zard rā mādar degar būd
šenīdastam ke ō Hendū gohar būd[44]

From the city of Rey Rāmīn wrote a letter to his mother,
which clad her life with joy,
for Rāmīn and the king were brothers, both
extracted from the selfsame pure mother,
and Zard was from another mother than theirs
a woman of Indian origin, as I have heard.

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44 TG 211, vv. 4–6.

And again:

har āngāhī ke bar dargāh bāšam
ze bīmaš gōyī andar čāh bāšam
na čarxast o na māh o āftāb-ast
koǰā bā man ham az yek mām o bāb-ast[45]

whenever I am at court,
out of fearing him [Mobad], one would say I am in a pit,
he is neither the firmament, nor the moon, nor is he the sun,
for he is of the same father and mother as I.

Furthermore, Xenophon reports that, although Cyrus entrusted his empire to Cambyses, Bardiya (called Tanaoxarēs in the *Cyropaedia*) was also given rulership over numerous lands: σοὶ δ᾽ ὦ Ταναοξάρη σατράπην εἶναι δίδωμι Μήδων τε καί Ἀρμενίων καί τρίτων Καδουσίων ("to you, o Tanaoxarēs, I [Cyrus] grant [the right] of being satrap over the Medes, Armenians, and in the third place, the Cadusians").[46] This might have been an indication of Bardiya's position as heir apparent to Cambyses (who on all accounts was without child).

Again, Rāmīn is described both as a brother and son of Mobad (*barādar būd Mobad rā o frazand*, "he was both brother and son to Mobad"),[47] probably to accentuate his status as heir to the king of kings, while he is also shown to be a potentate in his own right, called in the same verse the (petty) king of Media (*valīkan Māh rā šāh o xodāvand*, "but [at the same time] he [was] king and lord of Māh [= Media]).[48] Thus, both Bardiya and Rāmīn are depicted as rulers over extended territories, especially Media—satrap of the Medes, Armenians, and the Cadusians in Xenophon (σατράπης Μήδων τε καί Ἀρμενίων καί τρίτων Καδουσίων), and king and lord of Media (*Māh rā šāh o xodāvand*) in *Vīs o Rāmīn*.

According to a different tradition, this one reported by Ctesias, Bardiya (called Tanyoxarkēs in Ctesias) was appointed lord (δεσπότης) over eastern satrapies, such as Bactria, Chorasmia, Parthia, and Carmania.[49] Intriguingly, Rāmīn holds the position of commander (*spahbod*),[50] as well as of margrave (*marzbān*)

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45 TG 211–12, vv. 9–10.

46 Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8. 7. 11. Text follows edition by Bizos, *Xenophon: Cyropédie*.

47 TG 116, v. 51

48 Ibid. See also Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance (Conclusions)," 20–21.

49 Ctesias F9.8. Text follows edition by Lenfant, *Ctésias de Cnide: La Perse*, *l'Inde*, *autres fragments*.

50 TG 217, v. 103; see also Minorsky "Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance (Conclusions)," 21.

and king (*pādšā*) of the eastern province of Xorāsān. In a conciliatory letter sent by Rāmīn's mother to her son, we read:

> *ke az bēgānagī sūdī nayārī*
> *o garče māye-ye besīyār dārī*
> *čo dārī dar <u>Xorāsān marzbānī</u>*
> *čerā ǰōyī degar ǰā ērmānī*
> *xorāsānī ke čōn xorram behešt-ast*
> *to rā īzad ze xāk-e ō serešt-ast*
> *to-rā dād-ast <u>bar-ōy pādšāyī</u>*
> *čerā ǰōyī hamī az-ōy ǰodāyī*[51]

> [O Rāmīn] you don't gain from drifting away,
> and although you are full of promise,
> as long as you hold the <u>office of the margrave in Xorāsān</u>,
> why should you be a humble guest elsewhere.
> Xorāsān is like a clement paradise,
> from its soil God has fashioned you forth,
> and has granted you <u>rulership thereof</u>:
> why do you seek to part from it?

In Plutarch's account of Cambyses, the sentiment is expressed that with Cambyses's fratricide the house of Cyrus had de facto died out, and the empire passed into Darius's hands, implicitly signaling that Bardiya would have become successor to his brother, had he not been killed by him beforehand:

> ὅθεν ἐξέπεσε τῆς Κύρου διαδοχῆς ἡ ἀρχὴ τελευτήσαντος αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ Δαρείου γένος ἐβασίλευσεν ἀνδρὸς οὐ μόνον ἀδελφοῖς ἀλλὰ καὶ φίλοις ἐπισταμένου κοινωνεῖν πραγμάτων καὶ δυνάμεως.[52]

> This is why, following his [Cambyses's] death, the empire was taken from Cyrus's successors, and Darius's family—the family of a man who knew how to share power and govern in community not only with his brethren, but also with his friends—ruled.

The very expectation of one brother succeeding to another is given voice throughout *Vīs o Rāmīn*. We have seen in the letter addressed to Mobad, how Rāmīn's eventual succession has been floated into the king's mind (*rōzī bar ǰahān bāšad xodāvand*, "he [Rāmīn] shall rule over the world one day"; *be dast-e ō bemānad*

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51 TG 217, vv. 106–9.
52 Plutarch *Moralia* 490 A. Text follows edition by Flacelière *et alii*, *Plutarque: Œuvres morales*.

ǰāygāh-at, "by his hands your throne shall be preserved").[53] More interesting, however, are Rāmīn's own pronouncements to that effect: he is desirous to inherit Mobad's throne in due time (*hamī gardam be gēhān tā bedān gāh || ke gardad ǰāygāh-e šāh bē šāh*), but, should this moment prove too distant, he would be coveting the succession by force (*man ke gerd āram spāhī || frōd āvaram mar-ō rā az sar-e taxt || nešīnam … bar taxt*):

> *hamī gardam be gēhān tā bedān gāh*
> *ke gardad ǰāygāh-e šāh bē šāh*
> *čo taxt-e Mobad az-ōy bāz mānad*
> *marā xʷad baxt bar taxt-aš nešānad*
> na ō rā ǰān be kōhī bāz bast-ast
> o yā dar češme-ye ḥeyvān bešost-ast
> o gar zīn pas bemānad čand gāhī
> *be ǰān man ke gerd āram spāhī*
> *frōd āvaram mar-ō rā az sar-e taxt*
> *nešīnam bā delārāmam bar taxt.*[54]

> I shall wander off in the world, until that time
> when the king's abode will become without king;
> when the throne of Mobad is bereft of him,
> then fortune itself shall seat me upon it,
> [as] neither is his [Mobad's] life bound to a mountain,
> nor did he bathe in the fountain of youth.
> And if hereafter he were to stay longer
> alive/upon my life, then I would raise an army
> overthrow him from the throne,
> and sit together with my beloved upon it.

By Way of Conclusion

Our comparison of some of the core themes of *Vīs o Rāmīn* with the narrative structure of the Bisotun inscription, the accounts of classical authors on that very episode—which are partially derived from Iranian oral transmissions—as well as early New Persian popular writings, has identified a number of parallels, which may be accounted for by the presence and productivity of Iranian oral (epic) traditions.

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53 TG 190, vv. 21–22.
54 TG 212–13, vv. 30–35.

Despite the Parthian setting of *Vīs o Rāmīn*,[55] some of the core story patterns of the romance may have been impacted by themes (and mythologems) originating from the Persis that may have—due to the prestige of the Bisotun inscription, and its oral renditions,[56] which eventually spilt over into Iranian oral traditions—become canonical; so for example the theme of the two (evil) brothers, which is, as we did explore, well attested in our romance.

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55 On the Parthian character of the geography and milieu, see Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance," 745, and 757–63; Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn: A Parthian Romance (Conclusions)," 22–31, especially 31; Minorsky, "Vīs-u-Rāmīn (IV)," 280–81.

56 This oral rendition of the Bisotun is called *handugā-* in the Bisotun inscription, and has been discussed in Shayegan *Aspects of History and Epic in Ancient Iran*, 93–106.

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Elaheh Kheirandish

Astronomical Poems from the "Four Corners" of Persia (c. 1000–1500 CE)[1]

Early astronomical poems were not limited to the "four corners" of Persia or to those written in Persian.[2] Furthermore, the poems presently selected are but a small sample from a larger set scattered in Medieval Persian poetry.[3] Representing a specific historical period (from the fifth/eleventh to the ninth/fifteenth centuries) and geographical area (from the northeast and northwest to the southeast and southwest of Greater Persia), these selections rather aim at highlighting the breadth and depth of knowledge that go beyond astronomy and astrology, extending to related areas within early sciences and crafts (*'ilm* and *ṣinā'a*), from natural philosophy (*ṭabī'iyyāt*) to mysticism (*'irfān*).[4] From the standpoint of the present volume, they also capture a mere drop in the oceanic range of knowledge of the scholar in whose honor the present volume is being published; a scholar who has pushed the boundaries of knowledge in Persian and Arabic philology and in disciplinary content from literature and history to philosophy and theology. Among his many and diverse works is a book devoted to Sanā'ī Ghaznavī's *Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqat* (c. sixth/twelfth century),[5] from which an astronomical poem is included here, excerpted from a longer version elsewhere.[6] That particular

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1 All date conversions are based on Jere L. Bacharach, *A Near East Studies Handbook* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976).

2 Poems on astronomy and/or astrology include one in Arabic attributed to Fazārī (fl. probably third/ninth century in Baghdad) called *Qaṣīda fī 'Ilm* (or *Hay'at*) *al-Nujūm* (Qasida on the Science [or Configuration] of the Stars). On the works of Fazārī see David Pingree, "The Fragments of the Works of al-Fazārī," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 29 (1970): 103–123; on Fazārī and Sanskrit technical treatises in [metrical] verse before Fazārī, see Kim Plofker, "Fazārī: Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Fazārī," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers*, ed. Thomas Hockey et al. (New York: Springer, 2007), 362–63.

3 Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols. (1902–6; reprint, Bethesda, MD: Iranbooks, 1997); C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey* (London: Luzac, 1927-); and see Wheeler M. Thackston, *A Millennium of Classical Persian Poetry: A Guide to the Reading and Understanding of Persian Poetry from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex, 2000).

4 Related areas within early science and craft include practical geometry (*a'māl al-handasa*) and war instruments (*ālāt al-ḥurūb*), and within natural philosophy and mysticism they include mechanical devices (*ḥiyal*) and prophetic ascension (*mi'rāj*).

5 Aḥmad Mahdavī Dāmghānī, *Dar Bāgh-i Rawshanā'ī: Guzīdah-i Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqat va-Sharī'at al-Ṭarīqat-i Sanā'ī Ghaznavī*, *Abū al-Majd Majdūd ibn Ādam* (Tehran: Sukhan, 1375/1996).

6 Aḥmad Ranjbar, *Chand Mi'rājnāmah* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1364/1985), 11–16.

poem fits within the genre of "prophetic ascension" (*mi'rāj*) and sits at the center of a group of seven other poems selected in this essay that are rather evenly distant from it in both time and place.

In the selection of "astronomical" poems that follow, the characterization, "astronomical," goes far beyond the mere inclusion of such common expressions as the "heavens" (*aflāk*), the "sky" (*āsmān*), or "the stars" (*kawākib*).[7] It should also be added that these poems are not merely selected from a much larger set of poems with astronomical content.[8] These poems include content that correspond to concepts and expressions within early astronomical and related traditions that raise specific, and often unexplored, historical questions. The first selection is from the *Shāhnāmah* of Firdawsī (northern Persia, after c. 1000), a work with a preface featuring the world's "four corners" and "seven portions,"[9] as well as unique conceptual expressions immersed in astronomical traditions. The selections close with the *Kulliyyāt* of Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī (southern Persia, before c. 1500), where astronomical concepts like the "seven heavens" and "twelve constellations" find their own evolving expressions and extensions.[10] The disciplinary, conceptual, and terminological overlaps and distinctions are represented in these selections in order to highlight some of the largely understudied historical meanings and contexts.

The first two selections are from fifth-/eleventh-century northern Persia, representing traditional elements within early science and craft, and early practices

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7 Asadollah Kheirandish, *Yik Bayt az Hizārān* (Tehran: Sīmīn Publications, 1377/1998), 197; Parvīz Varjāvand, *Kāvush-i Raṣadkhānah-i Marāghah* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1366/1987), 451–53.

8 Examples include Persian astrological prognostications in verse (*Ikhtiyarāt-i Manẓūm*): Gulchīn Ma'ānī, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts in Āstān-i Quds Library*, 8 (Mashhad, 1350/1971), 14–17; and for works on—or manuscripts of—zodiac constellations (many including illustrations) see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Roland Michaud, *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study* (Kent, England: Westerham Press, 1976), 100–103.

9 "Everywhere there was the resting place of the people, in the four corners of the world, from end to end, this earth they divided, and made into seven portions ..." (*Har kujā ārāmgāh-i mardumān būdh bi chahār sūy-i jahān az karān tā karān īn zamīn rā bibakhshīdand va bi haft bahr kardand ...*) [Muḥammad Qazvīnī, *Bīst Maqālah*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Adab, 1332/1953), 2:42; see further Touraj Daryaee, "Mind, Body, and the Cosmos: Chess and Backgammon in Ancient Persia," *Iranian Studies* 35, no. 4 (2004): 290–291, and 35n, where valuable information regarding the ancient notions of the "four corners of the world" is provided.

10 Alain Richard, "L'astronomie et l'astrologie dans la poésie persane," *Luqmān: Annales des Presses Universitaires d'Iran Revue semestrielle* 20, no. 1 (2003–4): 81–101. Richard includes the Persian original of the Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī selection; biographical and bio-bibliographical information related to the cited authors and works are based on their respective entries in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (*EI²*), *Encyclopædia Iranica* (*EIr*), and *Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers* (*BEA*).

in astronomy and astrology. The third and fourth selections are from the sixth/ twelfth century, outlining poetry versified in the northwest to the southeast of Persia. They add philosophical and mystical dimensions to the historical dimension of these astronomical poems and highlight some of the continuities in the tradition of these poems. The fifth and sixth selections are from the seventh/thirteenth century, covering some other parts of northern Persia, and speak to the intellectual and literary elements that signify some historical discontinuities. The seventh and eighth selections are from eighth-ninth/fourteenth-fifteenth centuries, from southwest Persia. Together, they broaden the historical domain of cosmology at large through a microscopic look from the sky above to the earth below.

Selection I

The first and earliest of the selections is from the *Shāhnāmah* (*Book of Kings*) of Firdawsī Ṭūsī (composed c. 401/1010), selected from among a number of comparable poems that reflect various activities in sciences and crafts up to Firdawsī's time (Appendix: I). The prevalent, and one might say central, subject of the poem is early practices in astronomy and astrology: subjects that while not particularly central to the *Shāhnāmah* as a whole are still prominent in it.[11] The poem in question is from one of the closing sections of the *Shāhnāmah*, which betells of a period right before the Islamic conquest of the Persian Empire. Earlier practices such as *astronomical* classifications and calculations can be seen to have been made distinct from *astrological* classifications and prognostications in this poem. The poem discusses such practices as "recording of the sky" (*shumār-i sipihr*), and "catching of the stars" (*akhtar girift[an]*). The former terminology implies recording numbers and positions of heavenly bodies for purposes of identification, and the latter, for 'catching' their signs for predictions. An astrolabe, here uncommonly alluded to as "ṣullāb" (for *usṭurlāb*), is placed in the hands of a so-called star-reckoner (*sitārah-shimur*). Associated with a period just before the Arab conquest of Persia, we come across a certain "Rustam" serving the last Sassanid King (Yazdgird III) as the head of the Persian army. The narrative finds its stage in this

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[11] The *Shāhnāmah* of Firdawsī has been the subject of a good number of recent studies: the multi-volume *Shahnama Studies*, ed. Charles Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006-); Charles Melville, "The Shahnameh in Historical Context," in *Epic of the Persian Kings: The Art of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh*, ed. Barbara Brend and Charles Melville (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010); The astronomical content of the *Shāhnāmah* is limited to occasional references to some verses as in the work by Varjāvand (Varjāvand, *Kāvush-i Raṣadkhānah-i Marāghah*, 452).

Rustam's (not Rustam father of Suhrāb) letter to his brother, where we see the elements of *qaḍā u qadar* (fate and destiny) are particularly highlighted.

"*Rustam's Letter to His Brother*" (*Nāmah-i Rustam bar Barādar-i Khudh*) (Appendix: I), identifies the main subject as Rustam "son of Hurmazd" (*Pūr Hurmazd*).[12] The versified letter contains references to the wandering and fixed stars, and to the significations of astrological houses and constellations, with references to one of the most fateful battles of the period: the battle of "*Qādisī*" (*Qādisiyya*). The wandering stars are referred to in their Persian nomenclature: "*Aftāb*" (Sun), "*Bahrām*" (Mars), "*Zuhrah*" (Venus), "*Tīr*" (Mercury), and "*Kayvān*" (Saturn). The Arabic terminology—"*Shams*," "*Mirrīkh*," "*Nāhīd*," "'*Aṭārud*," and "Zuhal"—seems quite intentionally avoided. As for the fixed stars, they are limited to the constellation Gemini, again referred to with its Persian "*Du Paykar*," rather than the Arabic "*Jawzā*." The astrological section of the poem follows with the appearance of Mercury ('*Aṭārud*) in the constellation Gemini (*Burj-i Du Paykar*), while Mercury itself (this time, as Persian *Tīr*) faces Saturn (*Kayvān*). This, in combination with the Sun (*Āftāb*), which is "looking down from the fourth [house]" (*zi chārum hamī bingarad Āftāb*), is then deemed as the "doomsday" (*rūz-i balā*): the day of "defeat at the hands of the Arabs" (*shikast az tāziyān*) in the battle of *Qādisiyya*. This event, which actually happened in the year 15/636, is predicted by the author of the letter where he says the "stars won't turn toward anything but loss" (*sitārah nagardad magar bar ziyān*). Later verses of the poem describe such a devastating loss as a "slanted turn of the compass [of fate]" (*gardish-i kazh-i pargār*). This reference to a turn in fate, in such a language, further extends the lexicon of the poem from the strictly astronomical and astrological to other nuanced areas.

"*Pargār*" (compass), a term long central to traditions within practical geometry, refers to an instrument used for drawing circles as well as measuring distances. An instrument, with such a name and function, is mentioned in works by near contemporaries of Firdawsī like Abū al-Vafā' Būzjānī (d. c. 388/988), who used compasses beyond the prescribed applications of ancient Greeks in his celebrated work on *Geometrical Constructions* (*A'māl al-Handasa*).[13] The expression *gardish* (turn) next to the term compass (*pargār*) in the Firdawsī poem implies a version of that instrument used for drawing circles, the only kind for which a

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12 Elsewhere also known as Rustam-i Farrukhzād.

13 For more on Būzjānī's *Geometrical Constructions*, see Elaheh Kheirandish, "An Early Tradition in Practical Geometry," Supplement Volume of *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Cultures of the Islamic World* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, forthcoming). For the earlier Greek tradition, and references to "collapsible," "rigid," and "complete" compasses, see J. L. Berggren, *Episodes in the Mathematics of Medieval Islam* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1986), 70–71 and 79.

slanted (*kazh*) turn, away from a circular path, could make sense. In contrast to a comparable use of the term "*pargār*" in this period, one, which is discussed in a poem by Niẓāmī more than a century later, the present poem reflects the term's early use in a more strictly astrological context.

In the case of the closely related field of mechanics and expressions associated with it, other verses in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah* present interesting contrasts to those in Niẓāmī's poetic production, and in his *Sharafnāmah* in particular. In selections that are associated with Alexander, the historical figure known as the "Great" conqueror of the ancient world, there are examples that highlight this contrast.[14] Items specifically named or described in verses containing mechanical devices involve some unexpected features. More specifically, the mechanical devices mentioned in Niẓāmī's *Sharafnāmah* are simpler than those mentioned in the *Shāhnāmah*. While the *Sharafnāmah* mentions mechanical instruments as simple as a bow and arrow, in line with many other works of Persian poetry, the *Shāhnāmah* includes more advanced mechanical devices: those in the tradition of mechanical automata. Devices such as moving iron statues filled with flammable mixtures particularly stand out in the excerpt from *Shāhnamah*.[15]

Selection II

The second selection of poems is titled "Description of the Night" (*Dar Ṣifat-i Shab*) from the Persian romantic epic *Vīs va Rāmīn* by Fakhr al-Dīn Asʿad Gurgānī (c. 442/1050) (Appendix: II). This selection is by a poet who, although not as celebrated as Firdawsī, is considered a "poetical genius" for his portrayal of a "fatal" night where even the never-changing "fixed stars" appear altered.[16] The long

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[14] The comparable selections referring to Alexander of Macedonia (c. 4th c. BCE) can be found in "*Education of Alexander*" (*Dānish Āmūkhtan-i Iskandar*): Manuscript folios in the Minassian Collection, at the John Hay Library, Brown University, catalogued by Elaheh Kheirandish, 2000 (unpublished); and "The Battle of Alexander with King Fūr of India," Sackler Museum, Harvard University.

[15] The manuscript folios of both the *Shāhnāmah* and *Sharafnāmah* poems associated with Alexander, as well as later sources such as *Jāmiʿ al-ʿUlūm* [Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, *Jāmiʿ al-ʿUlūm (Kitāb-i Sittīnī, c. 1150)*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Tasbīḥī (Tehran: Kitābkhānah-i Asadī, 1346/1967)] were part of an exhibit curated by the present author at Brown University ("Windows into Early Science and Craft") in 2010. Included among the folios from the Minassian Collection was the *Shāhnāmah* poem, "Battle of Alexander and King Fūr of India." Thanks are due to Arash Afraz for captions on the latter and references to the former astronomical selection(s).

[16] Fakhr al-Dīn Asʿad Gurgānī, *Vīs va Rāmīn*, ed. M. Rawshan (Tehran: Ṣidā-i Muʿāṣir, 1377/1998); Fakhr al-Dīn Asʿad Gurgānī, *Vīs and Rāmīn*, trans. Dick Davis (Washington, DC: Mage Publish-

poem of fifty-plus verses, an excerpt of which is presented here,[17] stands out for features far beyond its depiction of the heavens (*falak*) as a bearer of "a different kind of marvel" (*digargūnah shigiftī*), with "a mood shifting from one minute to next" (*har sā'atī sāzī giriftī*). The poem is particularly striking for its representation of most, if not all, of the forty-eight stellar constellations in the tradition of the ancient Greek mathematician Ptolemy (2nd c. CE) and his *Star Catalogue* contained in his infamous astronomical work, *The Almagest*.

This poem starts with "a night as black as tainted tar" (*shabī tārīk u ālūdah bi qaṭrān*), and "as dark and dreadful as the time to part" (*siyāh u sahmgīn chun rūz-i hijrān*). The fateful night next features the "Moon and Sun" (*Mah u Khwarshīd*), "both *hiding* their faces" (*har du rukh nahuftah*), "like lovers asleep [in locked embraces]" (*bi sān-i 'āshiq u ma'shūq khuftah*). It then continues to depict the alarmingly altered forms of the twelve zodiac constellations: Aries and Taurus, "Ram and Bull" (*Ḥamal bā Thawr*) are "facing one another" (*karda rūy dar rūy*), "catching the scent of the Heavenly Lion" (*zi Shīr-i āsmanī yāftah būy*); Gemini's heavenly "Twins" (*Du paykar*), "again, like two lovers asleep" (*bāz chun du yār dar khwāb*), are "wrapped around each other like a water-wheel" (*bi yik-dīgar bipīchīdah chu dūlāb*); Cancer's "Crab [*Kharchang*] is asleep at the feet of both" (*bi pā-i har-duvān dar khuftah Kharchang*), "as if it is stripped from its claws and soul" (*tu guftī bīravān gashtast u bī chang*); Leo's "Lion" (*Asad*) is "standing before the Crab" (*dar pīsh-i Kharchang īstādah*), "with its Tail on its head, resembling an Archer's bow" (*Kamān-kirdār dum bar sar nihādah*); Virgo's "Virgin" (*Zan-i dūshīzah*), holding "a bunch [of grapes] in each hand" (*du khūshah dar dast*), is "listlessly staying in one place like a drunkard" (*zi sustī māndah bar yik jāy chun mast*); Libra's "Scale" (*Tarāzū*) "with all of its strings unraveled" (*hamah rishtah gusastah*), seems to have "its balance point broken, while its pans are fine" (*du pillah māndah u shāhīn shikastah*); "Scorpio" (*Kajdum*), "with a tail curled around its head" (*dar-āvardah bi ham Kajdumsar u dum*), is "as helpless as one with the rhume [in bed]" (*zi sustī hamchu sarmā khwardah mardum*); Sagittarius's "Archer" (*Kamānvar*) is "left with a bow in its grasp," (*kamān dar chang māndah*), with "both feet in pain, hands unfit for war" (*du pāy āzurdah dast az jang māndah*); Capricorn's "Goat" (*Buza*) "sleeping safe from the [Archer's] arrow" (*az tīr-i ū īman bikhuftah*), is "hidden among the tulips and the greenery [of meadows]" (*miyān-i sabzah u lālah nahuftah*); Aquarius's "water-carrier's [*Ābkash*] pail [*Dalv*] having

ers, 2008), 51–52; also see Kunitzsch, "Description of the Night in Gurgani's *Vīs u Ramīn*," in *The Arabs and the Stars: Texts and Traditions on the Fixed Stars, and Their Influence in Medieval Europe* (Northampton: Variorum Reprints, 1989).

17 *Vīs va Rāmīn*, ed. Rawshan, 77–79; *Vīs and Rāmīn*, trans. Davis, 51–52.

fallen in a well" (*fitādah Ābkash rā Dalv dar chāh*), "has left him [water-carrier] baffled, and lost in his way" (*bimāndah Ābkash khīrah chu gumrāh*); and Pisces's "Fish" (*Māhī*), "deprived from its every move" (*bimāndah Māhī az raftan bi nākām*), is "like a fish that is caught in a trap [by a hook]" (*tu guftī māhī ast uftādah dar dām*) ..." All in all, everything *was* in an altered state.

Specially remarkable are the "astronomical" content of Gurgānī's poem and the use of the horoscope contained in it to date the poem.[18] Most notable, however, from the viewpoint of the present study, is the historical value of the poem in its citation of two contemporaneous and important works: Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī's *Book of Instruction* (*Kitāb al-Tafhīm*), and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣūfī's *Book of Constellations*. He cites the celestial globe (*kura falakiyya*) discussed in Ṣūfī's seminal work.[19] Bīrūnī's book is composed in both Arabic and Persian, and is dedicated to a certain Rayḥānah, a supposed Persian matron. The over five hundred questions contained in the book—ranging from arithmetic and geometry to geography and astronomy—impact many dependent traditions across both Arabic and Persian. The full coverage of the constellations in the *Book of Instruction* may have been a potential source for Gurgānī's poem. Still, it is not possible to readily establish a direct link between the works of Bīrūnī and Gurgānī's poem despite the common geographical locations of the two in Gurgān. Even more complex is the case of celestial globes, astronomical instruments associated with the markings of zodiac constellations, as they figure in both Bīrūnī's *Book of Instruction* and Ṣūfī's *Book of Constellations*. Ṣūfī's Arabic text was a work with its own textual tradition with a seventh-/fifteenth-century Persian translation by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī.[20] But there is little evidence of the availability of the Arabic text of Ṣūfī and its mention of the celestial globe to the much earlier Persian poet Gurgānī.

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18 In reference to the horoscope in the poem Kunitzsch ("Description of the Night in Gurgani's Vīs u Ramīn") questions "whether [it] might contain astronomical elements which could contribute to the dating of the poem" or "prove—or disprove—older dating of the story"; See also *Der Islam* 60 (1982): 297–301, in which Kunitzsch stresses "Prof. O. Neugebaur ... has derived the date of A. D. 968 for the horoscope."

19 Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Tafhīm li-Awāʾil Ṣināʿat al-Tanjīm* [*The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology*], ed. and trans. R. Ramsay Wright (1934; reprint, Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, 1998); Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Tafhīm li-Awāʾil Ṣināʿat al-Tanjīm*, ed. J. Humāʾī (Tehran: Bābak, 1362/1983); Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī, *al-Tafhīm li-Awāʾil Ṣināʿat al-Tanjīm*, Intro. F. Ghāsimlū (Tehran: Safīr Ardahāl, 2013); ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣūfī, *Ṣuwar al-Kawākib* (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1954). A discussion of the poem in the context of astronomical traditions is included in Kunitzsch, "Description of the Night."

20 Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Tarjumah-i Ṣuwar al-Kawākib-i ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣūfī*, ed. Muʿizz al-Dīn Mahdavī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhangī-i Īrān, 1969). The two earlier works of Ṣūfī and

Gurgānī's relatively little-known poem may have been accurately described as "unparalleled in medieval Oriental poetry,"[21] but there is a comparable poem by the slightly later and much better known poet Niẓāmī Ganjavī. Niẓāmī's poem, similarly, extends the altered forms in the sky to the seven heavenly bodies, historically called the "wandering" stars (*sayyār*), and later, planets. What makes the first of the two selections from Niẓāmī presented here distinct from Gurgānī's poem is that the altered forms in Niẓāmī's poem do not go beyond the twelve zodiac signs to extend to all northern and southern constellations. We also see that the altered forms presented in the first Niẓāmī selection have a more positive image when compared with the altered forms in Gurgānī's poem.

Selection III

The third selection is called "Description of the Night" (*Ṣifat-i Shab*) by Niẓāmī Ganjavī (composed c. 545/1150). This poem is one of the sectional constituents of his famous romantic epic masterpiece *Laylī va Majnūn*[22] (Appendix: III). The poem's verses are unique in their depictions of an exceptional night and its altered sky. To begin with, in contrast to Gurgānī and his "tainted tār" analogy as regards nighttime, Niẓāmī's night is "glowing" (*rakhshandah shab*) "as bright as the day" (*chu rūz-i rawshan*). Moreover, while the heavenly "marvel" (*shigiftī*) of the Gurgānī poem is of a "different kind" (*digargūnah*) on account of the frightening "tune" (*sāz*) that the heavens play from one moment to the next, the latter paints "stars" (*anjum*) "in a different state" (*ṣifat-i digar*). Highlighting the "grandeur" (*zībandagī*) of "nighttime stars in their hundred variations" (*ṣad gūnah sitārah-i shab-āhang*), these nighttime stars are then portrayed "as one constellation" (*dar yak awrang*) in the sky. And when it comes to the seven stars known at the time as "wandering," Gurgānī starts with the brightest—Sun and Moon—hidden and asleep, while Niẓāmī has all seven emerge in perfect shapes, one by one, although in an atypical order.

First, the "Moon" (*Māh*), is presented so perfectly shaped, "as if from the crossbow[23] of the king" (*guftī zi kamān-gurūhah-i Shāh*) a marble has "fallen

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Bīrūnī have been cited as likely sources for the poet; see Kunitzsch, "Description of the Night," 96–97.

21 Kunitzsch, "Description of the Night," 94.

22 Barāt Zanjānī, ed., *Laylī va Majnūn-i Niẓāmī Ganjavī: Matn-i 'Ilmī va Intiqādī* (Tehran: Muʾassasah-i Chāp va Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1369/1990); Niẓāmī, "*Decription of the Night (Ṣifat-i Shab),*" in *Laylī and Majnūn*, Minassian Collection, John Hay Library, Brown University, catalogued, 2000 (unpublished).

23 This type of crossbow was used to shoot harder objects such as rocks, round metals, etc.

upon its head" (*yik muhrah fitādah bar sar-i Māh*). Second, "Mercury"'s (*ʿAṭārud*) "shape is as if the Archer's bow" (*shikl-i ʿAṭārud az Kamānash*), is sending "an arrow to the sky [from below]" (*Tīrīst ki zad bar āsmānash*). Third, "Venus" (*Zuhrah*), "the strapping of the Archer's saddle" (*sitām-i, zīn-i ū būd*), is as "perfumed as the beads of sweat on his forehead" (*khushbū chu khuy-i jabīn-i ū būd*). Fourth, the "Sun" (*Khwarshīd*), is "as [hot as] his world-burning blade" (*chu tīgh-i ū jahānsūz*), "sheathed at night, naked by day" (*pūshīdah bi shab birihnah dar rūz*). Fifth, "Mars" (*Mirrīkh*), is "rushing hot with vengeance" (*bi kīnah garm-i taʿjīl*) in order "to run a rod, through his enemy's eyes" (*tā chashm-i ʿadūsh rā kishad mīl*). Sixth, "Jupiter" (*Birjīs*), with "his seal on its jewel" (*bi muhr-i ū nigīn dāsht*), was feeling that it "held all the world's good fortune in its sleeve" (*iqbāl-i jahān dar āstīn dāsht*). Finally, seventh is "Saturn" (*Kayvān*), which "is wearing a tasseled rope" (*rasanī ʿilāqa-āvīz*), "to sharpen his blade's iron with that cord" (*tā āhan-i tīgh-i ū kunad tīz*). The section on the planets ends with praising the ruler saying, "A King whose kingdom is such" (*shāhī ki chunīn buvad jahānash*) "may that the horizons never lack His splendor" (*āfāq mabād bī jamālash*). This is followed by the author addressing himself by his pen name in a line starting in Persian and ending in Arabic: "O Niẓāmī," "at the service of such a famed ruler" (*dar khidmat-i īn khadīv-i nāmī*), "how great is your stature indeed" (*mā aʿẓama sha'nak*)!

The following section on the zodiac signs (*burūj*) by Niẓāmī, in contrast to Gurgānī's twelve constellations, starts with a positive note: "Aries" (*Ḥamal*) has a reflection (*ʿaks*) from its crescent-like smile (*hilāl-i khandah*), while throwing a "chord" (*zih*) on "the heaven's sine" (*jayb-i falak*); the "Taurus of heaven" (*Gāv-i falakī*), has "jewels on its neck" (*gawhar bi galū dar*), which is "Pleiades" (*az Thurayyā*); "Gemini" (*Jawzā*) is "wearing a belt with two-sided [strips]" (*kamar-i du-rūyah bastah*), while sitting "on the throne of the heavenly Twins" (*bar takht-i Du-paykarī nishastah*); "Cancer" (*Kharchang*), "with the mailed claw" of his (*changāl-i dhirāʿī*) "thrusts forth a seven-fingered fist" (*andākhtah panjah-i subāʿī*); "Leo" (*Asad*) is making Alpha Leonis (*Qalb al-Asad*) so luminous (*furūzān*), and "burns incense like a fire that burns aloes" (*chun ātash-i ʿūd, ʿūd-i sūzān*); "Virgo's" (*ʿAdhrā*) "virginal face" (*rukh-i sunbulah*), spared "not an iota without any gains" (*bī ṣarfah nakard dānā'ī ṣarf*); "Libra" (*Mīzān*), "like the speech of a wise man" (*chu zabān-i mard-i dānā*), has "loosened its tongue with its two pans" (*bugshādah zabānah bā zabānah*); "Scorpio" (*ʿAqrab*) "has paid tribute to Sagittarius" (*bi Kamān kharāj dādah*), while "Corona has given a crown to Regulus" (*Iklīl bi Qalb tāj dādah*); "Capricorn" (*Jady*), is cut[ting] his head like a Goat (*buz*), "having heard of decapitation lores" (*afsānah-i sarburī shanīdah*); "Aquarius" (*Dalv*) has closed its lips (*khamūsh-lab*) due to "the patches of sunlight" (*gulihhā-i āftābī*); and "Pisces" (*Ḥūt*), is riding "in a litter" (*dar ʿimārī*). These "wondrous

bodies" (*ajrām-i gharīb*) are riding along on "the highway" (*shah-rah*) of the stars' stations "*manzil-i kawākib.*"

The context of Niẓāmī's description of such a night is the love epic *Laylī va Majnūn*, where the latter—the literal "mad [lover]"—points to the heaven's "wheel" (*charkh*) and its "gaming tricks" (*ḥuqqahbāzī*) for a "Godly favor" (*'ināyat-i khudā'ī*), in order to turn his "night into a light of splendor" (*k'āyad shab-i man bi rawshanā'ī*). Regarding the heavenly bodies themselves, the framework of Niẓāmī's highly creative expression may be immediately contrasted with their treatment in his other works: from the love epic *Khusraw va Shīrīn* to other masterpieces.[24]

A striking case is a self-contained astronomical poem in Niẓāmī's *Sharaf-nāmah*, a poem that covers a short interval, from the birth to the education of Alexander [of Macedonia], and offers an interesting contrast to earlier treatments of the subject by such figures as Firdawsī (Appendix: III). The birth sign of Alexander is determined as the astrological house of Leo (*Asad*), and then the poem goes on to combine the "seven stars" (*haft akhtar*) with seven of the twelve stellar constellations. When it comes to the prince's early education, activities covered in both sciences and crafts correspond more closely to the geometrical and mechanical traditions of Firdawsī's era. The term "*pargār*" (compass), for example, is introduced by Niẓāmī in the context of the "heavens," and in the form of "wheel's compass" (*pargār-i charkh*). This is in line with the term's long time association with fate as discussed in Firdawsī poem earlier. But its application here seems to be in a context relating more closely to the concept of *time* in astronomy than that of *fate* in astrology. The expression wheel's compass "turning around its circle a 'few' times over" (*bar īn dā'ira muddatī chand gasht*), while reflecting a temporal passage, appears to be construed in a form consistent with the capability—of such a compass—to continually produce a circle. As such, it would be comparable to a compass with a fixed opening as in Būzjānī's *Geometrical Constructions*, as opposed to a "complete compass" (*pargār-i tām*) used for drawing conic sections in both early and late scientific manuals.

Some of the verses in this selection go beyond practical geometry and mechanics by documenting material culture. They contain references to paper (*kāghadh*) and silk (*ḥarīr*) for archery targets (*hadaf*), as well as tools (*sāz*) like the astronomical balance astrolabe (*tarāzu-i anjum*), for which Firdawsī used the shorter and the more uncommon term "*ṣullāb*," as an alternative to "*usṭurlāb*." No less significant are reflections on practices of "specialists" (*shināsandagān*), presumably astronomers or astrologers, and their acts of "gathering" (*anjuman*) around the "move-

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24 Ranjbar, *Chand Mi'rājnāmah*, 23–62.

ments in sky" (*sayr-i sipihr*). In a separate verse, we find the revealing expression, "Inclined to seek practice after gaining knowledge" (*girā'īdah az 'ilm sū-i 'amal*), an expression reflecting the practical applications of theoretical sciences.

The selection from Niẓāmī's *Laylī and Majnūn* provides a useful contrast to the two selections before and after it. In the case of Gurgānī's earlier romantic poem, the contrasts go beyond the nature of the extraordinary night for which a "description" (*ṣifat*) is given. Furthermore, while Gurgānī's king (*mubād*) is a mortal, losing the battle of love on a visibly dreadful night, Niẓāmī's "king" has a more divine status as a "King" of heavens. Niẓāmī's King (*Shāh*) is associated with a "world" (*jahān*) whose "horizons" (*āfāq*) are told to never lack His splendor (*jamāl*). The latter expression is comparable to some of the depictions of prophetic ascension in the *mi'rāj* genre of poets like Sanā'ī of Ghazna, presented in the next section. These include spiritual expressions that not only speak to the presence of God through his commands to the world below, but also to His prophet and his rise to the heavens above. In Niẓāmī's representation of heavenly bodies in his *Book of Ascension* (*Mi'rājnāmah*), planets and constellations are skillfully painted in accord with the abovesaid ideas.[25] Sanā'ī advances the union of heavenly bodies and mystical expression to new frontiers.

Selection IV

The fourth selection contains astronomical verses from Sanā'ī Ghaznavī's (d. c. 525–35/1130–40) *Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqat*, a poetic masterpiece with abundant references to Prophet Muḥammad[26] (Appendix: IV). The section in the work titled, "Description of his Ascension" (*Dar Ṣifat-i Mi'rājash*) opens with the term "Ṣifat," as in the earlier astronomical poems by Gurgānī and Niẓāmī in their romantic epics; albeit, the genre of his poem is *mi'rāj*.

Sanā'ī's selection begins with how the greatness (*farr*) of the Prophet's "wisdom and views" (*faḍl u naẓar*) has made the soil of the earth "golden from his solar hues" (*zi āftabash zar*). He then proceeds to show the higher orbs of the wandering stars and the historical characteristics associated with each—with references to other aspects of Prophet's being. The first of the heavenly bodies to emerge is Venus (*Nāhīd*), which as a heavenly symbol of music has "forbidden his [the Prophet's] sadness" (*kardah Nāhīd az ghamash tawbīkh*). Next is Mars (*Mirrīkh*), which as the heavenly symbol of aggression has "read the record

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25 Ranjbar, *Chand Mi'rājnāmah*, 23–62.
26 Ranjbar, *Chand Mi'rājnāmah*, 11–16.

of his greatness" (*khwāndah tārīkh-i haybatash Mirrīkh*). Then follows Jupiter (*Birjīs*), which "is like a guide to him" (*būdah Birjīs chun dabīr ū rā*). After Jupiter is Mercury (*Tīr*), the heavenly guide, which has "bent like a bow for his arrow" (*chun kamān kham giriftah Tīr ū rā*).

These heavenly bodies are followed by others with features optimizing the Prophet's physical attributes: "The eyes of [King] Jamshīd are enveloped by his eyebrows" (*chashm-i Jamshīd māndah dar abrūsh*)" and "disk of the Sun" (*qurṣ-i Khwarshīd*) is a "bead in his hair" (*muhrah-i gīsūsh*). He continues to say, "His mouth is [red] like the color of Saturn's visage" (*rang-i ruskhsārah-i Zuḥal kāmash*) and "his name is a design on the Moon's forehead" (*naqsh-i pīshānī-i Qamar nāmash*). The selection references the seven moving bodies in the following order: Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Mercury, Sun, Saturn, and the Moon. The Earth, not considered a moving body at the time, is then placed next to the fixed stars and the constellations Leo and Taurus in the same verse where they appear as "Wheel's Leo" (*Shīr-i charkh*), and the "Earth's Taurus" (*Gāv-i Zamīn*). These all serve as ornaments (*zīnat*) by the feet of the "Master of faith" (*Khwajah-i dīn*).

What makes these "astronomical" verses of Sanā'ī unique from comparable depictions is the presence of a human element in the cosmic union, highlighted by the presence of mystical nuances. Sanā'ī's successor Rūmī, a much better known mystical poet, provides a good contrast to his standpoint on and depiction of cosmic union: Sanā'ī's "astronomical" verses point to an upward movement within the context of prophetic ascension: from the earth to the heavens, while Rūmī's similarly unheralded "astronomical" verses allude to the sky above, with a cosmic union—including that of the planets and constellations—all viewable from the earth below.

Selection V

The fifth selection is a poem by Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī Rūmī (d. c. 672/1273), the great mystic and poet, better known by a name that is a closer reflection of the sunset of his life in Rūm than its rise in Balkh.[27] The rarely cited astronomical verses in this selection (Appendix: V), fittingly contained in a work named after the "Sun" of the poet's own life, "Shams-i Tabrīz,"[28] open with a striking image:

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27 Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). [No page numbers]

28 Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Kulliyyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, ed. Badīʿ al-Zamān Furūzānfar (1336/1957; reprint, Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1345/1966), 431–32; for English translations see Reynold

that of the stars (*akhtarān*) in a "night of union [giving] and outpour" (*shab-i vaṣlast u nithārast*), where the heavens (*charkh*) is lit by the full disc of "the Moon of 'ten and four'" (*Māh-i dah u ch[ah]ār*).

In the first lines of the poem, the moon of the month's fourteenth night emerges as a full bright light on a festive night, and in the closing lines, the sky's seven heavens and twelve constellations sparkle from afar. The seven heavens appear in an unfamiliar order with Venus, Jupiter, and Saturn followed by Mars, Sun, Mercury, and the Moon. The twelve constellations are interspersed in a similarly rare progression: first come Capricorn, Leo, and Pisces, then Aquarius, Virgo, Gemini, and then Libra, Aries, Sagittarius, Scorpio, Taurus, and Cancer.

First we see that "Venus cannot contain herself from joy over ethereal sounds [that ring]" (*dar khwīsh nagunjad zi navāhā-i laṭīf*), and behaves "like a nightingale drunk on the flowers of spring" (*ham-chu bulbul ki shavad mast zi gul faṣl-i bahār*). Then comes Capricorn (*Jady*), who "is looking coquettishly at Leo" (*bi kirishmah bi Asad mīnigarad*). Then we are told to notice how "Pisces has brought forth" an impressive haze from the sea (*zi daryā chi barāvard ghubār*). Next, there is an image of "Jupiter" (*Mushtarī*), who "gallops his steed towards ancient Saturn" (*asb davānīd sūy-i pīr-i Zuḥal*) to say: "Regain your youth, and go herald good tidings" (*Javānī tu zi sar gīr buru Muzhdah biyār*). Thereafter, the palm of Mars (*Kaf-i Mirrīkh*) is shown to be "bloody from the grip of Sagitta" (*pur khūn buvad az qabḍah-i Tīr*), and "becomes as life-giving as the noble Sun" (*gasht jānbakhsh chu Khwarshīd-i musharraf āthār*). The cart of Aquarius's (*Dalv-i gardūn*), having been "filled with the elixir of life" (*az ān āb-i ḥayāt āmad pur*), waters "the dry sheaf Virgo" (*Sunbulah-i khushk*), who now is blessed with being "laden with those pearls" (*az ān gawhar bār*). He goes on to say, "Pithy Gemini does not shy from Libra and defeat" (*Jawz-i pur maghz zih Mīzān u shikastan naramad*), while "Aries" (*Ḥamal*) cannot bear to leave "its own mother with disgust" (*az mādar-i khud kay bigurīzad bi nifār*). When the "coquettish arrow (Mercury)" (*Tīr-i ghamzah*) reaches "Sagittarius's heart from the Moon's side" (*az sūy-i Mah bar dil-i Qaws*), the "Archer" then moves "by night, in his quest, Scorpion-like" (*shabravī pīshah girift az havasash 'aqrabvār*). The imperative verse, "In this feast, sacrifice heaven's Bull for him," (*andarīn 'īd bar ū Gāv-i falak ghurbān kun*), so as to not "slink like Cancer in the mud" (*chun Saraṭān dar vaḥlī-i kazh-raftār*)," conveys a shift in the tone of the poem. In the closing lines, "Heavens is an astrolabe" (*īn falak hast suṭurlāb*), "love, the truth" (*ḥaqīqat 'ishq ast*)—and "the Moon" represents the countenance of someone who can turn a dark night into a bright day

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Nicholson, *Selected Poems from the Dīvāni Shamsi Tabrīz* (1898; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

(*rūz-i rawshan shavad az rūy-i chu māhat shab-i tār*). This poem, in addressing a different kind of divinity, subsequently treats a different kind of cosmic union as well: one that is distinct from that encountered in the prophetic "ascension" (*mi'rāj*) genre of earlier poets such as Sanā'ī and Niẓāmī.

Selection VI

The sixth selection is from another author from the "Age of Rūmī," an age also marked by limited interactions between authors of scientific and literary works:[29] Rūmī's closest contemporary—in both time and place—was Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. c. 672–73/1274), a scholar who spent the prime of his life as the director of Maraghah school and observatory in northwest Persia,[30] not far from Konya, Central Asia, and who died shortly after Rūmī. The "astronomical" verses attributed to an author with a philosophical profile such as Ṭūsī (Appendix: VI [a]) are markedly different than those by a literary figure such as Rūmī. Among the verses attributed to Ṭūsī, there is a couplet enumerating, in an unexpectedly elementary manner, the names and order of the twelve constellations: "Aries, Taurus, and then Gemini" (*Ḥamal u Thawr ba'd az ān Jawzā*); "Cancer, Leo, then Virgo" (*Saraṭān u Asad digar Adhrā*); "Scorpio and Sagittarius, after that Libra" ('*Aqrab u Qaws ast u pas az ān Mīzān*); and then there are "Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces comes right after" (*Jady u Dalvast u Ḥūt pas az ān*)."[31]

One of the other astronomical verses attributed to Ṭūsī, a reputed "teacher of mankind," (*ustād al-bashar*) and specially proficient in astronomical matters, is in

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29 "Age of Rūmī," was a course offered at Harvard Summer School by the present author, with an emphasis on his "age" as it pertained to history, geography, and cosmology.

30 On Ṭūsī and his astronomical tradition, see Aydin Sayili, *The Observatory in Islam, and Its Place in the General History of the Observatory* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 1960); see also F. Jamil Ragep, *Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's Memoir on Astronomy (al-Tadhkira fī 'Ilm al-Hay'a)*, 2 vols. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1993); see also Saliba, "Persian Scientists in the Islamic World: Astronomy from Maragha to Samarqand," in *The Persian Presence in the Islamic World*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and George Sabagh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 126–46; and Melikian-Chirvani, "Khwāje Naṣīr and the Iranian Past," in *Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī: philosophe et savant de xiii^e siecle*, ed. N. Pourjavady and Ziva Vesel (Tehran: Institut Francais de Recherche en Iran, 2000), 69–104.

31 Attributed to Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī; for more see Varjāvand, *Kāvush-i Raṣadkhānah-i Marāghah*, 136; also see Mu'aẓẓamah Iqbālī, *Shi'r va Shā'irī dar Āthār-i Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī* (Tehran: Sāzmān-i Chāp va Intishārāt-i Vizārat-i Farhang va Irshād-i Islāmī, 1379/2000), 97–112, where the poem includes a couplet, citing 4 manuscripts, attributing it to Ṭūsī's contemporary, 'Abd al-Jabbār Khujandī.

a "versified introduction" (*Madkhal-i Manẓūm*) that includes an instructive *Explanation of the Heavens* (*Bayān-i Aflāk*) (Appendix: VI [b]).[32] This poem represents the work of an author with close attention to the order of his presentations, with sections titled *Introduction* (*madkhal*), and *Conclusion* (*khatm*), and with those in between articulately arranged; so it follows that the body of knowledge represented by the selection included here, maintains a sense of that order: "First," the author says, "I will speak of heavens' configuration" (*avval az hay'at-i falak gūyam*), "then, I will take up the stars' prognostications" (*pas bi aḥkām-i akhtarān pūyam*). He then says, "Know that the Creator of fairies and angels" (*dān ki āfarīnandah-i parī u malak*), "created nine orbs and heavens" (*nuh āfarīd charkh u falak*). He then says, "On one is the Moon, and on the second, Mercury" (*bar yakī Māh u bar duyum Tīrast*), "then, the third, after Mercury is Venus" (*bāz Nāhīd rā siyum Tīr ast*). He goes on to say, "On the fourth orb is ever the Sun" (*Shams bar charkh-i chārum ast mudām*) and "on the fifth one is Mars" (*bar charkh-i panjumīn Bahrām*). He then says, "Know the sixth orb as Jupiter" (*shishumīn charkh Mushtarī rā dān*), and on "the seventh is Saturn's Abode" (*haftumīn ast manzil-i Kayvān*), and "on the eighth are the fixed stars" (*bāz hashtum ki thābitāt bar ūst*). Finally he says, "Above it is the ninth, on which is everything else" (*zibar-i ū nuhum ki jumla dar ūst*).

The poet then turns his attention to elaborations on other aspects of the heavens: "Now that the number of orbs is known" (*'adad-i charkhhā chu shud ma'lūm*), "I will explain the stars" (*bikunam ba'd az īn bayān-i nujūm*). He goes on to say "scholars" (*ḥukamā*), prior to "explaining by observation" (*bayān-i raṣad*), "worked on the numbers of the stars" (*akhtarān rā giriftih-and 'adad*) and "of some twenty-nine thousand" (*bā nuh u bīst āmadast u hizār*), "seven of them are wandering stars" (*haft az īshān kawākib-i sayyār*). The rest, he says, are "fixed stars" (*thābitāt*), "from which are made the constellations" (*ki az īshān kunand paykarhā*). Given other astronomical concepts in the rest of the attributed poem, including those in variorum, the validity of Ṭūsī's authorship, or that of his contemporaries, matters for guesstimating the currency of concepts ranging from "wandering" (*sayyār*) and "fixed" (*thābit*) stars, to "prognostications" (*ikhtiyārat*) and "conjunctions" (*ittiṣāl*) in that particular period. It also helps us be mindful of their knowledge of cosmic concepts and their versatility with their configurations, and not presume their scope limited to numbers and orders of heavenly bodies. The order of the nine "orbs" (*charkh*) are as follows: the first seven, for the wandering stars

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32 This long poem (composed 616/1219) is attributed to 'Abd al-Jabbār Khujandī, Ṭūsī's contemporary; see Gulchīn Ma'ānī, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts*, 223; Gulchīn Ma'ānī then introduces a "Commentary on the Versified Introduction" (*Sharḥ-i Madkhal-i Manẓūm*) and dates the manuscript in the year 927/1520.

(*sayyār*), the eighth, for the fixed stars (*thawābit*), and the last, divided into two groups of six (*du-shish qismat*) to form the twelve zodiacs (*burj*) and the "forty eight constellations" (*ṣūrat angīkhtand hasht u chahār*). In addition, there is the matter of their "configurations" (*hay'at*) in the heavens. *Hay'at*, appearing in the opening lines of this poem—as well as being part of the title of an important astronomical work in Arabic by Ṭūsī, *Al-Tadhkira fī al-'Ilm al-Hay'a* (*cosmography*)—does not find expression in any of the selections presented so far. It is however included in other discourses by Ṭusī and his contemporaries. These point to discontinuities between the literary and scientific traditions even among those who lived in the same era, such as Rūmī and Ṭūsī. If the earlier cases of Gurgānī and Bīrūnī represent a lack of evidence for direct continuities, the later cases represent distinct discontinuities that extend to later eras as regards representations of astronomy.

Selection VII

The seventh selection is from a poem by Khwājū Kirmānī (d. c. 743–44/1342–43) called *Gul u Nawrūz*. This romantic epic was apparently composed around the time of the author's death[33] (Appendix: VII). The astronomical verses selected from this work highlight certain mystical dimensions that go beyond the transcendental 'norms' of the period. The first seven lines include images of the heavenly bodies with references to God and His prophet, akin to other works of prophetic ascension (*mi'rāj*). The next twelve lines include astronomical imagery already encountered, this time with references to a much earlier mystic, Bāyazīd Basṭāmī.

Typical of such genre, the poem opens with a praise of God. His name is repeated, while referencing the two most luminous of the heavenly bodies: the Moon and the Sun. God not only is named as "the designer of the surface of the earth" (*naqshband-i ṣafḥah-i khāk*) and the "igniter of the cheeks of heavens' beauties" (*madār-afrūz-i mahrūyān-i aflāk*), but as the One by whose command the "goldsmith Sun" (*Shams-i zargar*) melts "the full Moon like a gold piece each month" (*durust-i māh rā har māh chun zar*). God is also at the center of all the other verses: He is the one who gives "the Moon" (*Qamar*) the "luminous letter" (*rawshanā'ī-nāmah*), and to "Mercury" [the guide] (*'Aṭārud*) "ink and pen [to write]" (*davāt u khāmah*). He is the one who placed "in Venus's hand" (*dar chang-i Nāhīd*) "an organ" (*arghanūn*), and on its "harp" (*chang*) the "Sun's sharp blade" (*tīgh-i tīz-i Khwarshīd*). Above all, He is the one who not only makes a constellation such as "Gemini" (*Jawzā*) "twin-shaped" (*Du paykar*) through his "wisdom"

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[33] Khwājū Kirmānī, *Gul va Nawrūz*, ed. Kamāl Ā'īnī (Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhangī-i Īrān, 1350/1971).

(*ḥikmat*), but also the One who creates the "seven aspects" (*haft manẓar*) through his "craft" (*ṣanʿat*).

The imagery of the Moon and the Sun are also prominent in the section where he is referencing the prophet: "The full moon split in two before his visage" (*durust-i mah shikastah pīsh-i rūyash*), while the "dark night became a slave to his hair" (*shab-i shām shudah hindū-i mūyash*). The poet goes on to say, "The Moon was given light by the Sun of his face" (*zi Mihr-i chihrah Mah rā nūr dādah*), and "he gave a rescript to the sultan of the celestial sphere" (*bi sulṭān-i falak manshūr dādah*). It is, however, in reference to Bāyazīd Basṭāmī that heavenly bodies—including the Sun and the Moon—find different expressions. They are referred to respectively as the "constellation of the realm of the heart" (*burj-i ʿālam-i dil*) and "the messenger" (*badr-i qāṣid*). The other so-called "wandering stars," interspersed in other verses not included here, are then alternately addressed in both Persian and Arabic.

The verses in this section highlight a turn from astronomy and astrology, and philosophy and divinity: "Remove the hats from the heads of the fixed stars" (*thawābit rā kulāh az sar dar-andāz*) and "cast off the veils from the faces of the angels" (*malāʾik rā niqāb az rukh bar-andāz*). Then he says, "Turn your face from the bead-spinning heaven" (*zi charkh-i muhrah-gardān rū bigardān*) and "see the pole of the heavens as they turn the rosary beads" (*bibīn quṭb-i falak rā subḥa-gardān*). The verses then close with an invitation to "step into the realm of no realm [of mystical initiation]" (*qadam nih dar makān-i bī-makānī*) and "make laconism your tool of enunciation [of mystical expression]" (*sukhan gū az zabān-i bī-zabānī*)."

The factor that distinguishes Khwājū's imagery from comparable mystical poems is the broader utilization of astronomical nuances. These nuances place the allusions to astronomy and astrology of "*Haft Manẓar*" beyond what we might encounter in Niẓāmī's *Haft Paykar*.

Selection VIII

The last selection is from the *Kulliyyāt* of Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī (d. c. 835/1431).[34] The title of this poem is *Dar Marātib-i Vujūd*. The references here range from the popular numbers seven and twelve in astronomy, to the cosmology of the seven stars and twelve constellations. The verses begin with conveying an explicit alli-

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34 Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī, *Kulliyyāt-i Ashʿār-i Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī*, ed. Javād Nūrbakhsh (Tehran: n. p., 1374/1995); also cited in Richard, "L'astronomie et l'astrologie dans la poésie persane," 87, 101.

ance between seven and twelve (Appendix: VIII). First there are the seven planets emerging respectively as Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the beautiful Moon (*Māh-i khwush-sīmā*), with "seven different colors emanating from each" (*haft rang-i mukhtalif zīn haft gardad āshkār*). All of these are attributed to "God's One incontrovertible command" (*az ḥukm-i Khudāvandī ki ū yiktā buvad*).

The "seven rulers" (*haft sulṭān*) are presented "with ten and two dwellings" (*dah u du khalwat*), "each in its house, a monarch and a king" (*har yakī dar burj-i khwud Kaykhusraw u Dārā buvad*). Thereafter, the Sun and the Moon (*Mihr u Mah*) return as "the two great luminaries" (*nayyirayn-i a‘ẓamayn*), though their divine status and expressions are not as explicit as in the works of his contemporary Khwājū. We also see that the heavens are given eyes (*dīdah-i aflāk*), which are "bright and all-seeing" (*rawshan u bīnā*).

The repetitive sequence of the planets and their astrological features are further subjected to medical and natural-philosophical associations. However, it is the lineup of the twelve constellations in tandem with their attributed human physical traits (organs, body parts, etc.) that afford the reader a novelty. First mentioned are the "seven ruling bodies, like chiefs of a village" (*haft a‘ḍā-i ra’īsa chun ra’īsān-i dihand*), "with their well-being set in heavens' bliss" (*ṣiḥḥat-i īn haft tan dar jannat al-ma’vā buvad*). Then, "the chief of the seventh realm" (*kad-khudā-i mulk-i haftum*), "sometimes reclining, sometimes seated, sometimes upright" (*gāh khuftah, gah nishastah, gah-gāhī bar pā*) is shown to share physical attributes with the twelve zodiac constellations from head to toe. Aries is the head and Taurus is torso and neck (*sar Ḥamal mīdān u gardan Thawr*), and then we see the two hands open like Gemini (*har du dastat ay barādar bāz chun Jawzā*). Next, we are reminded to consider "Cancer as the chest, and Leo as its heart" (*sīnah Sar[a]ṭān dān u dil bāshad Asad*), and further Virgo is shown as the gut (*rudah-hāyat Sunbulah*). Then it says, "Consider Libra the belly, Scorpio its manhood, and Archer its thighs" (*nāf Mīzān dān u mardī ‘Aqrabast u Qaws rān*). Finally, "Capricorn is the knees, Aquarius the calves, and Pisces are the feet" (*har du zānū Jady u sāqat Dalv u Ḥūtat pā buvad*).

This poem concludes with a more familiar note in the final verse (*maqta‘*): "Assuming the shape of the world to be a circle" (*fī al-mathal yik dāyira īn shakl-i ‘ālam farḍ kun*), "God is its circumference, the spirit its central point, and [other] objects are that circle" (*Ḥaqq muḥīṭ u nuqṭah rūh u dāyirah ashyā’ buvad*).

Conclusion

The selected poems in this essay were meant to highlight various forms of knowledge, from science and craft, to philosophy and mysticism in the poetry of a certain

period and geographical area. The focus on the "four corners" of Persia between the years c. 1000–1500 CE started with the north of Persia with selections from Firdawsī Ṭūsī (c. 1000) and Fakhr al-Dīn Asʻad Gurgānī (c. 1050), continuing on to northwest and southeast Persia with selections from Niẓāmī Ganjavī and Sanā'ī Ghaznavī (both just before c. 1150). Northwest Persia presented us with selections from Mawlānā Rūmī and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (both fl. c. 1250), and southern Persia with Khwājū Kirmānī (before c. 1350), and Shāh Niʻmatullāh Valī (before c. 1450).

It may be concluded from what has been presented here that astronomical and astrological traditions have gotten ample attention in both epic and mystical genres of Persian poetry. It also appears that continuities and discontinuities in the treatments of these and related subjects cannot be directly correlated with the geographical proximities of authors versed in these traditions. Given the important—and understudied—nature of the subjects discussed, it is hoped that the present study and inclusion of the original texts and their translations can encourage further investigations.

Appendix: Persian Selections and English Translations[35]

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I

From the *Shāhnāmah* of Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī:
"*Rustam's Letter to His Brother*"

...
Rustam knew the recording of the sky
A star-reckoner, who was just and kind ...

بدانست رستم شمار سپهر
ستاره شمر بود و با داد و مهر ...

To catch the stars' [signs], he brought an astrolabe
Putting hands on his head, he dreaded doomsday

بیاورد صلاب و اختر گرفت
ز روز بلا دست بر سر گرفت

</div>

In a letter to his brother that he sent him in pain
He wrote and mentioned all the matters relayed

یکی نامه سوی برادر به درد
نوشت و سخنها همه یاد کرد

He first named God, in all His praise
In Whom he saw, both the good and the bad of fate

نخست آفرین کرد بر کردگار
کزو دید نیک و بد روزگار

He then wrote of the heaven, and the turn of fate
That people who seek it, would face despair …

دگر گفت کز گردش آسمان
پژوهنده مردم شود بدگمان …

That the Sun is looking down from the fourth [house]
[Meaning] doom is speeding from the side of war

ز چارم همی‌بنگرد آفتاب
کزین جنگ ما را بد آید شتاب

From Mars and Venus, harm is on our way
From the high-up wheel, can't turn away

ز بهرام و زهره ست ما را گزند
نشاید گذشتن ز چرخ بلند

Mercury and Saturn are facing each other
While Mercury is in the house of Twins …

همان تیر و کیوان برابر شدست
عطارد به برج دو پیکر شدست …

It is as such, with big things to come
Making hearts weary of life of one's own

چنین است و کاری بزرگست پیش
همی سیر گردد دل از جان خویش …

Defeat at the hands of the Arabs [is the sign of the stars]
Stars won't turn toward anything but loss …

کزین پس شکست آید از تازیان
ستاره نگردد مگر بر زیان …

Here is the word, and the deed is [itself]
But a slanted turn of the compass [of fate] …

چنین است گفتار وکردار نیست
جز از گردش کژ پرگار نیست …

II[36]

Fakhr al-Dīn As'ad Gurgānī:
"Description of the Night"

A night as black as tainted tar
As dark and dreadful as the time to part …

شبی تاریک و آلوده به قطران
سیاه و سهمگین چون روز هجران

The Moon and Sun, both hiding their faces
Like lovers asleep [in locked embraces] …

مه و خورشید هردو رخ نهفته
به سان عاشق و معشوق خفته

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36 For a most elegant translation of this section, see Dick Davis, Vis and Ramin, 51–52:

The night was pitch black, as though lovers parted, / From one another's presence broken-hearted …
The sun and moon were gone, as if they kept, / A lover's secret tryst and sweetly slept …
The bull and ram were paralyzed with fear, / Sensing the 'lion' of the sky was near;
The heavenly twins were locked in their embrace, / A waterwheel revolving in one place;
The crab slept quietly at their feet, you'd say / The virgin, as if drunk, could hardly stand;
All the scale's chains were broken, its pan scattered, / The balance beam from which they hung was shattered;
The scorpion's tail was curled around its head, / Like someone with a cold who stays in bed;
The archer stood there, bow in hand, each limb, / Immobile, as if fear had conquered him –
The lamb slept in the flower-strewn grass, as though, / It felt no threat from him, or from his bow …
The water-carrier'd lost his pail, he stared, / Like someone traveling who is lost and scared;
The fish was still and seemed to give no thought, / To swimming on, as if he had been caught.
The sky seemed like a conjurer, whose power, / And skill were demonstrated every hour …

The Ram and Bull, facing one another
Catching the scent of the Heavenly Lion

حمل با ثور کرده روی در روی
ز شیر آسمانی یافته بوی

The Twins at rest again, like two lovers asleep
Wrapped around each other like a water-wheel

دو پیکر باز چون دو یار در خواب
به یکدیگر بپیچیده چو دولاب

The Crab is asleep at the feet of both
As if it is stripped from its claws and soul

به پای هر دوان در خفته خرچنگ
تو گفتی بی روان گشتست و بی چنگ

The Lion standing before the Crab,
With its Tail on its head, resembling an Archer's bow

اسد در پیش خرچنگ ایستاده
کمان کردار دم بر سر نهاده

The Virgin with a bunch [of grapes] in each hand
Is listlessly staying in one place like a drunkard

زن دوشیزه را دو خوشه در دست
ز سستی مانده بر یک جای چون مست

The Scale with all of its strings unraveled
Its balance point broken, while its pans are fine

ترازو را همه رشته گسسته
دو پله مانده و شاهین شکسته

Scorpio, with a tail curled around its head
As helpless as one with the rhume [in bed]

در آورده به هم کژدم سر و دم
ز سستی همچو سرما خورده مردم

The Archer left with a bow in its grasp
Both feet in pain, hands unfit for war

کمان ور را کمان در چنگ مانده
دو پای آزرده دست از جنگ مانده

The Goat sleeping safe from the [Archer's] arrow
Hidden among the tulips and the greenery [of meadows]

بزه از تیر او ایمن بخفته
میان سبزه و لاله نهفته

The Water-carrier's pail [*Dalv*] having fallen in a well
Has left him baffled, and lost in his way

فتاده آبکش را دلو در چاه
بمانده آبکش خیره چو گمراه

The Fish, deprived from its every move
Like a fish that is caught in a trap [by a hook]

بمانده ماهی از رفتن به ناکام
تو گفتی ماهی است افتاده در دام

Heaven has a mood shifting from one minute to next
Bringing out [with each], a different kind of marvel …

فلک هر ساعتی سازی گرفتی
بر آورده دگر گونه شگفتی …

III (a)

From *Laylī va Majnūn* of Niẓāmī Ganjavī:
"*Description of the Night*"

A night glowing as bright as the day
Refreshing the sky, as verdure fresh

رخشنده شبی چو روز روشن
زو تازه فلک چو سبز گلشن …

Nighttime stars in their hundred variations
The sky showed as one constellation ...

صد گونه ستاره شب آهنگ
بنمود سپهر در یک اورنگ ...

The stars are all in a different state
Starting anew a display of grandeur ...

انجم صفت دگر گرفته
زیبندگی ز سر گرفته ...

You'd say the Moon, as if from the crossbow of the king
Has a marble fallen upon its head

گفتی ز کمان گروهه شاه
یک مهره فتاده بر سر ماه

Or, Mercury's shape is as if the Archer's bow
Had sent an arrow to the sky [from below]

یا شکل عطارد از کمانش
تیریست که زد بر آسمانش

Venus, the strapping of the Archer's saddle
Perfumed as the beads of sweat on his forehead

زهره که ستام زین او بود
خوشبو چو خوی جبین او بود

The Sun, as [hot as] his world-burning blade
Was sheathed at night, naked by day

خورشید چو تیغ او جهانسوز
پوشیده به شب برهنه در روز

Mars, rushing hot with vengeance
To run a rod, through his enemy's eyes

مریخ بکینه گرم تعجیل
تا چشم عدوش را کشد میل

Jupiter, with his seal on its jewel
Held all the world's good fortune in its sleeve

برجیس به مهر او نگین داشت
کاقبال جهان در آستین داشت

Saturn is wearing a tasseled rope
To sharpen his blade's iron with that chord

کیوان رسنی علاقه آویز
تا آهن تیغ او کند تیز

With a King whose kingdom is such
May that the horizons never lack His splendor

شاهی که چنین بود جهانش
آفاق مباد بی جمالش

At the service of such a famed ruler
O Niẓāmī, how great is your stature indeed!

در خدمت این خذبو نامی
ما اعظم شانک ای نظامی

From the shape of the constellations in their stations
The sky has fallen into agitation

از شکل بروج و از منازل
افتاده سپهر در زلازل

The reflection of Ram, from the crescent of a smile
Has thrown a chord on the heaven's sine

عکس حمل از هلال خنده
بر جیب فلک زهی فکنده

The Taurus of heaven, like the cow of the seas
Has jewels on its neck and pearls from the Pleiades

گاو فلکی چو گاو دریا
گوهر بگلو در از ثریا

Gemini, wearing a belt with two-sided [strips]
Sits on the throne of the heavenly Twins

جوزا کمر دو رویه بسته
بر تخت دو پیکری نشسته

Cancer, with the mailed claw [of his]
Thrusts forth a seven-fingered fist

خرچنگ بچنگل ذراعی
انداخته پنجه سباعی

Alpha Leonis, luminous from Leo
Burns incense like a fire that burns aloes

قلب الاسد از اسد فروزان
چون آتش عود عود سوزان

The virgin-faced Virgo in what she says
Spares not an iota without any gains

عذرا رخ سنبله در آن حرف
بی صرفه نکرد دانه صرف

Libra, like the speech of a wise man
Has loosened its tongue with its two pans

میزان چو زبان مرد دانا
بگشاده زبانه با زبانا

Corona has given a crown to Regulus
Scorpio has paid tribute to Sagittarius

اکلیل بقلب تاج داده
عقرب بکمان خراج داده

Capricorn has cut its head like a goat
Having heard of decapitation lores

جدی سر خود چو بز بریده
کافسانه سربری شنیده

Aquarius, due to the patches of sunlight
Has taken a vow of silence, its lips tightly closed

دلو از گلهای آفتابی
خاموش لب از دهن پرانی

The Lady, bearing musk on her shoulder
Rides with Pisces in a litter

خاتون ز شانه نافه داری
با بطن الحوت در عماری

Upon the highway of stars' stations
Wondrous bodies are on a ride ...

بر شه ره منزل کواکب
اجرام غریب گشته راکب ...

III (b)

From the *Sharafnāmah* of Niẓāmī Ganjavī:
"*Education of Alexander*"

...

When the nine months of pregnancy were over
And the vein of growing gained motion

چو نه مه برآمد بر آبستنی
به جنبش در آمد رگ رستنی

At the time of guardianship, ordered the Shah
That a wise [man] should look into the stars

به وقت ولایت بفرمود شاه
که دانا کند سوی اختر نگاه

Specialists took their tools [of trade]
And sought the secret from the heavens' turn

شناسندگان برگرفتند ساز
ز دور فلک باز جستند راز

They gathered [to catch] the movements in sky
With astrolabes set up [to measure the stars]

بسیر سپهر انجمن ساختند
ترازوی انجم بر افراختند

The horoscope came as Leo, lord of might
By whom are blinded the enemies' eyes

اسد بود طالع خداوند زور
کزو دیده دشمنان گشت کور

The Sun was honored by the sign Aries
Inclined to seek practice after gaining knowledge

شرف یافته آفتاب از حمل
گراییده از علم سوی عمل

Gemini galloping into Mercury
Moon and Venus in Taurus, keeping company

عطارد بجوزا برون تاخته
مه و زهره در ثور دم ساخته

Jupiter was adorning Sagittarius
Saturn was in Libra, in assistance

برآراسته قوس را مشتری
زحل در ترازو بیاری گری

Mars in the sixth house, taking residence
Inclined to serving, like a servant ...

ششم خانه را کرده بهرام جای
چو خدمت گران گشته خدمت گرای ...

When they had finished assessing the ascendant
They gave the king the name Alexander ...

ز تقویم طالع چو پرداختند
سکندر ملک نام او ساختند ...

In the prediction of the seven stars it appeared
That the world would give him a key [one day] …

در احکام هفت اختر آمد بدید
که دنیا بدو داد خواهد کلید …

He stepped from the cradle straight into the saddle
Headed to the field from the pad of his cradle

ز گهواره در مرکب آورد پای
شد از چنبر مهد میدان گرای

He asked his nurse for a bow and arrow
At times targeting paper, at times aiming at silk

کمان خواست از دایه با چوب تیر
گهی کاغدش بد هدف گه حریر

When more grown, he worked with swords
From lion hunts, to fights with lions …

چو شد رسته تر کار شمشیر کرد
… ز شیرافکنی جنگ با شیر کرد

After that he reveled in horseback riding
Pursuing kingship and kingdom …

وزآن پس نشاط سواری گرفت
پی شاهی و شهریاری گرفت …

When the wheel's compass, crossed fields and mountains
Turning around its circle a 'few' times over

چو پرگار چرخ از زبر کوه و دشت
برین دایره مدتی چند گشت

King Fīlqūs [his father] packed and left the world
Entrusting the new king with his realm

مللک فیلقوس از جهان رخت برد
جهان را بشاهنشه نو سپرد

…

IV

From the *Ḥadīqat al-Ḥaqīqat* of Sanā'ī Ghaznavī:
"*Description of His Ascension*"

[Prophet]

It is from the greatness of his wisdom and views
That the earthly soil is golden from his solar [hues]

شده از فرّ او به فضل و نظر
خاک آدم ز آفتابش زر

Venus has forbidden his sadness,
Mars has read the record of his greatness

کرده ناهید از غمش توبیخ
خوانده تاریخ هیبتش مریخ

Jupiter is like a guide to him
Mercury is bent like a bow for his arrow

بوده برجیس چون دبیر او را
چون کمان خم گرفته تیر او را

The eyes of Jamshīd are enveloped by his eyebrows
The disk of the Sun is a bead in his hair

چشم جمشید مانده در ابروش
قرص خورشید مهره گیسوش

His mouth is [red] like the color of Saturn's visage
His name is a design on the Moon's forehead

رنگ رخساره زحل کامش
نقش پیشانی قمر، نامش …

By the feet of the Master of faith
Is the ornament of Leo's Wheel, and Earth's Taurus

یافته بهر پای خواجه دین
زینت شیر چرخ و گاو زمین …

V

From the *Kulliyyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* of Mawlānī Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī

For the Stars, it is the night of union [giving] and outpour
As in the celestial sphere, there is a wedding [lit] by the Moon of 'ten and four'

اختران را شب وصلست و نثارست و نثار
چون سوی چرخ عروسیست ز ماه ده و چار

Venus cannot contain herself from joy over ethereal sounds [that ring]
Like a nightingale drunk on the flowers of spring

زهره در خویش نگنجد ز نواهای لطیف
همچو بلبل که شود مست ز گل فصل بهار

See how Capricorn is looking coquettishly at Leo
See what a haze Pisces has brought forth from the sea

جدی را بین بکرشمه باسد مینگرد
حوت را بین که ز دریا چه برآورد غبار

Jupiter gallops his steed towards ancient Saturn
Saying, "Regain your youth, and go herald good tidings"

مشتری اسب دوانید سوی پیر زحل
که جوانی تو ز سر گیر و برو مژده بیار

Mars' palm, bloody from the grip of Sagitta
Becomes as life-giving as the noble Sun

کف مریخ که پر خون بود از قبضه تیر
گشت جان بخش چو خورشید مشرف آثار

When Aquarius's cart was filled with the elixir of life
The dry sheaf Virgo was laden with those pearls

دلو گردون چو از آن آب حیات آمد پر
شود آن سنبله خشک ازو گوهر بار

Pithy Gemini does not shy from Libra and defeat
How could Aries leave his own mother with disgust?

جوز پر مغز زمیزان و شکستن نرمد
حمل از مادر خود کی بگریزد بنفار

When the coquettish arrow [Mercury] reached Sagittarius's heart from the
Moon's side
[The Archer] began to move by night, in his quest, scorpion-like

تیر غمزه چو رسید از سوی مه بر دل قوس

شب روی پیشه گرفت از هوشش عقرب وار

In this feast, sacrifice heaven's Bull for him
If you do not want to slink like Cancer in the mud

اندرین عید برو گاو فلک قربان کن

نه ای چون سرطان در وحلی کژ رفتار

Heaven is an astrolabe, and love, the truth
Lend your ears to the meaning of my words

این فلک هست سطرلاب و حقیقت عشق است

هر چه گوییم از این گوش سوی معنی دار

O Shams of Tabrīz, on the morning that you receive me,
Bright day will become the dead of the night—with you as its moon.

شمس تبریز در آن صبح که تو دریابی

روز روشن شود از روی چو ماهت شب تار

VI (a)

A poem attributed to Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī
"Enumeration of the Constellations"

[There is] Aries, Taurus, and then Gemini
Cancer, Leo, then Virgo

حمل و ثور بعد از آن جوزا

سرطان و اسد دگر عذرا

Scorpio and Sagittarius, after that Libra,
[And then] Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pieces comes right after

عقرب و قوس دان پس از میزان

جدی و دلو است و حوت از پس آن

VI (b)

A poem attributed to Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī
"*Explanation of the Heavens (Bayān-i Aflāk): Madkhal-i Manẓūm*"

Explanation of the Heavens

بیان افلاک

First I will speak of heaven's configurations
Then I will take up the stars' prognostication

اول از هیآت فلک گویم
پس باحکام اختران پویم

Know that the Creator of fairies and angels
Created nine orbs and heavens

آفریننده پری و ملک
دان که نه آفرید چرخ و فلک

On one is the Moon, and on the second, Mercury
Then, the Third after Mercury is Venus

بر یکی ماه و بر دوم تیرست
باز ناهید را سیم تیرست

On the fourth orb is ever the Sun
As on the fifth one is Mars

شمس بر چرخ چارمست مدام
همچو بر چرخ پنجمین بهرام

Know the sixth orb as Jupiter
The seventh is Saturn's abode

ششمین چرخ مشتری را دان
هفتمین است منزل کیوان

On the eighth are the fixed stars
Above it is the ninth, on which is everything else

باز هشتم که ثابتات بر اوست
ز بر او نهم که جمله دروست

Now that the number of orbs is known
I will explain the stars.

عدد چرخها چو شد معلوم

بکنم بعد از این بیان نجوم

Even before explaining by observation
Scholars worked on the numbers of the stars

حکما پیش از آن بیان رصد

اختران را گرفته اند عدد

Of some twenty-nine thousand
Seven of them are wandering stars

با نه و بیست آمدست و هزار

هفت ازیشان کواکب سیار

The fixed stars are what the rest are named
From which are made the constellations

ثابتانست نام دیگرها

که از ایشان کنند پیکرها …

VII

From the *Gul u Nawrūz* of Khwājū Kirmānī

[God]
In the name of the designer of the surface of the earth
The igniter of cheeks of heavens' beauties

به نام نقش بند صفحه خاک

مدار افروز مه رویان افلاک [3:1]

At His command the goldsmith Sun
Melts the full Moon like a gold piece each month

به حکم او گدازد شمس زرگر

درست ماه را هر ماه چون زر… [4:1]

He is the one crafting the seven aspects
By his wisdom, making Gemini twin-shaped

به صنعت بر کشیده هفت منظر
به حکمت کرده جوزا را دو پیکر... [5:11]

He gives the Moon, the luminous letter
And Mercury, ink and pen [to write]

قمر را روشنایی نامه داده
عطارد را دوات و خامه داده [6:2]

He places a musical instrument in Venus's hand
And the Sun's sharp blade, on its harp

نهاده ارغنون در چنگ ناهید
زده بر چنگ تیغ تیز خورشید [6:3]

[Prophet]
The full Moon split in two before his visage
Dark night became a slave to his hair

درست مه شکسته پیش رویش
شب شامی شده هندوی مویش [8:1]

The Moon was given light by the Sun of his face
He gave a rescript to the sultan of the celestial sphere

ز مهر چهره مه را نور داده
به سلطان فلک منشور داده [8:4]

[Mystical Figure]
[بایزید بسطامی]

O source of the king's Sun
O shadow of divine grace

الا ای مطلع خورشید شاهی
الا ای سایه لطف الهی [8:18]

You are the Sun of the constellation of the realm of the heart
Design on the bezel of the realm's ring of existence

تویی خورشید برج عالم دل
تویی نقش نگین خاتم گل … [8:19]

From the full Moon messenger, get a letter
From the hand of Mercury, the guide, a pen

ز دست بدر قاصد نامه بستان
ز چنگ تیر منشی خامه بستان … [9:20]

Remove the hats from the heads of the fixed stars
Cast off the veils from the faces of the angels

ثوابت را کلاه از سر در انداز
ملائک را نقاب از رخ بر انداز [10:5]

Turn your face from the bead-spinning heaven
See the pole of the heavens as they turn the rosary beads …

ز چرخ مهره گردان رو بگردان
ببین قطب فلک را سبحه گردان … [10:6]

Step into the realm of no realm [of mystical initiation]
Make laconism your tool of enunciation [of mystical expression]

قدم نه در مکان بی مکانی
سخن گو از زبان بی زبانی … [10:8]

VIII

From the *Kulliyyāt* of Shāh Niʿmatullāh Valī:
"*Regarding the Levels of Existence*"

Saturn, then Jupiter, Mars and then the Sun
Again Venus with Mercury, and Moon, the fine-faced one …

چون زحل پس مشتری مریخ و آنگه آفتاب
باز زهره با عطارد ماه خوش سیما بود …

Seven different colors emanating from each
Due to God's One incontrovertible command

هفت رنگ مختلف زین هفت گردد آشکار
لیکن از حکم خداوندی که او یکتا بود

Seven rulers, with ten and two dwellings
Each in its house, a monarch and a king, due to God's incontrovertible will

هفت سلطانند و ایشان را ده و دو خلوت است
هریکی در برج خود کیخسرو و دارا بود

The Sun, and Moon, the two great luminaries
Making heaven's eye bright and all-seeing ...

مهر و مه باشند هر دو نیرین اعظمین
دیده افلاک از ایشان روشن و بینا بود ...

Seven ruling bodies, like chiefs of a village
With their wellbeing set in heavens' bliss ...

هفت اعضای رییسه چون رییسان ده اند
... صحت این هفت تن در جنت الماوا بود

The chief of the seventh realm, see its spleen on the left side
Sometimes reclining, sometimes seated, sometimes upright

کدخدای ملک هفتم جانب چپ دان سپرز
گاه خفته گه نشسته گه گهی برپا بود

Aries its head, Taurus its trunk and neck, no doubt
And like your hands, O brother, Gemini with open palms

سر حمل میدان و گردن ثور باشد بیگمان
هر دو دستت ای برادر باز چون جوزا بود

Consider Cancer as the chest, and Leo its heart, O lion-heart—
Virgo, your gut makes up the abdominal part of the organs.

سینه سرطان دان و دل باشد اسد ای شیر دل
روده هایت سنبله جزوی از این اعضا بود

Consider Libra the belly, Scorpio its manhood, and Archer its thighs
Capricorn is the knees, Aquarius the calves, and Pisces are the feet

ناف میزان دان و مردی عقرب است و قوس ران
هر دو زانو جدی و ساقت دلو و حوتت پا بود

Assuming the shape of the world to be a circle
God is its circumference, the spirit, its central point,
and objects are that circle …

فی المثل یک دایره این شکل عالم فرض کن
حق محیط و نقطه روح و دایره اشیا بود …

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Alexander Matthew Key

Moving from Persian to Arabic

This article is a case study of mediaeval translation from Persian into Arabic. It was sparked by a problematic subheading in a millennium-old compilation of wit and wisdom, *Littérateurs' Ripostes and Poets' and Eloquent Men's Rejoinders*. Writing in Arabic, the author of the compilation stated that a specific selection of lines of poetry was "moved over from Persian." But how could this be, when most of the lines in question had been composed in Arabic, by Arab poets?

Answering this question has required an assessment of the languages and literary canons involved, as well as an attempt to theorize the purposes for which the poetry was selected. I have therefore written an article about mediaeval Perseo-Arabic poetry, linguistic developments, genre politics, identity politics, and translation theory. It reveals a time and place in which language was always an issue, culture was sometimes an issue, and translation was inevitable.

Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (henceforth Raghib) lived and worked in or before the year 1018, most likely around the city referred to in his name, Isfahan.[1] Towards the end of *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, he bundled together seventeen short poetic quotations under the title *Abyāt manqūla min al-Fārsiyya*, "Lines of Poetry Moved Over from Persian." This act of bundling selections under titles (and subtitles, and sub-subtitles) was the driving creative principle of his book, just as it was the dominant mode of authorship in a popular, dynamic, and well-established genre at the dawn of the fifth Islamic century: the *adab* manual of which his is a famous example. Raghib did not provide the Persian original for the seventeen quotations in this section, and the poetry itself can indeed be shown in the majority of cases to be original compositions in Arabic, some of which date back several centuries and appear in the published collections of well-known Arab poets. For five of the seventeen quotations, Raghib provides the name of the Arabic poet in question.

My initial reading of the printed editions of *Littérateurs' Ripostes* led me to observe that all the lines in the section were potentially proverbial; which is to say that they all contained pithy messages or analogies, mostly relating to the human condition, that could have been taken from, or subsequently spawned, proverbs and aphorisms. It was at this point that I consulted Professor Mahdavi-Damghani, who shared my fascination with the topic and provided extensive

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1 Alexander Key, "A Linguistic Frame of Mind: ar-Rāġib al-Iṣfahānī and What It Meant to Be Ambiguous" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012); Key, "al-Rāġib al-Iṣfahānī," in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography I*, ed. Mary St. Germain and Terri de Young (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011).

hand-written notes on possible analogues in Persian proverbial literature for these lines of Arabic poetry. Then, as is so often the case in our field, the manuscript record provided an answer. The oldest known dated copy of *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, held at the British Library under the shelfmark ADD18529,[2] bore witness to the same seventeen lines, but with the more detailed title "Lines of Proverbial Poetry Moved Over from Persian."[3] This proves that either Raghib originally conceived of a group of lines of poetry that he described as both proverbs and originally Persian, or that a scribe a century or so after Raghib's death emended the title to reflect the same proverbial connection.

It is my contention here that proverbs are the key to solving the translation puzzle of why and how original Arabic poetry could be claimed as originally Persian. This article will continue in five sections. In the first section, I provide some remarks on the proverb. The second presents a historical review of the different types of Persian language at play in the eleventh century and the different directions in which they were going. The third is a review of both oft-cited and lesser-known passages in which scholars other than Raghib talked about their perspectives and experiences of the interface between Persian and Arabic. Fourth is a detailed review of the Persian to be found in the work of Raghib, who as far as we know wrote every single one of his books in Arabic. This includes a presentation of the seventeen lines themselves. The final section remarks on how two eleventh-century scholars used the art of literary compilation to negotiate a Perseo-Arabic interstice.

The Proverb

It is a cheering fact, and a rarity in exercises of cross-cultural epistemology that address words loaded with cultural capital, that the semantic fields of the Arabic word *mathal* (plural *amthāl*), the Arabic-loan-word-in-Persian *mathal* (plural *amthāl* again), and the English word "proverb" overlap to a very large extent. The family resemblance centers around proverbs being commonly metaphorical and based on situational analogies.

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2 From catalogue data, dated at 1129 this is the oldest extant copy of *Littérateurs' Ripostes*. See Key, "A Linguistic Frame of Mind," 278–84.

3 The title read: *Abyāt min al-Amthāl Manqūla 'an al-Fārsiyya*. Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī. Ms. of *Muḥāḍarāt al-Bulaghā' wa Muḥāwarāt al-Udabā' wa'l-Shu'arā' [sic]*. ADD 18529 (dated 523/1129), in Oriental Manuscripts, British Library, London. fol. 229b.

The proverb has two major dynamics pushing in opposite directions: proverbs are both potentially universal and culturally specific. Proverbs are both "irredeemably culturally situated and incapable of being extracted from situations" and yet at the same time all "individual minds … operate by universal principles."[4] To this I would add that proverbs have particular qualities of content and form that push the human subjects who use them towards the universal. First, a proverb contains abbreviated and pithy wisdom. Its concision may require interpretative unpacking on the part of the audience, but this does not affect the truth of the resulting statement. The proverb is therefore, like an aphorism or a maxim, something that claims to be accurate. This dynamic pushes the proverb towards claims of universality, where proverbs pass between cultures and languages because they express truths about the human condition, and where the collection of proverbs (because they are highly collectable) becomes a transnational and transhistorical enterprise. This enterprise is facilitated by the small scale of proverbs, which facilitates memorization and translation. This potentially-universal nature of proverbs bundles those who use them into a single community, for as Elias Canetti said, "the great writers of aphorisms read as if they had all known each other well."[5]

The opposing dynamic, away from universality and towards cultural specificity, works for Arabo-Persian proverbs both on a high conceptual level in which Islamic theology and hermeneutics make claims about God's language, and on the more prosaic level of a shared profane subject matter. Raghib's account of the Arabic proverb (*mathal*) shows us both of these levels of difference. His proverb is:

> Both the most noble verbal form through its fashioning of good similes, syntactic structure, and concision, and the most noble mental content through the way it indicates both the intended moral and other, associated morals, at the same time.[6]

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4 Nancy Mason Bradbury, "Transforming Experience into Tradition: Two Theories of Proverb Use and Chaucer's Practice," *Oral Tradition* 17, no. 2 (2002): 273. Bradbury is quoting Richard Honeck and Jon Temple's article "Proverbs and the Complete Mind" (*Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 11:217–32), which argues against the cultural approach and for the universal.

5 Fred R. Shapiro, *The Yale Book of Quotations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 130. I am grateful to Andrew Hui for providing this quotation during his participation in the seminar "On the Classics: Debating a Concept Across the Premodern Mediterranean World" at the American Comparative Literature Association's Annual Meeting in New York, 2014. The universalizing potential of the proverb remains alive and well in contemporary paremiology (the study of proverbs) and paremiography (the study of their collection and writing); the first aim of the 2014 Interdisciplinary Colloquiums on Proverbs in Tavira, Portugal, is the "construction of a common European Heritage of proverbs." Interdisciplinary Colloquiums on Proverbs, "7th Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs (ICP13)," http://www.colloquium-proverbs.org/icp/en/general-presentation.

6 Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Iʿtiqādāt* [On creeds], ed. Shamrān al-ʿAjalī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Ashraf, 1988), 183.

The paradigmatic use of *mathal* is in the Quran, where God uses it because it enables him to discuss divine mental content beyond the range of the human language in which he speaks.[7] The concept of paradise is often written through a *mathal* based on a garden exactly because the afterlife is known to God but inconceivable to humanity. Raghib's linguistic approach to proverbs ("the most noble verbal form") is complemented by his cognitive approach ("the most noble mental content"), and the brief cognitive account in the above quotation is comparable to current scholarly analyses of universal proverbs that "posit miniature theories, under which seemingly unrelated experiences illuminate one another and are therefore transformed."[8]

The Arabic word *mathal* is usually translated as "analogy" (or even "allegory" and "parable"), or "proverb" (and "saying").[9] But Raghib has a universal account of the word:

> The root principle of this verb (*al-muthūl*) is the raising up to the vertical. The result of this action is something formed (*al-mumaththal*) according to a model (*mithāl*) that was provided by something else ... and the proverb (*al-mathal*) is an expression of a statement about something that resembles a statement about something else that shares a similarity with the first thing.[10]

There is certain circularity to explaining the concept of analogy with an analogy to the physical action of erection, but this is a typical move in mediaeval Arabic lexicography that need not concern us here.

In the Arabic intellectual context, it is not just God who strikes analogies (*tamthīl*) and describes himself as doing so;[11] literary critics regard the process of coining proverbs (also *tamthīl*) as part of both divine and profane poetics. Raghib's taxonomy of poetic techniques places proverb coinage under metaphor (*istiʿāra*) and his three examples of proverbs being coined are the genre of proverb collections (*Kitāb al-Amthāl*),[12] a line of poetry, and a "saying of the eloquent." He writes:

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7 Ibid., 187.

8 Bradbury, "Transforming Experience," 265.

9 My translation of *mathal* as "proverb" rather than a more general "analogy" is to a large extent determined by the subject matter of this article. Raghib's seventeen quotations are short poetic analogies, therefore proverbs.

10 Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāẓ al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* [Quranic glossary], ed. Ṣafwān ʿAdnān Dāwūdī (1992; reprint, Qum: Ṭalīʿat al-Nūr, 2006), 758–59.

11 See, for example, Quran 2:26 (al-Baqara) "God is not embarrassed to strike an analogy, whether to a mosquito, or to something larger."

12 It is not clear from the text whether Raghib is referring to a specific book of proverbs by an unnamed author, or to the genre of books of proverbs. In either case, the *Kitāb al-Amthāl* makes it clear that this phrase refers to the genre of proverbs as opposed to Quranic or poetic analogy.

In the same category as the genre of proverb collections comes Ibn Mayyāda's poetic statement:

أَبْيِنِي أَفِي يُمْنَى يَدَيكِ جَعَلْتِنِي * فَأَفْرَحَ أَمْ صَيَّرْتِنِي فِي شَمالِكِ

"Make it clear! Is it your right hand that you have placed me in, so I will rejoice? Or have you passed me over into your left?"[13] And the statement of some eloquent men "I see you putting one foot forward while leaving the other behind—decide which one you want!"[14]

An Arabic proverb can appear in prose statement, poetic verse, or in the Quran (which for Raghib is a *sui generis* divine alternative to prose and poetry).[15] The boundaries and distance between divine revelation, classical poetic canon, and popular adage disappear. This is the high conceptual level on which theology and hermeneutics make the Arabic context different from the European, drawing the proverb away from the universal form Friedrich Nietzsche valorized as "the aphorism, the apothegm ... the forms of eternity."[16]

Proverbs are also, as we will see with the translations of the seventeen lines presented by Raghib, culturally specific in a more mundane way. Because their field of reference is usually everyday life as a prosaic and familiar mirror with which to explain a universal truth or a divine infinity, the facts on which they rely change across time and place. Snakes, water wells, archery competitions, and donkey branding do not occur equally, or with equal significance, either side of millennial and continental difference.

If the proverb dominates the content of the seventeen quotations under investigation in this article, what of their language, the two languages between which Raghib claims they were moved? The cultural specificity of proverbs demands their translation, if they are to fulfill their universal potential to function in different times

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13 Meter: *al-Ṭawīl*. Ibn Mayyāda (Abū Sharāḥīl al-Rammāḥ b. Abrad al-Murrī, d. ca. 760). This same line is attributed to Ibn al-Dumayna (Abū al-Sārī ʿAbdallāh, fl. ca. 750) by Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (1964–74; reprint, Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī/Muʾassasat Jammāl, n. d.), 17:92.

14 Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī. Ms. of *Kitāb min Kalām al-Rāghib fīʾl-Badīʿ (Afānīn al-Balāgha)* [Raghib on the new style], MS 165 (ca. 1300 s), Landberg Collection, Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, CT, fol. 16b.

15 I have reviewed Raghib's concept of the unique Quranic syntactic structure (*naẓm*) elsewhere: Key, "Language and Literature in al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī," in *Reflections on Language and Knowledge in Middle Eastern Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

16 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1977), 555–56.

and places. To speak to our shared experience of the human condition, proverbs must be moved from one language to another. And if Raghib maintained the cultural specifics of everyday life on which these proverbs rely, he must have assumed, or been claiming, that Arabic and Persian were closely related communities.

The Persian Language

Raghib was a scholar of classical Arabic, living with and working on at least four centuries of classical Arabic literary canon in prose and poetry. It is clear that when Raghib says this poetry has been "moved over" from Persian he was not referring to the sort of two-text process with which we are familiar as "translation." It is not immediately apparent what language Raghib was translating from, never mind which texts. The history of the Persian language at this period is a moving target: complex, regionally diverse, and understudied. One thing we know for sure is that only forty or so years after Raghib was writing in Isfahan, another scholar living in the same town wrote one of the most important works of Persian epic, *Vīs o Rāmīn*, which itself came hard on the heels of the foundational epic of Persian literature, the *Shāhnāma*, written by a contemporary of Raghib's on the far eastern side of the Iranian plateau. Raghib must have been one of the last generations of Isfahanians to be engaged in the dynamic I am investigating, the movement from Persian to Arabic.

The Islamic conquests of the seventh century had shaken up the language map of the Middle East, with Arabic steadily displacing the established languages of Persian in what is now Iran, and Aramaic in what is now Iraq. By Raghib's time, the classical register of Arabic-dominated scholarship had created a literary space that managed to be both flightily innovative and carefully conservative at the same time. The written work of those scholars who learned this language was, across the vast territorial expanse from the Oxus River to Spain, indistinguishable from that of its native speakers. The first great grammarian was a native Persian speaker,[17] and Raghib's slightly younger contemporary, the great philosopher Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, d. 1037), was bilingual.

Two of the three stages of the historical development of the Persian language remained in play for Raghib. Old Persian, the cuneiform script of the Achaemenid Empire (sixth to fourth centuries BCE), was no more. But Middle Persian, the linguistic relationship of which to Old Persian has been compared to that of French

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17 Sībawayh (Abū Bishr ʿAmr b. ʿUthmān, d. 796); on whom see: M. G. Carter, *Sibawayhi* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

to Latin,[18] and which had been the language of the Sasanian empire (third to seventh centuries CE), remained in use in restricted areas. New Persian, the language of *Vīs o Rāmīn* and *Shāhnāma* epics that would come to supplant Arabic as the medium of the literature across most of the eastern Islamicate world, had seen literature composed in it for almost a century.[19] While the connection between the Islamic conquests and the rise of Arabic as a prestige register is clear, the myriad of reasons for the resurgence of Persian are beyond the scope of this article, although my references should give the reader an introduction to the information available.

What literature might Raghib have read, or heard, or thought about? Other than the classical register of Arabic in which he wrote, Middle Persian had existed alongside Arabic for the first several centuries after the Islamic conquests of the seventh century. Middle Persian (*pārsī[g]*, also known as Pahlavi) was written in a script descended from Aramaic, snatches of its poetry are preserved from the seventh and eighth centuries,[20] and we know that its literature included Sanskrit fables and an epic Persian book of kings (a *shāhnāma* as opposed to The *Shāhnāma*).[21] It was the language of the Zoroastrian religion (as well of the Manichaean), and as such remained in use by a clerical and aristocratic elite in areas

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18 Gilbert Lazard, "The Rise of the New Persian Language," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. R. N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 596.

19 The earliest New Persian poet of whose work a meaningful amount remains is Rūdakī (d. 940). His oft-cited poem "Mother of the Wine" can be found together with a record of its performance at court in Milton Gold, *The Tārikh-i Sistān* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1976), 258–64; *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Bahār (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-i Zavvār, 1935–36), 317–24. See also: Lazard, "Rise of New Persian," 606–11; John Perry, "Persian," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Versteegh et al.

20 Lazard, "Rise of New Persian," 605. For the history of the languages of Iran, see: Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Iran vi. Iranian Languages and Scripts," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Iranicaonline Website, 2012); Éva M. Jeremiás, "Iran: languages," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Brill Online: Brill, 2013); Éva M. Jeremiás, "Iran," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics Online* Edition, ed. Kees Versteegh, Lutz Edzard, and Rudolf de Jong (Brill Online: Brill, 2013); Ludwig Paul, "Persian Language i. Early New Persian," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Iranicaonline Website, 2013).

21 Lazard, "Rise of New Persian," 622–25; Skjærvø, Iranian Languages and Scripts; Mary Boyce, "The Parthian 'Gōsān' and Iranian Minstrel Tradition," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, nos. 1–2 (1957); Dagmar A. Riedel, "Kalila wa Demna i. Redactions and circulation," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*. See also the *Sindbādnāma* (The prince, the concubine, and the seven viziers), a Middle Persian collection of tales later "celebrated in Europe as 'The Seven Wise Sages.'" Mohsen Zakeri, "Sindbādnāma: a Zurvanite Cosmogenic Legend?," in *Early Islamic Iran: The Idea of Iran*, ed. Edmund Herzig and Sarah Stewart (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012),

such as Fars, on the eastern shore of the Gulf, where it was still flourishing in the ninth and even late tenth and early eleventh centuries.[22]

The bilingual administrators, littérateurs, and politicians who were an integral part of the new Islamic reality, had translated middle Persian historical and wisdom literature into the new elite register of classical Arabic on a steady and professional basis from the seventh century onwards. We will see below how anecdotes about this process were part of the wit and wisdom that scholars such as Raghib were engaged in producing and reproducing as cultural capital.[23] However, the position of Middle Persian poetry is less clear: for a scholar such as Raghib in Isfahan at the end of the tenth century the Persian heritage of great monarchical and administrative achievement was one to be celebrated and reported upon,[24] while any Persian history of literary eloquence in poetry and prose lay unmentioned in the shadow of the classical Arabic literary canon. When, in the thirteenth century, Shams-i Qays Rāzī wrote the first extant work of Persian poetics, his review of Middle Persian poetry was brief,[25] despite the depth of the history. Mary Boyce wrote that the "evidence, scattered and varied though it is, [has] established the existence in pre-Islamic Iran" of a vast poetic current that was later both predominantly oral and "appears to have been … linked invariably with music."[26] Twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars observed the failure of this Middle Persian poetic tradition to continue into the Islamic period, and supplanted the silence with faith regarding its oral continuation: "[o]f this production, which must have been brilliant, there are hardly any traces left, probably because it was purely oral."[27]

42; Ulrich Marzolph, "The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful: The Survival of Ancient Iranian Ethical Concepts in Persian Popular Narratives of the Islamic Period," in *Early Islamic Iran*.

22 Lazard, "Rise of New Persian," 609.

23 Louise Marlow, "Advice Literature in Tenth and Early Eleventh-Century Iran and Early Persian Prose Writing," in *Early Islamic Iran*; 'Alī b. 'Ubayda Rayḥānī, *Persian Wisdom in Arabic Garb: 'Alī b. 'Ubayda al-Rayḥānī (d. 219/834) and His Jawāhir al-Kilam wa-Farā'id al-Ḥikam*, ed. Mohsen Zakeri, trans. Mohsen Zakeri, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

24 Sayyid 'Alī Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib-i Iṣfahānī: Zindagī va Āthār-i 'Ū* (Isfahan: Sāzmān-i Farhangī-i Tafrīḥī-i Shahrdārī-i Iṣfahān, 2008), 46–51, 133–39, app. 2.

25 *The Clarification of the Measures of Persian Poetry*, written ca. 1233. (Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Qays al-Rāzī) Shams-i Qays, *al-Mu'jam fī-Ma'āyīr Ash'ār al-'Ajam*, ed. Mīrzā Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Qazwīnī and Muḥammad Taqī Mudarris Riḍavī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zavvār, 2008), 198–202.

26 Boyce, "The Parthian 'Gōsān,'" 32, 25–26. Cf. Kumiko Yamamoto, *The Oral Background of Persian Epics: Storytelling and Poetry* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), xxf.

27 Boyce: "The Arabic conquest can hardly have served to cut this current [of pre-Islamic Persian poetry] off, or to have plunged the poetry-loving Persians into silence for 300 years. Yet

Orality can never be discounted, as will be discussed below, but Middle Persian at the time of Raghib was in any case somewhat more than a relic. Richard Frye has argued for the persistent political influence of Zoroastrian clergy across Iran and Iraq in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and a consequent preservation of Middle Persian and disinterest in New Persian.[28] Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina has shown how the Zoroastrian communities of the ninth-, tenth-, and eleventh-century Islamicate world worked hard to produce, self-conscious of their minority status, the canonical texts on which we now rely for information about the pre-Islamic Persian world.[29] Our earliest Middle Persian colophon is from Baghdad in 1020, and while the Avestan script (Avestan being an Old Iranian language like Old Persian, and the *Avesta* being the holy book of the Zoroastrians) dates from the fifth and sixth centuries, our earliest extant Avestan manuscript is from 1288.[30] Middle Persian literature was "an important pivot or transitional corpus between the largely oral pre-Islamic period [of Zoroastrian literature] and the highly literate Islamic period [of Zoroastrian literature] in Iran," and it was an operative tradition in Raghib's context, albeit restricted to the conservative rearguard actions of the Zoroastrian minority.[31]

Finally, there was New Persian (*Fārsī*), the gradual setting of a spoken register of Persian to Arabic script from the early ninth century onwards. Other than the script, the difference between New and Middle Persian was largely one of vocabulary: New Persian added a large number of words from other Iranian languages, as well as a substantial Arabic vocabulary, to a grammatical and phonological structure largely inherited from Middle Persian.[32] The particular spoken register being set to Arabic script, sometimes referred to as *Darī*, had first been spoken in the urban and court center of Seleucia and Ctesiphon (Madā'in, twenty

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during this dark period the old [Middle Persian] poetry seems to have vanished so completely that thereafter its very existence came to be in doubt." Gilbert Lazard, "Prosody 1. Middle Persian," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*; Boyce, "The Parthian 'Gōsān,'" 32; Yamamoto, *The Oral Background of Persian Epics*, xxif., 139 f.

28 Roy Mottahedeh, "The Idea of Iran in the Buyid Dominions," in *Early Islamic Iran*, 154; Richard N. Frye, "Die Wiedergeburt Persiens um die Jahrtausendwende," *Der Islam*, no. 35 (1960): 47 f.

29 Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, "'The Ground Well Trodden But the Shah Not Found ...': Orality and Textuality in the 'Book of Kings' and the Zoroastrian Mythoepic Tradition," in *Orality and Textuality in the Iranian World*, ed. Julia Rubanovich (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid. These rearguard literary actions did, of course, interact with the Islamic actors and texts around them. See, for example, Touraj Daryaee, "Apocalypse Now: Zoroastrian Reflection on the Early Islamic Centuries," *Medieval Encounters* 4, no. 3 (1998).

32 Lazard, "Rise of New Persian," 597.

miles southeast of where Baghdad would be founded in 762).[33] However, the first courts to patronize its newly expanded and written form were in the East, that of the Samanid Manṣūr b. Nūḥ (r. 961–76) in Bukhara (now in southern Uzbekistan),[34] and of Maḥmūd b. Sebüktigin (r. 998–1030) in Ghazna (now Ghazni, in eastern Afghanistan). The latter court would produce the *Shāhnāma* of Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī around the year 1000. These three languages, Middle Persian, New Persian, and Arabic, appear in the geographical survey of the tenth-century scholar Abū Isḥāq al-Iṣṭakhrī (fl. ca. 950):

> This is a report on the appearance, clothing, language, and religion of the people of Fars [on the eastern shore of the Gulf] ... they have three languages. [1] New Persian (*al-Fārsiyya*), with which they converse; all the people of Fars speak a single language in which they understand each other with the exception of [certain] verbal forms that differ and which the masses are unable to pronounce. [2] Middle Persian (*al-fahlawiyya*), which is language of the books and histories (*al-ayyām*) of the Persians and those writings of the Zoroastrians that concern Zoroastrian matters. Middle Persian requires explanation (*tafsīr*) for the people of Fars to understand it. [3] Arabic, which is the language of written composition for the state (*al-sulṭān*), the bureaucracy (*al-dawāwīn*), and the majority of people (*ʿāmmat al-nās*).[35]

Al-Iṣṭakhrī reads the situation he encountered as the combination of a New Persian spoken language that is not yet fully functional at all levels of society, an archaic Middle Persian language, and the new Arabic language of power, which dominates the written word for all non-Zoroastrian matters.

In the West, and only a generation or so after Raghib, Isfahan would produce the second most significant New Persian narrative poem after Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, the *Vīs o Rāmīn* of Fakhr al-Dīn Jurjānī in around 1050.[36] An interim

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33 Lazard, "Pārsī et dārī: nouvelles remarques," in *Aspects of Iranian Culture in Honour of Richard Nelson Frye*, ed. C. Altman Bromberg et al. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990); reprint as *La formation de la langue Persane* (Paris: Peeters, 1995), 141–48. NB: Dārī is now the name for the dialect of Persian spoken in eastern Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. Skjærvø, *Iranian Languages and Scripts*.

34 Travis E. Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 302 f.; A. C. S. Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography and Political Legitimacy: Balʿami's Tarikhnama* (London: Routledge, 2007), 14 f.; Peacock, "Early Persian Historians and the Heritage of Pre-Islamic Iran," in *Early Islamic Iran*, 59–61; Elton Daniel, "The Sāmānid 'Translations' of al-Ṭabarī," in *Al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and His Work*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 2008).

35 M. J. de Goeje and Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Iṣṭakhrī, I. *Kitāb al-Masālik waʾl-Mamālik*, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum 1 (1870; Leiden: Brill, 1927). 137. My thanks to Yuhan Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina for this reference.

36 Dick Davis, "Vis O Rāmin," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. Yarshater.

stage in western Iran may have been oral poetry in those western dialects of Persian that were distinct from both Middle Persian as written in its Aramaic-derived script and from New Persian as written in Arabic script, a poetry now only preserved in snatches known as *fahlawiyyāt*.[37] There are also occasional references to a specific Iṣfahānī dialect of Persian. Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. ca. 961, on whom see more below) gives the example of a phrase for household furnishings, *al-khāsh-i māsh*, which he describes as "the Persian of the inhabitants of Isfahan, Persianized from Arabic."[38] The historian of Isfahan al-Māfarrūkhī reported, around a century after the fact,[39] that a local man had once insulted the Buyid ruler Rukn al-Dawla (r. 947–77) in an Iṣfahānī dialect Rukn al-Dawla could not understand.[40] It is worth noting, as a reminder of the fluidity of this situation, that al-Māfarrūkhī wrote in Arabic a century after history writing in New Persian had begun (and was translated into New Persian after a further three hundred years).[41]

Nevertheless, sources and scholarship agree that the broad eleventh-century dynamic for Isfahan was the same as for all the cities and towns of what is now Iran: a move from classical Arabic literature to New Persian literature. And yet what I am trying to investigate in this paper is a move in the opposite direction,

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37 Ahmad Tafazzoli, "Fahlavīyāt," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. Yarshater; Shams-i Qays, *al-Muʿjam*, 2008 ed., 173, 176.

38 *Wa-hādhihi 'l-kalimāti mawjūdatun fī fārisiyyati ahli iṣbahāna 'l-muʿajjamati min 'l-ʿarabiyyati*. The phrase does indeed combine the Arabic definite article with the Persian unstressed enclitic vowel "-i" (known as *iḍāfa*). Abū ʿAbdallāh Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira fī'l-Amthāl al-Sāʾira*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd Qaṭāmish (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1966), 2:459. Isfahan was, with regard to its trade connections, more connected to Baghdad in the west than the Iranian west. David Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Iṣfahān in the Saljūq Period* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010), 41–43; David Durand-Guédy, "Pārsī et dārī: nouvelles remarques," 141–148. NB: Dari is now the name for the dialect of Persian spoken in eastern Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. Skjærvø, *Iranian Languages and Scripts*. CF. Paul, *Persian Language i. Early New Persian*.

39 Mufaḍḍal b. Saʿd b. al-Ḥusayn al-Māfarrūkhī's *Kitāb Maḥāsin Isfahān* (The Good Qualities of Isfahan) was written between 1072 and 1092. Jürgen Paul, "The Histories of Isfahan: Mafarrukhi's Kitāb Maḥāsin Isfahān," *Iranian Studies* 33, nos. 1–2 (2000): 117 f.

40 Al-Mufaḍḍal b. Saʿd al-Māfarrūkhī, *Tarjuma-i Maḥāsin-i Iṣfahān az ʿArabī ba Fārsī*, ed. ʿAbbās Iqbāl, trans. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Abī al-Riḍā Āvī (Tehran: Sāzmān-i Farhangī-i Tafrīḥī-i Shahrdārī-i Iṣfahān, 2006). 119; al-Mufaḍḍal b. Saʿd al-Māfarrūkhī, *Kitāb Maḥāsin Isfahān*, ed. al-Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ṭihrānī (Tehran: Maṭbaʿat al-Majlis al-Millī, 1933), 96. Cf. Mottahedeh, "The Idea of Iran in the Buyid Dominions," 157. The Buyid dynasty came from Daylam on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea, and at this period most likely spoke a northwestern Iranian dialect. Wilferd Madelung, "Deylamites. ii. In the Islamic period," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*.

41 Daniel, "Translations" of al-Ṭabarī; Peacock, "Early Persian Historians"; Peacock, *Mediaeval Islamic Historiography*. Al-Māfarrūkhī's history was translated into Persian in the fourteenth century: al-Māfarrūkhī, *Tarjuma-i Maḥāsin-i Iṣfahān*.

towards Arabic, just as the momentum towards New Persian started to gather. It appears unlikely that I will be able to identify Persian texts from which Raghib moved poetry into Arabic. If he was translating Middle Persian literature, then so little has been preserved as to make it unlikely that a source will be found. If he was translating New Persian literature, then so little had been written by his time that the same is true.

Orality is a persistent question mark. As the discussion above shows, it can be profitably used to explain an absence of evidence, but this should not make it analytically disreputable. As Kumiko Yamamoto has shown,[42] New Persian epic contains evidence of its oral sources. Furthermore, the interactions between Persian and Arabic presented below almost all took place in performance situations. Poetry was spoken aloud, translated aloud, and sung aloud in court. Functional linguistic excellence was understood as the ability to talk to people in the appropriate way according to the nature of the setting. And yet Raghib's *adab*, even though it was produced to enable the performance of literature in speech, was written-down material.

Perseo-Arabica Beyond Raghib

The new imperial force of Arabic and the old imperial force of Persian have not been able, across the last long millennium, to escape the politics of their initial clash. My aim in this article is to show how Raghib negotiated his Isfahanian context some three hundred years after Arabic speakers conquered its Persian past. Abdelfatta Kilito thinks of hierarchy and conflict as soon as he thinks of translation, and thinks of Arabic and Persian as soon as he thinks of hierarchy therein. Kilito shares al-Jāḥiẓ's (Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Baḥr, d. 868) interest in an early (a century prior to al-Jāḥiẓ and over a millennium prior to Kilito) preacher and exegete who placed Arabic speakers on his right and Persian speakers on his left and explained the Arabic Quran to them separately, with the Arabs first:

> Can we imagine the reverse? If Arabs sat to his left and Persians to his right, Arabic would have become secondary to Persian, which would never have occurred to [the preacher or al-Jāḥiẓ] ... What we learn from this scene is that to speak a language necessitates turning to one side. Language is tied to a location on the map or to a given space. To speak this or that

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[42] Yamamoto, *The Oral Background of Persian Epic*s. Vevaina includes a brief review of the scholarship on the question of the orality of the *Shāhnāma*. Vevaina, "The Ground Well Trodden."

language is to be on the right or on the left. As for the bilingual, he is in constant movement, always turning, and since he looks in two directions, he is two-faced.[43]

As the preceding discussion of the linguistic situation in Raghib's Isfahan has shown, language is not necessarily tied to "a location on the map or to a given space" in the same way as it is in the contemporary world (Kilito's concern in his book), with its hegemonic Europe, subaltern Middle East, and postcolonial dynamics. But as the discussion below of other scholars who found themselves dealing with the nexus of Middle Persian, Arabic, and New Persian will show, Arabic and Persian were connected to past and separate spaces, even if the present saw them on top of each other. The great cities of pre-Islamic Middle Persian-speaking Iran were in a different location to the great deserts and trading towns of pre-Islamic Arabia. And Kilito's insight into the two-faced nature (he deliberately avoids the classicizing reference to Janus) of bilingualism must have some purchase on our discussion of what Raghib was doing, and how and why he used proverbs in poetry to do it.

In the review to which I now turn, some were more concerned with the politics of rival cultures than others, but all of these men (and scholars of language at this period were always male) reported on literary life at the Perseo-Arabic interstice around the tenth and eleventh centuries. In a work one of whose aims was to show the superiority of Arabic while at the same time, on the basis of Zoroastrian scripture, giving Persian a place (below Arabic and alongside Hebrew and Syriac) in the pantheon of languages of divine revelation,[44] Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān, d. 934) used the cultural and intellectual dominance of Arabic as proof of that language's inherent quality.[45] He used the same logic for poetry: Persian poetry does not share the qualities that define poetry as a genre in Arabic (meter and the subject matters of praise, satire, the histories of war, genealogy, and nature), so that which the Persians have is not "poetry" but rather an intermediate state of rhymed prose set to music.[46] It is reasonable to assume that al-Rāzī

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43 Abdelfatta Kilito, *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*, trans. Waïl S. Hassan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008). This short book is a meditation on translation, power, and history germane to this article. This quotation comes from the second chapter, "The Translator," which deals with the mediaeval movements of poetry, prose, and philosophy between Greek, Persian, and Arabic. Ibid., 21–37.

44 Aḥmad Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Zīna fī 'l-Kalimāt al-Islāmiyya al-'Arabiyya*, ed. Ḥusayn b. Fayḍ Allāh al-Hamadānī, 2 in 1 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1957). 1:56, 60 f.

45 Ibid., 1:61–62.

46 *Bayna'l-shi'ri wa'l-kalāmi 'l-manthūr ... bal huwa kalāmun qad sajja'ūhu wa-maththalūhu bi'l-alḥān*. Ibid., 1:122; Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an*, 198–205.

was here talking about poetry in Middle Persian, because he went on to make a distinction between it and the new poetry that was being composed in New Persian, for which he had even less sympathy. This new poetry with no history, which imitated Arabic meter and could not be used to prove anything was, he had heard, only very recently created by someone in Nishapur.[47]

The key phrase in al-Rāzī's dismissal of New Persian poetry at the time of its birth was "cannot be used to prove anything" (*lā ḥujjata fīhi*). For professional scholars engaged in preserving, reproducing, and expanding the elite performance space of classical Arabic, the register in which the Quran had been composed, a new form of poetic expression coming from a predominantly oral register was useless. It could not be used as a lexical and grammatical resource for understanding the word of God, nor could it be used by scholars and artists to demonstrate their mastery of a formal metrical system, complex and innovative metaphorical structures and practices, and a curated lexicon of fine semantic differences. Arabic, of course, was doing all of these things.

It is ironic, and symptomatic of the involved Perseo-Arabic relationship history with which we are dealing, that the anecdote al-Rāzī selects to illustrate this discussion about the lack inherent in Middle Persian poetry is about al-Aʿshā (Maymūn b. Qays, d. ca. 625) "one of the most renowned ancient Arab poets," a propagandist heavily involved in politics, and a poet with a predilection for the use of Persian and Aramaic words in Arabic.[48] Al-Aʿshā was sent on a delegation to the last Sasanian king, Khusraw II (r. 590–628), and when the king asked who he was, the courtiers said "*surūd gūy-bāzī*" (singer-musician).[49] Al-Aʿshā then recited the following verse:

$$^{50}\ \text{أَرِقْتُ وَما هٰذا السُّهادُ المُؤَرِّقُ * وَما بِيَ مِنْ سُقْمٍ وَما بِيَ مَعْشَقُ}$$

I couldn't sleep; what is this insomnia that prevents my slumber? I am not sick, nor am I in love.

47 Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Zīna*, 1:123; Lazard, "Rise of New Persian," 618; Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qurʾan*, 203.

48 Barbara Jockers, "al-Aʿshā," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed., ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

49 The editor Ḥusayn al-Hamadānī records *surūd gūb-tāzī* [sic] from the manuscript and suggests *kūy-tāzī* in a footnote. Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Zīna*, 1:122. Al-Rāzī himself translates (*maʿnā qawlihim*) the phrase as "singer" (*mughannin*). Ibid., 124.

50 Meter: *al-Ṭawīl*. Maymūn b. Qays al-Aʿshā, *Dīwān al-Aʿshā al-Kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Ḥusayn (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, 1974), 217 (no. 33).

This is the first line of sixty-two in which al-A'shā first muses on time, fate, and how being a king is no defense from either (the reason for the insomnia queried in the first line is "fate, and the events each day brings"), and then moves to reminiscences about his childhood, invective against his enemies, and praise of his patron. However, when the question in the first line is explained to Khusraw, the king assumes a prosaic reason for insomnia unconnected to his own situation and exclaims "he must be a thief." Al-Rāzī's Khusraw is ignorant and unreflective on his own situation. Khusraw's courtiers are reduced to calling al-A'shā a "singer-musician" because, according to al-Rāzī, they have no word for "poet" in Middle Persian, nor any poetic canon (*dīwān*).[51]

Al-Rāzī does not seek to belittle the historical and geopolitical achievements of the pre-Islamic Sasanian Empire, but he casts their power as illiterate. Khusraw hears the poem as a riddle, and with no reference canon in his own language he fails to hear what al-A'shā is really doing: talking to a king about his power, fate, politics, and history.[52] Arabic poetry is not just a metrical system and a rhyme pattern; it is a self-referential canon of political history that can be drawn upon to help powerful men consider themselves. Al-Rāzī was himself first and foremost a politician, a missionary for a new Islamic movement fighting to persuade rulers of its vitality and truth, and to establish a new dynasty.[53] He knew how important power and history were, and believed that, despite growing up in ninth-century western Iran and probably speaking New Persian from birth,[54] Arabic was the primary language with which fate was best contended.

It is clear, not least from al-Rāzī's tone, that a degree of cultural conflict between Persian and Arabic speakers was at play. This is hardly surprising given the geopolitical context, and the rumbling culture wars that flared up between scholars across the centuries with which we are concerned were given the name *shu'ūbiyya* (concerning peoples), and have been the subject of scholarly attention.[55] Most of the passages dealing with Persian and Arabic in the primary texts

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51 Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb az-Zīna*, 1:123.

52 It is unclear from al-Rāzī's presentation how much of the poem he wants his readers to think al-A'shā recited before Khusraw's intervention. Had al-Rāzī's al-A'shā reached the sixth line of the poem as we have it now then Khusraw would have heard a reference to his grandfather, Khusraw I Anūshirvān, and al-A'shā's statement that Khusraw I's wealth was not eternal. al-A'shā, *Dīwān*, 216 f.

53 The Ismā'īlī mission (*da'wa*) of the eighth and ninth centuries, which established the Fatimid dynasty in Cairo. H. Halm, "Abū Ḥātem Rāzī," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*.

54 Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an*, 201.

55 Roy P. Mottahedeh, "The Shu'ūbiyya Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 7 (1976); Lutz Richter-Bernburg, "Linguistic

that have been studied are, understandably, those in which clear preferences are stated and arguments made. This was certainly the case with the passage from al-Rāzī above. The sections of al-Jāḥiẓ's work discussed by Kilito are more ambivalent in their authorial presentation, but the situations described are equally charged with polemic. However, if I am to understand what Raghib was doing in *Littérateurs' Ripostes* then I will have to identify references to the two languages that do not occur in a polemical context. Examples abound, for instance the Persian-language book of Hellenistic philosophy written by Raghib's renowned contemporary Avicenna in Isfahan for the Kakuyid ruler of the city, 'Alā' al-Dawla, between 1023 and 1037,[56] and the book on the relative merits of the Persian and Arabic languages that Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (again, on whom see more below) wrote for the Buyid ruler of Isfahan, 'Aḍud al-Dawla (d. 983).[57]

However, my concern here is poetry, and a good place to look for the two languages interacting will be the definitive mediaeval account of the Arabic poetic tradition written by another of Raghib's fellow Isfahanians, this time from the previous generation, the much more famous Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's (d. ca. 970) *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (*Book of Songs*).[58] Abū Faraj begins his entry on the musician and composer Ibn Muḥriz (d. ca. 757) with an account of how this client of an Arab tribe spent three months each in Mecca and Medina before traveling to southern Iran (*Fārs*) where he learned the songs of Middle Persian (*alḥān al-furs*) before doing the same in Syria and Byzantium, finally winnowing down his multilingual collection and composing a new original mixture for the singing of Arabic poetry that led to him being called "the harpist of the Arabs."[59] Abū Faraj then goes on to

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Shu'ūbīya and Early Neo-Persian Prose," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 1 (1974); Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an*, 160; Scott Savran, "The Arab-Sasanian Narrative in the Early Islamic Historiographical Tradition" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011).

56 The *Dānishnāma-i 'Alā'ī* (*Philosophy for 'Alā' al-Dawla*). Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 114. Of this and Avicenna's only other work in Persian, M. Achema wrote: "Avicenna's [vast amount of] writings in Arabic … may be described as 'advanced textbooks.' In marked contrast, his two books in Persian … are introductory manuals written for the use of an uninitiated person." M. Achema, "Avicenna xi. Persian Works," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*.

57 This book is no longer extant, but quoted passages remain: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzhir fī 'Ulūm al-Lugha wa-Anwā'ihā*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad Bajāwī, Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, and Muḥammad Aḥmad Jād al-Mawlā (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1957), 1:354; Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 1:18–19.

58 On which 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* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

59 Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 1:378.

quote the following exchange between two of the best-known musicians from the previous century, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (d. 804), and his son Isḥāq (d. 850):

> "The first person to sing in the meter of *al-Raml* was Ibn Muḥriz; no one sang in it before him."

> "Even in Persian?"

> "Even in Persian! The first person who sang in *al-Raml* in Persian was Salmak during the reign of Hārūn ar-Rashīd [786–809]; he selected some of the tunes of Ibn Muḥriz and moved (*naqala*) their tunes over into Persian, and sung them."[60]

Abū Faraj uses the same word for the transposition of melodies from Arabic to Persian as Raghib uses for the translation of proverbs from Persian to Arabic. Later, in the entry on Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī himself, Abū Faraj quotes an Arabic poem of Isḥāq's that contains a Persian phrase:[61]

$$\text{إِذا قَالَ لِي يا مَرْدَ مَيْ خَرْ وكرَّها * عَلَيَّ وَكَنَّـانِي مُراحاً بِصَفْوانِ}$$

He said to me, "Drink the wine, sir!" and then said it again, and jokingly called me "Mr. Rock."[62]

"Drink the wine, sir!" is in Persian, and Abū Faraj interrupts the poem to add in Arabic: "This is speech in Persian and its explanation is 'drink the wine sir!'" The same bilingual dynamic occurs in the poetry of that most famous poet in Arabic, Abū Nuwās (d. ca. 813). In a poem about his lust for Zoroastrian boys, the poet throws in a Persian interjection, "give me one time" (*bidih marā yak bārī*), when the opportunity for intercourse arrives.[63] The same Persian phrase also occurs in one of the poems that the editor of Abū Nuwās' collected works, the same Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī we have already encountered and will return to below, describes as "those poems in which he speaks in Persian." Ḥamza concludes this section with the remark that "there are a total of two hundred Persian words in the poet's collected works."[64]

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60 Ibid., 1:379.

61 Meter: *al-Ṭawīl*. ibid., 5:338.

62 A more literal translation with the same implication of a joking accusation of stubbornness would be: "he gave me the patronymic 'father of the rock' (Abū Ṣafwān)."

63 al-Ḥasan b. Hānī Abū Nuwās, *Der Diwān des Abū Nuwās*, ed. Ewald Wagner, 7 vols. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner; Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1958–2006), 5:142; Ewald Wagner, "Abū Nuwās," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed.

64 Abū Nuwās, *Diwān*, 5:278–81.

These anecdotes are, in my opinion, just as representative of the way that the interaction of the Persian and Arabic languages was described and understood as those anecdotes that spring from the sort of polemical context that has attracted scholarly attention. Persian and Arabic had, for Abū Faraj, a history that dated back to before Islam. His opening anecdote for the pre-Islamic poet ʿAdī b. Zayd (d. ca. 600), detailed the careers and educational progressions of the poet, his father, and his grandfather between the Middle Persian-speaking court of Khusraw II in Ctesiphon, the Arabic-speaking court of the Lakhmid kings in al-Ḥīra, and the Arab tribes of what is now southwestern Iraq. The anecdote notes as salient that ʿAdī's grandfather Ḥammād was the first of his tribe to be literate in Arabic, that his father Zayd learned Persian from the Persian aristocracy after having mastered Arabic at home, and that the poet himself was more knowledgeable than most Persians with regard to the Middle Persian language (*al-Fārisiyya*) in addition to his mastery of classical Arabic.[65]

The administrative court Persian that ʿAdī b. Zayd mastered in Ctesiphon was Middle Persian, and the songs that Ibn Muḥriz learned must have been in the same language. When those same songs were brought back to the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the Persian must have been New Persian. The milieu across the centuries was bilingual, but not exclusively so: Abū Faraj still needed to translate the snatch of Persian dialogue that appeared in the poetry, and his sources had thought it worthy of remark that an Arab poet was also learned in Persian.

Perhaps it is that the sources are only comfortable with the coexistence of the two languages when poetry is the genre in play. To return to polemics and non-literary disciplines of scholarship, Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. ca. 1050) was working for a court that was patronizing Persian literature (that of Maḥmūd of Ghazna, see above) when he wrote the following:[66]

> Our religion and the state are Arab twins, the divine power hovers above one of them, and the hand of heaven above the other. How many times have factions of the different groups, specifically those from Gilan and Daylam, come together to garb the state in Persian robes but failed to find a market for their ideas?[67] The call to prayer still rings in their ears five

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[65] Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2:97–101. Similar descriptions of the Perseo-Arabic literary facility of the Sasanian king Bahrām V (r. 420–38) are discussed by Savran, who also shows how Ḥīrah, through the biography of ʿAdī b. Zayd, became a symbol of Perseo-Arabic harmony and shared literary pursuits. Savran, "The Arab-Sasanian Narrative," 147–48, 193–95. For the genre implications of such connections, see Franklin D. Lewis, "Reading, Writing, and Recitation: Sanāʾī and the Origins of the Persian Ghazal" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1995), 41 f.

[66] Georges C. Anawati et al., "Bīrūnī, Abū Rayḥān," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*.

[67] *Wa-kami ʾḥtashada ṭawāʾifun mina ʾl-tawābiʿi wa-khāṣṣatan al-jīlu waʾl-daylāmu fī libāsi ʾd-dawlati jalābība ʾl-ʿujamati fa-lam yattafiq lahum fīʾl-murādi sūqun.* I agree with Saʿīd's read-

times a day, the prayers are still performed, row upon row behind the imams, with that clear Arabic Quran, preached to them in the mosques with its message of reform for word and deed, and Islam remains whole and inviolable. Disciplines of knowledge [sciences] have been translated into Arabic from all parts of the world ...

I can use my soul as an analogy here, for it is sealed with a language that,[68] were a discipline of knowledge to be preserved in it, would astonish in the same way that a camel on a weighing scale or a giraffe in an irrigation channel would astonish. My soul was then moved over into Arabic and Persian, for I am foreign to these languages, and I undertake the burden of learning them both.[69]

I would rather be satirized in Arabic than praised in Persian. Anyone who reads a book from a specific scientific discipline that has been moved [from Arabic] into Persian will confirm this;[70] its luster will have dwindled, its meaningfulness eclipsed, its face will have been blackened, and it will no longer be useful. Persian is only appropriate for the history of the Khusraws and for conversations about Layla.[71]

Al-Bīrūnī's remark that his mother tongue was neither Arabic nor Persian is a valuable reminder of the linguistic diversity that persisted in the mediaeval Middle East, but the most important aspect of this passage for my purpose here is the clear connection the author makes between the Arabic language and the Islamic religion and its practice. As Travis Zadeh has discussed in a recent monograph on Persian translations and exegeses of the Quran,[72] the existence of an Islamic revelation that claimed to be the exact words of God, couched in Arabic of unsurpassable eloquence, cannot be ignored when it comes to the Perseo-Arabic relationship.

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ing of *ʿujma* as referring to the Persians. The word in question, *ʿujma*, is a failure to speak Arabic correctly, whereas *ʿajam* is more common and would have been a clearer reference to non-Arab ethnic origin. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Al-Biruni's Book on Pharmacy and Materia Medica* [*Kitāb aṣ-Saydana fī'l-Ṭibb*], ed. al-Ḥakīm Muḥammad Saʿīd and Sami K. Hamarneh, trans. al-Ḥakīm Muḥammad Saʿīd (Karachi: Hamdard National Foundation, 1973), 1:7 (English); Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an*, 323; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣaydana fī'l-Ṭibb*, ed. ʿAbbās Zaryāb (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 1991), 14.

68 *Wa-aqīsu hādhā bi-nafsī wa-hiya maṭbūʿatun ʿalā lughatin ...*
69 *Thumma muntaqilatun ilā 'l-ʿarabiyyati wa'l-fārisiyyati fa-ana fī kulli wāḥidatin dakhīlun wa-lahā mutakallafun ...*
70 *Muṣādiqu qawlī man taʾammala kitāba ʿilmin qad nuqila ilā 'l-fārisiyyati ...* Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2:97–101.
71 al-Bīrūnī, *Book on Pharmacy*, 1:12 (Arabic), 1:7–8 (English); al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣaydana*, 14. This passage has been the subject of commentary by, in order of importance, Zadeh, Hamarneh, Richter-Bernburg, and Lazard. Richter-Bernburg, "Linguistic Shuʿūbīya," 58 f.; al-Bīrūnī, *Book on Pharmacy*, 2:29; Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an*, 322–26; Lazard, "Rise of New Persian," 631.
72 Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an*, 214 f.

The subject matter and genre concerns that underpin the polemics of both al-Rāzī and al-Bīrūnī are centered on certainty and its linguistic insubstantiation. The Quran, as the divine basis for a worldly political program, had to be both true and accurate, and the same held true for the pharmacological discipline al-Bīrūnī was practicing and the lexicographical discipline in which al-Rāzī was writing. That lexicographical discipline was a significant carrier of cultural capital, which required a discourse of certainty precisely because it had at its heart the project of taxonomizing, understanding, and of course managing the divine vocabulary of the Quran. Raghib's most popular work, more widespread than *Littérateurs' Ripostes*,[73] was a glossary of the Quran, and the title of al-Rāzī's book quoted above was, of course, *The Book of Illumination in the Arabic Vocabulary of Islam*.[74]

Literature as entertainment however, did not depend to the same extent on a discourse of certainty. I say literature *as entertainment* because the nonentertainment function of poetry was to function as a lexical reference point for the Arabic lexicographical project, the function to which al-Rāzī referred in his complaint that Persian lacked a poetic canon (*dīwān*). He meant that Middle Persian, for all that it was the source of some of the tunes that graced the caliphal court, could not help scholars deal with the Quran.

The last scholar that I would like to introduce before Raghib may help to provide the final piece of the puzzle that has now taken shape: Middle Persian was respected as a source of historical knowledge, and was known to be a source of musical melody. Arabic was the vehicle of both divine certainty and the dominant literary canon on both aesthetic and hermeneutical grounds. Where was Persian poetry? Could Raghib possibly have shared al-Rāzī's disenchantment with Middle Persian poetry when he titled his seventeen-strong selection of Arabic poetry "Lines Moved Over from Persian"? What other ways of understanding the relationship between the two languages were available to him?

The answer lies, I believe, with Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, who has appeared several times already in this paper at various interstices between Persian and Arabic. Raghib was not the first scholar to connect Persian to Arabic through proverbs in poetry. Also from Isfahan, and from the generation immediately preceding Raghib, Ḥamza also put together a selection of lines of Arabic poetry and then described them having been moved over from Persian. With these two men we have, within the subgenre of proverbs in poetry,[75] a sub-subgenre in which prov-

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73 For the distribution of manuscript copies see: Key, "A Linguistic Frame of Mind," 262.

74 Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-Zīna*.

75 This subgenre is, unsurprisingly given the universal potential of proverbs, not unique to the Arabo-Persian context: "[p]aremiological poetry constitutes a minor sub-genre of English verse."

erbs in lines of Arabic poetry are claimed as originally Persian. This sub-subgenre makes a claim, and the question is whether that claim was part of a statement these two men wanted to make about the relative values of their two languages and cultures.

Although Ḥamza was older than Raghib, it is conceivable that they were alive at the same time in the same city, and it is likely that Raghib was aware of Ḥamza's poetic selection when he made his own. Both wrote works of literary compilation (*adab*).[76] With Ḥamza, we have more detail on his engagement with the cross-cultural epistemology of his Perseo-Arabic context, and a fuller biography. The biographical literature is scant on Raghib,[77] but it notes Ḥamza's connections to the Persian language; while writing all his extant and attributed works in Arabic, he was called the most knowledgeable of his era with regard to Persian, and someone who was unmatched at conducting himself in Persian.[78] He wrote about the sort of Middle Persian poetry that he knew about in the mid-tenth century in Isfahan,[79] but more importantly he made a number of theoreti-

Charles Clay Doyle, *Doing Proverbs and Other Kinds of Folklore* (Burlington: Proverbium, 2012), 89.

76 For analysis of the structure and purpose of Raghib's *adab* work, see Stephanie Bowie Thomas, "The Concept of Muḥāḍara in the Adab Anthology with Special Reference to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's Muḥāḍarāt al-Udabā'" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2000). Pace Dagmar A. Riedel, "Searching for the Islamic Episteme: The Status of Historical Information in Medieval Middle-Eastern Anthological Writing" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2004). For an example of how much conceptual depth can be read in *adab* compilation, see James E. Montgomery, "Speech and Nature: al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Bayān wa'l-Tabyīn*, 2.175–207, Part 3," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 12, no. 2 (2008); Montgomery, "Speech and Nature: al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Bayān wa'l-Tabyīn*, 2.175–207, Part 2," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 12, no. 1 (2008); Montgomery, "Speech and Nature: al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Bayān wa'l-Tabyīn*, 2.175–207, Part 4," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 12, no. 3 (2009); Montgomery, "Speech and Nature: al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Bayān wa'l-Tabyīn*, 2.175–207, Part 1," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 11, no. 2 (2008).

77 See the review in Key, "A Linguistic Frame of Mind," 32f.

78 *Wa lā aḥsana taṣarrufan fīhi minhu.* Ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Ḥamawī Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ: Irshād al-Arīb ilā Maʿrifat al-Adīb*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1993), 1220–21 (no. 436).

79 S. Shaked, "Specimens of Middle Persian Verse," in *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume*, ed. W. B. Henning, Mary Boyce, and Ilya Gershevitch (London: Lund Humphries, 1970), 405; Lazard, "Rise of New Persian," 624–25; Abū ʿAbdallāh Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira ʿan Buyūt al-Shiʿr*, ed. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḍubayb (Beirut: Dār al-Madār al-Islāmī, 2009), 64–65. And on Ḥamza's history writing, see Peacock, "Early Persian Historians," 62–65.

cal remarks about the relationship between poetry and the wisdom contained in proverbs.[80]

In the introduction to his collection of proverbs *The Precious Pearl: Proverbs in Circulation Today* (*al-Durra al-Fākhira fī'l-Amthāl al-Sā'ira*), after noting the tendency of the Bedouin Arabs to focus their proverbs on the nature and the animals they observe therein,[81] Ḥamza wrote that an older civilization than the Arabs had also used the proverb in their speech: the Persians. He goes on to give examples of proverbs based on comparison to animals from Middle Persian culture in order to show that the Arabs were not unique in this regard.[82] His sources are "books on Persian politics" and anecdotes about Persian rulers.[83] This is Persia as a source of wisdom couched in epithet and anecdotes, what is understood in the sources as *ḥikma* (wisdom).[84] It is just as Lakoff and Turner would conclude a millennium later: "[P]oetry has the power to instruct us in what to notice, how to understand, and how to conduct our lives. Proverbs are often viewed as the simplest form of such poetry."[85]

In the introduction to his *The Book of Proverbs Arising from Lines of Poetry* (*Kitāb al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira 'an Buyūt al-Shi'r*) Ḥamza notes that the "arising" can happen both with proverbs in circulation that get put into lines of poetry, and with lines of poetry that become proverbial. When it comes to Persian poetry, he says that it tended not to rhyme, to be in a single flexible meter, and "to circulate in the mouths of the people of the Persian age as proverbs, and some of them still circulate today on people's tongues."[86]

Ḥamza's section titled "Lines of Poetry Containing Proverbs Moved Over from Persian to Arabic" (*fī Abyāt dhāt Amthāl Manqūla min al-Fārisiyya ilā al-'Arabiyya*) starts with the following introductory passage:

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[80] See also Korosh Hadissi, "A Socio-Historical Approach to Poetic Origins of Persian Proverbs," *Iranian Studies* 43, no. 5 (2010); Muḥammad Ṭabāṭabā'ī, "Amthāl-i 'Arabī va Mu'ādil-i Ānhā dar Fārsī," *Āfāq al-Thaqāfa wa'l-Turāth* [UAE] 5 (1948).

[81] Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 1:59–60.

[82] Ibid., 61–62. Cf. his section of Arabic poetry based on the (originally Sanskrit) animal fables of *Kalīla wa Dimna*: Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 704–10; Riedel, *Kalila wa Demna*.

[83] *Kutub siyāsātihā*. Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 62.

[84] See Dimitri Gutas, "Classical Arabic Wisdom Literature: Nature and Scope," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101, no. 1 (1981): 61; Rayḥānī, *Persian Wisdom*. Raghib follows Ḥamza in liberal use of Persian kings and administrators as a source of best practice in politics and administration throughout his works, as noted above: Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 46–51, 133–39, app. 2.

[85] George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 160.

[86] Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 55–65, 65.

There are many proverbs that fall into this category, and both good and bad poets have taken charge of moving them from Persian into Arabic. I have placed two hundred lines in this [first sub-] section, chosen from among a potential two thousand. There are substantial differences in quality in my selection.

I have decided not to include the Persian words underneath each line because of the risk of scribal problems, for when Persian is written in Arabic characters it is difficult to read and mistakes are made in writing,[87] and when mistakes are made in writing the mental content behind the words is lost and they can no longer function as proverbs.

In this section I have included proverbs transmitted [in poetry] by Abū Nuwās and Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd al-Qadūs, and their transmission is free of defect. The lines from Abū Nuwās are more numerous, and those from Ṣāliḥ wiser.[88]

In the tenth century, Ḥamza knew Middle Persian poetry through its proverbs to such an extent that he was willing to characterize Middle Persian poetry as largely consisting of proverbs. He also saw poets as the primary group charged with the task of translation; they took control of the moving-over process (*tawallā naqlahā*). And Ḥamza makes a fascinating remark about writing Persian in Arabic: is this the voice of an educated man who prefers Persian written in a form of Aramaic script (Middle) to Persian written in Arabic script (New)? Is the Persian (*al-fārisiyya*) he is referring to the Middle Persian literature that had been written in the Aramaic script? If not, why exactly do the scribes find it hard to write a New Persian they presumably speak in the Arabic script in which they were presumably trained? Such intriguing problems aside, we learn that for Ḥamza in Isfahan in the mid-tenth century there was a tremendous amount of Arabic poetry that he considered to contain proverbs originating in Persian. The less famous poet he mentions, Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd al-Qadūs, was judged by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī to have written "poetry that was all proverbs and epithetic wisdom and normative ethical statements."[89] Proverbs were "verbal artifacts … to be used, adapted, and enjoyed. In a sense, a proverb is itself [already] a paremiological poem."[90]

Ḥamza also gives us confirmation that the translation process we are describing was, in its final form, written rather than oral. He described the sort of texts

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87 *Wa-taraktu ilḥāqa 'l-alfāẓi 'l-fārisiyyati bi-asfali kulli baytin li-mā yaʿriḍu fīhā min sūʾi 'l-kitābati idh kāna mā yuktabu min alfāẓi 'l-fārisiyyati bi-khaṭṭi 'l-ʿarabiyyati yaṣʿubu ʿinda 'l-qirāʾati wa-yataṣaḥḥafu.*

88 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl aṣ-Ṣādira*, 675.

89 *Wa-shiʿruhu kulluhu amthālun wa-ḥikamun wa-ādābun.* Abū Bakr Aḥmad al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād aw Madīnat al-Salām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ḥānghī, 1931), 9:302–5, 304 (no. 4844).

90 Doyle, *Doing Proverbs*, 100.

he used as sources: "An informant told me that someone from the area around Samarqand known as Abū al-Faḍl al-Kishshī had a piece of poetry in the *rajaz* meter with the rhyme fixed in groups of four or five lines, into which he had moved (*naqala*) four hundred Persian proverbs."[91] The reference to the *rajaz* meter raises the possibility that this source was indeed in Middle Persian, for Ḥamza's previous reference to Persian poetry in *rajaz* came in his description of the ten thousand sheets of Middle Persian historical poetry that was stored in their royal libraries.[92] He also reported on fourteen thousand Arabic proverbs that were said to have been collected in the ninth century on parchment (*al-julūd*), cotton-based paper (*al-quṭnī*), and papyrus (*al-qirṭāṣ*).[93]

Perseo-Arabica Within Raghib

Ḥamza's selection of lines of Arabic poetry that come from Persian sayings amounts to four hundred separate examples, so for the purpose of this article I will restrict myself to the seventeen lines adduced by Raghib. However I will endeavor, wherever possible, to carry out the task at which Ḥamza (and presumably Raghib) baulked, that of combining the Arabic verses with their Persian sources. And indeed, when Raghib cites Persian poetry outside that selection of seventeen lines, he does sometimes provide the original, although in all cases Ḥamza's prediction of transmission and scribal errors has come true.[94] Before dealing with Raghib's selection of seventeen lines, I will lay out the other references Raghib makes to the Persian language.

Outside the *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, Raghib makes a number of neutral references to the Perseo-Arabic interface. In his ethical work, he gives a Persian etymology (*wa-ma'nāhu bi'l-fārisiyya*) for the word *dīnār* (a unit of currency) in addition to quoting a Persian phrase for divine thanks (*wa-ma'nāhu bi'l-fārisiyya*), and making a theological-semantic distinction between *kār* (action) and *kirdār*

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91 *Urjūzatan muḥkamatan murabba'atan aw mukhammasatan qad naqala ilayhā arba'a mi'ata mathala min amthāli 'l-furs.*

92 See note 18 above.

93 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 65.

94 I am discounting as unsupported Khwānsārī's assertion in *Rawḍat al-Jannāt* that Raghib's *The Path to the Nobilities of the Revelation* was written in Persian and included Raghib's own Persian poetry. Muḥammad Bāqir b. Zayn al-'Ābidīn al-Khwānsārī, *Rawḍāt al-Jannāt fī Aḥwāl al-'Ulamā' wa'l-Sādāt* (Tehran: Maktabat Ismā'īlīyīn, 1970), 3:198. Cf. Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 129 f.

(deed).[95] He repeats the *dīnār* etymology in his *Quranic Glossary* (*aṣluhu bi'l-fāri-siyya … ay*),[96] together with the glosses of five other words as being "Arabicized Persian": a garment of coarse woolen cloth (*balās*), hell (*jahannam*), lumps of mized stone and clay (*sijjīl*), tent (*surādiq*), military leader (*iswār*), and bracelet (*siwār*).[97] Ḥamza has similar etymologies.[98] It is important to note, in light of the problems with the transmission of Persian words in Arabic texts of which Ḥamza warned, and that we will see play out below, that in the London manuscript of the *Quranic Glossary*, which is the oldest written evidence we have of Raghib's output (1018), the scribe gives an accurate Persian rendering of the word for bracelet (*dastvāra*).

In addition to etymology, Raghib indulges in comparative morphology: in the entry on the word *surādiq*, Raghib makes the statement that "the language of the Persians does not contain singular nouns in which the third letter is *alif* and there are two subsequent letters."[99] Raghib's argument here is that the Quran includes an Arabized Persian word, but not a Persian word, because the form *fuʿālil* does not occur in Persian, a fact which is anecdotally correct.

Littérateurs' Ripostes sees a number of further etymologies and one-to-one translations. The griffin (*ʿanqāʾ mughrib*) is *sīmurk* [*sic*] in Persian "as if it was thirty birds" (i. e., *sī murgh*).[100] In praise of the scribal arts, *kitāba* requires gathering both ideas in the heart and words, that is, gathering "two intelligences" (*dhikāʾayn*) and Raghib compares this to the potential etymology of the Persian *dabīr* as being from "two intellects" (*du vīr*).[101] The "scholars learned in Persian" say that the Persian language has no words corresponding to the long list pro-

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95 Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Dharīʿa ilā Makārim al-Sharīʿa* [*The Path to the Nobilities of the Revelation*], ed. Abū al-Yazīd al-ʿAjamī (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2007), 198, 251, 294; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 138.

96 *Raghib*, *The Path to the Nobilities*, 251; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 138; Raghib, *Mufradāt Gharīb al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* [Quranic glossary] (dated 409/1018), in Library of Muḥammad Luṭfī al-Khaṭīb, private collection, London. fol. 59a; Raghib, *Quranic Glossary*, 318.

97 Raghib, *Mufradāt al-Khaṭīb* Collection, fol. 18a, fol. 34a, fol. 79b, fol. 81b, fol. 89a; Raghib, *Quranic Glossary*, 144, 210, 398, 406–7, 433.

98 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 1:205, 1:228–29. Cf. al-Suyūṭī, *al-Muzhir*, 1:354.

99 *Al-surādiqu fārisiyyun muʿarrabun wa-laysa fī kalāmihimi ismun thālithuhu alifun wa-baʿdahū ḥarfān.* Raghib, *Mufradāt al-Khaṭīb* Collection. fol. 81b; Raghib, *Quranic Glossary*, 406–407.

100 Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 137; Raghib, *Muḥāḍarāt al-Udabāʾ wa-Muḥāwarāt al-Shuʿarāʾ waʾl-Bulaghāʾ* [*Littérateurs' ripostes and poets' and eloquent men's rejoinders*], ed. Riyāḍ ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Murād (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2006). 4:727.

101 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 1:200. Mīr Lawḥī's note includes details confirming the occurrence of this etymology elsewhere in the Persian lexicographical tradition. Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 135 (note 1).

vided by Raghib of names for dishes specific to the occasion on which they are prepared and to which guests are invited.[102] With regard to hats, a *qalansūwa* is a *kulāh* in Persian.[103] Raghib explains the Persian fire festival *Sada* (*al-sadhq*) as the Persian's celebration of the descendants of Adam (i. e., the human race) reaching one hundred.[104] With regard to games, *shabḥa* (lopping off branches) is *najv* in Persian.[105] When a Persian is asked what people care about most, he answers *ash niyāz va āz*, which Raghib translates as (*ay*) "from poverty (*niyāz*) and greed (*āz*)."[106] Raghib gives the Persian name for giraffe (*az-zarrāfa*): *ush-turkāv balang*.[107] He later describes the incorrect assumption that the Persian name implies the giraffe to be a cross-breed between a camel and a donkey.[108] Raghib tells how the Persians in wartime created and named a certain dish *razm-āvūrd* ("war-bringing"), for which Sayyid 'Alī Mīr Lawḥī provides a Middle Persian etymology.[109]

There are also some longer anecdotes that rely on Persian for the punch line. The first of these relates a Persian lady's *bon mot* about the hair of the dog. In his section on people who drink a lot, Raghib cites a verse of al-A'shā (d. ca. 625): "How many a cup have I drunk for its sweetness, and then treated the resulting hangover with another?"[110] Raghib then gives an anecdote telling how al-A'shā died in the drinking house of a Persian woman who, when asked why he had died, replied by saying "the 'with another' killed him," quoting the last two words of the above line (*minhā bihā*). Raghib quotes the woman's Persian (*bikushtash*) and glosses it in Arabic (*ay qatalahū*).[111]

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102 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 2:565. Mīr Lawḥī notes that Ustād Mīrī saw this as a reason to think that Raghib, not identifying himself with these scholars, did not speak Persian. Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 130.

103 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 1:310.

104 Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 136; Anna Krasnowolska, "Sada Festival," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*; Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:464.

105 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:881.

106 Ibid., 2:263; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 134. See Tafaḍḍulī's notes on the transformation of *ash* into *az*: Ahmad Tafaḍḍulī, "Barkhī 'Ibārāt-i Fārsī-i Miyāna dar Mutūn-i Kuhan," *Nāma-i Farhangistān* 2, no. 4 (Zimistān 1375) (1996): 33.

107 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:708; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 136.

108 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:784–85; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 137.

109 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 2:506; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 137.

110 Meter: *al-Mutaqārib*. Wa-ka'sin sharibtu 'alā ladhdhatin/wa-ukhrā tadāwaytu minhā bihā. al-A'shā, *Dīwān*, 173 (no. 22).

111 Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 134; Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 2:631.

In his section on the "Names Of Translators,"[112] Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, the translator (*naqala* [intensifying adjective *naqqāl*]) of the tax register of Iraq from Persian into Arabic, was asked by a Persian man how he translated fractions into Arabic. Ṣāliḥ's successful negotiation of the challenge was met with a curse at the way the Arabs have wiped out Persian heritage.[113] Ḥamza has a similar anecdote in the opposite direction, in which Persians at the court of al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf, the notorious governor of Iraq between 694 and 714, require a witty remark in obscure classical Arabic to be translated into Persian.[114]

Raghib gives an interpretative paraphrase of a *bon mot* about access to rulers on a door in Herat that had the following phrase written on it: *bi-dar-i bādashāh kār ba-dam ākharad ādrang fazāyad* (rushing something to the king's gate increases the grief),[115] which Raghib translates (*ay*) as "a matter only makes it through the door of kings with effort, intellect, and persistence." Raghib adds that someone else had written below this "whoever has these three things doesn't need the ruler."[116] Elsewhere Raghib transcribes but does not translate into Arabic two very short Persian phrases shouted by rulers at their servants: Yazdgerd would say, "night has fallen" (*shab bishud*) and Bahrām would say, "sleep well" (*khurram khusfādh* [from the verb *khuspīdan*]). Riyāḍ ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Murād notes marginal translations of both in the manuscripts he consulted.[117]

The name Qutayba (small camel carrying saddlebags) is explained in Persian (*tafsīruhā bi'l-fārisiyya*) as *bālān* (pack-horse: *bālānī*). This is humorous because when Qutayba b. Muslim is besieging Samarqand (ca. 700), its master (*dihqān*) sends to him a message saying, "Were you to besiege the city for ever you would not win it, for we find in our books that the city's gates will only open to [somebody called] Bālān." Qutayba then conquers Samarqand by pretending to abandon siege and leaving chests containing soldiers in a ruse akin to the Trojan horse.[118]

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112 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 1:198; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 134.

113 This story, together with its various sources, is discussed in lively detail by Sprengling in a 1939 article: M. Sprengling, "From Persian to Arabic," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 56, no. 2 (1939): 196. Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel (1871–72; reprint, Beirut: Maktabat Khayyāṭ, 1966), 1:242.

114 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 2:508.

115 I would like to thank Dominic Parviz Brookshaw for his help with this sentence, and indeed for his help and advice throughout my research on this topic. For the sentence, I am following Mīr Lawḥī's reading of the Tehran University Manuscript no. 1884/1885, which is dated 27 Shawwāl 1068/28 July 1658. Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 133, 182–85.

116 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 1:396–97.

117 Ibid., 1:397; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 135.

118 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 3:666–67; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 136.

The evidence above establishes that Raghib, writing in Arabic, knew Persian. Often, when he is discussing etymologies the same evidence strongly implies that he expected his readers to know Persian as well. The next step in my review of Raghib's engagement with Persian is his two translations of Middle Persian into Arabic, which have been studied by Aḥmad Tafaḍḍulī.

[0.1] In the first of these, Raghib uses the phrase "its mental content is,"[119] before providing the translation into Arabic of a Middle Persian quatrain (*dū bayt*) about long-lived animals.[120] Tafaḍḍulī has reconstructed the Persian from the manuscript and edited variorums, and discussed the Middle Persian identification of the word *tīrist* (three hundred):[121]

<div dir="rtl">

زیود هشتاذ کۆر*تیرست دالمنه مرو

مار بي نه مریذ *جذکش بوزنیذ مرد[122]

</div>

> The wild ass lives for eighty years and the vulture for three hundred.
> The snake does not die unless someone kills it.[123]

Raghib's translation is, "The wild ass lives for eighty years, the vulture three hundred, and the snake does not die unless it is killed."

[0.2] The second example, later on in *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, sees Raghib give a line of Persian poetry in his section on descriptions of physical appearance of the narcissus, and say, "which they set [it] to meter in Arabic (*naẓamū bi'l-ʿara-*

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119 *Maʿnāhu*. He uses the same phrase elsewhere; see note 12 above.

120 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 3:654; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 133; Tafaḍḍulī, "'Ibārāt-i Fārsī," 30–32. Murād omits the word "vulture" (*al-nasr*), but this error is corrected by the Michigan ms.: Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī. *Muḥāḍarāt al-Udabāʾ wa-Muḥāwarāt al-Bulaghāʾ [sic]*. Isl. Ms. 1015 (dated 1670), Special Collections Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, fol. 223a. See also Tafaḍḍulī, "'Ibārāt-i Fārsī," 31.

121 Tafaḍḍulī notes that, according to Lazard, *tīrist* is a Middle Persian word from western Iran. Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1963), 217.

122 Following Tafaḍḍulī's reconstruction with additional corrections by Vevaina: "*zīwēḍ haštāḍ gōr/tīrist *dālmana murw//mār bē nē mirēḍ/juḍ ka-š be-ō zanēḍ mard*." Tafaḍḍulī, "'Ibārāt-i Fārsī," 31. For the suggested **dāmana* and its occurrence in Zoroastrian Middle Persian see: H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 137, 230.

123 Following Tafaḍḍulī's paraphrase: *gūr hashtād sāl mī-ziyad va kargas sīṣad sāl ammā mār namīrad magar kasī ān-rā bikushad*. Tafaḍḍulī, "'Ibārāt-i Fārsī," 31.

biyya)."[124] When Ḥamza (potentially Raghib's source text here) gives the same Persian and Arabic, he says that he has found the Persian "in the speech of the Persians" (*wajadtu fī kalāmi 'l-furs*) and he introduces the Arabic with the phrase "its mental content in Arabic is" (*wa-maʿnāhu bi'l-ʿarabiyya*).[125]

<div dir="rtl">

[126]نرگس ازمُرد دَسته * مُرواريد فذ و رُسته *زرّش در ميان بسته

</div>

The narcissus is an emerald shaft/with a pearl growing on it/set with gold at its center.[127]

<div dir="rtl">

[128]وَياقُوتَةٌ صَفْراءُ فِي رَأْسِ دُرَّةٍ *مُرَكَّبَةٌ فِي قامَةٍ مِن زَبَرْجَدِ

</div>

And a yellow emerald above a pearl, set in gold.

The Persian-Arabic translation in [0.1] is very direct, suggesting that the Arabic was a gloss produced in response to the Persian, whereas in [0.2] the connection is of a kind closer to that discussed above with regard to the door in Herat, where the proverbial thrust of the words in Persian is explained by the Arabic, rather than those words being directly translated. In effect, the Persian proverbs above the door in Herat and in [0.1] do not make it across into Arabic proverbs or poetry; they remain in Persian and are glossed for an Arabic audience. In [0.2], of course, we have an existing line of (anonymous) Arabic poetry placed alongside an existing line of Middle Persian poetry, with the authorial contention being that the two are conceptually connected. This is exactly the dynamic that will characterize Raghib's seventeen-line selection of "poetry moved over from Persian."

If the Arabic and the Persian lines of poetry are preexisting, the question remains whether Raghib is implying that the act of "moving over" was done by the Arabic poet at some point in the long history of coexistence between the two languages, or whether it is being done at the point of compilation by Raghib himself: are these lines of poetry reflecting (for him) historical moments of lit-

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124 Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:477–78; Mīr Lawḥī, *Rāghib*, 133–34. For a further example of al-Ṣāḥib's spontaneous use of vernacular Persian at court, see: Erez Naaman, "Literature and Literary People at the Court of Al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2009), 8, 75 (note 125).

125 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 1:314.

126 Following Tafaḍḍulī's reading, which is based on British Museum ADD 18529. Tafaḍḍulī, "'Ibārāt-i Fārsī," 32. The change from "p" to "f" is discussed in Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments*, 142.

127 Following Tafaḍḍulī's paraphrase: *nargis ba sān-i dasta-ī zumūrrud ast ke gūʾī murvārīd bar ān rusta va dar miyāna-i ān zarr nishānda shuda ast*. Tafaḍḍulī, "'Ibārāt-i Fārsī," 32.

128 Meter: *aṭ-Ṭawīl*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:477–78.

erary translation, or are they lines of poetry in one language that remind him of proverbs in another?

The Seventeen Lines

Raghib's sub-subsection on "lines of proverbial poetry moved over from Persian" has seventeen entries. I will present them in Raghib's order, together with English translations and references to Persian where it can be identified or suggested.[129] Raghib's original text contains nothing but the title and the lines themselves beneath it.

[1] The first example is an unattributed and otherwise unknown line of Arabic poetry. Only its inclusion in this list tells us that it was considered by Raghib to originate in a Persian proverb:

تَرَى الدِّيكَ فَوْقَ السَّطْحِ فِي كُلِّ ساعَةٍ*وَتَنْكَرُ إِنْ كانَ الحِمارُ عَلَى السَّطْحِ [130]

You always see the rooster on the rooftop, but you disavow the donkey on the rooftop.

[2] Raghib provides the name of the poet in his second example, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Umawī, although the poetry itself is otherwise unknown:[131]

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129 The contributions of Professor Ahmad Mahdavi-Damghani, noted in the introduction above, are marked in the following with an asterisk (*).

130 Meter: *al-Ṭawīl*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:852.

131 In addition, I have not been able to identify this figure "Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā the Umayyad" with certainty. One possibility is Abū Ghassān Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā, who appears in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* "almost dancing" as he recites some of the poetry of the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd b. Yazīd (r. 743–44), then elsewhere is mentioned as the host of the poet Ibn Abī az-Zawā'id (Sulaymān b. Yaḥyā, fl. ca. 750), and as a source of anecdotes about Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn (al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, grandson of the Prophet, d. 680). Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 7:19, 14:126, 16:154–55. A second possibility is the hadith scholar, and source for al-Bukhārī's canonical *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection, Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. 'Abdallāh al-Dhuhlī al-Nīsābūrī (Abū 'Abdallāh, born ca. 786 and d. 87 2), whose name, al-Dhuhlī, came from the fact that his grandfather was a knight of one of the Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiyya's hostages, a hostage who was freed by al-Qa'qā' b. Shawr al-Dhuhlī. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūṭ (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risāla, 1985). 12:273–85, 12:278; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 3:415–20.

إِذا ما كُنْتَ فِي طَرَفَي كِساءٍ*وَلَمْ يَكُنِ الكِساءُ يَعُمُّ كُلَّكْ

132 فَلَا تَتَبَسَّطَنْ فِيهِ وَلَكِنْ* عَلَى قَدْرِ الكِساءِ فَمُدَّ رِجْلَكْ

Whenever you are inside a robe, and the robe doesn't cover all of you,
Then don't stretch out in it! Rather, extend your legs as much as the robe will allow.[133]

A Persian proverb,*[134] "don't let your foot be bigger than your carpet,"[135] was in circulation around Raghib's time: his younger contemporary, Asadī Ṭūsī (d. 1073), the author of "the oldest extant Persian dictionary based on examples from poetry,"[136] has the following line in his *Garshasbnāma*, a nine thousand line epic composed "some sixty years after" the *Shāhnāma* that "employs archaic Persian terms as well as Arabic phrases":[137]

138 مجوی آنچت آرد سرانجام بیم *مکش پای از اندازه بیش از گلیم

Look not for that which will bring terror to you in the end
Don't stretch your foot out beyond the carpet.

The proverb is still in circulation today, and a 1948 list of Arabic proverbs with Persian counterparts contained the following pairing:

139عَلَى قَدْرِ الكِساءِ مُدَّ رِجْلَيكَ : بقدر گلیمت پا دراز

Stretch out your legs to the extent of your robe [Arabic]
Put out your foot to the extent of your carpet [Persian]

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132 Meter: *al-Wāfir*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:852.

133 Cf. "cut your cloth according to your circumstances"; an English proverb "to cut the coat according to the cloth" meaning to "keep within the limits of one's means." See "cut, v.," in *OED Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

134 See note 24 above.

135 Also: "he made his foot bigger than his carpet" (*pāyat-rā az galīm-i khudat darāz-tar nakun/ pāyash rā az galīmash darāz-tar karda ast*).*

136 Jalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Asadī Ṭūsī," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*.

137 Khālighī-Muṭlagh, "Asadī Ṭūsī." These lines from Ṭūsī are the oldest poetic witnesses (*shawāhid*) quoted for this proverb by Dihkhudā, author of "the most comprehensive compilation of Persian proverbs and their citation in works of renowned Iranian poets." ʿAlī Akbar Dihkhudā, *Amthāl va Ḥikam* (Tehran: Maṭbaʿa-i Majlis, 1960), 1:498; Hadissi, "Poetic Origins of Persian Proverbs," 599. For date of composition, Yamamoto, *The Oral Background of Persian Epics*, 110.

138 ʿAlī b. Aḥmad Asadi Ṭūsī, *Garshāsbnāma*, ed. Ḥabīb Yaghmāʾī (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-i Ṭahūrī, 1975), 436.

139 Ṭabāṭabāʾī, "Amthāl-i ʿArabī va Muʾādil-i Ānhā dar Fārsī," 229.

[3] Raghib attributes his third example to al-Khubzaruzzī (d. 929), and again appears to be the only scholar to cite the line in question:[140]

مِنْ أَوَّلِ الدَّنِّ اعْتَرَفْنَا وَرْدَهُ *فَتَرَكْتُ آخِرَهُ لِكَرْهِ الأَوَّلِ [141]

We became aware of the bouquet from the beginning of the bottle, and it was because of my distaste for the introduction that I abandoned completion.

'Alī Akbar Dihkhudā, twentieth-century author of a dictionary of Persian proverbs, connected the Persian proverb* "dissolute from the first sip of the cup" to a line from Rūmī (Mawlānā, 1207–73):[142]

پس سلیمان گفت ای هدهد رواست *کز تواول در قدح این دُرد خاست

Then Solomon said "O hoopoe, is it right that these dregs have risen from thee at the first cup?"[143]

[4] Raghib's unattributed and otherwise unknown fourth example:

وَمَا لَيْسَ يُشْبِهُ أَرْبَابَهُ*فَلَا شَكَّ فِي أَنَّهُ مِنْ سَرَقْ [144]

That which doesn't resemble its owners can only be the result of theft.

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[140] Abū al-Qāsim Naṣr b. Aḥmad al-Baṣrī al-Khubzaruzzī. Basran poet and baker of rice (*arruz*) bread (*khubz*), about whom al-Mas'ūdī wrote that "most of the modern songs of our time come from his poetry." Bibliographic notices referencing this information and providing selections of his poetry: 'Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn: Tarājim Muṣannifī al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya* (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risāla, 1993). 4:22; Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi'l-Wafāyāt*, ed. Aḥmad al-Arnā'ūṭ and Turkī Muṣṭafā (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2000), 27:34–37; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:296–299 (no. 7271); Abū Manṣūr 'Abd al-Malik al-Tha'ālibī, *Yatīmat al-Dahr fī Maḥāsin ahl al-'Aṣr*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Sa'āda, 1956). 2:366; Charles Pellat, "al-Khubza'aruzzī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Udabā'*, 2745–47; Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf b. Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm az-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa'l-Qāhira*, ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt, Jamāl al-Dīn Shayyāl, Ibrāhīm 'Alī Ṭarkhān, Jamāl Muḥammad Miḥrīz, and Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyāda (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1929–72), 3:276–77; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'ādin al-Jawāhir*, ed. Charles Pellat (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Jāmi'a al-Lubnāniyya, 1965–79), 5:241–42.
[141] Meter: *al-Kāmil*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:853.
[142] *Avval-i piyāla va badmastī*. "Barely a sip and acting the fool." Dihkhudā, *Amthāl va Ḥikam*, 1:315.
[143] Cf. Quran 27:20. Nicholson's translation. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *The Mathnawī of Jalāluddīn Rūmī*, ed. and trans. Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1926–40; reprint, London: Trustees of the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1972), 1:76, 2:68 (1225)
[144] Meter: *al-Mutaqārib*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:853.

Ḥamza gives a Persian proverb, the text of which is almost irretrievably corrupt (thereby proving his own concerns about scribal failings well founded),[145] and provides "its Arabic explanation" (*wa-tafsīruhā bi'l-'arabiyya*) as "if you didn't give birth to it, it is not your child, and if you didn't buy it, it is not your slave."[146]

[5] Unattributed and otherwise unknown:

$$^{147}\text{وَحُقَّ لِمَنْ قَد صَحَّ تَمْيِيزَ عَقْلِهِ*إذا ما رَأَى الدَيْنارَ أَنْ يَتْرُكَ الفلْسا}$$

One whose reason is discerning will leave a penny in order to save a pound.

[6] Unattributed and otherwise unknown:

$$^{148}\text{فَانْظُرْ لِذاكَ فَلَيْسَ يَعْلَمُ كُلَّ ما*في الخُفِّ غَيْرَ اللهِ والإسْكافِ}$$

Take care of that [unknown event or unseen thing], for no one knows what's in the boot other than God and the cobbler.

An Arabic proverb with a similar meaning is found in al-Maydānī's (Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad, d. 1124) collection of proverbs: "No one but God and the cobbler know what is in the boot."[149] A Persian proverb in circulation today*: "The dog and the leather worker know what is in the leather bag."[150]

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145 See page 115 above.

146 The corrupt Persian text reads: کبراد برود کنهریذ نبنده. I am grateful to Behnam Sadeghi for his suggestions here; it is likely that the third word should be read *nakharīda* (not purchased), which would fit with the Arabic explanation. The last word *nabanda* means "is not a slave." Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 2:495. Arabic: *man lam talidhu fa-laysa bi-'bnika wa-man lam tashtarihi fa-laysa bi-'abdika*. Ibid.

147 Meter: *al-Ṭawīl*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:853.

148 Meter: *al-Kāmil*. Ibid.

149 *lā ya'lamu mā fī 'l-khuffi illā 'llāhu wa'l-iskāf*. Al-Maydānī explains the proverb with the anecdote of a cobbler who unknowingly threw a boot across the room and the dog that had been hiding inside it barked. According to al-Maydānī, the proverb is used for a matter of which the onlooker is ignorant. Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad al-Maydānī, *Majma' al-Amthāl* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1961–62), 2:258.

150 *Sag dānad va pīnadūz ki dar anbān chīst*. Professor Mahdavi-Damghani provided the gloss of "leather bag" (*kīsa-i charmī*) for *anbān*. An alternative wording is "the dog and the cobbler know what's in the purse" (*sag dānad va kafshgar ki dar himyān chīst*). Dihkhudā also cites the Arabic line used by Raghib with the substitution of "the dog" for "God." Dihkhudā, *Amthāl va Ḥikam*, 2:984.

[7] Raghib gives three lines by the poet Ibn Ṭabāṭabā (d. 956), who was perhaps one or two generations older.[151] These lines are found in a contemporary compilation of poetry, which like Ḥamza connects them to proverbs,[152] but which does not connect them to any Persian origin. Instead, the compiler al-Thaʿālibī (Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Malik, d. 1038) places these three lines in a selection titled "from proverbs in circulation among later modern poets (*muwalladūn*)." This implies that other poets writing in Arabic in similar contexts (al-Thaʿālibī lived and worked among poets in eastern Iran) were also mining the Persian language around them for ideas that could be set to the register of classical Arabic poetry.[153]

<div dir="rtl">

مَثَلِي كَبَائِعٍ طَشْتِهِ بِشَرَابِهِ*سِرّاً لِئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ الجِيرَانُ

لمَّا تَمَلَّى ظَلَّ فِي غَثَيَانِهِ*يَشْكُو الصُّدَاعَ فَعَادَهُ الأَخْدَانُ

فَدَعَوا بِطَسْتٍ كَي يَقِيْءَ فَقَالَ مَهْ*لَو كَانَ طِسْتٌ لَمْ يَكُنْ غَثَيانُ[154]

</div>

I am like him who sells his copper bowl for the price of a drink in secret so that the neighbors don't know.

After he enjoyed it he remained sick, complaining of a headache, so his companions visited him.

They called for a copper bowl for him to vomit in and he said "Forget it; if there were a bowl then there wouldn't be a hangover."

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151 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-ʿAlawī (Abū al-Qāsim, Ibn Ṭabāṭabā). Kaḥḥāla, *Muʿjam al-Muʾallifīn*, 1:239; Kâtip Chelebi, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn ʿan Asāmī al-Kutub waʾl-Funūn*, ed. Gustav Flügel (London: R. Bentley for the Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1964), 4:281; Ismāʿīl Pāshā b. Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Īḍāḥ al-Maknūn fīʾl-Dhayl ʿalā Kashf al-Ẓunūn*, ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn Yāltaqāyā and Rifʿat Bīlga al-Kilīsī (1945–47; reprint, N. p.: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1971–72), 2:131.

152 These are the first of Raghib's selections that can also be found in Ḥamza's (longer) list of Arabic poetry moved over from Persian proverbs. Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 680.

153 The book in question, *Quoting Proverbs and Ready Replies*, was intended, according to al-Thaʿālibī, to enable its author ("a friend of literature") to put that literature to the service of the court by spreading the name of his patron among the book's readership. The book's subject matter is proverbs and ready replies "Islamic and pre-Islamic, Arabic and Persian, royal and everyday, elite and popular." Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Malik al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl waʾl-Muḥāḍara*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Ḥuluw (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1961), 4–5.

154 Meter: *al-Kāmil*. Ibid., 104–5; Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:853.

[8] The next three lines from Rabī'a al-Raqqī (d. ca. 814),[155] are in Ḥamza's collections, as well as the poet's collected works and a number of other anthologies.[156] Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī includes them in *al-Aghānī*, and attributes the melody to which they were set to both Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī and the son of an Abbasid caliph.[157] Ḥamza, despite including them in his selection of lines coming from Persian proverb, reports in his other work on proverbs that the same lines are "moved over from a long Arab Bedouin narrative."[158] The word for the translation process is the same whether the source is Arab or Persian: "Moved over" (*manqūla*).

فَأَنْتَ كَذِئْبِ السَّوْءِ إِذْ قَالَ مَرَّةً ∗لِعُمْرُوسَةٍ وَالذِّئْبُ غَرْثَانُ مُرْمِلُ

أَأَنْتِ الَّتِي فِي كُلِّ قَوْلٍ سَبَبْتِنِي ∗فَقَالَتْ مَتَى ذَا قَالَ ذَا عَامُ أَوَّلُ

فَقَالَتْ وُلِدَتْ العَامَ بَلْ رُمْتَ غَدْرَةً ∗فَدُوْنَكَ كُلْنِي لا هَنَا لك مَأْكَلُ [159]

For you are like the evil-natured wolf when it says to a sheep while hungry and foodless,

"Is it you that is always vilifying me?" The sheep asked, "when?" and the wolf said, "the year before last."

"I was born this year" said the sheep, "you have accused me falsely. Come on and eat me; and may the food not go down well!"

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155 Rabī'a b. Thābit al-Asadī al-Raqqī (d. ca. 814). Rabī'a al-Raqqī, *Shi'r Rabī'a al-Raqqī*, ed. Yūsuf Ḥusayn Bakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1984), 37 f. In a remark quoted by Abū Faraj in *al-Aghānī*, Ibn al-Mu'tazz prefers Rabī'a's love poetry to that of Abū Nuwās: it is sweeter and smoother while Abū Nuwās is cold. Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 16:254–66 (15:39 f.).

156 Al-Maydānī (whose recension Raghib follows and the numerous variants are detailed in Bakkār's edition) gives these lines without attribution, and with regard to wolves. al-Maydānī, *Majma' al-Amthāl*, 488, 620. Al-Maydānī also gives Ḥamza's no longer extant *Kitāb al-Mu'anūn* as one of his sources (ibid., 112). Other appearances of these lines are in Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Mustaqṣā fī-Amthāl al-'Arab* (Hyderabad: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1962), 1:233 (no. 985); Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān al-Kubrā*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ (Damascus: Dār al-Bashā'ir, 2005), 3:203; 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj, *Dīwān Majnūn Laylā* (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1973).

157 Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (d. 804) and Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī (the son of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī, d. 839). Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 16:260.

158 *Ḥadīth ṭawīl min aḥādīth al'ārab*. Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-ṣādira*, 696; Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Durra al-Fākhira*, 1:294–95.

159 Meter: *al-Ṭawīl*. Rabī'a al-Raqqī, *Shi'r Rabī'a al-Raqqī*, ed. Bakkār, 110–11; Rabī'a al-Raqqī, *Shi'r Rabī'a al-Raqqī*, ed. Zakī Dhākir al-'Ānī (Damascus: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa'l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1980), 50–51; 'Abdallāh Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu'arā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1968), 166.

[9] The next single line by Ṭarīḥ (d. 782),[160] is found in a number of anthologies with alternative attributions, and also attributed to an unnamed Persian proverb by Ḥamza (although without mentioning a poet's name).[161]

[162] وَإِذا اسْتَوَتْ لِلنَّمْلِ أَجْنِحَةٌ * حَتَّى يَطِيَرَ فَقَدْ دَنا عَطَبُهْ

And if the ant were endowed with wings to fly then its death would be imminent.

According to al-Jāḥiẓ, ants die (in the context of this line) because they are huntable by birds once airborne. And according to the historian al-Masʿūdī (d. 956), the caliph of *A Thousand and One Nights*, Hārūn al-Rashīd, would repeat this line a great deal after his destruction of that great family of viziers who had served him, the Barmakids.[163]

[10] A single anonymous line, not found elsewhere, with a similar gist to a current Persian proverb*: "One almond but forty dervishes" (*yak bādām va chihil darvīsh*).

[164] وَقَدْ خَرَقَ الأَشْواقَ شَبْعانُ مُرْتَوِ *فَقالَ رَغِيْفٌ واحدٌ يَشْبَعُ الخَلْقا

Well fed and watered he got over his desires and said, "A single piece of bread satisfies everyone."

160 Ṭarīḥ b. Ismāʿīl al-Thaqafī. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr waʾl-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Āthār, 2009), 562–63; Abū Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 4:302–20 (4:74 f.); Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ*, 1458–59.
161 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 686.
162 Meter: *al-Kāmil*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:854. Al-Jāḥiẓ attributes this line to Abū al-ʿAtāhiya (d. ca. 825), and cites it twice in his section on ants. Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1966–69), 4:31–32, 4:35–36. Al-Jāḥiẓ may have been thinking of Abū al-ʿAtāhiya's reputedly four-thousand line epigrammatic *rajaz* poem known as *Dhāt al-Amthāl* (the proverb poem). Robyn S. Creswell, "Abū l-ʿAtāhiya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd ed.; the lines are in Abū al-ʿAtāhiya's *Dīwān*. See Ismāʿīl b. al-Qāsim Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, *Dīwān Abī al-ʿAtāhiya*, ed. Karīm al-Bustānī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1964), 61. Abū Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Malik al-Thaʿālibī, *Thimār al-Qulūb fīʾl-Muḍāf waʾl-Manṣūb*, ed. Khālid ʿAbd al-Ghanī Maḥfūẓ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), 2:90 (no. 701). al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān*, 4:106. Ismāʿīl b. al-Qāsim Abū al-ʿAtāhiya, *Sharḥ Dīwān Abī al-ʿAtāhiya*, ed. Anṭwān al-Qawwāl (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 2003), 61. al-Thaʿālibī includes the line without attribution in his section on proverbs about ants. al-Thaʿālibī, *al-Tamthīl waʾl-Muḥāḍara*, 376.
163 With *badat* for *istawat*. al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 4:256.
164 Meter: *al-Ṭawīl*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:854.

[11] The following is a single anonymous line, not found elsewhere. The ninth-century Arabic philologist Tha'lab (Abū al-'Abbās Yaḥyā, d. 904) cited a similar proverb: "If you strike him, you are striking the needle [the point of the awl used to sew leather]."[165]

<div dir="rtl">

لاطِمُ الإشْفَى مُضِرٌّ كفَّهِ *وَمَرَامِي الدَّهْرَ رامَ كَبْدَهُ [166]

</div>

He who slaps the needle hurts his palm, and he who gets into an archery competition with fate will hit his own liver.

[12] The following is cited by Ḥamza as a line of Arabic poetry originating in a Persian proverb,[167] and comparable to the current Persian proverb* "If you recognize the aroma of meat, it is because they are branding donkeys" (*agar bū-yi kabāb mīshinavī barā-i ān ast ki khar dāgh mīkunand*).

<div dir="rtl">

لا تَقْصُدَنَّ كُلَّ دُخانٍ تَرَى *فَالنَّارُ قَدْ تُوْقَدُ لِلْكَيِّ [168]

</div>

Don't chase every plume of smoke you see, for fire can be lit to deter.

[13] A single line of anonymous poetry, cited by Ḥamza as originating from a Persian proverb,[169] and not found elsewhere:

<div dir="rtl">

وَمَنْ يَرُوْمُ نُزُوْلَ البِّرِ عَنْ غَرَضٍ *فَلَيْسَ فِي الشَّرْطِ أَنْ يُحْصِيْ مَرَاقِيها [170]

</div>

He who desires to go down to the well without purpose does not need to count the number of steps.

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165 *In lāṭamtahū lāṭamta 'l-ishfā*. Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 8 vols. (1863–93; reprint, Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984, 2003 [2 vols.]), 1575; Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā Tha'lab, *Majālis Tha'lab*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1960). 2:589.
166 Meter: *al-Raml*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:854.
167 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl aṣ-Ṣādira*, 678, 682.
168 Meter: *al-Sarī'*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:854. In *The Fruits of Hearts in Attribution and Ascription* (*Thimār al-Qulūb fī'l-Muḍāf wa'l-Manṣūb*), a work devoted to enumerating things that are ascribed to other things (such as Joseph's wolf, or the Prophet's cloak), al-Tha'ālibī attributes this line to Ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 908). He also includes it without attribution elsewhere, as does al-Maydānī (with *tatba'anna* for *taqṣudanna*). al-Tha'ālibī, *al-Tamthīl wa'l-Muḥāḍara*, 265; al-Maydānī, *Majma' al-Amthāl*, 1:422; al-Tha'ālibī, *Thimār al-Qulūb*, 2:229.
169 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 684.
170 Meter: *al-Basīṭ* (poetic license allows *yuḥṣī* to be substituted for *yuḥṣiya*). Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:854.

[14] A single line of anonymous poetry, cited by Ḥamza as originating from a Persian proverb,[171] and not found elsewhere:

<div dir="rtl">

١٧٢مَنْ لَسَعَتْهُ حَيَّةٌ مَرَّةً *تَراهُ مَذْعُوْراً مِنْ الحَبَلِ

</div>

He who has been bitten by a snake once will be seen to be terrified of the rope.

The Persian proverb* "A man bitten by a snake fears a black and white twine" has a comparable meaning (*ādam-i mār gazīda az rīsmān-i siyāh va safīd mītarsad*), as does another of Ḥamza's selection: "The bitten person is scared of a dog collar in the dark."[173]

[15] A single line of anonymous poetry, cited by Ḥamza as originating from a Persian proverb,[174] and not found elsewhere:

<div dir="rtl">

١٧٥إذا سَقَطَ الجِدارُ وَلَمْ يُغَبِّرْ *فَما بَعْدَ السُّقُوْطِ لَهُ غُبارُ

</div>

If the wall falls without raising dust then what comes after the fall will raise it.

[16] A single line of anonymous poetry, cited by Ḥamza as originating from a Persian proverb,[176] and not found elsewhere:

<div dir="rtl">

١٧٧كَدُوْدٍ نَشَا فِي الخَلِّ لَيْسَ بِبارِحٍ *كَأَنْ لَيْسَ فِي الدُّنْيا مَكانٌ يُعادِلُهْ

</div>

Like a worm raised in vinegar untouched by the hot wind, as if there were no place in the world to equal it.

[17] A final single line of anonymous poetry, cited by Ḥamza as originating from a Persian proverb,[178] and not found elsewhere:

<div dir="rtl">

١٧٩ما رَسُوْلُ اللَّيْثِ إِلَّا عُنْقُهُ * فَلِهٰذا عُنْقُ اللَّيْثِ غَلْظُ

</div>

What is the prophet of al-Layth but its chief? This is why the chief of Layth is strong.

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171 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 685.

172 Meter: *al-Sarīʿ*. ʿAbdallāh Fikrī, *Naẓm al-Laʾāl fī'l-Ḥikam wa'l-Amthāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Awzāʿī, 1984). 157; Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:855.

173 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 675.

174 Ibid., 685.

175 Meter: *al-Wāfir*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:855.

176 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 687.

177 Meter: *aṭ-Ṭawīl*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:855.

178 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Amthāl al-Ṣādira*, 693

179 Meter: *al-Raml*. Raghib, *Littérateurs' Ripostes*, 4:855.

There is a play on words with the Arabic word *ʿunq* being able to mean both "chief" or "leader" and, more commonly, "neck," and the word *ghalṭ* meaning both "strong" and "thick."

Concluding Remarks

What patterns can be observed from the seventeen examples that make up Raghib's selection of "lines moved over from Persian," in addition to his two translations of Middle Persian poetry? First, we can probably observe a note on technical terminology for the translation process. Raghib and Ḥamza give their translation process a name: "Moved over" (*manqūla*). This was a general term for the process of knowledge transmission, primarily used for passage between the Arabic of different times and places, but also for passage into Arabic from other languages such as Syriac or Greek. Other technical terms follow the same dynamic; Raghib uses the explicative particle *ay* (that is) and the phrase "its mental content is" (*maʿnāhu*), while he and Ḥamza each use *tafsīr* (explanation or exegesis) only once (Raghib to move from Persian to Arabic, and Ḥamza to move from Arabic to Persian). All these phrases were common in Arabic-to-Arabic exegesis of the Quran, hadith, and poetry.[180]

Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā's line of poetry in [2] expresses the potentially universal moral imperative not to live beyond one's means, and couches it in specific relation to fabric. A Persian proverb in circulation in the eleventh century used the same metaphor, exchanging the fabric of a robe for the fabric of a carpet. What has moved from Persian to Arabic is the proverb, and as the Ṭūsī citation shows, the proverb moves in poetry. Chronologically, therefore, Ṭūsī's use of the proverb about material overextension and Ḥamza's provision of a contemporary Persian proverb in [4] prove that we can safely imagine Raghib as having had Persian versions of his poetic Arabic proverbs in mind, just as his title claimed. Raghib also decided to make explicit attributions of five of his seventeen quotations, and these Arabic poets span the eighth ([2] and [9]), ninth ([8]), and tenth ([3] and [7]) centuries. Bearing in mind this careful spread and the fact that Ḥamza, Raghib's predecessor in this mini genre, did not attribute any of the four hundred lines he adduced to any named or dateable poets, we can suggest that Raghib intended

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180 Gerhard Endress adduces the same three technical terms for the translation process. Gerhard Endress, "Die wissenschaftliche Literatur," in *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie II*, ed. Helmut Gätje (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 1987), 3.

to make the chronological claim that the movement of proverbs from Persian to Arabic poetry had been taking place for centuries.

What further cultural and political conclusions can be drawn from the information presented in this article? I would like to suggest that for Raghib and Ḥamza, poetry and proverbs were the way that Persian wisdom gained access to Arabic literature, and specifically to the prestige canon of that literature, poetry. By placing, or claiming that others had placed, Persian wisdom that lacked the linguistic prestige of classical Arabic into an Arabic poetic context Raghib and Ḥamza were able to have their cake and eat it. The wisdom was recognized as Persian, and the language was recognized as Arabic. Prestige was preserved on both sides. The fact that a local Persian dialect, or written Middle Persian, or written New Persian, replicated (or even spawned) ideas found in Arabic poetry served to support and protect their position as Persian speakers who lived in Iran and only wrote in Arabic.

The significance of the proverb is that it allowed for Persian wisdom to be crystallized and commodified in this eleventh-century knowledge economy.[181] The tradition of poetry being exchanged in short quotations of one or two lines was already well established. The proverb, with its self-contained allusive moral, was a perfect complement to that quotation dynamic. Persian proverbs in Arabic poetry were a commodity that could be used to negotiate audiences that were themselves engaged in negotiation between Persian and Arabic. Proverbs also facilitated the translation of knowledge from Persian into Arabic. There was no problematic language-specific aspect to the popular proverb so, unlike so much of *adab* culture, the proverb did not rely on the performance of the lexicographical, grammatical, and phonetic intricacies that came out of scholars' engagement with Arabic's canonical repertoire. And then when these proverbs, regardless of

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181 The ability of forms of literature to be particularly commodifiable in certain contexts appears to be universal. Cintia Santana recently wrote about the late-twentieth-century Spanish novel between Europe and the Americas that "literature carries special import with respect to an attendant, if imagined, sense of national community … novels [in our Perseo-Arabic context, proverbs] successfully crystallized various national [for us, cultural] and literary anxieties in a particularly commodifiable way, proving fertile … soil on which to struggle with the meanings of literature and Spanish-ness [for us, Persianness and Arabness] in a new European [for us, Middle Eastern] and increasingly global, framework." Despite the fact that Santana is (as her reference to the theories of Benedict Anderson with the word "imagined" makes clear) dealing with a context in which the concept of the nation-state is operative and hegemonic, her analysis fits our context with minimal adjustment required. Cintia Santana, *Forth and Back: Translation, Dirty Realism, and the Spanish Novel (1975–1995)* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 2013), 109. On the nationalist anachronism in this context, see Savran, "The Arab-Sasanian Narrative," 21 f., 46, 49 f.

whether their origin lay in informal New Persian dialect or formal Middle Persian verse, were made to settle into Arabic poetry, Raghib and Ḥamza could associate the wisdom of Persia they knew with the eloquence of Arabic they performed.

Raghib and Ḥamza may well have been giving voice to, or responding to, the resurgence of Persian as a language of literature and its new insubstantiation in Arabic script.[182] Presenting Persian ideas in Arabic poetry helped them to preserve the relevance of the classical Arabic register in which they functioned as intellectuals, while alluding to their Persian dialect realities. Their sub-subgenre of Persian proverbs in Arabic poetry is therefore a late and linguistic echo of the original eighth- and ninth-century Abbasid project to create a functional shared identity that could marry the prestige of Persian culture with the revolutionary power of Arabic Islam.[183] Both Raghib and Ḥamza were producing, performing, and thereby governing the canon when they wrote their *adab* compendia; they were therefore in a position to alter the repertoire of canonized forms in order to maintain both that canon itself and their position as Persian speakers within it.[184]

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182 Cf. Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an*, 198, 203.

183 As Savran puts it, drawing on the influential work of Tayeb El-Hibri, "The ideology emanating out of the 'Abbasid Revolution of a universal Islam uniting the traditions of the Arabs and the Iranians, was endangered by the increasing attractiveness of Iranian culture among the elites and the concomitant decline of the Arabs' power and prestige." The response was a "pro-'Abbasid, anti-Shu'ubi 'master narrative,' or 'main corpus.'" For example, the famous collection of pre-Islamic poetry, *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, was a product of this main corpus, commissioned as it was by the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754–75) from al-Mufaḍḍal b. Muḥammad al-Ḍabbī (d. ca. 780). A later product of the same main corpus was the historian Abū Mansūr al-Tha'ālibī's (fl. 1021) repetition, in a work dedicated to the governor of Khurāsān, of Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī's (d. 923) sympathetic explanation of pre-Islamic Arab attacks on Fars in the fourth century as being the struggle of poor and needy Arabs to find sustenance. Savran, "The Arab-Sasanian Narrative," 13, 18, 108, 122–23; Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Narrative of the 'Abbasid Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 213.

184 My analysis here is influenced by Itamar Even-Zohar's account of the cultural polysystem: "Thus, it is the group, which governs the polysystem that ultimately determines the canonicity of a certain repertoire. Once canonicity has been determined, such a group either adheres to the properties canonized by it (which subsequently gives them control of the polysystem) or, if necessary, alters the repertoire of canonized properties in order to maintain control. On the other hand, if unsuccessful in either the first or the second procedure, both the group and its canonized repertoire are pushed aside by some other group, which makes its way to the center by canonizing a different repertoire. Those who still try to adhere to that displaced canonized repertoire can only seldom gain control of the center of the polysystem; as a rule, one finds them on the periphery of the canonized, referred to (by the carriers of official culture) pejoratively as 'epigones'." On this account, Raghib and Ḥamza's efforts were a failure, because New Persian eventually came to supplant Arabic in Isfahan. Whether subsequent New Persian cultures would universally condemn those who worked in Arabic as epigones (the less distinguished succes-

Were Raghib and Ḥamza conscious that they were giving voice to their bilingual realities? They were, after all, writing in the genre of *adab*, which was if nothing else pedagogical, programmatic, and prescriptive. They did not choose their categories by chance.

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sors of an illustrious generation) is not a question that can be resolved here. Itamar Even-Zohar, "Polysystem Theory," in "Polysystem Studies," special issue of *Poetics Today* 11, no. 1 (1990): 15–17; Even-Zohar, "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2004). Cf. Pascale Casanova, "Consecration and Accumulation of Literary Capital: Translation as Unequal Exchange," in *Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London: Routledge, 2009).

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Kristen Brustad

The Iconic Sībawayh[1]

<div dir="rtl">إلى الأستاذ الدكتور أحمد مهدوي دامغاني مع أسمى عبارات الاحترام والتقدير والامتنان</div>

I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Roy Mottahedeh for bringing Professor Mahdavi Damghani from Philadelphia to Boston once a week to teach Arabic and Persian texts during my final years in graduate school. Each week, Michael Cooperson and I would meet him in a small office in the Center for Middle Eastern Studies to read classical Arabic literature. Since the three of us had only one language in common, Professor Mahdavi Damghani conducted the entire class in Arabic. Stepping into his office felt like stepping into a living tradition of Arabic poetry. My favorite part of our lessons was when Professor Damghani would read aloud a line from the poem at hand, pause, look off, say, "*hāzā yuzakkirnī bi bayt ...*" ("this line reminds me of the line by ..."), and recite a line by another poet from memory. We were thus quite fortunate not just to read, but also to experience Arabic literature with him. I am grateful for the opportunity to honor one of my most important teachers at Harvard.

The name Sībawayh is synonymous with Arabic grammar due to his status as the author of *al-Kitāb*, which, according to Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī (d. 351/962), "people called the Qurʾān of grammar."[2] Even assuming he built heavily on the work of his predecessors and teachers, the scope of this work represents a unique achievement that continues to engage scholars well over a millennium after his death sometime around 180/796. Few figures loom as large in the history of the Arabic language—and few are as obscure; Michael Carter calls Sībawayh's biography "almost impenetrably vague."[3] The earliest biographies of him, written nearly a century later, provide almost no information about his identity, origin, or death.

Bernards, Carter, Humbert, Marogy, Talmon, Versteegh, and others have devoted considerable attention to the early history of Arabic grammar and Sībawayh's role in it, and have extrapolated as much information as possible about his life.[4] I can hardly hope to add anything to their work. Much of their

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[1] I am grateful to my research assistant, Katie Martins, whose assistance tracking down and organizing information, translating passages, and discussing ideas was essential to the writing of this paper. She of course bears no responsibility for any of its shortcomings.

[2] Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī, *Marātib al-Naḥwiyyīn* (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1974), 106.

[3] M. G. Carter, *Sibawayhi* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 7.

[4] See especially Monique Bernards, *Changing Traditions: Al-Mubarrad's Refutation of Sībawayh and the Subsequent Reception of the Kitāb* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Carter, *Sibawayhi*; Genevieve

information, however, comes from sources written two centuries or more after Sībawayh died, leaving the historical Sībawayh a nearly blank page. However, his life, as it was remembered by later biographers, still offers us a valuable window on the formative period of Arabic grammar. I propose here to read Sībawayh as an iconic figure, focusing primarily on works written in the first half of the ninth century, in search of a view less clouded by the ideologies that formed during the later ninth and tenth centuries. I will argue that Sībawayh lived at the cusp of a period of important changes in the study of language, and that he and his teacher al-Khalīl, author of *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, wrote their books aiming to describe the 'Arabiyya,[5] and that this project ultimately resulted in the rise of an ideology of language that survives today.

The afterlife of Sībawayh begins in Ibn Qutayba's (d. 276/889) *al-Ma'ārif* (*Everything You Need to Succeed*), which contains the first biographical notice we have:

> He is 'Umar ibn 'Uthmān, and he was best known for grammar. He had come to Baghdad, and was brought to meet with the grammarians (*aṣḥāb al-naḥw*), but was humiliated, and so he returned, then went on to a city in Fārs, and died there while still young. Abū Ḥātim told me on the authority of Abū Zayd: Sībawayh used to attend my session (*majlis*) when he had two curls of hair (*dhu'ābatān*, a sign of his youth). When you hear him say, "One whose knowledge of the 'Arabiyya I trust told me," he means me.[6]

Here we find a short name devoid of the common identifiers—no geographical adjective (*nisba*), no patronymic (*kunya*), and no client (*mawlā*) status. Ibn Qutayba mentions a humiliating trip to Baghdad, and seems to imply a self-imposed exile possibly related to it. An anecdote linking Sībawayh to a lexicographer named Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī (d. 215/830), author of *Nawādir fī al-Lugha* (*Rare Words*), provides the only connection with another identifiable human being, and it is one in which Sībawayh appears inferior in both age and knowledge. This short notice gives no indication of Sībawayh's future as the "leading imām

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Humbert, *Les voies de transmission du Kitāb de Sībawayhi* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1995); Amal Marogy, *Kitāb Sībawayhi: Syntax and Pragmatics* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Rafael Talmon, *Eighth-Century Iraqi Grammar* (Cambridge: Harvard Semitic Museum Publications, 2003) and "*Naḥwiyyūn* in Sibawayhi's *Kitāb*," *ZAL* 8 (1982); Kees Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'ānic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

5 I use the term 'Arabiyya—the term Sībawayh and al-Khalīl used—to refer to the language of pre- and early Islamic poetry and the Qur'ān.

6 Ibn Qutayba, *Al-Ma'ārif*, ed. Tharwat 'Ukāsha (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), 544.

of grammar" (*imām a'immat al-naḥw*), as al-Ṣafadī calls him.[7] The content of this brief notice makes it difficult to imagine that he is more than an object of mockery.

At the same time, it is important to keep in mind the purpose of *al-Ma'ārif* as spelled out by its author. Joseph Lowry notes that Ibn Qutayba wrote the book as a prompt for aspiring social climbers who would be mixing with the elite and needed anecdotes and interesting bits of information;[8] thus, its entries are not meant to be biographical. Hence we can assume that it represents at best a partial view of how Sībawayh was remembered in the mid-to-late ninth-century elite circles. Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī's reported posturing reveals both that people are reading and studying the *Kitāb*, and that he himself, or the person who spoke on his behalf, felt that he was in need of Sībawayh's testimony to enhance his stature.

True biographies start appearing in the middle of the tenth century with a short one in Abū al-Ṭayyib's *Marātib al-Naḥwiyyīn* (*The Ranks of the Grammarians*), and gradually expand into the long and detailed account of al-Qifṭī (d. 624/1248) which contains detailed names, places, and circumstances.[9] These biographies add increasingly detailed information that reflect some aspect of familiarity either with the *Kitāb* itself or with the scholars whose lives overlapped with Sībawayh's. As Talmon points out, some biographers narrate the story of Sībawayh's humiliation in Baghdad in ways that reveal their own affinities.[10] This is what Michael Cooperson calls the "reformulation of the past" in Arabic biographical traditions, which, he observes, "emerges most clearly from the biographies written to commemorate the exemplars of each tradition."[11] Starting with this earliest source in *al-Ma'ārif*, a portrait of Sībawayh gradually emerged that, I will argue, tells us more about the ideology of the 'Arabiyya than it does about the man whose name is so closely linked with it. The relationship of Sībawayh to the 'Arabiyya in a sense represents the relationship of all its scholars to this most ideal of languages.

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[7] Al-Ṣafadī, Khalīl ibn Aybak, *Al-Wāfī bi al-Wafayāt* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1997), 66.

[8] Joseph Lowry, "Ibn Qutayba," in *Arabic Literary Culture*, *500–925*, ed. Michael Cooperson and Shawkat Toorawa, vol. 311 of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Detroit: Thompson Gale, 2005), 179.

[9] Al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh al-Ruwāt*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1986), 2:346–60. Sībawayh's biography runs nearly fifteen pages printed in this work. See for a discussion of the expansion of his name Humbert, *Les Voies de la Transmission du Kitāb de Sībawayhi*, 5–8.

[10] Rafael Talmon, "Al-Mas'ala al-Zunbūriyya," *Al-Karmal* 7 (1986): 131.

[11] Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of Al-Ma'mūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 189.

Studying the ʿArabiyya

As many have pointed out, it took some time for Sībawayh to gain his status as the *imām* of Arabic grammar. Bohas et al., Carter, and Talmon point out that Sībawayh's work was not new or exceptional at the time; however, the nature of that project is not entirely clear.[12] The *Kitāb* is assumed to have been compiled and propagated at the hands of Sībawayh's student al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ (d. around 830).[13] For al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868), this al-Akhfash was the expert in grammar of his time, and in the *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (*Book of Animals*) he takes al-Akhfash to task for his impenetrable writing. The latter's reply shows us that the teaching of grammar—but not the writing of books—has become a source of potential profit:

> I said to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Akhfash: You know more about grammar than anyone, so why do you not make all of your writings intelligible? How come we understand some of them but don't understand most of them? How come you put some of the most abstruse [parts] first and some of the easiest [parts] later? He said: I am not the kind of man who writes these books of mine for the sake of God, nor do they deal with matters of religion. If I had written them in the way you ask me to, people's need for me would lessen. My goal has always been personal gain (*manāla*); therefore, I write some of it in this intelligible fashion, so that the appeal of what they understand will prod them to seek out what they do not comprehend.[14]

Despite al-Jāḥiẓ's assessment of al-Akhfash's status at mid-ninth century, his partially comprehensible grammar has not survived. In fact, several of Sībawayh's students are reported to have written grammars, yet it is the *Kitāb* that emerges at the end of the ninth century. Did the students simply fail to outdo the master? Were they writing a different kind of work, perhaps a kind of teaching grammar? Or was there something about the *Kitāb* that gave it staying power in a fiercely competitive environment?

We may see a clue in al-Jāḥiẓ's mention of Sībawayh twice in *al-Ḥayawān*, once as a rival of al-Kisāʾī in a long list of rival cities, poets, scholars, and the like over which debate apparently raged at the time, and the second time as the source of a line of poetry about mountain goats eating snakes.[15] Elsewhere

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12 Georges Bohas, Jean-Patrick Guillaume, and D. E. Kouloughli, *The Arabic Linguistic Tradition*, 3–6; Carter, *Sībawayh*, introduction; Talmon, *Eighth-Century Grammar*, chapter 1.

13 Carter, "Sībawayh," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005). Gregor Schoeler argues that the *Kitāb* was planned as a book on the basis of its organization and the citation language that Sībawayh uses. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, 49.

14 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, 1:91–92.

15 Ibid., 7:7; 3:497.

in *al-Maʿārif* (that is, not in the entry on Sībawayh), Ibn Qutayba cites a line of poetry he read in the *Kitāb*.[16] The fact that he does not cite the *Kitāb* in the entry on Sībawayh merely reflects his lack of interest in book authorship in general in the *Maʿārif*. Still, the fact that both al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn Qutayba seem to be using the *Kitāb* more as a source of poetry than as a grammar invites further investigation. Why would both al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn Qutayba be looking for poetry there? The *Kitāb* contains nearly a thousand verses of poetry. Perhaps its value was as more than just a compilation of grammatical rules and issues—perhaps it was also a good place to find citable poetry.

Another clue to the early importance of the *Kitāb* lies in Ibn Qutayba's organization of topics involving language. The categories he uses and the placement of some scholars within them look a bit different than the way they would later be fixed, suggesting that the constellations of intellectual activity involving language may have differed in the late eighth and early ninth centuries from the patterns that we know from the tenth century on. Ibn Qutayba lists the following sections together in this order:

> "Qurʾān Reading Authorities (*Aṣḥāb al-Qirāʾāt*)"
> "Readers who Perform with Melodies (*Qurrāʾ al-Alḥān*)"
> "Genealogists and Oral Historians (*al-Nassābūn wa Aṣḥāb al-Akhbār*)"
> "Poetry Reciters, Lexicographers and Grammarians (*Ruwāt al-Shiʿr wa Aṣḥāb al-Gharīb wa al-Naḥw*)"[17]

All of these sections contain the names of some of Sībawayh's teachers and contemporaries. The scholars listed in these sections specialize in at least one and often more than one of the following: Qurʾān recitation (including the grammatical study of variant readings), oral histories, poetry, lexicography (collecting and explaining rare and unusual vocabulary), and grammar (*naḥw*). In other words, all these categories have to do with the study and transmission of the language and lore of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia.

I include Qurʾān-reading authorities here because several of them are listed twice by Ibn Qutayba, once in this category and a second time in the category "Poetry Reciters, Lexicographers and Grammarians." One such reader is ʿĪsā ibn ʿUmar, who "spoke gutturally and used rare vocabulary in his speech and his *qirāʾa*.[18] This comment implies that in his *qirāʾa* he was not just reciting the Qurʾān,

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16 Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif*, 613.
17 Ibid., 528–46.
18 Ibid., 540.

but explicating or analyzing it as well.[19] Several of the best-known grammarians in the eighth and early ninth centuries were also prominent Qurʾān readers, including Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ-mentioned often by Sībawayh in the *Kitāb*-and al-Kisāʾī. In fact, Ibn Qutayba mentions Abū ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAlāʾ in passing in the category he calls *Aṣḥāb al-Qirāʾāt*, but notes that "he is better known for lexicography and poetry, so we list him with the lexicographers."[20] However, in the tenth century, Ibn Mujāhid designates Abū ʿAmr as one of his seven canonical readers. Thus Abū ʿAmr is primarily a lexicographer in the ninth century, but comes to be known as a Qurʾān reader in the tenth.[21]

It seems that the exact nature of the relationship between the study of grammar and the *qirāʾāt* in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries has yet to be fully recovered. Studies of the history of the Qurʾān focus largely on variation and stability in the *muṣḥaf* or written text, but evidence from the grammatical tradition suggests that the eighth-century grammarians were concerned primarily with the *recited* text. Talmon shows that sophisticated grammatical activity was well underway in the eighth century among a group of scholars who called themselves the *naḥwiyyīn*.[22] Carter notes that "it is even possible, though it needs further research, that in this period *naḥwiyyūn* referred only to those concerned with the 'way' the Qurʾān (and possibly poetry) was formally recited."[23] I argue here that Carter's guess was correct, poetry included. The early grammarians—at least some of whom were also readers—were not concerned with how people spoke, or how the Qurʾān was written, but how it was *performed*.[24] We can

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19 Thus it appears that the eighth-century *qurrāʾ* did far more than just recite: they analyzed the text, studied grammar and produced readings based at least in part on their grammatical knowledge, and probably worked as judges and legal scholars as well, as suggested by Christopher Melchert's discussion of the *ahl al-qirāʾa*, who disappeared as a group sometime during the ninth century ("Ibn Mujāhid and the Establishment of Seven Qurʾanic Readings"). There is thus no need to try as Juynboll did to explain the origin of *qurrāʾ* from *qurā* ("The Qurrāʾ in Early Islamic History").

20 Ibn Qutayba, *Al-Maʿārif*, 531.

21 Just how much the *qirāʾāt* were in flux is evident from the fact that only four of Ibn Mujāhid's seven are also found in Ibn Qutayba's list of twenty; the missing three are the Damascene Ibn ʿĀmir, the Meccan Ibn Kathīr, and the third the Kufan al-Kisāʾī, whom Ibn Qutayba lists among the poetry reciters, lexicographers, and grammarians. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif*, 528–32.

22 Talmon, *Eighth-Century Iraqi Grammar*, 35–37.

23 Carter, *Sibawayhi*, 5.

24 I follow here Richard Bauman's definition of performance in his book *Verbal Art as Performance*: "Performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content. From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer

see in al-Farrā''s (d. 207/822) early ninth-century *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* an interest in the way various people recited the text, and some interesting variant readings, among them:

> A similar [case] in which they allow both possibilities if you read it after a long *y* vowel or a short *i* vowel are the passages, "It is in the *ʿUmm al-Kitāb*" [43:4] and "until He had sent to their center a messenger" [28:59]; it is permissible to read a short *u* vowel on the alif of *umm* and *ummihā* or to read it with a short *i* in both places because of the position of the [immediately preceding] *y*.[25]

In other words, in the early ninth century, al-Farrā' reports that some people are reading "*fī ʾimm-i al-kitāb*" instead of "*fī ʾumm-i al-kitāb*" and "*ʾimmihā*" instead of "*ʾummihā*." The written text is not of concern to him here; rather, he is analyzing performances of the Qurʾān. The kinds of variation recorded by al-Farrā' are surprising in their divergence from the more narrow variation that was canonized in the tenth century, but they are not random: only variations that follow linguistic principles are allowed. The derivation of grammatical rules seems therefore not to have grown out of a stable text but rather variable performances, a situation that happens to parallel that of poetry.[26]

In addition to the Qurʾān, the centrality of poetry to the study of grammar is well known. Poetry makes up the bulk of the material that Sībawayh and the other early grammarians use as data and proof texts. Nonetheless, it is rather surprising that Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d. 232/846) devotes the majority of the introduction to his *Ṭabaqāt al-Shuʿarā'* to a history of the study of the ʿArabiyya, beginning with Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī as the first person to set down rules.[27] Ibn

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is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence ... Additionally, it is marked as available for the enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression and gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity" (emphasis added). Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 11 and note 4. I explore the implications of identifying the ʿArabiyya as a performance register in a separate project.

25 al-Farrā', *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2002), 1:16.

26 Mustafa Shah ("The Early Arabic Grammarians' Contributions to the Collection and Authentication of Qurʾanic Readings: The Prelude to Ibn Mujāhid's *Kitāb al-Sabʿa*") argues for the early separation of the two fields on the basis that grammarians had different goals and interests than Qurʾān scholars, and starts from the premise that Qurʾān scholars' primary aim was to preserve the Qurʾānic text. This assumes a degree of uniformity in the performed text that I suspect is exaggerated.

27 Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shuʿarā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001), 29, 32.

Sallām goes on to note several differences of opinion on grammatical matters between figures such as Abū ʿAmr and ʿĪsā ibn ʿUmar, and reports that he asked Sībawayh himself about his opinion on a disagreement concerning the grammatical ending on the imperfective verbs in Qurʾān 6:27.

The linguistic relationships that link the study of the ʿArabiyya, poetry, and the Qurʾān are clear enough. However, it is less clear why a book containing biographies of poets begins with a brief history of the development on the origins of Arabic grammatical study and questions of vocalization of a Qurʾānic verse. We may take it as evidence that, until at least the beginning of the ninth century, activities surrounding the knowledge and study of the ʿArabiyya were conceived as a coherent field of study. Marie-Andrée Gouttenoire observes that the second-/eighth-century Basran and Kufan scholars, whom she calls *les savants iraqiens*, had "polymorphous" linguistic interests that centered around the transmission of material that she calls the "fond arabo-bedouin," the pre-Islamic and early Islamic heritage that includes poetry and oral histories.[28] Everhard Ditters, responding to an article by Zubayr Saʿdī, calls this activity a kind of corpus linguistics.[29]

Kalām al-ʿArab: The Corpus

If, as appears to be the case, a corpus of material corresponding to a recognized cultural category constituted the primary focus of this distinguished group of scholars, then we should be able to find an Arabic term for this concept. I propose that this corpus of pre-Islamic poetry, formal speeches, and tribal war (*ayyām*) material is what grammarians and others refer to as "*kalām al-ʿarab*." I argue that "*kalām*" here does not refer to everyday speech (as Ditters and others assume) but rather to performed speech given in a recognized register, that of the ʿArabiyya, and "Arabs" does not constitute an ethnic term so much as a cultural one: those Arabs who participated in the performance and culture of *kalām*. The categories that Ibn Qutayba lays out—Qurʾān reciters, oral historians, and preservers of poetry—delineate the areas of the *kalām* corpus, the body of material that schol-

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28 Gouttenoire, "Les enjeux de l'écriture biographique relative aux savants iraqiens Du II/VIIIᵉ siècle et à leur transmission du fond Arabo-bédouin," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 57 (2006–7): 44–46. As she points out, the meaning of the adjective "bedouin" is far from clear; I suspect that this term underwent some reinterpretation during the ninth and tenth centuries as well.

29 Ditters emphasizes the difference between corpus linguistics then and now, and assumes that informal speech constituted part of the corpus ("Arabic Corpus Linguistics in Past and Present").

ars were expected to know. The final category in this group—scholars of poetry, rare and unusual vocabulary, and grammar—includes those who study the 'Arabiyya, the language of the *kalām* corpus. I believe it is likely that the two terms developed more or less together, since the body of material is hardly separable from the register of language that defines it. In fact, they define each other.

The term *al-'Arabiyya* is used by al-Khalīl and Sībawayh in *Kitāb al-'Ayn* and the *Kitāb* respectively. It is a term that deserves analysis. Although adjectival in form, *al-'Arabiyya* is used by these two scholars only as a noun, never as an adjective. Moreover, it contrasts with the Qur'ānic term *lisān 'arabī*, "an Arabic language" (the only term used in the Qur'ān to refer to Arabic) in two important ways: the former is feminine and definite, and used as a noun and not as an adjective; whereas the latter is masculine and indefinite, and used only as an adjective that modifies *lisān*. The indefiniteness of *lisān 'arabī* clearly indicates that the revelation occurred in one of an unspecified number of Arabic dialects, and not in a single standard language or register, which probably did not exist at the time. Since the word *lugha* still meant "variant" or "dialect variant" at the time of al-Khalīl and Sībawayh, we cannot explain the feminine form of 'Arabiyya as referring to *al-lugha al-'arabiyya*, "the Arabic language," at that time. More likely, the word *'arabiyya* uses the feminine marker *tā' marbūṭa*'s secondary function as an abstract-noun marker to refer to the abstract concept of the language of the corpus, including grammar and lexicon. Ibn Qutayba says of Ḥammād al-Salama: "He knew the 'Arabiyya and (or 'including') grammar (*naḥw*)."[30] The fact that Ibn Qutayba distinguishes the two suggests that the 'Arabiyya includes other areas of knowledge. This distinction makes sense if we interpret the 'Arabiyya to be the language of the corpus including its linguistic material, lexicon, and grammar.

Another remark by Ibn Sallām about Ḥimyar provides additional evidence of the special status of the 'Arabiyya: "Their language is different from ours and their 'Arabiyya is different from ours" (*lisānuhum ghayru lisāninā wa 'arabiyyatuhum ghayru 'arabiyyatinā*).[31] Here language and the 'Arabiyya are clearly distinguished from each other, and since *lisān* means "language," we may surmise that the 'Arabiyya of Ḥimyar refers to their corpus of poetry and other performed genres. This remark distinguishes the Arabs from the Ḥimyarites while suggesting that the two cultures shared the concept of a special register of language considered to be distinct from that of speech or language in general.

The two closely related terms and concepts of the 'Arabiyya and *kalām al-'arab* frame the activity of the eighth-century scholars. The concept of the corpus also

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30 Ibn Qutayba, *Al-Ma'ārif*, 503.
31 Al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shu'arā'*, 29.

helps us understand why early grammarians are also deeply engaged in Qur'ān recitation, poetry, and lexicography of unusual words (*gharīb*), which presumably are not well known precisely because they are reserved for use in the 'Arabiyya. The contents of *Kitāb al-'Ayn* and the *Kitāb* show us that the corpus of *kalām al-'arab* consisted mostly of poetry and the Qur'ān. Al-Khalīl defines the 'Arabiyya as "their poetry and proverbs (*amthāl*) and formal speeches (*mukhāṭabāt*)."[32] The *Kitāb* gives us a good idea of the materials that eighth-century scholars were collecting: its indices list over one thousand lines of poetry, over four hundred verses of the Qur'ān, dozens of tribal affiliations, and seven ḥadīths, some of which have a formulaic ring to them, such as a phrase the Prophet is said to have used in prayer: *subbūḥan quddūsan rabba al-malā'ikati wa al-rūḥ* (Most praised and most holy, Lord of the angels and the spirit), and an alternate version, *subbūḥun quddūsun, rabbu al-malā'ikati wa al-rūḥ*.[33]

By the time of al-Khalīl and Sībawayh, the *kalām al-'arab* corpus is more or less fixed and assessable. Al-Khalīl makes statements on whether certain words and patterns are "part of the corpus" (*min kalām al-'arab*), such as *sal-nadl*: Dirtiness of every kind, with no usage in the 'Arabiyya (*min ghayr isti'māl fī al-'Arabiyya*)."[34] Sībawayh offers frequency judgments for some of the structures he talks about, using phrases such as "this occurs more than I can describe for you in the corpus," and "this rarely/often occurs in the corpus." Both scholars repeatedly state that a certain word or structure is or is not part of, or occurs rarely or frequently, in the 'Arabiyya or the *kalām al-'arab*. It is worth recalling that the *Kitāb* and *Kitāb al-'Ayn* were among the very first, if not the first, books conceived and composed as such.[35] The scope of both works was ambitious: to present as comprehensive as possible a description of the 'Arabiyya.

If these two books, conceived and set in motion by teacher and pupil, constituted a joint project to define and describe the language of this corpus, their project seems to signal the end of one era and the beginning of another. Carter points out that Sībawayh uses the word *naḥwiyyūn* as if the latter constituted a group to which he (and by extension al-Khalīl) do not belong.[36] Those *naḥwiyyūn* must have worked with the eighth-century *savants iraqiens* to collect and transmit material the way it had been done in times past: person to person, by experts and their apprentices. As we shall see below, by the time Sībawayh's biographers

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32 Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, 1:47.

33 Sībawayh, *Al-Kitāb*, 1:327.

34 Al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, 8:41.

35 Gregor Schoeler, *Oral and Written In Early Islam* (London: Routledge, 2006) 49, 151.

36 Carter, *Sibawayhi*, 4–5.

reconstruct the highlights of his career, they imagine "Bedouin" informants waiting outside the caliph's door to be summoned to answer a question. There is little connection between them and the *kalām al-'arab*.

Sībawayh's Project

Perhaps, rather, Sībawayh and his teacher shared a project that was distinct from the work of those *naḥwiyyūn*. The *naḥwiyyūn*'s project was, as Carter speculated, to define the rules of performance for the Qur'ān and poetry, and their primary focus was most likely that corpus. The *Kitāb al-'Ayn* and the *Kitāb*, on the other hand, can easily be imagined as reference works for the 'Arabiyya, with the primary focus on the language, and they may well have been undertaken by al-Khalīl and Sībawayh in agreement with each other. Scholars of the *Kitāb* have long noted its descriptive stance, and contrasted that to later prescriptive grammars. Sībawayh was describing, but the fact that he could do so signals the end of the living corpus tradition, and the decoupling of the 'Arabiyya from its corpus. In part, this decoupling was an historical inevitability, due to the freezing of the corpus material. Yet there are also indications that al-Khalīl and Sībawayh's joint project to describe the language of the *kalām al-'arab* may have aimed to detach it from the corpus so that it could survive on its own.

This hypothesis means that the informants of the eighth century had a different position than those of the tenth century. Gouttenoire notes that the "Bedouin informants" in the eighth century look quite different than the tenth-century characters, who appear in courts and *majālis*:

> Il semble qu'il faille bien distinguer cette première génération de *'Arab*-bédouins du II/VIIIe siècle des informateurs bédouins que nous rencontrons dans les coulisses des salons à Baghdad, dans la littérature des majālis ou du Kitāb al-aghānī, par exemple. Durant les deux premiers siècles de l'islam, dans les *amṣār* iraqiennes, ce rôle devait être moins codifié, plus spontané dans le sens où les *'Arab*- bédouins n'en avaient pas encore fait profession et source de profit. C'est là encore une des spécificités de ce II/VIIIe siècle durant lequel ces savants bédouins eurent un rôle majeur.[37]

Leaving aside for a moment the question of what "bedouin" means, we may suppose that by the tenth century, the *kalām al-'arab* has been reinterpreted as the speech of bedouins. As Gouttenoire observes, the "Arabs" come to take on the role of informants in a subservient role, and we shall see this in Sībawayh's

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37 Gouttenoire, "Les enjeux de l'écriture," 54.

biography, in which the humiliation to which Ibn Qutayba alludes takes on full dramatic force by the tenth century. In al-Zubaydī's (d. 371/981) biography of him, Sībwayah is challenged by rival al-Kisā'ī, who has arranged for ethically challenged Bedouin to stand idly at the palace door waiting to be summoned and asked a question or two.[38]

In contrast, Sībawayh does not identify his informants as Arabs *or* bedouin. In many places he cites "a trustworthy person" (*man yūthaq bihi*) or "one whose 'Arabiyya is trustworthy" (*man yūthaq bi-'arabiyyatihi*). Bernards's exhaustive study of grammarians of the first four centuries reveals that many of the eighth-century scholars were non-Arabs, and a large percentage of the linguistic scholars identified by Ibn Qutayba were *mawālī*.[39] In this context, the claim of Abū Zayd al-Anṣārī to be the person whose 'Arabiyya was trustworthy is noteworthy because he is one of a very few ethnic Arabs who were part of the eighth-century group. The fact that his name is used hints at a shift in how the 'Arabiyya was viewed during the ninth century. Thus, within the framework of the 'Arabiyya and its corpus, we may propose that the early generations of "trustworthy" transmitters of the corpus were more than informants answering questions—they were the authorities. However, when Sībawayh says "he whose 'Arabiyya is trustworthy," he both admits that authority and already begins to undermine it: although he is reporting the judgment of experts, he is the one determining who those experts are.

Stories of poets going out into the (always unspecified) desert reflect a tenth-century search for the kind of lineage that Cooperson talks about, the legitimacy of the 'Arabiyya. Such legitimacy had come to be understood through lineage by the time of al-Mutanabbī, by way of example, but lineage was not to be had in the case of the 'Arabiyya or the corpus. Therefore, another kind of direct connection had to be made, and since tenth-century scholars understood the corpus to have originated among the "Arab-bedouins" in "the desert," the closest connection possible was one of place, unspecified though it was. Sībawayh did not go out into the desert in search of the 'Arabiyya, and in fact by his time scholars who did so may not have found much. The culture that gave rise to and sustained the pre-Islamic poetic tradition must have changed significantly by the eighth century. Ibn Sallām notes that the reciting of poetry all but stopped during

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38 Al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Naḥwiyyīn wa al-Lughawiyyīn*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1973), 68–69.

39 Monique Bernards, "Pioneers of Arabic Linguistic Studies," paper presented at the Tenth Conference of the School of Abbasid Studies, July 5–9, 2010, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium.

the conquests.[40] Good or gifted poets like Jarīr who might have remained with his tribe in a pre-Islamic era went instead to seek other performance venues, such as al-Mirbad, as means to fame and a better livelihood.[41]

The Ethnic Turn of the Ninth Century

The important point is that *kalām al-ʿarab* is for the eighth-century scholars the corpus of the ʿArabiyya, and thus in grammatical contexts these *ʿarab* are not just any ethnic Arabs, or Bedouins, but rather those who are authoritative transmitters of this language culture. When Sībawayh says, "one of the Arabs who can be trusted" (*baʿḍ al-ʿarab al-mawthūq bihi*), he is not talking about an ethnic Arab with good grammar but rather a participant in the culture of the ʿArabiyya whose knowledge of the register and its corpus is reliable. This of course implies that there were many "Arabs" whose knowledge of the language and corpus was *not* reliable, and also that Sībawayh himself felt capable of determining whose ʿArabiyya was trustworthy and whose was not. We do not know how he and others judged the proficiency of those who could be trusted to perform it accurately, but can assume that they are in Basra, not in the Arabian Peninsula. There are no reports of Sībawayh or other early grammarians going out into the desert to learn the ʿArabiyya.

In the eighth century, then, the ʿArabiyya appears to have been considered not so much an ethnic attribute as rather a cultural possession. In the ninth century, however, the word *ʿarab* in the context of *kalām al-ʿarab* seems to have been reinterpreted as an ethnic term. In the eighth century, the *kalām al-ʿarab* clearly represents a cultural and linguistic corpus to which scholars of Arab and non-Arab ethnicity had full access. In the ninth century, however, the meaning of *kalām al-ʿarab* must have become unlinked from the corpus. As the "*ʿarab*" of *kalām al-ʿarab* came to be understood ethnically and not in terms of a particular linguistic and cultural competence, *kalām* came to be understood literally as "speech." The shift in meaning of *al-ʿarab* in *kalām al-ʿarab* probably coincided with the rise of the *Shuʿūbiyya* and a closely related language ideology that became part of the history of Arabic ever after.[42]

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40 Al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shuʿarāʾ*, 34.

41 Kristen Brustad, "Jarīr," in Cooperson and Toorawa, *Arabic Literary Culture*, 244.

42 The relationship between the rise of the Shuʿūbiyya and the shift in language ideology is a question I hope to explore in a future study.

The ideological shift that occurred during the ninth century becomes evident in the comparison between two versions of the emergence of grammar. Ibn Sallām, writing in the early ninth century, notes that "the *kalām al-ʿarab* was 'disturbed' (*iḍṭaraba*), and instinct (*al-salīqa*) [in speech] took over."[43] In other words, *kalām al-ʿarab* is contrasted here with natural speech. He subsequently points out that Islam and the wars of conquest preoccupied people and the transmission of poetry underwent a period of disruption, which limited the material that survived from pre-Islamic Arabia.[44] In other words, the production and transmission of poetry and the corpus in general was dependent on the culture of pre-Islamic Arabia, and this culture all but ended with the advent of Islam. Here we see *kalām al-ʿarab* used to mean corpus.

Some eighty years later, Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī writes his version of this story in the introduction to his *Marātib al-Naḥwiyyīn:* "Know that the first [aspect] of the 'speech of the Arabs' that became defective and was thus in the direst need of learning was the case inflection system, because grammatical error appeared in the speech of the *mawālī* and those that assimilated into Arab society."[45] Clearly, the *kalām al-ʿarab* in Abū al-Ṭayyib's text no longer refers to the corpus; rather, the word "Arabs" has been reinterpreted ethnically and contrasts with *mawālī*, and *kalām* refers to speech in general. Writing in Aleppo, far from the hub of corpus activity in Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad, Abū al-Ṭayyib may have misunderstood Ibn Sallām's comment about the *kalām al-ʿarab* becoming "disturbed" and drew the only possible conclusion, given the time frame of Abū al-Aswad al-Duʾalī's life: things had already started to unravel at the beginning. He also must have known that there were *mawālī* in Mecca and Medina in pre-Islamic times.[46] Since it made no sense that the "Arabs" were responsible for the decline of their own language, the only logical conclusion was that the foreigners were the ones to shoulder the blame.

As Carter notes, grammar does not become a fully theorized enterprise until the ninth or tenth century.[47] During the eighth century, it was closely connected with the corpus, and did not constitute a stand-alone field. Sībawayh studied and

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43 Al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shuʿarāʾ*, 29.

44 Ibid., 34.

45 Abū al-Ṭayyib al-Lughawī, *Marātib al-Naḥwiyyīn*, 23. Ironically, immediately following this claim, Abū al-Ṭayyib reports that even the caliph Abū Bakr admitted to falling short himself: "Abū Bakr, May God be Pleased with Him, said: 'To recite [Qurʾān] and leave something out is preferable to me than to recite with error.'"

46 See on this Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, 246.

47 M. G. Carter, "When Did the Arabic Word *Naḥw* First Come to Denote Grammar?," *Language & Communication* 5, no. 4 (1985): 266.

wrote about grammar, but in order to do that, he had to know the corpus quite well. Al-Suyūṭī reports a testimony from al-Jarmī, a mid-ninth-century grammarian who studied under Sībawayh's student al-Akhfash, that Sībawayh knew 1,000 of the 1,050 lines of poetry in the *Kitāb*.[48] This report also suggests significant changes between late eighth and late ninth centuries: whereas the eighth-century grammarians knew the corpus of the 'Arabiyya intimately, ninth-century grammarians perhaps less so. Sībawayh himself would have had to know the corpus fairly well in order to feel capable of evaluating someone else's knowledge of it. Subsequent generations may not have been able to make this judgment, and thus were not able to add new data to the study of grammar. This explains why grammarians of the following centuries largely copied Sībawayh's examples, and represents another reason for the longevity and importance of the *Kitāb*.

End of an Era?

It seems likely that Sībawayh belonged to one of the last generations for whom the corpus was a living entity that they could collect, study, and transmit. During the eighth century, the culture of the 'Arabiyya must have gradually lost ground to new pastimes such as theological debate and other types of public entertainment. In addition, the exchange between al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Akhfash cited above suggests that many changes took place between the death of Sībawayh sometime around 795 and the death of al-Akhfash sometime around 830. Sībawayh died soon before the opening of a paper factory in Baghdad, after which book writing and copying quickly spread. In less than thirty years, al-Akhfash was writing books for people hoping that they would read on their own and then come to him for further instruction. I do not mean to imply here that the production of books heralded a transition from oral to written. On the contrary, the oral-performance *component* of transmission may be seen clearly in the ubiquitous use in the *Kitāb* and elsewhere of the verb *'anshada*, "to recite (a poem or line of poetry)." Oral and written transmission survived through the ninth century, at least, as two complementary and necessary aspects of transmission, not two alternate means thereof, and the status of Arabic grammar is directly linked to this cultural phenomenon. It is likely that the performative nature of the 'Arabiyya contributed to the maintenance of the dual oral-written nature of the transmission of knowledge and the acts of teaching and learning.

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48 Al-Suyūṭī, *Bughyat al-Wuʿāt fī Ṭabaqāt al-Lughawiyyīn wa al-Nuḥāt*, 229.

The project of Sībawayh and al-Khalīl to describe the ʿArabiyya as a living language fits into Dimitri Gutas's view of the early Abbasid project, which he calls the shift from "Arab" to "Arabic," that is, from a culture based on ethnic "Arabness" to one framed linguistically by the Arabic language.[49] The ʿArabiyya was not a language of everyday speech, and what the *Kitāb* aimed to do was to show that the language did in fact constitute a system that could be brought to life and used outside its previous performative contexts. In other words, rather than save the ʿArabiyya from the fate of the foreigners (*ʿajam*), Sībawayh and al-Khalīl aimed to make it accessible to them and to everyone.

However, neither project succeeded. In the ninth century, the ethnic was reasserted over the linguistic: *kalām al-ʿarab* was in the eighth century the purview of scholars but in the ninth, tenth, and later, it was reclaimed as a property of the ethnic Arabs. The ninth century is also when we begin to read that the *ʿajam* were the ones to blame for the decay of the ʿArabiyya. The attempts to make the ʿArabiyya the language of speech—the by-now logical meaning of *kalām* in *kalām al-ʿarab*—succeeded but also failed. It did become a universal language, but an ideal and idealized one that could never quite be mastered, as the iconic Sībawayh shows us in his biographies.

A Humiliating Meeting in Baghdad

Of the fifty-two words in Ibn Qutayba's biography of Sībawayh, the single word that has the greatest impact in later biographies is *ustudhilla*, "he was humiliated." Ibn Qutayba says that Sībawayh was "brought together with the grammarians, and (as a result, *fa-*) was humiliated." There is no mention of a context for the humiliation, and we are left to interpret, as later biographers were obliged to do. It is almost as if Ibn Qutayba left the details out on purpose, perhaps precisely to give room for the clever reader to interpolate or editorialize, no doubt, the kind of talk that would have been suitable for an important social occasion. It may be that some of those interpolations at high-society gatherings became the fodder of later biographies such as that of al-Zubaydī. However, if Sībawayh was brought to meet with other grammarians—though there is no evidence of grammatical activity in Baghdad in the late eighth century—it is unlikely that the meeting would have involved a contest, since grammar was not yet an independent field of study in Sībawayh's time. Thus it is not likely that grammar contests were being held at the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd under the auspices of Faḍl al-Barmakī or anyone else.

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49 Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought*, *Arabic Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), 191.

Rather, this competition between Sībawayh and his rivals is a projection of the practice of comparison and competition that spread during the ninth century. In fact, al-Jāḥiẓ himself may have contributed to the dramatization of the Sībawayh-al-Kisā'ī rivalry by listing the pair in the *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* as one of a number of debated "relative merit" topics current in his time.[50] It is widely accepted that the Basran-Kufan rivalry was a ninth- and tenth-century projection back on the eighth century, and it is interesting that al-Jāḥiẓ also lists al-Kūfa and al-Baṣra as rivals in this same list, as one of a series of geographic rivalries: "[This book] is not about favoring Basra over Kufa, or Mecca over Medina, or the Shām over the Jazīra," and he goes on to list what must have been the debate topics of the day. Down in this list, after the pre-Islamic poets Imru' al-Qays and al-Nābigha, jurisprudents Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa, after the musician/singers Ibn al-Surayj and al-Gharīḍ, he mentions Sībawayh and al-Kisā'ī.[51] The human tendency to argue over things that al-Jāḥiẓ notes, combined with the (real or imagined) stories of lavish rewards for success in court competitions, surely made Ibn Qutayba's mention of a trip to Baghdad, seat of the caliphate, seem verifiable to later biographers.

The performative nature of the 'Arabiyya must have enhanced these stories. Competition was part and parcel of the culture of 'Arabiyya, starting with pre-Islamic poetry. It was also part of the nature of the 'Arabiyya itself, a register of language used primarily in certain marked contexts, with rules agreed upon by audience and performer, and in which form is as important (or more) than content. In the *Ḥayawān* and elsewhere, the verb *'anshada*, "to recite," is often used to cite a line of poetry.

The social isolation of Sībawayh that we see in his early biographies extends to what we might call a cultural marginalization. Bernards has documented that the majority of early grammarians were ethnically Persian, but most of them were known by Arabic names or *kunyas*. Sībawayh's biographers found three *kunyas* for him: Abū Bishr, Abū 'Uthmān, and Abū Ḥasan, but he is not called by these names, only by the name Sībawayh, which some biographers take care to hypothesize means "apple scented" in Persian. Together with the mysterious return to Fārs, this "otherness" distances Sībawayh from anything Arab and makes him a quintessential "other." Despite (or because of) his deep knowledge of the 'Arabiyya, Sībawayh is remembered as an ethnic Persian in every way: name, origin, and place of death.

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50 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Ḥayawān*, 7:7.
51 Ibid.

In contrast, Sībawayh's senior linguistic authority, Abū Zayd al-Anṣarī, is an Arab. This juxtaposition is not surprising to find in a ninth-century *Shuʿūbi-yya*-era work. The anecdote puts Sībawayh in a subordinate position to Abū Zayd in three ways: social position, age, and knowledge of the ʿArabiyya. Abū Zayd was one of several scholars who were both born before Sībawayh and lived longer than he did, and thus it is quite plausible that he was the source of information on Sībawayh. Taking the anecdote at face value for a moment, and assuming that Abū Zayd is the source, it is unclear why he would have felt the need to compete with a younger non-Arab. He has the upper hand ethnically, and does not need to be in direct competition with Sībawayh, who moreover devoted his life to study-ing and teaching the ʿArabiyya. It thus appears that Ibn Qutayba's portrayal of Sībawayh is already colored by *Shuʿūbī* undertones.

The Road Not Taken: Sībawayh Errs at Ḥadīth

One of the most prominent anecdotes found in later biographies of Sībawayh explains that he came to study grammar after being humiliated at ḥadīth. Here, the theme of humiliation, familiar to us from the *Maʿārif*, is transferred from grammar to another field. Apparently Sībawayh needed a reason to study grammar in the post-*Shuʿūbiyya* era; it might have seemed illogical that an ethnic Persian with a Persian name with no obvious connection to Arab society would have come from Fārs to study *naḥw*. While ḥadīth could be seen as a logical choice in any case, several details found in Sībawayh's early biographies and in the *Kitāb* seem to provide the seeds of this particular narrative.

The following version of the anecdote is found in al-Zubaydī's *Ṭabaqāt al-Naḥwiyyīn*:

> Abū ʿAlī al-Baghdādī said, "Sībawayh was born in a village in Shīrāz called al-Bayḍāʾ, in the governorate of Fārs. Then he went to Basra to write ḥadīth, and became a regular in the circle of Ḥammād ibn Salama. While he was reciting his notes back to Ḥammād on the ḥadīth of the Prophet, 'I could, if I wanted, find fault with every one of my companions, except Abā al-Dardāʾ,' Sībawayh said 'Abū al-Dardāʾ,' thinking that it was the subject of the verb *laysa*. Ḥammād said, 'You have erred, Sībawayh. That is not what I said; rather, *laysa* here is a particle of exception.' Sībawayh then said, 'I will seek knowledge about which you will not be able to accuse me of making mistakes!' So he followed al-Khalīl and excelled."[52]

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52 *Ṭabaqāt al-Naḥwiyyīn*, 66. The Arabic of the ḥadīth is, "*laysa min aṣḥābī illā man law shiʾtu la-ʾakhadhtu ʿalayhi laysa Abā al-Dardāʾ*."

The story of Sībawayh studying ḥadīth with Ḥammād ibn Salama is interesting on two counts. One is the error Sībawayh makes when studying with him: he misunderstands and incorrectly vowels a construction with the grammatically complex category of exception (*istithnāʾ*). It just so happens that this is a topic that Sībawayh treats very thoroughly in *al-Kitāb*, and this seems to be an unlikely coincidence—given that Sībawayh made an error in his studies, this particular topic, and this particular ḥadīth, present a logical and convincing story. The second interesting facet of this report is the identity of the teacher, Ḥammād ibn Salama, whom Ibn Qutayba lists in the *Maʿārif* as one of the ḥadīth authorities, although "it is said that he was an expert in grammar (*naḥw*) and the ʿArabiyya, and that Sībawayh the Grammarian heard and learned by dictation (*istamlā*) from him."[53] Perhaps al-Zubaydī concluded that Sībawayh took dictation in ḥadīth, since from a later perspective it made little sense that expert Sībawayh would study grammar and the ʿArabiyya with Ḥammād, who was by then remembered as a *muḥaddith* and not as a scholar of the ʿArabiyya. However, Ibn Qutayba also listed Ḥammād as an expert in *naḥw* and the ʿArabiyya. Hence it seems more probable, given the data in the *Kitāb*, that Sībawayh was actually taking dictation in poetry.

In later biographies, starting with those in *Tārīkh Baghdād* and al-Anbārī's *Nuzhat al-Alibbāʾ*, Sībawayh comes to study law.[54] This is a logical conclusion that someone who had read the *Kitāb* very carefully would reach. Carter has also noticed the preponderance of legal terminology in the *Kitāb*, which he believes shows the close links between the development of grammar and the development of law. He describes one particularly long section:

> Sībawayh explores how deals are struck, beginning significantly with the grammar of *kalla-mtuhu fāhu ʾilā fīya* "I spoke to him face to face" and *bāyaʿtuhu yadan bi-yadin* "I traded with him hand in hand" (i.e. for cash), where the dependent (*naṣb*) forms are obligatory, since they are not literal, but simply mean "immediately, on the spot," no matter how physically close the listener might be. In other words the legal (utterance) meaning is different from the overt (sentence) meaning: by saying these words in this form a legal obligation is created regardless of their literal meaning. This leads to a whole string of commercial expressions.[55]

The many examples in the *Kitāb* that Carter astutely observes support the hypothesis that Sībawayh is not only describing the ʿArabiyya, but is also putting that description in service of new usages of the ʿArabiyya. Here, it seems, the perfor-

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53 Ibn Qutayba, *Al-Maʿārif*, 503.

54 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 14:100; Ibn al-Anbārī, *Nuzhat al-Alibbāʾ*, 54.

55 Carter, "Pragmatics," 31–32.

mance venues of the ʿArabiyya have expanded beyond poetry and Qurʾān and attendant Arabian cultural genres into legal and theological performances and perhaps beyond.[56] Sībawayh may or may not have come to Basra to study law, but he succeeded, in theory at least, in making the ʿArabiyya not just a language of performing the corpus but also a language of public speaking.

The Question of the Wasp

The final humiliation of Sībawayh is known as "The Question of the Wasp" (*al-Masʾala al-Zunbūriyya*), a story so well known it has a title. In it, Sībawayh's grammatical knowledge is once again put to the test, and he fails. Or does he? Al-Zubaydī tells three versions of this story. In the first, Sībawayh arrives in Iraq and pays a respectful visit to al-Kisāʾī, who lays a trap for his rival:

> [Al-Kisāʾī] came to Jaʿfar ibn Yaḥyā ibn Barmak and al-Faḍl ibn Yaḥyā ibn Barmak and said: "I am your protégé and companion. This man has come just to take away my position." The two of them said, "Think of a trick that will help you, because we are going to bring you together." They were brought to meet each other in the Barmakid's *majlis*. Sībawayh arrived by himself, and al-Kisāʾī arrived with al-Farrāʾ and al-Aḥmar and other companions. They asked: "How do you say 'I used to think that the scorpion had a stronger bite than the wasp, but they are the same,' do you say *fa idhā huwa hiya* or *huwa iyyāhā*?" He said, "I say *fa idhā huwa hiya*." The group approached him and said, "You are mistaken." Yaḥyā ibn Khālid ibn Barmak said: "This is a difficult situation, how can one judge between you?" They replied: "Those Bedouins are at the door." Abū Jarrāḥ was brought in, along with others who served al-Kisāʾī and his companions as informants. They said: '*fa idhā huwa iyyāhā*.' The session ended with the conclusion that Sībawayh had erred. The Barmakids gave him [money], and got some more for him from Hārūn al-Rashīd, and then he was sent back to his land. It is said that not long after that, he died of grief.[57]

Sībawayh loses the battle, but it is implied that the informants were bribed. Of particular note here is that these Arab informants act like Gouttenoire's tenth-century informants (if in fact those existed at all), and not like the eighth-century savants she describes. Despite the lip service paid to the importance of their opinion, these Bedouin (*aʿrāb*) have nothing to do but sit outside the Caliph's door waiting until they are called to testify. Their morals are also called into question, a theme

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56 I am grateful to Michael Cooperson for linking the performative aspect of the ʿArabiyya to *kalām*, "(theological) debate."
57 Al-Zubaydī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Naḥwiyyīn*, 68.

even more evident in the second account. Here, Sībawayh goes directly to Yaḥyā ibn Barmak, who asks him about the issue that brought him:

> Sībawayh said: "I came so you would help me meet al-Kisā'ī." [Yaḥyā] said: "Do not do that, because he is a *sheikh* of Baghdad and its Qur'ān reader, and teacher of the caliph's son. Everyone in the city is for him and with him." But [Sībawayh] insisted that he arrange for the two of them to meet. So [Yaḥyā] informed al-Rashīd of his request, and he ordered a meeting between the two, and set a date. When that day came, he went to al-Rashīd's palace and found that al-Farrā', al-Aḥmar, Hishām ibn Mu'āwiya and Muḥammad ibn Sa'dān had preceded him. Al-Aḥmar asked [Sībawayh] about one hundred problems and he answered them, and to every answer [al-Aḥmar] replied: "You are mistaken, Basran!" And as a result Sībawayh became frustrated. Then al-Kisā'ī showed up with a group of Bedouin Arabs, and when they sat, he said to [Sībawayh]: "Basran, how do you say, "I went out and there was Zayd standing? *kharajtu fa idhā zaydun qā'imun*?" He said: "*kharajtu fa idhā zaydun qā'imun*" in the nominative case. The other said to him: "Is it possible to say *fa idhā zaydun qā'iman*?" He said, "No." Al-Kisā'ī said: "Those Arabs are at the caliph's door. Since they're here, we should ask them." So he said: "Ask them." Al-Kisā'ī asked them: "How do you say: *qad kuntu aḥsibu anna al-'aqraba ashaddu las'atan min al-zunbūri fa idhā al-zunbūru iyyāha bi 'aynihā*?" Some said: "*fa idhā al-zunbūru hiya*" and others said "*iyyāhā bi 'aynihā*." He said: "This contradicts what you say, Basran." [Sībawayh] said: "However, the Arabs in our country say *huwa hiya*." All of them agreed he had made a mistake, and he was trapped. Yaḥyā ibn Khālid gave him 10,000 dirhams and sent him away.[58]

In this version Sībawayh is truly humiliated, and the informants here do not even need to be unanimous in their judgment to bring Sībawayh to defeat. In the third version, however, Sībawayh's legacy is redeemed: a postscript is added in which Sībawayh's student al-Akhfash, whom we meet with al-Jāḥiẓ, meets Sībawayh and learns the story of his humiliation in Baghdad. In an act of revenge, al-Akhfash sets out for Baghdad, puts al-Kisā'ī to the test, and defeats him, upon which the latter welcomes him with open arms and hires him to tutor his own children.

Talmon analyzes in detail the ways in which this incident was appropriated by one side or another to promote its cause in the imagined Basra-Kufa contest.[59] In the final version, the Basrans get the last word. More importantly, though, the dramatic scene, repeated a magical three times, plays up the importance of grammar itself, which is crucial to what Cooperson calls the "etiological narrative" of biography.[60] Grammar was important because the stakes were high, caliphs and viziers were interested, and money changed hands.

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58 Ibid., 69–70.
59 Talmon, "al-Mas'ala al-Zunbūriyya."
60 Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, 9.

Other biographers, too, add their touches to the wasp story. Ibn al-Anbārī, in his *Kitāb al-Inṣāf*, takes advantage of this incident to signal how intimately he knows the *Kitāb*. After al-Kisā'ī asks Sībawayh about the wasp, he goes on, says the narrator, to ask him about problems "in this vein," *min hādhā al-naḥw*, using the word *naḥw* in the same way that Sībawayh does and making a pun on the meaning of grammar.[61] Biographers may have been grinding axes, but they were also winking at each other, speaking an insider's language.

And they are winking at us too. This entire anecdote is a joke. The sentence in question, comparing as it does the sting of the scorpion and that of a wasp, itself embodies the "sting" of defeat that Sībawayh suffered, not just at the hands of the literary character of al-Kisā'ī but also at the hands of the biographers themselves. In fact, Sībawayh's entire career is framed with error: he commits mistakes publicly at the beginning and end of his professional life. In the first, he takes up the study of grammar because he makes a mistake reading back a ḥadīth. In the second, he is contradicted by native speakers at the court, and dies in shame. Since he speaks publicly in both situations, he is held accountable for his errors, part of the contract of performance that Bauman describes. The effect of this ideology is, inevitably, that mistakes and grammar become synonymous: no one, not even Sībawayh, can perform in the 'Arabiyya without making mistakes.

The biography of Sībawayh thus illustrates the story of Arabic grammar, and shows that this story became, to a considerable degree, a story of errors. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the long history of this discourse,[62] we can at least make an important link between Sībawayh committing errors in his biographies and what we may call the "ideology of error" that emerged along with, and entangled with, grammar as a field of knowledge and study. We saw the beginnings of this ideology in the exchange between al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Akhfash: grammar is difficult, and already experts are engaged in controlling access to it.

Ironically, the iconic Sībawayh, who for centuries embodied the humiliation human beings suffer in their quest to master the grammar of the 'Arabiyya, has now become the very emblem of the grammar that is said to have defeated him. This new "meaning" of the name Sībawayh appears in the titles of two recent books published in Egypt and Lebanon, *Li-Ṭaḥyā al-Lugha al-'Arabiyya*: *Yasquṭ Sībawayh* (*Down with Sībawayh That Arabic Might Live*) by Sharīf al-Shūbāshī, and *Jināyat Sībawayh: al-Rafḍ al-Tāmm li-mā fī al-Naḥw min Awhām* (*Sībawayh's*

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61 Ibn al-Anbārī, *Kitāb al-Inṣāf*, 563.

62 See on standard language ideology James Milroy, "Language Ideologies and the Consequences of Standardization," *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 5, no. 4 (2001): 530–55. The investigation of the history of this discourse is a project I hope to complete soon.

Crime: Complete Rejection of Grammar's Delusions) by Zakareya Ouzon. However, neither book mentions Sībawayh the person in its contents; rather, the name sits powerfully and provocatively on the cover representing the ideology of linguistic correctness. We might paraphrase "Sībawayh" in these titles as "the powerful but antiquated, unmodern, oppressive body of rules known as 'Arabic grammar.'"[63] Of course, Sībawayh's Persian name makes it appealing for these purposes, as one can attack problems facing the Arabic language through a non-Arab(ic) icon. These contemporary writers could not very well title their books *May Arabic Grammar Die* or *The Crime of Arabic Grammar*. They are also well aware that the blame of Arabic's demise was laid at the feet of the Persian *mawālī* centuries ago. Hence, the name "Sībawayh" continues to be useful as the quintessential *other* that, like a lightning rod in a storm, carries the blame safely away from us.[64]

On the other hand, many of his biographers saw his successes as well as his defeats. Many accounts credit him with honesty and painstaking accuracy in noticing details. He may have failed in competition, but he was telling the truth. More than anything, his humiliations serve as reassurances in our frustrating attempts to master the complex rules of Arabic grammar. After all, if the most learned of us all failed in the face of the 'Arabiyya, perhaps we can all be excused for our shortcomings.

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63 Yasir Suleiman analyzes these works in a language-ideology framework in "Arabic Language Reforms, Language Ideology, and the Criminalization of Sībawayh," in *Grammar as a Window onto Arabic Humanism: A Collection of Articles in Honour of Michael G. Carter*, ed. Lutz Edzard and Janet Watson (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 66–83.

64 Even so, as Suleiman points out, al-Shūbāshī's book provoked outrage in Egypt, with calls for his dismissal from the Ministry of Culture. Suleiman, "Arabic Language Reforms," 69.

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Sarah Bowen Savant[1]
Naming Shuʿūbīs

The term *Shuʿūbiyya* is most often used to refer to a movement of skilled orators and poets that originated in the ʿIrāqī heartland of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate in the eighth century. In theory, the movement stood for the equality of Arabs and non-Arabs in Muslim society, but in reality it often advocated the superiority of non-Arabs. The Shuʿūbīs' name derived from the Qurʾanic verse they quoted to justify their goals, namely, "We have made you peoples (*shuʿūb*) and tribes that you may know one another. The noblest of you in the sight of God is the most pious."[2] Despite their rhetoric of equality, the Shuʿūbīs reportedly insulted Arabs in ways that, from a modern perspective, seem bigoted (for example, referring to them as lizard eaters). For this reason, calling someone a Shuʿūbī has for centuries called up a set of negative associations.

Since at least the nineteenth century, students of classical Islam have searched for the Shuʿūbīs' wider ambitions. A pioneer, Ignaz Goldziher, described the Shuʿūbīs in nationalist terms as Muslim Persians waging a "literary battle" against Arabs.[3] In a short book chapter, Hamilton A. R. Gibb described a "move-

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1 I would like to thank Wadad Kadi, Patricia Crone, Antoine Borrut, and John Hayes for their helpful comments on this paper and Rida al-Arabi for advice on problematic passages in Arabic.
2 Qurʾan 49:13. Cited, e. g., in Ibn Qutayba, *Faḍl al-ʿArab wa-l-Tanbīh ʿalā ʿUlūmihā*, ed. Walīd Maḥmūd Khāliṣ (Abu Dhabi: al-Mujammaʿ al-Thaqāfī, 1998), 109; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn, Aḥmad al-Zayn, and Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Cairo: Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1940–53), 3:404.
3 Goldziher saw an "intimate connection" between Shuʿūbiyya and "the political and literary renaissance of the Persians" and advanced the argument that the movement arose in a "political and social atmosphere" characterized by the growth of "foreign elements in Islam," growing displacement of Arabs in places of power, and even a revival of Persian religious customs and the "defiant reaction of the ʿAjam element against Islam" itself. These foreign elements ultimately achieved foreign rule and the emergence of independent dynasties within the caliphate, breaking not only the caliphate's power but "also that of the nation from which this institution stemmed." *Muslim Studies*, ed. S. M. Stern (Chicago: Aldine, 1966), 1:137, 40–44; translated by C. R. Barber and Stern from *Muhammedanische Studien*, 2 vols. (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1889–90). The Shuʿūbīs are discussed in three chapters: "'Arab and ʿAjam"; "The Shuʿūbiyya"; and "The Shuʿūbiyya and Its Manifestation in Scholarship." Regarding Goldziher, Edward G. Browne wrote: "For our knowledge of the Shuʿúbí controversy and the literature which it evoked, of which echoes only are preserved in the works of al-Jáḥidh († A. D. 869) and Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi († A. D. 940), we are chiefly indebted to Goldziher's excellent *Muhammedanische Studien*, already so freely cited in this chapter." Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1909), 1:268; similarly, Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 280–81.

ment" that was not "in any sense a Persian nationalist movement," but rather one that reflected competing cultural values and a struggle over the "inner spirit of Islamic culture," in which the Shuʿūbīs—while touting egalitarianism—sought to promote as models Sasanian institutions and values.[4] Roy Mottahedeh, Susanne Enderwitz, and Louise Marlow have emphasized the importance of questions of status to partisans of the Shuʿūbiyya.[5] Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi connected nascent Husaynid Shiʿi sentiment to the Shuʿūbiyya.[6] Most recently, Patricia Crone has referred to Shuʿūbīsm as a form of "post-colonialism."[7] Many scholars, such as Aḥmad Amīn and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dūrī, who work in Arabic—the language in which the phenomenon appeared—have also analyzed a Shuʿūbī "movement" (ḥaraka),[8] as have scholars working in Persian.[9] A modern Shuʿūbiyya phenomenon has also been defined based on the existence of a prior classical

4 Gibb described the movement's members as the class of court secretaries who felt a "violent hostility to the Arab tradition and to all that belonged to it, and above all to the claims put forward on behalf of Arabic culture." Gibb, "The Social Significance of the Shuubiya," in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, ed. Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (Boston: Beacon, 1962), 66. See also his "Government and Islam under the Early ʿAbbasids: The Political Collapse of Islam," in *L'élaboration de l'Islam: colloque de Strasbourg*, 12–13–14 juin 1959 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961), 115–27, esp. 123.

5 As Enderwitz wrote, "It was not simply a question of the triumph of one cultural tradition over another; rather, it was a matter of status. At risk was not just the reputation of the Persian court literature but the social privileges of the secretaries who followed its tradition. Meanwhile, the Arab and Islamic literature was not simply a product of isolated philologists and jurists but reflected the world-view of the new citizens." Enderwitz, "al-Shuʿūbiyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al.; on al-Jāḥiẓ and the Shuʿūbiyya, see her *Gesellschaftlicher Rang und ethnische Legitimation: Der arabische Schriftsteller Abū ʿUtmān al-Gāḥiẓ über die Afrikaner, Perser und Araber in der islamischen Gesellschaft* (Freiburg: Schwarz, 1979). See also Mottahedeh, "The Shuʿûbîyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976): 161–82, and Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. 98–99 and 104–8.

6 Amir-Moezzi, "Shahrbānū, dame du pays d'Iran et mère des imams: entre l'Iran préislamique et le Shiisme imamite," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 27 (2002): 519–20, and *The Spirituality of Shiʿi Islam: Beliefs and Practices* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 75–76.

7 Crone, "Post-Colonialism in Tenth-Century Islam," *Der Islam* 83, no. 1 (2006): 2–38.

8 Amīn, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, [1933–36]), 1:49–78, and al-Dūrī, *Al-Judhūr al-Taʾrīkhiyya li-l-Shuʿūbiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa, 1962).

9 E. g., ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Du Qarn Sukūt* (Tehran: Jāmiʿah-yi Līsānsiyyahā-yi Dānishsarā-yi ʿĀlī, 1330/1951; 2nd ed., Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1336/1957), 326–32, and *Tārīkh-i Īrān baʿd az Islām* (Tehran: Idārah-yi Kull-i Nigārash-i Vizārat-i Āmūzish va Parvarash, 1343/1964), 452–56. Ādhartāsh Ādharnūsh, *Chālish-i Miyān-i Farsī va ʿArabī: Sadah-hā-yi Nukhust* (Tehran: Nay, 1385/2006).

one.[10] Indeed, H. T. Norris summed up the scholarly consensus when he referred to the Shuʿūbiyya as "[o]ne of the most striking movements in Arabic cultural history and literature."[11]

What is absolutely astounding about this research, however, is the slimness of its evidential base—especially in comparison with research on other movements of Islamic history. In biographical works and literary anthologies from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries we have a few references to Shuʿūbīs, but there are virtually none in chronographies, heresiographies, or works on genealogy, even though since Goldziher scholars have stressed genealogy as a particularly Shuʿūbī interest.[12] We do have an apparent rebuttal to the Shuʿūbīs authored by the ninth-century courtier Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889),[13] as well as a Shuʿūbī statement of unknown origins that was reproduced in tenth-century al-Andalus by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi and, also in medieval Spain, a rebuttal to the Shuʿūbiyya in al-An-

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10 See esp. S. A. Hanna and G. H. Gardner, "Al-Shuʿūbiyya Up-Dated: A Study of the 20th Century Revival of an Eighth Century Concept," *Middle East Journal* 20 (1966): 335–51.

11 Norris writes that "[o]pinion now favours the view" of the Shuʿūbiyya as "a movement, widespread among the new middle class of mixed race and the influential government secretaries (*kātib*s), aimed at remolding the political and social institutions and the whole spirit of Islamic culture on the model of Sasanian institutions and values, which were then in favor and which the new urban society and the administrative class held forth as the highest ideal." He continues: "It is clear, though, that the movement was not confined to secretaries, but was wider, nor can its aims be so clearly defined." He also states that "while the political impact of Shuʿūbiyyah is hard to assess, it was undoubtedly of notable impact in the history of Arabic literature and [of] consequence for the evolution of Islamic doctrines." "Shuʿūbiyyah in Arabic Literature," in *ʿAbbasid Belles-Lettres*, ed. Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 31. Gérard Lecomte was an early skeptic about an organized Shuʿūbī movement. The Shuʿūbiyya was not "un mouvement concerté avec des chefs, un programme et des porte-parole," but represented instead "une tendance diffuse," coinciding "souvent avec des aspirations religieuses et intellectuelles hétérodoxes." As he writes, "Ce n'est pas par hasard si les auteurs anciens donnent l'impression de confondre Šuʿūbiyya et Zandaqa." Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba (mort en 276/889): l'homme, son œuvre, ses idées* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1965), xiii. More recently, see Zoltán Szombathy, "Some Notes on the Impact of the Shuʿūbiyya on Arabic Genealogy," in *Goldziher Memorial Conference*, ed. Éva Apor and István Ormos (Budapest: Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2005), 255–69.

12 But see again Szombathy, "Some Notes on the Impact of the Shuʿūbiyya on Arabic Genealogy," 255–69.

13 I am translating this text with Peter Webb for New York University Press's new Library of Arabic Literature. Ibn Qutayba, *The Superiority of the Arabs and an Exposition of Their Learning: A Translation of Ibn Qutaybah's Faḍl al-ʿArab wa-l-tanbīh ʿalā ʿulūmihā*, Pt. 1 translated by Sarah Bowen Savant, pt. 2 by Peter Webb; Arabic edition text by James Montgomery and Peter Webb (New York: New York University Press, forthcoming).

dalus composed by Ibn García.[14] We do not, however, have the name of a single self-proclaimed Shuʿūbī. The way that modern scholars have forged ahead despite the slimness of sources—and, by necessity, repeatedly citing the same sources—might be based, in part, on the assumption that evidence that would elucidate the movement has not survived because the Shuʿūbīs were losers in a cultural battle.[15] More troublingly, it appears to be based on the idea that a phenomenon of limited historical duration was representative of the perspective of many Iranians, and therefore it is safe to extrapolate from what slight evidence we do have. In other words, Shuʿūbism was a prototypical reaction of Iranians to the Arab conquests and Arab culture. We need not be constrained by the limits of our evidence.

In what follows, I argue that scholars have greatly overestimated the extent and importance of the Shuʿūbī movement and that overstating the Shuʿūbiyya crowds out more searching investigations of the situation of non-Arabs in early Islam. Furthermore, it plays into the hands of modern nationalist polemics, in which *Shuʿūbiyya* has been a term of condemnation.

An Exchange at Court

Let us start with an example of someone who might sound like a typical Shuʿūbī—the Persian Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī (from the courtly al-Munajjim family)—and a story that modern historians have interpreted as an episode within a Shuʿūbiyya movement.

In his reporting on life at court in the *hijrī* year 295/907–8, Muḥammad Abū Bakr al-Ṣūlī (d. ca. 335/947) recalls that he would often see Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī in the presence of ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Muʿtazz (d. 296/908). Ibn al-Muʿtazz was a member of the ʿAbbāsid clan and, like Yaḥyā, an accomplished poet. One day, al-Ṣūlī came upon Yaḥyā and a small group of courtiers who had with them a poem boasting about the ʿ*Ajam* (a relational term signifying non-Arabs, with the first marker being "Persians"),[16] which al-Ṣūlī wrote down in a notebook in which he habitually recorded poetry. Later, as was his habit, Ibn al-Muʿtazz came to look at a dictation of his own poetry in al-Ṣūlī's notebook, and so happened upon the boasting poem, for which al-Ṣūlī had not recorded an author. The poem began by addressing the

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14 James T. Monroe, *The Shuʿūbiyya in al-Andalus: The Risāla of Ibn García and Five Refutations* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970); Göran Larsson, *Ibn García's Shuʿūbiyya Letter: Ethnic and Theological Tensions in Medieval al-Andalus* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).
15 Amīn, for example, explains the failure of Shuʿūbī writings to survive as due to the common agreement among Muslims to oppose Shuʿūbiyya as an anti-Islamic tendency. *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, 1:70.
16 See Savant, *The New Muslims of Post-Conquest Iran: Tradition, Memory, and Conversion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), esp. 8–12.

sons of Hagar, the concubine of the prophet Abraham. By this, the poet meant the Arabs as the offspring of Hagar's son, Ishmael. The poem ran for some twenty-four lines with insults to the Arabs and to the Prophet's kinsmen, the Banū Hāshim,[17] and praise for the Persians, who were named as descendants of Abraham's other son, Isaac. The poem stated that the one who most deserves Muḥammad is the one who follows him, as opposed to his Arab kin, and concluded with lines that said that the Arabs are not like the "freemen of Persia" (*aḥrār Fāris*) who "are leaders, like a lion in his den," with their protection from Kisrā.

When he read the poem, Ibn al-Muʿtazz's face changed, showing his anger. What followed is the material of literary drama. Ibn al-Muʿtazz asked who had dictated the poem. Al-Ṣūlī replied that the reciter attributed the lines to one of the Ṭāhirids. "Which of the Ṭāhirids uttered something like this?" asked Ibn al-Muʿtazz. Interrupting them, Yaḥyā, who was present, said, "That is [all] that the one who recited them claimed," and thus affirmed al-Ṣūlī's vague response but offered no clarification. Ibn al-Muʿtazz departed quickly, but the next day he summoned al-Ṣūlī and again asked him to identify the poet, swearing that he knew who the poet was anyway because of a particular word he had used, and that the poet was Yaḥyā.

Ibn al-Muʿtazz, one learns, was right. Outraged, he subsequently dictated to the courtiers a poem in response to Yaḥyā's, but nearly twice as long, in which, as a point of pride for the tribe of Quraysh, he mentioned Muḥammad as the Prophet by whom God had "shattered the heads" of Persia's past kings.[18] Ibn al-Muʿtazz's insults referred to Persians as dogs, goats, pigs, and various types of parasitic insects. He also called the Persians "a tribe of sinners" (*banū'l-athama*); accused the Persians of insincerity in Islam; and attributed to them, as presumed Zoroastrians, religiously sanctioned incest. He addressed the Persians, saying:

> O you people, a most wicked people, that laid down
> A religion that carries evidence of its error!
> In which an old woman keeps kneeling down over
> Her son in bed, full of lust![19]

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17 This term referred in early ʿAbbāsid times to the descendants of Hāshim b. ʿAbd Manāf, the common ancestor of the Prophet, ʿAlī, and al-ʿAbbās. It is used here to refer to the ruling ʿAbbāsid members of that family.
18 Al-Ṣūlī, *Qism min Akhbār al-Muqtadir bi-llāh al-ʿAbbāsī*, ed. Khalaf Rashīd Nuʿmān (Baghdad: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Iʿlām, Dār al-Shuʾūn al-Thaqāfiyya al-ʿĀmma, Āfāq ʿArabiyya, 1999), 81, lines 3–4. See Savant, "Isaac as the Persians' Ishmael," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2006): 10–12, where I briefly discuss the exchange between Yaḥyā and Ibn al-Muʿtazz.
19 Al-Ṣūlī, *Qism*, 81, lines 2 and 4–5.

Al-Ṣūlī reports that the matter quieted down until Yaḥyā composed a reply, which, as far as al-Ṣūlī knew, Yaḥyā recited only to his son Aḥmad, al-Ṣūlī himself, and a close confidant named Ibn al-Nūshajānī. Somehow, however, Ibn al-Muʿtazz learned of Yaḥyā's second poem, whereupon Yaḥyā accused al-Ṣūlī and the others of circulating it. Seeking to prove their innocence, al-Ṣūlī challenged Yaḥyā to compose yet another poem, not recite it to the group, and then see what would happen. As expected, this poem also reached Ibn al-Muʿtazz, proving the group's innocence. Al-Ṣūlī writes that after Ibn al-Muʿtazz's failed bid for the caliphate later that year, Yaḥyā revealed that he had, in fact, shared his poems also with a friend from the ʿAjam who had feigned hatred for Ibn al-Muʿtazz and who had begged Yaḥyā to let him read his poems first.[20] The friend had then betrayed Yaḥyā by revealing the poems to Ibn al-Muʿtazz. Al-Ṣūlī quotes Yaḥyā: "I had no idea that he wanted by that only to draw near to Ibn al-Muʿtazz and to help him become caliph so that he could become his vizier."[21]

In his rather generous reporting of these events, al-Ṣūlī presents himself as a neutral witness but shows sensitivity to his own place before Ibn al-Muʿtazz as a courtier before a powerful, if ultimately failed, would-be caliph. Thus, al-Ṣūlī says that he marveled at Ibn al-Muʿtazz's knowledge of poetry since "this in rulers (*al-mulūk*) is rare."[22] Al-Ṣūlī writes that if a ruler does excel in knowledge, he will excel over all others, especially if the ruler is from the Banū Hāshim; for, he writes,

> they are the finest of people in understanding, the most subtle in intellect, and the best natured. All one of them needs is a flick of a match for his fire to burn brightly. By contrast, I do not know at that time any poet possessed of prudence, religion, virtue, and understanding who did not insult Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī on account of his first lines of poetry.[23]

Shuʿūbism as a Biographical Detail

Yaḥyā makes what would appear to be a classical set of Shuʿūbī boasts, which were documented a generation earlier by Ibn Qutayba, including the insults con-

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20 Yaḥyā identifies the friend as Muḥammad b. Dāwūd al-Jarrāḥ (d. 296/908–9); he was the uncle of the ʿAbbāsid vizier ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Dāwūd (d. 334/946); the family was heavily involved in the conspiracy to put Ibn al-Muʿtazz on the throne. See H. Bowen, "ʿAlī b. ʿĪsà," in *Encylopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed, ed. P. Bearman et al.

21 Al-Ṣūlī, *Qism*, 82.

22 Al-Ṣūlī, *Qism*, 86.

23 Al-Ṣūlī, *Qism*, 86.

cerning Hagar and Isaac.[24] Modern scholars have accordingly identified Yaḥyā as a Shuʿūbī. But neither al-Ṣūlī nor Yaḥyā's contemporaries call him a Shuʿūbī, nor do later chroniclers of the ʿAbbāsid court.[25]

One finds a similar situation with regard to other figures whom modern scholars have labeled Shuʿūbīs.[26] Based chiefly on biographical works and literary anthologies—that is, our main sources for the Shuʿūbiyya—let me now state my argument for narrowing the extent of a historical movement.

First, classical biographers use the term *Shuʿūbiyya* mainly for ʿAbbāsid insiders living during the reigns of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–93/786–809) and al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218/813–33). The setting for the label is Iraq (especially Baghdad). In contrast, modern scholars have labeled also many later figures as Shuʿūbīs and extended the geographical scope of the movement beyond Iraq to include figures whose milieu was Iran and Transoxiana, for example, al-Bīrūnī (d. after 442/1050). Their citation of sources is highly selective and disregards the silence in our sources about Shuʿūbism. For example, the scholar Khalīl Ibrāhīm Jaffāl cited statements by Ibn al-Nadīm and Yāqūt that a certain "ʿAllān al-Warrāq" was a Shuʿūbī. Ibn al-Nadīm and Yāqūt do not call Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 350/961), a Shuʿūbī, nor does Yāqūt call al-Bīrūnī one (Ibn al-Nadīm predates al-Bīrūnī), but this did not stop Jaffāl from doing so.[27] In terms of evidence, then, we see much greater priority given to positive versus negative identification.

Second, why do our sources not label their contemporaries Shuʿūbīs? The creative periods of persons most commonly identified as the Shuʿūbīs' opponents—al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–9), Ibn Qutayba, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023), and Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Jahmī—followed the reigns of al-Rashīd and al-Maʾmūn.[28] In

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24 Ibn Qutayba, *Faḍl al-ʿArab wa-l-Tanbīh ʿalā ʿUlūmihā*, 46 ff.; see also Monroe, *The Shuʿūbiyya in al-Andalus*, 24.

25 According to Ibn Khallikān, during the reign of al-Muktafī, that is, the period of Yaḥyā's encounter with Ibn al-Muʿtazz, Yaḥyā's rank rose high and he was promoted over al-Muktafī's personal retinue (*khawāṣihi*) and companions. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, 6:198.

26 Similarly, in his own biographical work on poets, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shuʿarāʾ*, Ibn al-Muʿtazz includes separate, lengthy entries for Bashshār b. Burd and Abū Nuwās and repeatedly mentions Abū ʿUbayda, but he does not describe them as Shuʿūbīs. Some of the biographical information he provides flatters. *Ṭabaqāt al-Shuʿarāʾ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1956), 21–31, 193–217.

27 Jaffāl, *al-Shuʿūbiyya wa-l-Adab: Abʿād wa-Maḍmūnāt min al-ʿAṣr al-Jāhilī ḥattā al-Qarn al-Rābiʿ al-Hijrī* (Beirut: Dār al-Niḍāl, 1986), esp. 330–32.

28 Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933) is sometimes also labeled as an opponent of the Shuʿūbiyya. Goldziher described Ibn Durayd's *Kitāb al-Ishtiqāq* ("a genealogical etymological handbook") in the context of "linguistic Shuʿūbiyya" as "the oldest of the documents belonging to this pro-Arab series." He did not call him an opponent of the Shuʿūbiyya per se but noted that in the book "he

his polemic, for example, Ibn Qutayba gives a few names,[29] but while he criticizes Abū ʿUbayda (d. ca. 210/825) for being unfair to Arabs, he does not specifically call him a Shuʿūbī, nor does he employ the term when he provides a biographical description of Abū ʿUbayda in his *al-Maʿārif*. The Shuʿūbī statement reported by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi and so often cited by modern scholars is likewise devoid of names or context. Rather, the application of the label exclusively to people long dead and gone would suggest a way of retrospectively imagining a category for the purpose of chastening one's contemporaries. Furthermore, it is worth noting that al-Tawḥīdī[30] does not mention the term Shuʿūbiyya in a passage commonly cited to prove his opposition to the movement; rather, he expresses doubts about Persian cultural influence and pride, including at court.

Third, the ideological content of Shuʿūbism as described in the sources is noticeably narrow. The biographers say that the Shuʿūbīs said things that insulted Arabs, and consequently they draw a very close connection between Shuʿūbiyya and anti-Arab bias. Contrary to Gibb, they do not indicate that the Shuʿūbīs promoted Persian culture, even when the person in question did indeed do so, nor do they characterize Shuʿūbism as a cultural phenomenon in any meaningful way, such as by attributing to it an agenda, proponents, and a public profile.

Consider the case of Sahl b. Hārūn (d. ca. 215/830), whom biographers named as a Shuʿūbī and who was a Persian cultural proponent if ever there was one.[31]

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answers opponents by investigating the etymological context of every Arabic tribal name. The representatives of the opposing party are unfortunately not cited by name. Presumably they were people of the same type as the Shuʿūbiyya." *Muslim Studies*, 1:192; *Muhammedanische Studien*, 1:209. See also, e. g., Nicholson, *Literary History*, 280.

29 For example, in one case he refers to "their poet," without providing a name. The poem cited is attributed elsewhere to Abū Nuwās (d. 198–200/813–15). See Savant, "Isaac as the Persians' Ishmael," 6–7 and 16n4. For Abū Nuwās's possible Shuʿūbism, including as it was viewed by Ibn Qutayba, see Albert Arazi, "Abū Nuwās fut-il Šuʿūbite?," *Arabica* 26 (1979): 61. Cf. Jaffāl, *Shuʿūbiyya*, 289 ff. See also Ewald Wagner, *Abū Nuwās* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1965), 136 ff.

30 Al-Tawḥīdī has been described as a respondent to the Shuʿūbiyya based on a section of his *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-Muʾānasa* in which he addresses the relative merits of Arabs and other peoples. In it, al-Tawḥīdī responds to the Sāmānid vizier al-Jayhānī, who reportedly insulted the Arabs; the terms Shuʿūbī and Shuʿūbiyya are absent. Al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-Imtāʿ wa-l-Muʾānasa*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ṭawīlī (Tunis, al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1988), 55–72, esp. 66 ff. For al-Jayhānī as a Shuʿūbī, see e. g. Mottahedeh, "Shuʿūbīyah Controversy," 180. Cf. Marc Bergé, *Pour un humanisme vécu: Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1979), 9–14.

31 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 174; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ*, 4:258–9; al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-Wafayāt*, ed. Aḥmad al-Arnāʾūṭ and Turkī Muṣṭafā (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2000), 16:13. See also Mohsen Zakeri, "Sahl b. Hārūn b. Rāhawayh," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. and Abdelkader Mehiri, ed. and trans., *An-Namir Wa-T-Taʿlab* (La panthère et le renard) (Tunis: Publications de l'Université de Tunis, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines,

Sahl was a prominent figure in stories about the caliphates of Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Maʾmūn and certainly appears to have been a supporter of a Persian cultural heritage. ʿAbbāsid-era writers mention his ʿAbbāsid connections, his position as a *kātib*, his writings, and the sayings for which he was known. Sahl is the primary witness that his younger contemporary al-Jāḥiẓ cites in his detailed account of the fall of the Barmakid viziers in 187/803 under Hārūn al-Rashīd.[32] Under al-Maʾmūn, Sahl served as the director of the House of Wisdom (*bayt al-ḥikma* or *khizānat al-ḥikma*). Sahl was, in fact, a contemporary of Yaḥyā b. ʿAlī Munajjim's grandfather (Yaḥyā b. Abī Manṣūr, d. 215–17/830–32), who also served in the Bayt al-Ḥikma.[33] Sahl is credited with introducing into Arabic literature an epistolary style in fables, and he was nicknamed the "Buzurgmihr of Islam." Mohsen Zakeri concluded that this nickname not only put Sahl in the rank of Buzurgmihr, vizier to the sixth-century Sasanian ruler Khusraw Anūshirvān (r. 531–79), but "also signified the role [Sahl] had assumed in the Persianization of al-Maʾmūn's court, that of the supreme wise man in politics and advisor to the caliph."[34] In fact, the book titles of works authored by Sahl that Ibn al-Nadīm lists suggest an interest in Persian storytelling traditions, in government (or, as ʿAbdelkader Mehiri writes, "problèmes du pouvoir et de la politique"), and in the memory of Persian kinship.[35]

But when biographers apply the Shuʿūbī label to Sahl, they connect it strictly to anti-Arab sentiment and not to other elements of his exciting life story. Ibn al-Nadīm thus states that Sahl was "wise, articulate, and a poet. He was Persian by origin, followed the Shuʿūbī way, felt a strong prejudice against the Arabs, and on that topic wrote many books and epistles."[36] Yāqūt (d. 626/1229) writes that Sahl was "an *adīb*, a secretary, a poet, and wise. [He was] a Shuʿūbī who felt great bias

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1973), 15. After writing that it seems that Sahl was among the "familiers" of al-Maʾmūn, Mehiri writes: "Mais le fait que les historiens ne mentionnent pas sa mort parmi les événements de 215/830–31 peut-il être considéré comme une indication sur le peu d'importance des fonctions qu'il exerçait? Ou bien ce silence est-il dû à l'incertitude de la date de sa mort."

32 The account here is transmitted by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *ʿIqd*, 5:58 ff., and is introduced as the reporting of al-Jāḥiẓ from Sahl. See also Zakeri, "Sahl b. Hārūn b. Rāhawayh"; and Sahl, *An-Namir*, 14. Cf. pseudo-Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma wa-l-Siyāsa*, ed. Khayrī Saʿīd ([Cairo]: al-Maktabat al-Tawfīqiyya, n. d.), 2:406 ff.

33 M. Fleischhammer, "Munadjdjim, Banu'l-," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al.

34 Zakeri, "Sahl b. Hārūn b. Rāhawayh."

35 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 174; Zakeri, "Sahl b. Hārūn b. Rāhawayh"; Sahl, *An-Namir*, 16.

36 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 174.

for the ʿAjam against the Arabs; he was extreme in that."[37] Al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) states that Sahl was "wise, eloquent, a poet, and an *adīb*; Persian in origin; and Shuʿūbī in persuasion (*madhhab*), with an intense prejudice against the Arabs."[38]

Another case mentioned by modern scholars is that of "Ghaylān the Shuʿūbī." In the tenth century, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī says that Ghaylān authored a book (*abdaʿa kitāban*) for Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 207/822), the Ṭāhir for whom the governorship was named. Ghaylān began with the defects (*mathālib*) of the Banū Hāshim and attached lies and falsehoods to the Prophet's family, the clans of Quraysh, and the rest of the Arabs. Ghaylān, Abū al-Faraj alleges, even found fault with (*ghamaṣa*) Muḥammad himself.[39]

A third example is provided in the thirteenth century by Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1248), who wrote in his biographical dictionary of grammarians that Abū ʿUbayda "was mentioning the Arabs so frequently that he became linked to the Shuʿūbiyya, on which he wrote a book."[40]

To premodern lexicographers who took stock of such evidence, the significance of the term *Shuʿūbī* was clear. They repeat the statement that "the Shuʿūbī is he who belittles the significance of the Arabs and does not see them as having precedence over others."[41] Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311–12), for example, states that a "Shuʿūbī" is one who holds the Arabs' authority in low regard (*muḥtaqir amr al-ʿArab*).[42] In fifteenth-century Egypt, al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) notes that the term *shuʿūb* was used most frequently in reference to "the Persian nation" and that "one who holds the Arabs and Arab culture in low regard is called a *shuʿūbī*."[43]

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37 Yāqūt, *Irshād al-Arīb ilā Maʿrifat al-Adīb* [*Muʿjam al-Udabāʾ*], ed. D. S. Margoliouth (London: Luzac, 1907–27), 4:258.

38 Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-Wafayāt*, 16:13.

39 *Al-Aghānī*, vol. 20, ed. ʿAlī al-Najdī Nāṣif (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya li-l-Kitāb, 1972), 77.

40 Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh al-Ruwāt ʿalā Anbāh al-Nuḥāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1950–73), 3:276–87, esp. 280 (no. 759, Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā Abū ʿUbayda al-Taymī al-Baṣrī). In his biography of Abū ʿUbayda, Ibn al-Qifṭī also cites ʿAllān al-Shuʿūbī (p. 285), on Abū ʿUbayda's origins, death date, and non-Arabic-speaking, Persian ethnic origins, but ʿAllān does not mention Shuʿūbism here. Goldziher argued for the Shuʿūbī flavor of Abū ʿUbayda's scholarship; *Muslim Studies*, 1:179 ff.

41 Al-Azharī (d. 370/980), *Tahdhīb al-Lugha*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn and rev. Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Najjār (Cairo: al-Muʾassasa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Anbāʾ wa-l-Nashr; al-Dār al-Miṣriyya li-l-Taʾlīf wa-l-Tarjama, 1964–67), 1:442 (sh-ʿ-b); Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (d. 606/1210), *al-Nihāya fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa-l-Athar* (Cairo: n. p., 1311/1893), 2:223 (sh-ʿ-b); and Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311–12) *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, [1955–56]), 3:440 (sh-ʿ-b).

42 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 3:440 (sh-ʿ-b).

43 Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Nizāʿ wa-l-Takhāṣum fīmā bayn Banī Umayya wa-Banī Hāshim*; translated by Clifford Edmund Bosworth as "Al-Maqrīzī's 'Book of Contention and Strife concerning the

In the eighteenth century, Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791) cites the statement that the Shuʿūbiyya is a party (*firqa*) that does not prefer the Arabs to the ʿAjam, adding for clarification: "They do not see them as having precedence over others."[44] The lexicographers pull together different uses of the root, including also the related term *shuʿūb* as used in a hadith (*rajul min al-shuʿūb aslama fa-kānat tukhadh minhu al-jizya*), but in none of these cases does the lexicographer provide meaningful embellishments on the traditional definition of Shuʿūbī.[45]

In modern scholarship, the narrowness of this definition is generally overlooked. When Abdelkader Mehiri, for example, seeks to disprove Sahl's Shuʿūbī loyalties, he does so chiefly with reference to the body of Sahl's work and what it represents by way of cultural aspirations.[46] To summarize, then: in the sources the Shuʿūbiyya label is applied mainly to ʿAbbāsid insiders living during the late eighth and early ninth centuries—but it is applied retrospectively, including by other ʿAbbāsid insiders, for persons they considered bigoted. In addition, proof of the ideological content of Shuʿūbism as such is very thin.

The Cost of Overstating the Shuʿūbiyya

In its infancy, Islam was a religion that sprang from Arabia and played a major role in the formation of an Arab identity. In Islam's first centuries, the cultural mixing that followed the conquests produced many uncertainties and questions. These included: Who would blend into whom and how? What would be the balance of cultural exchange? What cultural entities would come into being, and what would be the fate of earlier ones? Conversion introduced still further questions, such as how non-Arab peoples were to understand their relationship to a religion that originated in Arabia. Such questions were fundamental, and their importance for the development of early Muslim societies cannot be overestimated.

Relations between the Banū Umayya and the Banū Hāshim,'" *Journal of Semitic Studies* 3 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 103–4.

44 Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs*, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿAzabāwī, rev. Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrāʾī, and ʿAbd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj (Kuwait: al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1967), 3:143–44 (sh-ʿ-b).

45 See also al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Fāʾiq fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī and Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿārif, 2010), 2:253 (sh-ʿ-b).

46 Sahl b. Hārūn, *An-Namir*, 15. See also M. G. Balty-Guesdon, "Le Bayt al-Ḥikma de Baghdad," *Arabica* 39, no. 2 (1992), 142–45.

Although we know something about the major persons and events that produced the empires, there is far more work to be done to understand the variety of ways in which new Muslims negotiated cultural difference. The main danger in overstating the significance of the Shuʿūbiyya lies in the reduction of this variety of responses to a single one. This happens when the Shuʿūbiyya is interpreted beyond the texts at hand. Shuʿūbiyya can then easily become the paradigmatic expression of the "foreign elements in Islam," to quote Goldziher. Some rather nonsensical questions arise as a result, such as the relation between Shuʿūbīs and Khārijites, an issue addressed by Goldziher,[47] Amīn,[48] Gibb, and others. Gibb proposed that the "original *shuubiya* were the Khārijites,"[49] a belief echoed by Mottahedeh.[50] Similarly, figures with no connection to the context of the movement's origins are labeled Shuʿūbīs, as, for example, when Amīn considered Ibn Khaldūn a sort of Shuʿūbī.[51] And conflicts and debates that have nothing to do with the ʿAbbāsid court, such as that which occurred among Qurʾan exegetes over the term *shuʿūb*, are grafted onto a much earlier and different historical context. Courtly literature also gets simplified when, for example, texts such as al-Jāḥiẓ's diatribe against Persian court secretaries are read as a rebuttal to the

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47 Goldziher described an "affinity" between the Khārijites as "politico-religious dissenters" and the Shuʿūbīs, with both sharing in the "denial of privilege to any race." Goldziher nonetheless criticized prior historians of Islam who "made the representatives of the Shuʿūbiyya into Khārijites" and criticized characterizations of Abū ʿUbayda as both a Shuʿūbī and a Khārijite. Goldziher cites Brünnow, *Die Charidschiten unter den ersten Omajjaden* (Leiden, 1884), 31n4, to exemplify "old historians of Islam [who] made the representatives of the Shuʿūbiyya into Khārijites." *Muslim Studies*, 1:130–31, 142–43, and 181; *Muhammedanische Studien*, 1:138–39, 153–54, and 196–97.

48 To his credit, Amīn argues that equations of Khārijites with Shuʿūbīs are anachronistic; *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, 1:60.

49 Gibb, "Social Significance," 66–67. See Enderwitz, "al-Shuʿūbiyya," and Norris, "Shuʿūbiyyah in Arabic Literature," 33. Enderwitz writes, paraphrasing Gibb, "The original Shuʿūbiyya was the concept of extending the equality between the *shuʿūb* and the *ḳabāʾil* to include equality among all Muslims, and was adhered to by the Khāridjites in the early period of Islam. This idea countered the Ḳuraysh's claim to leadership. The Shuʿūbiyya movement, which appeared in the 2nd/8th century and reached its peak in the 3rd/9th century, had other, more diverse goals."

50 Mottahedeh argues that "the *shuʿûbîyah* had its origin as a movement with egalitarian tendencies among the Khârijites, the most egalitarian of early Islamic sects. Since, however, it was reinterpreted by the landlords and clerks for their own purposes, in most (though not all) cases it lost its egalitarian tenor. The *shuʿûbîs* and some of their opponents continued to use a rhetoric that has been mistaken for egalitarianism, but on closer examination has no such meaning." Mottahedeh, "Shuʿûbîyah Controversy," 176.

51 Amīn, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, 1:59.

Shuʿūbiyya even though he does not mention Shuʿūbīs there,[52] or worse, when the much wider *mufākhara* subgenre of Arabic letters gets read as a simple record of debate between Shuʿūbīs and their opponents. In the case of al-Ṣūlī's reporting on Yaḥyā and Ibn al-Muʿtazz, al-Ṣūlī is reporting on court life just prior to Ibn al-Muʿtazz's failed bid for the caliphate (Ibn al-Muʿtazz earned himself the nickname "the caliph of one day"). The exchange between Yaḥyā and Ibn al-Muʿtazz illustrates the conflicts that divided the ʿAbbāsid court at that time—but these were far different than those of a century prior during the days of al-Rashīd and al-Maʾmūn. That is why neither al-Ṣūlī nor al-Tanūkhī, who also reports on the conflict between Ibn al-Muʿtazz and Yaḥyā, label Yaḥyā a Shuʿūbī.[53]

What we seem to have with Shuʿūbism, then, is a name and a weapon employed by people such as Ibn Qutayba who saw themselves as defending Arabs and even Arab cultural values. It is important to bear in mind that Ibn Qutayba appended to his polemic against the Shuʿūbiyya an "exposition" of the Arabs' areas of knowledge, beginning with the following statement:

> Now we will discuss the Arabs' stake in different areas of knowledge and the wise sayings contained in their poetry and rhymed prose. We will not provide exhaustive coverage of any one subject, nor go into comprehensive detail, as our goal in this book is to raise awareness of, and offer evidence for, the Arabs' knowledge, and to rebut the arguments of those who call the Arabs boorish and stupid. There are two kinds of knowledge. One is Islamic, a product of the Muslim religion and the Arabic language. It includes jurisprudence, grammar and the study of poetic themes. These fields of knowledge are particular to the Arabs. Non-Arabs can only acquire such knowledge through learning and parroting; the Arabs alone possess the brilliance and glory of having developed them. The other is age-old knowledge common to all peoples. Of every field of knowledge of which I am aware, God has granted the Arabs a share, and in some of them, they alone came to possess unrivaled knowledge.[54]

Ibn Qutayba wrote at a very specific point in ʿAbbāsid history, amid discussions that were first and foremost about the meaning and value of an Arab identity, and during which he could see the changing cultural tide but could do little to stem it. Non-Arabs had been prominent at the court since the beginning of the ʿAbbāsid period and indeed even under the Umayyads. Now, they were dominant. Anxiety about their presence was real. Ibn Qutayba thus also wrote a book called *Adab*

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52 See Charles Pellat, trans., "Portrait of a Secretary," in *The Life and Works of Jāḥiẓ: Translations of Selected Texts* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 274–75.

53 Al-Muḥassin b. ʿAlī al-Tanūkhī, *Kitāb al-Faraj baʿd al-Shidda*, vol. 4, ed. ʿAbbūd al-Shāljī (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1978), 4:110 ff. (no. 402).

54 Ibn Qutayba, *The Superiority of the Arabs and an Exposition of Their Learning* (forthcoming).

al-Kātib in which he explained how his fellow courtiers could straighten their tongues and fix their writing. Al-Jāḥiẓ, slightly earlier, also bristled at the Iranian courtiers in whose midst he found himself. We should picture Ibn Qutayba and al-Jāḥiẓ as two men who were well-regarded by ruling elites. Two men who were non-Arabs themselves, but were loyal to the idea that Islam was born among the Arabs and that the Arabs therefore deserved a special place in Muslim society. They looked around for a name that captured what most irritated them about their contemporaries. They felt themselves, and their view of history, to be victims, and in a sense they were. Contempt for Arabs, or perhaps jealousy—the sort that is born whenever a group does not seem to live up to what its history claims for it—was real in some quarters, and it demanded a label. Ibn Qutayba, al-Jāḥiẓ, and other writers found one and thereby created a category that modern historians have used problematically, for by applying the label uncritically, they support the allegation that Ibn Qutayba himself made: Persian cultural values add up to bigotry.

There also is a layer of sarcasm, or perhaps humor, in anecdotes that mention the Shuʿūbiyya, which is sometimes missed by modern scholars. For example, Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (himself a Qurashī) states that the late Umayyad-era courtier Ismāʿīl b. Yasār (d. before 132/750) was a Shuʿūbī with an intense partisanship for the ʿAjam (*shuʿūbiyyan shadīd al-taʿaṣṣub li-l-ʿAjam*).[55] According to Abū al-Faraj, Ismāʿīl recited:

> Many a crowned head I call uncle, great ones of noble tribe.
> They are named "Persians" according to their excellent descent.
> Desist then, O Umāma, from boasting to us, leave injustice and speak the truth:
> While we brought up our daughters, you buried yours in the sands.

An Arab answered: "Indeed. You needed your daughters but we did not."[56] Ismāʿīl refers to the pre-Islamic Arabs' practice of burying newborn girls, which is condemned in the Qurʾan (Qurʾān 81:8). The Arab has the last word, however, with an allegation of Zoroastrian incest.[57]

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55 Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, vol. 1, pt. 4 (Būlāq: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa al-ʿĀmira, 1867), 121 (this being the edition used by Goldziher). Ibn al-Nadīm and Yāqūt do not mention Ismāʿīl b. Yasār, but see, e. g., al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi-l-Wafayāt*, 9:143–45. Al-Ṣafadī's reporting mentions that Ismāʿīl boasted in favor of the ʿAjam against the Arabs and that he was afflicted by *ʿaṣabiyya* for the ʿAjam. See Amīn's argument against labeling Umayyad-era figures such as Ismāʿīl b. Yasār as Shuʿūbīs, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, 1:56–57.

56 Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 1, pt. 4:120; trans. Goldziher (C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern), *Muslim Studies*, 1:148n3; *Muhammedanische Studien*, 1:160–61n3.

57 For another mention of this anecdote, see Raḍī al-Dīn al-Astarābādhī's (d. 684 or 686/1285–8) *Sharḥ Shāfiyat Ibn al-Ḥājib*, esp. 4:319. For the composition of this text, see H. Fleisch, "Ibn

Such name-calling can tell us very little about a social or cultural "movement," and likewise there is very little evidence of anything like a Shuʿūbī identity at any point in history. Far more commonly *Shuʿūbī* appears, rather, to have been a term for others whom one wished to tarnish as bigots. Shuʿūbism was thus a label, not a name. In other words, far from being a prototypical reaction of Iranians to the Arab conquests and Arab culture, Shuʿūbism as an abstract category was the invention of cultural conservatives such as Ibn Qutayba whose anxieties modern scholars may guess at but should not mistake as paradigmatic for Iranians or their cultural ambitions.

Finally, the case of the Shuʿūbiyya illustrates a general problem surrounding our own searches for prototypes, which is that they are often products of the environment in which modern historians work; the present manufactures the past. The present, of course, always inflects a historian's interpretation. The problem arises when this natural conditioning is not problematized. Historians have had a particularly hard time avoiding nationalist sentiment when dealing with the Shuʿūbiyya. A view of the Shuʿūbīs as nationalists has been discredited as an excessive reading of modern nationalism backward. But it is also important to realize that the term Shuʿūbiyya has often been used to censor opponents of Arab aspirations and ideology, ranging from Iraqi communists and the Left in general to Ṭāhā Ḥusayn. Several books and pamphlets have treated the Shuʿūbiyya, often with plainly Arab nationalist agendas. It is telling that Persian-language works on the phenomenon are comparatively rare. Scholars writing in European languages are sadly disconnected from this polemical use of the term and continue to use it naively in their scholarship, when across the Arabic-speaking world the name continues to conjure up a polemical context long after scholars such as the Iraqi ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Dūrī were taken to task by their compatriots for delivering in their scholarship on the Shuʿūbiyya thinly veiled attacks on contemporary opponents of pan-Arabism.[58] All the way back in 1964, Aḥmad ʿAbbās Ṣāliḥ, editor of Cairo's leading cultural monthly, *al-Kātib*, said of nationalists who used the term *Shuʿūbiyya*: "Although they have used it to dispel anti-Arab nationalist trends, the

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al-Ḥādjib," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al.

[58] Al-Dūrī explains in his introduction to *Al-Judhūr al-Taʾrīkhiyya li-l-Shuʿūbiyya* how he came to write his book: "Voices have been heard advocating that the Arab heritage be discarded, disparaging Arab culture, attacking Arab and Islamic values, and considering it reactionary to turn to these values. These voices have begun to derogate the concept of an Arab Nation and are trying to spread dissension and revolt in the name of regionalism or racialism ... It is because of all this that the writer has sought to present a critical, scientific view of the roots of Shuʿubiyya in Arab society." Cited by Nissim Rejwan in *Arabs in the Mirror: Images and Self-Images from Pre-Islamic to Modern Times* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 38–39.

weapon has proved to be two-edged – one edge, and the more dangerous of the two, leads to a despicable racialism and hysterical suspiciousness that attacks before it reflects or converses; the other edge is like an old weapon used to fight a new battle."[59] The Arabic-speaking Middle East has moved on from a fixation on Shuʿūbiyya, as it has from a fixation on Arab nationalism. It is time academics working outside of it do the same.

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Kambiz GhaneaBassiri

Prioritizing Metaphysics over Epistemology: Divine Justice (*'Adl*) and Human Reason (*'Aql*) in al-Shaykh al-Mufīd's Theology

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nuʿmān al-ʿUkbarī al-Baghdādī (ca. 336/948–413/1022), known also as Ibn al-Muʿallim but more commonly as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, was born in ʿUkbara, a town north of Baghdad along the Tigris river, at a time of major political transitions and new identity formation in Islamic history. He is widely recognized as the most prominent Imāmī Shiʿi scholar of his time who contributed to the changes during this period by mainstreaming the use of reason (*ʿaql*) in Imāmī theology (*Kalām*) and law (*fiqh*).[1] In this chapter, I examine his definition of justice (*ʿadl*) to shed light on the nature of his contribution to the development of Imāmī theology in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries.[2] I argue that his impact on Imāmī thought is best understood when his work is read as a product of its time, that is, as a distinctly Imāmī Shiʿi response to the monumental sociopolitical and religious changes experienced, not only by the Imāmī Shiʿa but by Muslims in general during the Būyid era (334–447/945–1055). The Imāmiyya felt a distinct need for a consolidation of religious authority because of the recent, indefinite occultation of their twelfth Imām. The decentralization of political and religious authority, however, was not unique to the

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1 The diversity of the following select references attests to how widespread al-Mufīd's reputation is for introducing reason into Imāmī Shiʿi thought: Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya fī Naqḍ Kalām al-Shīʿa* (Cairo: Būlāq, 1321/1902), 1:31; Dominique Sourdel, *L'Imamisme vu par le cheikh al-Mufīd* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1972), 21–22; Martin J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022)* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1978); Wilferd Madelung, "Imāmism and Muʿtazilite Theology," in *Le Shîʿisme imâmate*, ed. T. Fahd (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979), 21; Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shiʿite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 28; Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiʿism: The Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, trans. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 12–13, 90, and 138.

2 I studied al-Mufīd along with other early Muslim theologians with Dr. Mahdavi Damghani. I benefited tremendously from Dr. Mahdavi Damghani's erudition and always regretted that, for a variety of reasons, I was not able to include al-Mufīd in my dissertation on conceptions of justice during the Būyid period. I am very grateful that this celebration of Dr. Mahdavi Damghani's scholarship, teaching, and magnanimity has provided me with an opportunity to revisit al-Mufīd's theology after all these years. Rereading him for this chapter brought me back to the seat across Dr. Mahdavi Damghani's desk in Coolidge Hall, Harvard University.

Imāmī community but rather was experienced by Muslims across the sectarian spectrum. Accordingly, al-Mufīd, who addressed this crisis of authority, was not solely responding to an Imāmī Shi'i problem as a religious intellectual or an *'ālim* but also to a prominent problem of his times as an Imāmī Shi'i. As such, he was open to learning and selectively borrowing from other sects who were similarly addressing theological problems at a time of political and religious flux. His openness to learning from varying sects can be clearly seen in his theological treatise, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, where in addition to stating his own theological conclusions he expresses agreements as well as disagreements with the doctrines of different schools of thought. Sometimes his doctrinal positions were in line with the Baghdadi Mu'tazila and sometimes with traditionalists (*Aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*);[3] he did not aim to align Imāmī Shi'ism with any specific theological system but rather to formulate Imāmī doctrines in a logically consistent and coherent fashion.

The distinction I make between al-Mufīd as an Imāmī intellectual responding to general problems of his time and as an intellectual responding specifically to Imāmī Shi'i problems may seem pedantic, but ignoring it has been a central source of confusion in attempts to interpret al-Mufīd's contribution to Imāmī thought and, more specifically, in attempts to explain the role and place of *'aql* in his thought. Most interpretations of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd's thought focus on the degree to which he accepted *'aql* as a source of religious knowledge, thus deviating from the earlier Imāmiyya's heavy reliance on transmitted knowledge (*naql*) in the form of revelation and traditions (*ḥadīth*). Did he appropriate Mu'tazili rationalism for Imāmī thought?[4] If so, what are we to make of his unequivocal belief in the Prophet and the Imāms as sources of divine guidance and his reliance on their teachings? Alternately, rather than assimilating *'aql* into Imāmī Shi'ism, did he simply use rational theological discourse (*Kalām*) to defend Imāmī dogma and the teachings of the Imāms against their opponents?[5] If this was the case, are we to assume that he did not realize that rationalizing Imāmī doctrines would affect how they are conceived and formulated? This seems a highly unlikely assumption given that he wrote an entire book dedicated to carefully rephrasing and "correct-

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3 Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nu'mān al-Mufīd, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Zanjānī al-Khū'īnī, vol. 4 of *Silsilat mu'allafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufīd* (Beirut: Dār al-Mufīd, 1993).
4 This seems to be the question McDermott asks in *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd* even though his work is more descriptive than analytical.
5 This argument is made in Madelung, "Imāmism," 24–25, and Tamima Bayhom-Daou, *Shaykh Mufid* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 92.

ing" his traditionalist teacher's, the famed Ibn Bābawayh (d. 381/991–92), articulation of Imāmī doctrines.[6]

What is more likely is that for al-Mufīd, in the Baghdad of the late fourth/tenth and early fifth/eleventh centuries, the reasonableness of Imāmī doctrines were not in question as they were for later Muslim scholars and modern academics. His theological discourses presumed that Imāmī doctrines were essentially rational because they were in accord with the underlying structure of existence (metaphysics). Consequently, he used reason to doctrinally articulate the coherence of Imāmī beliefs and to define how humans ought to conceptualize God and God's relation to humanity.

Historical Context

The historical context of al-Mufīd's thought was marked by transitions in power structures and struggles for self-definition, the concurrence of which, ironically, created an intellectually open and culturally vibrant atmosphere that led such astute historians of the period as Adam Mez, Joel Kraemer, and Roy Mottahedeh to regard it as the "Renaissance of Islam."[7] Political authority was fragmented. The 'Umayyads, the Fāṭimids, and the 'Abbāsids all asserted their control over their respective territories by claiming to be the rightful vicegerents (*khulafā'*) of the Messenger of God. In the heartland of the Muslim empire, the Fertile Crescent, the 'Abbāsid Caliphate had come under the influence of regional dynasties who paid it nominal homage but in effect governed on its behalf. The seat of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, Baghdad, was under the control of the Būyids, a pro-Shi'i dynasty who, in 352/963–64, for the first time, officially sanctioned the public commemoration of the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn in Baghdad,[8] and patronized the celebration of the festival of *Ghadīr Khumm*, named after the place where the Shi'i believe Prophet Muḥammad designated his cousin and son-in-law, 'Alī ibn

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6 Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nu'mān al-Mufīd, *Taṣḥīḥ al-I'tiqādāt*, ed. Ḥusayn Dargāhī, vol. 5 of *Silsilat mu'allafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufīd*.

7 Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, trans. Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh and D. S. Margoliouth (London: Luzac, 1934); Joel Kramer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival During the Buyid Age* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986); and Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, 2nd ed. (1980; reprint, London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 31. Mottahedeh rightly points out that "this description does not quite fit (what is being reborn?)," but he goes on to affirm that "no one would deny the flowering of culture in this period."

8 Abū al-Maḥasin Yūsuf ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-Z*āhira fī *Mulūk Miṣr wa al-Qāhira* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, n.d.), 334.

Abī Ṭālib, as his successor.[9] These public commemorations helped define the practices involved in Shi'i public rituals for years to come, as well as demonstrate the growing influence and self-confidence of the Shi'i under the Būyids. They also heightened sectarian tensions and contributed to the consolidation of a Sunni identity in reaction to Shi'ism.[10] Sunnis in Baghdad responded with their own festivals to commemorate the death of Muṣ'ab ibn al-Zubayr, the governor of Iraq who defeated the proto-Shi'i rebellion of al-Mukhtār, and *Yawm al-Ghār*, the day Abū Bakr and Muḥammad hid in a cave to evade capture by their Meccan opponents.[11]

The decentralization of power at this time allowed for the formation of smaller courts in place of a single imperial court; these smaller courts competed with one another for the patronage of religious scholars, scientists, historians, poets, and philosophers.[12] Emirs and viziers hosted poetry competitions and theological and scholarly debates. These debates had a formative effect on many religious thinkers of the era,[13] including al-Mufīd, who was acknowledged as "the tongue of the Imamiyya" for his skill in disputation.[14] In these intellectual gatherings, participants had to develop a language and a system of argumentation that transcended their sectarian or disciplinary mode of discourse because their opponents were unlikely to share their disciplinary presuppositions or accept their partisan sources. Debates exposed scholars to different methods of reasoning and various understandings of human nature, epistemology, metaphysics, and the human-God relationship. Debate participants were thus compelled to think about and to represent their sectarian beliefs and opinions in relation to one another. Scholarly disputations helped unify the form in which varying religious beliefs were articulated and brought them into conversation with one another even if they did not reconcile sectarian differences.

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9 Abū al-Farj 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī Ta'rīkh al-Mulūk wa al-'Umam* (Hyderabad: Da'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, AH 1358), 7:15; Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rīkh* (Cairo, 1290/1873), 9:58.

10 For a recent discussion of the formation of Sunni identity in relation to Shi'ism, as well as pro-Umayyad factions during the 'Abbāsid caliphate, see Abbas Barzegar, "Remembering Community: Historical Narrative in the Formation of Sunni Islam" (PhD diss., Emory University, 2010).

11 Ibn 'Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 9:58.

12 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 31.

13 E. Wagner, "Munāẓara," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005).

14 Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb al-'Ibar fī Khabar man Ghabar*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Kuwait: Maṭba'at Ḥukūmat al-Kuwait, 1960–66), 3:114–15, cited in McDermott, *Theology*, 9.

"The weakness of government threw society back on its own resources," leaving its members to innovate and institutionalize means of regulating social and economic affairs.[15] The ulema, along with other elites, played a central role in this process. As they gained more notoriety and authority in arbitrating and managing social affairs, they attracted the attention and patronage of rulers who sought to legitimize their own political authority over provinces with whose inhabitants they often had little in common ethnically, historically, or (in the case of the Būyids) religiously.[16] The increasing importance of the ulema in public life combined with the increasing patronage of the ulema as a social class paved the way for the institutionalization of their positions in society as teachers, jurists, and judges, and helped formalize their legal and theological teachings through the establishment of *madrasa*s and *madhhab*s (legal and theological schools of thought).

This increased professionalization of the ulema and the consolidation of religious beliefs and identities affected the historical development of both Sunni and Shi'i Islam. Its tempo, however, was different for the Imāmiyya. Because of its political marginalization and quietist interpretation of the Imām as a religious leader whose spiritual and political authority it fell upon Muslims to oblige rather than on the Imām himself to assert through insurrection, Imāmī Shi'ism was able to remain chiliastic yet aloof from the political exigencies of governing a diverse empire.[17] Up until the turn of the fourth/tenth century, the Imāmiyya also had little reason to develop a methodology for discerning orthodoxy and orthopraxy because they could theoretically, if not always practically, access divine guidance through the Imām.

Over time physical access to the Imām was severely restricted. Beginning with the ninth Imām, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Taqī al-Jawād (195–220/811–35), the 'Abbāsids tried to control access to the Imāms and kept a watchful eye on their activities as rivals to the throne. The eleventh Imām, for example, came to be known as Ḥasan al-'Askarī, because he resided in the 'Abbāsid army camp (*'askar*) in Samarra.[18] Consequently, by the time Ḥasan al-'Askarī died in 260/873, leaving no apparent heir, the Imāmiyya had become accustomed to not having direct access to their source of divine guidance even though in theory their creed was

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15 Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership*, 39.

16 Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), in particular 147–66 and 213.

17 Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*.

18 Heinz Halm, *Shiism*, trans. Janet Watson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 34.

based on such access.[19] In practice, the Imāmiyya had developed a system by which confidants of the Imām administered the community on his behalf. Indeed, following the demise of the eleventh Imām, while the community was frantically struggling to identify its new leader, his associates continued to collect and distribute requisite alms on behalf of the Imām. One of these associates, Abū 'Amr al-Amrī, was nicknamed *al-Sammān* ("butter merchant") "because he carried the money collected from Iraqi communities to Sāmarrā hidden in a butter sack." These associates also continued to respond to petitions received from the community on behalf of the Imām.[20] Eventually, as the doctrine of *ghayba* or "occultation" gained a foothold among the Imāmī Shi'i, these associates were canonized in the sacred history of the Imāmiyya as four successive "ambassadors" (*sufarā'*) or "trustees" (*wukalā'*) of the Twelfth Imām through whom they communicated with the occulted Imām.

The system the Imāmiyya developed to administer their community was robust enough that in 329/941 the notion of ambassadorship itself was abandoned and the Twelfth Imām was said to have gone into "total occultation" (*al-ghayba al-tāmma*) to reappear at an indefinite time as the *Mahdī* ("the rightly-guided") to establish justice on earth as the rightful leader of the Muslim community ('*umma*). It is worth noting that the ministerial system that the Imāmiyya progressively developed over several decades to accommodate their community's limited access to the Imām was at odds with the charismatic and chiliastic structure of Shi'ism, which centered around the figure of the Imām as an immediate source of divine guidance and salvation for humanity. Put differently, the Imāmiyya had a bureaucratic means of administering themselves but lacked a theological explanation for their community in the physical absence of the Imām.

For a while, gnostic understandings of the Imāms as celestial incarnates who provided a means to salvation by imparting to their followers secret knowledge of the divinity of the human soul offered one of the more persuasive theological explanations of what it meant to be a member of the Shi'i community without access to the Imām. Gnosticism, however, posed a serious threat to the legitimacy of divine law, and as such most Imāmī scholars ultimately rejected it as "extremist" (*ghuluww*).[21] As evidenced by the publication, and later canonization, of such *ḥadīth* collections as *al-Kāfī fī 'Ilm al-Dīn* ("what suffices in

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19 Hossein Modarressi Tabataba'i, *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam: Abū Ja'far ibn Qiba al-Rāzī and His Contribution to Imāmite Shī'ite Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 1993), 70.

20 Halm, *Shiism*, 36.

21 Bayhom-Daou, *Shaykh Mufīd*, 8–9; and Halm, *Shiism*, 42–43.

knowledge of religion") and *Man lā yaḥduruhu al-faqīh* ("one without access to a legal scholar"), the Imāmiyya sought to define themselves primarily through *ḥadīth*s of the Prophet and traditions of the Imām rather than through an esoteric connection with the Imām's divine knowledge. Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd was a student of the author of *Man lā yaḥduruhu al-faqīh*, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Bābuwayh (mentioned above) and succeeded him as the most prominent scholar of the Imāmiyya. By the time al-Mufīd was recognized in this role in the latter part of the fourth/tenth century, Imāmī scholars were faced with the dual task of 1) identifying the enduring, soteriological significance of the Imāms as intermediaries between God and humanity and 2) developing a means of discerning God's attributes and will without disrupting the structures the Imāmiyya had built to administer their communal lives. Al-Mufīd tended to the first of these tasks by penning a widely celebrated book on the biographies of the Imāms,[22] but it is his attempts to address the second task that preoccupies the rest of this chapter.

Al-Mufīd and Rationalism

Against this historical backdrop, it is easy to see why many scholars of Shiʿism have explained al-Mufīd's introduction of rational arguments into Imāmī Shiʿism as a solution to the problem of authority during the Great Occultation. *ʿAql* already had a prominent place in early Imāmī literature, even though, as Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi has shown, it was not attributed to "dialectical reasoning" but rather understood as "hiero-intelligence"—a spiritual organ and a cosmogenic force through which God was perceived and the world ordered.[23] According to Amir-Moezzi, because of the homonymy of *ʿaql* as hiero-intelligence and *ʿaql* as reason, al-Mufīd and other Imāmī rationalists in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries "neglected the semantic slide in the idea, and believed they were working in the name of *ʿaql* so lauded by the imams" when they criticized their predecessor in the name of reason and rationalized Imāmī doctrinal discourses.[24]

In this light, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd's affinity toward Baghdadian Muʿtazilism appears as a convenient means of rationally defending Shiʿism at a moment of existential crisis by appropriating an existing system of theology, which most closely cohered with Imāmī doctrines. Such a reading of al-Mufīd, however, over-

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[22] See his *Kitāb al-Irshād*, which remains his most popular work and has been translated into English by I. K. A. Howard.

[23] Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 6–13.

[24] Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 13.

looks the fact that this was not only a moment of uncertainty for the Imāmiyya but also a time of growing Shi'i presence in public life. The lack of fixity in doctrine as well as religious and political authority had allowed for great intellectual and cultural openness and vitality, which brought the Shi'i out of the margins of society and politics and allowed scholars, such as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, to address the theological problems of their time from center stage. When we read al-Mufīd's theological discussion of justice as having been articulated from the epicenter of intellectual activity at this time, his use of *'aql* no longer appears as a misappropriated solution to a crisis which had struck the Imāmiyya nor as a radical interjection of rationalism into Imāmī Shi'ism but rather as a means of structuring religious thinking and articulating a distinctly Imāmī understanding of the God-human relationship to not only the Shi'a but the '*umma* as a whole.[25]

Al-Mufīd's Discussion of Justice

> I say that God—lofty is His majesty—has power over injustice just as He has power over justice, but He does not act unjustly (*jawran*), tyrannically (*ẓulman*), or repugnantly (*qabīḥan*). The Imāmiyya collectively, all of the Mu'tazila, save al-Naẓẓām, and a group among the Murji'a, the Zaydiyya, the Traditionalist (*Aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*), and the Khawārij (*al-muḥkimma*) agree on this view. All proponents of predestination, al-Naẓẓām, and everyone else who concurs in their opposition to [divine] Justice and Unity oppose us.[26]

Anyone who is enticed by al-Mufīd's reputation as a pivotal figure in the Imāmiyya's turn toward dialectical reasoning is bound to be disappointed by the Shaykh's laconism and apparent dogmatism. The above quotation, along with the two citations below, are about the sum total of all that al-Mufīd has to say on *'adl* directly in his most comprehensive extant theological treatise, *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*:

> I say that God—mighty and majestic—is compassionately just (*'adlun karīmun*). He created creation (*khalaqa al-khalq*) to worship Him and commanded them to obey Him and forbade transgressions against Him. He surrounded them with His guidance. He set them upon graces and favored them with goodness (*iḥsān*). He did not obligate anyone to carry out what he could not bear, and He did not command him to do what he had not given him the capacity to do. Nothing in his makings is in vain, and there is no discrepancy in his creation

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25 In relation to this point, Dominique Sourdel argued that by presenting Imāmī theological arguments in a more universalist language, al-Mufīd sought to appeal to the large number of Muslims at this time who did not associate with *ahl al-sunna wa al-jamā'* (Sunnis). See Sourdel, *L'Imamisme*, 35–36.

26 Al-Mufīd, *al-Maqālāt*, 56.

or any badness in his doings. He is too sublime to participate in the acts of His servants and too exalted to compel their deeds. He only punishes one for the sinfulness of one's action, and He only blames one for the badness of one's acts. "He does not wrong so much as the weight of an atom, and if there is a good deed, he adds to it, giving from Himself a mighty reward." (Qur'an 4:40). The majority of the Imāmiyya agree with this position. Wide circulating traditions with multiple lines of transmission from the family of Muḥammad attest to it. All the Muʿtazila, with the exception of Ḍirār and his followers, are of this view. This is the position of many of the Murjiʾa and a number of the Zaydiyya and the Khawārij, and a few of the Traditionalists. Opposed to it are the majority of the general public (al-ʿāmma) and anyone else whom we did not list. They claim that God—exalted—created most of His creation to disobey him and selected some of His servants to worship him. He did not make his blessing (niʿma) universally available and obligated most of them to obey Him without the capacity to do so. He created the acts of all of his creatures and punishes sinners for the act of disobedience He made in them. He commanded what He does not will and forbids what He willed. He decreed worshipers to be unjust. He loves depravity and hates righteousness from most of His servants. He is exalted far above what wrongdoers say![27]

I say that God—lofty is His majesty—is compassionately just. He does not punish one except for the blame one has earned or for the crime one has committed or for perpetuating a wrong that he had forbidden.[28]

What are we to make of such terse expressions of dogma? Al-Mufīd addressed *Awāʾil al-Maqālāt* to "our lord the Noble Marshal" (*sayyidunā al-sharīf al-naqīb*). The *Naqīb*, to whom I refer in English as "marshal," was an official at this time whom the Būyids appointed from among the Shiʿi nobility to oversee Imāmī sacred sites and pilgrimages. The person holding the office at the time of al-Mufīd's writing was most likely al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī (d. 406/1016), who came from a prominent Imāmī family and had been a pupil of al-Mufīd.[29] Al-Mufīd explains, "I set down in this book the points he [i.e., al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī] had selected to demonstrate the differences between the Shiʿi and the Muʿtazila and to explain the relation between the proponents of Divine Justice (ʿadliyya) among the Shiʿi and the Muʿtazila as well as the differences between the latter and the religious principles upon which the Imāmiyya have consensus."[30] Are we to assume from this stated purpose of *Awāʾil al-Maqālāt* that al-Mufīd was simply articulating Shiʿi doctrines

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27 Ibid., 57–58.

28 Ibid., 61. Here too, al-Mufīd discusses the positions of other groups, but I do not translate them because they do not shed much light on his own view.

29 Moktar Djebli, "al-Sharīf al-Raḍī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; Sourdel, *L'Imamisme*, 37n2; McDermott, *Theology*, 22n1.

30 Al-Mufīd, *al-Maqālāt*, 33.

concisely for the sake of an advanced student of theology? Was *Awā'il al-Maqālāt* a guidebook of Imāmī theology (or a heresiography[31]) for the Shiʻi elite?

It is clear from the above citations that al-Mufīd was fully aware of how central the issue of divine justice was to the theological debates of the time. Theological discussions of justice touched upon God's omnipotence. Did human conceptions of what is just limit God's power to act in a way that humans would consider unjust? Al-Mufīd tells his readers: God has power over injustice but does not act unjustly.

Discussions of divine justice touched upon the problem of free will and pre-destination. Can God punish or reward humans for their behavior if humans have no control over their actions? Al-Mufīd tells his readers: God has given humans the capacity to act and is too sublime to share any part in humans' mundane activities.

Discussions of divine justice also raised ethical questions about how we know something is good and just or bad and unjust. Is an act just because God commands it or does God command an act because it is inherently just? Indeed this was a central point of contention in *Kalām*. The Muʻtazila believed that goodness and justice are innate characteristics of acts that could be determined as such through the intellect and intuition. The ʻAshʻarīs and the *Ahl al-ḥadīth* argued that justice is determined by God's commands and revealed to humanity through revelation. Al-Mufīd is curiously silent about this question. On the one hand he seems to side with the traditionalist position of the ʻAshʻarīs and *Ahl al-ḥadīth* by stating that God created humans to obey Him. On the other hand, when he indicates that God has power over injustice, he seems to suggest that humans have the ability to determine what is just irrespective of God's commands. I will return to this question below. There is clearly not enough information in his discussion of justice in *Awā'il al-Maqālāt* to ascertain his position on this issue. For now, it is important to take note of his silence.

Even though al-Mufīd did not feel the need to offer rational proofs of his theological positions, he, and presumably his intended audience, were well aware of contemporary theological debates. By penning Imāmī positions in these debates, he seems to have been concerned not just with defining Imāmī theology but doing so in a way that was logically consistent. In other words, even though he was not concerned with justifying Imāmī beliefs through reason, he was very much concerned with demonstrating that there is an underlying logic to Imāmī beliefs that is internally consistent. The implicit logic underlining his terse explanation of divine justice is as follows: God has created humans and informed them of His commands and prohibitions; God graciously guided humans and surrounded

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31 Sourdel, *L'Imamisme*, 10.

them with blessings; God gave humans the capacity to act and did not burden them with what they could not bear. Therefore, God is justified in punishing them for their acts of transgression against God. Moreover, if one believes, as all believing Muslims do, that God is just and omnipotent, it is logically consistent to also believe that God could act unjustly but would never do so.[32]

Earlier I mentioned that there has been much confusion about the role of reason in al-Mufīd's thought. I hope his discussion of justice illustrates the source of this confusion. There is a rational underpinning to al-Mufīd's theological positions, but his positions are in line with traditionalist teachings. For this reason scholars have interpreted his use of dialectical reasoning (*Kalām*) as a means of defending the teachings of the Imām during the early decades of the Great Occultation.[33] There is, however, another side to al-Mufīd's use of dialectical reasoning. Whatever solutions *Kalām* may have provided for the problems of authority that the Imāmiyya were facing during the Great Occultation, it also saddled Shi'ism with the burden of making its theological doctrines logically consistent; needless to say, this affected how Imāmī doctrines came to be understood and articulated. The importance of this development can be seen in al-Mufīd's *Taṣḥīḥ al-I'tiqādāt* in which al-Mufīd "corrects" a treatise on Imāmī theology (*al-I'tiqādāt al-Imāmiyya*) by his teacher and predecessor, the eminent Imāmī traditionalist Ibn Bābuwayh. Most of his corrections, as I will show through an examination of his discussion of justice, aimed not to rationally disprove Ibn Bābuwayh's doctrines (as the title seems to suggest), but to articulate his positions in a more disciplined and logically consistent fashion, which inevitably—and ingeniously—altered Ibn Bābuwayh's text without straying from the essence of his doctrines.

Ibn Bābuwayh's principal chapter on justice ('adl) reads:

> We believe that God—blessed and exalted—commanded us to be just while He treats us according to what is greater than it, and that is grace (*tafaḍḍul*). The reason for this is His saying, "Whoever comes with a good deed to him is ten times its kind, and whoever comes with a bad deed, he will be recompensed its like. They shall not be wronged" (Qur'an 6:160). And justice is that which recompenses goodness and punishes badness. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "No one enters the Garden except by the mercy of God, mighty and majestic."[34]

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32 Of course, as noted in the above citations from *Awā'il al-Maqālāt*, proponents of the doctrine of divine justice and unity accused their opponents of believing that God is unjust, but none of the 'Ash'arī or *Aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* ever saw themselves as describing God as unjust. Rather, they defined justice and goodness as whatever God does.

33 Madelung, "Imāmism," 25. Bayhom-Daou, *Shaykh Mufīd*, 92.

34 Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Bābuwayh al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *I'tiqādāt*, ed. 'Iṣām 'Abd al-Sayyid, vol. 5 of *Silsilat Mu'allafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufīd* (Beirut: Dār al-Mufīd, 1993), 69.

Given that as a Muslim, Ibn Bābuwayh undoubtedly believed that God is just, it is interesting that he sees no connection between his definition of justice and the way in which God's relation with humanity ought to be conceived. Justice is what God commands for the human realm. The divine's relation with humans is based on compassion and grace as stated in the Qur'an and the Hadith. The language of revelation, for Ibn Bābuwayh, thus defines the reality of God's relation with humanity, not human conceptions of God's attributes. There is no need here to hone one's linguistic expression of belief or to strive for logical consistency in one's language because neither language nor logic could reflect reality as it is experienced.

Needless to say, this mode of writing theology contrasts with *Kalām* or dialectical theology both in form and content. Formally, the purpose of *Kalām* was to express rationally the nature of God through carefully crafted linguistic expressions, which were *both* rational *and* in accord with revelation. A theological position that could be shown to meet this dual standard was consequently regarded as universally valid. In Ibn Bābuwayh's *I'tiqādāt*, however, language is merely a means of communication. Linguistic expressions and structures do not have to be exact because they do not bear the ontological burden of revealing the reality of things by ascertaining definitions.

In terms of its content, unlike discourses in *Kalām*, Ibn Bābuwayh's discourse is not predicated on epistemology. Theological discourses in *Kalām* treatises generally began with reflections on how humans know and the different types of knowledge.[35] They proceeded from there to demonstrating the necessity of knowing God. Then, they discussed God's attributes and established the possibility and validity of revelation through which religious duties are defined. Consequently, in classical *Kalām* discourses, the issue of how humans know was directly related to ethics and to the nature of God's relation to humanity.[36] The way in which one determined what constituted knowledge, and thus truth/reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*), shaped how one understood what was good or bad, just or unjust.

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35 This point is also true for al-Mufīd's *al-Maqālāt*, despite the fact that his text is organized more idiosyncratically and is more similar to early Muslim doxographies than *Kalām* treatises. After identifying the distinctive features of Imāmī Shi'ism, al-Mufīd turns to the question of how humans gain knowledge of religion. "The Imāmiyya," he writes, "agree that the intellect (*al-'aql*), for its knowledge and conclusions [regarding religious obligations] needs revelation (*al-sam'*)" (44).

36 See Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, "The Epistemological Foundation of Conceptions of Justice in Classical Kalām: A Study of 'Abd al-Jabbār's al-Mughnī and Ibn al-Bāqillānī's al-Tamhīd," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 1 (2008): 71–96.

For Ibn Bābuwayh, however, how humans determined what was just (*ta'dīl*) had little bearing on how God related to humanity because, for him, God's relation to humans was defined by divine grace and not by knowledge.

In his "correction" of Ibn Bābuwayh's creed, al-Mufīd does not turn Ibn Bābuwayh's position inside out by revising it to conform to the structure of arguments employed in *Kalām*. Rather, he aims to hone Ibn Bābuwayh's language and definition of justice. Unlike Ibn Bābuwayh, who begins by asserting the existence of divine grace and then defines justice, al-Mufīd begins with justice and makes God's grace an attribute of divine justice. He states:

> Justice is the recompensing of an act according to what is due to it and injustice is the obstruction of rights. God, the exalted, is just, munificent, generous, gracious and compassionate. He has ensured the recompense of acts and reparation for the one on whom pain has been afflicted, and He promised grace (*tafaḍḍul*) after that over and above what he has [coming to him].[37]

Al-Mufīd here amends Ibn Bābuwayh's definition of justice by specifying that justice is not simply the recompensing of acts but the recompensing of acts according to their desert.[38] He also makes explicit what one could safely assume Ibn Bābuwayh took for granted, mainly that God is just and that despite God's munificence God punishes and rewards acts according to their due. Al-Mufīd makes divine grace and mercy concomitant with the divine attribute of justice. In doing so, he subtly brings justice back into God's relation with humanity (in contrast to his teacher who saw justice as a means of recompense that was immaterial to God's relation to creation because God's relation to humanity was defined by God's grace, which is ultimately beyond any form of compensation or recompense).

For evidence of his position, al-Mufīd, just as Ibn Bābuwayh, resorts to revelation:

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37 Al-Mufīd, *Taṣḥīḥ*, 103.

38 It is worth noting that al-Mufīd, here, expresses a definition of justice that would have been familiar to the people of the Fertile Crescent since the time the Emperor Justinian (r. 529–65) ordered the codification of Roman law. The Justinian Code includes a dictum from the jurist Ulpian (third century), which according to D. D. Raphael "had become the standard definition of justice [in the Roman and Byzantine Empires]: Iustitia est constans et perpetua voluntas ius suum cuique tribuendi ('Justice is the constant and permanent will to render to each person what is his right.')." Justinian Code, *Digest*, i.1.10 cited in D. D. Raphael, *Concepts of Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 56.

> He, the exalted, said, "For those who do good is the best and more …" (Qur'an 10:26). He declared that for those who do good there is the deserved reward as well as more than what they earned. He said, "Whoever comes with a good deed to him is ten times its kind," meaning he receives ten of the kind of reward he deserved. "And whoever comes with a bad deed, he will be recompensed its like. They shall not be wronged" (Qur'an 6:160). What He means [in this verse] is that He does not punish him beyond what he deserves. Then, he has ensured, following the punishment, clemency and promised forgiveness. He said, praised be He, "Indeed, your Lord is forgiving of people for their wrongdoings" (Qur'an 13:6). He said, praised be He, "Indeed, God does not forgive anything being associated with Him, and forgives anything else to whomever he wills" (Qur'an 4: 48).[39]

Unlike Ibn Bābuwayh, however, al-Mufīd's explanation of justice does not stop at citations from the Qur'an. He goes on to show how grace and justice are logically related to one another because of the metaphysical structure of existence.

> He said, praised be He, "Say, 'In the bounty and mercy of God, therein let them rejoice'" (Qur'an 10:58). That which is due to the worshiper is that which God, exalted, made a right for him. Its requisite is God's generosity and munificence. Were the worshiper to reckon his account of justice, nothing would be due to him given the blessings that preceded him. Because God preceded His creation with blessings and necessitated that they be thankful for them, there is no one in creation who could repay God's blessings with his works. Nor could anyone thank Him enough and not fall short of the gratitude divine blessings deserve.[40]

Given that in the divine act of creation, the bounties of creation precede human existence, al-Mufīd argues that there is no right due to humans by God, and humans could never repay God, neither by their actions nor by their gratitude, for the bounties God has provided for them in the world. He states, "There is consensus among the people of intellect (*ahl al-'aql*) that anyone who says that I have fulfilled what God, most high, has made incumbent upon me and have repaid his blessings with gratitude is errant."[41] Divine justice in the world is thus inextricable from divine grace because God's grace precedes God's justice in creation and there is nothing that God owes humanity given all the bounty that God has provided for humanity.

In his use of reason, al-Mufīd does not subvert, or even revise, Ibn Bābuwayh's conception of justice. Rather he justifies it by demonstrating that it is in accord with our experiential understanding of how the world is ordered (metaphysics). In this prioritizing of metaphysics over epistemology lies an important

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39 Al-Mufīd, *Taṣḥīḥ*, 103–4.
40 Ibid., 104.
41 Ibid.

clue for explaining the curious silence in al-Mufīd's discussions of divine justice about how humans make ethical judgments. The question of how humans know what is good or just and what is bad or unjust becomes irrelevant to understandings of divine justice because any measure of recompense that applies in humans' dealings with one another does not apply to God given the bounty of God's grace which humans experience in their lives.

This, however, does not mean that human reasoning is inconsequential for understanding God or divine justice. Reasoning about the relation between divine grace and divine justice reveals God's relation to humanity. Al-Mufīd further explains that though the precedence of grace in creation makes grace, rather than justice, the primary way in which God relates to humanity, this does not mean that all of humanity is equal before God. Since God's grace necessitates gratitude, it is obvious that one who is not thankful to God deserves blame. Unfortunately, given the Shaykh's penchant for laconicism, he does not write about those who are not thankful to God. Rather, al-Mufīd explains, "Given that, in the intellect (*fī al-'uqūl*), the state of a thankful actor is the opposite of the state of one who does not act, then, it follows through intellection that a thankful person deserves praise and one who does not act, according to the intellect, is not praiseworthy … And if the intellect necessitates that he have advantage over one who does not act, then it would be just for God to treat him according to what the intellect deems his right." After all, God prefers action to inaction; "For God, most high, had commanded justice and prohibited injustice. He, most high, said, 'Indeed, God commands justice and good deeds'" (Qur'an 16:90).[42] Here, al-Mufīd rightly corrects and not just elaborates on one of Ibn Bābuwayh's assertions. While he agrees with his teacher that God's relation with humanity ought to be conceptualized based on grace rather than justice, in the rare case of the inactive person, justice requires that God treat the thankful active person differently than the inactive person by giving the former the praise that he deserves according to reason.

Conclusion

By predicating his theological discourse on metaphysics rather than epistemology, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, in effect, imported into the *Kalām* discourse of his time a different premise for making rational theological arguments. Given how closely his doctrinal position on *'adl* aligned with the work of the prominent Imāmī scholar and traditionalist, Ibn Bābuwayh, it seems that al-Mufīd's differ-

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42 Ibid.,105.

ent mode of *Kalām* argumentation was firmly embedded in earlier Imāmī Shiʿi thought. Indeed, his emphasis on God's grace and munificence in his discussion of *ʿadl* preserved for the Shiʿi Imāms their role as divinely inspired intercessors on behalf of their followers. God's grace and mercy supersedes any ethical notion of recompense. "The imam was for the Imāmiyya," as Wilferd Madelung observed, "the intercessor for the community of his followers. It was inconceivable for them that anyone who followed him faithfully should, as Muʿtazilism taught, be condemned to permanent and unconditional punishment or could lose his status as a believer, whatever sins he might have committed."[43]

We would thus be amiss, as the more recent scholarship on al-Mufīd has shown, to see his introduction of rationalism into Shiʿism as a means of subordinating Imāmism to Muʿtazili *Kalām*. What I have tried to show in my reading of al-Mufīd's conception of justice is that we would be equally remiss to overlook how his use of rational dialectics as an Imāmī intellectual affected *Kalām*. Al-Mufīd did not just use *Kalām* to defend Imāmī beliefs and doctrines. His attempt to wed *Kalām* with Imāmī doctrines demanded that the latter be expressed in a logically consistent manner. This demand shifted al-Mufīd away from prevailing modes of *Kalām* argumentation in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries rooted in epistemological reasoning, and it led him to introduce novel ways of making rational theological arguments fundamentally based in metaphysics.

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43 Madelung, "Imāmism," 28.

Ibn Bābuwayh, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq. *Iʾtiqādāt*. Edited by ʿIṣām ʿAbd al-Sayyid. Vol. 5 of *Silsilat Muʾallafāt al-Shaykh al-Mufīd*. Beirut: Dār al-Mufīd, 1993.

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Ahmed El Shamsy

Returning to God through His Names: Cosmology and *Dhikr* in a Fourteenth-Century Sufi Treatise

Following the institutionalization of the Sufi orders, the ritual practice of *dhikr* took on a central role. In this paper I show that under the influence of the speculative Sufism that had taken root in the orders, *dhikr* came to be theorized as a method of return: a graded process that could lead its practitioner back to humanity's divine origin through various layers of existence. The core text at the heart of my analysis is the perennially popular *Sirr al-Asrār* (or *Bayān al-Asrār*), which in modern editions and translations has been misattributed to ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) but which in fact was written by Yūsuf al-Kūrānī (d. 768/1367), a Kurdish Sufi who settled in Egypt.

Beginning in the sixth/twelfth century, Sufism underwent a fundamental transformation with two principal facets. The first of these was the emergence of an institutional framework of Sufi orders, structured by a system of master-disciple relations and based in endowed lodges. The second was the formulation of holistic doctrines that incorporated and adapted elements from a range of intellectual and religious traditions. The former development gave Sufism significant influence over popular religiosity, while the latter reconfigured the meaning of key Islamic concepts and practices.[1]

My aim in this article is to shed light on this transformation by examining the theorization of *dhikr*, formalized remembrance and contemplation of God, as developed in an eighth-/fourteenth-century Sufi text. My analysis reveals that the emergence of *dhikr* as the primary Sufi ritual within the nascent Sufi orders was underpinned and supported by a theoretical foundation rooted in a Neoplatonic cosmology of emanation. Within this framework, the increasingly internalized recitation of specific divine names allowed the Sufi seeker to gradually overcome the distance separating the person uttering the name from the one named and thus to return to humanity's original abode in the realm of divine presence.

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1 On these developments see, for example, J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 9–11, and David Martin, "The Return to the 'One' in the Philosophy of Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā," in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge, 211–46 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 213–14.

The Work and Its Author

The principal work analyzed here is a short Sufi treatise on *dhikr*, comprising between thirty and sixty handwritten pages and divided into twenty-four chapters. The work is known variously as *Sirr al-Asrār*, *Asrār al-Asrār*, *al-Asrār*, *Bayān al-Asrār li al-Ṭālibīn*, *Bayān Asrār al-Ṭālibīn*, *al-Sulūk fī Bāṭin al-Asrār*, and *Risāla fī al-Bāṭin wa al-Ẓāhir*; I refer to it in this article by its best-known title, *Sirr al-Asrār*.[2] Numerous manuscript copies of the work are extant,[3] attesting to its popularity, and it has been printed several times in Arabic.[4] In addition, at least two translations into English have been published, as well as translations into French, Spanish, Turkish, Indonesian, Urdu, and Persian.[5]

The Arabic editions as well as all of the translations attribute the authorship of *Sirr al-Asrār* to the famous Ḥanbalī Sufi ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166). Other

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2 Footnote references to *Sirr al-Asrār* pertain to the printed edition by Muḥammad ʿAzqūl and Khālid al-Zarʿī (Damascus: Dār al-Sanābil, 1992); references to *Bayān al-Asrār* relate to a manuscript housed at Istanbul's Süleymaniye Library, Şehid Ali Paşa 1390/1.

3 The multiplicity of possible titles makes manuscripts of the work difficult to count, but a cursory survey has identified at least thirty-nine copies. Istanbul, Süleymaniye: Ali Nihat Tarlan 79; Aşir Efendi 148; Düğümlü Baba 234; Esad Efendi 3540; Hacı Mahmud Efendi 431, 2529, 2577, 2879, 2940, 3107, 6443, and 6446; Karaçelebizade 228; Kasidecizade 672; Laleli 2039 and 3731; Reşid Efendi 1180; and Şehid Ali Paşa 1390. Damascus, Ẓāhiriyya: 94, 3956, 6919, 7389, 9177, and 11242. Aleppo, Waṭaniyya: 18581. Hama (Syria): 5707 (see the editors' introduction to *Sirr al-Asrār*, 10). Cairo, Dār al-Kutub: 23074. Cairo, al-Azhar: *Majāmīʿ*, 744. Princeton University: Yahuda 2333, 2803, 981, 5433, and 5814. Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek: 1661 (see Gustav Flügel, *Die arabischen, persischen und türkischen Handschriften der kaiserlichen und königlichen Hofbibliothek zu Wien* [Wien: Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1867], 3:101). Berlin, Staatsbibliothek: 3060 and 3061 (see Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis der arabischen Handschriften* [Berlin: A. Asher, 1891], 3:110–11). Leiden University: Or 1018. Bratislava University Library: Basagic 224 and 225.

4 The published editions carry the title *Sirr al-Asrār*. The first edition was published on the margins of al-Jīlānī's *Ghunya* (Mecca: al-Maktaba al-Mīriyya, 1314/1896–97); this was followed by an edition from al-Maṭbaʿa al-Bahiyya al-Miṣriyya in Cairo in 1955. The most recent edition is that of Muḥammad ʿAzqūl and Khālid al-Zarʿī, to which I refer in the footnotes.

5 *The Secret of Secrets*, trans. Tosun Bayrak (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1992); *The Book of the Secret of Secrets and the Manifestation of Lights*, trans. Muhtar Holland (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Al-Baz, 2000); *Secret des Secrets*, trans. Abd el-Wadûd Bour (Beirut: al-Bouraq, 1999); *El Secreto de los Secretos*, trans. Carmen Liaño (Madrid: Madrid Sufi, 2000); *Sırru'l-esrâr: Sırların sırrı*, trans. Mehmet Eren (Istanbul: Gelenek Yayıncılık, 2006); *Rahasia Dibalik Rahasia* (Surabaya: Risalah Gusti, 2002); *Sirr al-Asrār* [in Urdu] (Lahore: Maktaba-i Zāwiya, 2003); *Sirr al-Asrār* [in Persian], trans. Muslim Zamānī and Karīm Zamānī (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1385/2006).

suggested authors include Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240),[6] ʿUmar al-Mīlānī al-Rūshānī,[7] Zayn al-Dīn al-Khawāfī (d. 839/1435),[8] and a certain al-Bālī.[9] However, the most likely author of the work is the Kurdish Sufi Yūsuf al-Kūrānī (d. 768/1367). As Wilhelm Ahlwardt already noted, al-Jīlānī cannot be the author.[10] The work quotes several authors who died half a century or more after al-Jīlānī, namely, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209),[11] Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. probably 616/1220),[12] Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī ("Dāya"; d. 654/1256),[13] and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (d. 672/1273).[14] In addition, several statements in *Sirr al-Asrār* flatly contradict the creed of al-Jīlānī's well-known work *al-Ghunya li Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*. While al-Jīlānī denounces in the *Ghunya* any figurative interpretation of divine attributes as a deviation of the Muʿtazilīs and the Ashʿarīs,[15] the author of *Sirr al-Asrār* employs figurative interpretations of God's fingers and face in order to avoid anthropomorphizing God.[16] Similarly, the author of *Sirr al-Asrār* claims that Muḥammad knew the Quran before its revelation to him through the angel Gabriel, whereas al-Jīlānī brands such views heretical and traces them to the Sālimiyya movement in Basra.[17]

That al-Kūrānī is the probable author of the work is supported by the fact that the majority of the extant manuscripts as well as the bibliographer Ḥājjī Khalīfa (d. 1067/1657) name him as the author.[18] There are also important clues in the

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6 *Fihris al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Mawjūda bi al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Azhar, 1947), 3:545.

7 According to a manuscript in the Berliner Staatsbibliothek; Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis*, 3:110. This is probably ʿUmar al-Rūsānī (d. 892/1486), the third grandmaster of the Khalwatī order; see Frederick de Jong, "Khalwatiyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 4:991.

8 Rudolf Mach, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Garrett Collection, Princeton University Library* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 246.

9 This name is on a lithograph from the year 1276/1859–60; see Yūsuf Zaydān, *ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: Bāz Allāh al-Ashhab* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1991), 102.

10 Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis*, 3:110–11.

11 *Bayān al-Asrār*, fol. 14; *Sirr al-Asrār*, 63. The editors of *Sirr al-Asrār* omitted some of these quotations, considering them later additions; however, they give no reason for this supposition beyond the stated authorship of al-Jīlānī. See the editors' introduction to *Sirr al-Asrār*, 12.

12 *Bayān al-Asrār*, fols. 15 and 28.

13 *Bayān al-Asrār*, fols. 9, 12, 18, and 26; *Sirr al-Asrār*, 54 and 60.

14 *Bayān al-Asrār*, fols. 8 and 11; *Sirr al-Asrār*, 53.

15 Al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya li Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq*, ed. Muḥammad Khālid ʿUmar, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1996), 85–86.

16 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 88 and 105.

17 Al-Jīlānī, *al-Ghunya*, ed. ʿUmar, 132–33.

18 Ḥājjī Khalīfa (Kâtip Çelebi), *Kashf al-Ẓunūn*, ed. Muḥammad Sharaf al-Dīn Yāltqāyā and Rifʿat Bilgih al-Kilīslī, 2 vols. (1941–43; reprint, Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, [1972?]), 1:260 and 940.

content of the text. Entries on al-Kūrānī in biographical dictionaries stress the importance for him of the creedal formula (*shahāda*) *lā ilāha illa Allāh*, "no deity but God," which he traced back to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Prophet through a continuous chain of transmission (*silsila*).[19] This emphasis is also evident in the *Rayḥān al-Qulūb*, a work that already contemporary historians considered to be by al-Kūrānī.[20] In the *Rayḥān*, al-Kūrānī advocates recitation and contemplation of the *shahāda* as the most direct and noble path toward God and as a key feature in the initiation of new disciples.[21] The passage containing this statement is replicated verbatim in *Sirr al-Asrār*.[22] The *shahāda* also furnishes the fundamental structure of *Sirr al-Asrār*: the author explains in the introduction that the number of chapters in the work—twenty-four—corresponds to the number of letters in the *shahāda*.[23] Further parallels can be found in the similar discussions in the *Rayḥān* and the *Sirr* of the conditions for and various stages of *dhikr* and in their shared argument that *dhikr* should begin aloud and be conducted silently thereafter—although the *Rayḥān*'s concerns are clearly practical, whereas *Sirr al-Asrār* focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of the process.[24]

The names of other possible authors appear rarely on the manuscripts of *Sirr al-Asrār*. The speculative nature of the work probably explains why one manuscript copy has been attributed to Ibn ʿArabī.[25] Zayn al-Dīn al-Khawāfī, the putative author named in another manuscript, was the student of al-Kūrānī's student Nūr al-Dīn al-Buḥayrī (d. unknown).[26] One of the extant copies of al-Kūrānī's *Rayḥān al-Qulūb* includes a *silsila* of the Suhrawardī order that lists al-Kūrānī, al-Buḥayrī, and finally al-Khawāfī as its most recent links.[27] It seems likely that al-Buḥayrī and al-Khawāfī were also featured in the transmission history of

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19 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyāʾ*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Shurayba (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1973), 494.

20 See, for example, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-Kāmina*, ed. Muḥammad Ḍānn (Hyderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1972), 6:235. *Rayḥān al-Qulūb* remains extant in multiple manuscript copies; for example, at Princeton University, Yahuda 3893; and at Istanbul's Süleymaniye Library, Ayasofya 2106; Esad Efendi 1797; Fatih 5389; Hacı Mahmud Efendi 705; Halet Efendi 797 and 826; Reşid Efendi 395; Şehid Ali Paşa 1340; and Tahir Ağa Tekkesi 171. Subsequent references to this work are to Esad Efendi 1797/2.

21 *Rayḥān al-Qulūb*, fol. 65a.

22 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 68.

23 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 50.

24 Compare *Rayḥān al-Qulūb*, fols. 67a–69a, with *Sirr al-Asrār*, chaps. 7 and 8.

25 Cairo: al-Azhar, *Majāmīʿ*, 845.

26 Princeton: Yahuda 981. On al-Khawāfī and al-Buḥayrī, see ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī, *Nuzhat al-Khawāṭir* (Hyderabad: Dār al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyya, 1962), 3:23.

27 *Rayḥān al-Qulūb*, fols. 66b–67a.

Sirr al-Asrār and that the subsequent copyist of this version of the work simply mistook the latest transmitter for the author.

Abū al-Maḥāsin Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Kūrānī al-Kurdī al-Kalūrī (after his place of birth) al-Namlajī (after his tribe), later al-Miṣrī al-Qarāfī, known also as al-ʿAjamī and as Mawlānā Yūsuf, was a shaykh of the Suhrawardī Sufi order.[28] The following is a sampling of biographical notices about him.

ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1575):

> He was the first to revive the path of Junayd—God's blessings be upon him—in Egypt after it had disappeared. He had an unusual approach to renunciation and the mystical path. He had many disciples and lodges ... Master Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Iṣfahānī and master Badr al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Shamshīrī initiated him and clothed him in the Sufi cloak and taught him the *dhikr* formula *lā ilāha illa Allāh*, and this is the chain of transmission of the path from al-Junayd—God's blessings be upon him.[29]

Ibn Taghrī Birdī (d. 874/1470):

> He was the imam of the travelers on the mystical path in his age, and he occupied an extraordinary rank. Most scholars of his age followed him, and he had powerful litanies (*awrād wa adhkār*). A group of scholars, pious individuals, and jurists benefited from his company, and no accusation distracted him from the path of God. He possessed great virtue and a comprehensive knowledge of Sufism, and he wrote a treatise that he called *Rayḥān al-Qulūb*.[30]

Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 804/1401):

> He received from his two masters the *dhikr* of *lā ilāha illa Allāh* through the mentioned chain of transmission.[31]

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449):

> People hold exaggerated opinions about him, and the master Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Gharbānī claimed to have heard from him something that proves that he followed the school of Ibn ʿArabī; however, God knows his secrets best. He died in Jumādā al-Ūlā in 768.[32]

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28 His name has been misread a number of ways, for example, as "al-Ghūrānī" in Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, appendix C, and as "al-Nūrānī" in Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, ed. W. Nassau Lees (Calcutta: n.p., 1859), 569.

29 ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, ed. Aḥmad al-Sāyiḥ and Tawfīq Wahba (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 2005), 2:132–33.

30 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira* (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1970), 11:94.

31 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyāʾ*, 492.

32 Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-Kāmina*, 5:238–39, no. 5128.

From these quotations we glean that al-Kūrānī introduced to Egypt a previously unknown type of Sufism, which al-Shaʿrānī explains as the reintroduction of the path of al-Junayd (d. 297/910), an early Sufi master of Baghdad. This is not incorrect, since the chain of transmission of the Suhrawardī order includes al-Junayd, and al-Junayd's characteristic *dhikr* consisted of the formula *lā ilāha illa Allāh*.[33] However, al-Kūrānī's thought should be seen in the light of developments in Persian Sufism in the preceding century. Al-Kūrānī was part of an important branch of the Suhrawardī order that originated with Najīb al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Buzghush (d. 678/1279); see Figure 1.

This branch of the order is remarkable both because it is the most important Suhrawardī branch in terms of its written output and influence on the heritage of the order as a whole,[34] and because at least from the generation of Najīb al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Buzghush's students, the teaching within the branch comprised a theoretical as well as a practical part. The practical aspects of Sufi life among the adherents of the branch were regulated by *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, the principal work of the founder, ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī. The theoretical doctrine, however, was strongly influenced by Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn Fāriḍ.[35]

The branch was originally based in Persia, but Najm al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, al-Kūrānī's teacher, moved west to Mecca, where he had close contact with Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258) and Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī (d. 686/1287), the Maghrebi founders of the influential Shādhilī order.[36] Al-Kūrānī then migrated farther westward, settling in Egypt.[37] Given the hostility prevalent in eighth-/fourteenth-century Egypt toward speculative Sufism in general and Ibn ʿArabī in par-

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33 Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. al-Sharīf (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 2:45.

34 Richard Gramlich, *Die Gaben der Erkenntnisse des Umar As-Suhrawardi* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978), 14.

35 See Jalāl al-Dīn Humāʾī, introduction to ʿIzz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Kāshānī [al-Qāshānī], *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya wa Miftāḥ al-Kifāya* (Tehran: Majlis, 1325/1946), and Hermann Landolt, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen Kāšānī und Simnānī über Waḥdat al-Wuǧūd," *Der Islam* 50 (1973): 34–35. Members of this branch, most prominently ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, wrote commentaries on Ibn ʿArabī's works; see Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, 561–62. Tilman Nagel considers unlikely the thesis that the Buzghush branch simultaneously followed al-Suhrawardī in practical matters and Ibn ʿArabī in theory; see Nagel, *Im Offenkundigen das Verborgene: Die Heilzusage des sunnitischen Islams* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 469. However, such an amalgamation of pietist and speculative Sufism can be seen clearly in al-Kūrānī's work, as demonstrated below.

36 Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt al-Awliyāʾ*, 459.

37 Al-Shaʿrānī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 2:132.
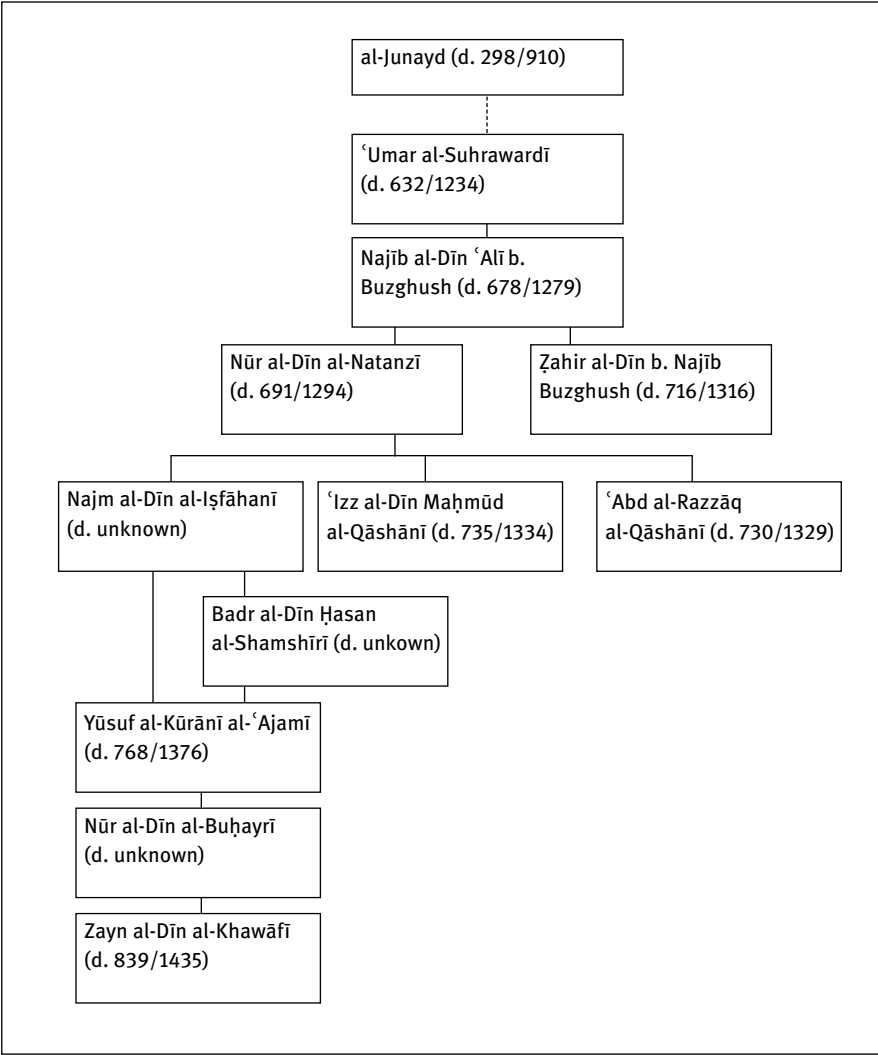
Figure 1. The Najīb al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Buzghush branch of the Suhrawardī order.

ticular,[38] it is likely that al-Kūrānī did not express his theoretical views openly. This may explain why the extant manuscripts of *Sirr al-Asrār* date mainly from the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries, that is, precisely from the period when thinkers such as Ibn ʿArabī were being rehabilitated. During al-Kūrānī's lifetime, *Sirr al-Asrār* was probably circulated only among his students—the "seekers" mentioned in some versions of the title. Accordingly, none of the contemporary sources mention *Sirr al-Asrār* even though they describe al-Kūrānī's other work, *Rayḥān al-Qulūb*, which deals with the less controversial, practical aspects of Sufism, such as repentance and the attachment to a shaykh.

However, even this caution did not avert all suspicion regarding al-Kūrānī's intellectual leanings. Ibn Taghrī Birdī hints obliquely at accusations leveled against al-Kūrānī, and Ibn Ḥajar reports (as quoted earlier) that a certain Shihāb al-Dīn al-Gharbānī had heard something that led him to the conclusion that al-Kūrānī was a follower of Ibn ʿArabī.[39] Another piece of evidence is provided by reports about al-Kūrānī's students. Al-Sakhāwī mentions two students of al-Kūrānī; he comments about one that he "inclined toward Ibn ʿArabī" and about the other that he "held correct beliefs and criticized the heretical innovators among the Sufis *despite the fact* that he followed Shaykh Yūsuf al-Kūrānī."[40] The ideas that al-Kūrānī had brought from the East were thus very controversial in the Egypt of his age. Nevertheless (or perhaps because of this), he attracted a multitude of students and founded several Sufi lodges. After his death, he was buried in his lodge in al-Qarāfa, which quickly became the destination for pious visits (*ziyārāt*).[41] The ruins of al-Kūrānī's tomb remain extant today.

Al-Kūrānī's offspring established themselves as a family of scholars. His son Aḥmad (d. ca. 820/1418)[42] wrote books on legal theory and gave celebrated Friday sermons. Another son, Muḥammad (d. around 800/1398), had three daughters who became scholars; one of them—Umm al-Ḥasan—was a teacher of al-Sakhāwī.[43]

The biographical works are silent regarding the content of al-Kūrānī's theoretical teaching beyond the recurring theme that he transmitted the *dhikr* formula *lā ilāha illa Allāh*. To learn more about his thought, therefore, we must consult al-Kūrānī's extant writings. Beyond the already mentioned *Rayḥān al-Qulūb*

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38 Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), esp. chaps. 3, 4, 5, and 8.

39 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-Kāmina*, 2:236.

40 Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī, *al-Tuḥfa al-Laṭīfa fī Tārīkh al-Madīna al-Sharīfa* (Cairo: Asʿad Ṭrābzūnī al-Ḥusaynī, 1979–80), 3:501–2. Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Tuḥfa*, 3:472 (emphasis mine).

41 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*, 11:94.

42 Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), 2:213.

43 Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʿ*, 10:94.

(which has little theoretical relevance) and *Sirr al-Asrār* (which I discuss in detail later), two short texts by al-Kūrānī survive. The first of these consists of a short explanation of three famous and controversial lines of poetry by ʿAbd Allāh al-Harawī al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1088) at the end of his *Manāzil al-Sāʾirīn*:

> No one can affirm the unity of the One
> For everyone who does this denies Him
> The affirmation of [God's] unity by someone speaking of His attributes is but a loan
> Which the One has invalidated
> His Self-affirmation is the only real affirmation of His unity
> And the one describing Him denies Him[44]

Al-Kūrānī's introduction to the commentary, titled *Badīʿ al-Intifās fī Sharḥ al-Qawāfī al-Thalāth*, claims that the Sufis of Bejaya (Algeria) had been criticized by local jurists for quoting these verses, and that they consequently wrote to al-Kūrānī to demand clarification of the verses' meaning.[45] In response, al-Kūrānī explains that the affirmation of God's unity by an individual implies the independent existence of this individual, which in effect denies God's unique existence. Al-Kūrānī argues that once one has reached the presence of exclusive unity (*al-ḥaḍra al-aḥadiyya*),[46] there are no more attributes or forms to describe (*lā naʿta fī al-ḥaḍra al-aḥadiyya wa lā nuṭq wa lā rasm li shayʾ*); there is only being, a being that is exclusive in the sense that "anything that exudes the smell of being belongs to God and is for other than God only a loan" (*kullu mā yushammu minhu rāʾiḥat al-wujūd fa-hiya li al-ḥaqq taʿālā wa huwa ʿinda al-ghayr ʿāriya*).[47] This statement is a direct quotation from ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī's commentary on these verses,[48] and it explains al-Harawī's poem from the perspective of *waḥdat al-wujūd*: all being is divine, and the essence of the divine is pure being.

The second of al-Kūrānī's works, *al-Irshād ilā Ḥaqīqat al-Iʿtiqād*, deals with creed.[49] Al-Kūrānī justifies the work as an auxiliary tool for the Sufi adept: correct

44 Al-Harawī, *Manāzil al-Sāʾirīn: Sharḥ ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāsānī [sic]*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 2006), 618.

45 Al-Kūrānī, *Badīʿ al-Intifās fī Sharḥ al-Qawāfī al-Thalāth*, manuscript (Istanbul: Süleymaniye, Şehid Ali Paşa 1358), fols. 53b–55b.

46 For this term, see William Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī to al-Qaysarī," *Muslim World* 72, no. 2 (1982): 116.

47 Al-Kūrānī, *Badīʿ al-Intifās*, fol. 55a.

48 In al-Harawī, *Manāzil al-Sāʾirīn*, 618.

49 Al-Kūrānī, *al-Irshād ilā Ḥaqīqat al-Iʿtiqād*, manuscript (Istanbul: Süleymaniye, Yeni Cami 744), fols. 187a–196b. I am grateful to Necmettin Kizilkaya for having procured a copy of this manuscript for me.

belief and distance from heresy are necessary preconditions for embarking on the Sufi path. The bulk of the work addresses doctrinal topics, primarily in the form of negative theology, with an emphasis on human limitations in comprehending the true nature of divine attributes. But toward the end of the epistle, al-Kūrānī turns to the subject of the logos (which he calls *al-insān al-muṭlaq*), which mediates between and connects the divine and creation:[50]

> This is the position of those who believe in the absolute being, the unity of being, the being of being, the necessary being, the possible being, and similar ideas in the discussions of the theologians among the Sufis as well as others, based on ideas they received from inspiration and imagination and on their different stations of unveiling. One is not obliged to take as conclusive or to believe any of the things they say, because the issue is more important than that, and because belief consists of certainty regarding what one believes. However, matters that are disputed and subject to doubts that originate in subjective thoughts do not reach the level of proof, nor can they be used to establish faith.[51]

وإلى هذا المعنى ذهب من قال بالوجود المطلق ووحدة الوجود ووجود الوجود والواجب الوجود والممكن الوجود وما ناسب ذلك من كلام المتكلمين من الصوفية وغيرهم وعلى حسب ما حصل على خواطرهم من الواردات والأوهام ومراتبهم المتفاوتة في الكشف. وجميع ما قالوا لا يجب أن يعرج عليه ولا يعتقد لأن الأمر أعلى من ذلك وأن الإيمان هو اليقين بما هو مؤمن به. فالشيء الذي قيل وفيه إختلاف والشكوك المتواردة على الخواطر الوهمية لا يقف عندها برهان ولا يحقق في أمرها إيمان

These two short works (*Badīʿ al-Intifās fī Sharḥ al-Qawāfī al-Thalāth* and *al-Irshād ilā Ḥaqīqat al-Iʿtiqād*) demonstrate that al-Kūrānī's thought was clearly influenced by Ibn ʿArabī's concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. The first text lays out al-Kūrānī's theory of the ultimate divine presence as simply being devoid of any attributes (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*) and of the logos (*al-insān al-muṭlaq*) as the intermediate stage between the absolute being and the contingent being of creation. However, the second text shows that al-Kūrānī did not consider such ideas to constitute the doctrinal bedrock of Islamic belief; rather, he views them as the subjective insights of individuals who have reached a particular spiritual station, insights that thus cannot be established with certainty.[52] The disputes and doubts that he mentions regarding speculative Sufi theories could refer either to the categorical rejection of Ibn ʿArabī's ideas in the public scholarly realm of his new

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50 John T. Little, "Al-Insān al-Kāmil: The Perfect Man According to Ibn al-ʿArabī," *Muslim World* 77 (1987): 43–54; Landolt, "Briefwechsel," 42–43.

51 Al-Kūrānī, *al-Irshād*, fol. 196a.

52 If the goal of this creed had been simply to distance its author from Ibn ʿArabī, there would have been no need to introduce the issue of *al-insān al-muṭlaq* in the first place.

home in Egypt or, more probably, to the debates raging among Sufi theorists, such as al-Simnānī's critique of Ibn ʿArabī in his letter to ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī.[53]

These two texts are very short and can provide only a glimpse into al-Kūrānī's thought. It is in his most extensive work, *Sirr al-Asrār*, that the partly competing, partly complementary influences of rival circles of speculative Sufism come to the surface. Like al-Kūrānī's shorter works, *Sirr al-Asrār* contains clear parallels with Ibn ʿArabī's writings.[54] At the same time, however, the contribution of another line of Neoplatonic Sufi thought is also visible in the text: that of ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī (d. 736/1336), the scion of a family of prominent Ilkhanid court officials who turned to Sufism and founded a famous Sufi lodge in al-Simnānī's home-town of Simnān in Iran.[55] Al-Simnānī authored a number of works, in which he lays out a cosmological framework that is identical to the one offered by al-Kūrānī in *Sirr al-Asrār* and discussed in detail below. This framework consists of four hierarchical realms of being, reflecting four stages of humanity's descent from their original abode in God's presence. Al-Simnānī seems to have been the first to propose the four-realm theory in this precise form.[56] Al-Kūrānī's extant works do not directly mention al-Simnānī, but the similarity is striking. In addition, *Sirr al-Asrār* quotes repeatedly the *Mirṣād al-ʿIbād* by Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī,[57] who was, together with al-Simnānī, among the most important theorists of the Kubrawī order. Al-Kūrānī's debt to these two figures thus suggests a Kubrawī influence on his thought.

This heterogeneous mix of ideas in al-Kūrānī's work is not reconciled on a theoretical level; rather, it is mediated by his relativization, quoted earlier, of the truth claims of these various theories. Al-Kūrānī's stance reflects the fertile inter-action among various strands of speculative Sufism in the sixth/twelfth through eighth/fourteenth centuries, which forms al-Kūrānī's background. Ibn ʿArabī's thought played a significant role in this tradition, as clearly evident in the writings of members of the Buzghush branch of the Suhrawardī order, but similar ideas seem to have been already present in Persia before the arrival of Ibn ʿArabī's

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53 Landolt, "Briefwechsel."

54 Compare, for example, *Sirr al-Asrār*, 94, with Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, ed. Abū al-ʿAlāʾ ʿAfīfī (Cairo: ʿĪsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1946), 54.

55 On al-Simnānī, see Jamal J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ʿAlāʾ ad-Dawla as-Simnānī* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

56 Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 63.

57 The work has been translated by Hamid Algar as *Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1982); on its textual history, see Franklin Lewis, "The Modes of Literary Production: Remarks on the Composition, Revision and 'Publication' of Persian Texts in the Medieval Period," *Persica* 17 (2001): 74–81.

works.[58] Furthermore, Sufis such as al-Simnānī, who disagreed with Ibn ʿArabī on some points, nonetheless shared the same discursive space—in some cases quite directly, such as in al-Simnānī's correspondence with the Ibn ʿArabī popularizer al-Qāshānī, who belonged to the same Suhrawardī branch as al-Kūrānī.[59] Likewise, Ibn ʿArabī's student Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 679/1274) was a friend of the Kubrawī Shaykh Saʿd al-Dīn al-Ḥamūya.[60] Al-Simnānī himself received two honorary cloaks (khiraq al-tabarruk) from the Suhrawardī order and was thereby an honorary affiliate of this order.[61] The common element among these strands of Persian speculative Sufism that is relevant for this study is the ontological connection that all of them postulate between material and divine reality, the former emanating from the latter.

Cosmology

In the beginning of Sirr al-Asrār, al-Kūrānī sketches a basic Neoplatonic cosmological framework within which he then positions the rest of his discussion. According to al-Kūrānī, God's first act of creation was to form the soul of Muḥammad or the reality of Muḥammad (al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya) out of the light of His own beauty. As evidence for this claim al-Kūrānī quotes several traditions attributed to Muḥammad that refer to his reality through various metaphors, such as light and the pen.[62] The Muḥammadan reality, al-Kūrānī explains, can be called light because it is free of the darkness of divine majesty and contains only the light of divine beauty. The term "pen" is appropriate because the Prophet fulfills in the human world the role of the pen in the world of letters (ʿālam al-ḥurūf), namely, the conveying of knowledge.

According to al-Kūrānī, God created all other souls from the soul of Muḥammad in the realm of divinity (ʿālam al-lāhūt). From this highest level of existence, the human souls underwent a process of descent. First they descended from the realm of divinity to the realm of omnipotence (ʿālam al-jabarūt), then further into the realm of sovereignty (ʿālam al-malakūt), and finally to the lowest level, the

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58 See, for example, the anecdote about al-Kīshī (d. 694/1295), according to which he developed the idea of waḥdat al-wujūd independently of Ibn ʿArabī. Landolt, "Briefwechsel," 35.
59 See Landolt, "Briefwechsel."
60 Omar Benaïssa, "The Diffusion of Akbarian Teaching in Iran during the 13th and 14th Centuries," Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society 26 (1999): 89–109.
61 Elias, Throne Carrier of God, 41.
62 Sirr al-Asrār, 45.

material realm of existence (*ʿālam al-mulk*).[63] In each of these realms, the soul received a new shell that Protected its higher nature from the debased surroundings.[64]

The task of the Sufi is now to reverse this descent and to ascend through the various realms of existence toward God. The first hurdle on this path, as outlined by al-Kūrānī, is that the material nature of the lowest realm of existence has distracted people from their primordial covenant with God, as outlined in Quran 7:172: "Am I not your highest Lord? They said: Yes, we bear witness to this." The divine law (*sharīʿa*), as the manifestation of divine communication with humankind through the Prophet, is a reminder (*tadhkira*) of this covenant and inspires people to strive to return to their original home (*al-waṭan al-aṣlī*) with God.

The return to the spiritual home takes place in two stages. The first of these occurs in the material world, where the requirements of the divine law must be fulfilled. When this is accomplished, the seeker reaches the next stage in the nonmaterial realms of existence. In these realms, the task is no longer following the sacred law, but rather *dhikr* of specific and appropriate names of God.

Al-Kūrānī elucidates the difference between the material and the nonmaterial obstacles on the path through the image of the two eyes of the human heart, one small and one big. The former perceives the manifestation of divine attributes, while the latter sees the light of the divine being itself. By following the sacred law, the human attributes of darkness (*ṣifāt ẓulmāniyya*), such as hate and arrogance, are cast aside, causing the veils of darkness (*ḥujub ẓulmāniyya*) to lift and to expose the divine origin of the world. At this point, the small eye of the heart opens and the seeker sees the world as manifestation of divine attributes. The big eye of the heart, which perceives the uncreated divine essence instead of the mere reflection of divine attributes in the created world, can open only once the veils of light (*ḥujub nūrāniyya*) have been lifted. To achieve this, the seeker must discard his or her lower humanity (*bashariyya nafsāniyya*) by extinguishing the self-aware ego.[65] This purging of the self is the precondition for entry into God's presence, since no other being can coexist with the divine presence.[66]

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63 Al-Kūrānī does not discuss the precise nature of these realms. There is a particularly wide range of opinions among Sufis regarding the nature of the two middle realms. See Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, 159; Louis Gardet, "ʿĀlam," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:349; and esp. Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 63.

64 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 55.

65 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 90.

66 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 109.

An alternative image for the spectrum between the highest realm (of divinity) and the lowest realm (of the material world) in al-Kūrānī's work is the dichotomy of inner and outer layers. In this conceptualization, humankind's original abode is the innermost layer of existence, and its counterpart soul is thus located in the "secret" (*sirr*), or the innermost core of the human being. The subsequent realms of omnipotence and sovereignty correspond to different layers of the heart (*qalb* and *fuʾād*), and the material human existence in flesh and blood represents the outermost layer.

For al-Kūrānī, this categorization of layers of being, with the material world as the surface and the divine as the core, is of universal applicability and constitutes the fundamental matrix for all aspects of the Sufi path. Table 1 illustrates the various facets of the different layers in al-Kūrānī's cosmology and the forms of *dhikr* that correspond to each.

Table 1. Levels of existence and their characteristics in al-Kūrānī's cosmology.

Realm of existence	material realm (*ʿālam al-mulk*)	realm of sovereignty (*ʿālam al-malakūt*)	realm of omnipotence (*ʿālam al-jabarūt*)	realm of divinity (*ʿālam al-lāhūt*)
Form of the soul	physical soul (*al-rūḥ al-jismānī*)	wandering soul (*al-rūḥ al-sayrānī*)	majestic soul (*al-rūḥ al-sulṭānī*)	sanctified soul (*al-rūḥ al-qudsī*)
Location of the soul	in flesh and blood	in the heart (*qalb*)	in the inner heart (*fuʾād*)	in the "secret" core (*sirr*)
Type of knowledge	sacred law (*sharīʿa*)	knowledge of the path (*ṭarīqa*)	knowledge of God (*maʿrifa*)	knowledge of absolute reality (*ḥaqīqa*)
Type of *dhikr*	obedience to the sacred law	concentration on the first four of twelve divine names	concentration on the second group of four divine names	Concentration on the third group of divine names
Place of *dhikr*	on the tongue	in the heart (consciously)	in the heart (unconsciously)	divine self-contemplation in the "secret"
Veils between humankind and God	material veils (*ḥujub ẓulmāniyya*)	mental veils (*ḥujub nūrāniyya*)		no veils
Reward	sainthood and miracles; the first level of paradise	visions of the unseen; the second level of paradise	reflections of divine beauty; the third level of paradise	the vision of God's countenance

Dhikr

The possibility of humans' reversing their emanation from the divine presence is already present in the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* written by Plotinus (d. 270 CE).[67] Al-Kūrānī's innovation was to match the Neoplatonic idea of return with the Islamic ritual practice of *dhikr*. As seen above, in al-Kūrānī's scheme the return to God's presence takes place through recitation and contemplation of the twelve names of divine unity. Al-Kūrānī dedicates a chapter of *Sirr al-Asrār* to the subject of *dhikr*, enumerating and describing its various steps:

> Every station [of *dhikr*] has a certain rank, audible or silent. First He leads them to *dhikr* of the tongue, then to *dhikr* of the animal soul (*nafs*), then to *dhikr* of the heart (*qalb*), then to *dhikr* of the soul (*rūḥ*), then to *dhikr* of the secret (*sirr*), then to *dhikr* of the hidden (*al-khafī*), and then to *dhikr* of the innermost hidden (*akhfā al-khafī*).
>
> As for the *dhikr* of the tongue, it is as if He reminds the heart of its forgetfulness in remembering God.
>
> The *dhikr* of the animal soul is not heard as sounds or letters, but only as feeling and inner movement.
>
> The *dhikr* of the heart is the heart's perception of the majesty and beauty within itself.
>
> The result of the *dhikr* of the soul is seeing the lights of the manifestations of divine attributes (*tajalliyyāt al-ṣifāt*).
>
> The *dhikr* of the secret consists of witnessing the unveiling of divine secrets.
>
> The *dhikr* of the hidden is the preoccupation with the lights of the beauty of the unitary self (*al-dhāt al-aḥadiyya*) in the seat of truthfulness.
>
> The *dhikr* of the innermost hidden is the vision of the truth of absolute certainty (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), and no one reaches it except God Himself; as He says [in Quran 20:7], "He knows the secrets and what is even more hidden." This is the furthest point of all worlds and the end of all aims.[68]

This basic sequence of audible *dhikr*, silent *dhikr*, and then the witnessing of the divine self-recollection can also be found in the work of al-Kūrānī's contemporary

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[67] See the edition of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Aflūṭīn ʿinda al-ʿArab* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1955), 22–23.
[68] *Sirr al-Asrār*, 80–81.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350),[69] as well as in Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's (d. 709/1309) *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ wa Miṣbāḥ al-Arwāḥ*, which the author claims to be the first work to deal exclusively with the practice of *dhikr*. The *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ* contains both the simple tripartite classification and a more elaborate system similar to that of al-Kūrānī.[70] What all of these works have in common is that they see progress in the practice of *dhikr* as a process of internalization: *dhikr* begins with the tongue, subsequently penetrates the self, and eventually transforms from a human to a divine activity.

However, there is a fundamental difference between Ibn al-Qayyim on the one hand and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh and al-Kūrānī on the other. While the former describes *dhikr* simply as a form of worship, the latter two integrate *dhikr* into an ontological spectrum that connects the human being at the one end with the divine at the other.[71] Ibn al-Qayyim rejects such a unified spectrum encompassing both human and divine, because he perceives a danger of blurring the line between humankind as servants and God as master. He consequently adds to his section on *dhikr* a caution:

> The possessors of spiritual insights give servitude its due and knowledge its due. They know that the servant is truly a servant in all respects and that the Lord is truly Lord in all respects … Through witnessing the meanings of His names and attributes, they extinguish their selves (*fanū*) vis-à-vis anything but Him; [they do this] out of love through that which is for Him (*lahu*), and in contentment with what is created and willed by Him (*bihi*). For all creation is by Him (*bihi*), but what is for Him (*lahu*) is [only] that which He loves and which pleases Him. This, then, is both for Him and by Him.

> The heretics obliterate that which is for Him through that which is by Him. They thereby become His enemies, abolish His religion, and equate what is pleasing to him with what causes His wrath.[72]

Ibn al-Qayyim emphasizes that while the goal of the Sufi seeker is the annihilation of the human ego, the theorization of *dhikr* as the ultimate transformation of the object—God—into the subject must be understood within its proper limits. First, the divine and the human remain separate, and second, awareness that the absolute reality of the divine lies under the individual self and its actions should not seduce the seeker to disregard the distinction between right (that which God

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69 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Faqī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1956), 2:152–54.

70 Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2001), 7–11.

71 Ibn ʾAṭāʾ Allāh, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, 9.

72 Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 2:154.

created and is pleased by) and wrong (that which God created but made impermissible). While the mystical experience reveals to the seeker that everything, both good and evil, is from and through God (*bihi*), only what is right is pleasing to Him (*lahu*).

The challenge of maintaining the distinctness of God and humanity and the dangers of antinomianism had already informed Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 728/1328) attack on Ibn ʿArabī.[73] The fact that Ibn Taymiyya's student Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned these points in the context of *dhikr* indicates that the latter recognized that speculative Sufism had in some circles provided the practice of *dhikr* with a theoretical basis in monistic cosmology.[74] Although the notion that *dhikr* progresses from the outside to the inside and culminates in the realization of a divine soliloquy had by the eighth/fourteenth century been widely accepted, the critics of speculative Sufism continued to insist on recognition of the transcendental divide between the human and divine realms. By contrast, Sufis such as al-Kūrānī integrated the theory of *dhikr* into an ontological model that postulated a degree of immanence between material and divine being.

Language and Epistemology

In order to traverse the nonmaterial realms of existence, al-Kūrānī prescribes the recitation of four divine names for each realm, which add up to the twelve "names of divine unity" (*asmāʾ al-tawḥīd*). The idea that each divine name has specific properties that can benefit their reciter amounts to a theory of spiritual medicine, as Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh describes it:

> Know that God's beautiful names are medicine for the sicknesses of the heart ... However, a medicine is applied only to the disease that it heals. For the specific heart for which the name "the Giver" (*al-muʿṭī*) is appropriate, the name "the Bestower of benefit" (*al-nāfiʿ*) is not, and so on. As a rule, the meaning of a *dhikr* formula attaches to the heart of the reciter and brings its consequences with it, so that the reciter takes on the meaning as a characteristic, if the meaning of the name is open to reason.[75]

After this explanation, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh provides a list of fifty divine names, describing for whom each of the names is beneficial, which traits of character they lend,

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[73] Nagel, *Im Offenkundigen das Verborgene*, 367.

[74] Louis Gardet alluded to the general phenomenon in "Dhikr," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 2:223.

[75] Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, 26.

and what are the counterindications. Different Sufi orders have identified different divine names as the most important and most effective in the process of spiritual realization.[76] Al-Kūrānī never specifies the twelve names of divine unity; they were most probably taught on a personal level between shaykh and *murīd*, since al-Kūrānī considered it necessary to receive one's *dhikr* directly from a living teacher.[77]

The significance of the divine names differs radically between debates in theology and those in Sufism. In theology, the divine names are significant insofar as they indicate rationally graspable divine attributes. Therefore, even names that do not occur in the Quran or the Prophetic tradition, such as "the Eternal without beginning" (*al-Qadīm*), can be attributed to God as long as they accurately describe Him.[78] Sufi authors, on the other hand, reject the use of such "artificial names" for God for the same reason that they reject the Muʿtazilī claim of the createdness of the Quran: both artificial divine names and the thesis that the Quran is created deny the supernaturalness of sacred language.[79] For Sufis, this characteristic of divine language is of crucial importance, because it means that human beings have access to something that can breach the divide between the human and the divine.

It is this notion of the nature of sacred language that underpins the idea that the repetition of divine names leads one to approach the named. Instead of mere human conventions, names are manifestations of the named in the material world. Therefore, the sign of the name and the thing named are not separated by an unbridgeable gulf, as the theory of arbitrary convention would suggest; rather, there is an organic connection between God and the names describing Him and His attributes. This theory of immanence is an extension of the Sunni

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76 Similar importance is given to the divine names in a widely read handbook of the Qādirī order for the development of the soul through the twelve fundamental names of God: 1. *Lā ilāha illa Allāh*; 2. *Allāh*; 3. *Huwa*; 4. *Ḥaqq*; 5. *Ḥayy*; 6. *Qayyūm*; 7. *Qahhār*; 8. *Wahhāb*; 9. *Fattāḥ*; 10. *Aḥad*; 11. *Wāḥid*; 12. *Ṣamad*. See Ismāʿīl al-Qādirī, *al-Fuyūḍāt al-Rabbāniyya fī al-Maʾāthir wa al-Awrād al-Qādiriyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), 14–18. The same twelve names were used by the Khalwatī order; see de Jong, "Khalwatiyya." Other authors give other numbers. Al-Qāshānī identifies seven "imams" of divine names (*aʾimmat al-asmāʾ*): 1. *Ḥayy*; 2. *ʿAlīm*; 3. *Murīd*; 4. *Qādir*; 5. *Samīʿ*; 6. *Baṣīr*; 7. *Mutakallim*. See ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1992), 58.

77 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 46, 67, and 71.

78 ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Fūda, *Tahdhīb Sharḥ al-Sanūsiyya* (Amman: Dār al-Bayāriq, 1998), 32–33.

79 On the specifically Sufi emphasis on the power of divine language see Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, *Die Fawāʾiḥ al-ǧamāl wa-fawātiḥ al-ǧalāl des Naǧm ad-Dīn al-Kubrā: Eine Darstellung mystischer Erfahrungen im Islam aus der Zeit um 1200 n. Chr.*, ed. Fritz Meier (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1957), 146–54.

theory of God's uncreated word as a gateway to the sacred,[80] and it is diametrically opposed to the Muʿtazilī theory of the Quran as an ethico-legal message housed in the—in itself—profane hull of created language.

An explicit stress on the noncreatedness of the Quran and on its supernatural character and layering appears in the work of al-Kūrānī as well as in that of al-Simnānī,[81] and the former's discussion of the subject seems to borrow from and expand on the latter's. According to this view, the Quran exists in the same four realms of existence as the human being. The type of exegesis that characterizes the material world is termed *tafsīr*, and it deals with the worldly aspects of the text, such as the historical circumstances of revelation and its legal implications. The exegesis corresponding to the three spiritual realms of existence is called *taʾwīl* and is reserved for those who have passed through these realms.[82] The ontological layering of humankind is thus also found in the sacred language of the Quran.[83] This fundamental similarity between the human being and the Quran, together with the integral connection between name and named, is what makes the practice of *dhikr* effective.

According to the Sunni understanding, divine revelation took place through sacred language as an uncreated attribute of God, and it established direct access to the divine, since it was sent down (*nuzila*) from God to humankind. This image of a downward movement is complemented in the Quran through the image of the "firm rope of God" (*ḥabl Allāh*) as a metaphor for the Quran.[84] Al-Kūrānī's theory elaborates on these two Quranic concepts through the fourfold hierarchical spectrum of being. In this view, the material manifestation of the Quran is the worldly end of revelation, while the higher manifestations lead seekers upward to their home in the realm of divinity.[85]

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80 Nagel, *Im Offenkundigen das Verborgene*, 246–65.

81 See al-Simnānī's "Muqaddimat tafsīr al-Qurʾān," ed. Paul Nwyia, *al-Abḥāth* 26 (1973–77): 151.

82 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 62–63.

83 Al-Kūrānī explicitly states that humanity is a copy of the ur-Quran (*umm al-kitāb*); *Sirr al-Asrār*, 94. On the same parallel between humankind and Quran in Ibn ʿArabī's thought, see Pierre Lory, "The Symbolism of Letters and Language in the Work of Ibn ʿArabi," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 23 (1998): 37.

84 See, for example, Quran 23:98.

85 For al-Kūrānī, the original Quran originated in the realm of divinity, from the greatest tablet (*al-lawḥ al-akbar*), whereas the Quran that was revealed to Muḥammad by the angel Gabriel is from the realm of sovereignty (*ʿālam al-jabarūt*), from the protected tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*); *Sirr al-Asrār*, 74. For Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā's very similar usage of the term *ḥabl Allāh*, see *Die Fawāʾiḥ al-ǧamāl*, 69 and 202.

Every human being has the potential to make this journey, since every human being consists of layers that correspond to the levels of being that need to be traversed, which in turn are products of his or her original descent through these levels.[86] Since the physical body of flesh and blood represents the material level of existence (*ʿālam al-mulk*), *dhikr* begins on this level as the production of sounds that manifest the divine names on the material level. Given the right circumstances (that is, obedience to the sacred law), constant repetition of this lowest form of *dhikr* penetrates through the heart to the next dimension, the realm of sovereignty (*ʿālam al-malakūt*).[87] At this stage, the words lose their sounds and are repeated on a higher level with the "tongue of the heart." Subsequently, the words deepen further and reach the inner heart (*fuʾād*); at this point the action of *dhikr* changes into being, since the repetition of the *dhikr* no longer occurs voluntarily but rather has become a part of the person performing it.[88] In the final step, the *dhikr* performer's ego perishes entirely and the sole truly existing actor, God, remains, in an act of self-remembrance.

To describe the progression of *dhikr* as a phenomenon of language, the namer ascends through the levels of being as the distance between the name and the named progressively shrinks, eventually achieving self-obliteration when the name, the named, and the namer coincide and the human being emerges as a locus of divine self-contemplation. This phenomenon of Sufi grammar is described by Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh as the phenomenon of "He." While for ordinary grammarians "he" must be followed by a predicate in order to generate meaning, for the Sufi the realization that "He" is a complete expression because it is the origin of every being represents the culmination of spiritual progress.[89] The impossibility that Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh describes of attributing a predicate to the divine subject is due to the seeker's utter loss in the divine. God has become so immediate that no statement can be made about Him beyond the witnessing of His being Him. Similarly, al-Kūrānī describes the eventual goal of the human ascent in purely negative terms, asserting that arrival at the divine is unlike either physical proximity or mental attainment.[90]

From the perspective of God, on the other hand, the seeker, by reaching the realm of divinity, fulfills the very purpose of his or her creation by becoming

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86 The view is also attributed to al-Shādhilī; see Nagel, *Im Offenkundigen das Verborgene*, 355.

87 "Repetition brings out the secrets that lie beneath the utterance, since under every utterance hides a well-guarded secret." Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, 35.

88 See, for example, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, 9–10.

89 Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh plays on the similarity between the personal pronoun *huwa* and the sound of the divine breath as the act of creation; *Miftāḥ al-Falāḥ*, 32–33.

90 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 91.

a mirror of the Truth in His majesty and beauty, the summation of creation (*majmūʿat al-kawn*). He is called the encompassing being (*al-kawn al-jāmiʿ*) and a macrocosm (*ʿālam kubrā*), because God created him with both of His hands, that is, with the attributes of hardness and softness (*qahr wa luṭf*), since every mirror has two sides, one rough and one fine. Therefore, he [the human being] is a manifestation of the all-encompassing name (*al-ism al-jāmiʿ*), in contrast to all other things, which were created with only one hand, that is, with only one divine attribute.[91]

Contemplation of the divine names thus leads the seeker to regain, in the realm of divinity, the status of a perfected mirror in which God then contemplates Himself in the fullness of His attributes.[92]

Conclusion

The origins of the concept and practice of *dhikr* in particular and of a logocentric approach to worship in general can be traced back to the Quran. Early Sufi handbooks already describe *dhikr* as a distinct practice, underpinned by a rudimentary theory that postulates a process of internalizing the meanings of the words used in *dhikr*.[93] Furthermore, schemes that divide the human being into layers, the innermost of which represents intimate experience of God, were proposed early on.[94] However, it was the speculative Sufism of the post–Ibn ʿArabī era that developed complete and comprehensive cosmologies derived from Neoplatonism, with a complementary theology, anthropology, and epistemology, within which *dhikr* as practice acquired a full-fledged theoretical grounding. The development of *dhikr* from one spiritual practice among others to the archetypal form of spiritual exercise in the emerging Sufi orders was rooted in these Sufi theories. They share three crucial assumptions. First, the world has come into being as a manifestation of divine names. Second, the Sufi seeker has the potential to become an embodiment of these divine names as the complete human being (*al-insān*

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91 *Sirr al-Asrār*, 94. The idea that the human being is a macrocosm rather than a microcosm, i.e., that it is the world that reflects the human being's constitution on a smaller scale rather than the other way around, appears to have been introduced by al-Simnānī; see Elias, *Throne Carrier of God*, 68.

92 This is, of course, also Ibn ʿArabī's anthropology; see his *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, 48–58 (on Adam).

93 See, for example, Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī's (d. 465/1072) *Risālat al-Dhikr*, quoted in extenso in Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qushāshī's *al-Simṭ al-Majīd* (Hyderabad: Maṭbaʿat Majlis al-Maʿārif al-Niẓāmiyya, 1327/1909–10), 18–24.

94 For example, by Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907); see Annemarie Schimmel, *Deciphering the Signs of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), xiv.

al-kāmil). And third, divine names and the divine named stand in a relation of immanence, the former representing lower-level manifestations of the latter. In view of these three postulates, it is understandable that *dhikr*, the recitation and contemplation of divine names, became the primary exercise of spiritual ascent.

Al-Kūrānī's work provides an illustrative example of the role of speculative Sufism in the theoretical doctrine of a Sufi order and of the effect of this doctrine on the significance and theorization of the central ritual practice of *dhikr*. Once al-Kūrānī and his ideas arrived in Egypt, they and their proponents encountered resistance and suspicion, leading to a bifurcation of the literature: al-Kūrānī's public work, *Rayḥān al-Qulūb*, was an uncontroversial handbook of Sufi practice that was known to historians who were his contemporaries, whereas his theoretical works, which revealed his indebtedness to speculative Sufism, remained to an extent secret and reserved for other Sufis. Eventually, the alliance of the institution of the Sufi order and the holistic models of speculative Sufism prevailed,[95] and al-Kūrānī's *Sirr al-Asrār* achieved wide circulation, as indicated by the wealth of extant manuscript copies.[96] The new Sufism combined a theoretical body of thought that could be transmitted in books and a practical path (*ṭarīqa*) that was passed on through the personal contact between teacher and novice. By endowing the practice of *dhikr* with a new and central role as a spiritual exercise of return within the emanationist scheme of a Neoplatonist cosmology, the theoretical end of Sufism thus decisively shaped the Sufi orders that were emerging as influential societal players in the post-Mongol world.

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95 The Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam prohibited public defamation of Ibn ʿArabī in the sixteenth century; see Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition*, 4.

96 Al-Kūrānī also became a crucial link in the *silsila*s of many Sufi orders. Al-Qushāshī alone mentions three *silsila*s in which al-Kūrānī appears in *al-Simṭ al-Majīd*, 64, 77, and 104.

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Roy Parviz Mottahedeh
Friendship in Islamic Ethical Philosophy

Matthew Arnold, the great Victorian social and literary critic, offers us a valuable context in which to interpret much premodern Islamic philosophy. In 1869 he wrote: "Hebraism and Hellenism—between these two points of influence moves our world."[1] By Hebraism he meant the Bible, by Hellenism he meant classical Greek thought, and by "our world" he meant the world of Western civilization. Significantly, the civilization of most educated Muslim thinkers of the premodern era was also under the influence of Hebraism and Hellenism, to which they added the enormously powerful influence of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān, of course, sees itself as a continuation and perfection of the revelations of Jesus and the Prophets.

A word that symbolizes this rich heritage is *sa'ādah*, frequently misleadingly translated as "happiness." The Qur'ān uses the root of this word to explain the condition of the saved. We read in *sūrah Hūd*, verse 105, that

> On that Day [of Judgment] when it comes no soul will speak except by His permission; then some among them will be wretched and some will be blessed.

The word for blessed in this verse, *sa'īd*, does indeed mean "happy," but here it is associated with divine blessedness or bliss. This approach is fully consonant with the Bible, where, for example, the eleventh verse of Psalm 16 reads:

> Thou dost show me the path of life; in Thy presence there
> is fullness of joy, in Thy right hand are pleasures for everyone.

Strong confirmation that "blessedness" and "fullness of joy" were the moral goal of life was found in the translation of Aristotle's term *eudaimonia* as *sa'ādah*. For the classical philosophers this state is one in which all possible human virtues are realized and come to flourish; hence some modern translators render it as "flourishing." The understanding of *sa'ādah* as the realization of a person's virtues and the fulfillment of his or her possibilities was strong in premodern Islamic philosophy. It was combined with a view of the afterlife in which the "blessedness" or

1 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (New York: n.p., 1910), 110.

"bliss" continued for the virtuous. Henceforth, the word *sa'ādah* is translated in this essay as "virtuous well-being."[2]

Yet the classical Greek and premodern Muslim philosophers agreed that it would be nearly impossible to achieve this state alone and that one of the essential ingredients for the full flourishing of the virtues was friendship, which indeed was itself one of the virtues. Friendship was one of the ties that prevented the pursuit of "virtuous well-being" from becoming a solitary and self-absorbed preoccupation. On this account both of the Muslim ethical philosophers discussed in this essay devote a chapter to friendship.[3]

The first philosopher considered is the great tenth-century polymath Miskawayh, whose full name was Aḥmad Abū ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad Miskawayh (d. 421/1030).[4] He was born in Rayy, an important city near modern Tehran, and lived much of his life there as well as in Baghdad. He was a member of the intellectual elite of his time and his works on ethics and history had a very significant influence on the Islamic tradition right through to the nineteenth century when Muḥammad ʿAbduh taught Miskawayh's ethics as a fundamental text. Although Iranian (his name in Persian means "smelling of musk"), he wrote exclusively in an elegant and economical Arabic. Miskawayh's belief in the autonomous authority of reason infuses the later chapters of his outstanding "world history," which are analytical and sophisticated in a way that few premodern Muslim historians are—a feature from which I greatly benefited in my book *Loyalty and Leadership*.

In his ethical text *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq* (*The Refinement of Character*), Miskawayh begins by quoting Aristotle's famous maxim "Man is communal by nature."[5] Both in Greek and in Arabic this maxim is often translated "political by nature," but the Arabic word employed by Miskawayh and by Islamic philosophers in general—*madanī*—means, more exactly, "belonging to a *madīnah*, a city or community."

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2 Professor Wisnovsky has pointed out to me that there are inclusivist and exclusivist interpretations of Aristotle. According to the inclusivist view, *eudaimonia* consists in the sum of all activities that are in accordance with the virtue. According to the exclusivist view, *eudaimonia* consists in one activity, contemplation. The authors discussed here belong to the inclusivist view.

3 This essay considers only two books: Miskawayh's *Akhlāq* and Ṭūsī's *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*. What both authors have written elsewhere is not discussed. Both of these texts on friendship are so rich that they deserve much longer separate treatment, especially the *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī*.

4 There are several good accounts of Miskawayh's life, including the excellent chapters in Mohammed Arkoun, *L'humanisme arabe au IVe/Xe siècle* (Paris: Libr. Philosophique J. Vrins, 1982).

5 Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, ed. C. Zurayk (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1967), translated by C. Zurayk as *The Refinement of Character* (Beirut, 1968); hereafter, page numbers for the Arabic followed by those for English. Zurayk's edition and translation are excellent, and by and large I accept his translation without revision. Here, however, he translates *madanī* as "civic" (155/139)—whereas I prefer "communal."

That "communal" is the meaning here is confirmed by Miskawayh's and Aristotle's reference to bees and ants, which we would call communal or social animals. Miskawayh goes on to explain that consequently the perfection of human virtuous well-being can only be realized with friends. Miskawayh believes this is so even at the most basic level because of shared needs among friends. The man of virtuous well-being obtains friends and strives to give goods to them in order that he receive from them goods which he is unable to obtain himself. Moreover, on a higher level, the man of virtuous well-being enjoys the days of his life through his friends and so do they through him.

Miskawayh distinguishes this "unchanging and indissoluble" pleasure, which is had by few, with the "animal pleasures" of the majority. So refined is true friendship that it can only subsist with one person. In contrast, the good and virtuous man will approach everyone with good comradeship (*'ishrah*) and try to behave toward everyone with the approach of a true friend.[6] This immediately raises a question to which I shall return. As mutuality of friendship is necessary for the material and moral exchange within a community, can friendship based on mutuality be feigned or superficial or merely limited? According to Miskawayh, it can be all of these because it falls short of deep or true friendship. Sincere gratitude, lack of greed, and a comparative disinterest in domination and praise are essential in the character of a true friend. Yet a human without defects does not exist and if one does not overlook small defects one will have no friends.[7]

Miskawayh plainly states that if you achieve "good fortune," you should share it with friends. Furthermore, the sharing of "bad fortune" is even more incumbent and the effect of doing so on the friend who has bad fortune is much deeper. Miskawayh writes: "Do not wait until he asks you either explicitly or implicitly ... [rather] share with him the pain of what has befallen him."[8]

Miskawayh strongly supports the duty to contradict any backbiting or slanderous comment about one's friend that has been made in the absence of the other friend. If one becomes aware of a defect in his friend, he should show it to his friend in a gentle manner "because the tactful doctor may accomplish with a delicate treatment what others do by cutting, amputation and cauterizing."[9]

In two different passages Miskawayh emphasizes the importance of teaching the value of friendship. Miskawayh quotes a Greek author of the fourth century BCE who says, "I am greatly astonished at those who teach their children the tales

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6 Miskawayh, 153–55/138–39.

7 Miskawayh, 160/143.

8 Miskawayh, 162/145.

9 Miskawayh, 165/147.

of kings and the fighting between them, and the stories of wars, hatred, revenge, and rebellion, who forget the subject of affection, the accounts of concord, and the benefits which all people gain through love and fellowship (*al-maḥabbah wal-'uns*). For no man can live without affection (*al-muwaddah*) even though the world may favor him with all its attractions."[10] In another passage he recommends the wisdom conveyed by the famous book of animal fables, *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*. He draws attention to "the parable about the powerful lions which are killed and destroyed by the weak but cunning fox that gets into their midst."[11]

Miskawayh relates all the ethics of friendship to a basic Islamic theme. He says, "We have chosen concord, sought and praised it, and have said that God—Mighty and Exalted is He—has summoned us to it by the prescription [of] the upright Divine Law (*sharī'ah*)."[12] And indeed it is in man's relation with God that friendship reaches its apotheosis. Miskawayh writes:

> It is the necessary truth which admits of no doubt that [God] is loved only by the person of virtuous well-being (*sa'īd*) and goodness who knows true virtuous well-being and the real good (*al-sa'ādah wa-l-khayr*). That is why he endeavors to seek His favor through both [virtuous well-being and good], strives to the utmost of his ability to please Him, and imitates His acts to the extent of his capacity. And he who shows such love of God—Exalted is He!—such interest in seeking His favor and such obedience to Him will be loved, favored and gratified by God and will become worthy of His friendship—that friendship to some men by the Law wherein Abraham is called "the friend (*khalīl*) of God" and Muhammad "the Beloved (*ḥabīb*) of God."[13]

One would expect that in a strongly monotheistic system—and it is difficult to think of a more strongly monotheistic system than Islam—God would be too remote to be a friend. Yet both the Bible and the Qur'ān call Abraham the friend of God. Excepting love affairs, friendship with God or gods would have been unusual in the classical Greek context before Christianity. Despite the strong influence of Greek philosophy, such friendship between God and man is a persistent theme in the Islamic tradition. In later Islamic tradition saintly Sufi mystics are called the *awliyā'*, the friends of God.

The second moral philosopher we consider is Naṣīr al-Dīn at-Ṭūsī, a giant in the intellectual tradition of the Islamic Middle East. Ṭūsī, who was born in Khorasan in northeast Iran and who lived from 597/1201 to 672/1274, was an outstanding astronomer, philosopher, and theologian. His prolific output includes works

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10 Miskawayh, 156/140.

11 Miskawayh, 166/148.

12 Miskawayh, 163/146.

13 Miskawayh, 170/151–52.

on astronomy, mathematics, physics, mineralogy, medicine, jurisprudence, logic, mysticism, and theology. Significantly, for his discussion of patronage and friendship, Ṭūsī made his peace with the non-Muslim Mongols who conquered most of southwestern Asia in the thirteenth century and became the official astronomer to the conquering Mongol ruler. In this capacity he dispensed patronage to many other leading scholars of his day.[14] Ṭūsī wrote in both Arabic and Persian, and his ethical work *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* (A book on morals dedicated to Nāṣir), abundantly copied in the age before printing, was written in a stiff and occasionally difficult Persian. In this text Ṭūsī draws a large scale picture of the sociological and emotional need for affection: "Since people need each other and the perfection and completion of each one lies with others of the human species ... hence the necessity to combine in a way so that all individuals help each other as do the limbs of a single person ... This yearning for this combination is [called] love (*maḥabbah*)."[15]

Ṭūsī sees several motives for friendship. Friendship (*ṣadāqat*) among young men and people of like nature is the quest for pleasure (*lizzat*). The motive for friendship among old men and personages of like nature is the quest for benefit (*manfaʿat*). Such friendships endure as the link of profit or benefit endures. As for the friendship of the good (*ahl-i khayr*), when it is purely good that binds them and good is something constant and unchanging, such friendship does not change or decline.[16]

Ṭūsī says that the friendship of the good is made possible by "the simple [i.e., noncompound] divine substance (*jawhar-i baṣīṭ-i ilāhī*)" which exists in men. This substance opens man to an entirely new kind of pleasure unlike other pleasures. This new pleasure is the product of an "utter passion and divine love" (*ʿishq-i tāmm va-maḥabbat-i ilāhī*).[17] Interestingly, Ṭūsī relates all forms of love to the communal nature of man, which he further relates to religion.

> The principle of love calls forth communal life and social combination (*tamaddun va-taʾalluf*) ... For this reason mankind has been urged to share (*ishtirāk*) in both their acts of worship (*ʿibādāt*) and entertainments (*ḍiyāfāt*), for it is in their coming together that feeling of fellowship (*ʾuns*) is developed from a potential to an actual act. It may be too that this is the reason the Divine Law of Islam (*sharīʿat-i Islām*) has given preference to communal

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14 See the excellent sketch of Ṭūsī's life and work by H. Daiber and F. J. Ragep in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005).

15 Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i ʿIlmiyya-i Islāmī, n.d.), translated by G. M. Wickens as *The Nasirean Ethics* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964); page numbers given hereafter first for the Persian then for the outstanding English translation, which I have only rarely revised, except to insert key words in Persian. The passage here is Ṭūsī, 216–17/195.

16 Ṭūsī, 220/198.

17 Ṭūsī, 220/198.

> prayer over praying alone ... It may even be that [those who engage in the communal prayer] progress from the degree of fellowship (*'uns*) to that of love (*maḥabbat*).[18]

Ṭūsī recommends restricting the number of one's friends: "As for the [category of the] true friend one cannot find them in large numbers, for he [the true friend] is noble and hard to find. ... However, good companionship (*husn-i 'ishrat*) and liberality of spirit in encounters (*karam-i liqā'*) should be shown to all. For without the blessings of love (*maḥabbat*) and companionship (*mu'ānisat*) living would be impossible."[19]

Ṭūsī discusses the criteria for picking a friend in much the same way as Miskawayh. He emphasizes the need to avoid any discrepancy among possible friends insofar as they love authority (*riyāsat*), since a person who likes domination and superiority (*ghalabah va-tawaffuq*) "will not employ equity in affection (*mawaddat*), or be satisfied with equal giving and taking. On the contrary, haughtiness and arrogance will lead him to despise friends and to behave disdainfully towards them."[20]

Yet Ṭūsī is explicit in encouraging friends to overlook minor shortcomings in each other: "It is incumbent to overlook trifling faults of friends (*sighār-i 'uyūb-i yārān*) ... No person will survive unscathed [from such an examination] ... As the [prophetic] law-giver has said: 'Happy is the person whose preoccupation is his own faults rather than the faults of other people.'"[21] Near the end of his treatment of friendship Ṭūsī gives a stirring summing up of the virtues: "The farthest of men from virtue are those who depart from communal life and social combination and incline to solitude and loneliness. Thus, the virtue of love and friendship (*mawaddat o sidāqat*) is the greatest of virtues, and its preservation the most important of tasks. This is why we have spoken at length on this matter, for this is the noblest topic in the present discourse."[22]

There are broad areas of agreement between these two ethical philosophers, which have been partly determined by the similarity of their sources. Their goal is to describe the virtuous well-being and flourishing of humans. For those who believe in the afterlife this virtuous well-being continues as a state of blessedness after death. Friendship is essential for such human development and man is by nature communal. While the deepest friendship may be restricted to one or

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18 Ṭūsī, 222/199–200.

19 Ṭūsī, 278–79/243.

20 Ṭūsī, 282/246.

21 Ṭūsī, 282/246.

22 Ṭūsi, 291/252.

two people, good companionship and sociability are necessary for the material economy in matters such as the division of labor and for the moral economy in matters such as the customary expectation of good faith in obligations. According to the Muslim philosophers discussed here, there is a third category of friendship, which the Greeks did not believe in, namely friendship between man and God.

Ṭūsī is in some ways the more religiously inclined of the two authors. He speaks of the "noncompound divine substance" in each person. In this expression we see not only the influence of Neo-Platonic views but also of Sufi philosophy, which by Ṭūsī's time had become part of the mainstream of Islamic thought.

A relatively important theme in both writers is mutuality or, as Ṭūsī expresses it, "equity in affection" (*inṣāf dar mawaddat*).[23] True friends overlook each other's defects. True friends defend each other from slander and backbiting, and correct each other gently. Even love with God is mutual although not engaged in by beings on an equal level. Rather striking is the mutuality implied in the insistence upon a true friend sharing the pain that has befallen another friend.

Both authors are interested in the types of lesser friendships, which are classified as "for pleasure" or "for profit." Ṭūsī acknowledges that there are composite types of friendship as well as friendship held on different sides for different reasons: "The causes of some loves is diverse ... An instance is that between a singer and a listener, where the singer loves the listener by reason of profit while the listener loves the singer for pleasure."[24]

Indeed, in the case of the teacher and the student the higher love exists, but so does the love motivated by profit. It seems to me reasonable to consider most cases of friendship in the actual world as mixed and/or weighted differently on the two sides of the friendship.

Many questions are not directly answered by the text. Is friendship between a man and a woman possible, and is a marriage also a friendship? Both Miskawayh and Ṭūsī quote Artistotle's sentiment that the virtue of friendship causes people to meet for exercise, hunting and banquets, which give a rather masculine cast to friendship.[25] According to Ṭūsī, among the bad behavior that arises from contention among friends is "attacking each other's manhood."[26] Nevertheless, Ṭūsī takes serious interest in the growth of friendship between husband and wife. He says: "[As to] the benefits common to wife and husband in respect of domestic goods: if both cooperate therein, these become a reason for common

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23 Ṭūsī, 282/246.

24 Ṭūsī, 224/201.

25 Miskawayh, 156/140.

26 Ṭūsī, 287/249.

love (*maḥabbat-i yak-digar*)."[27] While not a ringing endorsement of marital love, a kind of friendship between husband and wife is acknowledged.

Another question arises about the ability of friendship to extend across social levels. Ṭūsī answers this question more directly: "Let a man be careful not to act stingily with friends over the science or the accomplishment by which he is adorned, or in respect of the trade or craft in which he is skilled."[28] I have the impression that Miskawayh would disapprove of friendship between a craftsman and a man of learning, a possibility that Ṭūsī's statement on generosity among friends seems to allow.

Interestingly, both these highly learned men, who no doubt taught students in some fashion or other, acknowledge friendship between teacher and student. Ṭūsī, who is particularly fulsome on the subject, places "the love of the teacher in the student's heart" between the love of God—the strongest love—and love of children for parents. Parents nurture the bodies of their children whereas teachers nurture their souls. "Likewise," adds Ṭūsī, "the love by the teacher for the student in a good way is superior to the love of the father for the son, for the teacher nurtures [the student] with complete virtue and sustains [him] with pure wisdom."[29]

There seems no doubt that both our thinkers endorse patronage by friends in power for (the benefit of) their less fortunate friends, a system called clientelism or, more negatively, cronyism; and indeed disputes continue to our day as to the need for and the harm done by these systems. Miskawayh is fully aware of the possibility that love and justice might be in conflict. He states that good judgment based on sound religious beliefs must be exercised before the benefit of love is realized: "This desirable and coveted type of union [of people through love] can be accomplished only by means of sound opinions on which sane minds will be expected to agree, and by means of strong beliefs which result only from religions directed toward the Face of God."[30] Ṭūsī, somewhat confusingly, calls both love in one passage and justice in another the primary virtue.[31]

Modern sentiments are strongly on the side of meritocracy. Yet in the highly personalized world of politics in the time of Miskawayh and Ṭūsī patronage was essential to maintaining a coherent government and to fostering an ongoing cultural world. Both authors point out that the ruler is the most needy of friends

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27 Ṭūsī, 224/201.

28 Ṭūsī, 287/250.

29 Ṭūsī, 228–29/204–5.

30 Miskawayh, 134/118.

31 Ṭūsī, 73/80 (here, perhaps *'adālat* is to be translated as "justice"), 291/252.

because he has only two ears and two eyes. Ṭūsī writes: "The need of great emperors (*pādishāhān*) for those worthy of nurture and care is as the need of poor men for those who will show them kindness and favor."[32] Patronage survives today in the arts and, to some extent, in the world of learning. Clearly, a new field in which one can reject patrons is suggested by Samuel Johnson's celebrated letter of 1755 to Lord Chesterfield: "Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help?"[33]

The great and unwavering message of both authors is that friendship is an aspect of that cardinal virtue, love. It is through friendship that association of people is turned into community. In its deepest form friendship is the strongest bond that can exist between human beings. It is also a human capacity that can be focused on God and God welcomes that focus. Without friendship we would have no society and no spiritually deep relation with the Divine.

Appendix

The vocabulary of *friend*, *friends*, and *friendship* tells us something of what our texts are trying to convey. The variety of words is sanctioned by the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The translation used by Miskawayh may well correspond with the Fez manuscript edited by Anna A. Akasoy and Alexander Fidora.[34]

The unknown translator, attributed by the editors to "the school of Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq" (d. 260/873) frequently uses *aṣdiqā'*, the most common word for "friends," but seldom uses *ṣidāqah*, the abstract noun for "friendship" from the same root. Thus, in part 3 of book 8 we read:

> Since these [grounds for friendship] differ from one another in form, the affections (*iḥbābāt*) and friendships (*maḥabbāt*) differ accordingly. Thus the kinds of friendship (*maḥabbah*) are three, equal in number to the lovable things. In each one of them there is reciprocity in friendship ... and those who love each other (*yuḥibbūna ba'ḍuhum ba'ḍan*) wish for good things for each other, for this very friendship (*maḥabbah*) which they have. For those

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32 Ṭūsī, 289/243.

33 Boswell, James, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, *LL.D.* 4 vols. (London: Routledge, Warne, and Routledge, 1865).

34 Aristotle, *The Arabic Version of the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Anna A. Akasoy and Alexander Fidora, trans. Douglas M. Dunlop (Leiden: Brill, 2005); see p. 31 on the relation of this manuscript found in Fez to Miskawayh's sources.

who love each other for advantage, do not love for themselves but because they have some mutual good from each other. Similarly those who love for some pleasure do not love [those who easily] change because of their possessing a quality, but because they are pleased with them ... These friendships are accidental, for they are not loved for what the person is loved for, but because they provide, the one of them a certain good, the other pleasure ... So when the cause of their being friends is dissolved, the friendship (*maḥabbah*) is dissolved also, since the friendship was something superadded on that account.

Here we have the Greek word for friendship, *philía*—which specialists say can "sometimes rise to the meaning of affection or love, but also includes any sort of kindly feeling"[35]—consistently translated as "love." Yet shortly after this passage the Arabic translates "the best friendship" (*tōn agathōn philía*) as "*al-ṣadāqah al-tāmmah*," using the same root as *ṣadīq*.[36] In other cases "beloveds" (*maḥbūbīn*) and "friends" (*aṣḍiqā'*) seem nearly interchangeable in the same sentence.[37]

As for *agape*, the celebrated virtue of Christian thinking (and often in Christian contexts understood as "selfless love" or "charity"), in the Arabic version of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (book IX, chapter XII.1), it is translated with a word derived from *'ishq*, which is a generic word for love, particularly physical love.[38] Interestingly, the Persian word for friendship, *dūstī*, does occur in Ṭūsī[39] but is not as common as the Arabic equivalents.

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35 See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 45 note a.

36 *Arabic Version*, 434–35.

37 *Arabic Version*, 436, lines 5–8.

38 *Arabic Version*, 525. The Greek context is a discussion of eros, also translated as *'ishq*. The outstanding glossary by Manfred Ullmann, *Die Nikomachische Ethik des Aristoteles in arabischer Übersetzung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011) gives more guidance on the Arabic terms for "friends" and "friendship," a subject which would require a separate essay.

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A. David K. Owen

The Poetic Syllogism:
Foray into an Inductive Research Proposal[1]

> *Prospero*: ... But this rough magic
> I here abjure; and, when I have requir'd
> Some heavenly music,—which even now I do,—
> To work mine end upon their senses that
> This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
> Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
> And deeper than did ever plummet sound
> I'll drown my book.

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

> ὅτι δ᾽ οὐ ποιητική, δῆλον καὶ ἐκ τῶν πρώτων φιλοσοφησάντων: διὰ γὰρ τὸ θαυμάζειν οἱ
> ἄνθρωποι καὶ νῦν καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ἤρξαντο φιλοσοφεῖν, ἐξ ἀρχῆς μὲν τὰ πρόχειρα τῶν ἀτόπων
> θαυμάσαντες ...

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 928b10–14

This essay on the poetic syllogism (*qiyās*[*-i*] *shi'rī*) takes as its point of departure two prominent treatments of our topic from the literature on Arabic philosophy.[2] These scholars have demonstrated an important original contribution of the *falāsifa* to the history of philosophy where the poetic syllogism is concerned, and I do not examine here the cogency of their very capable reconstructions. The broad question which I have in mind is that of the use value of this mode of inference, with an eye to establishing whether this use value lies in the poetic syllogism's aptness for interpretation of existing text, for the production (*poiesis*) of specific kinds of statements or cognitive states, or some combination of these. To put this somewhat differently, if the poetic syllogism is really "poetic" (in the sense of 'productive,' as opposed to theoretical or practical), how so? Is it good for making (not just 'doing' sc. *praktein*) things, and if so, what sort of things does it make? To

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2 Deborah Black, *Logic and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics in Medieval Arabic philosophy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990); Aouad, "Le syllogisme poétique selon al-Fārābī: un syllogisme incorrect de la deuxième figure," in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 12 (2002).

return to the age-old debate between poetry and philosophy, what happens to the truth values of assertoric statements in sacred or poetic or figurative speech, and what use is formal analysis, as with the poetic syllogism, in explicating these?

This essay doesn't hope to answer these questions; instead, it begins to analyze particular unregimented/unschematized examples in order to clarify how the poetic syllogism works in the practice of interpretation and inference mapping, the better to prepare the ground for generalizations drawn from an inductive review of examples putatively produced under the influence of a given theory, that is, a set of generalizations that will have moved beyond the familiar mode of paraphrase [and explanation] ('Avicenna says *q* [because *p*]). The inductive[3] study of a broad range of cases that should eventually have resulted would have the benefit of testing the predictive power of the poetic syllogism, understood as an explanatory hypothesis plausible enough to be worth testing.[4] It is also conceivable that the range of formal inference could be expanded beyond Barbara and Celarent to a fuller range of modes, though it seems unlikely that any of these will yield valid inferences.

But what is a "poetic syllogism"?[5] The 'poetic syllogism' is a tool for (a) the regimentation of statements and (b) the analysis of images and (c) the formalization of inferences as these three occur in rhetorical and poetic speech. The poetic syllogism resembles the theoretical and practical syllogisms, but rarely, if ever, leads to a deductively valid inference. What a 'poetic syllogism' is, is intimated by

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3 For example: 'Ghazali says r and s and t [and so on]. In order to know the truth-value of enthymematic schema r we must elaborate r, i.e. substitute for r the schemata for which r stands.'
4 This method of formal analysis is probably worth pursuing more broadly, if only as an experimental exercise in an alternative method for intellectual history. For it is one thing to say that Ghazali uses logic in law (or "rationalizes" Sunni legal theory or practice) because Ghazali says as much in the introduction to the *Muṣṭaṣfā*. It is quite another thing to attempt to arrive at textually supported conclusions if we start from his premises and use the methods of argumentation that he prescribes. Just so, it is quite another thing to compare (a) formally analyzed conclusions we have produced using a stated set of premises and a stated method, with (b) formally analyzed and elaborated arguments derived from findings of law. Nor is the research method proposed merely anachronistic or exotic imposition of our own prejudices and priorities. It is consistent with Ibn Rushd's stated aims in *Bidāyat*, and would serve us well to test two important criticisms of Ghazali's influential (cf. Hallaq 1990) synthesis of Avicennan logic and Islamic law: Ibn Taymiyya's claim that (Avicennan formal deductive) logic was superfluous to legal argumentation, "camel meat on top of the mountain," and Ibn Rushd's earlier and similar claim that the deductive analysis that Ghazali had proposed was inappropriate for legal argumentation.
5 Black (p. 212) paraphrases an example from Avicenna:

m. So and so is handsome	S – M
M. Everything handsome is a moon	M – P
Therefore, So and so is a moon	S – P

Farabi in his reflections on the analysis of poetic imagery in *Qawānīn al-shiʿr*, the *Ars Rhetorica* commentary, *al-Qawl fī al-tanāsub*, *inter alios*; and is most explicitly formalized by Ibn Sina in his treatment of *qiyās* (roughly speaking, 'semi-formal inference') in the *manṭiq* (logic) section of his magnum opus *al-Shifā'* (The Healing).

Let us take a famous *āya* from Sūrat al-Nūr: When we recite, "God is the light of the heavens and the earth" (Q 24:35) what do we understand by this?[6] I think it suffices to say that the core predication of this statement is, to begin at the surface level, of the form $(\sum x)$ $(Gx \cdot Lx)$: "There exists[7] some x such that x is God and x is light." Truth-functionally: If G then L. More simply: G – L. There are a number of ways one might take the force of this utterance, but if we understand it as a truth claim about the world of our experience, a claim the terms of which are intelligible to us, then we must attend to the qualification of "light" with restrictive "the" and "of the heavens and the earth." We might wonder if the extension of "(things in) the heavens and the earth" includes all of "(things that are) light" in the sense of *nūr*, not *khafīf*. Leaving that aside, for simplicity's sake, let us represent the entire predicate of this proposition with the sentence letter 'L.' So: G – L.

If we take 'G – L' as a truth claim about the same world from which our experience derives, a claim the extension of the terms of which are fully intelligible to us, and if we take 'G – L' as veridical, non-figurative speech, then if we are strict monotheists, we may have *prima facie* misgivings about any association of the physical (L) with G; many a theologian has wrestled with these problems, and though the semantics of this statement are not our primary concern, a cursory glance suggests that semantically as well not a little is at stake. However, we are more interested in establishing *how*—through what pattern of inference—this statement means, rather than *what* it means.

For the statement we represent by 'G – L,' if we are to analyze it with the poetic syllogism, it needs to be understood as a conclusion of an enthymeme

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6 We might simply begin by understanding this wondrously humbling locution as an example of figurative speech (*istiʿāra*), but that is somewhat beside the point, since (1) we need to analyze it as, at least superficially, some sort of truth claim if we are to put the poetic syllogism to use and because (2) we are not concerned in this essay with interrogating or applying the terminology of Rummānī, Jurjānī, Sakkākī et al. (e.g. *ḥaqīqa/majāz*), nor that of scholastic *ʿilm al-bayān*. For, as an explicitly formal analytic device, the *qiyās shiʿrī is* a product of the tradition of *falsafa*, our focus here. Having said that, still the difficulty we confront in unpacking 'G – L' does suggest some of the text's *iʿjāz*, its quality of leaving us in apôria.

7 We might use a universal quantifier instead of an existential one in order to make a definitional statement about the class G, but since we also want something in class G to exist, this would require the inelegant addition of a second proposition in order to have instantiation.

since, if we are inference-hunting, it makes no sense to understand this statement other than enthymematically unless we can find some other statement to which or from which the statement is being inferred. Our next task then is to supply the suppressed premises to our enthymeme. But what could possibly be a veridical, theologically correct middle term in this case? By way of example, and playing loose and fast with our "syllogism" we might say something like the following:

> God's existence in x is a necessary condition for x's existence.
> Light's existence in x is a necessary condition for x's existence.
> Therefore, God is light.

This reconstruction fails to do justice to the original; if we can think of nothing satisfactory, then something has to give: our commitment to the *āya* as a form of veridical speech, the dominant intellectualist understanding of 'monotheism' as exclusive of corporeality, or the claim—required if we are to maintain the utility of the poetic syllogism—that there is a middle term that will help explain why we take this as an intelligible statement and as an inference from premises. One current in the tradition from which 'G – L' arises would say that this explanatory difficulty is a proof of the veridical character of this text and one of the cognitive states the text aims to induce. Even where the application of the poetic syllogism seems to fail, then, our attempt at its application helps clarify what some of the salient interpretive options are; unsurprisingly, these options are also represented in the autochthonous tradition.

But let us turn to more uncontroversial poetic examples from the Islamicate world. Speaking of Persian poetry, Wheeler Thackston states the following:

> In ghazals, particularly those of the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, when the bizarre comparison and highly intellectualized metaphor were greatly prized, the logic that underlies many an image can be stated as follows: if A shares any attribute with B, and B shares any attribute with C, then A = C. For instance, when the down on the beloved's lip is called *sabz*, it means dark, but the literal meaning of *sabz* is "green"; parrots are green; therefore, the down on the lip becomes a parrot. The lips are as sweet as sugar and become simply sugar. Parrots are spoken of as sweet of speech (the parrot's irritating voice is beside the point—the tradition so named them); therefore they are *shikarkhā* (sugar-chewing). The final stage in this series is to have the parrot of the down chewing the sugar of the beloved's lips.[8]

Drawing attention to the cumulative character of the tradition's use of metaphor, Thackston observes that already by the 12th century

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8 Thackston, *A Millennium of Classical Persian*, x.

> ...Nizāmī could write that Layli's mother *mah-rā zi sitāra tawq barbast* (bound a necklace of stars onto the moon) and know that his audience would immediately understand by this that she covered her daughter's face with tears.[9]

What Thackston's description, and the perhaps disproportionate influence of Avicenna in the Iranophone vs. Arabophone Islamicate,[10] and the vitality of intellectual life in the former through the period in question would all seem to suggest, is the strong possibility that Persian poetry would be at least as promising a source for *examples* of poetic enthymeme (susceptible to formalization and analysis) as indeed the Arabic tradition of letters in which the *theory* of the poetic syllogism was first elucidated. For such a project, a compendium such as that of Dawlatshāh's *Tadhkirat al-Shuʿarāʾ*[11] would be ideal, not only for the sort of inductive study of argument types described above, but for tracking changes in inferential patterns—such as the lengthening of a chain of inferences—over time and perhaps even within and across regions. Here is just one example taken from Dawlatshāh, with an initial attempt at the formalization of tacit inferences:

Manūchihrī says of a candle that:

> *Bigirʾī bī dīdagān* (You weep without eyes ...)[12]

By way of accounting for the indexicality of the pronoun, I take this to mean:

> *This* candle weeps without eyes.
> Thus: This is a candle and this weeps without eyes.
> Thus: $(\Sigma x)\,(Cx \,.\, (Wx \,.\, -Ex))$

We may take the inference pattern as follows:

> This is a candle.
> This sheds drops of liquid.
> All drops [from 'animate' beings] are tears.
> All tears are weeping(s).
> All eyes (possibly) weep.
> But no candles are eyes.

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9 Ibid.

10 Cf. Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols. (Bethesda: Iranbooks, 1997).

11 I am very grateful to Prof. Roy Mottahedeh for bringing this invaluable resource to my attention.

12 Dawlatshāh, *Tadhkira*, 47.

> C1: Eyes are not in this. ('in this' = property)
> C2: This is a candle and weeps.
> C3 from C1, C2: This is a candle and weeps and does not have eyes.

There is much that could be said about the light shed by this one of several possible elucidations. The particular/existential quantities of multiple terms, and the multiplicity of premises, both suggest that in some cases the poetic chains of inference will be more similar to practical syllogistic than theoretical (hypothetical) syllogistic.[13] In a word, if this is the realm of the syllogism, then the tripartite scheme must be on holiday. And, clearly, there are a number of paradoxes and subtleties in this hemistich, which our reconstruction either elides or ham-handles. Yet the formalizer's failure at expressing subtleties in verse represents not merely the failure of a mediocre logician, but the skill of a poet when he expresses that which resists easy paraphrase.

Another genre worth mining for poetic inferences is that of ethics (*akhlāq*), as the role of poetry in moral education is well-known, both for the Islamicate world and for a number of levels of its con- and substrata. Just so, the use of poems as proof texts and exempla is widespread in the genre, and Ghazali's *Kīmiyā-i Saʿādat* hides more than a few gems of such material:

> *Chunān ka ... vaqt-i...bāzrasīdan az safar chunān ka rasūl (ṣ) chūn ba madīna barasīd, pīshbāz shudand, va daf mīzadand va shādī mīkardand va shʿir mīguftand:*

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13 We might extend this comparison between practical and poetic inference even further, for any proponent of Aristotle's practical syllogism must confront the question of the practical syllogism's broad or strict applicability to all, many, or only some of practical argumentation. As for the poetic syllogism, comprehension of its basic form is easy enough. Much more difficult is to show its utility where hard cases resist easy regimentation. If regimentation of all or nearly all hard cases is possible, then we will have learned a great deal about the utility and reach of the poetic syllogism. But if regimentation is not possible for a great deal of poetic instances, all the more so if these possess moral/paedaeic force, then the utility of the poetic syllogism needs to be reassessed, and with it the apparent felicity of Farabi and Avicenna's formalizations described in Black's defense of their synthesis of logic proper, rhetoric, and poetics under the rubric of the context theory. But even if an inductive review of cases shows the poetic syllogism to have limited applicability, this will not have defeated the attempt to show the inferential character of poetic imagination, for Aristotle did not focus in his "logic," in the first instance, and as do the modern logicians, on the prescription of correct theories of deductive inference (cf. e.g. Goldfarb, xiii) but rather on the description of the full range of sound and unsound processes of reasoning humans in which regularly engage in their fields of endeavor. Just so, Avicenna and Farabi make no claim to the general deductive validity of the poetic syllogism.

> Whenever someone returned from a journey, [and] whenever the Messenger (PBUH) arrived in Medina, they gathered together, and would strike the drum and rejoice and recite poetry:

> *Ṭalaʿa al-badru ʿalaynā min thaniyyāti al-wadāʿ[i]*
> *Wajaba al-shukru ʿalaynā mā daʿā li-llāhi dāʿ[i(n)]*

> The full moon arose upon us from the valleys of farewell,
> A debt of thanks was set upon us for the caller's call ... [14]

I hope to have shown herein that the model of the poetic syllogism offers powerful tools for the inference patterning of poetic images, and thus for pointing to how human beings are affected by well-crafted verse. I have shown that inference patterning is possible, and I have argued that it is also desirable for historiography of the intellectual life of the Islamicate world. However, I do not want to push this formalizing argument too far. Naturally, it will ultimately be self-defeating to require of poetry something other than that for which it comes into being, or to deprive of poetry that without which it loses vitality, becomes corrupt, and passes out of existence. I have not postulated a definition for poetry, a sure limitation of this formalizing account, but I share Aristotle's intuition that wonder is a precondition for the best of human endeavors, and what medium is better equipped for wonder than poetry? For though he inferred invalidly, Rūdakī spoke most truly when he said:

> *Bī kardan shagaft nabūdast rah-i ān ...*
> Without amazement the road to these things would not have been ...[15]

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14 *Kīmiyā-i Saʿādat*, 1:479.

15 Dawlatshāh, *Tadhkira*, 38.

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Elias Muhanna

The Scattered and the Gathered: Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's Infrequently Asked Questions

Why does a person come to like a certain month or day? What is a coincidence? What is better, singing or playing music? These are a few morsels from the banquet that is *al-Hawāmil wa-l-Shawāmil* (*The Scattered and the Gathered*, hereafter *Hawāmil*), a book comprised of 175 questions posed by the famous litterateur and courtier Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī (d. 414/1023) to the philosopher and historian Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), who provides the answers.[1] Covering an encyclopaedic range of topics from predestination to politics to fashion, the *Hawāmil*, like much else in al-Tawḥīdī's oeuvre, provides a record of the intellectual interests of Būyid-era literary humanists and philosophers, and is shot through with his fiendish portrayals of human foibles.[2]

In comparison with some of al-Tawḥīdī's other works, the *Hawāmil* has not been much studied.[3] Two seminal essays by Mohammed Arkoun in 1961 placed

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1 Author's note: This essay is dedicated to the life and career of Professor Ahmad Mahdavi Damghani, and to the memory of Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (1941–2014).

All references to this work are to the following edition: Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Hawāmil wa-l-Shawāmil*, ed. A. Amīn and A. Saqr (Cairo, 1951). On al-Tawḥīdī's life and works, see: Iḥsān ʿAbbās, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (Beirut: Dār Bayrūt, 1956); Ibrāhīm al-Kīlānī, *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1957); S. M. Stern, "Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2ⁿᵈ ed., 1:126–27 (hereafter EI2); Marc Bergé, *Pour un humanisme vécu: Essai sur la personnalité morale et intellectuelle d ʾAbū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1979); Bergé, "Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī," in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: ʿAbbāsid Belles-Lettres*, ed. Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 112–24; Everett K. Rowson, "The Philosopher as Litterateur: Al-Tawḥīdī and his Predecessors," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 6 (1990): 50–92; Wadād al-Qāḍī, "Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī: A Sunni Voice in the Shiʿi Century," in *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honour of Wilferd Madelung*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Josef W. Meri (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 128–59.

2 On the *Hawāmil*, see M. Arkoun, "L'humanisme arabe au IVᵉ/Xᵉ siècle, d'après le Kitâb al-Hawâmil wal-Šawâmil," *Studia Islamica* XIV (1961): 73–108 and XV (1961): 63–88; Fāʾiz Ṭāhā ʿUmar, *al-Ẓamaʾ: Dirāsa fī Asʾilat al-Tawḥīdī al-Ḥawāmil* (Baghdad: Dār al-Shuʾūn al-Thaqāfiyya al-ʿĀmma, 2007). On the problem of the term "humanism" in the Būyid context and as it relates to al-Tawḥīdī in particular, see Alexander Key, "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism' to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī," *Studia Islamica* 100–101 (2005): 71–112.

3 Bergé's biography of al-Tawḥīdī briefly passes over this work, referring the reader to Arkoun's study (see Bergé, *Pour un humanisme vécu*, 186). Other works on the culture of humanism during

the book within the context of Islamic humanism in the fourth/tenth century, and argued that the questions it raised were interesting mainly for what they revealed about the cultural horizons of the Būyid age.[4] Its exemplary character notwithstanding, the book merits study on its own terms for what it tells us about al-Tawḥīdī's philosophical orientation during the early part of his career, as well as for its status as a rather unusual specimen of a "coauthored" medieval text. The title of the work alludes to its bivalent character, for the *Hawāmil* is actually two books in one: a collection of al-Tawḥīdī's wandering questions and Miskawayh's responsible, clear, and often prosaic responses.[5] Could the two men have exchanged roles? Can we imagine a work in which al-Tawḥīdī provided the answers and Miskawayh the questions? Doubtless, this would have made for a very different kind of book.

This article presents an abridged translation of about one hundred questions from the *Hawāmil*. They are introduced by a few notes on the likely date of the work's composition, and a brief consideration of al-Tawḥīdī's system of classifying his questions according to philosophical categories. I conclude by offering an alternative topical index to the questions, taking into account those that contain several shorter queries.

The *Hawāmil* in al-Tawḥīdī's Career

Abū Ḥayyān got a late start as a writer. During his early adulthood, he made a living as a copyist in Baghdad and began composing his first work (the literary anthology *al-Baṣāʾir wa-l-Dhakhāʾir*) in the year 350/961, when he was in his

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the Būyid period tend to focus on al-Tawḥīdī's role as the chronicler of intellectual debates and discussions in the circles of Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī and Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī; see Joel Kraemer, *Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1986). Everett Rowson discusses al-Tawḥīdī from the perspective of the famous epithet that described him as "the philosopher of the litterateurs and the litterateur of the philosophers," but does not examine the *Hawāmil* as an example of the hybrid position that al-Tawḥīdī occupied between the poles of *adab* and *falsafa*, focusing rather upon other works; see Rowson, "The Philosopher as Litterateur."

4 "Ce ne sont pas tant les problèmes agités dans le K.H. qui sont, en fait, intéressants, mais l'esprit et les perspectives dans lesquels ils sont posés et resolus d'une part, les enseignements qu'on peut en tirer, d'autre part, sur deux auteurs importants et les horizons de pensée de toute une époque." (Arkoun, "L'humanisme arabe," *Studia Islamica* XIV, 78.)

5 The word *hawāmil* refers to animals (camels or cattle) that have been left to pasture freely. Wolfhart Heinrichs proposed an alternative translation of the title as *The Wandering Sheep and the Herding Sheepdogs*, which captures something of two authors' different styles in this work (private correspondence).

mid-thirties. He completed it fifteen years later, by which time he had made at least two attempts to find a patron for his talents. In 358/968, al-Tawḥīdī visited Rayy in the hopes of gaining employment in the court of Abū l-Faḍl Ibn al-ʿAmīd (d. 360/970), but was rebuffed. It may have been during this visit that he first met Miskawayh, who was employed as Ibn al-ʿAmīd's librarian, and one may speculate that this encounter planted the seed for what would eventually result in the *Hawāmil* project. In 364/974, al-Tawḥīdī attended the *majlis* of the younger Ibn al-ʿAmīd (Abū l-Fatḥ) who was visiting Baghdad, and seems to have succeeded in gaining his patronage until the brash vizier was executed two years later for his political maneuverings.

Miskawayh's services had been bequeathed from the elder Ibn al-ʿAmīd to his son, and when the latter was put to death, Miskawayh and al-Tawḥīdī found themselves in professional limbo. Both men would secure employment shortly thereafter but the uncertainty of this moment may help to shed light on the composition date of the *Hawāmil*, which was written during a time of distress for both authors, as attested by Miskawayh in the introduction to the work. Mohammed Arkoun has proposed that al-Tawḥīdī composed his questions between 367–70/977–80, during the period of his residence at the court of al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād, and that Miskawayh wrote the answers between 370–72/980–82.[6] In a later work, Arkoun revised the composition date to 375/985, or well after al-Tawḥīdī had left Rayy and returned to Baghdad where he became the amanuensis of Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and a frequenter of his philosophical circle.[7] Erez Naaman has recently argued that this later date is unlikely for a variety of reasons, and proposes that the *Hawāmil* was "the cooperative fruit of the two figures in the late 350's or 360's, but no later than that."[8]

Certainly the fact that Abū Sulaymān is not mentioned at all in the *Hawāmil* would argue in favor of the earlier composition date. In either case, what is relevant to note here is that the *Hawāmil* was one of al-Tawḥīdī's first compositions, and was in fact the first nonanthological work that he wrote. Furthermore, unlike some of his later books in which his opinions tend to be subordinated to the teachings of Abū Sulaymān, the *Hawāmil* is a work in which al-Tawḥīdī's voice is all his own.

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6 Arkoun, "L'humanisme arabe," XIV, 77–78.

7 Mohammed Arkoun, *Essais sur la pensée islamique* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1984), 116.

8 Naaman argues that "the fact that al-Tawḥīdī regarded al-Sijistānī as the greatest philosopher in this Baghdadi milieu (*al-Imtāʿ*, I, 33), became his closest adherent, addressed to him many questions, and recorded his sessions (in his *al-Muqābasāt*), while simultaneously holding a very critical view of Miskawayh (professionally and personally), makes it unlikely that at this time the latter could have been the esteemed addressee of his queries. It must have been beforehand." See Erez Naaman, "Literature and Literary People at the Court of al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2009), 237–38n57.

Classifying al-Tawḥīdī's Questions

The eclecticism of al-Tawḥīdī's questions invites comparison with the sinuous prose of his idol, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–69), and the *Hawāmil*'s thematic hetero-geneity is of a piece with al-Tawḥīdī's broader rhetorical gesture: a display of imagination and sprezzatura meant to instruct and delight. On the other hand, the book contains a classification system that sorts the questions into various categories, so it appears that al-Tawḥīdī made an attempt to be systematic about his queries. The categories, along with the questions they are associated with, are listed below in figure 1. In addition to single categories (e.g., *lughawiyya*), there are also several questions that have a compound classification (e.g., *zaj-riyya-lughawiyya*), and four questions that contain descriptions rather than clas-sifications (e.g., no. 44, *mas'ala fī mabādi' al-ʿādāt*).

Title	Question Number	Total
Unclassified	8, 35, 36, 38, 39, 48, 50–87, 89–175	131
lughawiyya	1	1
khilqiyya	2, 7, 14, 23, 27, 31, 40	7
ikhtiyāriyya	4, 5, 11, 13, 17, 20	6
ṭabīʿiyya	6, 9, 10, 12, 16, 18, 25, 26, 28, 32, 45	11
nafsāniyya	33	1
ṭibbiyya	37	1
irādiyya	41, 46	2
ṭabīʿiyya-ikhtiyāriyya	15, 19	2
ṭabīʿiyya-khilqiyya	21, 22, 24	3
ṭabīʿiyya-lughawiyya	3, 34	2
zajriyya-lughawiyya	30	1
irādiyya-khilqiyya- lughawiyya	42	1
irādiyya-khilqiyya	43, 49	2
On the definition of injustice	29	1
On the origin of customs	44	1
On dreams	47	1
The queen of questions	88	1

This scheme provides some insight into al-Tawḥīdī's understanding of the themes of his questions; however, there are a few issues to consider. First, of the 175 ques-tions in the book, only forty are arranged into categories, less than a quarter.[9]

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9 While it is possible that Miskawayh or a later copyist added the titles, their inconsistent ap-plication may be a sign of their early origin. One can imagine that al-Tawḥīdī began addressing

Second, many of the longer questions are comprised of multiple shorter questions that extend beyond the thematic boundaries of the initial query.[10] The most puzzling aspect of the categories, however, is their meaning. Some are straightforward, such as *lughawiyya* (linguistic) and *ṭibbiyya* (medical), but they account for only a handful of queries. The vast majority of the classified questions belong to the categories *khilqiyya*, *ikhtiyāriyya*, *ṭabīʿiyya*, and *irādiyya*, which are more elusive.

The terms *ikhtiyārī* (volitional) and *khilqī* (innate) are frequently found together in philosophical discourse, and are used to designate qualities of human behavior that are contingent or essential.[11] Al-Tawḥīdī's *ikhtiyāriyya* category contains questions on a multitude of subjects including: why asceticism is considered a virtue in all cultures (no. 4); why praising a person in their presence is considered repugnant but doing the same in their absence is laudable (no. 11); why people seek out middlemen, despite what is said about their corrupting influence (no. 20); and so on. Generalizing, it might be argued that all of these questions are matters of volition or free will (*ikhtiyār*), but this is also true of the set that should represent the opposite type of query, the *masāʾil khilqiyya*: why is the scholar self-admiring when he should know better (no. 7); why does the sensible man envy his equal when he knows this is shameful (no. 23); why do relatives

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questions to Miskawayh with these introductory titles and abandoned the practice later on. It seems less likely that a copyist or redactor of the manuscript took it upon himself to insert the titles for a portion of the questions in the beginning of the book. On the compilation of the work, see Arkoun, *Studia Islamica* XIV, 75: "on est amené à penser que cette 'présentation nouvelle' a dû être choisie par Miskawayh – car, à en juger par les coupures qu'il avoue avoir apporté au texte de Tawḥīdī, c'est lui qui s'en est chargé – pour obtenir un 'succès de librairie.'"

10 For example, question no. 16, a *masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*, begins with a request to clarify the nature of amazement and then leads into another question about the definition of truth and falsehood. This is followed by a third question about God and His attributes. Did al-Tawḥīdī consider each of these sub-questions a *masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*, or just the first? Here again we have an indication of the likelihood that al-Tawḥīdī wrote the titles himself, as it seems more likely that he occasionally began with a given *masʾala* and then naturally branched off into different directions without paying attention to the original classification. A copyist who added the titles of his own accord would likely have taken greater care to make the question fit into a more capacious category.

11 The term *ikhtiyārī* means "of, or relating to, the will, or choice ... Opposite of *khilqiyya*" (E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1984), 1:831). The definition of *khilqī* is "Natural; not accidental: [constitutional: of, or relating to, or belonging to, the natural constitution of an animated being, as created in the womb of the mother:] ... You say *ʿayb khilqī* A natural fault or imperfection... And *ṣifa khilqiyya* [A natural quality]; opposed to *ikhtiyāriyya*." (Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:802).

bear such enmity toward each other (no. 31); why do people lie about their age (no. 27); and so on.[12]

A similar sort of imprecision obtains with the other pair of categories, *irā-diyya* and *ṭabīʿiyya*, which mean more or less the same thing as the aforementioned pair. If there are subtle distinctions to be noted between these two pairs of categories, the questions themselves offer little assistance in uncovering them.[13] Perhaps we miss the point by demanding terminological rigor from an author who was more of an *adīb* than a *faylasūf*, except that al-Tawḥīdī's interests in the *Hawāmil* are not particularly belletristic. There is little here that has to do with poetry, elegant speech, urbane manners, and witty anecdotes; where *adab*-themed material does appear, it is scrutinized and critiqued, like the other topics in the book. One might go further and propose that there is something about the interrogative posture exemplified by al-Tawḥīdī's barrage of questions that is fundamentally antisystematic and incommensurable with a canon of authoritative logia, whether literary, philosophical, or theological. Mohammed Arkoun, writing in the early 1960s, referred to this orientation as al-Tawḥīdī's "sentiment tragique de la vie." A decade later, he might have called it a type of deconstruction avant la lettre.[14]

An alternative map of the *Hawāmil*'s themes might look something like figure 2. Here, one can address the problem of classification engendered by al-Tawḥīdī's habit of taking Jāḥiẓian detours in the course of a single question, and parse the book's subject matter into the themes it represents.[15]

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[12] Scanning the questions in this category, it may seem that the reading of *khulqiyya* (ethical, moral) rather than *khilqiyya* would fit more appropriately, as many of the questions have an ethical flavor. However, this could be said of many of al-Tawḥīdī's questions, including a majority that does not appear in the category.

[13] This is a feature of al-Tawḥīdī's style that occasionally irritates his interlocutor. For example, in response to question 4—which begins on the subject of asceticism and then digresses sharply into a philosophical inquiry on the definitions of time, space, duration, reason, and cause—Miskawayh retorts, "This question is adorned with several questions on nature (*masāʾil ṭabʿiyya*), and you have turned them into one question. Perhaps what you made into tails are more likely to be heads." (*Hawāmil*, 26)

[14] Arkoun, "L'humanisme arabe," XIV, 79; see also Key, "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism'," 96.

[15] In such cases I have broken up compound questions into their separate parts and labeled the subquestions [a], [b], [c], etc. I have pursued this practice only with those portions of a question that seem to me to break away entirely from the original idea; related elaborations on the principal theme are treated as part of the same question. In instances where al-Tawḥīdī strays from his primary question into another question and then returns back to the theme of the original question, the text is marked in the following way: [a] ... [b] ... [a] ...

Category	Questions
Philological	1, 34, 39b, 42c
Sociological	
a. Moral ideals vs. social realities	2, 4a, 5, 7, 23, 39a, 42a, 43a, 55a, 55b, 58, 88,
b. Peculiar social behaviors and phenomena	8a, 9, 10, 12, 20, 22, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 49a, 51, 53, 66, 70b, 71, 73, 74, 75, 76a, 126, 135
c. Social and conventional values	11, 13, 17, 19, 21, 30a, 38, 40, 41, 44, 67, 78, 80, 81
Philosophical	4b, 16b, 29, 30b, 34, 47, 48a, 48b, 49b, 50, 55b, 57, 61, 68a, 68b, 159
Religious-theological	8b, 16c, 34, 35, 59, 60, 77, 172, 175
Natural	
a. Physics and physiognomy	18, 25, 26, 37, 45, 62, 63, 72, 73, 76b, 101, 110, 119, 163, 168, 171, 174
b. Psychology	3, 6, 14, 15, 16a, 24, 32, 36, 42b, 43b, 46, 52, 54, 56, 64, 65, 70a, 79

Philological questions

What is the difference between the words *miserly*, *niggardly*, *stingy*, *tenacious*, *despicable*, *vile*, *tightfisted*, *avaricious*, and *cheap*? The *Hawāmil* contains several lexicographical quizzes of this nature. Are these real questions, one wonders, or was al-Tawḥīdī interested in testing Miskawayh's verbal prowess (while demonstrating his own)? The first question in the *Hawāmil* begins with one such request to clarify the difference between synonymous terms, but is quickly overtaken by a second, more theoretical, query: "Is there necessarily some difference between two words that agree upon a meaning?" This represents al-Tawḥīdī's principal philological interest. The consummate prose stylist, al-Tawḥīdī did not need a philosopher to explain to him the semantic difference between the words *bakhīl* and *laʾīm*. His interest in synonyms is about the relationship between linguistic form and meaning, a central philosophical issue but one of interest to the *udabāʾ* as well.[16]

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16 Further in the question he elaborates, "What is it that clarifies the distinction between: 'he spoke' (*naṭaqa*) and 'he said nothing' (*sakata*), and obscures the distinction between 'he spoke' (*naṭaqa*) and 'he talked' (*takallama*)... ?" In other words, why are antonyms easily distinguish-

Sociological questions

This category represents the largest proportion of the *Hawāmil*'s questions, emphasizing the overwhelmingly sociocultural and behavioral bent of al-Tawḥīdī's interests. The questions fall into three subgroups that occasionally overlap: a) moral ideals vs. social realities; b) peculiar social behaviors; and c) social and conventional values. Many topics are covered, but the questions generally deal with the oddities, idiosyncrasies, hypocrisies, foibles, and virtues of ordinary people. In the first group, we find a foreshadowing of al-Tawḥīdī's project in the vituperative *Mathālib al-Wazīrayn*, which mercilessly skewered the two viziers, Abū l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd and al-Ṣāḥib b. ʿAbbād. Al-Tawḥīdī's caustic wit is evident throughout the dozen questions, but his tone is not entirely vindictive; he seems to be genuinely troubled by the lack of moral uprightness that he sees in society. Question 58 sums up the fundamental concern represented in this category: "How can he who is an inveterate hypocrite be sincere at times? And how is it that the disreputable person is sometimes trustworthy, the listless person sometimes is vigilant, and the corrupt person gives good advice?" How is it, indeed, that such a vast gulf exists between what *is* and what *should be*? In question 88, which he calls "the queen of questions" (*malikat al-masāʾil*), the revanchism in al-Tawḥīdī's outlook is more evident: "Speak to me about ... the deprivation of the meritorious person and the achievement of the deficient person," he says to Miskawayh, whose professional success he coveted and whom he would later disparage as unworthy of it.[17]

A second group contains questions about peculiar social behaviors and phenomena, comprising a hodgepodge of miscellaneous topics, among them: why

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able, but synonyms are not? Does the criterion of difference arise from the linguistic form or from its usage? Why is this criterion not more commonly known? These are questions about the nature of language's ability to express similar concepts in different ways, a subject that is obviously of great interest to a litterateur like al-Tawḥīdī.

17 In a well-known passage in *al-Imtāʿ wa-l-Muʾānasa*, al-Tawḥīdī described Miskawayh thus: "As for Miskawayh, he is refined of expression, fresh around the edges, amiable, easy in his approach, rarely gushing forth, slow in casting [his motifs], well known for his poetic ideas, often slackening, very wary, weak in attaining heights, going down to the watering hole more than bringing up from the watering hole, stretching out his efforts and then falling short, flying far and falling near, watering before he plants, and drawing water from the well before there is water in it. Moreover, he has certain sources of inspiration such as: some knowledge in philosophy; a certain ease in [government] service; a certain ability to perform the rules of boon companionship. He is [also] a model in miserliness, a prodigious liar, and frequently changes his mind with his zeal for alchemy." Al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtāʿ wa-l-Muʾānasa*, ed. Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat al-Taʾlīf wa-l-Nashr, 1951), 136; see translation in Key, "The Applicability of the Term 'Humanism,'" 102.

a person wants to know what is said about him after his death (no. 12); how it is that fame comes unexpectedly to someone who had previously lived in obscurity (no. 22); why people lie about their age (no. 27); why a person comes to like a certain month or day (no. 28). These are questions that genuinely seem to baffle al-Tawḥīdī, unlike some of those in the previous group where, one sensed, the tone was less interrogative than rhetorical. He is fascinated by the mystery of how two people with radically different dispositions and physical countenances might become friends, though each may hail from a separate and far-flung region (no. 49a). He wonders aloud about why a person goes to such great lengths to hide his fear from other people (no. 70b). There is no condescending judgment or prescriptive air in al-Tawḥīdī's tone; he seems to be truly interested in these peculiar behaviors, and perhaps curious to see how Miskawayh will be able to explain such mundane phenomena in philosophical terms.

The final group within the sociological theme concerns questions that relate to social and conventional values. Al-Tawḥīdī asks Miskawayh why "the act of praising someone in their presence came to be considered abominable, to the point that everyone agrees upon its condemnation?" (no. 11). He wonders why the young man who behaves with the gravity of an old man is deemed foolish (no. 13); why people love a person who is content with very little in life (no. 38); and why a person's self-praise is considered to be ugly whereas his praise of someone else is considered to be good (no. 41). What these and other questions have in common is al-Tawḥīdī's interest in how or why a certain social value came to be held. Question 44 exemplifies the central concern underlying the questions in this category: "What is the origin of different customs of far-flung nations? ... [H]ow did people adopt these customs in the first place, and then proceed in accordance with them?"

Philosophical questions

The *Hawāmil* contains some questions that may be described as traditionally philosophical, which is to say that they are abstract, foundational questions for traditional philosophical disciplines such as ethics or metaphysics. For example, al-Tawḥīdī asks Miskawayh to define the meaning of time and space (no. 4b); truth and falsehood (no. 16b); injustice (no. 29); similarity and difference (no. 30b); and knowledge (no. 50). He asks if the soul has a request or desire in this world, and if it does, what is it (no. 68a)? These are questions that would have been debated in the Neo-Platonic context of Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī's *Majlis*, and Miskawayh responds to them in a philosophical vocabulary.

Religious-theological questions

It might be argued that a majority of al-Tawḥīdī's questions are broadly connected to the themes of religion and ethical philosophy, but it is notable that very few directly address creedal or legal matters. This group contains some of the few, including requests for interpretation of Prophetic ḥadīths: "shame is a part of faith" (no. 8b); "slovenliness is a part of faith" (no. 60). In question 16c, he raises the classic theological question of what knowledge of God and His attributes entails, reminding Miskawayh that if God "is described as having attributes, then He is also restricted through the description of these attributes." Al-Tawḥīdī's tone in these questions is more somber and reserved, less characterized by the wit on display in the colorful descriptions of his more anthropological questions.

Natural questions

This category contains questions on a wide range of subjects, united by a pre-occupation with the physical nature of human beings. Al-Tawḥīdī wonders why nobility is more prevalent in thin people (no. 25); why the short person is wicked and the tall person is foolish (no. 26); why a person with a small head has a weak brain (no. 72); and why the sparsely bearded man is considered to be evil and sly (no. 73). However, given the question about physiognomy's reliability (no. 63), one wonders to what extent these questions were intended merely to be provocative, rather than serving as accurate indications of al-Tawḥīdī's personal beliefs.

The second subgroup contains questions about human psychology. Among them are several questions that display al-Tawḥīdī's talents as a keen observer of human emotion. He asks Miskawayh to explain the sense of intimacy that a person feels for a place where he has spent a lot of time, such as a given room in a public bathhouse, or a local mosque (no. 36). He wonders why one sometimes has an uncanny feeling of fear when there is nothing fear inspiring around (no. 70a), and why some people fear death while others accept it (no. 24). In another fascinating query, he asks why a person is disgusted by a wound and simultaneously captivated by it (no. 54). Other questions are occupied with cognitive functions and habits of mind, such as why a particular word is more pleasing to the ear than another (no. 3).

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The purpose of this introduction to the following translation has been to use al-Tawḥīdī's conceptual categories, patterns of exposition, and styles of argumen-

tation as a guide to understanding his project in the *Hawāmil*. As argued above, the problematic that occupies al-Tawḥīdī in this work is human behavior. Is it willed (*ikhtiyārī*) or innate (*khilqī*)? How does it come into being? How does it conflict or agree with moral precepts? How does it conflict or agree with reason? This is the *Hawāmil*'s main preoccupation to which al-Tawḥīdī repeatedly returns, at times earnestly and seriously, at other moments in a spirit of playfulness and irony. If, in the course of surveying al-Tawḥīdī's wandering sheep I have played the role of one of Miskawayh's sheep dogs, I take solace in the realization that for every question herded, another escapes into the wild.

Appendix: Translation of Selected Questions from *al-Hawāmil wa-l-Shawāmil*[18]

1. Linguistic question (*mas'ala lughawiyya*): What is the difference between haste (*ʿajala*) and speed (*surʿa*)? Is there necessarily some difference between two words that agree upon a meaning? For one may say that someone was happy or glad, merry or cheerful, far away or distant, joking or jesting, hindered or hampered, forbidden or refused; or that he gave or offered, that he wished for or wanted, that he aimed for or tried, that he exerted himself or persevered, that he went or continued on, that he governed or ruled, that he came or arrived at, that he grew close or near, that he spoke or talked, that he spoke correctly or truthfully, that he sat or had a seat, that he was remote or far away, that he observed or witnessed, that he turned away or abstained from.

Do joy and happiness, delight and bliss, merriment, gaiety, glee, cheerfulness, and mirth comprise one meaning or different ones? Take this up, for its door is tall, and its rope is coiled, and its shape is multifarious. If there is a difference between each of these pairs that distinguishes one meaning (*maʿnā*) from another, separates one purpose (*murād*) from another, and differentiates one intention (*gharaḍ*) from another, why does it not contribute to the knowledge of a word, in the way it contributes to the knowledge of its root?[19]

Along these lines, what is the difference between intention, meaning, and purpose, and is it the same as what was presented above? What is it that clarifies

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18 As discussed above, the terms *khilqiyya* and *ṭabīʿiyya* are more or less synonymous, as are the terms *ikhtiyāriyya* and *irādiyya*. I have therefore translated both synonyms with the same English equivalent ("natural" and "volitional," respectively).

19 In other words, why are differences in form easier to discern than differences in meaning (*fa-li-ma lā yushtarak fī maʿrifatihi ka-mā ʾshturika fī maʿrifat aṣlihi*)?

the distinction between: "he spoke" (*naṭaqa*) and "he said nothing" (*sakata*), and obscures the distinction between "he spoke" (*naṭaqa*) and "he talked" (*takallama*), and between "he said nothing" (*sakata*), and "he was silent" (*ṣamata*)?[20]

2. Natural question (*masʾala khilqiyya*): Why do people encourage each other to keep secrets concealed, and go to great lengths to make promises about them, and forbid the circulation of them, and extol the encouragement of [their] conceal-ment, and despite all of these precautions, secrets are still not concealed? And how do they emerge from behind the screens that are set up and become scattered throughout the places where people assemble, immortalized within the pages of books, awakening the ears, and recounted across the ages? And whence their circulation, given the cautiousness about their concealment, nay even the wide-spread fear of their diffusion, the remorse that accompanies the telling of a secret, the fleeting benefits, the perilous consequences, and the destructive causes? (15)

3. A question composed of natural mysteries and linguistic particles (*masʾala murakkaba min asrār ṭabīʿiyya wa-ḥurūf lughawiyya*): Why is one word more pleasing to the ear than another, such that you find rapture taking hold of one who hears it? I heard a man who loved al-Buḥturī and was quick to talk about him, and preferred his poetry once say: "How excellent is al-Buḥturī's rhapsodiz-ing about ʿAlwa, and how excellent was his choice of [the name] ʿAlwa, for you do not find this [excellence] in Salmā and Hind and Fartanā, and Daʿd."

This is a condition that is found in names and agnomens and good qualities and ornaments, and in images and structures, and manners and dispositions, and nations and eras, and doctrines and writings, orders and customs.

And when you delve into this subject, connect it with the study of what, among these things, weighs upon the soul and the hearing and the character. For if its acceptance has a reason, its rejection does as well; and if its progression is for a reason, then its obstruction must be as well. (20)

4. Volitional question (*masʾala ikhtiyāriyya*): [a] Why do people of all languages and customs encourage each other to practice asceticism, and to withdraw from the world, and to be satisfied with what time brings with it and what circum-stance facilitates? And they say this despite the intensity of [their] covetousness and desire, and the excess of gluttony and greed, and the crossing of sea and land in the name of meager profits, and trifling rewards, such that you only find on the earth's surface those who are sadly occupied with its transience, infatuat-

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20 *Hawāmil*, 5–6. (Hereafter cited parenthetically in text)

edly concerned with its present, or worriedly anticipating about its future, to the extent that even if you scrutinized every person you would only find those who are grieved by the world, or baffled by it, or intoxicated by it. And those who have the most exalted minds are the ones who are most confused. And those who urge abstinence from the world most severely are the ones who are most involved with the world. And those who call most for hating it are the ones most afflicted by their love for it.

So give us the reason for this and the cause. [b] And speaking of reason (*sabab*) and cause (*ʿilla*), what is a reason and what is a cause?[21] And what is the link between the two, if there is one. Does one take the place of the other? If one does substitute for the other, can this be the case in any time or place, or only in certain places and certain times?

[c] And speaking of place (*makān*) and time (*zamān*), what is place and what is time? And what is the reason for the confusion of one with the other? And what is the relation of one to the other? Are *al-waqt* and *al-zamān* the same thing? And what about *al-dahr* and *al-ḥīn*? And if they are, then how is it possible for two things to be one? And if it is permitted for two things to be one, then is it permitted for one thing to be two? (24)

5. Volitional question (*masʾala ikhtiyāriyya*): Why are worldly things sought through knowledge, even though knowledge forbids this? And why is knowledge not sought through worldly things, though it commands this? (33)

6. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): What is the reason for a person's longing for that which has passed from his life, such that he yearns like a she-camel crying for her young, and he cries like a restless and anxious person, and his thoughts linger on the recollection of what went before? And on this subject, the poet cried out: "I did not cry from regret over time spent / Rather, I cried for it when it waned." Another said: "Many a day caused me to cry, but when / I came to a different time, I cried for [those days]." And another said: "I hope for tomorrow, and if it does not come, / I cry for the past that is gone." This condition afflicts one even if the past was [full of] difficulty and need, sorrow and pain. (37)

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21 M. Arkoun translates *sabab* and *ʿilla* as "cause seconde" and "cause première"; see Arkoun, *Studia Islamica* XIV, 78. In Islamic jurisprudence, the term *ʿilla* refers to the ratio legis, while the *sabab* is the trigger of its effect, like the sighting of the new moon for the period of fasting.

7. Natural question (*masʾala khilqiyya*): Why is self-admiration associated with the scholar (*ʿālim*) when knowledge requires the opposite of this, namely humility and mildness, abasement of the self, and finding faults in its weaknesses? (40)

8. [a] What is the reason for sometimes being ashamed of something shameful, and yet sometimes bragging about it? And, first of all, what is shame? For there is something in its definition that draws near to desire, and facilitates the attainment of truth.

[b] What is the sense of the Prophet's saying: "Shame is a part of faith." One of the scholars said: "How is it possible for shame—which is something natural—to be part of faith, which is volitional? [The verb] "to believe" will guide you here, for in the previous case, one says that a man "was ashamed, became ashamed," so it belongs to the pattern of *infiʿāl*, and is thus reflexive (or passive). Is shame praiseworthy in all cases, or does it depend on certain conditions? (41)

9. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): Why would a man claim to have knowledge when he knows that he does not? What is it that propels him to do so, leading him to pomposity, stupidity, and abuse? (43)

10. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): What is the reason for a person's happiness upon hearing something that is said about him, which is true? And what is the reason for a person's joy upon hearing something good that is related about him, even though it is not true? (44)

11. Volitional question (*masʾala ikhtiyāriyya*): Why did the act of praising someone (*thanāʾ*) in their presence come to be considered abominable, to the point that everyone agrees upon its condemnation? And why did the act of praising someone in their absence come to be deemed good, such that it is highly prized? Is it because praising someone in person resembles flattery and imposture, whereas doing so in their absence resembles sincere devotion and tribute, or is it for some other reason? (45)

12. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): Why does a person want to know what was said about him after he departs from a gathering, to the point where he even yearns to hear what is eulogized about him after his death, and to know the truth of what will happen and what will be said? And why does he not fake doing what he would like to be remembered and extolled for? For, his desire [to be remembered] is natural; if he wanted to distance himself from it, he wouldn't be able to do so, even though he may degrade its character and want to renounce it. (46)

13. Volitional question (*masʾala ikhtiyāriyya*): Why is the young man, who acts like an old man, carries himself with gravity and fortitude, has a preference for seriousness, shudders from jesting, dislikes obscene language, looks straight ahead when he walks, sits in a composed and gathered way, articulates his words distinctly, and has a fixed gaze deemed foolish? (47)

14. Natural question (*masʾala khilqiyya*): Why is the wicked person endowed with reason, and why is recklessness characteristic of the generous person? Does reason ever combine with generosity? And is recklessness ever associated with wickedness? (50)

15. Natural and volitional question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya wa-ikhtiyāriyya*): Why is man in need of learning knowledge? Why is he not in need of learning ignorance? Is it because he is ignorant in his original state? What is the reason for that? And in the digging up of its reason, does the proof for its correctness present itself? (52)

16. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): [a] Why might someone who is an object of amazement to others be similarly amazed by himself? For example, a poet composes a rhyme, and the listener is amazed by him in accordance with the beauty and originality of his style. Why, though, is the poet also amazed by it, given that he is the source of amazement? We find this in both poetry and prose, in responsa (*jawāb*), in books (*kitāb*), arithmetic (*ḥisāb*), and craft (*ṣanāʿa*).

And, speaking of amazement or wonder (*taʿajjub*), what exactly is it and what does it indicate? People have said: "It was asked of one of the wise men: 'What is the most wondrous of all things?' And he responded: 'The heavens and the stars.' Someone else said: 'The most wondrous thing is fire.' Someone else said: 'The most wondrous thing is the speaking tongue.' Someone else said: 'The most wondrous thing is the intelligent mind (*al-ʿaql al-lāḥiq*).' Someone else said: 'The sun.' And Aristotle said: 'The most wondrous thing is something whose cause is unknown.' And someone else said: 'The most wondrous thing is, rather, the ignorance of a thing's cause.'"

So, based on what these people have said, everything is wondrous. And in accordance with what that wise man said [i.e., Aristotle], everything whose cause is unknown is wondrous, whether it be something paltry or priceless. Someone else said: "The most wondrous thing is fortune (*rizq*), for its anchor is distant, and its depth is profound. The intellect, despite its nobility, is baffled by fortune, and the rational person, despite his exertion [to understand it], is as if drunk."

Someone else said: "There is no such thing as wonder." He was right. For what are all these differences and disparities? When it comes to truth, there can be no conflicts of opinion, just as there can be no harmony in falsehood. [b] And

speaking of truth and falsehood, what is truth and what is falsehood? This question fits well into this chapter.

[a] One of the Ancients said: "The most amazing thing of all is a person who is abundantly endowed with gifts of intelligence, breeding, and knowledge, and yet is unable to achieve his goal, and [conversely] the achievement of the weak person."

A Sufi (whom I have seen and debated and benefited from) said: "The most wondrous of all things is distant yet undeniable, close yet unseeable, and that is the One Truth."

[b] And speaking of God Sublime, what does the knowledge of Him comprise, given the difference in allusions (*ishārāt*) and unequivocal expressions (*ʿibārāt*) [referring to Him]? Is He a thing graspable by the intellect (*yalṣaqu bi-l-iʿtiqād*)? Or is He a pure word by convention (*muṭlaq lafẓ bi-l-iṣṭilāḥ*)? Or is he a nonverbal allusion (*īmāʾ*) to one of the divine attributes, despite our ignorance of the Described? Or is he unrelated to anything in our knowledge?

For if He is described as having attributes, then He is also restricted through the describer of these attributes. And if God has no attributes, then He is open to [descriptions based on] ignorance, and non-being (*al-maʿdūm*) competes with Him. (54)

17. Volitional question (*masʾala ikhtiyāriyya*): When familiarity [between two parties] becomes strong and deeply rooted, and blandishment is fought off, and [their] acquaintance lengthens, why does carrying favor diminish, and praise [of one another] become distasteful? And for this reason it is said: "When brotherliness grows old, praise diminishes." The plain evidence of this is witnessed, and the knowledge of it is at hand. (60)

18. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): Why does the blind man come to find [a replacement for] his loss of sight in something else? Like he who, being blind, is tender of throat, sweet of voice, rich in knowledge, quick to memorize, sexually potent, exceedingly happy, and worry free? (61)

19. Natural and volitional question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya wa-ikhtiyāriyya*): Why do people say: "Nothing good comes from partnership"? For this is what we find as plainly true, as we have not seen a property maintained, or an order fulfilled, or a contract established by way of a partnership. So much so that God, may His mention be exalted, said: "If there were any god in them but God, they would both be in disorder" [Q 21:22]; and this meaning is the most lofty sign of God's unity, may His praise and the repudiation of whosoever may assail Him be sublime. (64)

20. Volitional question (*masʾala ikhtiyāriyya*): Why do people seek out intermediaries in all matters, despite what they say ... concerning the corruptness of partnership and partners? Indeed, the majority of matters and cases in Divine Law and princely statutes are not completed and carried out but through a middleman who mends and weaves, patches up and unknots, and embellishes and beautifies. (67)

21. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya khilqiyya*): Why does a man speak up for the sake of someone else when it suits him, yet refrains from speech in consideration of his own self-interest? What is the secret in this? (68)

22. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya khilqiyya*): What is the reason for the fame that unexpectedly comes to pass for some people after their death, though they may live in obscurity yet [they] die famous, like Maʿrūf al-Karkhī? (69)

23. Natural question (*masʾala khilqiyya*): Why does the sensible man of culture and refinement envy his equal, despite his knowledge of the dishonor of envy and the shamefulness of its name, and the agreement of the Ancients and Moderns (*al-awwalīn wa-l-ākhirīn*) upon its censure?

And if there is no liberation from this condition for its owner because it takes possession of him, then what is the reason for its censure and the aversion from it? And if it is not something that takes possession of him, but rather is something that he creates in himself, beleaguering himself on account of it, then why does he do this? Could such a person be in the rank of the perfect, or among the wise? It was asked of Aristotle: "Why is the envious person the most anxious of all?" He said: "Because he worries just as all people worry, but then he is alone in envying what others gain in the way of well-being." (70)

24. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya khilqiyya*): What is the reason for fear of death? And what about the acceptance of death? If the first idea [*maʿnā*] is more common, then the second is more evident and clearer. Which of the two ideas is more exalted: fear of death or accepting it? For indeed the discussion of this matter is of great profit and ample benefit. (73)

25. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): Why is nobility more common among thin people and ignobility more common in fat people? (76)

26. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): Why is the short person wicked, and the tall person foolish? (77)

27. Natural question (*mas'ala khilqiyya*): Why do some people, when asked about their age, pretend to be younger than they truly are, while others pretend to be older? (78)

28. Natural question (*mas'ala ṭabīʿiyya*): Why does a person come to like a certain month or a certain day? Where does a person's image of Friday come from, as opposed to Thursday? It was said to al-Rūdakī, who was born blind, "What is color like for you?" And he said: "Like a camel." (80)

29. On the definition of injustice (*fī ḥadd al-ẓulm*): What is the meaning of the poet's verse: "Injustice is a human trait / so if you find a virtuous person, it is for the reason that he is not unjust"?[22] What is the definition of injustice in the first place? For the theologians speak at great lengths about these subjects, but they are not impartial, as though they were angry or quarreling.

I heard so-and-so say, while a vizier, "I take pleasure from injustice." What does this mean? And what is its source, I mean that of injustice? Is it from the action of man or is it an effect of nature? (84)

30. Superstitious and linguistic question (*mas'ala zajriyya wa-lughawiyya*): [a] Why is it that if a man wears all new clothes, it is said to him: "Take something with you that is not similar to what you have on, so that it might serve as a protection." Is similarity not desirable in all places?

[b] And while we are talking about similarity, what are similarity (*mushākala*), and conformity, and resemblance, and likeness, and equality, and affinity? For if these terms are elucidated, then so too will be terms such as contradiction, difference, incompatibility, and opposition. (87)

31. Natural question (*mas'ala khilqiyya*): Why does the enmity of relatives deepen to the point where it is untreatable, because of an intensity of envy and an excess of grudges, and this proceeds to the point where benefits cease because of it, and lives are lost, resulting in departure and ruin? And is it a similar kind of enmity [that one finds among one's] neighbors and those from whom one seeks God's protection? (90)

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22 In other words, injustice is the default state of the human being (*al-ẓulm fī khuluq al-nufūs*) so there must be a reason behind the virtue of a person who is not unjust (*fa-in tajid / dhā ʿiffa fa-li-ʿillā lā yaẓlum*).

32. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): Why does a person become angry when a vice—of which he is guilty—is attributed to him? And what is the reason for his anger when a vice—of which he is not guilty—is attributed to him? The truth in the first case falls under the category of being loved and praised (*min bāb al-maḥbūb al-maḥmūd*), and the falsehood in the second case falls under the category of being censured and hated (*min bāb al-madhmūm al-makrūh*). (91)

33. Psychological question (*masʾala nafsāniyya*): How is it that a person unexpectedly happens to be around when someone else is speaking about him? This is a very well known phenomenon, even if it is not common or customary, for if it were so, amazement would diminish and it would cease to be momentous …

Similar to this is the act of turning around and seeing a person whom you were not expecting. Also, sometimes your eye is drawn to someone who looks like somebody else that you know, until you gaze at him and realize that it is not him. Then, soon afterwards, you run into the person you know who looked like the stranger.

Are all of these cases just coincidences? And if they are, then what is coincidence? And is coincidence (*ittifāq*) the same as concord/harmony (*wifāq*)? What is concord? (92)

34. Natural and linguistic question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya lughawiyya*): What are the properties that distinguish the true meanings of words that circulate among the people of reason and religion? These are nouns that concur in sense, are obscure in origin (*khafiyyat al-uṣūl*), and clear in meaning (*jaliyyat al-maʿānī*). And they are: faculty (*quwwa*), capacity (*qudra*), ability (*istiṭāʿa*), power (*ṭāqa*), … courage (*shajāʿa*), bravery (*najda*), valor (*buṭūla*), succor (*maʾūna*), good fortune (*tawfīq*), grace (*luṭf*), utility (*maṣlaḥa*), command (*tamakkun*), withdrawal of grace (*khidhlān*), aid (*nuṣra*), sovereignty (*wilāya*), rule (*mulk*), property (*milk*), livelihood (*rizq*), misfortune (*dūla*), good luck (*jadd*), and fortune (*ḥaẓẓ*).

I did not mention *bakht* (Persian: luck), for it is not an Arabic word, and its meaning is made ambiguous amongst some of these things. (94)

35. What do people mean when they say: "This is from (*min*) God"; and "This is by (*bi*) God"; and "This is for (*ilā*) God"; and "This is upon (*ʿalā*) God"; and "This is God's plan" (*min tadbīr Allāh*); and "This is according to (*bi*) God's plan"; and "This is by God's will" (*bi-irādat Allāh*); and "This is by God's knowledge" (*bi-ʿilm Allāh*)? (108)

36. What is the intimacy that a person feels for a place where he has spent a lot of time, and for a friend whom he has known for a long time? You see this in the man who gets used to frequenting a certain public bathhouse, and even a partic-

ular room within the bathhouse, or a certain mosque, or even a certain column (*sāriyya*) within the mosque.

I had heard a Sufi saying: "I had quartan fever for forty years, and then it left me and I yearned for it. And I couldn't determine the reason for this yearning except for the fact that my very substance and soul was kneaded, folded, and dyed by the familiarity [with the fever]. (110)

37. Medical question (*masʾala ṭibbiyya*): Why is epilepsy (*ṣarʿ*), as far as illnesses go, difficult to heal? For indeed we see that the doctor despairs of treating it. It is said that it is more difficult [to treat] among those who are advanced in age ... For the boy who is "supple of trunk" and "moist of clay" and quick to heal, it is easier to treat. (112)

38. What is the reason for the people's love of a person who is content with little? The people go so far as to prepare appetizing foods for him while incurring heavy debts, and they bring them to him in round plates on their heads, and place them in front of him. And the more that the ascetic increases his refusal, the more these people increase their insistence, and if he dies they start praying at his tomb and saying: "He fasted often and demanded little."

And if they are shown someone who eats a lot, and gorges himself, they loathe him and spurn him, hate him to be around, and despise his manners.

It's for a good reason that people renounce most of the tombs of the kings and caliphs, and they are drawn to the graves of poor people, and the ascetics. (114)

39. [a] Why are some people very fond of spending [money], despite their knowledge of its negative consequences? Others are dead set upon their stinginess, despite their knowledge of the bad things that are said about it. [b] And what is the difference between fortune (*rizq*) and wealth (*milk*)? A shaykh from among the philosophers said to me—after hearing me complaining—"Son, you have little wealth (*milk*) and great fortune (*rizq*); how many others have great wealth yet little fortune? Praise be to God, exalted and sublime." (115)

40. Natural question (*masʾala khilqiyya*): Why are some people devoted to concealing what comes to them [in the way of good fortune], and hiding what they do, and they hate having anything pertaining to them examined by others? While others display what they have... showing people what little or much they possess. And what is the meaning of the Prophet's saying, "Seek fulfillment (*istaʿīnū*) in your personal matters by concealing them, for indeed all things of benefit are envied"? (116)

41. Volitional question (*masʾala irādiyya*): Why is a person's praise of himself considered ugly, whereas his praise of someone else is considered good? And what qualities does the praised person admire in the one who praises, and why? (117)

42. Volitional and natural and linguistic question (*masʾala irādiyya wa-khilqiyya wa-lughawiyya*): [a] What is the reason for people's censure of miserliness, despite the prevalence of miserliness among them? And what is the reason for their praise of generosity, despite the lack of this among them? [b] And are miserliness and generosity natural or acquired dispositions? [c] And are there differences between the words: miserly (*bakhīl*), niggardly (*laʾīm*), stingy (*shaḥiḥ*), tenacious (*manūʿ*), despicable (*nadhl*), vile (*watiḥ*), tightfisted (*masīk*), avaricious (*jaʿd*), and cheap (*kazz*)? (118)

43. Volitional and natural question (*masʾala irādiyya wa-khilqiyya*): [a] And along the same lines as people's censure of miserliness and praise of generosity, what is the reason for their deeming betrayal to be abominable, and their deeming loyalty to be good, given the prevalence of betrayal and the lack of loyalty? (120)

44. A question on the origins of customs (*masʾala fī mabādiʾ al-ʿādāt*): What is the origin of different customs of far-flung nations? For the word *ʿāda* is derived from [the verb] *ʿāda /yaʿūdu* (to return), and *iʿtāda/yaʿtādu* (to be habituated, become accustomed to). So how did people adopt these customs in the first place, and then proceed in accordance with them?[23] And what is the original motive that determined the forms of dress of each nation, and the forms of adornment, and expression, and movement, across impenetrable boundaries and impassable regions? (121)

45. Natural question (*masʾala ṭabīʿiyya*): Why doesn't a person, after he becomes old and senile, go back to being a middle-aged man, and then a naïve youth, then a young boy, then an infant as he was born. And what does this ordering indicate, and what does this natural law (*ḥukm*) indicate? (122)

46. Volitional question (*masʾala irādiyya*): What does a person experience when likening (*tashbīh*) one thing to another, such that the meaning comes to his mind and he regularly mentions it in his poetry and prose? And why, if the likening is

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23 The text says *fa-kayfa faziʿa al-nās ilā awāʾilihā*, but the verb must be *nazaʿa*, as it is in Miskawayh's response (121–22).

not real (*wāqiʿan*) and its meaning is not skillful, does this cause repulsion and prevent its appreciation? (124)

47. A question about the dream (*masʾala fī al-ruʾyā*): What is the reason for the truth of some dreams and the falsity of others? And why are not all dreams correct or all false? And what does this fluctuation between two poles suggest? Perhaps there is in this a secret that might be exposed through experimentation. (125)

48. [a] What is the dream? Its importance has become enormous [because] it is a part of prophecy. And what is it that dreams that which is dreamt: the soul, or nature, or the human being? I disdain to advance into an inquiry on the soul, and on the determination of its subject, and what the Ancients and the Moderns said about it.

[b] If this is a miracle, and outside of human ability (*ṭāqa*), then what would you think about the inquiry into reason, for its horizon is higher, and its world is loftier, and its signs (*āthār*) are finer, its measure is more integrated, and its proof farther in scope, its rays stronger in power, and its heart is clearer? (126)

49. Volitional and natural question (*masʾala irādiyya wa-khilqiyya*): [a] What is the reason for the feeling of mutual cordiality between two people who bear no physical resemblance to each other, nor a resemblance in personal nature, nor any neighborly relationships? Like for example a man from Farghāna and one from Tāhart,[24] one being tall and erect, the other short and ugly; one being slender and svelte, the other obese and boorish; one hirsute and the other thin haired; one is less expressive than Bāqil and the other more eloquent than Saḥbān Wāʾil; one is more generous than clouds flowing with rain after the lightning flash, and the other is stingier than a dog over a meatless bone; and between them are differences and divergences that amaze one who looks at them and examines their conditions. [b] And speaking of difference and divergence, what are they? And what are familiarity and harmony?

[a] Yes, and then you see the two men commingling with give and take, sincerity and loyalty, agreement and friendship, in poverty and plenty, without a common creed nor an embracing doctrine, nor a common state, not a similar nature. And this mutual cordiality is not limited to male-male relations to the exclusion of male-female or female-female relationships.

And if we pause for a moment [we might note that this line of discussion can] proceed down different paths: for example, the idea that mutual cordiality can be

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24 Farghāna is a town in Transoxania; Tāhart is in present-day Algeria.

extended or curtailed, and when it is extended it can reach the end of time, and when it is curtailed, it might not last a month or even less.

And among the stranger things that emanate from it are enmity and rancor and envy and hatred, to the point where it is as though that mutual acceptance is identical with mutual incompatibility, until it leads to disastrous results, and the most peculiar calamities, when both old and new possessions are exhausted, and it comes to the expected conclusion. And then enmity runs among the children as though it was part of the inheritance, and perhaps it increases beyond what the parents felt.

This is a difficult subject and here is an opportunity and a place for wondering about it, for the causes of it are hidden. (129)

50. What is knowledge (*'ilm*)? And what is its definition and nature? For I have seen its masters carping at each other about it, and one person said of it: "It is the knowledge (*ma'rifat*) of something on the basis of what it consists of (*'alā mā huwa bihi*)." And some others said: "It is the belief (*i'tiqād*) of something on the basis of what it consists of." And others said: "It is the establishment (*ithbāt*) of something on the basis of what it consists of."

And it was said to the person responsible for the first definition: "If knowledge (*'ilm*) is the knowledge (*ma'rifat*) of something on the basis of what it consists of, then the definition of *'ilm* would be: 'the *'ilm* of something on the basis of what it consists of.' Thus, the need to define *ma'rifat* is the same as the need to define *'ilm*." And this is a negligent and ambiguous response.

And it was said to the person responsible for the second definition: "If *'ilm* is the belief of something on the basis of what it consists of, it is clear that the creation of something precedes the belief of what it consists of. Then comes the belief, and the opinion precedes the creation of the thing. For, what it consists of is the object of examination, and the standard was placed for its sake, and the expression was made necessary ..."

And it was said to the person responsible for this response: if *'ilm* were the belief of something on the basis of what it consists of, then God would possess an opinion (*mu'taqid*) about what something consists of, because he is knowing (*'ālim*). (134)

51. Why is it that when a person sees a beautiful image or hears a pleasant melody, he says: "By God, I've never seen anything like this, or I've never heard anything like this," and he knows that he has in fact heard or seen something more beautiful or melodious than that? (139)

52. What is the reason for the appreciation of a beautiful form? And what is this clear desire and vision, and this passion present in the heart, and this ardent love enslaving the soul, and this thought that chases away sleep, and these fantasies that are visible to a human being?

Are all these natural qualities (*āthār*)? Or are they among the accidental qualities (*'awāriḍ*) of the self? Or are they among the circumstances of reason? Or are they among the parts of the soul? Or are they devoid of causes, and guided rather by nonsensical babble?

And is it possible that such powerful conditions can be found from a joking or frivolous perspective? (140)

53. When you consult the advice of a judicious, skilled, reasonable, distinguished person, why does he respond with wondrous things and calamities, splitting hairs, even claiming that rain is something dreadful? And if he is alone in his opinion and defends it, and if all of his benefits are scrutinized and criticized, why does he become like a mirage in a lowland, neither sweetened nor embittered, until he is dishonored by those who used to praise his smartness and subtlety, and point to the correctness of his opinion?

What was it that brought him down?
And what was it that impaired him?
And what was it that branded him in such a way, and led him to this outcome? (144)

54. Why does a person become disgusted by a jaw-dropping wound, to the point that he even avoids looking at it and approaching it, and he drives away the thought of it from himself, and he distracts himself by doing something else? And the more he averts himself from it, the more he is captivated by it …

Also: Given that the healer treats the wound visually with his eye, and tactilely with his hand, and through speech with his tongue, do you see this as [the product] of nothing other than his zeal and his practice, and the length of his pursuit [of this occupation], and his observation? Or is it due to his profit, and his need, and his dependents, and his livelihood?

If it is due to his zeal and his practice, what is his knowledge with regard to the basis of this zeal and practice? And if it is due to his profession, then how did he stubbornly resist his innate nature, and fight his own instincts? And is it right for a human being to become accustomed to what is not natural to him, and to persist in it, such that he becomes like one who was born thus and granted long life in that condition? (145)

55. [a] What is the reason for the love of this transitory world? Do you not see that God the Sublime says: "Nay, (ye men!) But ye love the fleeting life," and the poet says: "The self is mad with love of the ephemeral." And for the sake of this idea, discord raged, and circumstances were transformed, and intellects became confused, and the Prophets were needed, and statecraft, and instruments of repression, and religious exhortations. So if the love of the transitory world is innate, and ingrained in one's nature, and wrought in one's makeup, then how is its repudiation and the separation from it possible?

[b] And how does the moral obligation of something contrary to one's nature come about? Is not the law something that corroborates nature? Is not religion the support of politics? Is not godliness the affair of reason? Is not death the opposite of life? What is said about this side [of the issue]? And how does blame attach itself to one who loves what he was made to love, and whose ambition was restricted, just as he was created a man or a woman, or tall or short, or blind or seeing, boorish or clever? For if blame adheres to one thing, it must adhere to its partner as well, and if it is required in one, then it is required in the other.

And this idea steals into the realm of predestination and free will. (147)

56. Do you know what the reason is for a person's killing himself because of a failure he constantly faces, and something that he lacks, and a state that his strength and ability cannot achieve, and a door that is closed to his wish and request, and a passion that he is unable to bear, and grows weary of treating?

What is it that he hopes will happen [after committing suicide]? In what direction is he moving through his intention and purpose? And what is it that rises up in front of him, and wears down his sound judgment, and makes him forget common sense, a beloved self, and a noble life?

And what is it that finally saves him from his delusional longing for nonexistence, and wrests him from the grip of his ardor, and allows him to turn away from his misfortunes? (180)

57. I asked one of our shaykhs in Baghdad about a man who passed under a bridge, and was surrounded by police who then took him towards the prison. He saw a shining razor by the side of a barbershop. Quick as lightning he snatched the razor and ran it across his throat. When he grew weak, he separated from his spirit and left the living. So I say: Who killed this man? For if we say, "He killed himself," then is the killer the one killed, or not? And if one is *not* the other, then how are they connected despite this disengagement? And if the one is the same as the other, then how do we separate them despite this connectedness? I've followed the previous question with this one because they are on related subjects. (152)

58. How can he who is an inveterate hypocrite be sincere at times? And how is it that the disreputable person is sometimes trustworthy, the listless person sometimes is vigilant, and the corrupt person gives good advice? And how is it, also, that a person who grows up sincere and loyal begins to dissemble and be hypocritical? And what about one who is accustomed to righteousness, yet becomes suspicious? And along these lines, how is it that someone who remains loyal for sixty years would become a traitor, and someone who spends sixty years as a traitor would then abstain from it? What are these different anomalous conditions, and these unusual practices?

In the same way, we find that the liar tells the truth sometimes for a nonselfish reason, and the honest man lies for an unclear reason, for it is not agreed that the first one told the truth for some advantage, and the other lied for some incentive. (154)

59. What is the meaning of one of the scholars' saying: "Indeed, God Most High blessed all of Creation with His grace, but not His favor (*ʿamma al-khalq bi-l-ṣunʿ wa-lam yaʿummahum bi-l-iṣṭināʿ*)"? What is the basis of this idea? And how is it to be understood?

Did God leave out something that contains within it [mankind's] salvation, not granting it openly without it being sought? How could this be, given that He began by blessing [mankind] before it was worthy of His blessing, and that He created mankind without any need for it? (156)

60. What is the reason for the noble soul's preference for cleanliness, and its love for and pursuit of purity? And along these lines, then what is the beneficial aspect of the Prophet's saying: "Slovenliness is a part of faith." And one of the ascetics said: "Austerity is part of nobility, and luxury is immoderate."

I heard a Sufi say: "The secret of the Sufi is that when he is pure, he doesn't suffer hardship." The general sense of this requires specification, but he said it and then was silent.

I heard a philosopher say: "If the heart is pure, then evil is banished." While being an elegant saying, the meaning of it is hidden, and the explanation of it is indolent. (158)

61. What is better: singing or playing music? And who is nobler: the singer or the player? (162)

62. What is the reason for one person's mastery of diverse sciences, due to the compliance of his mind, the submission of his passions, and the agreement of his nature? Whereas another person cannot master a craft despite the efforts of

his heart, sleepless nights spent working, attending classes and long studies? And imagine that the former is a poor person, and the latter is rich. Someone said: "These are talents." And others said: "These are destinies." And some said: "These are different natures, and conflicting dispositions... And others said: "Rather, they are lofty influences, and bad breeding, and celestial connections." And someone else said: God knows best as regards His creation and deed and it is not for us to do anything but to look on and speculate. (164)

63. What is physiognomy? And what is sought through it? And is it a sound science, or is it true only at certain times, or with certain people? (166)

64. What is the meaning of the saying: "Man is desirous of what is forbidden"? And why is this the case? And how is it that boredom quickly sets in with that which is granted, and greed is doubled by the demand for what is withheld? Why is there not greed for that which is granted and abstinence from that which is forbidden? Along these lines, why is the cheap undesirable, while the expensive is desirable? Similarly, when the *amīr* rides out, he does not make the impression as the caliph does when he appears in public. (172)

65. What is the reason for man's looking into outcomes? What is his motive for this and what are his effects on it? And what does he find good about penetrating deeply? And what is it that he is scared of, if he inclines towards mildness? What is the meaning of the Ancients' saying: "The anxious one is hated and the friendly one is protected"? (175)

66. How is a person affected by his friend in positive and negative ways? And why does a scoundrel have a speedier influence on a good person than vice versa? And what is the benefit, to the soul, in comparison? (176)

67. What is the reason that people ridicule someone who pompously lengthens his robes' hems and enlarges his turban, and stuffs his collar with cotton, and exposes his pocket [i.e., by hinting continuously at its contents], and walks with a haughty gait, and speaks boastfully? Why are he and his ilk loathed, and what is it that makes him and his like abominable? Why isn't each person left to their own opinions and choices and desires and preferences? Have the distinguished and excellent scholars and learned ones agreed upon the hatred of such things for some hidden secret reason? If so, what is this secret hidden thing? (178)

68. [a] What is the soul's request in this world? And does it have a request, and an object of desire? For if it is associated with these ideas, it departs from being

lofty of station, great of value, because this is the sign of need and the basis of weakness. And were it not that the scope would become [too] wide, then I would ask: "What is its relation to the human being?"

[b] Is the human being the foundation of the soul, or vice versa? In what way is this so? And, more broadly speaking, there is the issue of the human being, for indeed the subject of the human being is difficult and intricate for the human being. [Here, Miskawayh interjects: "And then you related some stories that have no use to the question, so let us get to work on the answer."] (179)

69. You've quoted a number of stories between a questioner and an answerer, and did not move to a matter that we should research. For the question belongs to the subject of names and attributes, and we spoke penetratingly about this in what has come before, and there is no reason to repeat it, and so it is necessary for you to go back to what was said and seek it out so as to find it complete, with God's assistance.[25]

70. [a] What is the cause of a perception of fear when there is nothing fear inspiring around?

[b] And what is the reason for the endurance of the fearful and stricken one, not wanting others to be apprised of his weak nature, his lack of strength, and his deep anguish, and this in addition to the feebleness of his limbs … and the beating of his heart, and the emergence of certain signs which—even if he wanted to conceal them—would appear in his facial expressions, and the glances of his eyes, and his tongue's utterances, and his disturbed body language? (182)

71. Why does a person become angry and annoyed when, for example, he goes to open a lock and finds it stuck, and flies into a rage and bites the lock and curses? For this is widespread among people. (183)

72. Why does one who has a small head have a weak brain? And yet, not everyone with a big head is sound of judgment. (184)

73. Why do people believe that a sparsely bearded man is evil and sly, just like the short man? Yet they do not reckon that intelligence and judiciousness are found in a man with a long beard, or thick hair, or towering stature, or a beautiful coun-

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25 Here, Miskawayh disregards a question apparently asked by al-Tawḥīdī that rehearsed material covered earlier in the book.

tenance. And why do some people see a sparse beard as [a sign] of happiness? (185)

74. Why is death easy for the tormented man, despite his knowledge that there is no life in nonexistence, and that suffering—even if severe—is a part of the noble life?

And, moreover, he knows that the existent is more honorable than the non-existent; indeed there is no dignity in the nonexistent, so what is it that makes nonexistence easy for him to bear? And what is the thing planted in his heart? Is this choice rational or [the product of] a corruption in his constitution? (186)

75. Why does a man criticize that which he cannot obtain, and disparage that which he does not possess? And in the same way, people act hostilely toward what they are ignorant of, to the extent that this has become one of the unique maxims: "People act hostilely toward that which they don't understand," as it is said. So why do they do this?

Why do they not, rather, love that which they do not understand, and seek it out, and study it, until the enmity ceases …? (187)

76. [a] Why is a person able to create a bunch of enemies very quickly, but if he seeks to make one friend with the goodwill of an intimate, he is only able to do so over a long period, and with effort and submission and hardship?

[b] The same goes for every good state of affairs that is hoped for, and every form of order that is sought. Do you not see that tearing is easier than stitching, and destroying is easier than building, and killing is easier than raising and enlivening? (189)

77. What is it that drives the atheist (*zindīq*) and the freethinker/materialist (*dahrī*) toward the good, and toward a preference for the beautiful, and the pursuit of honesty, and acting persistently in righteousness, and pity for the suffering, and assistance for [those who are] crying out [for aid], and the help of one seeking refuge with him, and the plaintiff who stands before him? He does this without hoping for recompense, nor waiting for anything in return, nor does he fear any accounting or reckoning.

Do you consider the incentive for these noble manners and praiseworthy traits to be his desire for thanks, or his self-acquittal from suspicion, or his fear of the sword? [If] he does these things at times when people do not think that he is on guard or soliciting thanks, why then does he do them if not for some hidden reason in his soul and some secret in his mind? Does something in this matter point to the oneness of God, most Blessed and Sublime? (190)

78. What is it that arises in someone's character that makes him a laughing-stock? I mean, he is laughed at and ridiculed and struck on the back of the neck [in insulting jest], and he is long suffering and content with all of this. Perhaps he is in need of someone's grace, or perhaps he made little someone's grace.

So how does he accept this miserable condition so easily? And he may even be from a family of distinct nobility and exalted station.

Similarly, another man becomes effeminate, a singer, frivolous, and all the rest of what is related about one who grows up in a condemnable fashion, yet he is from good family stock. (192)

79. What is the reason for man's love of leading others? And from where did he inherit this nature, and what is it that it allured him with? And why does one go too far in seeking it out, until he meets the spearheads in his throat, and confronts the blades in his breast, and abandons for its sake [the comfort of] the pillow, and bids farewell to sleep in its cause, and traverses wastelands and inhabited places?

Is this the same type of person who becomes annoyed at the formulation of an honorific address when he is sent a letter or writes one? What do you make of all this? For people have withheld their opinion on this subject, and differed considerably. (193)

80. Why do people honor someone who had a father or grandfather who was famous and well regarded because of his glorious deeds, his courage and his statecraft, to the exclusion of (*dūna*) someone who has a son similarly [distin-guished]? I mean, how does honor flow from the older to the younger and not vice versa? (194)

81. And, if a man's father is associated with the traits we have previously men-tioned, and other qualities of piety and godliness, why then must his son, and indeed his son's son, strut about and pompously drag their cloaks, and disdain people, and consider themselves to have been granted the right to rule, and they believe that your service to them is an obligation, and your confidence in them is devoted. What is this discord and plague and what is its source? And has this existed throughout time and in all civilizations? (197)

88. Speak to me about the queen of all questions, the answer to which is the prince of all answers … and it is [about] the deprivation of the meritorious person and the achievement of the deficient person (*ḥirmān al-fāḍil wa-idrāk al-nāqiṣ*)… When Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq saw a servant emerging from the abode of the caliph, leading some horses and with a coterie around him, [Abū ʿĪsā] raised his head to the sky and said: "I declare Your Unity in all languages and tongues, I proselytize

for You with arguments and proofs, I aid Your religion with every testimony and clear proof, as I walk along like this, naked, hungry, and thirsty, while the likes of this black is at home in silks and brocade, servants and attendants, followers and hangers-on. It was said that this person [whom Abū ʿĪsā was talking about] was Ibn al-Rāwandī, but whoever it may have been, the matter in question is clear, and its chain of transmission is sound, and investigating it is required. (212)[26]

101. One sometimes sees a person laughing over some curious thing he sees or hears or has occurred to him. Then someone looks at him from a distance and laughs because of his laughter, without knowing what [the observed] was laughing about. And the laughter of the observer might be even greater than the laughter of the first person. So, what is it that travels from the amused laugher to the second? (247)

110. Why does a noble and spacious house quickly become dilapidated when no one lives in it, while that is not the case if it is inhabited and visited? Perhaps you think it's because people repair what needs to be repaired, and they mend what has crumbled, and they take care of it through cleaning and sweeping, but know that this is not the case. For, you know that people impact a house by walking [in it] and leaning [against it] and all kinds of other activities, which, even if they don't weaken the house (because of their repair and upkeep) offset and balance [the repair]. So the question is still open. (260)

119. The caliph al-Maʾmūn said: "My condition amazes me: I control the horizons of the world, but I am weak at chess." This is something widespread among people. What is the reason? (272)

126. Why is verbal eloquence more difficult to achieve than written eloquence? Aren't the tongue and pen just two tools, and isn't their source [of eloquence] the same? Why is it that out of every ten people who write proficiently and eloquently, three are not capable of speaking proficiently and eloquently? The praise of those who speak well over those who write well is an indication to you of the rarity of the eloquent tongue. (285)

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26 Abū al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Isḥāq, known as Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. mid-4th/10th c.) was a famous heretic and a pupil of Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq (d. late 3rd/9th c.), who is similarly associated with heterodox and heretical opinions.

135. Why are some things found to be perfect only when they are fresh and young, and only considered valuable in this state? Meanwhile, other things are only prized if they are very old, having seen much time pass over them. Why isn't it just one way? (197)

159. Why are the gates of inquiry into everything in existence the following four [expressions]: "Is there" (*hal*), "what" (*mā*), "which" (*ayy*), and "why" (*li-ma*)? (341)

163. When is the soul connected with the body, and when is it present within it? Is it at the stage of the embryo or after that? (350)

168. Why is seawater salty? (359)

171. Why doesn't it snow in the summer, the way it might rain? (361)

172. What is the proof for the existence of angels? (363)

174. Why is the sound of thunder slower [to arrive] and more distant to our ears than the vision of lightning to our eyes? (365)

175. If a person espoused one rite (*madhhab*) and then disavowed it because of a fault that he found in it, would you not deny that he would leave the second rite the same way he left the first and continue in this fashion through all the rites until not a single one would be suitable for him, and no truth would be made clear to him? (367)

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Lynda Clarke

'Aql (Reason) in Modern Shiite Thought: The Example of Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya (1904–79)

This essay is intended as a contribution to the study of Twelver Shiite approaches to modernism, the roots of which, as Simon Fuchs remarks in his study of the Iraqi clerical intellectual Muḥammad ibn Mahdī al-Khāliṣī (1890–1963), are "scarcely studied." Like Fuchs, I mean to "take seriously the role of ideas" in modern Shiite thought while looking beyond the usual political controversies and borders of Iran.[1] I focus on modern ideas about *'aql* or reason, an important concept (with various meanings) in Shiism since its early days. There is a tendency in Shiite thought, apparently growing, to regard Shiism as the "religion of reason" and build on that perception in dealing with modernity. Many Shiite thinkers now use this approach: the seminarian Ahmad Qabel (1954–2012), the philosopher Mostafa Malekian (b. 1956), and the clerical activist Mohsen Kadivar (b. 1959) are three among others in recent generations. One can see a more modest tendency to valorize *'aql* also in some earlier figures, for instance Ayatollah Muṭahharī (d. 1979) in his writings on theology and legal reasoning. It might even be that this idea about reason has been received by Shiites in general, as I sometimes hear remarks to the effect that Shiism is the more rational or reasonable school of Islam. This interesting possibility would have to be investigated through fieldwork.

The Lebanese clerical scholar Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya is a relatively early figure who speaks explicitly about *'aql* and in fact makes it a centerpiece of his reformist thought. When the history of ideas about reason in modern Shiism is pieced together, Maghniyya may turn out to have been a pioneer in taking the rationalism that is characteristic of traditional Twelver Uṣūlī Shiism in novel directions. Maghniyya's modernized *'aql* involves a particular understanding of science and society and the application of that understanding to worldly problems. I will call this type of reason "rationality." Rationality is a species of practical reason with the characteristic elements of moral reflection and action, but it is distinctively modern in its emphasis on social progress.

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[1] Simon Wolfgang Fuchs, "Failing transnationally: local intersections of science, medicine, and sectarianism in modernist Shi'ī writings," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 2 (2014): 434.

The first part of the essay recounts Maghniyya's life experience and its effect on his thinking. The story is one of a profoundly personal response to contemporary local and global issues. In the second part, I show how Maghniyya makes Shiite rationalism into rationality by shifting traditional ideas about epistemology, justice, and messianism. In the last section, I use Maghniyya's work as a vantage point from which to comment on the career of reason and rationality in Twelver Shiism overall. While admitting the differences between successive phases, I emphasize continuity regarding *'aql* between ancient, prerational Shiism, rationalist Uṣūlism, and Maghniyya's rationality, which seems in turn to prefigure the more radical formulations of the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

I. Life and Mission

Maghniyya's approach to religion, including the focus on reason, was determined by commitments formed as a result of his life experience. The relation between his ideas and experience is detailed not only in his autobiography, but also his writings in general, which are often self-reflective. Born to a scholarly family in the Shiite-populated region of southern Lebanon known as Jabal 'Āmil, Maghniyya was thrown into terrible poverty at the age of ten by the death of his father. He continued to suffer penury through a decade of study in the great seminary town of Najaf in Iraq and then years as a village cleric after his return to Jabal 'Āmil in 1936, following which he managed to rise in the Shiite courts[2] while also gaining a reputation as a prolific writer. Maghniyya's account of his personal trials is affecting. He remembers, for instance, how as a child he would crouch at night in his deceased father's house without a cover or even proper clothing trying to keep warm in the harsh mountain winter.[3] These memories, however, take second place even in the autobiography to concern for the thoroughly miserable condition of the Lebanese Shiites whose lot he had shared. His first published book, which appeared in 1947, was a manifesto titled *The Current Situation in* Jabal 'Āmil through which he aimed, as he says, to depict "the grim life of the peasants, filled

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2 Laws of personal status were and still are adjudicated in Lebanon through religious courts organized according to the various confessional groups.

3 Maghniyya, *Tajārib Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Maghniyya and Riyāḍ al-Dabbāgh (Qum: Anwār al-Hudā, 1425/2004–5), 35.

with ignorance, labor from dawn to dusk and utter neglect" in order to "demand justice for them from the wicked politicians and ruling clique."[4]

The word Maghniyya uses here for politician is *za'īm*; the Lebanese *za'īm*s were notables from the various confessional groups who held political power through a corrupt system of clientelism, in the Shiite case largely supported or tolerated by the clerics.[5] Maghniyya's experience as an orphan in the South and then, before he made his way to Najaf, as a common labourer in Beirut set him hard against established orders. One of the reasons he took pride in Najaf was that it had not, like the Sunni and, in his view, most Western institutions of learning, allowed itself to be used in politics.[6] Maghniyya was critical, on the other hand, of both Najaf and the other great Shiite seminary of Qum in Iran for failing to address matters such as the Algerian Revolution, racial segregation in America, and nuclear weapons. Christian priests in South America who fought against "oppression and exploitation" set a better example, in his view.[7]

Maghniyya's oppositional stance caused him trouble throughout his life. His dismissal from the Justice Ministry in 1956 might have been occasioned by his speaking against Lebanese participation in the pro-Western Baghdad Pact, writing a newspaper editorial against capitalism and "feudalism" (*iqṭā'*, a clear reference to the *za'īm* system), or his refusal to cooperate with a leading Shiite parliamentarian.[8] Some think that he might have succeeded to the religious leadership of the Shiite community instead of Mūsā al-Ṣadr if his way had not been blocked by his enemies the politicians;[9] his many disputes with other clerics less

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4 *Tajārib*, 97. The book was not well received by some of the ulema, who felt that Maghniyya had gone beyond the proper role of a cleric. See 'Alī al-Maḥraqī, *Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya: Ma'ārikuhu wa-Musājalātuhu al-'Ilmiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍā', 1432/2011), 55–56.

5 Sabrina Mervin finds that though the two groups in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were "closely knit," there were instances in which the clerics stood up to the *za'īm*s on behalf of the villagers. Maghniyya's objections thus to some extent continue a honorable tradition. *Un réformisme chiite: Ulémas et lettrés du Ǧabal 'Āmil [actuel Liban-Sud] de la fin de l'Empire ottoman à l'indépendance du Liban* (Paris: Karthala; Beyrouth: CERMOC; Damas: IFEAD, 2000), 49–53.

6 *Tajārib*, 65.

7 *Tajārib*, 65–66.

8 See Karl-Heinrich Göbel, *Moderne Schiitische Politik und Staatsidee nach Taufīq al-Fukaikī, Muḥammad Ǧawād Muġnīya, Rūḥallāh Ḫumainī (Khomeyni)* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1984), 81–83.

9 Chibli Mallat, *Aspects of Shi'i thought from the south of Lebanon: Al-'Irfan, Muhammad Jawad Mughniyya, Muhammad Mahdi Shamseddin, Muhammad Husain Fadlallah* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1988), 6–7; Göbel, *Moderne Schiitische Politik*, 86 (citing the author's interview with Maghniyya's son 'Abd al-Ḥusayn). Mūsā al-Ṣadr, a scion of the scholarly al-Ṣadr family,

reform-minded and militant than himself cannot have helped.[10] "The first influence on my life," he wrote after his retirement to the life of a scholar, "was the injustice that surrounded me on all sides ... and that is the secret of my preoccupation with the position of Islam on oppression and oppressors."[11]

Maghniyya's primary commitment, as can be gathered from the short account above, was to social justice and Islam as the instrument of that justice. He also believed that teaching the people about true Islam was an essential duty of the clerics, which they had seriously neglected. The first step in fulfilling this duty would be to demonstrate religion through action. Maghniyya had experienced the indifference of the Jabal ʿĀmil peasants toward religion and his own person as a man of religious learning and concluded that the only way Islam could become "close to the minds (*ʿuqūl*, plural of *ʿaql*) and hearts" of the people was if the clerics proved through their own sincere deeds that Islam "conformed to the criteria of rationality" by being aimed at the betterment of society.[12] The "practical lesson, never heard from any teacher or learned in any book" the peasants taught him was that cleverness and learning amount to nothing

> unless one shoulders responsibility toward those who have been deprived of their rights ... and that the people (*al-shaʿb*, a leftist usage) respect a learned man who is also brave, resolute, fights and makes sacrifices; and that the people appreciate only a cleric who supports and struggles for their just causes—and is this not, after all, the message of religion and Islam? And I also learned that the true criteria [for learning and knowledge] are to be taken from the marrow of life.[13]

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came to Lebanon from Iran in 1960 and became the leading religious figure in the Shiite community until his mysterious disappearance in Libya in 1978.

10 To give just three examples: While still in Najaf, Maghniyya sided with the Grand Mujtahid Muḥsin al-Amīn in his characterization of bloody self-flagellation during the Muḥarram rituals as "reprehensible innovation" (*bidʿa*). Al-Amīn's "bitterest" opponent was ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn, who led the Lebanese Shiites before Mūsā al-Ṣadr (Göbel, *Moderne Schiitische Politik*, 83–85, and Mervin, *Réformisme chiite*, 250 ff.). In 1950, Maghniyya wrote a piece for the magazine *ʿIrfān* reproaching a group of clerics who had complained that their return from Najaf had not been written about for being far from the people and the realities of their lives. The controversy went on for years (see al-Maḥraqī, *Maʿārik*, 63ff). The 1970s find Maghniyya blaming Shiite clerics for letting their own interests get in the way of finding a solution to the plight of villagers in the South faced with the Palestinian presence and Israeli incursions (*Tajārib*, 509).

11 *Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt. Dirāsa fī Ḍawʾ al-ʿAql wa-al-Taṭawwur* [Islam with life: a study in light of reason and development] (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm lil-Malāyīn, 1979), 273.

12 *Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 271.

13 *Tajārib*, 89.

As Maghniyya came into contact with the more sophisticated folk of Beirut, he saw that they also lacked a firm understanding of Islam, and he feared that the youth (*shabāb*) in particular would drift away from it. He concluded that they needed to be convinced through rational argument. The basis for this idea was already present in Shiite theology, according to which belief in God is made obligatory not, logically, by revelation (since accepting it would already require belief), but by reason; as Maghniyya puts it, "It is *'aql* that obliges human beings to know their Creator, while statements in the revelation such as 'Know that there is no god but He' explain and confirm reason's judgment."[14] Building on this postulate, Maghniyya set out to present "logical" arguments for religion drawing on science and philosophy and designed to appeal to the modern mind.

Rational argument, however, would attract the audience Maghniyya wanted to reach only if it could be easily understood. Thus he decided very deliberately to produce a popular literature presenting, as he says, "new thought in a new style," as well as the Islamic heritage unburdened of "obscurity, unnecessary complications and specialized terminology."[15] Clarity, he believed, was "owed by the writer to his reader" (2:312); in a charming passage that opens his *Between God and Humanity*, he imagines a personal relationship with his own readers:

> I write and you read; and thus each of us influences and is influenced by the other. Because of your openness to and trust in what I write, you create in me the consciousness that I am responsible toward you ... And you are influenced by me because I am able, by God's grace, to make you want to read by expressing myself simply and striving to speak the truth. (2:371)[16]

Maghniyya's popularizing style should be appreciated in light of this mission. It apparently exposed him to criticism from his peers, as he occasionally defends his habit of writing very profusely—over sixty titles by the end of his life—repeating material and publishing and republishing short tracts.[17] Although his work has received appreciation in recent years,[18] some of his negative reputation as a

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14 *Al-Shī'a fī al-Mīzān* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, n.d.), 76 (from *al-Shī'a wa-al-Tashayyu'*; the volume also contains Maghniyya's *Ma'a al-Shī'a al-Imāmiyya and al-Ithnā 'Ashariyya*).

15 Muḥammad Jawād al-Maghniyya, *'Aqliyyāt Islāmiyya*, ed. Sāmī al-Gharīrī (N.p.: Mu'assasa-i Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1427/2006), 1:337, 287 (hereafter cited in text). Maghniyya is speaking here particularly of literature treating the sayings of the Imāms.

16 Maghniyya expressed the same sentiment much later in his life, in his *Falsafāt Islāmiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Ta'āruf, 1398/1978), 7–9.

17 For example, *'Aqliyyāt*, 1:338–39.

18 In addition to items cited in the notes, see: Hādī Faḍlallāh, *Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya: Fikr wa-Iṣlāḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Hādī, 1413/1993); 'Alī al-Maḥraqī, *Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya:*

popularizer continues; when I spoke to a Lebanese Shiite cleric about wanting to write about Maghniyya, he immediately mentioned it. The criticism is unjust; not only did Maghniyya turn to popular writing with a definite aim, but he also wrote books in a more intellectualized style on law, jurisprudence, philosophy, and Islamic history, as well as a complete exegesis of the Quran. Disapproval of him probably has more to do with reaction to his own critique of the ulema, his unconventional activism, and his "undignified" stance as a man of the people; he was known, for instance, for keeping his turban small and beard short and occasionally walking about Beirut without his clerical robes, which, he explains, made him more approachable.[19]

II. Reason and Rationality According to Maghniyya

Most of Maghniyya's writings include reflections on reason and some feature the word in the title, for example, *The Imāmate of 'Alī Between Reason and the Quran*. In 1959, a few years after being relieved of his judicial post, Maghniyya decided to write a series specifically on *'aql* addressed to a wide audience: *God and Reason*, *Prophethood and Reason*, and *The Afterlife and Reason* were followed a few years later by *The Mahdi and Reason*.[20] Highlighting reason was partly a rhetorical strategy, since the word suggests relevance and modernity and would thus appeal to the kind of audience Maghniyya wanted to attract. Somewhat in the manner of the great Egyptian Sunnī reformer Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), he wished to present Islam as the religion of modernity par excellence, and *'aql* would be key to this exposition. Focus on reason, however, is also part of the heritage of Shiism—to be more precise, the Twelver Uṣūlī Shiism to which the vast majority of Shiites adhere today. Maghniyya acknowledges those roots and draws on Shiite

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Ṣīratuhu wa-'Aṭā'uhu (Manama: Maktabat Fakhrāwī, 1417/1997); 'Iṣām al-'Ayṭāwī, *al-Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya: Dirāsa Sūsīyūlūjiyya fī Mashrū'ihi al-Iṣlāḥī* (Beirut: Markaz al-Ḥaḍāra li-Tanmiyat al-Fikr al-Islāmī, 2008); Jawād 'Alī Kassār, *Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya: Ḥayātuhu wa-Manhajuhu fī* al-*Tafsīr* (Qum: Dār al-Ṣādiqīn, 1420/2000); Ḥasan Mūsā al-Ṣaffār, *Shajā'at al-Ta'bīr 'an al-Ra'y: al-Shaykh Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya Unmūdhajan* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Intishār al-'Arabī, 1430/2009). Faḍlallāh, al-'Ayṭāwī, and Kassār consider *'aql* separately, each in a few pages (73–75, 38–39, and 93–5 respectively).

19 Maḥraqī, *Ma'ārik*, 71.

20 As he recounts in *The Mahdi and Reason*; see *'Aqliyyāt*, 1:337–38. *'Aqliyyāt Islāmiyya*, which first appeared in the 1970s, includes Maghniyya's original four-part series on *'aql* along with a number of other previously published writings connected to the same theme. The *'aql* series had been collected earlier under the title *al-Islām wa-al-'Aql* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1967).

theology in both his more intellectualized and popular writings, and so I will first lay out its basic premises as he received them.

According to Twelver Uṣūlī Shiite theology, God and religion are all part of one universe or supra-universe arranged according to reason and therefore capable to a large degree of being understood by it. Good (ḥasan) and evil (qabīḥ) are realities (wāqiʿ) which our reason is able to perceive independently of revelation "as we perceive the light of the sun and that one joined to another like one are two" (2:252)." God thus commands a thing because it is inherently good (ḥasan) and confers benefit (maṣlaḥa), while forbidding others because they are inherently evil (qabīḥ) and involve harm (mafsada). Shiite rationalism is ultimately based on justice as a necessary divine trait or way of acting; the logical end, in fact, of divine justice is that God always does the best for His creation, as "it is impossible for God, being as He is (fī ḥaqqihi), to bring anything into existence except in the most perfect way possible."[21] For divine justice to be delivered in the world and for it to be perceptible to humans—for God to be known as He is—there must be causality so that the world operates in a regular and expected way.[22] And there must also be human "choice" (ikhtiyār, somewhat resembling free will) so that deeds are actually attributable to the doers and they may justly deserve punishment or reward.

Shiite theologians also believe that, in the well-known formula repeated by Maghniyya, "religion confirms all that reason discovers and reason does not deny anything that religion commands," so that "reason is religion from the interior and religion is reason from the exterior."[23] Revelation, of course, has its own sphere; according to Maghniyya, it plays a role in society that reason cannot by dealing with ethics, providing moral incentive, and defining justice and human-

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21 *Falsafāt*, 59. This does not, of course, mean that there is no evil. Evil comes from humans, who are given the choice between sinning and doing good so that they may justly merit reward. Evil is also a necessary consequence of the existence of a material world: "Evil exists in the world (al-ṭabīʿa) and plentifully so, but its good is more than its evil and its benefit more than its harm" for "the clothes of a man may be burnt by fire" but the harm cannot be compared to "the benefits he enjoys from fire his whole life" (ibid., quoting the seventeenth-century Iranian Shiite philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā).

22 "Without causality and causal connexion (al-ʿilliyya wa-al-ʿalāqa al-sababiyya), there is no way to gain knowledge of universal laws and rules or predict anything at all," leading to "the complete closing of the door to knowledge (ʿulūm, also meaning 'sciences')" as well as making it impossible to "establish the existence of a power beyond the world that is the cause of its existence and regulation." *Madhāhib wa-Muṣṭalaḥāt Falsafiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Taʿāruf, 1977), 172–73.

23 *Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 27. It is also commonly said that "reason is the interior prophet"; see the discussion in section three of this essay.

ity or humanism (*insāniyya*).[24] Reason, on the other hand, is confined to discovering "forces in the world and the realities of things."[25] Nevertheless, revelation (*naql*) and reason (*'aql*) are "mutually complementary,"[26] and religious truths may be understood from both.

Maghniyya turns this rationalism into a modern rationality in two ways. First, he presents arguments for the existence of God and other religious truths that he expects will speak to the modern mind. This includes arguing that modern science as the product of reason confirms those truths, so that science and progress become the partner and very proof of religion and particularly of Islam. Second, he concentrates on justice in human terms. Justice is not only a rationalist theological imperative or a condition realized by the Mahdī in the last days, but something one gains knowledge of through experience of humans and society and which must be realized in the world through action. These are deeply held convictions, which Maghniyya proclaims near the beginning of his autobiography as his credo:

> I would like to introduce myself to the reader and anyone who cares to know about me. I believe in God, His Messenger, and the Last Day, but I interpret the implications of these three basic beliefs in accord with what benefits people and leads to a better life. And I also believe that there are three causes of knowledge: experience (*tajriba*), reason, and revelation.[27]

I will discuss Maghniyya's move in relation to rational proof and science first, and then go on to his recasting of justice. Note that his discourse is often marked by the dialectics and logical figures typical of the scholasticism still current in the Shiite seminaries. This is difficult, unfortunately, to reproduce in a summary.

Maghniyya, as seen in the credo quoted above, is preoccupied with epistemology. He is convinced that a proper way of knowing will open the door to belief. He also wishes to demonstrate to believers and doubters alike that the validity of religion in general and Islam in particular is a logical conclusion of human reason.[28] Maghniyya works out this proposition in a way that puts religion on at least an equal footing with science and philosophy in explaining the world and dealing with human affairs.

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24 *Al-Islām ma'a al-Ḥayāt*, 27.
25 Ibid. Although, note well, reason in the Shiite view is capable of recognizing the truth of the things that only religion can bring (with the exception, it is said, of a number of provisions of the Law that do not appear to follow the rules of logic).
26 Ibid.: "*muta'āzirān muta'āḍidān*."
27 *Tajārib*, 21. *Tajārib* is the plural of *tajriba*; the autobiography thus recounts the "experiences" of Maghniyya as the stuff of his philosophy.
28 Stated explicitly at the beginning of "God and Reason" ('*Aqliyyāt*, 2:23–24).

Knowledge, Maghniyya says, necessarily begins with sense (*ḥiss*) and experience (*tajriba*), through which we gather data about the world. This is true not only of the sciences, but also of religion. Knowledge of the existence of God, for instance, begins in our sense and experience of the marvelous order (*niẓām*) of creation; Maghniyya introduces this idea frequently, citing verses of the Quran that urge believers to contemplate nature. The prophethood of Muḥammad is another example. The Prophet himself became convinced of his mission through "sense and experience,"[29] and this proof is relayed to us through "reliable historical documents" attesting to his superior character so that we know he would not have announced his mission without being truly convinced. This, Maghniyya adds, is the principle people have always followed in receiving ideas from reliable persons; the scientist or scholar diligently does his research until he is able to announce a "reality" (*ḥaqīqa*), and then people gratefully accept and believe in it, as they have accepted, for instance, the theory of gravity from Newton and relativity from Einstein (2:161).

Knowledge cannot, however, rely only on sense-data and experience or experiment (*tajriba* may mean both), and in fact we see that, despite the claims of materialists and others, all knowledge whether scientific or religious results from rational deliberation (*ta'ammul 'aqlī*).[30] Every thought involves a leap from what is observed or experienced to that which is not, including scientific theories, which may begin in observation and the laboratory but finally include speculation. The ancient philosophers managed to perceive truths about nature, such as the earth revolving around the sun, chiefly through observation without being able to test them.[31] The very proposition that knowledge is derived only from sense-data involves the operation of reason![32]

That all knowledge is derived in the same way—that religion is not in fact more "metaphysical" than other kinds of thought, including science—means that religious propositions are just as real and reasonable as others. A great deal of religion may deal with the unknown (*ghayb*), but most of everything is unknown, and religion is, moreover, not merely a series of unknowns but finally ends in reason, for there is no knowledge or religion without reason (2:341, 328). We do

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29 The author may have in mind Muḥammad's vision of the angel Gabriel at the beginning of his mission and other physically difficult experiences of receiving revelation.

30 *Al-Islām bi-Naẓra Aṣriyya* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1973), 18. Maghniyya says that rational proof—for instance, proofs for the validity of the Quran—can result in certainty, just like direct observation. Everyone necessarily believes many things they do not actually see (*'Aqliyyāt*, 2:290).

31 *Al-Islām bi-Naẓra Aṣriyya*, 21.

32 Ibid.; *'Aqliyyāt*, 2:339–40.

not have to prove the existence of God using scientific instruments for it to be reasonable any more than scientists and other thinkers have to empirically prove their entire thought and theories (2:318).

Thus science and religion, when properly understood, are both based on reason, and both work to explain and deal with a world (itself rationally ordered) which humans know through experience. This thinking facilitates Maghniyya's conclusion that the two support and confirm each other; science, in effect, is rolled into *'aql* in the famous Shiite "rule of correspondence" (*mulāzama*) between *'aql* and *naql* (revelation). One can see why it would have been necessary before making this move to establish that religion is not inferior or subordinate to science but rather equally "realistic," for *'aql* in the classical understanding really only involves a system of logic already digested by the tradition, while modern science with its accomplishments and potential challenges to belief could be overwhelming. The balance Maghniyya proposes between science and religion has, he remarks, partly reasserted itself in the West despite the Church initially refusing to accept scientific discoveries due to a "fanatical devotion" (*ta'aṣṣub*) to religion and many modern thinkers refusing to seriously consider religion due to an equally fanatical attachment to science. Both groups were eventually compelled to accept what they had rejected, since "the principles of religion are real truths, just like scientific truths, and the results of science are also real like the principles of religion." Science and religion, Maghniyya declares, are "mutually complementary, especially in relation to the first principles on which the creed is based such as belief in God and survival of the soul" (2:411–12). The Arabic phrase translated here as "mutually complementary" is the same (*muta'āzirān muta'āḍidān*) used by Maghniyya in regard to reason and revelation in the passage cited above.

Islam, of course, is exemplary in its acceptance of science. As the religion of reason par excellence, it encouraged knowledge and science and condemned *taqlīd* (clinging to old ways); and thus it flourished, unlike Greek religion, for instance, which was blighted by ignorance (*jahl*, the opposite of *'aql*) and superstition (2:73–74). True Islam favors reason and science and blesses useful modern thought.[33] Here Maghniyya takes up the idea, widespread among Muslims in the twentieth century, that the Quran contains many scientific truths—the "secrets of the universe" and "reality and destiny of humankind," as he puts it (2:295).

Having asserted that science is harmonious with Islam in particular, Maghniyya is faced with aligning it with Islamic and Shiite doctrine. This is an important part of the project he undertakes in the popular *'aql* series. Though he is confi-

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[33] *Al-Islām ma'a al-Ḥayāt*, 125.

dent of success, since belief and religion are "ancient, deeply rooted" phenomena which have survived many challenges precisely due to their being based on "knowledge, reason, and proof," his speculations are inevitably fanciful, though certainly interesting (2:109).

Maghniyya's basic proposition is that science as it progresses confirms many of the realities portrayed by religion. Scientific knowledge furnishes a kind of ultimate proof based on experiment/experience (*tajriba*) that can be added to and may be actually more solid than the others. For instance, humans used to understand that they are spirit and not just body through intuition (*fiṭra*) and revelation; then they knew it through reason and philosophy—through the writings of, for example, Avicenna, Averroes, and Ṭūsī—and then survival of the soul was proved by scientists who, despite believing that science is opposed to religion, found that it actually proved it (2:399–401). Study of the soul or spirit (*rūḥ*) is now an integral part of the study of the conversion of matter to energy and energy to matter, theory of relativity, wave theory, and so on, as well as newly developing areas of knowledge such a parapsychology (2:404).[34] Scientific descriptions of the afterlife tend to be similar to each other as well as to the afterlife described by different religions, including Islam; here also modern science is beginning to confirm what the prophets said (2:407–11). Science is the "ally" of believers just as reason is their "guiding principle," so that "every new step forward in any field of science only strengthens the evidence for the existence of God, furnishing new proofs and making discoveries that can be explained only by a power not resembling anything in the world."[35]

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[34] See also ibid., 195 ff., where Maghniyya anticipates scientists ultimately being able to observe spirits leaving bodies. As usual, discoveries made by Western scientists are cited; Maghniyya says that research on the soul began in America and Oxford in the 30s and 40s (2:342).

[35] Maghniyya does not, however, accept the theory of evolution, or at least not entirely. In accord with his contention that believers approach science rationally, he allows that there is "nothing in Islamic texts" that really denies evolution of species. Though not supported by the decisive proof that would be required to demonstrate it to be actually true, evolution is at least possible (*mumkin al-wuqūʿ*) and would then be traceable in some way to God's power and will. The exception is the evolution of humans from apes, which is consistent neither with revelation nor reason, the first because the Quran clearly tells us humans were fully formed, intelligent beings from the beginning of their existence (Q 2:31, 4:33, 20:115, and 2:35), and the second due to the very large, inexplicable differences between humans and apes, above all the possession by humans of *ʿaql*, which cannot have resulted from a material process such as evolution. Maghniyya strongly rejects "survival of the fittest" in the sense of social Darwinism, which he considers to be exemplified in the philosophy of Nietzsche and brutality of Hitler and Mussolini (*al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 111–12).

A good number of Maghniyya's illustrations of the correspondence of science to religion depend on the idea that reasonable persons must keep an open mind, or as he explains it, when two parties each submit a potentially valid (*mumkin al-wuqūʿ*) proposition, one cannot be proved untrue simply by denying it. In such an encounter, one must have proof and not just doubt; but those who claim that science is valid and religion superstitious have doubts and nothing else (2:106–7).[36] Here Maghniyya tries to turn the tables on atheists by portraying them as irrational, prejudiced, and "blindly conformist" (*muqallid*) (2:339). He makes this point repeatedly, naming figures such as Nietzsche and Sartre and mockingly contrasting the irrationality of unbelievers with the open-mindedness of believers (2:102–8). It is in this spirit that he suggests that science may sooner or later discover many of the realities that are now part of the unknown, making them finally tangible and visible. For instance, the experiences of astronauts freed of gravity resemble aspects of the afterlife described by the Quran (2:414–14).[37] People doubt that God can bring the dead back to life, but they cannot prove that this is impossible, and all kinds of things have happened that were never imagined before—for example, television and landing on the moon (2:416, 1:194). Theories are often around a long time before they are materially proved, so it is not at all impossible that the Mahdī would appear to take the reins of power (1:366).

These are a few illustrations of how Maghniyya extends the traditional Shiite principle of adducing rational proofs for religion to the realm of science. Their most striking feature is progressivism. In Maghniyya's world, religion and science march together toward a future in which knowledge constantly increases and life is constantly improved by it. The prophets, he says, "affirmed in principle every new useful thing that ever was or will be" so that religion—along with the clerics if they follow the way of the prophets as they should—is always progres-

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36 See also ibid., 2:388. Somewhat contrary to this principle, Maghniyya does not want to admit miracles, which he rejects as being neither rational nor just. It seems that he is anxious to show that religion affirms the mechanical universe on which he believes science to be based. Denial of miracles is also part of his argument against Sufism, which he regards, like other Muslim modernists, as epitomizing the irrationality and inefficiency that keeps Islam in the dark ages. In dealing with miracles actually recorded in the Quran, on the other hand, he argues that there is a difference between that which is "impossible according to reason" and merely "impossible according to ordinary experience." Just because people have never experienced the return of the dead, a child speaking in his cradle as the Quran reports of Jesus, a man living on anonymously for a thousand years as the Shiites believe has happened with the Mahdī—and so on—does not mean that it cannot be admitted by reason (1:407–10).

37 Maghniyya relates the unusual feelings of physical ease and mental peace described by astronauts such as Gagarin and Shepard and compares these with Quran 15:48, "in it, no fatigue shall touch them," and 21:103, "the great terror shall not grieve them."

sive (*taqaddumī*) and never reactionary (*raj'ī*).[38] The key idea here is usefulness. "Heavenly books" and the dicta of Muḥammad in particular, Maghniyya says, encourage humans to pursue the "sciences and thought of the whole world," regardless of the religion or nationality of the originators and whether their fruits are "tangible" or aimed at "cultural needs." This is because such knowledge serves humankind in achieving "development" (*taṭawwur*) and "success," which is also the purpose of religion (2:296–99, 124–25).[39] Thus does Maghniyya's very wide reading of Shiite rationalism accommodate progressivism and turn *'aql* into rationality.

Maghniyya also turns the central Shiite doctrines of Imāmate and messianism toward progressivism. These, I think, bear that interpretation quite easily, since the Imām and Mahdī already represent an ideal future. All that is needed is to add to the classical theological rational proofs arguments from rationality keyed to contemporary concerns about governance and society.

For instance, the classic rational argument for the legitimacy of the Imāms' rule is that they are impeccable (*ma'ṣūm*) and the most knowledgeable of human beings, so God, since He is necessarily just and does the best for His creation, appoints them as leaders because they alone could not lead the people into error and sin. To put it another way, a just God would not leave humankind without complete guidance, which is found in the Imāms.[40] Maghniyya considers the argument to be insufficient. It may furnish Shiites with material for debates and their own satisfaction, but what does it mean in the real world today when there is no Imām? As Maghniyya puts it, "An ideal is one thing, but reality when there is no-one answering to the description is another" (1:349).[41]

In Maghniyya's estimation, the concept is still relevant because it helps the people to reflect on and demand good government. That obedience is due to the Imām alone tells Shiites that others who happen to come to power in his absence are *not* divinely appointed and are not to be followed except as "a means to do good," and certainly not as part of a cult of personality. Obeying corrupt rulers just because they are in power is one of the "things most strenuously forbidden" by Islam, and it is necessary to oppose and even, when feasible, rise up against

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38 *'Aqliyyāt*, 2:305–6 and *al-Islām ma'a al-Ḥayāt*, 46 ff.

39 Embracing modern knowledge and science would also allow the Arabs to stand up to Western incursions and Zionism. This concern is certainly present.

40 Though I have not here cited the proofs for the Imāms' rule from the Quran and hadith, these are always, of course, given along with the rational argument.

41 The question of the usefulness of a perfect but absent Imām is an old one posed by opponents of the Twelver Shiites. Maghniyya is not, however, deriding the tradition. He is rather raising a logical objection as part of his dialectical argumentation.

them (1:349).[42] The inerrant Imām as an ideal is important because it fights hereditary rule, wealth, and dictatorship, because it supports freedom and "democracy based on rule of the people in the absence of the Imām," and because "development and progress" altogether only proceed from "consciousness" (1:350). According to Maghniyya, Shiites believe that society and government will continually improve through time, just as it did in the past after humans began by living in primitive tribes (1:367). The ideal of the Imām's rule reminds them that no matter how long oppression lasts in this world, it is bound to come to an end; this is actually an instinctive feeling (f-ṭ-r) planted in all humans even if they are not always conscious of it, but Shiites because they believe in the Imāmate know consciously that "humanity shall finally thrive, free of misfortune and disease, and that the people—all peoples—shall live in the best way possible, in security, justice and ease" (1:350–51).[43]

Thus the Imamate, including the notion of inerrancy, is fully consistent with the "logic of reason" (1:367). And the coming of the Mahdī also answers to that logic, for we see that the world is in the midst of continual change with social cohesion constantly on the rise, a path that will inevitably lead to the "universal just government," equality, and world peace envisioned under the Mahdī's rule (1:373, 369). That philosophers of the past and present, including Plato in his *Republic*, Saint Augustine, al-Fārābī in *The Virtuous City*, Voltaire, Goethe, Bertrand Russell, the American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, and others have advocated such government clearly shows that the idea of a Mahdī is "scientific, realistic, and progressive," in contrast to the "unnatural, irrational, and inhuman" nationalism that has been the cause of so many ills (1:369–72, 374). Ignorant persons who ridicule this Shiite belief, Maghniyya remarks somewhat bitterly, should abandon their fanatical prejudice (ta'aṣṣub) and join in pulling down the barriers between their brothers in humanity from East to West (1:373).

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42 One is to rise up only "when there is some security and no fear of harm," says Maghniyya. He is invoking the Shiite doctrine of *taqiya* (dissimulation of belief or identity); "fear of harm" would mean chiefly harm to the community, an issue for Shiites because most live as minorities. In another place, however, Maghniyya says that *taqiya* has lost its relevance because Shiites no longer live in fear; see *Ahl al-Bayt*, *Manzilatuhum wa-Mabādiʼuhum* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Maktabat al-Andalus, 1956), 66.

43 This astonishing progress, it seems, happens before the coming of the Mahdī. For instance, Maghniyya says that humankind will experience a life in the future in which nature readily yields its treasures, goods are so plentiful that there is no longer any need for inheritance, illness is cured, the make-up of humans and animals will be changed and even poison eliminated from bugs, all due to the "development and progress of science." *Imāmat ʻAlī bayn al-ʻAql wa-al-Qurʼān* (Beirut: Muʼassasat al-Aʻlamī lil-Maṭbūʻāt, 1390/1970), 122–23.

The account I have given so far shows Maghniyya making rationality out of the rationalistic ‘*aql* which became important to nascent Twelver Shiism around the time of the Occultation of the Twelfth Imām in the tenth century. He also occasionally brings into play the transcendent Reason—akin to cosmic intellect or the Neoplatonic *nous*—believed to be possessed by the Imāms.[44] Maghniyya turns cosmic intellect into a far-reaching, universal social vision. Thus he writes that Imām ‘Alī was able to anticipate scientific progress that would be achieved hundreds of years after he lived because of "the radiance of a Reason that transcends its immediate environment," depending only on the "essence of the Imām" to "go beyond time and place." The Imām was able to see forward not only to our time, but a future beyond that, the "age of ‘Alī" in which "goods are [freely available] like water and air, in which there is no oppression, colonialism, feudalism, hunger or ignorance, or anything to spoil the purity of life in East and West."[45]

The coming of the Mahdī is preceded in traditional Shiism by corruption, decline, and mostly calamitous reversals of the natural order as the world finally collapses after a long history of oppression. There will be no improvement in the world or relief for believers before the Mahdī's return, which should be awaited hopefully but passively. The scenario Maghniyya presents could not be more different. In his retelling, the Advent is the culmination of gradual but steady improvement in human affairs, not a disruption of nature but the last stage in an orderly process of God-given human ‘*aql* uncovering the realities of a rationally ordered world and learning to align its own affairs with it. Maghniyya presents, in short, a preparatory messianism, in which humans not only wait for the coming of the Mahdī but also actively work toward it.

Justice is a central theme of the Mahdī's return—he is expected, in a set phrase, to "fill the world with justice as it has been filled with oppression." Maghniyya's preparatory messianism requires a redefinition of justice. The traditional Shiite story of oppression and justice revolves around the Imāms and Shiite community; peace and plenty are established only after bloody battles in which the Imāms and their followers are avenged for the sufferings they have endured throughout history. The justice Maghniyya looks forward to, by contrast, is for all Muslims and in fact all peoples. He does not mention the end-time battles that are a staple of Shiite apocalypticism, concentrating instead on a present and peaceful struggle to unite humanity. It is possible and in fact necessary to work

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44 "The ‘*aql* of the Imām is not separate from reality (*wāqi‘*); it is not like the speculative intellects of others which can be either [coincidentally] right (*ṣawāb*) or wrong (*khaṭa'*)." Maghniyya, *‘Alī wa-al-Falsafa* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī; Baghdad: Dār al-Nahḍa, n.d.), 132.
45 *Faḍa'il al-Imām ‘Alī* (Beirut: Manshūrāt Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1381/1962), 52–53.

now toward the universal concord traditionally situated in the age of the Twelfth Imām. The ultimate purpose of cooperation is to achieve justice, which in Maghniyya's retelling no longer has to do with historical wrongs or cosmic evil, but rather ordinary problems shared by all humans and societies.

Those problems in Maghniyya's view are essentially economic. Injustice refers to the condition of the poor, whose poverty is produced by "oppressive orders," whether local or linked to foreign interests.[46] Maghniyya must have been helped to this conclusion by his own difficult life and seeing the deprivation of his community in Lebanon and Iraq; his writing on poverty and wealth is full of passion and anger. Like many Shiites at the time, including clerics, he was drawn to a kind of leftism.[47] He envisions a world in which everyone has to work for their income, land belongs to those who cultivate it, rights to private property are limited, and everything is ultimately owned by God[48]—the best system possible, apparently, before the coming of the Mahdī and ultimately life in paradise where there will be no "coin, commerce or work," so that human relations are "organized by sincerity and affection alone" (2:409–10). Maghniyya is not, however, as optimistic about progress in economic relations as he is about scientific knowledge, which he thinks of as proceeding straight down the road of reason to marvelous destinations. Communism and capitalism, he says, have both shown themselves to be contrary to reason (1:353 ff.), while oppressors and most others ignorantly (*jahl*) persist (*ta'aṣṣub*) in their received belief (*taqlīd*) that poverty is inevitable and refuse to consider in light of "experience" and "knowledge" that it comes from man, not God, and can be "exterminated from the roots."[49]

The difficult struggle for justice, as can be gathered from this analysis, begins with a right understanding of Islam, which is naturally aligned with *'aql* in the

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46 *Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 77–79.

47 While in Iraq, Maghniyya was a friend of Ḥusayn Muruwwa, one of a number of seminary students at the time who finally opted for communism—in Muruwwa's case, joining the Lebanese Communist Party. Maghniyya himself was accused of being a socialist or communist in the midst of the Baghdad Pact controversy. See Sylvia Naeff, "Shīʿī-Shuyūʿī or: How to become a Communist in the holy city," in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History*, ed. Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 260, and Göbel, *Moderne Schiitische Politik*, 82.

48 *Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 179 ff. This sounds like a kind of socialism, but Maghniyya was ambiguous on the matter. In one place, he says that socialism was always a principle of Islam, even if not in the sense we know it today, and that Islam would welcome socialism just like other "new things that benefit people" (*Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 248–52); but in another, he says that whoever attributes socialism to Islam is "gravely mistaken." *Falsafat al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Wilāya* (Qum: Dār al-Tablīgh al-Islāmī, 1971), 260.

49 *Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 77–79.

sense of rationality. Islam has always encouraged progress toward justice to the extent that society was ready for it, for instance by giving slaves many rights against their masters before slavery could be completely suppressed and requiring fief-holders to contribute taxes before it was possible to eliminate feudalism.[50] Islam also, however, wants to "hurry history along" toward full realization of its "general [basic] principles" which transcend time, place, class, and race and are purely beneficial to everyone.[51] In order for that future to be realized, knowledge has to progress rather than remain "stagnant" (the word Maghniyya often uses is *jumūd*), which requires that people open their eyes to and actually feel or "experience" the realities of suffering and injustice.

It is necessary above all that knowledge be completed by action. Maghniyya's insistence that real knowledge is grounded in sense and experience seems ultimately to be aimed at this point, on which he places tremendous emphasis. Religious knowledge like all knowledge exists to be "useful" or "beneficial" (*n-f-'*).[52] There is "no religion without the world" (*lā dīn bi-lā dunyā*),[53] and Islam, as the title of one of Maghniyya's books says, is "with life" for the purpose of improving it. Faith is "doubtlessly situated in the heart and one of the properties of the soul," but it is "complete and sincere only if accompanied by determination to act" (1:73). In support of this statement, Maghniyya cites sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad and Imām 'Alī that pair faith with deeds. The word *'amal* in the original dicta has to do with performance of the Islamic rituals or "pillars" required to outwardly demonstrate faith and thus membership in the community, but Maghniyya interprets it as meaning action or activism. The degree to which he links belief to action and in fact rationality may be judged by his understanding of the first pillar, the verbal witness that "there is no god but God." What the witness of faith means in Maghniyya's view is that no one is allowed to regard himself as better than others and to dominate them, the only true measure of faith being "service to one's fellow man."[54]

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[50] *Al-Islām ma'a al-Ḥayāt*, 180–81.

[51] *Al-Islām ma'a al-Ḥayāt*, 181 and *'Aqliyyāt*, 2:158.

[52] The kind of "knowledge" that harms instead of benefits, for instance by creating weapons of mass destruction or mines in which workers' lives are endangered for the sake of rich owners, is not in accord with real reason, and *jahl* is actually a thousand times better, says Maghniyya (1:275–76).

[53] *Nafaḥāt Muḥammadiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Jawād, 1400/1981), 60–61.

[54] *Al-Islām bi-Naẓra Aṣriyya*, 33.

Maghniyya's message that knowledge and faith must be completed by "tangible" deeds,[55] which will be the sole basis for reward on the Day of Judgment,[56] was certainly meant for all his readers, basically as part of an argument for the relevance and efficiency of Islam (2:324–25). It was at the same time addressed directly to his fellow clerics, who he believed had fallen short in their responsibility to "speak the truth and do it," as he says of himself in his autobiography.[57] His statements on right knowledge and action are often followed by reproach of the ulema. For instance, his diatribe quoted above on the failure to understand that poverty is a curable ill reaches a crescendo as he refers to "religious types" who consider it a "great work of charity" to set up organizations to "gather pennies from this and that thief and usurer," while what they really should be doing is "fighting the enemy" and working to end the indignities of poverty altogether.[58] Some of what seminary students learn such as the location of the Well-Guarded Tablet (a celestial object related to revelation) are useless bits of information they will never be asked about on the Day of Judgment, and yet they strut around, proud of their turbans and robes and thinking themselves great scholars. [59]

Maghniyya's critique of the clerics really comes down to their lack of "experience" of the life and problems of those they are supposed to guide. Influenced, he thinks, by the attitudes of Plato and Aristotle, they consider practical knowledge to be beneath them and have no understanding of the dignity of labor (he may have in mind the Lebanese colleagues who made fun of him for having once worked in Beirut as a street-peddler).[60] How could such people be capable of working toward justice and demonstrating the rationality of Islam to the masses?

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55 *Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 257—including not only "struggle against oppression" but "building of dams, factories and railways," i.e., efforts aimed at economic development.

56 God created the world in order to test His servants to see who has the best deeds, as He says in Quran 11:7, because He cannot judge beings who possess free will on the basis of what is latent (*kāmin*) in them, but only according to what they "translate" into "tangible deeds" (*Falsafat al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Wilāya*, 85).

57 *Tajārib*, 19. If words are not made true through action, they are "lies," Maghniyya says (ibid., 20).

58 *Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 79.

59 *Falsafat al-Akhlāq fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm lil-Malāyīn, 1977), 176–77.

60 *Tajārib*, 38, 62–63.

III. Situating Maghniyya and *'Aql* in Modern Shiite Thought

The writings of Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya are part of a widespread movement in twentieth-century Muslim thought to create a religious mode of action relevant to modern life, in competition with other modes of action such as nationalism, science, and economic ideologies. Both conservative and liberal thinkers attempt to accomplish this by giving appropriate social and political meaning to various aspects of Islam while emphasizing that these must be put into practice. Islam should be shown to be as efficacious as its rivals, and actually more so.

Maghniyya's re-casting of *'aql* as rationality is in line with this movement. Reason, traditionally a principle of theology, is brought down to earth as a right order of actual human society, to be realized through active, progressive struggle. Just as in traditional theology, reason for Maghniyya also serves as a master concept for ideas about Justice, the Imāmate, and freedom. The justice that meets the requirements of rationality is economic and class justice; the Imāmate is made into a rationalistic principle of progress and democracy; and the human "capacity" (*istiṭā'a*) to "choose" (*ikhtiyār*) between acts that traditionally function as corollary of divine justice is associated with political freedom (*ḥurriyya*).[61]

Other Shiite thinkers who flourished in the axial age of the twentieth century also make Shiism into a socio-political gospel as Maghniyya does. 'Alī Sharī'atī (1933–77) and the Iraqi Ayatollah Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (1935–80) are two well-known figures of this kind. The work of Maghniyya, of Muḥammad al-Khāliṣī, who maintained that Islam was in harmony with science and would be strengthened by its progress, and of the Marxist-leaning expositor of Quranic economics Ayatollah Maḥmūd Ṭāliqānī (1911–79), who also placed great emphasis on *'aql* and its application to human life,[62] suggests that the movement toward rationality began sometimes in the twenties or thirties.

Maghniyya's own rationality leans heavily on science. Science, as explained above, is imagined as validating religion since they are both based on reason and aimed at human progress. This aspect of Maghniyya's thought seems passé, part

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61 *Ḥurriyya*, which in classical texts actually means non-slave status or nobility, is used in modern Arabic to express the idea of political freedom in relation to the state. Maghniyya also understands *ḥurriyya* in the sense of dignified autonomy, resembling the classical principle of the equal dignity of believers before God. Maghniyya's son 'Abd al-Ḥusayn has attempted to develop both ideas in his father's work by bringing together relevant parts of his Quranic exegesis: *Āyāt al-Ḥurriyya: Dīmuqrāṭīyat al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Jawād, 2004).
62 Shahrough Akhavi, "Islam, politics and society in the thought of Ayatullah Khomeini, Ayatullah Taliqani and Ali Shariati," *Middle Eastern Studies* 24, no. 4 (Oct., 1988): 406–407.

of what Arjomand calls "apologetic modernism."[63] The naïveté of Maghniyya's claims about particular scientific discoveries is probably now evident to most people, and science is no longer so new and fascinating that it can be imagined to be a sure path to a future ordered by reason and justice. Moreover, since science, or at least technology, has been thoroughly acquired by Muslims, proving Islam to be scientific is no longer as great a concern, while questions of social and political autonomy and satisfaction remain.

Maghniyya's reconfiguration of messianism, on the other hand, is part of a crucial shift in the outlook of 20th-century Shiism. The absence of the Twelfth Imām has traditionally been associated with quietism and passivity. Maghniyya picks up on the hope of the Mahdī's return and makes it into a principle of activism. The idea that action must be taken now and cannot wait until the coming of the Mahdī was central to the thought of both Sharīʿatī and Khomeini, and the notion that religion should participate in progress—that it has to *do something*—is presently widespread. More study of modern Shiite thought is required before assessing Maghniyya's role in this change. His version is certainly less political than those of the two figures just mentioned. With its exuberant optimism, it preserves the idealism and future-mindedness of the messianic vision. It is about a bright future rather than resistance and revolution; whereas Sharīʿatī and Khomeini emphasize notions of struggle and martyrdom, Maghniyya develops neither. His Lebanese background may play a role here; progress and development are relevant to the Lebanese context, and not uprising and revolution. Maghniyya's idea that the Twelfth Imām represents a principle of human progress relevant to the whole world does find echoes in the rationalizing "Mahdī philosophy" (*Mahdaviyyāt*) now popular in Iran largely or exclusively in more conservative circles.[64]

Speculation about the Mahdī has little appeal for the current generation of clerical intellectuals. They have seen the Advent, in effect, in the form of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, and found that what needs to be addressed is real political problems. Although Maghniyya lived only some months into the Islamic Revolution, he did manage, with his ever-energetic writing schedule, to contribute to the political debate. Like many others, he was initially enthusiastic about the revolution and very respectful of Ayatollah Khomeini. But he firmly rejected

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63 Said Amir Arjomand, "The reform movement and the debate on tradition and modernity in contemporary Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 4 (2002): 719–31.

64 E.g. Nāṣir Makārim Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥukūma al-ʿĀlamiyya lil-Imām al-Mahdī* [The World Government of the Mahdī] (Qum: Madrasat al-Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, 1426 [2005 or 2006]). Makārim Shīrāzī is an aged and very traditional Ayatullāh.

Khomeini's "Guardianship of the Jurist," the theory of clerical rule in the absence of the Twelfth Imām that is the basis for the quasi-theocracy in Iran today. In his *Khomeini and the Islamic State*, he insists on the classical juristic position that only a few relatively minor functions of the Hidden Imām pass to the jurists. The head of state, he writes, is to be elected by the people, and since justice is the goal, a just nonbeliever is preferred to an unjust Muslim.[65] The concern driving his objection is freedom. No person, Maghniyya says, has "guardianship" over any other except if there is a particular legal indication, for example if the person is under age, for freedom is a "sacred right of every individual."[66] In his earlier writings, Maghniyya had declared freedom to be a fundamental rational principle that must always be taken into account when deducing Sharia rulings.[67] Rationalism is explicitly invoked for other governmental arrangements. Since, Maghniyya says, "the affairs of state are not all religious," administrative and social affairs for which there is no "indication in religious texts" (*naṣṣ*) are to be left to "common usage" (*'urf*) and "intelligent persons" (*'uqalā'*), which they may attend to "according to the guidelines of public interest (*maṣlaḥa*)." They may do this even if it involves Western practices, for the Prophet said, "Wisdom (*ḥikma*) is the goal of believers wherever they find it, and they are most worthy of it."[68] The " practice of rational persons" traditionally refers in Shiite law to the existence in all human societies of basic ethical norms, which can then be invoked in specific juristic arguments. Maghniyya here considerably expands the concept into an idea about the universal validity and usefulness of acquired human knowledge and expertise.

Maghniyya's views about government are ultimately founded on the idea that one should reach for the best rule possible as long as the perfect governance of the Mahdī is not yet established. He re-interprets the traditional Shiite sentiment

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65 *Al-Khumaynī wa-al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1979), 66–68, 72–73. Maghniyya had already made the latter point, citing classical sources, in his "The Shī'a and Rulers," first published in the early 1960's: *al-Shī'a wa-al-Ḥākimūn*, ed. Sāmī al-Gharīrī (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Riḍā, 1433/2012), 44. He probably had in mind the multi-confessional Lebanese state, or perhaps Christians in the Middle East in general.

66 *Al-Khumaynī wa-al-Dawla*, 60.

67 "It is evident that *'aql* refuses that any human should have dominion (*sulṭān*) over another; Islam considers this to be one the principles of the Law" (*al-Islām ma'a al-Ḥayāt*, 232). See also *Al-Shī'a fī al-Mīzān*, 334. Maghniyya seems to be building on the classical jurisprudential rule that the basic assumption or "principle" (*aṣl*) when determining the status of a human being is freedom (*ḥurriyya*), i.e. a person is to be classed as a slave (and so on) only if there is a specific legal indication that would remove that basic assumption.

68 *Al-Khumaynī wa-al-Dawla*, 65–66.

that all rule except that of the Imām is unjust and oppressive—really a principle of passivity, since the conclusion is that one should stay away from government and politics—to mean that the people must refuse to tolerate tyranny and injustice and participate in ruling themselves. This idea, albeit in a less protest-minded and more routine political form, goes back to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911, when it was used to argue for constitutionalism by leading clerics such as Ākhūnd Muḥammad Kāẓim Khurāsānī (1839–1911) and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nāʾīnī (1861–1936). Not only notions of popular representation, but also *ḥurriyya* in the sense of political freedom and the rationalistic idea that one can think about good government on the basis of universal human experience are foreshadowed in Iranian constitutionalist thought.[69] In the later twentieth century, Ayatollah Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr again proposes filling the political gap of the Imām's absence with "government by the people" (*wilāyat al-umma*).[70] Maghniyya's contribution to this stream of thought is to ground it explicitly in rationalism, for instance by invoking, as we have seen, the juristic principle of the practice of rational or intelligent persons to argue that government and politics should be left to plain technical experts rather than leaders with religious qualifications as Khomeini asserted. The rationalistic turn in political thought is then carried forward by post-revolutionary clerical thinkers such as Muḥammad Mujtahid Shabistarī (b. 1936), Hassan Yusefi-Eshkevari (b. 1950), Kadivar, Qabel, and others, along with Maghniyya's compatriot Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, who also maintained that the people should rule over themselves in the absence of the Imām and that arrangements of government are not a religious affair.[71]

Sabrina Mervin speaks of a Shiite response to modernity, slightly predating the Iranian Islamic Revolution, that offers "a vision of Islam more humanist than political" while not engaging in "wholesale rejection of ideas imported from Europe."[72] Shabestari is given as an example, with Malekian and Kadivar, among

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69 See Denis Hermann "Akhund Khurasani and the Iranian Constitutional Movement," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49:3 (2013), 430–453. Maghniyya mentions that his associate Ayatullāh Muḥammad Kāẓim Sharīʿatmadārī (1905–1986), an heir to Iranian liberal constitutionalism, agreed with his views on theocracy (*Al-Khumaynī wa-al-Dawla*, 74–75).

70 For a recent assessment, see Jaffar al-Rikabi, "Baqir al-Sadr and the Islamic State: A theory for 'Islamic Democracy'" *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 5, no. 3 (2012): 249–275.

71 Hassan Mneimneh, "The Arab reception of Vilayat-e-Faqih: The counter-model of Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din," *Current Trends in Islamic Ideology* May 21st, 2009, 39–51. http://www.hudson.org/research/9847-the-arab-reception-of-vilayat-e-faqih-the-counter-model-of-muhammad-mahdi-shams-al-din. Accessed 19/09/2014.

72 "Transnational intellectual debates," in *The Shi'a Worlds and Iran*, ed. Mervin (London: Saqi, 2010), 328.

others, named as members of the current generation. Maghniyya's thought certainly exhibits these characteristics, indicating that humanistic tendencies existed in Shiism much earlier in the twentieth century. Maghniyya is well advanced in his universalistic humanism even in comparison with contemporary Iranian reformers. His life in the multi-confessional environment of Lebanon may again be a factor.

Philosophy is a path for Maghniyya to rationalism and humanism. He fondly remembers "absorbing the proofs" of the "theologians and theistic philosophers" (*falāsifa ilāhiyyūn*) in the 1920s in Najaf (2:380); the theistic or "divine" philosophers include the ancients Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, along with Islamic philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Avicenna. The premise (familiar from Western scholasticism) behind study of *falsafa* in the seminaries is that philosophers and theologians participate in discovering the same universal truth. Maghniyya routinely appeals to the authority of the philosophers and Shiite ulema together; he seems also to believe that religion is one common human quest. Practice of philosophy and a rationalist worldview led Maghniyya to the European branch of Western philosophy; the names of Western thinkers mentioned in this essay are only a few of the ones he cites. He probably accessed most through translation or partial translation, while the newer generations learn English and German with the intention of reading philosophy.

Maghniyya extends the idea of *'aql* implanted by God in humans, traditionally an article of theology that explains how humans know God, to a principle of universal brotherhood, which is, as I have shown, fundamental to his progressivism. Consider, for example, his statement that "the essence of reason is one in every human, *whether from the East or West*," with apparent differences in judgment springing only from "ways of thinking due to environment and upbringing" (2:148, emphasis added). Having invoked the juristic principle of the "practice of rational persons" to establish a rule that servants are to be considered trustworthy unless there is contrary proof, he goes on to emphasize that this value, which must have been dear to his heart as a former wage laborer, is true "in all religions, and in every age before Islam and after."[73] It is then not very far to the idea that the "aims of all religions are one," as he says in mentioning Gandhi, a favorite figure,[74] or praise of the American youth movement of the 1960s as being in accord with the messages of the Prophet Muḥammad and Jesus (1:133–35).

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73 *Al-Islām maʿa al-Ḥayāt*, 175.

74 Ibid., 112. "Because good and evil are realities, all persons in the world recognize them, whether Muslims or not and religious or not ... and not only through reason, but a 'sound heart' (*qalb sālim*) – like Gandhi." *Falsafat al-Tawḥīd wa-al-Wilāya*, 56–57.

Maghniyya speaks frequently of "humanity" (*al-insān*) and uses the Arabic equivalent of humanism, *al-insāniyya*. According to Maghniyya, all oppressed persons are loyal to the great Shiite martyr Ḥusayn, whether Shiite or not, non-religious, or even if they have never heard of him, since Ḥusayn demonstrated that everyone, including non-Muslims, should be defended as humans (1:20–22). Anyone who does something in which there is "humanism" is loved by God, even if the deed was not done in obedience to a religious command (1:283). "I wish good for all humanity," Maghniyya declares in the first pages of his autobiography, "and above all the sincere and those who are faithful to their country and friends, even if we are not of same religion or sect … and I only have room for humans who are truly human."[75]

Penetration of Sharia by rationalism is more difficult, since *'aql*, though considered one of the sources of law, is subordinate to textual sources and operates as a tightly defined system of logic with limited reach. Maghniyya nevertheless goes some way toward aligning Sharia with rationality, even intimating that it is akin to natural law. God, he says, has not laid down any rule that contradicts reason, nature (i.e., the natural world) and its rules, or the best interest (*maṣlaḥa*) of any person (2:126). What is permitted and forbidden is based on the "law of nature and principle of justice" so that everything that is "in the interests of humans in any way, is permitted"—and the opposite for that which causes harm (2:306). Sharia, moreover, has to accord not only with public good, but also with "reality."[76] It is flexible, like cloth that can be cut to different circumstances and people. Some rules abide because they are for the good of all times, but some are fit just for particular times. This means that law must undergo development, which it is very capable of doing since nothing prevents the introduction of new rules.[77] In an interesting example of flexibility, Maghniyya rules that there is no reason for men not to shave if they want to, since the beard is no longer a sign of physical integrity as it used to be.[78]

Maghniyya was willing to go against the revered authorities of the past, remarking that their lives do not in the least resemble those of people today, so that rulings cannot be taken from their books but should rather be deduced by drawing on "experience" and referring directly to the Quran, Sunna, and reason (i.e., properly performing fresh *ijtihād*).[79] One has to be ready to break

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[75] *Tajārib*, 21.

[76] *Al-Islām ma'a al-Ḥayāt*, 194.

[77] Ibid., 179 ff.

[78] Maḥraqī, *Ma'ārik*, 170.

[79] *Al-Islām ma'a al-Ḥayāt*, 213 ff.

from the past, especially since some scholars introduced nonsense into the Sharia such as various legal artifices (ḥiyal) and superstitions, including even the marriage of genies![80] In an article published in a Lebanese court journal in 1951 titled "Toward a Fiqh in a New Style," Maghniyya asserts that the bases of Sharia rulings are really principles such as freedom, saving of lives, prohibition of reprehensible things (and so on, in a long list), and that these enduring values are bound to manifest differently with changing times, in accord with "causes and needs." Anything that contradicts those rational principles, he says, is to be rejected, even if there is agreement among great authorities. Thus Maghniyya refused a long-accepted rule that a worker who is falsely imprisoned is not owed his lost wages, an opinion of Ibn Ḥanbal (not a Shiite figure) that the testimony of a Bedouin cannot be accepted against a townsman, and so on.[81]

Maghniyya's proposal raised a firestorm, partly because of its radical approach and partly because it was thought to disrespect the ulema. The changes he proposed in actual laws during his life were, however, limited. Change in legal rulings is more difficult to conceive and bring forward than humanistic universalism or a jurisprudential method, since the texts are very specific and concern social matters that are morally and culturally sensitive. Maghniyya's well-known "Law According to the Five Schools [of Muslim Law]" illustrates the gap between stated method and result. The book begins with Maghniyya's exposition of a hadith in which Adam, the father of humankind, correctly chooses reason as his first attribute, ahead of religion and decorum (ḥayā'). Anything that is contrary to reason, Maghniyya explains, cannot in any wise be part of religion, and obstructing independent legal reasoning (ijtihād), which depends on 'aql, amounts to obstruction of religion itself.[82] The legal material he presents, however, basically conforms to traditional law. Maghniyya's project turns out to be to bring the legal schools together in an ecumenical spirit while looking to choose the rules among them that are slightly more lenient.

Maghniyya is also concerned with preserving clerical authority. Although there cannot be anything in the Sharia that is contrary to 'aql, the law cannot, he says, be simply derived from reason (2:266). Religion still has to be taken from the experts (1:345 ff.). If being able to distinguish good and bad meant total discernment and freedom, society could not function (2:253). Asked by a Lebanese Shiite living abroad if he had to follow the rulings of a Grand Ayatollah, Maghniyya told

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80 Ibid., 217 ff.

81 Maḥraqī, *Maʿārik*, 145 ff.

82 *Al-Fiqh ʿala al-Madhāhib al-Khamsa* (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Riḍā, 1433/2012), 29–30. The author's preface is dated 1960.

the fellow that he was obliged to do so, reassuring him that this would not amount to "blind conformity" (*taqlīd*) since the rulings he followed would be properly based on the Quran and Sunna.[83] *'Aql* within Shiite law is deemed the prerogative of the clerics by virtue of a long course of study and standing in the clerical estate, and neither Maghniyya nor the reformists who come after him intend to change that.

Maghniyya did, however, make significant advances in law related to non-Muslims, a matter that was close to his heart. He seems to have been the first to reject the ruling peculiar to Shiism that non-believers, including the People of the Book, are impure. This new approach has gained fairly wide acceptance.[84] He also appears to have been the first Shiite scholar, in 1968, to work on making the famous phrase contained in Quran 2:256, "There is no compulsion in religion," into a principle of tolerance.[85]

With its emphasis on science, progress, economics, and activism, Maghniyya's reading of *'aql* is thoroughly modern. It is not, however, as far from traditional Shiite theology as might appear. A path runs from one to the other that begins even before the adoption of Mutazilite rationalism by Twelver Shiites in the tenth century. Embrace of rationalism involved migration from a mythical worldview centered on the miraculous, cosmic figures of the Imāms to a systematic, abstract theology. Undoubtedly, this was a great change. The theme of justice, however, is fundamental to both worldviews. Shiism had long been characterized by a messianic promise of justice at the end of time. Rational theology simply turned justice into a metaphysical principle. With the retreat of the Twelfth Imam into Occultation, which occurred at about the same time as the turn to rationalism, justice in the form of a sure if not quite visible order of the universe would have been appealing as a parallel to the latent justice of the hidden Imām. The idea of a hidden order is also central to both pre-rational and rational Shiism. The traditional Shiite hope of justice depended on a kind of rationalization: as much as the world seems disordered and wrong, as much as history has gone awry and the Imāms are prevented from rule, a right and certain cosmic order exists behind it all and will manifest itself one day. In Shiite mythology, the hidden right order of the universe is personified by the Imāms, who are actually identified with *'aql*

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83 *Al-Shī'a fī al-Mīzān*, 335.

84 Linda Darwish, "Defining the boundaries of sacred space: unbelievers, purity, and the Masjid al-Haram in Shi'a exegesis of surah 9:28," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 7, no. 3 (2014): 283–319.

85 In his *al-Tafsīr al-Kāshif*. See Patricia Crone, "'No Compulsion in Religion' Q. 2:256 in mediaeval and modern interpretation," in *Le shi'isme imamite quarante ans après: hommage* à *Etan Kohlberg*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Meir M. Bar-Asher, and Simon Hopkins (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 151.

in the sense of cosmic intellect. Subsequently in rationalist theology, the hidden order is guaranteed by reason ('*aql*) in the abstract sense of rationalism.

The shift from an esoteric to theological (metaphysical) "right order" would have been facilitated by the considerable attention already paid in the tradition to '*aql*. In the mythological world of pre-rational Shiism, '*aql* could not and did not imply anything as systematic and abstract as rationalism. As Amir-Moezzi has shown, it referred to a cosmogonic structure in which universal reason is opposed to ignorance or *jahl*. '*Aql* along with the corresponding human faculty capable of acquiring "transcendent knowledge" is associated with good and the host of good qualities that attend it, while *jahl* is associated with evil and its hosts.[86] Nevertheless, the moral structure here provides a fine basis for a shift to rationalism. All that is needed is to do the usual work of theology by making reason, ignorance, good and bad into abstract (demythologized) concepts and systematizing them.[87]

The further shift to rationality accomplished by Maghniyya and others in modern times is ultimately based on the same ancient ideas. Justice should be realized; the only change (a momentous one) being that it should be realized in the present. The people should work to actualize the hidden order of the universe called Reason; it should be demonstrated and made visible. The reason said to be placed by God in all humans is actualized as a principle of social and political relations.

Veneration of the Imāms also continues through the different stages of Shiite thought. To say, as Moezzi does, that jurisprudence "replaced the teachings of the Imāms" as a consequence of the rise of rationalism, that the interiority of Shiism was lost, or that attachment to the Imāms was replaced by "servile imitation (*taqlīd*) of the all-powerful jurist" seems intemperate.[88] The jurists own only a part of '*aql*—ratiocination is in fact the least part—while the Imāms continue to possess and personify fulsome, universal reason. The Prophet, as Muḥammad Jawād Maghniyya, a jurist of the twentieth century, says, is "perfect in reason," while the reason of the scholars is fallible (2:161).

Sanctified personalities evolve as characteristics valued by their devotees are ascribed to them. Thus 'Alī becomes a leader and exemplar also in ratio-

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[86] Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: The Sources of Esoterism in Islam*, tr. David Streight (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), chapter 1.

[87] For instance, the old tradition that the prophets and Imāms are the "exterior proof" of God while '*aql* is the "interior proof," a statement about salvation through personalities and transcendent knowledge (see Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 9), is made into the rationalizing theological statement quoted above about the harmony of reason and revelation, "Reason is religion from the interior and religion is reason from the exterior."

[88] Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 139.

nal thought. Imām ʿAlī, who functions in Shiite lore overall as a wisdom figure, comes to be regarded as "the lord of the philosophers and their great teacher," as Maghniyya says.[89] Maghniyya frequently cites wise sayings attributed to ʿAlī about human *ʿaql* to support his modernist ideas. Although he does not dwell on it, his idea about reason being rooted in experience (*tajriba*) appears also to be inspired by a series of sayings attributed to ʿAlī that talk about a necessary relation between *ʿaql* and *tajriba*.[90] I have also cited a passage above in which the transcendent *ʿaql* of ʿAlī is imagined by Maghniyya to compass and exemplify the rationality he wants to make out of reason. At the same time, he does not neglect dicta from ʿAlī and the Prophet about the more traditional, moral meanings of *ʿaql*. "Sound reason" (*ʿaql salīm*) is said to bring one close to God;[91] faith comes about through the "inspiration (*waḥī*) of reason and conscience (*ḍamīr*)" (2:383–84); *ʿaql* calls to good deeds against the impulses of ignorance (*jahl*) (1:285); *ʿaql* is that by which God is worshipped and heaven gained[92]—and so on. The wonderful personalities of the Imāms have not been eclipsed by changes in Shiism, but have rather moved along with them.

It is interesting that Maghniyya, for all his rather dry insistence on reason as the guarantor of belief, also offers more experiential accounts of faith that testify to its highly personal nature and the power of traditional Shiite piety. Apart from reason, he says, knowledge may be gotten through instinct or intuition (*fiṭra*). There are also "proofs" of religion that come up in one's life, unique in the life of each person (2:384 ff.). One wonders if his miraculous escape from Beirut to Najaf, helped by an Armenian driver who spirited him across the Syrian and Iraqi borders even though he had not been able to afford the fees for a passport, might be such a proof. In his autobiography he blesses the unknown Armenian, saying

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89 *Faḍāʾil Imām ʿAlī*, 50; see also *ʿAli wa-al-Qurʾān: ʿAlī maʿa al-Qurʾān wa-al-Qurʾān maʿa ʿAlī* (Beirut: al-Maktabat al-Ahliyya, n.d.), 41. ʿAli's wisdom or *ḥikma*, Maghniyya says, is a personal quality, different from ʿAlī's knowledge that came from the Quran and Prophet, since that is "beyond the reach of intellects" (ibid.).
90 Discussed in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Vāʾilī, "Jāigāh-i ʿAql va-Tajriba dar Nahj al-Balāgha," *Majalla-i Nahj al-Balāgha*, nos. 15 and 16 (2006): 95–118. http://www.balaghah.net/nahj-htm/far/id/maghaleh/ejtemaei/16.htm Accessed 19/09/2014. Al-Ṣadr and Faḍlallāh talk about *ʿaql* and *tajriba* in ways that suggest influence from Maghniyya, supposing they have not also built directly on these texts. Their ideas on *tajriba* are summarized in Richard Lux, "Revolution and the will to change: cosmology, cognition, and the mechanics of transformation in the thinking of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, and Mao Tse Tung" (PhD diss., University of Utah, 2007).
91 *Nafaḥāt Muḥammadiyya*, 87.
92 Discussed along with other like sayings in Amir-Moezzi, *Divine Guide*, 10.

that it was the first kindness he had ever known from a human being.[93] He also writes about the value of a faith based not on reason, but "taken in like mother's milk" from one's family and environment. This faith, he admits, may be stronger than the rational kind;[94] though he was only five when his mother died, he still remembered her extravagant love for the Imāms in his later life, as well as the mourning and weeping of the village priest, his regretted father, for their sufferings (2:377 ff).

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93 *Tajārib*, 42.

94 *Al-Islām ma'a al-Ḥayāt*, 274. The idea that simple faith may be valuable and even superior to the faith of the intellect is not unique to Maghniyya, but a recurring topic in Muslim theology (e.g. al-Ghazālī).

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Sarah Eltantawi

Ṭūsī Did Not "Opt Out": Shiite Jurisprudence and the Solidification of the Stoning Punishment in the Islamic Legal Tradition

This essay[1] attempts to cast the stability of stoning punishment in the Islamic legal tradition into sharp relief by examining how Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭūsī (d. 1066–67), instrumental in developing the Shiite jurisprudential tradition, treats the punishment in his works. I closely read Ṭūsī's discussions of the stoning punishment to open up larger questions of legality and authority in that period of the formation of Islamic jurisprudence. I hypothesize that while Ṭūsī's moment opened the possibility for Shiite scholars to "opt out" of the stoning punishment, and in spite of evidence of his own ambivalence toward it in his earlier work, Ṭūsī did not take this option. This is perhaps because of increasing pressures Ṭūsī's community came under in Baghdad.

Professor Ahmad Mahdavi-Damghani's methodology fundamentally informs my approach to this material, though I can only aspire to his erudition. During a yearlong private study with Professor Mahdavi-Damghani as a doctoral student at Harvard University, he systematically read with me both Sunni and Shiite ḥadīth collections and later legal works to identify patterns across the tradition's grappling with the stoning punishment. Professor Mahdavi-Damghani made no distinction between Shiite and Sunni texts during our course of study, and had equal tactile facilitation with both traditions across genre, reading them against one another or to inform one another.

I ask: what can Ṭūsī's treatment of the stoning punishment in his ḥadīth collections and uṣūl works, written approximately five hundred years after Shāfiʿī, tell us about the place of stoning in the Islamic legal tradition as a whole? In keeping with Professor Mahdavi-Damghani's method, I look at how Ṭūsī's discussions of legal material echo legal rulings derived from previous aḥādīth collections or the logics of previous Sunni jurisprudents. Terms Ṭūsī uses, including *muḥṣan* (a person who has contracted a marriage), *bikr* (an unmarried adulterer), *thayb* (a married person), *taqiyya* (dissimulation), *naskh* (abrogation), and *takhṣīṣ*

(specification) all echo deeper and earlier epistemological debates. Ṭūsī's general adherence to the Sunni resolutions of these debates, despite opportunities to "opt out" of the stoning punishment, can be read as "the exception that proves the rule" for the legality of the controversial stoning punishment: the continuity of the tradition overrode epistemological or moral concerns about its provenance, authenticity, and intellectual cohesion with principles of Islamic jurisprudence. This fact did not prevent Professor Damghani from frequently expressing his own deep reservations about the punishment, and he always took pains to point out how reluctant jurists were to legalize the punishment, how exceptional the punishment is, and how many meanings the word *rajm* (stoning) has (one of our tasks was to read and dissect its *Lisān al-ʿArab* entry). The incongruence between the punishment's severity and Professor Damghani's sense of the tradition's fundamental mercy on occasion brought him to tears.

The stoning punishment is one of the most epistemologically controversial in the Islamic intellectual tradition, which is to say that in both the Sunni and Shiite legal traditions, it stands on shaky ground. This is because 1) the punishment is of demonstrably foreign origin (ancient Near Eastern and Judaic law); 2) it does not exist in the Qur'an; 3) a different punishment for the same crime of *zinā* (illegal sexual activity, which includes pre- and extramarital sex, often rendered "adultery" in English) does exist in the Qur'an, which is flogging; 4) the hermeneutic devices developed to legalize stoning, *takhṣīṣ* (specification) and a particular form of *naskh* (abrogation), leave the epistemological structure of legal argumentation open to contradiction by introducing the Platonic notion of *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ* (a version of the Qur'an that is a heavenly scroll), leaving open the possibility that the earthly Qur'an is imperfect; and 5) The Shiites developed their jurisprudential tradition approximately five hundred years after the Sunnis, therefore at times referring to their Sunni counterparts as a starting point. In spite of this, the Shiites found their way around the fact that in the Sunni tradition, the stoning punishment is in significant part *fiqh* ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who is reviled in the Shiite tradition. Despite these problems, the stoning punishment was deemed important enough to legalize in both legal traditions. I examine here how the stoning punishment is treated by Shaykh al-Ṭūsī in three of his major works, and in so doing offers thoughts (that can only ever be speculative) as to why Ṭūsī accepted the complex intellectual regime developed by his predecessors to legalize stoning.

The intellectual reasons for the choice to legalize stoning are nowhere explicitly spelled out in the exegetical or legal writings that take it up. Therefore, one can only offer hypotheses as to why stoning was deemed necessary to legalize. I consider three possible reasons in this essay. First, the notion that there is something about the stoning punishment that solidifies the authoritative heft of *ḥadd*,

and penal laws more generally, which themselves lend existential weight to the legal tradition as a whole. The second reason stoning was legalized was because of its dependence on the authority of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, the Sunni tradition's second caliph. The third, specific to Ṭūsī, is perhaps his sense that to oppose the Sunni consensus on stoning would yield his community diminishing returns.

Ṭūsī's Significance

Ṭūsī's *Aḥkām* make up one of four canonical books (*al-Kutub al-Arba'a*) of Imāmī ḥadīth.[2] Born in Ṭūs in 385/995, his works' influence earned him the honorific Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifa (*al-Imāmiyya*) or, simply, al-Shaykh.[3] He lived most of his adult life in Baghdad where he moved in 408/1017, until Tughril Beg and his fiercely Sunni Turkish warriors made the capital an increasingly dangerous place for the Shiite community. The Buwayhis ruled Baghdad before Turghril Beg's rise, and in their time Ṭūsī enjoyed the sympathies of the rulers, facilitating free intellectual exchange between Sunni and Shiite scholars. In this period Shiite scholars no doubt were exposed to Shāfi'ī's principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) works Ṭūsī may even have begun his career as a Shāfi'ī. But repression of the Shiites in Baghdad led him to move to a quarter in Karkh. In spite of repression even there, his home became an intellectual center of both Sunni and Shiite scholars in the region. He died in Najaf as his era's preeminent scholar, having composed fifty books.[4]

Ṭūsī elaborates on stoning in five of his works, among which I concentrate on three. His first major collection is *al-Istibṣār* (1375–76), which is a summary of *al-Tibyān*, and is the first great Imāmī rationalist commentary. His next work is his great work of exegesis, al-*Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an* (1376). *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*, along with *al-Kāfī* of al-Kulaynī (d. 949) and *Kitāb man lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh* of Ibn Bābawayah al-Ṣadūq (d. 991), make up the four canonical books (*al-Kutub al-Arba'a*) of Imāmī ḥadīth. In his *Tahdhīb*, Ṭūsī summarizes a ḥadīth in circulation in Baghdad at the time of his writing, and compares these to the analyses of his teacher, Abu 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Nu'mān al-Ukbārī

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2 The other three are *al-Istibṣār* (1375–76), also from Ṭūsī, *al-Kāfī* (329/949) of al-Kulaynī, and *Kitāb man lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh* (381/991) of Ibn Bābawayah al-Ṣadūq.

3 Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "al-Ṭūsī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. Brill Online (2014), accessed June 25, 2013, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/ency-clopaedia-of-islam-2/al-t-u-si-SIM_7653.

4 Charles T. Adams, "The Role of Shaykh al Ṭūsī in the Evolution of a Formal Science of Jurisprudence Among the Shī'ah," *Islamic Studies* 10, no. 3 (1971): 173–80.

al-Baghdādī, known as "al-Mufīd" (d. 1022) to clarify which of the rulings on the stoning punishments are legally admissible. Ṭūsī's *al-Mabsūṭ fī al-Fiqh* (1387) is a work of principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl*) in which he summarizes his position on stoning. Finally, *al-Nihāya fī Mudjarral al-Fiqh wa al-Fatāwā* (1390) is Ṭūsī's last work of *usūl*.

Ṭūsī gave shape to Shiite legal theory. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib's traditions were refined and expanded by later Imams, with the fifth and sixth, Muḥammad b. ʿAlī (d. 732) and Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad (d. 675), playing particularly prominent roles. A great mass of traditions on legal matters from Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq were collected and passed down to later generations.[5]

Abī ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, the founder of Sunni jurisprudence, died in 204/820, two years after Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad. Because of the presence of the law-giving Imams in the first four Islamic centuries, Shiite scholars did not need to formally organize their legal approach to Imāmī legal material and subsequent *akhbariyyūn* and *uṣuliyyūn* on a rational basis until over two hundred years after the Twelfth Imam's occultation.[6] By Ṭūsī's era, profligate reports were in circulation whose accuracy were not subject to the practice of ascertaining *isnād* (chain of narration) or *matn* (body of text) accuracy. Ṭūsī undertook the task of ordering and ranking this material, undoubtedly influenced by Shāfiʿī, Ṭūsī adopted Shāfiʿī's development of a special form of *naskh* (abrogation), *naskh al-tilāwa dūna al-ḥukm* (the abrogation of the recitation of the verse without abrogating its legal maxim), to intellectually underpin legalizing the stoning punishment. John Burton calls this moment in Shāfiʿī's writing "the monument to the triumph of the Sunna over the Qurʾan."[7] Though Shāfiʿī prohibited the Sunna from abrogating the Qurʾan, admitting the stoning punishment into the *fiqh* meant a perpetual, in-built challenge to this principle. On this point, as Joseph Schacht observed, "Shafiʿi's theoretical structure collapses."[8]

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5 Adams, "The Role of Shaykh al Tusi," 178.

6 John Burton, *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), 5.

7 John Burton, "The Exegesis of Q. 2:106 and the Islamic Theories of Naskh: mā nansakh min āya aw nansahā naʾti bi khairin minhā aw mithlihā," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48, no. 3 (1985): 452–69.

8 Avraham Hakim, "Context: ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb," in *Blackwell Companion to the Qurʾan*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 205–20.

Ṭūsī on Stoning

The scholarly imperative that governed Ṭūsī's intellectual milieu had shifted from collecting traditions to articulating principles of jurisprudence and a theory of law. I am concerned with how in this moment Ṭūsī approaches the stoning punishment, which was itself problematic for Sunnis. I had suspected that stoning would have been difficult for Ṭūsī to legalize for all of the reasons confronting Shāfiʿī, in addition to some others, among them ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's indelible influence on legalizing the punishment.

When the aḥādīth that mention stoning—both *faʿalī* (portraying action) and *qawlī* (oral)—were transmitted by Mālik b. Anas (93/711–179/795), ʿUmar and all of the companions enjoyed a level of epistemic authority on a par with the Prophet.[9] These two *aḥādīth* illustrate ʿUmar's centrality. This first is from Muslim's ḥadīth collection:

> ʿAbdallah b. ʿAbbās reported that ʿUmar b. Khaṭṭāb sat on the pulpit of Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and said: Verily Allah sent Muḥammad (may peace be upon him) with truth and He sent down the Book upon him, and the verse of stoning was included in what was sent down to him. We recited it, retained it in our memory and understood it. Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) awarded the punishment of stoning to death [to the married adulterer and adulteress] and, after him we also awarded the punishment of stoning. I am afraid that, with the lapse of time, the people [may forget it] and may say: We do not find the punishment of stoning in the Book of Allah, and thus go astray by abandoning this duty prescribed by Allah. Stoning is a duty laid down in Allah's Book for married men and women who commit adultery when proof is established, or if there is pregnancy, or a confession."[10]

In the extraordinary ḥadīth that follows, from Bukhārī's collection, ʿUmar is portrayed as hastily warning that he will make a shocking announcement to the people of Medina to silence "those who wish to deprive the others of their rights (and challenge the question of rulership)." ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf is portrayed as trying to calm ʿUmar down, urging him to postpone his announcement, as the ḥajj season attracts "riff-raff" who are liable to misinterpret or misunderstand him. ʿUmar does not listen to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, and, having arrived in Medina, reveals the stoning verse. ʿUmar is portrayed as revealing the stoning verse as a means to strengthen his position in the battle over succession:

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9 Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, trans. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ṣuddiqī (Lahore: Sh. Muhammed Ashraf Publishers, 1971–74), 912, report 4194.

10 Muḥammad ibn Ismaʿīl al-Bukhārī al-Juʿfī, *The Translation of the Meanings of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, trans. Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Riyadh, 1997): 8, 82, report 794.

Narrated by Ibn ʿAbbās: I used to teach [the Qurʾan] to some people of the Muhājirūn [emigrants], among whom there was ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf. While I was in his house at Minā, and he was with ʿUmar b. Al-Khaṭṭāb during ʿUmar's last *Ḥajj*, ʿAbd al-Rahmān came to me and said, "would that you had seen the man who came today to Chief of the Believers [ʿUmar], saying, 'O Chief of the Believers! What do you think about so-and-so who says, "If ʿUmar should die, I will give the pledge of allegiance to such-and-such person, as by Allah, the pledge of allegiance to Abū Bakr was nothing but a prompt sudden action which got established afterwards." ʿUmar became angry and then said, 'Allah willing, I will stand before the people tonight and warn them against those people who want to deprive the others of their rights [the question of rulership].' ʿAbdur-Raḥmān said, 'I said, "O Chief of the Believers. Do not do that, for the season of *Ḥajj* gathers the riffraff and the rabble, and it will be they who will gather around you when you stand to address the people. And I am afraid that you will get up and say something, and some people will spread your statement and may not say what you have actually said and may not understand its meaning, and may interpret it incorrectly, so you should wait till you reach Medīna as it is the place of emigration and the place of Prophet's Traditions, and there you can come in touch with the learned and noble people, and tell them your ideas with confidence, and the learned people will understand your statement and put it in its proper place."' On that, ʿUmar said, 'By Allah! Allah willing, I will do this in the first speech I will deliver before the people in Medīna.' Ibn ʿAbbās added:

We reached Medīna by the end of the month of Dḥūl Ḥijja, and when it was Friday, we went quickly [to the mosque] as soon as the sun had declined, and I saw Saʿīd b. Zaid b. ʿAmr b. Nafail sitting at the corner of the pulpit, and I too sat close to him so that my knee was touching his knee, and after a short while, ʿUmar b. Al-Khaṭṭāb came out, and when I saw him coming towards us, I said to Saʿīd b. Zaid b. ʿAmr b. Nufail "Today ʿUmar will say such a thing as he has never said since he was chosen as Caliph." Saʿīd denied my statement with astonishment and said, "What thing do you expect ʿUmar to say the like of which he has never said before?" In the meantime, ʿUmar stood up, and having glorified and praised Allah as He deserved, he said, "Now then, I am going to tell you something which [Allah] has written for me to say. I do not know; perhaps it portends my death, so whoever understands and remembers it, must narrate it to the others wherever his mount takes him, but if somebody is afraid that he does not understand it, then it is unlawful for him to tell lies about me. Allah sent Muḥammad with the Truth and revealed the Holy Book to him, and in what Allah revealed, was included the Verse of the *rajm* [the stoning of married person (male and female) who commits illegal sexual intercourse], and we did recite this Verse and understood and memorized it. Allah's Apostle did carry out the punishment of stoning and so did we after him. I am afraid that after a long time has passed, somebody will say, 'By Allah, we do not find the Verse of the *rajm* in Allah's Book,' and thus they will go astray by leaving an obligation, which Allah has revealed. And the punishment of the *rajm* is to be inflicted to any married person [male and female] who commits illegal sexual intercourse if the required evidence is available or there is conception or confession."[11]

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11 Etan Kohlberg, "The Position of the Walad Zinā in Imāmī Shīʿism," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 48, no. 2 (1985): 237–66.

The Shāfiʿī Ismaʿīl b. Kathīr (d. 1373) adds, after citing this report: "It was also recorded in the Two *Saḥīḥs* in the lengthy Ḥadīth of Mālik, from which we have quoted briefly on the portion that is relevant to the current discussion." ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is not a source of authority among the Shiite, and, given ʿUmar's dominance in the Sunni reports, the question is raised as to why and on what basis the punishment was legalized, at least for Ṭūsī. There are other bases on which to legalize stoning, but because of ʿUmar's centrality in the Sunni discussion, Ṭūsī could have used ʿUmār's centrality as a means to "opt out" of the punishment; but Ṭūsī did not take this decision.

Interestingly, there is a Shiite tradition that holds that ʿUmar is himself a *walad al-zinā* (a bastard child, product of *zinā*), as Etan Kolberg shows. The *walad al-zinā* is impure, "a joint product of the *zānī* and the devil, both of whom participate in the sexual act."[12] Some traditions hold that the *walad al-zinā* is characterized by his hatred of *ahl al-bayt*; Abū Ayyūb and ʾUmm Salama report that Muḥammad told ʿAlī that *walad al-zinā*, the hypocrite, and the fetus conceived during a menstrual cycle were the only three categories of persons who would hate him.[13] ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is moreover rendered as *sharr al-thalātha*, the most evil of the three. Furthermore, according to Kolberg, the idea of an illegitimate offspring is also blamed on ʿUmar, because he introduced the *bidaʿ* (unlawful innovation) of divorce by three declarations by the husband, which for the Shiite did not actually terminate a marriage, thus precipitating rampant *zinā*.[14] These traditions could also have constituted grounds for Ṭūsī to reject the stoning punishment.

One way to circumvent ʿUmar's centrality in the *fiqh* of *zinā*, is for Shiite authorities to be presented in ḥadīth traditions as protagonists for stoning. In his ḥadīth collection *Tahdhīb*, Ṭūsī gives the following reports, which were circulating in the Baghdad of his time:

> ʿAlī, may God be pleased with him, struck (*yaḍrub*) the old man and the old woman with one hundred [lashes] and stoned them, and stoned the *muḥṣan* and the *muḥṣana* and flogged the unmarried man and the unmarried woman and exiled them for a year.[15] ʿAlī came upon a woman who had committed *zinā*, so she killed her child in secret, so ʿAlī called for her and flogged her one hundred stripes and then stoned her, and she was the first that he stoned.[16]

12 Ibid., 239.
13 Ibid., 242.
14 Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Ṭūsī, *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām fī Ḥudūd al-Zinā*, *(Juzʾ 10.2)* (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1351/1972), report 11.
15 Ibid., report 11.
16 Ibid., report 16.

No such report describing a woman who killed her offspring exists in the Sunni tradition, whereas it is often the case that similar narratives are found in Sunni accounts, just with different protagonists in Shiite narrations. Further grounding the stoning punishment in the Shiite tradition, Ṭūsī provides a report representing Ja'far as declaring that for the *muḥṣan* and *muḥṣana* the punishment is one hundred lashes followed by stoning.[17]

Having established that Shiite legal authorities practiced the punishment, Ṭūsī takes up the most important controversy presented by stoning: the notion that two punishments can be assigned for the same crime of *zinā*. Ṭūsī begins with a summary of currently circulating aḥādīth concerning stoning in Baghdad (779–83/1378–82). Since the Shiite community was enjoying a period of stability and intellectual dominance, there was a healthy environment for the circulation of multiple Shiite ḥadīth traditions. Ṭūsī does not analyze the *isnād* of the aḥādīth that he provides in full, focusing instead on comparing the aḥādīth's *mutūn* (textual bodies) to his teacher al-Mufīd's preferred traditions.

The first series of aḥādīth regarding *zinā* are on the question of combining the stoning and flogging punishments. I am not including the *isnād* of these aḥādīth in these short summaries nor do I include a discussion of their *isnād* because this endeavor would massively expand the scope of this analysis, and because Ṭūsī himself does not base his critique of these traditions on their *isnād*, but on their *mutūn*. The reports concerning the *muḥṣan* and the *muḥṣana* are these:

Men and women cannot be stoned without four witnesses of penetration, and the [witnessing of penetration] must be as the staff in a bottle of *khul* (*ka al-mīl fī al-makhāla*).[18]

If the free man or the free woman commit *zinā*, they are to be flogged with one hundred lashes, but the *muḥṣan* and *muḥṣana* [the man or woman who has at any point contracted a marriage] must be stoned.[19]

The *muḥṣan* [a person who has contracted a marriage] is to be stoned, and the man who has possessed a marriage contract (*qad amlaka*) but did not penetrate should be flogged one hundred stripes and exiled.[20]

If the old man (*shaykh*) committed *zinā* and flogging is required followed by stoning as a punishment for them; and if he committed *zinā* half way; if the man is a muḥṣan the pun-

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17 Ibid., report 2.
18 Ibid., report 6.
19 Ibid., report 8.
20 Ibid., report 10.

ishment is stoning and not flogging, and if it is a young man (*al-shāb*) the punishment is flogging and exile for one year.[21]

Distinguishing between the *muḥṣan* (person who has contracted a marriage) and the unmarried person or never previously married person (virgin, in theory) is central to making the legal distinction (*takhṣīṣ*) between who is to be stoned and who is to be flogged. The third report even introduces the notion that *zinā* can be committed "half way"—an echo of the binary introduced by *takhṣīṣ*. Before examining how Ṭūsī adjudicates among these traditions, let us review the relevant Qur'an verses and aḥādīth that concern *zinā*.

Relevant Qur'an Verses

The Qur'an addresses the crime of *zinā* and/or mandates flogging for the crime in the following verses:

> 4:15:
>
> If any of your women is guilty of unnatural offense, bring four of your witnesses to give evidence; if they testify against them, retain them in the houses until death overtakes them or God provides some other way for them.[22]
>
> 4:16:
>
> And the two who commit it among you, dishonor them both. But if they repent and correct themselves, leave them alone. Indeed, Allah is ever accepting of repentance and Merciful.[23]

"*Al-ladhāni*," the dual form, is used here, which refers to both genders. Hence there is a category of female in verse 16 that is distinct from verse 15. In any case, verse 4:15 is considered to have been abrogated (*mansūkh*) by verse 24:2, which is the verse therefore most cited in *fiqh al-zinā*:

> The adulteress and adulterer should be flogged a hundred lashes each, and no pity for them should deter you from the law of god, if you believe in God and the Last Day; and a body of believers should witness the punishment.[24]

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21 Ahmed Ali (trans.), *Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 74.
22 Ibid., 74.
23 Ibid., 74.
24 Ibid., 298.

Note that the female fornicator starts the Qur'anic injunction against *zinā*. In the subsequent verses when the marrying agent is the subject of the sentence, that subject is male. Hence the Qur'anic text casts the marrying agent in marriage as male. In verse 24:3:

The adulterer can marry no one but an adulteress or his partner (in the act). This is forbidden [to] the believers.[25]

Verse 24:3's restriction on adulteress's legal future marrying partners echoes the Old Testament ruling that a rapist must marry the virgin that he has forcibly deflowered. The Islamic rendering introduces egalitarianism to this concept. In verse 24:4, however: Those who defame chaste women and do not bring four witnesses should be punished with eighty lashes, and their testimony should not be accepted afterwards, for they are profligates.[26]

No opportunity is given to defame chaste men. This reinforces men as the agents of marriage and female virgins as its passive recipients. Casting the male as marrying agent is also found in verse 24:6–7:

> (6) Those who accuse their wives and do not have any witnesses except themselves, should swear four times in the name of God, the testimony of each such person being that he is speaking the truth.[27] (7) And [swear] a fifth time that if he tell a lie the curse of God be on him.[28]

A man is able to accuse his wife of adultery without four witnesses, provided he swears a fifth oath to God that he is telling the truth. The Qur'an is silent as to whether a wife can make the same accusation. According to verse 24:8, a wife has an opportunity to escape punishment if she swears to God that her husband is a liar, but the Qur'an is silent on whether she may make a similar accusation against her husband: the woman's punishment can be averted if she swears four times by God as testimony that her husband is a liar.[29] Finally, verse 24:9 asserts that she will be punished if her testimony defending herself against the accusations of her husband is untrue: her fifth oath being that the curse of God be on her if her husband should be speaking the truth.[30]

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25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Muḥammed ibn Ḥassan al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an* (Tehran: Maktabat Nūr al-Raqmiyya, 1351/1972), 405.

Stoning is not mentioned in the Qur'an. The stoning punishment comes from the Prophet's Sunna. Since there is a punishment in the Qur'an, flogging (*jald*), the punishment of stoning for the same crime appears to "contradict" the Qur'an.

Ṭūsī's *Tafsīr* of These Verses

Ṭūsī's *tafsīr* (exegesis) of the most significant *zinā* verses can be found in his *Tibyān*. The *tafsīr* of 4:15, which is,

> If any of your women is guilty of unnatural offense, bring four of your witnesses to give evidence; if they testify against them, retain them in the houses until death overtakes them or God provides some other way for them.[31]

The interpretation of this verse is as follows:

> This verse has been abrogated. The reason is that the first priority is: if a woman had committed *zinā* and the four witnesses had been brought against her, she would have been imprisoned in her home until she died. This was abrogated by the stoning punishment for *al-muḥṣan* and flogging for *al-bikrayn*.[32]

Exegetes take advantage of the ambiguity provided by the last phrase of this Qur'anic verse (*aw yaj'al Allah lahunna sabīlan*, "or until God finds a way for them") to posit the legality of the stoning punishment. Ṭūsī explains how this is accomplished:

> The unmarried person who commits *zinā* is to be flogged one hundred stripes, and the married person [or person who has contracted a marriage] is to be stoned. And the unmarried person is also to be exiled for one year [on this issue of exile there are differences among the scholars].

> On the question of exile, the best path is the *ijtihād* (Interpretation) of the Imām, and for those sentenced to stoning, he should be flogged first and then stoned in the interpretations of most of our predecessors [such as Ḥassan, Qatāda, 'Abāda b. al-Ṣāmit, and others that we mentioned in *al-Khilāf*]. But there are some of our predecessors who say, this combining of punishments is limited to the old man and the old woman (*al-shaykh wa al-shaykha*), and if they are not an old man or an old woman, they are not subject to anything except stoning. And most jurists (*fuqahā*) do not combine the punishments. There is consensus on stoning and no debate; and there is consensus among the Shiites (*wa 'alayhi ijma' al-tā'ifa*), and no one disagrees except the *Khawārij*.[33]

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31 Ibid., 142.
32 Ibid., 142.
33 Ibid., 405.

We see here that Ṭūsī goes to some lengths to avoid endorsing the legality of assigning two punishments for the same crime. He concludes here that such a combination is only legal for the old man and the old woman (*al-shaykh wa al-shaykha*). Ṭūsī presumably has to admit this exception because the ḥadīth regarding the old man and the old woman are prodigious and establish the dual punishment clearly, but it is also clear that there is ambivalence and controversy regarding the notion that any Muslim should be punished twice for the same crime. This is one of several ways the stoning punishment sits uncomfortably in the Islamic legal structure, and one of several "outs" Ṭūsī could have opted to take from the stoning punishment altogether. I suspect that the imperative to remain within the Sunni consensus on this issue trumped the credible possibility at this point of opting out of the punishment.

In the *tafsīr* of 24:2, Ṭūsī states that the male and female adulteress should be flogged, but that if they were (or if one of them is) *muḥṣan*, they should be stoned. On this ruling, he writes, there is no opposing view (*lā khilāf*). He says that there are "some of us among the Shi'a (*al-khāṣṣ*) that hold that the old man and the old woman (*al-shaykh wa al-shaykha*) should be flogged and then stoned, but if they were young people (*shābayn*) who were both *muḥṣan*, they are not subject to anything but stoning."[34] Here again Ṭūsī is forced to repeat the controversial ruling of double punishment for the old man and the old woman, but he quickly follows it up, as if to diminish the first clause, with the ruling that young people are not to be subjected to double punishment.

Ṭūsī finally lays out the conditions for *iḥsān* that must be met to qualify for the stoning punishment:
1. Have a spouse that he goes to and leaves (for sexual intercourse) continuously
2. A free man or woman
3. A slave cannot be a *muḥṣan*

Relevant Aḥādīth

A major reason Ṭūsī cannot easily "opt out" of the stoning punishment is the presence of several circulating ḥadīth traditions that clearly sanctify the punishment. As mentioned, Ṭūsī does not engage in *isnād* analysis of these aḥādīth, but instead repeatedly states that there is *ijmā'* (consensus) on this question, which clearly suggests that remaining within the *ijmā'* of *al-'āmma* (the general commu-

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34 Ibid.

nity, or, the Sunnis) is his priority. We should note that the *Tibyān*, Ṭūsī's great *tafsīr*, is one of his later works, and thus was written during a time when his community was entering into a period of repression by the newly ascendant Sunni regime in Baghdad. It is also the Shiite community's first great rationalist commentary, and, as such, marks the moment that its scholars had to demonstrate its intellectual heft and seriousness to an increasingly hostile majority. In this context, it is easier to imagine that Ṭūsī would not have wanted to risk the community's assimilation by opting out of a punishment that, while controversial even to Sunni scholars, had come to take on an odd kind of intellectual weight, perhaps because so much intellectual labor had to be undertaken to legalize it. In other words, the Sunni majority had already doubled down on this controversial punishment, and the price of "opting out" was perhaps too high for Ṭūsī, as ḥadīth traditions were too numerous and entrenched at this point.

This ḥadīth distinguishes between *thayb* (married adulterers), a term that Ṭūsī uses interchangeably with *muḥṣan* (because *thayb* is used in certain relevant ḥadīths) and *bikr* (unmarried) ones:

> Mālik related to me from Ibn Shīhāb from 'Ubaydullah b. 'Abd Allah b. 'Utba b. Mas'ud that Abu Hurayra and Zayd b. Khālid al-Juhānī informed him that two men brought a dispute to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. One of them said, "Messenger of Allah, judge between us by the Book of Allah!" The other, who was the wiser of the two, said, "Yes, Messenger of Allah, judge between us by the Book of Allah and give me permission to speak." He said, "speak." He said, "My son was hired by this person and he committed fornication with his wife. He told me that my son deserved stoning and I ransomed him for one hundred sheep and a slave-girl. Then I questioned the people of knowledge and they told me that my son deserved to be flogged with one hundred lashes and exiled for a year, and they informed me that the woman deserved to be stoned." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "By Him in whose Hand my self is, I will judge between you by the Book of Allah. As for your sheep and slave-girl, they should be returned to you. Your son should have one hundred lashes and be exiled for a year." He ordered Unays al-Aslami to go [to] the wife of the other man and stone her if she confessed. She confessed and he stoned her.[35]

This distinguishing process between the married (*muḥṣan/thayb*) adulterer and the unmarried (*bikr*) adulterer was the grist for the mill for the introduction of *takhṣīṣ* (specification) in Sunni *usūl*, which was developed well before Ṭūsī adopted it. Ibn Kathīr expands upon the Qur'anic verse in the excerpt below, and includes the line: "flog them with one hundred lashes." Ibn Kathīr then moves

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35 Mālik ibn Anas ibn Mālik ibn Abī 'Āmir al-Asbahī, *al-Muwatta'*, trans. Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1989), 41.

seamlessly into a discussion of the *takhṣīṣ* between this Qur'anic punishment for adultery—flogging—and the ḥadīth-based punishment for *zinā* for married persons, stoning:

> This honorable ayah contains the ruling on the law of retaliation for the person who commits illegal sex, and details of the punishment. Such a person will either be unmarried, meaning that he has never been married, or he will be married, meaning that he has had intercourse within the bounds of a lawful marriage, and he is free, adult and of sound mind. In addition to this he is to be banished from his homeland for one year, as was recorded in the Two *Saḥīḥs* from Abu Hurayrah and Zayd b. Khaild al-Juhani in the ḥadīth about the two Bedouins who came to the Messenger of Allah. One of them said, "O Messenger of Allah, this son of mine was employed by this man, and committed zinā with his wife. I paid a ransom with him on behalf of my son one hundred sheep and a slave-girl, but when I asked the people of knowledge, they said that my son should be given one hundred stripes and banished for a year, and that this man's wife should be stoned to death." The Prophet then said:

> By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, I will judge between you both according to the Book of Allah. Take back the slave-girl and sheep, and your son is to be given one hundred stripes and banished for one year. O Unays – he said to a man from the tribe of Aslam – go to this man's wife, and if she confesses, then stone her to death.

> Unays went to her and she confessed, so he stoned her to death. This indicates that if the person who is guilty of illegal sex is a virgin and unmarried, he should be banished in addition to being given one hundred stripes. But if married, meaning he has had intercourse within the bounds of lawful marriage, and he is free, adult and of sound mind, then he should be stoned to death.[36]

At this point Ṭūsī gives a report from his master al-Mufīd, which reads as a justification for *takhṣīṣ* (large crimes versus smaller crimes) that I have not come across in Sunni *tafāsīr*. This justification once again indicates ambivalence about stoning:

> Stoning is the punishment from God for big [discretions], and flogging is the punishment from God for small [discretions], so if the male *muḥṣan* commits *zinā*, he should be stoned and not flogged.[37]

There is no elaboration on what it is about the quality of being a *muḥṣan* that implies a "larger" crime. Ṭūsī here offers further elaboration:

> This does not cancel out (*lā yunāfī*) reports we have previously relayed with respect to the necessity to combine the punishments of stoning and flogging, because [this necessity] is

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36 Ibid., 2–5.
37 Ibid.

embedded in two points: the first is that this is outside the realm of *taqiyya* because this ruling is not agreed upon by the general population (*al-ʿāma*, i.e., Sunnīs), and this ruling does not necessitate *taqiyya*.[38]

The second point Ṭūsī makes is that:

> The purpose of it [combining the stoning and flogging punishments] is for he who is not an old person (*shaykhan*) but instead he who is a young man (*ḥadathan*). This is because the person for whom stoning and flogging become a necessity is an old *muḥṣan*. And *alayhi al-salām* [ʿAlī or Jaʿfar] broke this down in the narration of ʿAbd Allah b. Ṭalḥa and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥajjāj and al-Ḥalabī and Zarāra and ʿAbd Allah b. Sinān, who provided this narration. This ruling does not cancel out that which was transmitted by Muḥammad b. Qays when he narrated: 'the old man and the old woman (*al-shaykh wa al-shaykha*) are flogged one hundred times.' Here (Qays) did not mention stoning because it is not necessary to mention stoning as there is no debate about its necessity for the *muḥṣan*; but he mentioned flogging, which is a necessity [to carry it out] along with stoning. Flogging must be carried out along with stoning because the narration was originally separated into two distinct punishments in case the accused were not *muḥṣanīn*.[39]

Ṭūsī's invocation of *taqiyya* in the first passage is quite interesting. *Taqiyya*, defined variously as accommodation, dissimulation, or protecting the Shiite community through concealment and dissimulation for reasons of safety, would have been necessary for the stoning punishment were there consensus among the Sunnis regarding the punishment. But since there is not, the Shiite community does not have to adopt *taqiyya*, since they can rather adopt the intellectual regime of ambivalence (utilizing *takhṣīṣ*) that uneasily resolved the matter for the Sunnis. Again, if it had been deemed important enough to opt out of stoning, it could have been done, even by evoking *taqiyya*, but this was not the case. The fact that it was not deemed necessary to opt out of stoning could be because stoning was not an actual issue during this period of Islamic history (in fact, I believe stoning was not meaningfully practiced in Islamic history until the contemporary moment). It is also possible that Shiite scholars saw the logic in the regulation of gender and sexuality norms that I believe undergirds the early adoption of the stoning punishment. If this theory is true, it helps explain why the punishment was pinned on ʿUmar, who was known for his harsh attitude towards women in public spaces.

The contemporary Shiite jurisprudent Al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Mūsī al-Ardabīlī hints at further evidence for my theory that by the time Ṭūsī wrote

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38 *Tahdhīb al-Ahkām*, 6.

39 ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Mūsawī al-Ardabīlī, *Fiqh al-Ḥudūd wa al-Taʿzīrāt: Yaḥtawī ʿala Buḥūth Hamma Mustaḥdatha* (Qum: Maktabat Amīr al-Muʾminīn, 1372/1993), 443.

his *Tibyān*, the pressures on the Shiite community were such, that they had to abandon their misgivings about stoning. Ardabīlī gives a report from Ṭūsī, which indicates why, at least in his *Tibyān*, he expressed hesitancy about *takhṣīṣ*:

> That which Shaykh al-Ṭūsī narrated with a chain of transmission from Yūnis b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, from ʿAbān, from Abī ʿAbbās in the *Saḥīḥ* [Bukhārī] from Abī ʿAbd Allah, has said: "The Prophet of God stoned, but he did not flog. And they recalled that ʿAli stoned in Kufa and flogged—but Abu ʿAbd Allah disputed this, saying, 'we do not know that.' Yūnis said: "We do not find a man who suffered two punishments for one instance of guilt."[40]

According to Ardabīlī, Ṭūsī says of this narration in his *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*:

> That which Yūnis transmitted is not evident (*fī ẓāhir al-khabar*), because there is nothing to substantiate it. Rather what Yūnis says is, "We do not know that." What we do know is based on the Prophet of God's saying that [one should stone] and not flog, because he answers the questioner with two rulings: the first is narrated by the Prophet, and the other from Amir al Muʾminīn.[41]

However, Ardabīlī tells us, in Ṭūsī's *Nihāya*, *Khilāf* and *Kitāb al-Akhbār*, which are later works, he contradicts this stance and ceases to express his earlier doubts about the legality of sentencing two punishments for the same crime, stating that for the older person (*al-shaykh*) the punishment is stoning and flogging, but for the young man or woman (*al-shābb wa al-shābba*) the punishment is only stoning. Ṭūsī's later *usūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) work *Al-Mabsūt fī al-Fiqh* is a mature work that assimilates the analyses of traditions offered in the earlier works and states "results." In *al-Mabsūt*, the legality of stoning is summarized into two categories: the married person (*al-thayb*) and the unmarried person (*al-bikr*). The *thayb* is made interchangeable with *al-muḥṣan*.

> The punishment (*ḥadd*) for the married person, according to some (*aṣḥābinā*) is flogging followed by stoning, and there are others who say, this is only the case for the old man and the old woman (*al-shaykh wa al-shaykha*), and if they are young people, then it is only stoning, and some who differ from [both of these positions] say only stoning without making any distinctions, and some say to combine the two punishments without making any distinctions. As for the unmarried person, they are to be flogged and exiled to a foreign country if they are male, and no exile for women, and some say the woman too should be exiled. Exile is a must for us [the Shiite] and some say it is up to the discretion of the Imām whether s/he is exiled or put under [house] arrest. It then goes on to discuss the conditions for being a *muḥṣan*, which include being of sound mind and free.[42]

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40 Ibid.

41 Ibid, 445.

42 Jilāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, *Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* (Cairo: al-Turath, 1985), 61.

Naskh and the Legacy of Shāfiʿī

Al-Shāfiʿī's[43] reconciliation of the stoning punishment with Islamic law leaves the single most powerful jurisprudential legacy for subsequent scholars to reckon with. Shāfiʿī held that Sunna, including ḥadīth, couldn't abrogate the Qurʾan. This rule was circumvented to legalize stoning though several means. One was ʿUmar's ḥadīth, discussed above, claiming the existence of a verse that did not make it into the book of God, but that has nonetheless been recited. This "hidden verse," located in what Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 910/1505) calls "*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*," was abrogated in its recitation, but not in its legal maxim value in a form of abrogation called *naskh al-tilāwa dūn al-ḥukm*, which we explained earlier. I have not seen counterevidence for the assertion that Shāfiʿī developed this form of abrogation to legalize the stoning punishment in particular. As Burton says, "Of all the disputed questions in the fiqh, and especially in the *uṣūl*, none is richer in variety of treatment, or fuller in its appeal to Qurʾan and Sunna sources, or more acute in tension as to the relative weight that the *fuqaha'* were alleged to have accorded to each of the sources than that of the penalties for fornication and adultery."[44]

Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795), however, was explicit in his assertion that Sunna does supersede the Qurʾan on the issue of stoning. According to Mālikī jurist Abu ʿAbd Allāh Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273):

> Mālik admitted this principle [Sunna superseding Qurʾan], but Shāfiʿī denied it, although the *fuqaha'* all admit, in the instance of the penalty for the adulterer, that the flogging element of Q 24:2 has been allowed to lapse in the case of those offenders who are condemned to death by stoning. There is no explanation for the abandonment of the flogging element other than that the penalty all now acknowledge is based on the Sunna, i.e. the practice of the Prophet.[45]

Though *naskh al-tilāwa dūn al-ḥukm* is a Shāfiʿī doctrine, other *madhāhib* began to argue that instances of Qurʾanic verses that were "missing" were located in "another" Qurʾan. Hence the introduction of the Platonic notion of the "perfect" Qurʾan in the heavenly sphere that cannot escape comparison to the presum-

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43 Abrogations Shāfiʿī admits within his theory: 4:15–16 (confinement and *adha*) abrogated by 24:2 (one hundred lashes). 24:2 clarified by the ḥadīth of ʿUbaddah "Take it from me, take it from me, God has appointed a way" which tells us that 24:2 is to be limited to the unmarried case. The ḥadīth of ʿUbaddah is abrogated by the ḥadīth about the "wife of Aslami" who committed adultery with an employee. This ḥadīth gives the final law as follows: for an unmarried person one hundred lashes and banishment for a year and for a married person death by stoning.
44 Burton, *Sources*, 52. (Quoting Qurṭubī).
45 Ibid., 7–8.

ably imperfect one on the earthly sphere. Burton takes this to suggest that the *madhāhib* worked in dialectic relation during the period of their formation.[46] More specifically, Burton believes the concept was solidified in the period between Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and Zamakhsharī's (d. 537/1143) elaborations on the concept. Burton describes this difference as essentially a battle between Shāfiʿī and Mālik as to whether ḥadīth can abrogate Qur'an. While Shāfiʿī denies this happens in the case of stoning, Mālik acknowledges that this is what has occurred. This epistemological debate, among other reasons, makes stoning perhaps the most controversial of ḥadd laws.[47]

Burton notes Shāfiʿī's move to abrogate the Qur'an with a ḥadīth—even if that ḥadīth gestures toward a "hidden" Qur'anic verse—marks a strange departure from the ordinary rules of abrogation: to abrogate a verse in the Qur'an with another verse, in keeping with the traditional principle of reading the Qur'an with the Qur'an. Speaking of abrogation more broadly, Burton asserts that anxiety over what looked like conflicting statements in the Qur'an "spurred the scholar to discover a way of removing embarrassment and problem at one and the same time. The concept of *naskh* was the Muslim's ingenious response to the stimulus of embarrassment . . . But the stubborn fact remained obvious to everyone with eyes to see: that earlier punishment had been established by the Qur'an in Q. 24:2."[48]

For early ḥadīth scholar Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/741–42), learned jurists themselves often are unaware of the abrogator and abrogated in ḥadīth.[49] When chronological order is not possible to ascertain, then recourse is made to rules of preference (*al-tarjīḥ*) to determine which of the two is stronger and therefore preferable. The primacy of chronological order as a rule governing abrogation—that is, whichever verse was revealed later takes primacy—itself raises profound theological problems, as all verses are supposed to be equally divine because they were revealed by God. Andrew Rippen points out that the notion that Qur'anic verses follow in a linear subsequence is "remarkably underplayed in classical Muslim testaments."[50] Because latter-chronological supremacy is actually not accounted for in the sources, Andrew Rippin argues that "the real key to under-

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46 Ibid., 65–66.

47 Ibid., 47.

48 Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*. (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003). For Kamali, abrogation (*naskh*) depended upon the possibility of ascertaining a chronological order between two ḥadīths—in other words, Kamali argues that wherever possible, abrogation is deployed to privilege the verse that was later revealed.

49 Andrew Rippin, "The Function of *asbab al-nuzūl* in Qur'anic Exegesis," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 1, no. 1 (1988): 362.

50 Burton, *Sources*, 467.

standing *naskh*, then, is to realize that it, in fact, resolves conflicts between *fiqh* and the other two sources rather than conflict within the Qur'an and Sunna, at least when the exegesis of these two is not approached with the baggage of the *fiqh*." Stoning, which, using normal rules of abrogation, can not be legalized, is the prime example of what makes abrogation problematic as a practice and concept.

Abrogation theories that rely on valorizations of mortal, linear time to determine stoning's legality suggest that for Islamic exegetes, revelation's essential historicity was understood. Burton argues that the emphasis on abrogation among the early exegetes and jurists suggests the presence of a secondary science, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, since jurists acknowledged the stoning penalty, differing only as to its source. Since abrogation involves contentious propositions such as "suspending" Qur'anic rulings, the most expedient route to legalization would be to ground abrogation theory in Qur'anic verses.[51] This is precisely what happened.

Therefore succeeding generations of Muslim scholars (Shāfiʿīs and adherents to other *madhāhib*) would be left to wrestle with this uneasy "solution" to the problem of stoning's absence in the Qur'an, and would have to accept the premise that there was an invisible "original" Qur'an that the "surviving" Qur'an was left to reference. Inter-*madhhab* debates were left to ponder this problem in dialectic where each had to take into account the innovations of the other. As Burton says, "This accounts for the incorporation into the literature of the other *madhāhib* a type of *naskh* required to be posited only in the Shāfiʿī *madhhab*."[52] The Shiite *madhhab*, whose jurisprudence is now, in Ṭūsī's era, undergoing development, made the decision to participate in this dialectic rather than challenge or "opt out" of the stoning punishment.

Conclusion

The stoning punishment is controversial because of its uncertain provenance, and because it contradicts a punishment in the Qur'an for the same crime, *zinā*, and for Shiite scholars, because of the fact that much of the Sunni sources for the punishment prominently feature ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. In the Sunni tradition, the first of these two facts birthed a hermeneutic regimen of specification and a special form of abrogation that left the tradition with contradiction, ambiguity,

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51 Ibid., 7–8.
52 Ibid.

and potential destabilization. In spite of these dramatic implications, the stoning punishment was deemed necessary to legalize by both Sunni and Shiite scholars.

Stoning's legalization presented the problem of two punishments for the same crime, and the notion that the Sunna could abrogate the Qur'an. To circumvent this, a form of abrogation was developed that clearly suggests that the extant Qur'an is incomplete. Writing five hundred years after Shāfi'ī, Ṭūsī could have "opted out" of this intellectual reasoning, but he did not, choosing instead to adopt Sunni methodology and conclusions by the end of his career. We can speculate, then, that perhaps Ṭūsī did not think challenging the Sunni consensus on stoning—something Shiite scholars did in other contexts, often necessitating *taqiyya*—was worth the risk for his community, despite clues that he was wrestling with stoning's problems in his earlier works. Ironically, Ṭūsī may have chosen this "safer" path because Sunni thinking on the matter was sufficiently ambivalent enough that Shiite doubts could be quietly accommodated. There is no real consensus on the issue, Ṭūsī concludes, and so there is no reason to issue a ruling on it that would potentially compel his community to have to practice *taqiyya*. With Ṭūsī's decision not to "opt out" in the fifth/eleventh century, the uneasy legality of stoning in the Islamic tradition would continue.

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Tahera Qutbuddin

ʿAlī's Contemplations on this World and the Hereafter in the Context of His Life and Times

An important theme of the early Islamic oration (*khuṭba*) is contemplating this world and the next (*al-dunyā wa al-ākhira*). These contemplations form a particularly significant element of the orations of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661). ʿAlī was the first Shiʿa imam and fourth Sunni caliph, an acknowledged master of Arabic eloquence, a sage of Qurʾanic wisdom, a model of piety, and arguably the most influential orator of Islam. The tenth-century compilation of his words titled *Nahj al-Balāgha* (*Path of Eloquence*),[1] the fifth-/eleventh-century collection *Dustūr Maʿālim al-Ḥikam* (*A Treasury of Virtues*),[2] and other anthologies of his words,[3] as well as a large number of early and eclectic historical and literary texts,[4]

1 Al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, comp., *Nahj al-Balāgha*, ed. Ḥusayn al-Aʿlamī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Aʿlamī, 1993).

2 Al-Qāḍī al-Quḍāʿī, comp., *Dustūr Maʿālim al-Ḥikam wa Maʾthūr Makārim al-Shiyam*, ed. and tr. Tahera Qutbuddin as *A Treasury of Virtues: Sayings, Sermons, and Teachings of ʿAlī, with the One Hundred Proverbs of al-Jāḥiẓ* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

3 Other extant medieval anthologies of ʿAlī's words include Ṭabarsī's *Nathr al-Laʾālī* (Scattered Pearls), and Āmidī's *Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa Durar al-Kalim* (Radiant Maxims and Pearly Sayings). For a full list, see ʿAbd al-Zahrāʾ, *Maṣādir*, 1:66–86.

4 Extant early literary and historical works containing texts of ʿAlī's sermons, letters and sayings include (in chronological order of death dates): Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 3, 9, 15, 52, 55, 112, 131, and passim (see entry on ʿAlī in Index of Sermons, 613, and Index of Letters, 614); Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, 2:50–56, 59–61; Zubayr ibn Bakkār, *al-Akhbār al-Muwaffaqiyyāt*, 325, 347–48; Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-Akhbār*, 2:256–58 and passim; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma wa al-Siyāsa*, 1:70, 86, 100, 110, 111, 113, 122, 134, 138, 143, 151, 160, 163–66, 170; Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 2:192, 272, 317, 320–21, 330, 358; Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, 191–212; Mubarrad, *Kāmil*, 1:19–26, 213, 312–13, 3:208; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 4:436, 479, 548, 556, 567, 5:7–8, 13–17, 25, 37–38, 45, 48–49, 60, 61–62, 66, 77–80, 84–85, 88, 90, 95, 96, 97, 102, 107–108, 134, 147–48; Ibn Aʿtham al-Kūfī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥ*, 2:465,

contain numerous sermons, speeches, letters, aphorisms, and ad hoc statements attributed to him that typically focus on this world and the hereafter. Within this profusion, however, one observes—at least at first glance—a clear dichotomy in his treatment of this world. Despite the similar subthemes and identical rhetorical techniques in all his addresses, we find two radically contradictory positions articulated, one harshly castigating this world, the other staunchly defending it. In this paper, I attempt to resolve this dichotomy by contextualizing the material. I contend that a cohesive sense of ʿAlī's ideas on this world and the hereafter can be gained only by examining closely the historical, psychological, and literary milieus for these texts. By examining the backgrounds of the sermons, we see that the difference in characterization stems from the difference in context—and that the message is essentially the same: in all his discourses describing the world, whether the portrayal is positive or negative, ʿAlī is urgently exhorting his followers to realize the transience of human existence, reject materialism, and lead a godly life on earth in preparation for the eternal life to come; he is urging them at all times to be mindful of the hereafter.

This paper employs a multifaceted contextualization. In their theoretical work on the subject, Rick Rylance and Judy Simmons provide a useful list of the important types of context, which include the context of the period in terms of significant social, historical, political, and cultural processes; the context of the work in terms of the writer's biography or milieu; the context of a specific passage in terms of the whole work from which it is taken, and in terms of other works by the same author; the literary context in terms of the question of generic factors and period-specific styles; and the different contexts for a work established by its reception over time.[5] These classes of context are harnessed collectively to my analysis, in an attempt to provide an interdisciplinary scrutiny of the texts that display ʿAlī's presentation of the theme of this world and the next. Scriptural, historical, literary, critical, legal, philological, theological, exegetical, and commentary works are mined for relevant information. Together, they paint for us a rich, many-sided picture of ʿAlī's Qurʾan-based worldview and his enduring literary legacy.

491–92, 494, 550; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, 4:63–75; Ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl*, 59–167; Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 2:413–19; Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Sharḥ al-akhbār*, 1:157–58, 369–73; Maydānī, *Majmaʿ al-Amthāl*, 2:453–55; Zamakhsharī, *Rabīʿ al-Abrār*, 1:19, 36, 37, 39, 40, 215–18, 224, 2:13, 14, 16, 27–28 and passim; Muḥammad ibn Ṭalḥa, *Maṭālib al-Saʾūl*, 1:205–59; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣṣ*, 119–71.

5 Rick Rylance and Judy Simons, *Literature in Context*, xxiii.

Before I get into the details of ʿAlī's characterizations of the world, I should say a few words on the provenance of the sermons cited. ʿAlī lived in a largely oral society, where writing, though known, was infrequent, and was usually reserved for important documents and inscriptions. ʿAlī's orations and sayings, like those of others of his period, were initially produced orally and then for the most part transmitted by word of mouth over two or three generations. Only after the introduction of papermaking techniques to the Islamic world in the mid-eighth century were they systematically transcribed in historical and literary books. The initial period of oral transmission meant that these materials were vulnerable to error or fabrication. But scholarly findings of the last few decades about the nature of orality indicate that the strength of the indigenous Arabian tradition of oral transmission should not be underestimated. Mary Carruthers has demonstrated that people of oral societies have prodigious memories, which they harness to good effect in transmitting their artistic verbal productions,[6] and the phenomenal memories of members of early Islamic society are amply documented. Walter Ong has shown that in an oral society, artistic verbal materials are underpinned by mnemonic devices of cadenced rhythms and vivid imagery that help the audience to remember them,[7] and these devices are clearly visible in ʿAlī's oeuvre. And Gregor Schoeler has established that side by side with oral transmission, eighth-century Arabic scholars wrote down historical and literary materials as notes to be used as aides-mémoires in teaching.[8] ʿAlī was one of the most important and revered personages of early Islam, his eloquence was proverbial, and during the four years of his caliphate, he preached long and frequently to large public audiences. Thus, it is likely that the recorded sermons attributed to ʿAlī possess a genuine core, and a portion of the orations and sayings attributed to him are authentic, some in essence, some even verbatim. Moreover, given the consistent, multiple, and early attribution to ʿAlī of certain Qurʾan-based themes and nature-oriented images,[9] and given their compatibility with the historical and literary ambience of the time, it is feasible that they represent a true picture of ʿAlī's views on this world and the hereafter.

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6 Carruthers, Th*e Book of Memory*, passim.
7 Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, passim.
8 Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*; Schoeler, *The Genesis of Literature in Islam*; Schoeler, "The Relationship of Literacy and Memory in the Second/Eighth Century," passim.
9 See details of ʿAlī's Qurʾan-based themes and nature-oriented imagery, as well as translations of some of his key sermons, in Qutbuddin, "Sermons of ʿAlī," 205–6 and passim.

Condemnations of This World

ʿAlī emphasizes time and again that this world has no value. To point out its total insignificance, he compares it graphically in his sermons to objects familiar in the daily lives of people living in first-/seventh-century Arabia that they would have held in utter contempt: a decaying carcass (*jīfa*),[10] residual remnants of food scraps in the mouth (*lumāẓa*),[11] the bones of a pig in the hands of a leper (*ʿirāqi khinzīrin fī yadi majzūm*),[12] shreds from the pods of a spiny acacia shrub (*ḥuthālat al-qaraẓ*),[13] woolfluff floating off a pair of shears as they clip (*qurāḍat al-jalam*),[14] bitter gallnuts (*ʿafṣa maqira*, a cancerous growth produced by certain plants to surround and kill wasp eggs laid on their surface),[15] a leaf being chomped in the mouth of a locust (*waraqatun fī fami jarādatin taqḍamuhā*),[16] and the sneeze expectorate or fart of a goat (*ʿafṭat ʿanz*).[17]

ʿAlī's insistence on the insignificance of this world is rooted in the teachings of the Qurʾan. In over forty verses, the Qurʾan denounces this world as "a cargo of deception,"[18] "play and frolic,"[19] "inconsequential,"[20] "[superficial] ornamentation,"[21] and "[mere] commodities."[22] One verse that brings together all these epithets is Ḥadīd 57:20:

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[10] Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, 4:73; Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 239; Quḍāʿī, *Dustūr Maʿālim al-Ḥikam*, 52; ʿĀmilī, *Kashkūl*, 2:119.

[11] Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 727; Maydānī, *Majmaʿ al-Amthāl*, 2:453.

[12] Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 677.

[13] Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 101; Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, 2:60–61.

[14] Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 102; Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, 2:60–61.

[15] Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 559.

[16] Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 469; Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Tadhkira*, 1:97; ʿĀmilī, *Kashkūl*, 2:21.

[17] Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 57; Ābī, *Nathr al-Durar*, 1:187; Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *Nihāya*, 3:164; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, ʿ-F-Ṭ; Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, ʿ-FʾT.

[18] Qurʾan, Āl ʿImrān 3:185; see also Anʿām 6:70 and 130, Aʿrāf 7:51, Luqmān 31:33, Fāṭir 35:5, Jāthiya 45:35.

[19] Qurʾan, Anʿām 6:32, 70, Aʿrāf 7:51, ʿAnkabūt 29:64, Muḥammad 47:36.

[20] Lit.: "little." Qurʾan, Nisāʾ 4:77, Tawba 9:38.

[21] Qurʾan, Qaṣaṣ 28:60, Baqara 2:212, Yūnus 10:88, Aḥzāb 33:20.

[22] Qurʾan, Zukhruf 43:35, Shūrā 42:36, Ghāfir 40:39, Āl ʿImrān 3:14.

Know that this worldly life—which is but play and frolic, superficial ornamentation and boasting, and vying for more and more wealth and offspring—is like a rain shower whose resultant verdure delights unbelievers, but soon the vegetation dries up and you see it yellowing, then it becomes dust. The hereafter brings either a severe punishment, or it brings forgiveness and acceptance from God. This worldly life is naught but a cargo of deception.

ٱعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي ٱلْأَمْوَٰلِ وَٱلْأَوْلَٰدِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ ٱلْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَٰهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَٰمًا وَفِي ٱلْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَرِضْوَٰنٌ وَمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَآ إِلَّا مَتَٰعُ ٱلْغُرُورِ

In its strongly negative portrayal of this world, the Qurʾan sets it up against the hereafter. ʿAlī frequently uses these Qurʾanic appellations in declaring the transience and insignificance of this world,[23] and as we shall see, he too presents this transient world as a foil for the eternal afterlife.

The bitter, sometimes resigned, occasionally irate castigations of the world in ʿAlī's sermons and letters are also partly grounded in his troubled historical context. Early on, he had put his very life on the line, time and again, fighting in the Muslims' battles against the Meccans. Muḥammad's death had struck him hard, as he mourned a deeply revered leader and beloved friend. Moreover, according to several early historians, ʿAlī believed that the succession to Muḥammad, wielded by Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān for twenty-five years, rightfully belonged to him. Ibn Hishām, Ṭabarī, Yaʿqūbī, and Ibn Qutayba record ʿAlī's initial refusal to accept Abū Bakr as caliph until forced to do so. They also record ʿAlī's declarations about his own superior right to the caliphate, both immediately after Muḥammad's death, and later, during the deliberations of the Shūrā committee that appointed ʿUthmān.[24] Even after becoming caliph upon ʿUthmān's death, he was faced by revolts from within, one after the other. In the four years that he ruled, he fought three major battles: the Battle of the Camel against the Prophet's widow ʿĀʾisha and the Prophet's companions Ṭalḥa and Zubayr and the people of Basra, the Battle of Ṣiffīn against the Umayyad Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān and the people of Syria, and the Battle of Nahrawān against a renegade

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23 Cf. Qutbuddin, "Sermons of ʿAlī," passim.

24 Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, 2:489–90; Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, 2:126; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 4:231–33, 5:7–8; and Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma wa al-Siyāsa*, 1:28–33. For details of this issue and further primary sources see Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, 28–33, 141, and passim; Madelung, "Shīʿa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005).

group from his own army known as the Khārijites or Seceders. Some of his closest associates and family members were killed at Ṣiffīn and in its aftermath. After the post-Ṣiffīn arbitration went against him, most of his supporters pulled back, and he spent the last few months of his life unsuccessfully persuading them to resume the fight. Meanwhile, Muʿāwiya was going from strength to strength, taking over Egypt, and sending raiding parties into the Arabian Peninsula and even Iraq itself, not far from ʿAlī's capital, Kūfa. This state of affairs continued until ʿAlī was killed by a Khārijite's sword while he was praying in the mosque in Kūfa. Some of ʿAlī's lines quoted in this paper are spoken in defense of his own high moral grounding vis-à-vis these events. Others are articulated as part of his teaching oeuvre, in individualized situations as well as more general preaching events. ʿAlī's strongly personal take on the subject is clear from the repeated use of the first-person pronoun in many of the descriptive phrases cited above, which read, to take just two examples: "Your world is worth less in my eyes (*fī ʿaynī awhā wa ahwan*) than a bitter gallnut," and it "is less appealing to me (*azhadu ʿindī*) than a goat sneeze." Clearly, each of these phrases is pronounced in a text that comes out of a very specific, and very personal, context.

One of these specific contexts is the political situation of the time, which found ʿAlī at the center of a maelstrom of contentious claims regarding the leadership of the nascent Muslim community.[25] The "sneeze of a goat" image is set explicitly against the background of ʿAlī's situation vis-à-vis the first three Sunni caliphs. It comes at the end of the famous (and controversial) oration named the *Shiqshiqiyya*, in which ʿAlī—after becoming caliph—stated that Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthmān had earlier assumed the caliphate while knowing full well that ʿAlī's place in it was as central to it as that of "the pivot in the grinding stone" (*maḥall al-quṭb min al-raḥā*).[26] The context of this oration can be further elaborated by factoring in the accusations leveled at ʿAlī by his challenger Muʿāwiya and Muʿāwiya's associate ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ before and after the Battle of Ṣiffīn in 36/657, spelled out in their correspondence with him. They charged that he had been envious of the first three caliphs, and that he had always avidly desired the caliphate.[27] ʿAlī responded directly to their accusations elsewhere by letter;[28] in

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25 For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, passim.
26 Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 50–57; Ābī, *Nathr al-Durar*, 1:187; Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣṣ*, 124–25. For a list of medieval sources citing the *Shiqshiqiyya*, see ʿAbd al-Zahrāʾ, *Maṣādir*, 1:309–22. See parts of the *Shiqshiqiyya* and similar speeches in Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, 2:51; Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, 4:63, 68; and Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ, *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr*, 383.
27 Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 86–87.
28 Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 521–22; Minqarī, *Waqʿat Ṣiffīn*, 88–91; Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ, *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr*, 380–81.

the *Shiqshiqiyya* oration, he appears to be speaking indirectly to the same allegations. When he says this world means less to him than the sneeze of a goat, he is in fact stating that he cares nothing for the caliphate and for the worldly benefits that accrue from it, and that his motive for proclaiming his right to the caliphate is not greed for wealth or power, but the desire to establish God's religion. This is made very clear in the phrases immediately preceding the comparison we are discussing here, where he says: "If God had not made it incumbent upon the learned to rise up in the face of oppression and help the oppressed … you would have found this world of yours less appealing to me than the sneeze-expectorate of a goat."

Another context for understanding the background of these harsh criticisms of the world is what we know from the sources about ʿAlī's personality, his asceticism (especially in the last few years of his life), his strict ideas about right and wrong, his fairness with regard to distribution of treasury funds, and his crackdown on any hint of corruption among his governors.[29] Following the conquests, the Muslim empire had grown large and rich, and as a consequence worldliness and bribery had spread among the inhabitants of Medina and Kūfa. In contrast, ʿAlī himself lived simply, and he urged his followers to do the same. The assertion about the world being "worth less than bitter gallnuts" was prompted by the following incident: ʿAlī's governor in Basra, ʿUthmān ibn Ḥunayf al-Anṣārī, participated in an extravagant wedding celebration. His rich hosts, according to ʿAlī, routinely shunned the poor, and the sources of their wealth were dubious. ʿAlī reprimanded the governor in a letter urging ʿUthmān ibn Ḥunayf to follow his own—ʿAlī's—example. And what was ʿAlī's example? That he took from this world only the bare necessities, for it was "worth less [to him] than bitter gallnuts."

Within this same context of ʿAlī's personality, we can place yet another of his harsh characterizations of the world. In one oration, ʿAlī mentioned that his own brother, ʿAqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib, having many children to provide for and having become destitute, had implored him for funds from the state treasury; he, ʿAlī,

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29 Regarding ʿAlī's asceticism, see report of his patched-up garments in Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:20. See also Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī's oration in which he said ʿAlī left behind no gold or silver, in Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:28; Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, 2:213; and Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 5:157. See also the report of Ḍirār al-Nahshalī in Qālī, *Amālī*, 2:147; Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 2:415; Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān, *Sharḥ al-Akhbār*, 2:391–92; Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyāʾ*, 1:84–85; Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 641–42; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 24:401; Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Tadhkira*, 4:28; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, 18:225–26. See also the chapter on ʿAlī's asceticism in Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tadhkirat al-Khawāṣṣ*, "*Fī Dhikr Waraʿihī wa Zahādatihī wa Khawfihī wa ʿIbādatihī*," 109–19.

had denied the request, since the money was not his to give.[30] He mentioned in the oration that he had brought a fiery iron rod close to ʿAqīl, and when ʿAqīl had screamed from pain and fear, he had said, "Do you scream from the pain of an iron rod heated by a human for sport, while you drag me into the fire stoked by the Powerful One to punish those who have incurred His wrath? Do you scream from pain, while expecting me not to scream from the flames of hell?" In the same text, ʿAlī went on to profess outrage at a gift that he had been offered by a certain man (according to the commentators, the Kūfan notable Ashʿath ibn Qays),[31] presumably for a less than honest purpose. After recounting the incidents with ʿAqīl and Ashʿath, ʿAlī proclaimed that this world was worth less to him than "a leaf being chomped in the mouth of a locust," continuing, "what would ʿAlī want with pleasures that will end and delights that will not abide?!"

The severity of ʿAlī's reaction to both ʿUthmān ibn Ḥunayf and ʿAqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib can also be explained through the historical context of ʿAlī's caliphate coming at the heels of ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān's. Ibn Saʿd, Balādhurī, and other early historians have stated that much of the dissatisfaction of the Muslim community with ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān's caliphate had to do with nepotism and corruption;[32] ʿAlī would have wanted to wipe out all traces of these, to show his constituency that he would not tolerate dishonesty among his governors, nor show favoritism to his family.[33] Furthermore, Balādhurī again, as well as Yaʿqūbī and Ibn Qutayba, narrate that Muʿāwiya unlawfully appropriated property and arbitrarily disbursed treasury funds to garner support for his illegitimate claims.[34] Ironically, the sources tell us that ʿAqīl, having been turned down by ʿAlī, went to Muʿāwiya to ask for financial help.[35] In his responses to ʿAqīl and ʿUthmān ibn Ḥunayf, ʿAlī probably wanted to emphasize his own clean dealings in comparison with Muʿāwiya's.

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30 Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 469.

31 Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, 11:247–48.

32 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:47; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 5:25, 28. For a detailed analysis of the charges of nepotism against ʿUthmān, see Madelung, *The Succession to Muḥammad*, "The Grievances against the Caliph," 81–113.

33 See, e.g. Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 4:440.

34 Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, 2:221–22; Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 5:122, Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma wa al-Siyāsa*, 1:213–14. For collected citations about Muʿawiya's appropriation and distribution of funds and property, see Ṣāḥib Yūnus, *Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān*, "*Muʿāwiya Yastaṣfī Amwāl al-Nās li-Nafsi-hī*," 235–38.

35 Zubayr ibn Bakkār, *al-Akhbār al-Muwaffaqiyyāt*, 334–36; Ibn ʿAbd-Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, 4:6–7; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Imāma wa al-Siyāsa*, 1:101–2; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, 11:251–54.

The wide and early provenance of 'Alī's sermons denouncing this world indicates a common position taken by 'Alī, particularly during the four turbulent years of his caliphate; it appears that 'Alī was known for such teachings, and literary scholars recognized that 'Alī's particular historical context would produce such themes. Ibn Manẓūr in the *Lisān al-'Arab* (*The Arabic Tongue*),[36] and Majd al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr in his *al-Nihāya fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa al-Āthār* (*Ultimate Book of Rare Words from the Hadith and Sayings*), listed the "sneeze of a goat" phrase as a now-common Arabic proverb and traced its origin to 'Alī. More directly to our point is a remark made by the famed Abbasid litterateur Jāḥiẓ. Recording the "shreds from the pods of an acacia tree, woolfluff floating off a pair of shears" oration in his *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* (*Eloquence and Exposition*), he stated that although it was attributed by his informant to Mu'āwiya, he, Jāḥiẓ, believed it was "more like the words of 'Alī ... and closer to his situation."[37]

Detailed and explicit descriptions of the world's decrepitude and deceptions constitute the single most prominent theme in 'Alī's oeuvre. Using metaphors of predatory beast for death and beautiful temptress for the world, employing the technique of dramatization in his presentations of death, and asking *ubi sunt* rhetorical questions about the whereabouts of the audience's forebears, time and again he articulated the ignoble nature of this world. Why did 'Alī teach that this world is paltry? Because—as he explained copiously in many of his orations—it is corrupt, impure, deceitful, unstable, and transient.[38] There is nothing in it that is good or stable or loyal or permanent. This line of argumentation is visible in most of 'Alī's orations.

But why use such strong language? Why the relentless emphasis on the negative aspects of the world? I have cited in a previous article the following report to underline 'Alī's reason for dwelling in his sermons on death. The report also helps us understand why 'Alī so often and so lengthily castigated the world, whose transience he emphasized as the reason to plan for what comes after. This is the report:[39]

'Alī was participating in a funeral procession when he heard a man laugh. He exclaimed:

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36 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, '-F-T.

37 Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, 2:59–61.

38 For translations and analyses of some of 'Alī's key sermons on this issue, see Qutbuddin, "Sermons of 'Alī," 214–18.

39 Raḍi, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 653. Cited and discussed in Qutbuddin, "Sermons of 'Ali," 217–18.

We behave as though death were decreed for everyone other than ourselves, as though duties were incumbent upon everyone other than ourselves, as though people who die in front of our eyes are travelers who will soon return. We consign their bodies to the grave and then go on to consume their wealth—forgetting every counselor and shrugging off every tragedy.

كَأَنَّ الْمَوْتَ فِيهَا عَلَى غَيْرِنَا كُتِبَ وَكَأَنَّ الْحَقَّ فِيهَا عَلَى غَيْرِنَا وَجَبَ وَكَأَنَّ الَّذِي نَرَى مِنَ الْأَمْوَاتِ سَفْرٌ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ إِلَيْنَا رَاجِعُونَ. نُبَوِّئُهُمْ أَجْدَاثَهُمْ و نَأْكُلُ تُرَاثَهُمْ كَأَنَّا مُخَلَّدُونَ بَعْدَهُمْ. ثُمَّ قَدْ نَسِينَا كُلَّ وَاعِظٍ وَوَاعِظَةٍ وَرُمِينَا بِكُلِّ فَادِحٍ وَ جَائِحَةٍ.

ʿAlī's sermons—with their harsh and relentless characterization of the world's ignoble nature—attempt to shake up the complacent masses who are lulled by their base and mundane routines into a dangerous oblivion of the inevitable end, to frighten them into taking heed while there is yet time.

Although ʿAlī's condemnation of the world appears total, it is in fact qualified, and a means to an end. The particular contexts of these orations show that the world, when denounced in his orations, is not to be taken as an absolute term. Rather, the criticism is directed to the base aspects of the world, including money, power and fame, particularly when they distract from the hereafter, or worse, when they are obtained illegally and incur reprisals in the afterlife. In many sermons and sayings, ʿAlī provides ethical instructions on how to be a morally upstanding human being. The audience is urged to not immerse themselves in this world to the extent that they forget the next. Present in all of ʿAlī's sermons that discuss the world we find a comparison with the hereafter. In many orations, he presents the two in a comparative framework.[40] Even when the hereafter is not plainly mentioned, even when the stated theme is this world, the hereafter is still the coded referential theme. The aim of promoting mindfulness of the hereafter is either achieved directly by instructing the audience to strive for it, or it is gained indirectly by using this world as a foil and warning of its transience. The dichotomy is set up plainly in many of his orations, so even in those times that the hereafter is not mentioned overtly one evokes the other. Explicitly or implicitly, the vast majority of ʿAlī's orations and epistles urge an audience focused on their worldly lives to contemplate and prioritize the hereafter.

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40 For translations and analyses of some of ʿAlī's key sermons on this issue, see Qutbuddin, "Sermons of ʿAlī," 218–20.

Praise of This World

In startling contrast to ʿAlī's censorious characterization of the world in most of his sermons, in just a few pieces attributed to him we see a vigorous defense of this world, even praise.

One widely cited example is recorded (with minor variations) in several early sources including the *Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* and *Maḥāsin wa al-Aḍdād* of Jāḥiẓ, the *Iṣlāḥ al-Māl* of Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, the *Tārīkh* of Yaʿqūbī, the *Murūj al-Dhahab* of Masʿūdī, the *Nahj al-Balāgha* of Sharīf Raḍī, and several other historical and literary works.[41] In the *Nahj al-balāgha* narrative (and in many of the others), the oration is framed as a strongly worded retort to a man whom ʿAlī overheard criticizing this world:[42]

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41 Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, 2:190–91; Jāḥiẓ, *al-Maḥāsin wa al-Aḍdād*, 1:113. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Iṣlāḥ al-Māl*, 1:50; Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, 2:208; Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 2:413–14; Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 655–57. Additional sources include: Ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī, *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl*, 186–88; Bayhaqī, *al-Maḥāsin wa al-Masāwiʾ*, 1:265–66; Abū Bakr al-Dīnawarī, *al-Mujālasa wa Jawāhir al-ʿIlm*, 1:210; Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir wa al-Dhakhāʾir*, 1:51; Ābī, *Nathr al-Durar*, 1:185; Ḥuṣrī, *Zahr al-Ādāb*, 1:51; Khaṭīb Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 7:287; Rāghib Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarat al-Udabāʾ*, 2:403; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 42:498–99 and 58:79–80; Muḥammad ibn Ṭalḥa, *Maṭālib al-Saʾūl*, 1:215–16; Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ, *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr*, 277–79; Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Tadhkira*, 1:73; Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, 6:414–15; Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfī bi al-Wafayāt*, 18:7; Suyūṭī, *Jāmiʿ al-Aḥādīth*, 15:353; Ṣāliḥī, *Subul al-Hudā*, 11:304; Muttaqī Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, 3:292; Saffārīnī, *Ghidhāʾ al-Albāb*, 2:430; Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr*, 2:353. See also Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ's versification of ʿAlī's piece in Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfī bi al-Wafayāt*, 18:6–7; and Dāʿī Ṭāhir Sayf al-Dīn's versification in his *Dīwān*, "Qaṣīdat al-ʿAql," 1:403. The piece has also been translated by Cleary, *Living and Dying with Grace*, 21.

42 Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 655–57. Due to the continuous nature of the quotation that follows and the formatting necessities in accord, the following space could not be helped.

O you who reproach this world while being so willingly deceived by her deceptions and tricked by her falsehoods! Do you choose to be deceived by her yet censure her? Should you be accusing her, or should she be accusing you?! When did she lure you or deceive? Was it by her destruction of your father and grandfather and great grandfather through decay? Or by her consigning your mother and grandmother and great grandmother to the earth? How carefully did your palms tend them! How tenderly did your hands nurse them! Hoping against hope for a cure, begging physician after physician for a medicament. On that fateful morning, your medicines did not suffice them, your weeping did not help, and your apprehension was of no benefit. Your appeal remained unanswered, and you could not push death away from them although you applied all your strength. By this, the world warned you of your own approaching end. She illustrated by their death your own.

Indeed, this world is a house of truth for whomsoever stays true to her, a house of wellbeing for whomsoever understands her, a house of riches for whomsoever gathers her provisions, a house of counsel for whomsoever takes her advice. She is a mosque for God's loved ones, a place where God's angels pray, where God's revelation alights, where God's saints transact, earning his mercy and profiting paradise.

Who would blame her, when she has honestly declared her imminent separation, proclaimed her impending departure, and announced her own and her people's looming destruction?! She has illustrated by her trials the terrible trial of the fire, and awakened by her delights a desire for the abundant delights of paradise. In the evening she leaves you healthy and happy, only to arrive the next morning with an awesome calamity. All this, to awaken your desire and alarm, to stir up your fear and vigilance.

Some will blame her on the morning of regret. Others will praise her on the day of judgment. For she reminded them and they took heed. She told them about herself and they believed. She counseled them and they were mindful.

أيها الذامّ للدنيا المغترّ بغرورها المخدوع بأباطيلها. أتغترّ بالدنيا ثمّ تذمّها؟ أنت المتجرّم عليها أم هي المتجرّمة عليك؟ متى استهوتك أم متى غرّتك؟ أبمصارع آبائك من البلى؟ أم بمضاجع أمّهاتك تحت الثرى؟ كم علّلت بكفّيك. وكم مرضت بيديك. تبغي لهم الشفاء و تستوصف لهم الأطبّاء. غداةَ لا يُغني عنهم دواؤك ولا يُجدي عليهم بكاؤك. لم ينفع أحدهم إشفاقك و لم تسعف فيه بطلبتك ولم تدفع عنهم بقوّتك. قد مثّلت لك به الدنيا نفسك وبمصرعه مصرعك.

إنّ الدنيا دار صدق لمن صدقها ودار عافية لمن فهم عنها و دار غنى لمنتزوّد منها ودار موعظة لمن اتّعظ بها. مسجد أحبّاء الله ومصلّى ملائكة الله ومهبط وحي الله ومتجر أولياء الله. اكتسبوا فيها الرحمة وربحوا فيها الجنّة.

فمن ذا يذمّها و قد آذنت ببينها و نادت بفراقها و نعتْ نفسها و أهلها. فمثّلت لهم ببلائها البلاء و شوّقتهم بسرورها إلى السرور. راحت بعافية وابتكرت بفجيعة. ترغيبا و ترهيبا وتخويفا و تحذيرا.

فذمّها رجال غداة الندامة، وحمدها آخرون يوم القيامة. ذكّرتهم الدنيا فتذكَّروا و حدّثتهم فصدقوا و وعظتهم فاتّعظوا.

Although Raḍī does not provide the wider context for this piece, another author fills us in. According to the eminent tenth-century Twelver Shiʿa scholar Ibn Shuʿba al-Ḥarrānī in his compilation of sermons *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl ʿan āl al-Rasūl* (*Rare Gifts for the Intellect from the Progeny of the Messenger*), 'Alī delivered this oration to a group of men from his own army, late in the night, immediately following the Battle of the Camel in Basra.[43] The narrator of the *Tuḥaf* is 'Alī's companion, also a companion of the Prophet and a prolific raconteur of hadith, Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī. Jābir reported that he was present when 'Alī addressed this group from among his supporters whom he overheard censuring the world, with the words I have just cited (and Ibn Shuʿba's version of the text includes some variants and additions).

By censuring this world, 'Alī's companions were presumably shifting blame for their own shortcomings. They were perhaps also using it as a scapegoat to explain the inexplicable failings of the People of the Camel, Muslims all, who had borne arms against the incumbent caliph, 'Alī, to whom they had earlier sworn a pledge of allegiance. 'Alī reminded his companions that the world is neither good nor bad in and of itself, but that both the good and bad of this world are with reference to its people. We should not reproach the world for our own defects. Yes, its characteristics are base, but it does not hide them from us. Rather, it warns us time and again, showing us plainly by the deaths of our fathers and mothers that our fate will be exactly the same. The world is a bridge to paradise for the person who looks at it with the eye of reflection. It is here that one has the opportunity to prepare for the hereafter, to pray and perform good deeds, deeds that serve as a passport to heaven. But for the person who neglects to prepare for the hereafter, the world is a bridge to hellfire. In both cases, the world is not responsible for the fate of its inhabitants. It is they who choose their path. They make of the world what they will. They use it or abuse it as they will.

In many segments of this oration we sense an underlying woman metaphor that pins down much of the imagery 'Alī uses for the world. Elsewhere, 'Alī is reported to have addressed the world directly as a woman—"I have divorced you thrice!"[44]—referring to a form of Islamic divorce that permanently closes the door to reconciliation and remarriage. The grammatical structure of Arabic lends itself effectively to this particular metaphor. As we know, Arabic has no neutral gender; all nouns are either masculine or feminine, and the word used to denote this world, *dunyā*, is feminine, which is what partly prompts 'Alī's personification of

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43 Ibn Shuʿba, *Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl*, 186–88. Jābir related that 'Alī began with praise of God, which endorses the public, oratorical provenance of the piece.

44 Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 641.

the world as a woman. The leitmotif of the faithless woman in the *qaṣīda* tradition could also be at work here; ʿAlī could be evoking the beautiful but ultimately disloyal beloved of the poetic love prelude, the *nasīb*. In the *nasīb*, the poet bemoans the departure of the beloved, motifs of the faithless woman being combined with those of separation. This combination carries over into ʿAlī's pious-counsel orations, where themes of death and departure from this world are combined with a personification (*tashkhīṣ*) of the world as a seductress. In the oration cited above (as in many of ʿAlī's orations castigating the world), a woman is not obviously referenced, but the presentation is made immediately more meaningful when one realizes this veiled underpinning, hinted at by the vocabulary of seduction. Interestingly in this case, the metaphor is reversed—the idea that the world beguiles its inhabitants is turned around, with the rhetorical question: "When did she [i.e., the world] seduce you?"

Several medieval scholars remarked upon the fundamental departure in the "O you who reproach this world" sermon from ʿAlī's customary tone of censure when talking about the world. In his *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr fī Ṣināʿat al-Shiʿr wa al-Nathr* (*Register of Adornments of the Craft of Poetry and Prose*), the seventh-/thirteenth-century Cairene scholar Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ recorded this oration as the most interesting example of the rhetorical technique of radically shifting one's perspective (*taghāyur*).[45] Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ's contemporary, the Muʿtazilite commentator of the *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, also pointed out ʿAlī's diametric divergence from his usual perspective on the topic, and added that the Prophet Muḥammad too had portrayed the world in both negative and positive terms.[46] (Jāḥiẓ and Bayhaqī also cite this piece alongside ʿAlī's negative characterizations of the world in for-and-against type books.)[47] Indeed, praise of this world is not the dominant approach in ʿAlī's oeuvre, but it could have been a more common one than Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ and Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd realized. Masʿūdī, in the early tenth century, had prefaced his citation of the same piece with the words "'ʿAlī used to say," thus presenting it as a frequent topic in his orations.[48]

Like his condemnation of it, ʿAlī's praise of the world is a means to an end. In some sources, the text cited above is followed by two interesting tags, which indicate that for ʿAlī, the real point of praising the world is to praise the hereafter; or in other words, to assert the importance of using one's time in this world to make preparations for the hereafter. These sources report that after ʿAlī finished his

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45 Ibn Abī al-Iṣbaʿ, *Taḥrīr al-Taḥbīr*, 277–79.
46 Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, 18:326.
47 Jāḥiẓ, *al-Maḥāsin wa al-Aḍdād*, 1:113–14; Bayhaqī, *al-Maḥāsin wa al-Masāwiʾ*, 1:265.
48 Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, 2:413–14.

impassioned speech in defense of the world, he turned to face the cemetery and said:[49] "O you who are residents of these graves, O people living in narrow confines and loneliness, O people of exile and isolation: If you were to ask us about your homes—others have occupied them. If you were to ask us about your wives— others have bedded them. This is our news—what is yours?" Then he turned again to his companions and said: "If they were given permission to speak, they would say: 'The best provision is piety!'"(إِنَّ خَيْرَ ٱلزَّادِ ٱلتَّقْوَى)"[50] Another corroboration of the proposal that 'Alī's praise of this world is to be read in terms of his exhortations to prepare for the hereafter is found in an exegetical text. Qurṭubī, in his *Tafsīr*, quotes the first line of 'Alī's oration in his explanation of the Qur'anic verse, "This worldly life is but meaningless play and frolic" (وَمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَآ إِلاَّ لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ)[51] to explain that activities in this world by which the hereafter is intended are to be excluded from this divine condemnation of worldly life.[52] Most importantly, the nature of the praise in the oration is the strongest evidence for this contention. For 'Alī praises the world as "a house of truth for whomsoever stays true to her, a house of wellbeing for whomsoever understands her, a house of riches for whomsoever gathers her provisions, a house of counsel for whomsoever takes her advice ... a mosque for God's loved ones, a place where God's angels pray, where God's revelation alights, where God's saints transact, earning his mercy and profiting paradise"—all the aspects of this world that the praise focuses on are related to God, godliness, and the hereafter.

The notion that the essential message of 'Alī's expositions on the world was the importance of using one's time here to prepare for the hereafter is clarified yet further in a formal epistle of counsel that he wrote to his ward Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr when he dispatched him as governor of Egypt soon after the Battle of Ṣiffīn. The epistle—as was common practice at the time—would presumably have been read out in the mosque, or some other public venue, to the people of Egypt at large. Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr was the letter's immediate addressee, but 'Alī, in his role as Imām of the Muslim community, was simultaneously preaching to a wider audience. Moving away from his usual strong criticisms of worldly pleasures, he empties this piece of the slightest whiff of asceticism. Similar to the Qur'anic verse "Through the blessings that God has granted you, seek the abode

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49 Bayhaqī, *al-Maḥāsin wa al-Masāwi'*, 1:265; Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣā'ir wa al-Dhakhā'ir*, 1:51; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, 42:498–99 and 58:79–80; al-Saffārīnī, *Ghidhā' al-Albāb*, 2:430.
50 Qur'an, Baqara 2:197.
51 Qur'an, An'ām 6:32.
52 Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, 6:414.

of the hereafter; but do not forget to enjoy your share of this world,"[53] ʿAlī's letter to Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr and the Egyptians explicitly praises good living as long as it is accompanied by godliness. The *Nahj al-Balāgha* records the letter as follows:[54]

You should know, O servants of God, that the pious partake of the joys of this world and those of the next. They share the world with the worldly, but the worldly do not share the hereafter with them. In this world, they reside in the most splendid of residences and consume the finest of delicacies. They possess the sumptuous comforts of the wealthy and partake of the lavish luxuries of the mighty. Yet, when they depart, they leave with full provisions and a large profit. They enjoy the pleasures of this world without becoming immersed in worldliness, happy in the certain knowledge that they will be God's neighbors in the next: no prayer rejected, no pleasure withheld.

واعلموا عباد الله أنّ المتّقين ذهبوا بعاجل الدنيا وآجل الآخرة فشاركوا أهلَ الدنيا في دنياهم ولم يشاركهم أهلُ الدنيا فى آخرتهم. سَكنوا الدنيا بأفضل ما سُكنت وأكلوها بأفضل ما أُكلت. فحظوا من الدنيا بما حظي به المترَفون وأخذوا منها ما أخذه الجبابرة المتكبّرون. ثم انقلبوا عنها بالزاد المبلّغ والمتجر الرابح. أصابوا لذّة زهد الدنيا في دنياهم وتيقّنوا أنّهم جيرانُ الله غدا في آخرتهم. لاتُردّ لهم دعوة ولا ينقص لهم نصيب من لذّة.

In this epistle, ʿAlī explains that while living a full and engaged life in this world, its people should also use their time to prepare fully for the next. They should be happy in this world and enjoy its delights to the fullest, yet at the same time they should always bear in mind—not pessimistically, but realistically—the imminent arrival of death. (Death is the subject of the next part of the epistle, which begins "Servants of God, beware of death and its imminence.")

Weighing the Two Positions: What the Context of ʿAlī's Sermons Tells Us about His Worldview

Discussing ʿAlī's oration defending this world, Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd implicitly refers to the context as justifying the 180-degree turn from ʿAlī's usual approach, and he comments: "This piece is in praise of the world, and it illustrates ʿAlī's ability to control his themes, maneuvering them in any which way he wished. Almost all

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53 Qurʾan, Qaṣaṣ 28:77.
54 Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 516–17; Zamakhsharī, *Rabīʿ al-Abrār*, 2:27–28; Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Tadhkira*, 1:81.

his orations are in censure of the world, whereas here, he praises it. But he is true there, and he is true here."[55] Even in the orations that contain harsh condemnation of this world, if we look closely, the approach is more complex than meets the eye. Although ʿAlī is saying that the world deceives, through his castigation of the world, he is, in fact, metonymically castigating the people of the world— humans, who by their own volition have become enamored of her, to the degree that they have become oblivious to the hereafter.[56] Knowledge of the context is vital in interpreting these oratorical texts. Just as ʿAlī's orations help explain his times and scenes, his times and scenes help explain his orations. Understanding the background of his orations gives us a fuller awareness of why they were said and what they meant to their original audience. As we have seen, the orations discussed in this article are firmly grounded in the political reality of ʿAlī's time, as well as in the literary scene of early Islamic Arabia. Contextualization provides us with a richer sense of those associations.

Paradoxically, identifying the local, temporal context of the orations also helps us in identifying what it is that renders them universally relevant, for fundamentals of the local context stay constant across time and place. Although details of conflicts and conversations vary, the essentials of human existence, their questions and their concerns, in many ways remain the same. Because the local context of ʿAlī's orations taps into humanity's existential questions of being and purpose, they have relevance beyond their original context, and are commonly recognized as timeless founts of moral counsel. Clear proof of the influence of his teachings is found in the wide dissemination, both diachronically and synchronically, of some of his orations, including the sermon in defense of the world. In the orations that I have discussed here and the many others that I have not, he urges his audience to live a virtuous life in this abode and prepare for the next, by pointing out the limited span of life on earth, the imminence of death, and the eternity of bliss or hellfire in the hereafter—teachings that continue to resonate over a thousand years later.

When ʿAlī is censuring the world, he is criticizing certain aspects of human nature that are base. He is addressing an audience whose members are immersed in worldliness at the expense of the hereafter. ʿAlī's response to their gross mate-

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55 Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha*, 18:325–27.
56 See for example, an oration attributed to ʿAlī (Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 464–67), in which he expounds the meaning of the Qurʾanic verse "O human, what deceived you with regard to your gracious Lord?" (Qurʾan, Infiṭār 82:6); and another (Raḍī, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, 456–61), on the verse "You remain occupied with collecting more and yet more, until you visit [your] grave" (Qurʾan, Takāthur 102:1).

rialism is to point out the insignificance of the world and its ultimate destruction. When he is defending this world, he is addressing an audience whose members are implicitly disclaiming responsibility for their own immorality by blaming the world. ʿAlī's response to their disclaimer is to point out to them that the world is merely an arena for performing one's actions, and the choice as to how we use the world, for good or for bad ends, is entirely ours. Whether he censures this world or defends it, the core message of ʿAlī's teachings is mindfulness of the hereafter.

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Chase F. Robinson

Al-ʿAṭṭāf b. Sufyān and Abbasid Imperialism

It might be said that ours is a postcolonial world of neo-imperialism, but the confusion does not end there: describing empires in history, as a growing body of literature teaches us, is no simple thing.[1] What do Islamic historians mean when they speak or write about the Abbasid "Empire"? In what follows I shall argue that this shorthand designation deserves the kind of careful scrutiny that the philologist characteristically applies to a text: swords may be more truthful than books,[2] but it is with words that we think, learn and teach. More than a generation of scholarship has outlined some of the ways in which political and social elites exercised authority and power—so much so, in fact, that one can even discern a chastening critique of crudely absolutist models of pre-modern Islamic politics.[3] This said, much more remains to be done, especially to take down the bogey of an early Abbasid Empire as monolithic hegemon.

   In what ways does speaking of empire advance or impede our understanding of how social and political power was exercised in the late eighth century, the very heyday of Abbasid rule? I approach the problem inductively. First I shall examine events that took place in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul in 177/793–94, when, at the hands of a certain al-ʿAṭṭāf b. Sufyān al-Azdī, it temporarily fell out of the political community that we usually call the "Abbasid Empire." Little of sig-

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1 The literature is huge, but a reasonable start can be had in P. F. Bang and W. Scheidel, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Bang and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Tributary Empires in Global History* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); and C. Sinopoli, "The Archaeology of Empire," *Annual Review of Archaeology* 23 (1994): 159–80 (with a massive bibliography that remains useful). Remaining close to the Arabic texts, but wishing to remain accessible to non-Islamicists, I use both Islamic and Gregorian dating; all dates that begin with the digits 1, 2 or 3 are hijrī.

2 As Abū Tammām reminds us in his Amorium *qaṣīda*, which is one of many texts that I had the privilege of learning from Ahmad Mahdavi-Damghani, for whom this contribution is dedicated in deep gratitude and respect. I am also very grateful to Andrew Marsham for reading a version of this contribution and making several useful suggestions.

3 Select examples include R. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972); B. Shoshan, "The 'Politics of Notables' in Medieval Islam," *Asian and African Studies* 20 (1986): 179–215; A. Havemann, *Riʾāsa und qaḍāʾ: Institutionen als Ausdruck wechselnder Kräfteverhältnisse in Syrischen Städten vom 10. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg: K. Schwarz, 1975); J. Paul, *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler: Ostiran und Transoxanien in vormongolischer Zeit* (Beirut and Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996).

nificance seems to have been said about these events, at least in part because the primary sources know so little about them.[4] The great exception can be found in detailed accounts that survive only in the history of Mosul by Yazīd b. Muḥammad al-Azdī (d. *ca* 945).[5] Still, many details of how al-ʿAṭṭāf ruled the city are absent, perhaps because they promised to document the embarrassing scale of Mosuli complicity in rebellion, as we shall see; al-ʿAṭṭāf's rule was yet another example of Mosuli restiveness, which dominated its eighth-century history.[6] Moderately more can be said about the events that ended it, however, including the measures that Hārūn took to restore direct Abbasid control (insofar as we can speak of "control"), and these can help us identity at least some of the leading figures in the events. All in all, al-Azdī gives us enough evidence to reach some reasonable conclusions about how al-ʿAṭṭāf's brief rule fits within the Mosuli context of early Abbasid imperialism. "The Roman empire is too often seen as a whole, too seldom as a collection of provinces," Wickham has written.[7] The same thing is true of Islamic politics, as I shall seek to show.

Having made some sense of the events within Mosul's political and fiscal history, I shall then draw some equivocal conclusions about empire, especially social and political power in one province and what is generally understood to be the apogee of Abbasid rule. I have the benefit of a running start. In 1981 Hugh Kennedy wrote an important article, based largely on al-Kindī's and al-Azdī's histories, which proposed that the provincial histories of Egypt and Mosul in the early Abbasid period reflected not "an absolute military dictatorship," but instead a "system of government" that negotiated local and central interests—"a careful arrangement of alliances and compromises." This "system," in his view, broke down during the civil war that broke out upon the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 809.[8] What follows might reasonably be described as a follow-up contribution

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4 For al-Ṭabarī's confusion, see below, notes 20 and 21. The most recent word apparently belongs to B. J. Ulrich, "Constructing al-Azd: Tribal Identity and Society in the Early Islamic Centuries" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2008), 236 f.; see also P. Forand, "The Governors of Mosul According to al-Azdī's *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89 (1969): 96 f.; and C. F. Robinson, *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 151 (where the events are mistakenly dated to 176) and 161 ff. The following might be considered an immoderate expansion upon those three pages.

5 See below.

6 For an overview see Robinson, *Empire and Elites*.

7 C. Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.

8 H. Kennedy, "Central Government and Provincial Elites in the Early ʿAbbāsid Caliphate," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 44 (1981): 26–38; more recently, the civil war

to the project of understanding empire by focusing not upon metropolis, but upon province.

I

An appropriate place to start is al-Azdī's text. Al-Azdī's work was composed, on the basis of eighth- and ninth-century accounts that had come to him in both oral and written form, during the 930s.[9] For Mosuli history these accounts were generally written or reported by Mosulis, a point of some principle for our author, who remarks that locals know more of local history than those (nonlocals) who (merely) "collect and compile accounts."[10] Many of his informants were very well placed, and, it might be imagined, voiced opinions that belonged to the city's establishment. One such informant was Ḥafṣ b. ʿUmar al-Bāhilī, who was related through clientage to descendants of the celebrated commander Qutayba b. Muslim al-Bāhilī (d. *ca* 96); these included Saʿīd b. Salm, who served as governor of Mosul from 172–73 (788–90).[11] Coming from a family that owned an estate in the nearby town of Bāfakhārā,[12] and transmitting here on the authority of unnamed *shaykh*s, Ḥafṣ had an understanding of the events that was invaluable to al-Azdī. Another well-placed informant was Aḥmad b. al-Muʿāfā of the Shurayḥid family, to whom al-Azdī owed the account that narrates the decisive negotiations between

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between al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn also marks for him the end to the Abbasids' "strategies for containment" so successfully followed in the provinces; see Kennedy, "The Decline and Fall of the First Muslim Empire," *Der Islam* 81 (2004): 3–30.

9 For details on al-Azdī and his work, see C. F. Robinson, "A Local Historian's Debt to al-Ṭabarī: The Case of al-Azdī's *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 126 (2006): 1–15; and Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 127 ff.

10 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil* (Cairo: Lajnat Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1967), 228. A newer edition (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 2007; here p. 440) based on the same single manuscript, supplements the surviving text (years 101–224) with two *takmila*s (years 16–100 and 228–334), which consist mainly of material drawn from Ibn al-Athīr's *Kāmil*, Ibn al-Jawzī's *Muntaẓam*, and al-Dhahabī's *Taʾrīkh*; although this may confuse the unwary reader, the edition is far more accessible, and I will cite it accordingly.

11 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 499 (as governor in 172), 511 and 515 (as informant); for the family, P. Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 136 ff.

12 Which lay on the Tigris, apparently about eleven kilometers south of Mosul; see al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 416 f. (with note 2 thereto); and J. M. Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965), 2:490.

the Mosulis and Hārūn's chief *qāḍī*, Abū Yūsuf.[13] In at least one case, ʿAlī b. Ḥarb (d. ca. 875–80), a Mosuli expert in *ḥadīth*, *akhbār*, and genealogy who also came to receive caliphal patronage from al-Muʿtazz (r. 252–55/866–69) through to al-Muʿtaḍid (r. 279–89/892–902), we can attach a name to an unequivocal written source.[14]

Al-Azdī was working from a wide variety of local sources, and knew that these could be in some conflict; he openly acknowledges confusion and contradiction, and his task seems to have been to compose as full and harmonious an account as he was able. "That which I have narrated," he writes of a composite account about Hārūn's entrance into the city after al-ʿAṭṭāf's departure, "came from a number of my *shaykh*s, for all that they disagreed in the exact words that they transmitted on the authority of those who preceded them."[15] This is suggestive of a fairly sophisticated historiographical program, which produced, *inter alia*, the most informative city history of the early period. But how plentiful and reliable was his local material to begin with? Since there is no real way of controlling so much of it,[16] we are left with the text itself. Of one thing we can be fairly certain, however: Mosuli history in this and other problematic moments was a history selectively transmitted. Al-Azdī's annual entries are not infrequently short,[17] but year 178 is especially economical, and, almost nearly so, 179: as Mosul temporarily fell out of Abbasid rule, the Mosulis seem to have lost interest in their history. This is understandable. To what good purpose would stories of the townsfolk's complicity have circulated during the ninth century? What interested al-Azdī

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13 For the account, see below; and on the Shurayḥids, Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 155 f. One is tempted to suppose that the transmitter named ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Sufyān b. al-ʿAṭṭāf (al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 518) was a descendant of al-ʿAṭṭāf himself.

14 "I found the following in the hand [*khaṭṭ*] of ʿAlī b. Ḥarb." Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 511 (see also 498); Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmīya, 1994), 4:178 f. (5501). For details on ʿAlī b. Ḥarb and early Mosuli learning more generally, see Robinson, "A Local Historian's Debt," and C. F. Robinson, "al-Muʿāfa b. ʿImrān and the Beginnings of the *Ṭabaqāt* Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115 (1996): 119 f.

15 "*Akhbaranī bi-mā dhakartuhu min hādhā jamāʿatun min shuyūkhinā ʿalā ikhtilāf alfāẓihim fī-hi ʿamman taqaddamahum.*" Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 516. His confusion about governors and their terms even leads him to apologetics: he's had to piece together material from a variety of *kutub*, he writes, and he's put down what he's found, without straying from "truthfulness"; see the *Taʾrīkh*, 471.

16 On the coinage, see below.

17 And, not coincidentally, nor are al-Ṭabarī's, including during the period in question. In two cases (124 and 152) entire years are missing, the two having dropped out of the manuscript tradition (presumably due to a negligent scribe) upon which Ibn al-Athīr relied; see Robinson, "A Local Historian's Debt."

appears only in the entry on year 180, which narrates al-ʿAṭṭāf's departure from, and Hārūn's entrance into, the city, which were preceded and followed by a crucial set of negotiations. In fact, one would not be forcing things to discern a strain of Mosuli pride—a mix of courage, political nous, sangfroid, even insouciance—that runs through the first- and second-person testimony that narrates Hārūn's restoration of Abbasid rule.[18] As much as the Mosulis tempted fate, they skillfully averted catastrophe.

Here it must be emphasized that al-Azdī could only work with the hand that he had been dealt—and many cards were missing. Even a matter as apparently straightforward as the governorship was a source of chronic frustration: over and over he volunteers his uncertainty about the Mosuli governors' identity or the timing of their service in the city, often falling back upon unresolved contradictions or inferences. There were multiple sources for this confusion, but the most important was the governors' fairly regular turnover (including, in some cases, second terms) and the complex administrative geography of the north, which alternately married and divorced Mosul from the Jazira.[19] Such ambiguities did not apply in the case of the city's *qāḍī*s, who differed from its governors in at least two important respects: they were frequently Mosulis, and they tended to serve longer terms. It is little wonder, then, that al-Azdī evinces many fewer problems in listing *qāḍī*s than he does governors. Be this as it may, it should not surprise that even when he does his best by working from inference—"[b]y all indications," he writes, "the governor [in year 155] was Mūsā b. Kaʿb," for example—he could get things wrong: perhaps because he was too deferential to his historiographic model, he seems to have followed al-Ṭabarī in confusing Mūsā b. Kaʿb with Mūsā b. Muṣʿab.[20]

Now, the published numismatic evidence can dissolve some of the fog in this and other cases,[21] but the coins remain far too spotty to do anything more than

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18 In these respects, the narratives resemble those of the massacres of 133.

19 Similarly the administrative frontier between Iraq and Mosul; for the reflex of this confusion in conquest narrative, see Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 20 ff.

20 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 436 (*ʿalā mā tadull ʿalayhi al-akhbār wa-taẓhar al-dalāʾil*); see also al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk* (Leiden, 1879–1901), 3:375 ff.; cf. Forand, "The Governors of Mosul According to al-Azdī's *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil*," 94 f. (also clearly wrong in following al-Azdī in mistaking Mūsā b. Muṣʿab for Mūsā b. Kaʿb); and Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, 186 and 193.

21 The coins unambiguously place Mūsā b. Muṣʿab in Balad (which lay on the Tigris, to the north of Mosul) in 155/very late 771–72 (thus N. Lowick, *Early ʿAbbāsid Coinage: A Type Corpus, 132–218 H/AD 750–833* [London: British Museum Press, 1999], 329), and so at least provide a starting point from which to judge the confusing and contradictory information provided by al-Azdī (*Taʾrīkh*, 449, where conflicting reports have either Mūsā or Khālid b. Barmak in charge; see also 454), amongst others (including al-Ṭabarī). The Syriac sources are subject to no such confusion (Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 156 f.). In fact, Mūsā is put in Balad in 772–73 by the *Zuqnīn*

offer limited help. This said, they do occasionally allow us precious glimpses at local arrangements. For example, we have several specimens from al-Mawṣil dated to 145 that were struck in the name of Hishām b. ʿAmr al-Taghlibī,[22] just as we have several specimens struck in the late 140s and 150s in the name of the *amīr* al-Ṣaqr b. Najda, another of the city's notable Azdīs, and scion of a family that produced local learning too.[23] Both figures are known to al-Azdī, the former as the last Umayyad governor (r. 128–33), the latter as a commander of the city's *rawābiṭ* no later than 148; in neither case does our author identify them as Abbasid governors, however. Hishām, who had ingratiated himself to the Abbasid house by refusing Marwān II as he fled Abbasid armies during the revolution, was a favorite of the dynasty, and governed Sind[24]; by contrast, al-Ṣaqr b. Nadja seems to have been an entirely local figure, who is otherwise known only to al-Azdī. In short, the texts apparently tell one story, the coins another.

The conflict can be resolved by distinguishing between the formal authority possessed by governors appointed by the caliph, and the effective authority that they not infrequently delegated to subordinates. Al-Azdī, as some other historians, was working from sources (including lists) that seem to have recorded only (or mainly) governors' names, while the coins, such as they are, at least sometimes record both governors and those subordinates. This distinction—between (formally appointed) governor and his subordinate—is more or less what the legend on a *fals* struck in 145 tells us in describing arrangements that obtained during the governorship of Jaʿfar b. Abī Jaʿfar (145–47/48): "*mimmā amara bi-hi Hishām ibn ʿAmr ʿāmil al-amīr Jaʿfar ibn Amīr al-muʾminīn*" (struck by Hishām b. ʿAmr, the agent for the commander [governor], Jaʿfar, the son of the Commander

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Chronicle, which was published as *Incerti auctoris chronicon anonymum pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dictum II* (Paris: CSCO, 1933), and translated by A. Harrak as *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn*, *Parts III and IV*, *A.D. 488–775* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1999), 290/253 (Syriac/translation); and a similar dating (1083 Seleucid/771) can be found in an independent source that dates from two generations later; see the "Chronicle of 813" published in *Fragmenta chronici anonymi auctoris ad annum domini 813 pertinentia* (Louvain: Imprimerie orientaliste, 1905–7), volume 3 of *Chronica Minora*, 188/248.

22 Thus G. Rotter, "The Umayyad Fulūs of Mosul," *Museum Notes* 19 (1974): 196 f.; S. Shamma, *A Catalogue of ʿAbbasid Copper Coins* (London: al-Rafid, 1998), 69 f.; and Lowick, *Early ʿAbbāsid Coinage*, 331. (I am grateful to S. Heidemann for making his expertise and Shamma's work available to me.) For more details on Hishām, see Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 139 and 156.

23 Shamma, *A Catalogue of ʿAbbasid Copper Coins*, 70; and Lowick, *Early ʿAbbāsid Coinage*, 331; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 159 f.

24 See Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, 167 f.

of the Faithful).[25] For this and other reasons, a systematic understanding of provincial politics requires a command of both the historical and numismatic evidence, and, perhaps counterintuitively, cannot necessarily set much store by the nomenclature.[26] Such an understanding must also accommodate the idea that provincial politics were determined by the confluence of the local and imperial.

II

Let us examine one illustration of this truism in some detail. The chronology of events in question has to be approximated. It is in his entry on year 177 (late April 793 to mid-April 794) that al-Azdī begins his account, which has al-ʿAṭṭāf take control of Mosul "for years" from the Abbasid Muḥammad b. al-ʿAbbās, who was responsible for the ṣalāṭ and ḥarb (that is, the "governor," who possessed theoretical and symbolic authority over ceremonial prayer and making war) and an obscure mawlā named Minjāb, who was in charge of levying taxes (literally, the kharāj).[27] Little can be said about either figure's tenure in the city,[28] or, for that matter, how one is to resolve the author's confusion about precisely how ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ṣāliḥ, an Abbasid with several governorships to his name (including an earlier stint in the city), and who later served as governor of Medina, was caught up in the events.[29] "In this year, al-ʿAṭṭāf b. Sufyān al-Azdī formed a coa-

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25 Lowick, *Early ʿAbbāsid Coinage*, 331. Al-Azdī occasionally makes mention of governors appointing deputies; see, for example, *Taʾrīkh*, 454 (which has Khālid b. Barmak deputize Khālid b. al-Ḥasan b. Barmak over Mosul). That al-Ṣaqr b. Najda arrogated to himself authority beyond his command of the *rawābiṭ* can be inferred from al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 431—but this may be forcing things.

26 Al-Azdī uses a variety of terms and locutions, including ʿalā..., *wālī*, *ʿāmil*, and *amīr*, as do the coins (thus Hishām b. ʿAmr, who appears as *amīr* in an undated *fals* in Shamma, *Catalogue of ʿAbbasid Copper Coins*, 70). Meanwhile, an inscription cited by al-Azdī (*Taʾrīkh*, 470) commemorates al-Mahdī's expansion of the city's congregational mosque *ʿalā yad ʿāmilihi Mūsā b. Muṣʿab*. The chronicler from Zuqnīn, who uses Arabisms as a matter of course, usually employs *amīrā*; for a discussion, see Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn*, 25 f. There is a lesson herein for data miners-to-be.

27 Forand's discussion of the governors (see notes 4 and 45) contains many errors, but remains the standard, *faute de mieux*.

28 We might expect that taxing would fall to a non-Arab client of the Abbasid house, and indeed this seems to be the only thing known about Minjāb, whose name is a muddle to all the copyists, and who pops up along with other clients only later; see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:1016; and the anonymous *Kitāb al-ʿUyūn waʾl-ḥadāʾiq* (*Fragmenta Historicorum Arabicorum* [Leiden, 1869–71]), 438.

29 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 492 ff. (appointment in 170 and dismissal in 171) and 511 (confusion about his possible reappearance in 177); Forand, "The Governors of Mosul According to al-Azdī's *Taʾrīkh*

lition [*taḥālafa*] against Hārūn," al-Azdī writes by way of introducing events that will dominate that next ten pages or so of his text; the narrative tag was rewritten by Ibn al-Athīr, who copied generously from this section of al-Azdī's work, but lacked his more subtle understanding of the events.[30] To al-Azdī, it apparently seemed that al-ʿAṭṭāf sought to preserve the appearance of Abbasid rule: the notional governor may have been Muḥammad b. al-ʿAbbās, and Minjāb the notional tax agent, but "he [al-ʿAṭṭāf] had taken all effective authority, [Minjāb] being under his control" (*ghālib ʿalā al-amr kullihi wa-huwa fī yadihi*). There is not a hint that such authority was considered legitimate, nor that al-ʿAṭṭāf sought caliphal sanction. Such as it was, al-ʿAṭṭāf's rule was over by 180 (early March 796 to early March 797), when, according to multiple sources, Hārūn al-Rashīd arrived in Mosul and restored direct Abbasid rule.

Who belonged to this "coalition"? Of al-ʿAṭṭāf himself, nothing can be said beyond what al-Azdī tells us. What is clear is that he was from that part of Mosul's long-standing and land-holding Azdī élite that could mobilize military force: he was one of the city's commanders (*quwwād*), and one who could attract a following of considerable size—some four thousand men, we read, a force that included "irregulars from the countryside" (*ṣaʿālīk al-balad*), who had "rallied to him."[31] The *ṣaʿālīk*[32]—in the Mosuli context, it appears all or mainly "southern" Arabs[33]—stand in obvious contrast to the city's formally constituted (and mustered) military forces, which go by a variety of names in this period: *al-aḥdāth*, *al-maʿūna*, *al-shurṭa*, *al-rawābiṭ* (all local militias, the last being an especially fast-moving force that

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al-Mawṣil," 96 (mistakenly making him Ibn Khālid); note that al-Ṭabarī (*Taʾrīkh*, 3:630) puts him in Egypt in 178, and al-Kindī (*Kitāb Wulāt Miṣr* [Naṣṣār ed.; Beirut, n.d.], 148) gives an exact date for his arrival in Egypt in Dhū al-Ḥijja of 167.

30 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 511 ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1965–67), 6:140 (*khālafa*).

31 Is the number believable? Perhaps: in 171 Rawḥ b. Ṣāliḥ, a Hamdānī commander of the *rawābiṭ*, led a force of exactly that size; see al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 498 f.

32 The term is used to describe armed opportunists in northern Syria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and northern Mesopotamia, especially in the context of frontier warring, overlapping (it would appear) with the *zawāqīl*; see C. Cahen, "Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du moyen âge, II," *Arabica* 6 (1959): 47; M. Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 49 and 55; Qudāma b. Jaʿfar, *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (Leiden: Brill, 1889), 253. Cf. the case of the *bagaudae* in J. F. Drinkwater, "Patronage in Roman Gaul and the Problem of the Bagaudae," in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. A. Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1989), 189–203.

33 At least to judge from the Kindī, Azdī, and Hamdānī tribesmen who constitute its leadership, according to al-Azdī; Bonner (*Aristocratic Violence*, 55 and 68) not unreasonably ties the loss of stipends and status amongst Jaziran Arabs to *ṣaʿālīk* numbers.

seems to have operated outside of the city against pastoralists, including Khāri-jtes),[34] and, of course, *al-ḥarb*.[35] We have no evidence for any resistance against al-ʿAṭṭāf, and one is entitled to infer that al-ʿAṭṭāf was commander of one of these militias, and it was with it (fortified by *ṣaʿālīk*) that he took control of the city.[36]

We also have a handful of names, figures who were implicated in the events, and so exempted from the general amnesty that would eventually be announced: ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muʿāwiya, al-Muʿāfā b. Shurayḥ, Bīrawayh al-Raḥabī, Yaʿlā al-Thaqafī and a certain Muntaṣir. Taken together, the figures suggest support from the city's establishment. At least two are explicitly identified as landowners (Bīrawayh and Muntaṣir), their estates (along with al-ʿAṭṭāf's) being confiscated after the movement's failure, to be turned into *ṣawāfī* lands, which for genera-tions they remained;[37] a thousand-dinar bounty was also placed on Bīrawayh's and Muntaṣir's heads, the latter fearlessly remaining in the city and escaping the manhunt only because of the oversight of Hārūn's herald, we read.[38] Al-Muʿāfā b. Shurayḥ was certainly a figure of local significance: son of Shurayḥ b. Shurayḥ (d. 133), who was a victim of the massacre of that year, brother of Bakkār b. Shurayḥ (d. 163), *qāḍī* of the city for two terms in the 150s and early 160s, and tied by marriage to the most infamous of the city's governors in this period, Mūsā b. Muṣʿab,[39] al-Muʿāfā was nothing if not part of the city's Azdī establishment. As it happens, he was the only ringleader to be arrested, a fact that may not be unrelated to his ability to call in favors from a group of Yamanīs (al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba, ʿAbd Allāh b. Mālik al-Khuzāʿī and ʿAbd Allāh's brother, Ḥamza), who, having experience in both the Jazīra and Mosul, were embedded in caliphal and

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34 On which see Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 159 f.

35 Which in this context means the authority to muster a salaried army on the caliph's behalf, be it for making war on the frontier or against Khārijites who proved too much of a match for the *rawābiṭ*; a good example comes in 178 (al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 472), when Harthama b. Aʿyan and Muḥammad b. Farrūkh, dispatched by al-Mahdī against a Tamīmī Khārijite named Yasīn, come to Mosul, then set out from the city and defeat Yasīn in heavy fighting. Cf. Ibn al-Athīr's gloss regarding al-Ḥasan b. Qaḥṭaba's army in 162 in al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 463, where he adds "stipended [soldiers], setting aside the volunteers."

36 The parallel with soldiers-turned Khārijites (such as, for example, Shabīb b. Yazīd and Bahlūl b. Bishr) is striking, but we cannot say (as we can of them) that al-ʿAṭṭāf had fallen off the rolls.

37 Cf. the case of al-Muʿāfā b. ʿImrān (d. 185 or 186), Mosul's most celebrated second-century scholar, who was a "man of immense wealth and numerous estates"; see al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2003), 4:978. For more details, see Robinson, "Al-Muʿāfā b. ʿImrān and the Beginnings of the *Ṭabaqāt* Literature."

38 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 516 f.

39 His term was interrupted only by ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Abī Rabāḥ, who held the post in 159 and 160; see al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 454 and 458; on the Shurayḥids, Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 155 f.

local patronage networks. Mālik al-Khuzāʿī had been the governor of the city from 142–144/45, a post to which his son ʿAbd Allāh (d. 213) succeeded in 173 for two years.[40] With local standing and pull from men such as these, it is little wonder that al-Muʿāfā got off lightly—only a year of captivity in the location of his choice: Mosul.[41] If the accounts are to be trusted—and I do not see why they should not—there is more than a whiff of theatre in these measures, as also in Hārūn's showy entrance into the city, as we shall see. The punishment does not fit the crime, it would appear, the imprisonment perhaps being intended less to punish or deter than to display what Althoff would call the "rules" of medieval politics.[42]

Whatever the precise composition of al-ʿAṭṭaf's city-rural coalition—indeed, perhaps even because it *was* a city-rural coalition—it did not last. In 180 Hārūn arrived in Mosul, having travelled up the Tigris, via the town of al-Ḥadītha, which lay at the juncture of the Tigris and the Greater Zab, about fifty kilometers south of the city. Al-ʿAṭṭāf responded by leading his own force to Marj Juhayna, a district of villages on the western side of the Tigris, about a day's ride south from Mosul, thus not far from al-Ḥadītha, which lay on the opposite bank of the river.[43] We read that Marj Juhayna's "learned and pious men" (*shuyūkh* and *ṣulaḥāʾ*) dissuaded al-ʿAṭṭāf from attacking the Abbasid army, and prevailed upon him to vacate the town; their argument is not spelled out, but al-Azdī's source, here Ḥafṣ b. ʿUmar al-Bāhilī, may have had access to the *shuyūkh* in question. Al-ʿAṭṭāf complied, disappearing to the north, into what our sources conventionally call Armenia—and so from the historical record, it seems.

This was not the end of the problem, however, for al-ʿAṭṭāf's departure had the result of leaving Mosul vulnerable to Abbasid retaliation, especially, as one is entitled to surmise, since the Mosulis were perceived to be complicit. In order to negotiate their way out of danger, they accordingly dispatched to Marj Juhayna a delegation of their own, which was comprised of the city's "notables" (*wujūh*) and "learned people" (*wa-man kāna bi-hā min ahl al-ʿilm*). Coming within memory of the gory massacre of 133, and within a generation of the Mosulis' involvement in a rebellion led by Ḥassān b. Mujālid (wherein al-Manṣūr noted their failure to make

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40 On the descendants of Qaḥṭaba b. Shabīb, see Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, 188 f.

41 At least one son of his (Aḥmad) transmitted his father's derring-do: al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 516.

42 G. Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Medieval Europe*, tr. C. Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 148.

43 For the geography, G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 90 f.; and Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne*, 3:227.

good on earlier agreements),[44] the townsfolk had good reason to be fearful of Abbasid retribution. The members of this delegation thus had to be chosen carefully. It seems to have especially featured *anṣārī*s who could carry favor with the caliph's chief *qāḍī* and negotiator, Abū Yūsuf (d. 182), himself an *anṣārī* and one, according to al-Azdī, who was partial to the town. One such figure was al-ʿAbbās b. al-Faḍl b. ʿAmr (Abū al-Faḍl al-Anṣārī; d. 186), a native Basran, *faqīh*, and traditionist, who settled in Mosul, and after whom a mosque in the city was eventually named; according to one report, he seems to have been rewarded by Hārūn with the *qāḍī*-ship of the city, but thought better of it and quickly resigned from the post.[45] In addition, the delegation included Mūsā b. al-Muhājir (d. 201), a Mosuli *faqīh* and traditionist whom posterity remembered as a follower of Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161), two other learned men, Saʿd and ʿAtīq, about whom almost nothing can be said, as well as others who go unidentified.

What took place, as transmitted by Ḥafṣ b. ʿUmar on the authority of anonymous *shaykh*s,[46] is a pleasing and edifying piece of narrative that has Abū Yūsuf broker an arrangement whereby the caliph could make good on his oath to kill the Mosulis while doing little harm to the city. Its heart is the kind of resourceful casuistry for which the jurist was well known,[47] but what we are left missing are the terms of the Mosulis' capitulation.[48] First, he directs the Mosulis to produce a real din of prayer calling, the effect of which so impresses Hārūn that he turns in wonder to Abū Yūsuf: "'Those are muezzins?' 'Yes, Commander of the Faithful: the people are [very pious] Muslims, among them people of goodness, Qurʾān-readers, and people of [religious] knowledge and understanding.'" Abū Yūsuf then proposes that "[i]f you enter [the city] at night, you won't find anyone to kill, and

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44 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 415 ff.; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 147 ff.; and Robinson, "The Violence of the Abbasid Revolution," in *Living Islamic History: Studies in Honour of Professor Carole Hillenbrand*, ed. Y. Suleiman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 241 f.

45 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 516 and 519; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, 4:873; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, 3:81 (3699); Forand ("The Governors of Mosul According to al-Azdī's *Taʾrīkh al-Mawṣil*," 96) goes badly astray here.

46 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 516.

47 An ability, to judge from al-Masʿūdī (*Murūj al-Dhahab* [Beirut, 2012], 3:416), which was exactly what recommended him to the Abbasid family. On the origins of legal devices in connection with oaths, see S. Horii, "Reconsideration of Legal Devices (*ḥiyal*) in Islamic Jurisprudence: The Ḥanafīs and Their 'Exits,'" *Islamic Law and Society* 9 (2002): 318 f. As is well known, Abū Yūsuf himself wrote on *ḥiyal*.

48 Cf. the altogether fuller account of the terms set to effect the capitulation of the governor of Egypt in 826, which is preserved by al-Kindī and described by M. Tillier, "Le cadi et le sauf-conduit (amān): Les enjeux juridiques de la diplomatie dans l'Orient abbasside," *Islamic Law and Society* 19 (2012): 201–21.

it's not incumbent upon you to kill someone you can't see." Having been directed to do so by Abū Yūsuf, the Mosulis duly disappear from sight, leaving the caliph one or two people whom he has killed.

Precisely what happened is impossible to know, of course, but in a society where oaths mattered—"believers are judged by the terms they enter into," as the Prophet said[49]—at the very least we have to assume that the events had verisimilitude.

Whatever one thinks of the story, there is little reason to doubt the other measures that Hārūn took to recompose Abbasid rule. One was to raze the city's walls, a collective punishment that seemed draconian enough to merit mention in sources that are otherwise ignorant of al-ʿAṭṭāf's rule.[50] Here, once again, one is inclined to think that the measure may actually have been largely symbolic.[51] Another was to dismiss the city's *qāḍī*, Ismāʿīl b. Ziyād al-Duʾalī. Of Kufan origins, the "learned and abstemious" Ismāʿīl had been appointed by Hārūn himself in 174, but the causes for his removal could not be made clearer: Ismāʿīl, Hārūn alleged, was "partial" to the people of the city. Indeed, the Mosulis lauded his conduct and wrote down [*ḥadīth*] on his authority.[52] By contrast, his replacement, the learned ʿAbd Allāh b. Khalīl, had "compositions" (*muṣannafāt*) to his name, but "the people found fault with his conduct," their complaints reaching Hārūn as late as year 188.[53] Knowing that he was about to be dismissed, Ismāʿīl still had enough time to exercise his prerogative as *qāḍī* to document the ownership of Wāʾil b. Shaḥḥāj's properties in the name of his son, ʿIsār. The Banū Shaḥḥāj were a powerful family in the city, and one can only speculate about how they had conducted themselves during al-ʿAṭṭāf's interregnum.[54]

Meanwhile, both Minjāb, the tax agent, and the discredited governor, Muḥammad b. al-ʿAbbās, were dismissed, and their responsibilities combined in the person of the well-connected and well-travelled Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Ḥarashī, a descendant of a storied Qaysī from northern Syria.[55] The appointment of a 'north-

49 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 418 f. (adduced by al-Manṣūr in connection with the Mosulis).
50 Al-Dīnawarī, *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl* (Leiden: Brill, 1888), 385 f.; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:645, guessing that Hārūn was responding to Khārijites.
51 Cf. the case described by Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*, 150.
52 On Ismāʿīl, see al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 504, 506, 508, and 518 f.; see also al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, 4:581; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, 1:249 f. (552); and al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1998), 1:468 (446).
53 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 518 f., 535, and 543.
54 Wāʾil himself had been in charge of the city's *shurṭa* in 146; see al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 404 and 519; on the Shaḥḥājīs, Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 154 f.
55 On Yaḥyā and his family, see Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, 144 f. Waxing theoretical, al-Azdī explains elsewhere (*Taʾrīkh*, 401, in year 145) that Mosuli practice was for governors to have author-

erner' after Sufyān's Azdī rule cannot have been coincidental. In any event, Yaḥyā was directed to recoup the taxes lost to Baghdad during the two- or three-year interregnum, and he collected some six million dirhams, we read;[56] given what other sources describe as Mosul's *annual* revenue in this period—no less than twenty-four million according to one budget[57]—the figure is relatively modest; it is dwarfed, for example, by the cost that Hārūn is said to have spent on the one-hundred-thousand-man army that he sent into Byzantium twelve years earlier.[58] Even so, al-Azdī has it that the exactions necessary to make up the shortfall forced Mosulis to flee to Azerbaijan, brought villages into ruin, and opened districts to lawlessness.

III

Given northern Mesopotamia's geography, along with the state's evolving military and political culture, we might expect various forms of resistance from tribesmen, be it passive or active, such as refusing to appear when called up (*takhalluf*) and abandoning long campaigns[59] (both passive) or, especially for those who have fallen off the *dīwān* and out of favor, banditry and other forms of rural opportun-

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ity over "[ceremonial] prayer, security and taxing [*al-ṣalāt wa'l-maʿūna wa'l-kharāj*], if it [i.e., the last, taxing] was granted to him," and a subordinate *ṣāḥib al-rābiṭa*, who was charged with fighting Khārijites. Depending on the circumstances, tax levying could thus fall under the authority of the governor, the tax agent, or the *qāḍī*. Examples of the last are plenty enough: an Umayyad one is Maymūn b. Mihrān (thus Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj* [Būlāq: al-Maṭbaʿat al-Miṣrīya, 1302], 114); for Abbasid ones, al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 413, and below.

56 Or one million (al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 518).

57 S. A. al-Ali, "Ibn al-Muṭarrif's List of Revenues in the Early Times of Hārūn al-Rashīd," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 14 (1971): 303–10 (al-Mawṣil, inclusive of Takrīt). Precisely what to make of these numbers remains unclear; a recent discussion 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): 146 ff.

58 Thus al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:504 (where exact sums of 194,000 dinars and 21,414,800 dirhams are given). This was an astounding sum, of course, for an exceptional army; cf. the numbers given in ca. 178 for the army returning from Transoxania with al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyā in the anonymous *Kitāb al-ʿUyūn wa'l-Ḥadāʾiq*, 296 (1,500,000 dirhams). The size and salaries of Abbasid armies remain open to dispute; for an overview, H. Kennedy, *The Armies of the Caliphs* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 78 ff. and 96 ff.

59 See the discussion in P. Crone, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period Political Parties?," *Der Islam* 71 (1994): 36 ff.; and Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*, 32 ff.

ism (all active).[60] And given the potent activist model that the first generation of Arabian tribesmen had bequeathed to subsequent generations of Muslims, nor should we be surprised that such active resistance could be given a measure of ideological coherence by Khārijism, which was endemic in the Jaziran country-side throughout the eighth century. In fact, Khārijite rebellions in the Jazira and Mosul were so numerous and regular that when the Mosulis explained the under-collection of taxes by adducing a Khārijite episode in 175, it is hard to know if the explanation was genuine or convenient.[61] Since the Mosuli elite was known to flirt with Khārijites, this may well have struck the Abbasids as a bit rich.[62] All in all, Khārijism in northern Mesopotamia highlights the limits of both the state's effective power (especially in rural districts) and the efficacy of its ideological program: there was a steady succession of Khārijites (especially Shaybānīs and Tamīmīs) in part because they had northern Mesopotamia's geography on their side, and in part because they also had a compelling construction of Islam on their side.[63]

But matters were surely different in the *miṣr* of Mosul, the state's political and military hub. What, beyond restiveness, resentment, or geographic limin-ality, can explain the Mosulis' ill-advised and short-lived bid, predicated as it apparently was upon a rural-urban coalition? To propose an answer we must first backtrack and make some general comments about economic and social context.

The early Islamic economic and social order should be understood as an elab-oration upon late-antique patterns in the eastern Mediterranean. While contrac-tion and simplification are the rule elsewhere (even in Byzantium, where there was greater continuity than in the post-Roman West),[64] in the heartlands of the Islamic Middle East the trajectory is continuity in settlement and trade through the seventh and into the eighth century (varying by region, of course), fostered by

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60 Of course there are illuminating parallels in the late-Roman West; see R. Van Dam, *Lead-ership and Continuity in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 16 ff.

61 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 504 f. The Khārijite in question is al-Faḍl b. Saʿīd, on whom see below.

62 For such episodes, see Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 147 f.

63 That the Jazira was an infamous breeding ground for Khārijites is clear; for the sources, see Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 111n18. To that list of Marwānid rebellions (110 f.) can be added the incomplete enumeration to year 184 that follows, which is drawn from Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, al-Azdī, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr: al-Burayka (year 133), al-Mulabbad al-Shaybānī (137), Ḥassān b. Mujālid al-Hamdānī (148), ʿAbd al-Salām b. Hāshim al-Yashkurī (162), Yasīn/Bāsīr al-Tamīmī (168), Ḥamza (169), al-Ṣaḥṣaḥ (171), al-Faḍl b. Saʿīd al-Rādānī (173), Kh/Jurāsha b. Sinān (176), al-Walīd b. Ṭarīf (178 or 79), and Abū ʿAmr (184).

64 For a very useful overview of the current evidence, see M. Whittow, "Early Medieval Byzan-tium and the End of the Ancient World," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 9 (2009): 134–53.

the survival of state structures, practices, and institutions, including coinage and taxing. Conquest in the seventh century had not only put an end to over a century of ever-intensifying warfare between Byzantine and Sasanian armies in northern Mesopotamia, but, one imagines, it also (more invisibly) lowered transaction costs by removing borders and increasing the flow of information. Uniform coinage facilitated exchange, and was struck in sufficient number to ensure a degree of monetization. As the eighth century unrolled, one can discern increasing administrative size and complexity, which culminated in the great taxing machine that was the centralizing and bureaucratic early Abbasid Empire.[65] Already in the Marwānid period northern Mesopotamia had established itself as an important part of the interregional network of trade, but in the extraordinarily detailed and contemporaneous testimony of the *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, which was written in about 775, we have what can be compared to a high-resolution snapshot of the accelerating integration of the northern Syrian countryside into this network in the 760s and early 770s. The picture is not pretty, and much of the chronicler's lachrymose account focuses on the infamies and depravations of Mūsā b. Muṣʿab.[66]

A full accounting of fiscal practices and, crucially, how they related to trade is a subject for another place; three points can be made here. The first is about wealth and the grain market. The grains of the Jazira's rain-fed and irrigated plains and valleys were invaluable to the explosive urbanism of southern Iraq,[67] in addition to the burgeoning conurbation of al-Rāfiqa/al-Raqqa, with its industrial center and well-settled hinterlands.[68] The archaeological and literary evidence for settlement in the middle Euphrates and Balīkh combines nicely, and leaves no doubt that the late Umayyad and early Abbasid period saw a substantial increase in set-

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65 Non-Islamicists, often thinking comparatively or diachronically, and working with archaeological and numismatic evidence, sometimes find it easier than do Islamicists to recognize the enormous scale of the political and economic achievement. As good an example as any is the proposal that the late eighth and early ninth centuries mark the second of the Mediterranean's three great trade cycles; see C. Wickham, "The Mediterranean around 800: On the Brink of the Second Trade Cycle," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004), 161–74.

66 See above, notes 20 and 21. And note that al-Kindī (*Wulāt Miṣr*, 148) speaks of his corruption as well.

67 For a recent overview, see H. Kennedy, "Feeding the Five Hundred Thousand: Cities and Agriculture in Early Islamic Mesopotamia," *Iraq* 73 (2011): 177–99.

68 For the "vast urban complex" and its industrial center, see S. Heidemann, "The History of the Industrial and Commercial Area of ʿAbbasid al-Raqqa, Called al-Raqqa al-Muḥtariqa," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69 (2006): 33; for the surrounding region, S. Heidemann, "The Agricultural Hinterland of Baghdād, al-Raqqa and Sāmarrāʾ: Settlement Patterns in the Diyār Muḍar," in *Proche-Orient du Justinien aux abbassides: Peuplement et dynamiques spatiales*, ed. A. Borrut, et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 43–58.

tlement, driven in large measure by large-scale investments in irrigation.[69] Jaziran grains (mainly wheat and barley) were shipped downriver, sometimes already milled into flour, Mosul apparently playing an enormous role in the river-borne trade. That the city was wealthy and populous in the mid-eighth century is made clear by the scale of its building already in the late Umayyad period (especially the large-scale installation of mills in the city's purpose-built canal), the enlargement of its walls, and property speculation, along with stray anecdotes relating to mortality; we read that thirty thousand Mosulis died in the massacres of 133, and an epidemic in 773–74 is said to have killed as many as one thousand in a single day.[70] That the prosperity came in some large measure from growing and trading grain is just as clear, and not merely because the city's built geography was so clearly conditioned by milling: the chronicler from Zuqnīn is at some pains to describe the wealth of Mosulis living in the Jazira, which he explicitly attributes to landowning and money lending.[71] For him, measuring the scale of natural disaster (especially drought and epidemic) usually means measuring its effect upon grain prices and, occasionally, the damage done to the infrastructure of milling.[72] His was not merely a monetized society, but a highly price-sensitive one.[73]

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69 For the middle Euphrates, see S. Berthier, ed., *Peuplement rural et aménagements hydro-agricoles dans la moyenne vallée de l'Euphrate, fin VIIᵉ siècle–XIXᵉ siècle* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 2001), which documents significant expansion in settlement in the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods. The Balīkh valley survey reveals a peak of settlement in the late eighth and ninth centuries; see K. Bartl, *Frühislamische Besiedlung im Baliḫ-Tal/Nordsyrien* (Berlin: Reimer, 1994), 186 f. The evidence is summarized and discussed by Kennedy, "Feeding the Five Hundred Thousand," 190 ff.

70 For the epidemic, *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, 358 ff./305 ff.; and Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 81 (where a guesstimate of fifty thousand is made for the mid-eighth-century city). Cf. M. Decker (*Tilling the Hateful Earth: Agricultural Production and Trade in the Late Antique East* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 84 and 150 f.), where Edessa's population is estimated to have been somewhere between thirty and fifty thousand, apparently the largest in this part of Byzantine Oriens. Kennedy ("Feeding the Five Hundred Thousand," 177) puts Baghdad at its height at five hundred thousand, and Basra (earlier) at two hundred fifty thousand.

71 *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, 254/224 f.

72 For example, a flood in 762–763 is said to have swept away millstones on the Tigris, and by this we are presumably to understand mill installations such as those that lay in the river or its canals; see the *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, 228/205; and, for the city's milling industry, Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 78 f. (including a ten-year canal project). Mills were both expensive and crucial to the Jaziran economy, which is why they are singled out for protection in treaty texts (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* [Leiden: Brill, 1866], 174), and subject to legal scrutiny (thus Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 93 [reading *al-ʿarba*]).

73 According to a view ascribed to the early Abbasid Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad, the Mosulis were of three kinds: Khārijites, thieves, and merchants; see al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (Beirut: Steiner, 1978), 281.

The second point I wish to make is about the fiscal information. The *Zuqnīn Chronicle* is commonly said to document the operation of a rapacious taxing regime in the 760s and 770s—and this it surely does. What often goes unmentioned is how it also documents a minutely measured and audited rural society, the information and data gathered up by swarming tax agents, census takers, assessors, surveyors, and record-keeping scribes, all apparently working closely with small armies of specialized tax collectors targeting differential tax categories, accompanied by soldiers, sealers, and branders. There is nothing surprising about this; after all, there was a lot riding on the accuracy of the records.[74] Thus was rapacious taxing predicated upon a massively comprehensive record of tax liability—of people, properties (including churches and monasteries) and agricultural produce and goods, down to the single beehive.[75] The flood of personnel and scale of the record keeping may have been unprecedented—this (year 769–70) is the first time one reads of tax fugitives (*jawālī*) in northern Mesopotamia—but the accounts are probably exceptional only in the glimpse they allow us at rural conditions. Although it is difficult to measure the regularity of the flow of information from the tax-producing, rural hinterland to provincial and imperial capital, there is no question that Mosul, as geography would suggest, was not only an entrepôt for goods and people travelling downriver, but also for intelligence.[76] Jazirans and Mosulis alike, we read, would take their complaints about the noxious Mūsā b. Muṣʿab directly to the caliph in Baghdad.[77] Here one is entitled to point out that al-ʿAṭṭāf's rebellion reflects a striking failure of intelligence, one that contrasts sharply with al-Manṣūr's success in aborting Ismāʿīl b.

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74 Namely (if one believes the numbers), fifty-four million dirhams (the Jazīra, Diyār Rabīʿa and Muḍar, and Mosul), at least according to the budget that survives from Hārūn's time; see al-Ali, "Ibn al-Muṭarrif's List of Revenues."

75 The set of lugubrious accounts begins at *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, 252ff/223 ff. Mosuli honey figures in both budgets and the geographers; see, for example, al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm* (Leiden: Brill, 1877), 145; and al-Ali, "Ibn al-Muṭarrif's List of Revenues." For sealing and branding in early Islam and the Jazira, see C. F. Robinson, "Neck-sealing in Early Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48 (2005): 409–41.

76 Here it is worth noting that when al-Mahdī directed Hārūn to hasten from al-Raqqa to Baghdad by the *barīd*, he made his way from Ḥarrān to Baghdad via Mosul "in a matter of days"; see al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 466. Traveling from Mosul to Baghdad "in haste down the Tigris," as Ibn Shaddād has it, meant covering the distance in just over two days; see *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*, trans. D. S. Richards (Burlington, VT: Aldershot, 2002), 57. More generally, A. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-modern Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. 80 and 107.

77 *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, 313/271.

ʿAlī's bid for independence in 142; in that case, it was the caliph's knowledge of Ismāʿīl's alliance with the chief of the *rawābiṭ*, Ibn Mishkān, that was crucial.[78]

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that governor and caliph alike could access impressively detailed information about the fiscal bureaucracy, land tenure, revenues and the like, tax agent and caliph communicating directly with each other in the early Abbasid period, as an illuminating account from the year 176 tells us.[79] Al-Azdī preserves a wide variety of documents that give some indication of the flow of such information. One such document had been in the possession of the *qāḍī* al-Ḥārith b. Jārūd, who passed it on to his sons; it seems to have been part of an archive of "old" material (some written on parchment) relating in part to taxation, which was under the authority of the *qāḍī* in 146.[80] The letter, apparently reproduced in something very close to its entirety, was written on 13 Shawwāl 152 (22 October 769), on behalf of al-Manṣūr, to Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qasrī, governor of the city in 151 and 152. It takes up charges of embezzlement levied against a number of officials (agents, scribes, assistants, and accountants),[81] and instructs the governor to act upon information that the caliph has sent to him in a register (*daftar*), which recorded their names, their domiciles, and the accusations against them. Another account also illustrates the minute scale of record keeping. When, in 782 or 783, collection from an estate in the region of Mosul dropped well below its multiyear average (*ʿibra*),[82] news of the shortfall was transmitted to Baghdad, and al-Mahdī himself took the matter up and called the governor

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78 See al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 377 f.; Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 160.

79 Al-Wāqidī *apud* al-Ṭabarī (al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:627 f.) recounts how the recently appointed ʿUmar b. Mihrān handled temporizing and dissembling taxpayers in Egypt: "[I]n those days, the tax agents would correspond [directly] with the caliph," we read: one infers that the practice had fallen into desuetude by the time of al-Wāqidī (d. 823). By providing Hārūn all manner of information (names, sums, etc.), ʿUmar made good on his threat to deliver one of the shirkers to Baghdad, but the measure had only mixed results because others failed to deliver the third installment (*najm*), forcing him to summon the "taxpayers and merchants," the latter, one supposes, acting as money lenders. For *najm* as "installment," see http://hum.leiden.edu/lias/formation-of-islam/topics-state/arab-fisc-term.html#n.

80 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 405, 413 and 429; cf. W. Hallaq, "The Qadi's Diwan (*sijill*) before the Ottomans," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61 (1998): 415–36; and, more generally, I. Bligh-Abramski, "The Judiciary (*qāḍīs*) as a Governmental-administrative Tool in Early Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35 (1992): 40–71.

81 *ʿUmmāl*, *kuttāb*, *aʿwān* and *qasāṭīr*.

82 For the definition, see C. E. Bosworth, "Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Khwārazmī on the Technical Terms of the Secretary's Art: A Contribution to the Social History of Medieval Islam," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 12 (1969): 135 f. (it documents two- or three-year horizons for averaging).

to account. "It happens that I am familiar with the issue," explained Mūsā b. Muṣʿab, the North's most infamous governor, "since it [the estate, *ḍayʿa*] is adjacent to mine . . . Its yield [that was to be the basis for the tax collection] was transferred to another estate, and both [of the estates] are [now] owned by another man."[83] The caliph found the explanation unpersuasive, and transferred Mūsā to Egypt. The rebellion of al-Faḍl b. Saʿīd al-Rādānī started in Balad in 173, where he was promptly bought off for one hundred thousand dirhams; but he reappeared in 175 near Nisibis with five hundred men under his command, and made his way northwest (as far as Khilāṭ), then headed southeast, eventually being killed on the Zāb. The result was a reduction in tax revenue, which al-Azdī's sources can identify by category.[84]

The third point to be made here regards tax liability. The expansion and fiscal integration of swathes of the northern Mesopotamian countryside had manifold effects in the 760s and 770s. One was to enrich Mosuli landowners and grain merchants, who profited from the interdigitation of market and fisc. Another was to subordinate a religio-ethnic elite under the new political order. Sedentarization must have been a complex, start-and-stop process, sometimes sponsored by the state by granting land;[85] but the *Zuqnīn Chronicle* makes it clear that no later than the mid- to late 760s, Muslim Arabs (*ṭayyāyē*) had fallen off the Abbasids' *dīwān*, purchased lands and cattle, and taken to agriculture, as much as they might have wanted to re-enroll in the caliph's army.[86] Settlement in this case must mainly have been a reflex of dynastic change. Having lost their status as members of the ruling elite, these demobilized Arabs now shared the same fate as the Christian peasants of the Jazira, subject not only to the regime of census and assessment (*taʿdīl*) that until this point (772–73) had been restricted to non-Arab Christians,[87]

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83 And so, one presumes, there was an over-collection elsewhere—or so he was claiming; al-Azdī, *Taʾrikh*, 248 f.; on Mūsā, see Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 156 ff.

84 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 504 f.

85 Thus we read that already in Muʿāwiya's time Arabs were being settled in the Jazira; see al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, 178. For settlement on the frontier in the early Abbasid period, see P. von Sivers, "Land and Trade in the ʿAbbāsid Thughūr, 750–962/133–351," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25 (1982): 75 f.

86 As is made clear in at least two crucial passages; *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, 231/208 (in 766–67 the *ṭayyāyē* no longer receive the *gzītā*) and 251/222 (mustering in Ḥarrān in 767–68). The classic discussion remains C. Cahen, "Fiscalité, propriété, antagonismes sociaux en Haute-Mésopotamie au temps des premiers ʿAbbasides, d'après Denys de Tell-Mahré," *Arabica* 1 (1954): 136–52; see also Kennedy, *Armies of the Caliphs*, 96.

87 *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, 298/259 (where its unprecedented character is mentioned explicitly as a cause of outrage). For Egyptian parallels, see W. al-Qāḍī, "Population Census and Land Surveys under the Umayyads (41–132/661–750)," *Der Islam* 83 (2008): 405 ff. ("re-assessment").

but also to the humiliation, torture, and, to judge from our chronicler's lugubrious catalogue of woe, the destitution that could come with being taxed so mercilessly.[88]

So the beneficiaries of taxation—both materially and in status—had become taxpayers, and this at precisely the time that non-Arab converts were taking on increasingly prominent roles in the state. Whatever their precise construction of faith, to many Muslim Arabs of northern Mesopotamia it must have appeared a perversion of the natural order of things that they were to pay a humiliating tribute to a Jaziran governor, especially a non-Arab parvenu such as Khālid b. Barmak.[89] Arab rule—with all the privileges that it delivered or implied—was over.[90] Echoes of the extension of tax liabilities into the pastoralist economy can be heard in al-Azdī. The first attestation we have for a tax agent specifically tasked with levying the *kharāj* and *ṣadaqāt*, the pastoralists' tax that the Zuqnīn chronicler knows as *ṣadaqāt al-māl*, appears in 168/785, and three years later we read of a tax-levying expedition to the Taghlib that went very badly.[91] One cannot fail to notice that the frequency of Khārijite rebellions in the Jazira and Mosul appears to correlate well with the extension of taxation into the countryside during the late 760s and 770s.[92]

What does this context allow us to say about the events in question? It is impossible to avoid the obvious conclusion that taxing lay at or near the heart of the matter: it was Minjāb and his taxes that seem to have concerned al-ʿAṭṭāf, just as it was recouping the uncollected taxes that concerned Hārūn and his new governor, Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Ḥarashī. As a token of political subordination and a mechanism for surplus extraction, taxation was a perennial source of contention

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88 Thus the *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, 269 f./237 f. (*ṭayyāyē* subjected to all manner of torture and humiliation). Various tortures are condemned by Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 105, 109, and 119.

89 The awe that the Mosulis felt for Khālid b. Barmak, one Mosuli informant reported, was greater than they had for any other governor; see al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 422 f.; and al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:383. On Khālid's early career, see C. E. Bosworth, "Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Kirmānī and the Rise of the Barmakids," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 57 (1994): 268–82. According to the *Zuqnīn Chronicle* (266/234), Mūsā b. Muṣʿab employed a Zoroastrian administrator (Syr: ʿāmel).

90 The Zuqnīn chronicler reflects how the Syrian Arabs saw things: the "Persians" (*parsāyē*) had defeated the (Arab) Umayyads, the Arabs of Syria rebelled against the Persians, Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr was "the king of the Persians" (*malkā d-parsāyē*), etc. See the *Zuqnīn Chronicle*, 192/178 and 195/181.

91 Al-Azdi, *Taʾrikh*, 498 f. According to the *Zuqnīn Chronicle* (319/275), the effects of Mūsā's calamitous taxing measures had reached some in Taghlib a decade earlier. Needless to say, pastoralist and settled economies were intertwined.

92 For an unscientific sample, see above, note 63.

in virtually all provinces (as elsewhere), of course. To understand this particular episode, one needs to consider timing.

Above I noted the relatively modest sum (six million dirhams) that al-Ḥarashī was able to recoup. One can discount the figure for any number of reasons, but that it may be taken to suggest that revenues were down in this period is, as it happens, confirmed by al-Azdī himself,[93] who describes a fall in wheat prices that took place a year before al-ʿAṭṭāf's rebellion, the most recent drop in a period of volatility that is documented by the *Zuqnīn Chronicle*.[94] So we have a trigger: the fiscal system was embedded in a thoroughly monetized grain market (taxes were to be paid in coin by selling crops, often at gross disadvantage to cultivators),[95] and even if prices were depressed, Baghdad expected the taxes all the same—and at levels that were unsustainable. For above all, the army needed to be paid in coin. One is inevitably drawn to the conclusion that something like a structural limit was being reached: Baghdad had been pressing too hard for too long. Al-Manṣūr had squeezed,[96] Mūsā b. Muṣʿab had squeezed, and now Hārūn was squeezing anew, as Christian chroniclers are keen to record.[97]

In sum, it seems likely that al-ʿAṭṭāf's takeover was less the result of Mosuli audacity than desperate resourcefulness, the events ultimately being set in train by Baghdad's increasing appetite for revenue. Landowners here and elsewhere had the means to turn the asynchrony of taxing season and agricultural yield to their advantage, and, in any number of ways, capitalize upon the vulnerable peasant—"the needy tiller who works with his own hand," as Abū Yūsuf knows

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93 In addition to the budget data, cf. the higher numbers reported by Qudāma b. Jaʿfar (6,300,000) and Ibn Khurdādhbih (4,000,000); see Robinson, *Empire and Elites*, 82.

94 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 506; for a discussion of these and other prices in the period, see now M. Campopiano, "State, Land Tax, and Agriculture in Iraq from the Arab Conquest to the Crisis of the Abbasid Caliphate (Seventh-Tenth Centuries)," *Studia Islamica* 107 (2012): 1–37 (for Mosul, 33 f.); and Campopiano, "Land Tax ʿalāl-misāḥa and *muqāsama*: Legal Theory and the Balance of Social Forces in Early Medieval Iraq (6th–8th Centuries C.E.)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 54 (2011): 258 f. However and whenever one sees the introduction of the *muqāsama* in the Sawād, it had not taken root in the Jazira in this period (if it ever did). In fact, as Cahen noted ("Fiscalité, propriété, antagonismes sociaux," 138 f. and 144 f.), the anonymous chronicler from Zuqnīn used a terminology that is archaic by the standards of the jurists, and there is no evidence of the *muqāsama* in operation in the world that he knew.

95 For details, see C. F. Robinson, "One Monk's Economics: The Countryside of Northern Syria in the Late Eighth Century," (forthcoming).

96 See, for example, Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche 1166–1199* (Paris: Laroux, 1899–1924), 11:xxv.

97 See, for example, the *Chronicle of 1234*, published as *Chronicon anonymum ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens* (1916; reprint, Louvain: CSCO, 1974), 2:3/1 ("tribute," *mdattā*).

him;[98] these and other activities were profitable, if necessarily risky.[99] But now the balance between gain and risk had been lost, and the Mosuli landowners took matter into their own hands. Seen from a broader perspective, this was no small thing: what we may have is an attempt on the part of a landowning elite to outfit itself with military force independent of the state. At the very least, we have an attempt to force Baghdad's hand. That it failed reflects not merely something about Abbasid power at the end of the eighth century, but also something about the nature of early Islamic politics in general.[100]

IV

Having reached some conclusions about the events of the mid-790s, we may now usefully turn to some concluding observations about the nature of Abbasid rule.

What we have in the late eighth century is a discernibly Islamic iteration of empire: a large and multinational polity that made hegemonic claims, which were both compelling and legitimating, and that featured an organizational hub and extracted wealth from subordinated populations, typically through tax or tribute.[101] In this particular case, claims for legitimacy and hegemony were grounded in history (especially the Abbasid revolution), descent (consanguinity with the Prophet) and an imam-centric conception of the religio-political order,[102] a model of reciprocal loyalty between ruler and elite being periodically reaffirmed

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98 Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 122, which stipulates a lower rate for the peasant, but effectively concedes coerced selling. As Cahen puts it crisply: "Les paysans ne peuvent l'acquérir [coinage to pay the tax] que par la vente immédiate de leur récolte" ("Fiscalité, propriété, antagonismes sociaux," 143).

99 Wickham, *Framing the Middle Ages*, 68. Such practices are described by the *Zuqnīn Chronicle* (Robinson, "One Monk's Economics"), and proscribed by Abū Yūsuf (for one example, *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, 105). The most sophisticated discussion of the *Kitāb al-Kharāj* belongs to N. Calder (*Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 121 ff.), but the argument that the final redaction belongs to al-Khaṣṣāf and the mid-third century is unpersuasive. I see no reason to disbelieve that it belongs in the late second century.

100 Cf. C. Wickham, "Tributary Empires: Late Rome and the Arab Caliphate," in *Tributary Empires in Global History*, ed. Bang and Bayly, 209 ff.

101 For some of the competing definitions of "state" and "empire," see the literature cited in note 1 above; for one recent Middle Eastern case study, K. Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

102 One cannot improve upon the discussion in P. Crone and M. Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 80 ff.

and reenacted by ceremonial.[103] The state's finances were drawn principally from agricultural surpluses that were extracted through taxes on the land levied in coins, either from the Iraqi hinterland or the empire's heterogeneous provinces. Income (net of structural inefficiencies, leakage, embezzlement, graft, etc.) was redirected chiefly towards maintaining tools of coercion (especially armies and the administrators who supported them) and modes of persuasion, such as a wide variety of ceremonial events and rituals, in addition to ongoing performances of status and entitlement, such as the possession and consumption of wealth.

Late eighth-century Baghdad thus served as the organizational and ideological center of an economic and political network of cities and towns that was tied together by the flow of information, goods, coins, people, and power. And provincial cities, such as Mosul, were the primary sites where Baghdad's hegemonic claims had to be translated into effective policies and politics. Al-Azdī, to whom we owe so much of our understanding of Mosuli politics, understood some version of this idea—that metropolis and provincial capital were partners in the creation and maintenance of empire. This is the case in two respects.

First, our author tells us the Mosuli elite was the product of conquest, Arab tribal settlement, Umayyad and Abbasid investment and patronage, and the considerable wealth that came from the city's political, military, and economic role within a province that was tributary to the caliphs. We may not be able to map the distribution of the elite's social power in any detail, nor know whether non-Muslims played any real part in it,[104] but we have enough evidence to know that the ingredients were descent (especially from settler tribes, such as the Azd and Hamdān), landowning, office holding, and religious learning. Such social power explains why locals had prerogatives (such as militias) that Baghdad respected, and produced *qāḍī*s whom Baghdad was content to appoint. Power, one might say, had to be refracted through the provincials in order to be projected effectively. In this sense, there certainly was a "system," as Kennedy would have it, one that mediated between provincial capital and imperial metropolis.

On the other hand, al-Azdī also provides for us a more or less continuous narrative of provincial ambivalence about this system. For throughout the eighth century Mosulis had been given to testing the caliphs' limits, Umayyad and Abbasid alike:

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103 A. Marsham, *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy: Accession and Succession in the First Muslim Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

104 When Muslims built Mosul on the opposite side of the river from Nineveh, they symbolically left behind the ancient and late-antique world. Cf. the altogether more prominent role of Christian notables in Jaziran towns and cities, such as Edessa, Amida, Nisibis, and Mayyāfāriqīn.

by sheltering or supporting Khārijites;[105] switching sides as soon as the opportunity presented itself and putting up imprudent opposition to the imposition of Abbasid rule (in 132–33); providing a setting for Ismāʿīl b. ʿAlī's attempt to resist dismissal by the caliph (in 142); and throwing their lot in with al-ʿAṭṭāf b. Sufyān. Here the pattern was not to ask for permission, it appears, but to ask for forgiveness, in this last case by leveraging the connections Mosulis had made with those with close ties of loyalty or kinship with Baghdad. In other words, it appears that the Mosulis knew that the caliphs' oaths, pledges, threats, and ultimatums were made as a matter of course; they were part of the rhetoric of power and rule, one of its "rules," and could be managed as such.[106] The negotiating that took place in Marj Juhayna, which opened the way for the re-imposition of direct Abbasid rule in 180, was thus more than just the denouement of one episode of Mosuli restiveness. In fact, practices of face-to-face negotiation carried out to avert the threat or risk of violence appear frequently enough that they can be said to have both symbolized the bro-kered nature of Abbasid rule and constituted a crucial tool in the very conduct of politics.[107] Unacknowledged in theory, they were as much part of the "system" of rule (and of "rules") as any other institutionalized practice.

Such as it was then, the "system" that tied province to metropolis was already in clear disrepair before the civil war that broke out upon Hārūn's death, and resulted in the emergence of local autonomy signaled by the power of local chief-tains. How al-Azdī understands the politics of the matter is worth noting:

> When caliphal authority (*al-sulṭān*) weakened, and the protection (*al-ḥimāya*) [it afforded] diminished, the people of Mosul rallied around ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī [a local chief-tain] so that he would take control of the region and protect its sub-districts. From this time until the passing of the Banū al-Ḥasan, they would let enter [into the city] a caliphally appointed governor (*al-wālī min wulāt al-sulṭān*) only if they found him satisfactory, their being in effective control all the while.[108]

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105 Examples for which we have explicit evidence for Mosuli favor include Bahlūl b. Bishr (in 119), Bisṭām and/or Saʿīd b. Baḥdal (126), al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays (128), and al-Ḥassān b. Mujālid (148).

106 As far back as Marwān II, a caliph had pledged to execute the Mosulis' fighting men (*muqā-tila*) and enslave their offspring (al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 259), but here too nothing came of the threats. The unacknowledged "rules," it could be argued, would have been violated. (I borrow the term and idea from G. Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* [Darmstadt: Primus, 1997]). Here it could also be said that the wanton violence of the revolutionary period (see Robinson, "The Violence of the Abbasid Revolution") took place at a moment of intense religio-political charge, precisely when those rules of engagement had been suspended.

107 On Abbasid diplomatics in this context, see Tillier, "Le cadi et le sauf-conduit."

108 Al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 563 (year 195).

Might protection be one key to understanding empire? This is Bang's view,[109] and it should be tested for the eighth century. For whatever else the caliphs offered the Mosulis in the way of legitimacy and status, the violence that their armies could effect, be it threatened or actualized, was meant to offer them protection from the endemic unruliness, lawlessness, and banditry that put their trade, travel, and prosperity at risk. And on those occasions when caliphal armies were not up to the task, Abbasid governors could still buy off those who threatened order.[110] Of course the Mosulis paid for this protection with their taxes. So although there is no doubting that the dissolution of order resulting from the civil war opened up opportunities for locals across the empire to assert themselves, already earlier in the second Islamic century the Mosulis were weighing the possibility that ever-rising taxes were too high a cost to pay. They sought an alternative, but their experiment came too early in the history of the caliphate.

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[109] Bang, "Trade and Empire—In Search of Organizing Concepts for the Roman Economy," *Past & Present* 195 (2007): 3–54, esp. at 39 ff.

[110] Buying off Khārijites was common practice. One instance comes in the rebellion of al-Faḍl b. Saʿīd al-Rādānī (see above), and another in al-Mulabbad, who, having inflicted a series of crushing defeats on Abbasid armies, was bought off by Ḥumayd b. Qaḥṭaba, the governor of the Jazira, for one-hundred thousands dirhams; see, for example, Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ, *Taʾrīkh* (Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-Ādāb, 1967), 444; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, 3:120 ff.; al-Azdī, *Taʾrīkh*, 365 ff.; and al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 3:248 f.

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Michael Cooperson

An Early Arabic Conversion Story: The Case of al-Faḍl b. Sahl[1]

In 1990, Richard Bulliet published an essay in which he noted that early Arabic historical sources contain remarkably few conversion stories. By his count, al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-Buldān* contains only four, while "the local biographical dictionaries from Nishapur, Isfahan, and Jurjan, which contain some 7,000 biographies," include only five.[2] In reading through Ibn Saʿd's *Ṭabaqāt* I have come across several more. All of them, however, deal with the conversion of pagan Arabs during the lifetime of the Prophet. In one well-known report, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb strikes his believing sister and her husband but then, seeing that their faith is unshaken, asks to hear the Qurʾānic verses he had caught them listening to.[3]   Another, more cryptic report says that a tribesman of Sulaym joined

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[1] It was Professor Roy Mottahedeh who in the late 1980s introduced Harvard's Arabic doctoral cohort to Professor Ahmad Mahdavi Damghani, who very kindly agreed to meet with us to read Arabic. Once a week, Kristen Brustad and I would call on Professor Damghani to discuss the Arabic text we had brought with us. We soon noticed several astonishing things. First, he could comment exhaustively on any text we chose to bring—to the point that we began seeking out especially difficult texts just to see what would happen. (He of course realized this; when we came in with the notoriously unreadable *Risālat al-Ghufrān* of al-Maʿarrī, he laughed delightedly and said, "I know what you're up to!") Second, he preferred to comment without looking at the text: everything he wanted to tell us was in his head. (When we pointed out that an explanation he had given differed from the one in the editor's footnote, he recited the footnote from memory and explained why it was wrong.) Finally, we noticed that he was equally encyclopaedic in his commentaries on Persian texts, which he delivered to the class that met immediately after ours. In the course of those years, Kristen—now Professor of Arabic at the University of Texas at Austin—and I read Shiite traditions, pre- and early Islamic poetry, and literary prose, as the mood took us; and even now many of the texts I most enjoy teaching are the ones I first heard read aloud in Professor Damghani's office in Coolidge Hall. To him I also owe a great debt of gratitude for his help with my dissertation: when I expressed an interest in Shiite accounts of the death of the Imam ʿAlī al-Riḍā, he sent me to Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī's *ʿUyūn Akhbār al-Riḍā*, to which I ended up devoting an entire chapter of what became my first book. It is therefore an honor and a pleasure to offer a modest contribution to this volume, and to thank the editors for their kind invitation to participate. The following essay does not deal directly with any of Professor Damghani's many contributions to the field of Arabic, Persian, and Islamic studies. It does, however, deal with a historical figure who, like him, was famous for his eloquence in both Arabic and Persian. I hope that he will greet whatever errors he finds in it with his customary indulgence.

[2] Bulliet, "Conversion Stories," 125. By "conversion stories" he evidently means narratives that provide details about the circumstances under which some person or persons accepted Islam.

[3] Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:142–43.

the Prophet after hearing "the speech of Muḥammad," which impressed him more than "the *tarjamah* of the Romans, the mutterings (*haynamah*) of Persia, the poems of the Arabs, the incantations of the soothsayers, and the speech of the chiefs (*maqāwil*) of Ḥimyar." Yet another tribesman is said to have renounced his idol when he saw two foxes urinating on it.[4] But as the *Ṭabaqāt* moves into the second and third generations after the Prophet, the motives and feelings of converts cease to be a matter of interest. Despite ample evidence that people were "entering God's religion in throngs" during this period, transmitters seem indifferent to the how and why of conversion.[5]

To explain the indifference of second- and third-century observers, Bulliet looks to conversion itself, suggesting that "change of religion may not have been particularly momentous for the convert." Our sources do not refer to spiritual or intellectual transformation because becoming a Muslim "was more a matter of social behavior than of religious belief."[6] During this period, one might adopt Islam without knowing very much about it. In later times, though, "as social distinctiveness declined," the element of faith "gradually became more important." Bulliet thus posits "a change in the character of conversion sometime around the fourth Islamic century."[7] To these proposals one might add the suggestion that there had been another, earlier change in the character of conversion, or at

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4 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:148–49. I do not know what *tarjamat al-Rūm* might be, nor do I know what was special about the speech of the subkings or clan chiefs of Ḥimyar (on *qayl* and *miqwal* see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, s.v. QWL, and Beeston, "Ḳayl"). *Haynama* is apparently the same as *zamzama*, the droning sound of Zoroastrian prayers.

5 Evidence for conversion comes directly from non-Muslim sources (for which see Morony, *Iraq*, and Choksy, *Conflict*) and indirectly from Arabic sources, most notably from genealogies (Bulliet, "Conversion Stories"). On the timing of the conversions see now Bulliet, "Onomastic Evidence." The citation is Qurʾān 110:2 (tr. Arberry). This paper will not address conversion of the kind that Sufi biographers call *tawba*, that is, renewed (ascetic or mystical) commitment to Islam on the part of persons already (nominally) Muslim.

6 Bulliet, "Conversion Stories," 127–28. DeWeese offers a similar argument based on his corpus of Inner Asian texts, where conversion to Islam "is not a change of heart, as might be conveyed by the use of *tawbah* or its derivatives, or of mind, as in the 'intellectual' process implied by *daʿwah* or its derivatives, but a change of status" (*Islamization*, 23; emphasis in original). A somewhat different view is that of Hodgson, who speaks not only of the "essentially social reasons" for conversion, but also of the "appeal to people's religious consciousness" that often proved successful because of the "populistic intelligibility of Islam" (*Expansion*, 535–36).

7 Bulliet, "Conversion Stories," 131, 132. One of the most notable Arabic conversion stories, that of Samawʾal al-Maghribī (d. 570/1175; ed. Perlmann, and, from an earlier text, by Marazka et al.), is indeed from a later period. From an even later period, and from a different region altogether, we have the Inner Asian conversion narratives, whose role in the diffusion of Islam has been exhaustively studied by DeWeese, *Islamization*.

least in the way it was remembered and represented. Briefly put, conversions by Arabs seem to have been interesting, while conversions by non-Arabs were not. This distinction doubtless had something to do with the ethnicity of the people involved, but there may have been other, formal reasons too. Breaking with one's family to join a persecuted minority, as the first Muslims did, made for a story worth retelling. But adopting the faith of a triumphant conqueror did not inspire self-congratulatory or self-reflective narratives on the part of converts. At the end of this essay I will consider the narratological implications of this phenomenon.

To better understand how Arabic sources represent conversion, I would like to look at what seems to be a partial exception to the rule of second- and third-century indifference to conversion stories: the narrative traditions surrounding the Abbasid administrator al-Faḍl b. Sahl (d. 202/817–18).[8] A protégé of the Barmakī family, al-Faḍl was famous for his role in guiding the Abbasid prince al-Maʾmūn to victory in his campaign to unseat his half-brother, the caliph al-Amīn. There are two texts that describe the vizier's conversion to Islam. The first appears in the *Kitāb al-Wuzarāʾ wa al-Kuttāb* (*Book of Viziers and Scribes*) by al-Jahshiyārī (d. 331/942). It explains why the members of al-Faḍl's originally Zoroastrian family found it to their advantage to adopt Islam. The second text appears in the *Taʾrīkh al-Ḥukamāʾ* (Biographies of Philosopher-Scientists) by Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 646/1248), as abridged by al-Zawzanī in 647/1259. This account purports to tell us the words al-Faḍl spoke immediately after his conversion. Al-Jahshiyārī's report is ostensibly older, and provides a good deal of incidental detail about al-Faḍl and his family history. Therefore, we will address it first.

According to al-Jahshiyārī, al-Faḍl's family came from a place called al-Sīb or Ṣābarnītā, near Kūfah. Al-Faḍl's paternal uncle, Yazīd b. Zādanfarūkh, managed an estate for one ʿĀṣim b. Ṣubayḥ, a client of Dāwūd b. ʿAlī.[9] Jealous of Yazīd's success, ʿĀṣim accused him of malfeasance, killed him in a drunken rage, and appropriated his property. In response, Yazīd's brother Sahl appealed to Yaḥyā b. Khālid, of the powerful Barmakī family of viziers, to ask that ʿĀṣim be punished and the property returned. Yaḥyā entrusted the task to a client of his named Sallām b. al-Faraj, who wrested the estate back from ʿĀṣim's agents. At this point, we are told, Sahl converted to Islam at the hands of Sallām. The implication is that the wronged man's protectors felt that they would be better able to protect

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8 On al-Faḍl see Sourdel, *Vizirat*, 1:196–213; Scarcia Amoretti, "Gli Aṣḥāb di ʿAlī al-Riḍā"; Yücesoy, "Al-Faḍl b. Sahl."

9 This is apparently the Abbasid prince Dāwūd b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-ʿAbbās.

him if he were a Muslim. In the event, ʿĀṣim did try to reclaim the property, but Sahl was able to retain it thanks to the influence of his patron Sallām.[10]

This first part of the story is interesting for a number of reasons. It indicates that a *mawlā* who was a Muslim could kill a Zoroastrian without necessarily incurring a legal penalty.[11] Also, it suggests that an injured *mawlā* might seek the help of another, more powerful *mawlā* to plead his case. One nevertheless wonders what the basis for Sahl's appeal to Yaḥyā al-Barmakī may have been. Sahl's family was Iraqi and Zoroastrian, while Yaḥyā's was originally Buddhist, from Balkh.[12] In the ethnolinguistic parlance of the time, both were ʿ*ajam* (roughly, "non-Arabs"), but was that enough of a reason to expect help? We also know that Sahl's family belonged to the *dihqān* (provincial administrative and landowning) class. Perhaps, then, Sahl could presume on Yaḥyā's sense of duty toward a fellow patrician. In any case it is clear that, despite belonging to a family that had converted generations before, Yaḥyā served as a middleman between the Arab Muslim ruling class and the remnants of the *dahāqīn* whose social clout was limited because they were (as al-Jahshiyārī puts it) "still Magians."[13]

Now living (continues al-Jahshiyārī) under the protection of Sallām, Sahl found himself mixing with the Barmakī family, and in a position to seek advancement for his sons al-Faḍl and al-Ḥasan. Yaḥyā al-Barmakī himself took a benevolent interest in the brothers and gave them sinecures in his household. Al-Faḍl's expert translation of a document from Persian into Arabic led Yaḥyā to exclaim that the young man would go far—on one condition. "Become a Muslim," said Yaḥyā, "so I can find a way to give you some real responsibility." Al-Faḍl agreed and asked Yaḥyā to preside at his conversion. But Yaḥyā declined, saying that there was a better way for al-Faḍl to "reap the same worldly benefits we have" (*aḍaʿuka mawḍiʿan tanālu bihi min dunyāna*). He sent al-Faḍl to his son Jaʿfar, who presented him to al-Maʾmūn, asking the prince to sponsor al-Faḍl's adoption of Islam. Al-Maʾmūn did so, adding the young man's name to his list of sti-

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10 Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarāʾ*, 229–30.

11 According to the evidence collected by Fattal, jurists of the four Sunnī schools disagreed about whether a Muslim who kills a non-Muslim can be put to death. Except for the Ḥanafīs, who called for the same amount in all cases, the jurists called for different amounts of blood money to be paid depending on whether the victim is a Muslim, a *dhimmī*, or a Zoroastrian (*Statut légal*, 113–18). The category "Muslim" evidently included *mawālī* converts.

12 On the origins of the Barmakīs see Sourdel, *Vizirat*, 1:129–33.

13 It is noteworthy that Sahl, as well as his sons al-Faḍl and al-Ḥasan, had Arabic names even before their conversions.

pendiaries. Al-Faḍl nevertheless remained in Jaʿfar's service until the fall of the Barmakī family, after which he attached himself directly to al-Maʾmūn.[14]

This part of the story is also of interest. It indicates that some people at least converted as individuals, not as families. Indeed, Sahl seems to have anticipated that his sons would benefit by embracing Islam on their own, at the time and place best calculated to advance their careers. Conversion offered advantages to both parties: the convert was enabled to rise in society, while the patron gained prestige and religious merit. That everyone involved understood the calculations involved is clear from Yaḥyā's advice to al-Faḍl. Al-Faḍl was happy enough to convert through Yaḥyā, who stood higher on the social scale than his father's protector Sallām. But Yaḥyā cannily proposes that he leapfrog up to the very top of the scale and establish a relationship with al-Maʾmūn, who was then second in line to succeed as caliph.[15]

Al-Jahshiyārī's account represents conversion as a course of action chosen for practical and indeed opportunistic motives. But it hardly follows that the story means to condemn such conversions as insincere. Generally speaking, premodern Arabic sources give the impression that conversion was considered valid by virtue of the ritual or ceremony that effected it. Once the ritual was carried out, the convert stood in a new relationship to God, and what he made of that relationship was up to him.[16] Second- and third-century Muslims could, of course, impugn another's state of belief. But I do not recall any instances of persons being explicitly accused of having been insincere at the moment of conversion and therefore deserving of punishment now.[17] Rather, a *zindīq* (for example) is accused of believing things, or doing things, that are wrong precisely because he is a Muslim.

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14 Jahshiyārī, *Wuzarāʾ*, 230–31.

15 It must not be assumed that this sort of conversion was typical. Until recently, it was believed that non-Arabs embraced Islam by converting at the hands of an Arab Muslim and entering into a legal relationship of clientage (*walāʾ*). But a recent essay by Bulliet argues that this scenario is unlikely, at least as an explanation for the majority of conversions. In the immediate postconquest period, Arab Muslims were few and far between. How—Bulliet asks—would prospective converts have tracked them down? How would they have learned of the procedure in the first place? And what was to prevent them from claiming they had undergone the procedure when they had not? For these reasons, he concludes that conversion through *walāʾ* is "highly implausible as the primary form of free conversion" ("Onomastic Evidence," 261).

16 In his trenchant critique of Western descriptions of Inner Asian Islam as "superficial," De-Weese suggests that "the Islamic tradition regards even purely formal and 'external' adoption of Islamic practices and patterns as religiously meaningful" since those practices "may themselves transmit the divine grace which alone can 'turn' the soul toward God and lead to a 'change of heart'" (*Islamization*, 25–27; see also 3–4, 9).

17 For this, one would expect to see the term *munāfiq* ("hypocrite" or "dissembler"), which was familiar from the Qurʾān, but I cannot recall seeing it used as a term of abuse in the biographies

Like most Abbasid conversion stories, al-Jahshiyārī's account does not describe the procedure that al-Faḍl must have followed, nor does it tell us what—if anything—he had to say about the experience.[18] There is, however, a story from a much later source that purports to tell us a little about these matters. This is the passage from al-Zawzanī's abridgement of Ibn al-Qifṭī, whose biography of the Nestorian physician Jibrīl or Jibrāʾīl b. Bukhtīshūʿ (d. 212/827) contains the following anecdote:

> When telling [stories] to Ibrāhīm al-Mahdī one day, Jibrāʾīl mentioned that he once went to see the Dual Authority al-Faḍl b. Sahl after the latter had become a Muslim.[19] [Al-Faḍl] had been circumcised, and he was reading a copy of the Qurʾān placed before him.

> [Jibrāʾīl] said, "I asked him, '*Chun bīnī nāmi-i Īzad*?' He answered, '*Khush u chun Kalīla wa-Dimna*.'"

> The translation (*tafsīr*) of what they said is: "I asked him, 'How do you find the book of God (*kayfa tarā kitāba l-lāh*)?' He answered, "Good, like *Kalīla and Dimna*" (*ṭayyib wa-mithl Kalīla wa-Dimna*).[20]

This is an odd story, and its oddness is something we will have to consider. To begin with, though, it is worth noting that its transmission history, fragmented though it is, is historically impeccable. Like al-Faḍl, the physician Jibrīl b. Bukhtīshūʿ was a protégé of Yaḥyā al-Barmakī. He could therefore have been present when al-Faḍl converted in 190/806. He is also likely to have crossed paths with Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī (d. 224/839), an uncle of the caliph al-Maʾmūn. And Ibrāhīm, as it happens, had every reason to dislike al-Faḍl. Like his fellow Abbasids, he doubtless held the vizier responsible for leading al-Maʾmūn's campaign against al-Amīn, a campaign described as "a Magian plot." Doubtless, too, he blamed al-Faḍl for al-Maʾmūn's decision to nominate an *Alid* as his heir apparent and thereby remove the Abbasids from the line of succession.[21] This decision had an especially direct effect on Ibrahim, whose Abbasid relatives named him caliph in opposition to al-Maʾmūn. Forced to flee for his life when al-Maʾmūn

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of second- and third-century figures.

18 The only Arabic reference I know to the procedure is a report that likens the fear a worshipper feels before God to the fear a Zoroastrian feels when he cuts his sacred cord before his Muslim sponsor (Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, 10:40). I thank William Sherman for this reference.

19 *Dhū al-riʾāsatayn*, a title given him by al-Maʾmūn to indicate his responsibility for both military and administrative affairs.

20 Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Ḥukamāʾ*, 140.

21 On these events, see Scarcia Amoretti, "Gli Aṣḥāb di ʿAlī al-Riḍā"; Cooperson, *Classical*, esp. 70–106; Tor, "Historiographical Reexamination"; Bayhom-Daou, "Al-Maʾmūn's Alleged Apocalyptic Beliefs."

returned to Baghdad in 204/819, he remained a fugitive until 210/825–26, when he was discovered and pardoned.[22] Meanwhile, Jibrīl too had suffered as a result of the civil war. From 193/809 to 198/813, he served as physician to al-Amīn. Upon al-Amīn's defeat, he was put in prison, where he remained until 202/817. Three years later he was again disgraced and again reinstated, this time by al-Maʾmūn, but died soon afterwards (212/827).

Given these dates, then, Jibrīl b. Bukhtīshūʿ could certainly have told Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī an anecdote about al-Faḍl's conversion to Islam. One opportunity may have come during al-Amīn's caliphate, when both Jibrīl and Ibrāhīm were in Baghdad. The reference to *Dhū al-riʾāsatayn* (the Dual Authority), a title al-Faḍl received in 196/812, may mean that Jibrīl told the story after that date, though it is not clear why he should have used the title (it is more likely an addition by a transmitter). Perhaps, then, the story was told during the reign of al-Maʾmūn: that is, between 202/817, when Jibrīl was released from prison, and 204/819, when his alleged auditor Ibrāhīm went into hiding.[23]

As we have seen, both Jibrīl and Ibrāhīm had good reason to resent al-Faḍl and to tell stories at his expense. Assuming, then, that the story was intended to belittle the vizier, how exactly does it do so? Taken at face value, it implies that he had not read or listened to the Qurʾān before embracing Islam and therefore had little idea of what was in it.[24] From a Muslim perspective, he may not have been at fault: non-Muslims were presumably not supposed to touch a *muṣḥaf*.[25] Then again, they were undoubtedly allowed to listen to recitations of the Book.[26] In any case, al-Faḍl seems here to be taking advantage of the fact that he can now read

22 Sourdel, "Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī," *EI²*.

23 By then, however, Jibrīl may have felt indebted to the family of Sahl since it was al-Faḍl's brother Ḥasan who had arranged his release from prison. For the dates and other details see Sourdel, "Bukhtīshūʿ," *EI²*.

24 Bulliet thinks it unlikely that the Qurʾān played any role in conversion for the contingent reason that most converts are unlikely to have understood Arabic ("Conversion Stories," 129). It should however be noted that using a religious text for ritual purposes by no means presumes an understanding of what the text says. Al-Faḍl, of course, knew Arabic very well, but that hardly implies that the procedure followed during his conversion was different than it would have been for anyone else. In this connection it would be of interest to know whether the Jibrīl of the anecdote is supposed to be asking al-Faḍl's opinion of a message he is already familiar with, or whether he (Jibrīl) is asking because he does not know what is in the Qurʾān either.

25 This is not the place to investigate this question, but the relevant text is 56:78–79, which calls the Qurʾān "a hidden Book none but the purified shall touch." See also Hodgson, *Expansion*, 536.

26 Again I cannot address this question here, but it seems self-evident that Muslims would want nonbelievers to hear the revelation, a position spelled out in Qurʾān 9:6: "And if any of the idolaters seeks of thee protection, grant him protection till he hears the words of God."

the text for himself. Certainly, his reaction to it ("Good, like *Kalīla and Dimna*") is striking. The story does not explain what resemblance he is supposed to have perceived between the Qurʾān and the collection of Sanskrit fables translated from Middle Persian by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ.[27] It may be the didactic tone, the exhortation to good deeds, or the inculcation of moral lessons through stories. More specifically, it may be the presence of stories about animals. Six Qurʾānic chapters—"The Cow," "The Herding Animals," "The Bee," "The Ants," "The Spider," and "The Elephant"—are named after animals, and many others appear in the text.[28] In both books, moreover, they can speak, although only two Qurʾānic animals—the ant and the hoopoe[29]—are actually shown doing so. Perhaps, then, the point is that al-Faḍl has seized on a relatively minor part of the Qurʾānic message only because it involves something already familiar to him.

Without a context of performance, it is sometimes difficult to judge when a story was supposed to be funny, especially when the teller and the audience lived more than a millennium ago. Yet a good case could be made that the story is a joke. Al-Faḍl is apparently being mocked for adopting a religion he knows practically nothing about. After converting to advance his career, he is pleasantly surprised to discover that the revelation of Islam makes for enjoyable reading. As reported by Jibrīl, this response betokens al-Faḍl's failure to grasp the sublimity of the Qurʾān, which he compares to a pagan book of stories. Certainly, taking the story as a joke has the advantage of providing an explanation for one unusual feature: the fact that the dialogue is given in Persian. Evidently, the storyteller felt that al-Faḍl's ill-informed and insincere conversion could most effectively be ridiculed by repeating or inventing comments in a language other than Arabic.

Satisfactory as it may be in some respects, our reading seems to contradict a claim made earlier in this essay: that conversion stories are not concerned with sincerity. To accept Islam is to establish a formal relationship with the divine; one's state of mind at the moment of conversion hardly matters in comparison with the fact that one is henceforth in a position to accept right guidance. But Ibn al-Qifṭī's anecdote seems to mock al-Faḍl for knowing nothing about Islam before his conversion and failing to understand it properly even afterwards. The explanation for this anomaly may lie in the fact that the narrator, Jibrīl, was a Christian. As such, he may have assumed that a conversion without belief could hardly be genuine. He does not, therefore, mock al-Faḍl in the same way a Muslim would. Rather, he mocks him in his own way, producing a story that seems odd when encountered

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27 On the history of the text see de Blois, *Burzōy's Voyage*.
28 See further Eisenstein, "Animal Life."
29 Qurʾān 27:16 ff.

in a Muslim source. Indeed, one could argue that the story can only be told by a non-Muslim narrator (or attributed to one, if we take the tale to be invented): al-Faḍl would never have spoken so candidly to anyone else. The use of Persian emphasizes his shiftiness: it suggests that we are overhearing the sort of conversation that *mawālī* have among themselves when they feel comfortable enough to speak freely. And this element of the story may explain why it was preserved at all. Muslim readers may not have found the implied criticism of al-Faḍl's spiritual state to be at all meaningful, but they may have enjoyed the sensation of eavesdropping on the *mawālī*. And the story was in fact transmitted to audiences who could not understand Persian: the translation is described as *tafsīru kalāmihim* [*sic*] "an explanation of what they said," not "what we said," as it would have to be worded if Jibrīl himself had provided the gloss. In other words, the Arabic translation must have been added by a transmitter or copyist, suggesting that the story appealed to at least one generation of readers outside third-century Baghdad.[30]

The foregoing arguments notwithstanding, there is of course no way to know whether the two conversations—Jibrīl's with al-Faḍl, and later with Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī—ever took place. But what matters here is whether the anecdote tells us anything about how conversion was experienced and remembered.[31] Given the very limited nature of the evidence, all we can do is ask whether the story might represent the experience of someone like al-Faḍl—that is, a *dihqān* who embraces Islam as an adult.[32] The text that bears most closely on this question is another anecdote from al-Jahshiyārī:

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30 To this reading it may be objected that it forces Jibrīl to repeat an irreverence concerning the Qurʾān to a Muslim interlocutor. Shouldn't he have feared being accused of irreverence himself? Under normal circumstances, perhaps so. But the war between al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn made al-Faḍl detestable to the Baghdadis. Branded a traitor and a Zoroastrian, the vizier could evidently be maligned with impunity. Note also that Jibrīl describes himself as referring to the Qurʾān as the Book of God. He may have used the expression during the original encounter out of deference to al-Faḍl, who was formally now a Muslim. But he may also have used it during his retelling of the story for Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī precisely to avoid the appearance of irreverence.

31 As DeWeese has argued in connection to Inner Asian conversion stories, even if we had access to whatever did in fact take place, we would not have access to what it meant. For the latter, our best source is precisely the mass of narrative material often dismissed as legendary accretion. There is, furthermore, no reason to assume that the earliest version of a story was an unadorned historical report; rather, the oldest version may be the legend, and the later versions attempts to historicize it (*Islamization*, 160–62).

32 In this respect he may be compared with men like his Barmakī patrons, or the singer Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, all of whom were raised as Muslims from infancy (on Ibrāhīm see Iṣbahānī, *Aghānī*, 5:1798–1800; I thank Amirhossein Pourjavady for this reference). These few examples suggest

Al-Faḍl b. Marwān said that he was once in al-Baradān with Isḥāq b. Sūrīn [when the following took place]:

"Al-Faḍl b. Jaʿfar b. Yaḥyā b. Khālid [al-Barmakī] came by riding bareback on a horse. He was wearing a brocade gown without trousers or boots and carrying a drawn sword. Behind him was a long-necked Magian. The Magian drew up beside us and asked for a drink of water. Some water was brought to him in a jug of green clay. He looked at the clay jug in disapproval and said: "Nobility (dahqana) is almost gone! There is hardly any left. Where is your silver?"

Isḥāq said, "Islam took it all."

"What about glass?"

"It's too humid for glass."

So he took the jug and drank from it.

Then Isḥāq said [to al-Faḍl b. Marwān]: "Can you believe the airs your friend there is giving himself?"

[Al-Faḍl b. Marwān] said: "He is drunk on youth, wine, power, wealth, and magnanimity, all at once." He then followed him.[33]

Later we asked who [the Magian] was and we were told that it was al-Faḍl b. Saḥl.[34]

The narrator of this story, al-Faḍl b. Marwān (d. 250/864), was an Iraqi of Christian origin who served as an administrator under al-Rashīd, al-Maʾmūn, and several later caliphs.[35] His companion Isḥāq b. Sūrīn was—to judge by his name—an ʿajamī who claimed descent from the ancient family of Sūrēn, and was in any case a convert or the son of a convert. It was to him that al-Faḍl b. Sahl addressed his question about the shabby state to which the dihqān class had fallen. According to this anecdote, then, al-Faḍl identified himself as a member of that class, priding himself on its glories and resenting the indignities that had befallen its representatives. At least, he is represented as doing so before his conversion to Islam.[36] Yet there is no reason to imagine that he was required to renounce his patrician airs upon becoming a Muslim. Indeed, as someone who converted as an adult, he cannot have shed his dahqana, and the culture that came with it, by a mere act of will.[37] Rather, what he is more likely to have done is to find some

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that some Iranian patricians sought to have their children raised by Arab Muslim families. Such families would have no conversion stories to transmit, since no one actually converted.

33 This seems to mean that al-Faḍl b. Marwān rode away to escort the party.

34 Al-Jahshiyārī, Wuzarāʾ, 232–33. I thank Hugh Kennedy for reminding me of this passage.

35 Sourdel, "Al-Faḍl ibn Marwān"; Gordon, "Al-Faḍl ibn Marwān."

36 The story makes it clear that he could be identified at sight as a Zoroastrian, presumably because of his costume.

37 Had he been raised a Muslim from infancy, the case would presumably have been different. Though he too claimed noble ʿajamī birth, his older contemporary Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, who was raised by Arabs, demonstrates no particular attachment to the dahāqin or any evidence of being educated in their traditions (see his biography in Iṣbahānī, Aghānī, 5:1797–1904).

way to salvage certain elements of his old self-understanding and social loca-
tion—that of a Zoroastrian *dihqān*—within the constraints created by his new
sense of connectedness with his patrons and his new self-understanding as an
up-and-coming Muslim administrator.[38]

This, finally, is why Ibn al-Qifṭī's story—even if it was meant as a joke to be
told at al-Faḍl's expense—has a certain ring of truth to it. The young man has
just renounced his religion and been subjected to the painful and humiliating
ritual of circumcision. It is therefore plausible that he should attempt to salvage
his dignity. To do so, he proclaims that the Qur'ān, to his surprise, reminds him
of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, a work familiar to him. As a man of learning, he can affect
to take an interest in the Qur'ān in the same way he might take an interest in any
other work of foreign literature. In other words, becoming a Muslim is simply a
matter of broadening one's cultural horizons (to put it in modern terms), or so he
wants his friend Jibrīl to believe.

As an example of the way someone like al-Faḍl might respond to the conver-
sion experience, Jibrīl's story strikes me as plausible. But if many literate people
had similar experiences, why are there so few reports like this? Bulliet, as we
have seen, has offered an explanation based on the particular nature of early
conversion. To his explanation one might add an argument based on the nature
of self-representation in narrative. Simply put, the non-Arab converts of the
second and third centuries may have lacked a template for telling their stories.
For conversion in the face of adversity, a template *did* exist: the reports of how
the Prophet's companions braved persecution to join the beleaguered new com-
munity. But when there was no adversity—when embracing Islam meant going
over to the side of the victors—how could conversion be represented *except* cyn-
ically?

In theory, one might tell a latter-day conversion story by casting the members
of one's native community as the villains, as in the early Christian and early
Muslim tales where one's friends and family, or the authorities, attempt to stop
the protagonist from carrying out his or her resolution to convert. But as the
story of al-Faḍl shows, we should not think of embracing Islam as a choice made
by loners and outcasts. In his case at least, it was a family strategy, with conver-
sions timed for maximum benefit, and patrons chosen based on the advice of
those who had traveled the path before. This kind of story might be told by an
outside observer, as it was by al-Jahshiyārī (or more exactly, by his sources). But
it is difficult to imagine telling it from the *inside*—that is, in a first-person or con-

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38 On the terms "self-understanding," "social location," and "connectedness," see Brubaker,
Ethnicity without Groups, 41–48.

fessional mode. One might represent oneself as having realized that Islam was true in the historical or metaphysical sense, but then one would be left at a loss to explain why one happened to convert only at the most opportune moment. Alternatively, one might represent oneself as acting purely out of cynical calculation. But this is hardly likely to have been true; and even if it were, a confession of insincerity—even if sincere—would undo all that one had accomplished by converting.

Of course, people must have said *something* about their experience of conversion.[39] If Ibn al-Qifṭī's sources are to be believed, al-Faḍl is one of those who did. Specifically, he tried to salvage his dignity by making a feeble comparison—one that seems utterable only to a non-Muslim interlocutor. Because the comparison is feeble, and quite unexpected, it gives the impression of being genuine. It may, in other words, tell us something about the meaning of conversion, even if it was remembered and retold with an entirely different purpose in mind: to entertain Ibrāhīm by showing that his enemy al-Faḍl was an irredeemable pagan.

Whatever the storyteller's motives may have been, the story itself was striking enough to appeal to later audiences: not only was it copied by Ibn al-Qifṭī, it survived the pruning of his text by al-Zawzanī. Even so, its particular content seems to have survived only because of three contingent circumstances. First, it was necessary for al-Faḍl to have divulged *to a non-Muslim* what he was really thinking about as he sat reading the Qurʾān. Second, it was necessary for al-Faḍl to fall out of favor, such that it was safe for a non-Muslim to malign him. And third, that non-Muslim needed to come into the presence of an Abbasid prince who was more than happy to hear stories about what he imagined to be crypto-Zoroastrian depravity. If any of these things had not happened, the story would not have reached Ibn al-Qifṭī, or so it seems to me. And therefore, even if it proves to tell us little about the experience of converts like al-Faḍl, the text may tell us a great deal indeed about the obstacles that a conversion *story* had to overcome in order to survive. It is perhaps regrettable that one of the very few conversion stories from this period should come down to us in the form of a joke told at the convert's expense. Then again, the very fact that it is a joke may be the only reason that we have it at all.

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39 Bulliet suggests that such stories were indeed told within families but only occasionally written down ("Conversion Stories," 26–27).

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Blain Auer

A Translation of the Prolegomena to Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī's *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*

Introduction

Sayyid Aḥmad Khān produced the first critical edition of Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī's *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī* in 1862, the same year that he produced the *Mohomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*. In 1855 he edited Abū al-Fażl's *Āʾīn-i Akbarī*, the court record of the reign of Akbar, the great Mughal. In 1864 he added the *Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī*, the memoir of Jahāngīr, son and successor to Akbar, to his efforts to reproduce and preserve classic Persian works that discuss ideals of Islamic rule from the Mughal and Delhi Sultanate courts. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān considered Baranī's history a work of "great excellence" and clearly indicated its value to him by including it with the writings of Abū al-Fażl and Jahāngīr. Indeed, Baranī was a leading intellectual of fourteenth-century Delhi during the reign of Muḥammad b. Tughluq (r. 1324–51). Born in Baran around 1285, an important province east of Delhi, Baranī was likely brought to the House of the Sultanate (*dār al-salṭanat*) as a child. He was raised in the courtly milieu of the capital at the center of an expanding empire. The most important years of his adult life were spent serving the Sultan in the role of councilor and advisor, an appointment he held over a period of seventeen years.

Having received his education in a family of courtiers, Baranī had direct access to stories about the accomplishments and failures of the sultans of Delhi. His uncle ʿAlāʾ al-Mulk was appointed *kutvāl*, or city magistrate of Delhi under ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Khiljī (r. 1296–1316), and his father Muʾayyad al-Mulk served Arkalī Khān, a son of the sultan Jalāl al-Dīn Khiljī (r. 1290–96). Baranī conceived of the *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī* as a continuation of Minhāj Sirāj Jūzjānī's magisterial *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, the universal history that covered the Ghaznavid and Ghurid periods that led to the establishment of Delhi as a center of Islamic authority in South Asia under Quṭb al-Dīn Aybeg, Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish, and his descendants. Baranī followed Jūzjānī's narrative, beginning with the rule of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balaban (r. 1266–87) and carried it down to Fīrūz Shāh (r. 1351–88), for whom the work is named.

Baranī's history is significant for the important details he provides about the reigns of sultans that had a lasting impact on the political, social, and cultural developments in South Asia. It is also noteworthy for the insight it provides into Baranī's philosophy of history. This is clearly expressed in the introductory

section of *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī* where Baranī details his thoughts on the knowledge of history (*ʿilm-i tārīkh*). For Baranī, history is a proper discipline or field of study, just as the study of the Qurʾan, ḥadīth, and Islamic law (*fiqh*) are fields of study. Baranī's introduction to *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī* fits into a broader intellectual discourse on the relative merits of studying history expressed by his near contemporary Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ījī (fl. 1381–82), the author of *Tuḥfat al-Faqīr ilā Ṣāḥib al-Sarīr fī ʿIlm al-Tawārīkh* (*The Poor Gift to the Possessor of the Secret of the Knowledge of History*), and scholars of a century later Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Kāfiyajī (d. 1474), who composed *al-Mukhtaṣar fi ʿIlm al-Tārīkh* (*The Short Treatise on the Knowledge of History*) and Shams al-Dīn Abū al-Khayr Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Shāfiʿī al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497), the author of a treatise in defense of the historian's method titled *al-Iʿlān bi al-tawbīkh li-man Dhamma Ahl al-Tārīkh* (*The Open Denunciation of the Adverse Critiques of the Historians*).[1]

   In *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī* Baranī discusses the qualities of history that make it a noble subject for study. Baranī argues that historians need to take an active role presenting an unadulterated portrait of the successes and failures of rulers from the past. Baranī admonishes historians whose goal is to flatter those in power and warns that God has punishment in store for those who lie. Baranī conceives of history writing as a trust that must be preserved with truth. History, in his view, has the ability to teach rulers and great men about the proper conduct of ruling. In this sense, the introduction provides further information about his ideas of rule expressed in the *Fatāwā-i Jahāndārī* (*Edicts of World Rule*). Baranī finds the primary example of good rule in the teachings of the Qurʾan and the life and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad. In praising the miraculous career of the Prophet, Baranī highlights his ability to navigate the affairs of religion and the world (*dīn wa dunyā*). This, he argues, was accomplished by following the rules of Islamic law (*aḥkām-i sharīʿa*) and the prescriptions of the Sufi path (*ʿazāʾim-i ṭarīqat*). He makes specific use of a descriptive vocabulary that connects Muḥammad and his example to the sultans of Delhi, referring to Muḥammad as the "Sultan of Prophets" (*sulṭān-i payghambarān*). He extends the vision of Islamic rule into the reigns of the first four caliphs of Islam, which he describes according to the different qualities of their rule. Baranī's historical vision of world rule (*jahāndārī*) extends beyond the clearly Islamic context into the pre-Islamic Persian traditions of kingship. In Baranī's formulation the Prophet was successful over the "throne of Jamshīd" and the "throne of Kay Khusraw."

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1 For a study of these works with selections of original Arabic and English translations see Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968).

Baranī's own sense of history comes from reading the classics of Arabic and Persian historiography. He divides this into two historiographical traditions. First, he describes the "Arab" histories beginning with the writings of Ibn Isḥāq (ca. 704–767), author of the *Siyar al-Nabī wa Āthār al-Ṣaḥāba* (*The Biography of the Prophet and the Companions*) and Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Yazīd al-Ṭabarī (b. 839), author of *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* (*The History of Prophets and Kings*). On the other side he sees a tradition of "Persian" histories represented by Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī, author of the famed *Shāhnāma*, as well as earlier Pahlavi works such as the *Tārīkh-i Āʾīn* and *Tārīkh-i Kasravī*. Baranī also uses the introduction to the *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī* to express his staunch Ḥanafī-Sunnī perspective on religion and turns it into a forum to channel his religious devotion.

This translation is based on Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's 1862 Calcutta edition of *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*.[2] Sayyid Aḥmad Khān relied on five different manuscripts to produce his critical edition: a copy of his own, a copy found in the Delhi library, a copy loaned by Henry Elliot and now located in the British Library, another loaned copy from Edward Thomas, and a copy he received from Benares. I was able to consult the British Library manuscript in comparing the critical edition.[3] I also utilized the Urdu translation prepared by S. Moinul Haq who further compared the Calcutta edition and the Aligarh edition.[4] There is no complete translation of Baranī's history. H. M. Elliot prepared a partial translation, now nearly a century and a half ago, in 1871.[5] The introduction was not translated and appears here in full for the first time. As such Baranī's history has primarily been studied to understand the social and political dynamics of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century South Asia under Islamic rule. However, Baranī's ideas about history and his arguments about the knowledge of history are not available in English and have been little discussed. This translation is an attempt to bring those ideas to

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2 Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1862).

3 Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*, ms. British Library Or. 2039. The British Library also has a second copy that was given by a Lt. Colonel Kirkpatrick in 1804. Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*, ms. British Library I. O. Islamic 177. The Bodleian Library in Oxford has an important copy considered to be the "first version" Baranī produced. Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī, *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*, ms. Bodleian Elliot 353. For a discussion of the differences within the manuscript tradition of the *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī* see Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, "Fresh Light on Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī: The Doyen of Indo-Persian Historians," *Islamic Culture* 63, nos. 1–2 (1989): 69–94.

4 Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī, *Tārīkh-i-Fīrūzshāhī*, trans. S. Moinul Haq (Lahore: Markazi Urdu Board, 1969).

5 See H. M. Elliot and John Dowson, *The History of India as Told by its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period* (London: Trübner, 1867–77), 3:93–268.

a broader audience and also to show a representative example of how a leading intellectual living in the medieval Persianate world viewed history and history writing.

Invocation

Praise and glory be to God who informed humankind about the record of the prophets and sultans through heavenly revelation. God shed light on the affairs of those whom he accepts and rejects as well as the virtues of those close to him and the wicked deeds of those who have fallen away among the peoples of the Muslim community of bygone times. In this proclamation he conferred favor on this community and in the language of the pure Qurʾan he commanded:

<div align="center">نَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَأَثَارَهُمْ</div>

"We record that which they send forward and what they leave behind."[6]

And in another verse he commanded:

<div align="center">نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَص</div>

"We tell you the most beautiful of tales."[7]

Thanks and praise is due to the Omniscient One who enlightened the intelligent with the light of vision and who created a brilliantly clear idea so they could see with an insightful eye the record of the ancestors, the virtues and vices of the predecessors, the good and bad deeds of the previous generations, the obedience and disobedience of loyal and disloyal subjects, the victories of the learned and the defeat of the outcasts. Those who are close to the Eternal Lord are counted as fortunate and those that remain far from that threshold are among the unfortunate. Observing the experiences of the wretched, those who have fallen away, the outcasts, those who have gone astray, and the enemies, is a lesson for the prosperous, those close to God, the learned, those who have found their way, and friends. He distinguishes virtues from vices and good deeds from bad. He demands clear insight into the beauty of Islam and the ugliness of infidelity (*kufr*)

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6 Qurʾan 36:12.
7 Qurʾan 12:3.

and into the incalculable worth of goodness and the grossness of evil. Following and imitating the sayings and deeds of those nearest to God and the friends of the Divine is counted as a personal obligation and duty [2][8] for they keep away from the moral degeneration and corruption of good qualities of the fallen and the ugly deeds of the enemies of the divine order. They know that the best part of religion and worldly affairs is avoiding the way of those with bad fortune and following those of good fortune. By following the sayings and deeds of the prosperous and in rejecting the bad character and evil conduct of the damned, they obtain salvation. And they find a place under the protecting canopy of the Possessor of Power and Mercy. They consider distinguishing good and evil and relating the obedience and disobedience of the previous generations as a duty for the elite and common people of the Muslim community and it is a rare gift and great benefit. Thanks to this great blessing language was made into eloquent speech. They recognized the blessed record of the predecessors as the grace of the Possessor of Grace and realized all its fruits:

<div dir="rtl">ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاء وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ يِمالْعَظِ</div>

"That is the grace of God and he gives it to whom he wishes and he is the possessor of the greatest grace."[9]

May the infinite blessings and abundant salutations of God, the prophets, God's angels, the Sufi shaykhs, the faithful of the early members of the community, and the common and noble people of succeeding generations be continuously conferred upon the pure soul of the Master of Prophets and Messengers, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qurayshī al-Ḥāshimī al-Abṭaḥī.[10] He is such a messenger whose lofty traits and high moral character have been inscribed in the heavenly book and who will seek justice on the Day of Resurrection. The ḥadīth collections and histories are full of his praiseworthy sayings and illustrious acts. Through his sayings and actions the rules of Islamic law (*aḥkām-i sharīʿa*) and the prescriptions of the Sufi path (*ʿazāʾim-i ṭarīqat*) spread East and West. Consulting his sayings and following the actions of that Sultan of Prophets was the means for elevating the common people of his community. The edifice of world rule of the kings of Islam and the seat of royalty of the religion-protecting sultans was

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8 For reference, numbers in brackets approximately indicate the pages that correspond to Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's Persian edition.

9 Qurʾan 57:21 and 62:4.

10 Baranī utilizes the epithet al-Abṭaḥi that refers to the place al-Abṭaḥ outside of Mecca where Muḥammad stopped during pilgrimage.

built on the rules of Islamic law and the precedent of the custom of that King of Messengers. [3]

The Example of the Prophet Muḥammad as a World Ruler

May the prayers of God, the blessings of Muṣṭafā, his community of Sufi shaykhs, and the common people of the religion of Muṣṭafā be perpetually conveyed on the souls of the four friends of Muṣṭafā, his family, and the rest of his sincere Companions until the Day of Judgment. How can the glorious deeds of the community chosen by God and Muṣṭafā be put into writing in whose praise the following verse of the Qurʾan was sent down from heaven:

<div dir="rtl">

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالأَنصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ رَّضِيَ اللّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُواْ عَنْهُ

</div>

"As for those who led the way, the first of the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār, and those who nobly followed them, God is pleased with them and they are pleased with him."[11]

Which author has the temerity to praise such a group that has been praised in the language of the pure Qurʾan?

<div dir="rtl">

حَسْبُكَ اللّهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

</div>

"God is your strength, and the faithful who follow you."[12]

Especially deserving of praise are the four pillars of the sacred Kaʿba [the first four caliphs] who left their mark as an example for carrying out the affairs of religion and governance of Muṣṭafā. Having raised their heads in the Caliphate established by the Prophet, through the eternal power of Muṣṭafā they triumphed over the throne of Jamshīd and the throne of Kay Khusraw and ruled over the inhabitable world. Despite having such a vast empire, through the blessings of the prophetic example, they never lost their adherence to poverty. In total piety with a torn coat and threadbare blanket they ruled all the realms of the inhabited world. It is one of Muṣṭafā's miracles that through their exercise of poverty they made brilliant the practices of rule. They spread the knowledge of Islam through-

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11 Qurʾan 9:100. N. J. Dawood, trans., *The Koran with Parallel Arabic Text* (London: Penguin, 2000). Unless noted translations are the authors.
12 Qurʾan 8:64.

out the world and they established the rules of Muṣṭafā's *sharīʿa* on the peoples of the world.

The Example of the Four Caliphs

It was from the time of the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq that the affairs of imperial rule were put in order. [4] He suppressed and removed the false prophets and enemies of the religion. The armies of Islam were engaged in the seizure of Iraq and Syria and the overthrow of the godless kings. Because the time of the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq did not last longer than thirty months, that is, two and a half years, the regions of the opponents of religion were seized but not fully taken under control. Nevertheless the false prophets, along with their entire community, were suppressed and a number of Arab tribes who apostatized were brought back into Islam at the point of the sword. The taxes that had been established during the time of the Prophet for those who submitted to the rule of Islam were fully collected. Even the rope of the camel harness was not lost in the financial accounting. The wounds of spear and sword brought down the false prophets who fanned the flames of dissent. Their women, children, wealth, and the possessions of the apostates of Islam were made the booty of the warriors of religion. During the time of his rule the example of Muṣṭafā was radiant. From the perfect modesty, complete truthfulness, firmness of belief, and great dignity of Abū Bakr the bonds of friendship of the Companions spread and there was no disunity or dissent.

After Abū Bakr, ʿUmar Khaṭṭāb, the Commander of the Faithful, took his place on the seat of the caliphate with Abū Bakr's appointment and the consent of the Companions. He ruled for ten years and nine months. During the time of Umar's caliphate, through the signs of the eternal miracles of Muṣṭafā, the best regions of the world were seized and put in the control of the people of Islam. The rules of Islamic law were spread to humankind and the practice of Islam was on the ascent. The knowledge of Islam spread to the corners of the world. All the Arab, Hijaz, Yemen, and Bahrain tribes, the kingdoms of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, [5] most of Khurasan and Transoxania, and some parts of Byzantium, all of these regions were opened by the sword of jihad during ʿUmar's caliphate. The poor and the Companions who were close to Muṣṭafā's circle ascended to the thrones of Khusraw, the Byzantine Emperor, and other sultans, becoming the commanders and governors of the new lands through the honor and power of Islam. Infidelity, polytheism, and fire worship were removed from the realms of Iraq and other places, as well as the religion of the Zoroastrians. Kufa and Basra were founded and made the cities of Islam.

It was one of the wonders of the world, in the seven thousand years since Adam, that ʿUmar Khaṭṭāb, with a torn and patched cloak, from the eternal prophetic miracles, was able to rule in the world in the manner of Solomon and Alexander. It was a time when the world's dissenters surrendered out of fear of ʿUmar's scourge and the rebels submitted to the *kharāj* and *jizya*. The thousand-year old wealth of the kings of Persia and Byzantium, who boasted of their rebellion against God and claimed their own divinity with that strength, fell into the hands of the warriors of Islam during the reign of ʿUmar. It was distributed to the noble and common people in Muṣṭafā's mosque and on the plain of Medina. The honor of Islam and the debasement of infidelity were made splendid in the eyes of the insightful because ʿUmar Khaṭṭāb did not dip his hands into that treasure. After distributing it he returned home empty-handed to make a living for himself and his family from brickmaking. All this greatly enhanced his respect in the eyes of the Companions.

His rule became even more widespread amongst the people. It is one of the gifts of companionship of God's messenger that during ʿUmar's caliphate there were twelve thousand Arabian horses in the treasury of the Muslims at one time. Yet even on Friday prayer, the Companions could count nine patches on ʿUmar's cloak. [6] Ḥadīth scholars and historians have written that the success of ʿUmar Khaṭṭāb's rule was made possible by wearing a torn cloak and practicing asceticism in a manner that Jamshīd, Kay Qubād, and Kay Khusraw never achieved with all their tyranny, violence, terror, bloodshed, and punishment. Except for the prophets and messengers, in seven thousand years no king or caliph showed such justice and generosity as in the time of ʿUmar. Even Nūshīrvān the Just and Ḥātim al-Ṭāʾī do not compare. He combined world rule with world renunciation. Ruling like Kay Khusraw and wearing a torn cloak was not possible for any king or ruler and never will be again until the Day of Resurrection.

ʿUmar was the first caliph to be called the Commander of the Faithful. He was the first caliph to set aside financial assistance in the treasury for the warriors and just claimants. He was the first caliph to construct cities for Muslims. He was the first caliph to create positions and dwellings for the Companions and followers. He was the first caliph to establish a tax on the subjects and the people of Islam. He was the first caliph to appoint judges in the cities of Islam. He was the first caliph to carry a scourge to bring moral order to the people. He was the first caliph of Islam to be martyred.

After ʿUmar al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān became caliph. The *Muhājir* and *Anṣār* swore an oath of allegiance to his caliphate. Many stories of the generosity, gentility, and modesty of ʿUthmān the Commander of the Faithful are described in the history books. He collected the Qurʾan into a single book and there was a consensus of the Companions as to the validity of his compilation. [7] ʿUthmān,

the Commander of the Faithful, spent his own wealth in service of Muṣṭafā's military expeditions to ease the burden of the Prophet. He performed many duties in the service of Islam. He was a scribe of prophecy and he memorized the Qurʾan. He married two of the Prophet's daughters and thus he was called the Possessor of the Two Lights. He wrote the messages for ʿUmar al-Khaṭṭāb that went out to the regional leaders and judges. Muṣṭafā, Abū Bakr, and ʿUmar were pleased with him. Under ʿUthmān's caliphate the provinces of ʿUmar remained obedient and under him all of Khurasan and Transoxiana was put under control. ʿUthmān's caliphate endured for twelve years.

After ʿUthmān, ʿAlī Murtażā became caliph. It is the consensus of the Muslim community that ʿAlī, the Commander of the Faithful, remains unparalleled in knowledge from the time of Adam till the end of the world, because of the prayers of Muṣṭafā, excluding the prophets and messengers. In courage he was second only to Ḥamza, the Prophet's uncle, and was called the Lion of God. Murtażā's honor was proven in every respect amongst the Companions. First, he was the son of Muṣṭafā's uncle and from the great Banī Hāshim tribe. Second, Muṣṭafā was raised in the care of ʿAlī's mother and father. Third, he was the father of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn who were the light in the eyes of Muṣṭafā. Fourth, Muṣṭafā called him the most abstemious and he was the most abstemious of the companions. Fifth, he had no peer amongst the Companions in the vastness of his knowledge. He was the first in taking the oath of Islam and he never, even for a moment, gave a thought to infidelity and polytheism. The leading historians write that while ʿAlī was still in his mother's womb, when she wanted to go and pray to an idol he used to cause so much pain in her stomach that she would not be able to bow before the deity. [8] Seventh, a number of verses from the Qurʾan were revealed in special reference to his generosity. Since Abū Bakr and ʿUmar had proven their duty to Islam before him and sacrificed their own lives and wealth serving religion and placing it above all else, they came first in the caliphate. The example of their Islamic duties gave them precedence over Ali's virtues.

In the days after ʿUthmān, when ʿAlī Murtażā became caliph, he heard that innovation in religious practice had spread across the provinces of Islam where the brothers of ʿUthmān had become the governors. Innovative practices contrary to the example of the Prophet and the two shaykhs, Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, had crept into the affairs of rule. ʿAlī wanted to change those innovations back into prophetic custom and the practices of the two shaykhs, even if it meant by means of the sword. He wanted to re-establish truth to its proper place and return the splendor to the customs of the Prophet and the rule of ʿUmar. Muʿāwiya and other relations of the Commander of the Faithful ʿUthmān, who had conquered vast swaths of territory and gathered great power and strength, confronted ʿAlī with rebellion and insurrection and denied him their oath of allegiance. Insurrection

spread and all the unity, strength, and power of the Companions that existed during the age of the two shaykhs vanished. Some were martyred in battle and many died during the plague of Emmaus.

The Commander of the Faithful ʿAlī set out to suppress the rebellion leaving Medina for Iraq. He ordered a halt in Kufa with two hundred and fifty Companions and other soldiers who were not Companions. During the four years and four months of his caliphate he was occupied with fighting rebellions. Many Companions were martyred by the rebel army. Ibn Muljam, "the Cursed," stabbed him with a dagger. The prophetic caliphate came to an end during the reign of ʿAlī just as Muṣṭafā predicted saying, "The caliphate after me will be thirty years and after that the age of kings."

In this introduction, I have related to you the story of the four friends of Muṣṭafā who were his close companions. [9] After praising God and Muṣṭafā the introduction of the *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī* is adorned with truth concerning the deeds of the world monarchs.

The Knowledge of History

After the praise for God and Muṣṭafā, his family, and Companions, this sinner and hopeful of God's forgiveness, Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī, who spent his life scrutinizing books, page after page, and engaged in an intensive study of the previous and recent works in all fields of knowledge, states that I have not profited from the benefits of any system of knowledge or study, besides Qurʾanic exegesis, ḥadīth, law (*fiqh*), and the way of the shaykhs, as I have in the knowledge of history. History is knowing the records of the prophets, caliphs, sultans, and the great men of religion and rule. The main preoccupation of the knowledge of history is the affairs of great men and the accomplishments of those who are especially noteworthy among men for their great qualities. By contrast, the rabble, lower classes, the unsuitable, the incapable, base, unprincipled, ignorant, depraved, incomplete, the laggards, ignoble, and derelicts are not the subject of the knowledge of history, not their trade or profession. There is no benefit to these groups in knowing history nor will it come to use because history is comprised of relating the qualities of great men of religion and rule and describing their talents and achievements, not the mention of the worthless things the rabble, lower classes, low bred, and derelicts who by nature of their low character only share a relationship with similar classes of people [care about]. They have no desire for the knowledge of history; rather, reading and studying history for the low and base is noxious, not salutary. What greater respect for the knowledge of history can one imagine than knowing the fact that the low, base, and vile have no taste for this

exquisite field of knowledge. It doesn't benefit them one bit in their low affairs and base morals. [10] They don't see it fit to mention the accomplishments of great men and they are unsuccessful in every endeavor. But with regard to the knowledge of history, for the nobles and the sons of nobles, the great men and sons of great men, and those who have nobility in their blood, they cannot do without knowing and studying the knowledge of history. They cannot live without listening to history. The historian is dearer to great men and their descendants than life itself. They hope that humble historians, whose writings are the source of immortality for great men of religion and rule, will draw the attention of the Omniscient One to their affairs.

The Seven Qualities of History Writing

The great men of religion and rule have said much about the qualities of the knowledge of history. The first of the excellent qualities of the knowledge of history is that the heavenly books that are God's speech are filled with the records of the affairs of prophets, the best of God's creation, and the sultans, their tyranny and oppression, [and] who have ruled over men. The very knowledge of history is the source of esteem for the possessors of insight.

The second excellent quality of the knowledge of history is its connection to the knowledge of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet, and after knowledge of Qur'anic exegesis, this remains the most valuable and beneficial field of knowledge. The knowledge of history is similar to the knowledge of ḥadīth in the way it criticizes and praises the narrators and the circumstances of transmission of Muṣṭafā's sayings and his military exploits. Because of this relationship between the knowledge of ḥadīth and history, the Imams of ḥadīth say that the knowledge of ḥadīth and the knowledge of history are twins. [11] If the scholar of ḥadīth is not a historian then he does not recognize the original narrators of the actions of the Prophet and the Companions, nor does he distinguish between the sincere and insincere of the Companions. Whenever a ḥadīth scholar is not a historian the aforementioned subjects cannot be established; he cannot give the correct tradition of the ḥadīth, or the true explanation of the sayings. It is the knowledge of history that tells us about the affairs of events and actions of the age of prophecy and the Companions.

The third quality of the knowledge of history is that it helps increase reason and wisdom and is the means for arriving at correct opinion and council. One gains experience through the experience of others. Through understanding the accidents of others one develops vigilance [in] knowing history. Aristotle and Buzurgmihr, the minister of Nūshīrvān, said that knowledge of history aids in

correct judgment because knowing the affairs of those in the past is the evidence for justice in the sound opinion of contemporaries.

The fourth quality of the knowledge of history is that by knowing it the hearts of sultans and kings are fortified from the accidents of time, and if they face the challenge of fateful accidents, they are not cut off from hope. In applying a remedy to the maladies of the government, their path is lit by those who have gone before and applied their solution. By knowing history one develops a feeling of caution that acts as a warning sign that a catastrophe on its way. This is the greatest benefit of knowing history. [12]

The fifth quality of the knowledge of history is that knowing the record of the prophets and their encountering misfortune and calamity with acceptance and patience is a source of acceptance and patience for those who know history. And the prophets escaping calamity is a means of hope for those acquainted with the knowledge of history. It is sure that the prophets, who are the best of creation, faced various kinds of calamity and because of that the believers of Islam do not lose heart in the face of misfortune.

The sixth quality of the knowledge of history is that by knowing it the habits of the select, the just, and the good and their deliverance and high stature settle into the heart. By knowing history the pestilence and killing of the rebellious and tyrannical is made clear for the caliphs, the sultans, ministers, and kings of Islam. The fruits of good deeds and the results of bad character are made evident in the affairs of rule. The caliphs, sultans, and rulers of good fortune turn towards doing what is right and the kings of Islam refrain from tyranny and oppression. They never boast in pride about their affairs and they never delay the essential values of service. The benefits of the good actions of caliphs, sultans, ministers, and rulers will pass on to the common people and will spread near and far.

The seventh quality of the knowledge of history is that it is necessarily based on truth. Present and past great men of religion and rule report that the knowledge of history is founded on truth. For that reason, Abraham the patriarch prayed to God:

$$وَاجْعَل لِّي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الآخِرِينَ$$

"Let me be honest in all I say to others."[13]

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13 Qurʾan 26:84. Kenneth Cragg, *Readings in the Qurʾān* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 118. Translators have struggled to provide a literal rendering of this verse and followed the general meaning, "Have future generations speak well of me."

And rebuking the authors of lies, God said:

$$يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ$$

"They rob words of their true meaning."[14]

God considers lies and falsehoods deadly things. The knowledge of history is especially necessary for great men and their children as a condition of doing justice, being honest and correct. [13]

For this reason, the knowledge of history is recording goodness and wickedness, justice and oppression, righteous and unrighteous, beautiful and ugly deeds, the acts of following God and sins, the good and despicable behavior of those who have gone before. From this future generations can learn and be informed about the benefits and injuries of world rule and the good deeds and poor character of royalty; knowing that it is possible to follow the good and refrain from bad conduct. If, God forbid, someone started to spread lies and misinformation and out of their wicked and deceitful nature started to take liberties, weaving false tales about respected men of the past and giving them currency through their colorful and crafty expressions, then lies would become truths and be set down in writing. As a consequence people are not afraid of the sins of this world or the next and there is no fear of answering for one's deeds on the Day of Judgment. Slandering good men in writing is a graver and greater sin than doing so verbally. Saying good things about bad people is one of the worst character traits. Since historical reports lack sources, then when there is mention of sultans and nobles, the historian, in particular, needs to be trustworthy and thought of as truthful and principled so that readers can be sure of his writings that lack sources and be trusted amongst respected people. Respected people only trust those authors in whose writings they have complete faith.

The History of Islamic History Writing

All the Arab and Persian historians who have contributed to the Arabic and Persian histories were respectable men of their day. Imām Muḥammad Isḥāq, author of the *Siyar al-Nabī wa Āthār al-Ṣaḥāba* (*Biography of the Prophet and Record of the Companions*), was the son of a Companion.[15] [14] He is counted

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14 Qurʾan 4:46 and 5:13.

15 The text reads *farzand-i ṣaḥābī* or taken literally, "son of a Companion." However, Muḥammad Isḥāq was not a son of a Companion.

amongst the ḥadīth scholars. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. al-Wāqidī (b. 747/48–822) was the specialist in *maghāzī* literature and was also a son of a Companion of the Prophet.[16] He is also counted among the great ḥadīth scholars. His historical accounts are found in the books of the most respected authors. Imam Aṣmāʿī (Abū Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Mālik b. Qurayb al-Aṣmaʿī, d. 828) was one of the greatest exemplars in the knowledge of Qurʾanic recitation and a master of knowledge, learning, and eloquence. Imam Bukhārī was also one of the greatest of ḥadīth scholars and of equal rank with exemplars of history writing. The credibility of the reports related by him is beyond doubt. Then there is Imam Thaʿlabī, Imam Maqdisī, Imam Dīnawarī, Imam Ḥazm, and Imam Ṭabarī who are historians and are also considered great commentators and authors of reliable literary works.

The historians of Persia were also among the great men of their time. Therefore, Firdawsī and Bayhaqī, the author of *Tārīkh-i Āʾīn*, *Tārīkh-i Kasravī*, and the author of *Tārīkh-i Yamīnī wa ʿUtbī*, are each counted among the respected persons of their lifetime.[17] The historians of the capital city of Delhi were also among the great men of their age. Therefore, Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Niẓāmī, author of *Tāj al-Maʾāthir*, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Sadīd al-Dīn ʿAwfī, author of *Jawāmiʿ al-Ḥikāyāt wa Lawāmiʿ al-Riwāyāt*, Minhāj al-Dīn ʿUthmān b. Sirāj al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Jūzjānī (b. 1193), author of *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, and Kabīr al-Dīn son of Tāj al-Dīn ʿIrāqī, who wrote *fatḥnāmas* for Sulṭān ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn and performed magic with his pen. All four were trustworthy, admirable, and noble. It should be understood that others depend upon whatever trustworthy people write in their histories and report on their authority. But the wise distrust the writings of those devoid of a good family name. The histories written by those who lack a proper genealogy are tossed and forgotten in the bookseller's shop. Some get passed on to the paper seller who erases the writing and reuses it for blank paper.

The Requirements of Writing History

While being noble is one of the requirements of the historian, being correct in religion is also a condition for writing history. Some of bad faith, such as the extremists [and] of those who deny (*ghulāt-i rawāfiż wa khawārij*) the legitimate

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16 al-Wāqidī, as in the case above, was not the son of a Companion.

17 Baranī's definition of Persian pertains to the history of Persians as he lists "*Tārīkh-i Yamīnī wa ʿUtbī*" which was written in Arabic. Storey gives several Persian translations of this work. See C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Biographical Survey* (London: Luzac, 1927), 1:250–52. Baranī mentions a *Tārīkh-i Āʾīn* that refers to the Pahlavi work translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ.

succession of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, have created tales of lies about the Companions, rejecting the appointed successor. [15] Some contemporary historians of bad religion mix truth and lies by including well-known and rejected reports in their own histories. In any case, people who read history do not know about the religion and improper beliefs of the authors of history. Counting them among the predecessors, they supposed that it was written correctly. Not everyone can recognize the deceit of bad religionists. It is the method of the bad religionists to conceal their absurd religious views in their writings from the Sunnis. The lies and deceit that have crept into their perverse religious beliefs is mixed with correct traditions and true events and inserted into their fallacious writings. Until someone comes along who has studied them and is aware of the traditions of the predecessors and is prepared to refute them, their deceitful ways spread along [with the religion of the lying historians]. Their faith is damaged by reading those lies mixed with truth. The fabricated writings of the lying irreligionists are understood as truth. However, one of the great advantages of knowing history is the ability to distinguish between those who follow the example of the predecessors from the bad religionists of the predecessors, the truthful reporters from the liars, and the trustworthy from the deceitful. And reliable narratives can be discerned clearly from unreliable ones. The follower of religion is freed of false beliefs and is firmly established on the beliefs of the leaders of the Sunni community.

It is a condition of history writing that the historian should exhibit religiosity and even while writing about a king or great person's qualities, good works, justice, and beneficence; he should not conceal their flaws and imperfections. Don't adopt the style of a confidant in writing history. [16] If you see the general good being cared for then say it clearly, otherwise inform the insightful through allusions, subtle indications, and metaphor. If out of fear one cannot write about the crimes of one's own contemporaries then one is excused but for the past, one must speak truthfully and directly. If one is physically abused by the sultans, viziers, and nobles of one's age, or given gifts, one should not be influenced by that behavior while writing history because that would not result in following the truth. Then things that did not happen are written down. But writing truthfully about the righteous, religious, faithful, and truthful is the sole object of the historian and his only fear is answering on the Day of Judgment. It is incumbent upon the historian to completely reject the methods of the liars and encomiasts, the poets, and those who are prone to exaggeration. One should know that those people turn cowrie shells into rubies and, out of greed, call broken stones pearls. Their best writings are their greatest lies. Others trust what the historian writes. If he writes something untrue then that fault will remain with him and will be proof against him before God. Whatever the historian writes falsely, will on the Day of Judgment be cause for his most severe punishment.

Amongst the fields of knowledge history is one of the most excellent and beneficial. Writing history is a great trust. The benefits of that knowledge pertain both to those whose great and laudable actions remain imprinted on the pages of time and to the readers of history. [17] The historian's duty is toward those whose actions and deeds he records and whose glories he disseminates on the pages of time. If they are alive then when the historian shows their good deeds people develop an affection for them, praise them, and send them well wishes. A fondness for them becomes imprinted on the hearts of people near and far. If they are dead, then by mentioning the results of their glorious deeds, they find a second life and are deserving of having said about them "God's mercy upon them." It is incumbent upon readers and listeners of history to give historians their just due because they [people] receive so many benefits from their writings.

The Patronage of Historiography

Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī notes in his *Ghurar al-Siyar* that it was at the very early stages of the Abbasid caliphate that the caliphs, sultans, and nobility showed intense interest in history. The Commander of the Faithful Hārūn al-Rashīd, the greatest caliph of the Abbasid period, had a deep passion for history. In seeing the Caliph's interest Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad Shaybānī also became engaged. They followed al-Wāqidī in studying the reports and military exploits of the Prophet and the Companions. It is because caliphs and sultans come from noble families and descent that they take such an interest in history. In an age of nobility there never was a night or day that Arabic and Persian histories were not read before the caliphs, sultans, ministers, and princes. They could not help but take council in them. It was in the period of these sultans, viziers, and nobles that respect for the knowledge of history grew and historians achieved notoriety. They were respected and awarded gifts. [18] From the caliphs, sultans, viziers, and kings, notable historians received jewels, land, horses, and camels. After the period of the great connoisseurs of history, the appreciation and basis of that appreciation for history and historians declined. The appetite of the caliphs and sultans of the later period occupied their youth pursuing the fulfillment of their personal desires. Therefore, their lofty aspirations dissipated. The sultans' and nobles' desire to care for the glorious deeds and great qualities of the great men waned along with their desire to have them recorded in histories so that the memory of their great accomplishments would last until the end of time. Having a proper lineage as a requirement of rule to become a sultan, vizier, or Amir, was no longer observed. Rather, kingship turned into oppression and viziership into cleverness and frugalness. The fashion for the knowledge of history and the splendor of the historian diminished.

In the early period, the great enthusiasm for the reading, knowing, and study of the knowledge of history became a source of attracting students. Many courses were given concerning the knowledge of history. That all diminished in later times and historians were left without their reputation and esteem.

In the courts of the Persian kings, kingship came from being born into a line of kings, viziership came from being born into a line of viziers, and free birth was a necessary condition of nobility. Historians were employed in the Persian courts from Gayumars to Khusraw Parvīz. Under the Persian courts the historian achieved the same level of respect and position as the Zoroastrian priests (*mubid*), the shaykhs of the religious community of those Persian kings. Thaʿlabī (Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Nīsābūrī al-Thaʿlabī, d. 427/1035), who was a peerless historian, wrote in the *ʿArāʾis al-Majālis fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* (also *Tārīkh-i ʿArāʾisī*) how is it possible that caliphs, sultans, ministers, and kings should recognize the value of the service of the historian to the court knowing that many courtiers, poets, encomiasts, and idle talkers spread sleights of hand, lies, meaningless jargon, false praise, and indecorous hyperbole. [19] For their bizarre adulation and lies they are paid in riches. They churn out chapter upon chapter in their praise and even fill books with their virtues. When the time of their sultanate, kingship, vizierate, and rule comes to an end, then no one remembers the pages overflowing with flattery and lies, whose falsehoods and exaggerations shine like the sun, and no one reads their praises. Their fictional writings lay abandoned in the bookstores. This can be contrasted to how kings are referred to in history books. Their great and glorious deeds are mixed with those of the kings and viziers extoled from the past.

Historians preserve and demonstrate the continuity of generations of rulers, and, having observed the proper order of the months and years, do not distort the continuation of eras, which is one of the essential requirements of the discipline of history. In doing so the historian performs a service that will last until the Day of Judgment. Moreover the passion of high-minded readers will not be diminished by reading their books and hearing the accounts recorded in their writings. Who can really comprehend its value? Just think that when a person passes from this world so does his wealth and life. Nothing of the kingdom, household servants, wealth, livestock, assistants, companions, wives and children, horsemen and followers, slaves and concubines, and treasures and provisions remains to succeed him. But his good deeds mentioned in the history books are recorded and compared along with those of other kings. Every day and every week of the praised kings and nobles written about in history books are recalled for the edification of the kings and nobles of the current age. [20] Upon hearing the great deeds of those kings the esteemed men of learning of every age confer their blessings upon them. One says, "A hundred blessings upon them." Another says, "May God show them countless kindness for their splendid rule." Others praise them saying

that such a rule filled with just sayings, deeds, and goodness is worthy to follow. Everyone sends their good wishes and that person is happy and satisfied in their grave and they receive life. Just as the Prophet Muḥammad has said, "Whomever Muslims remember well and praise, they are deserving of heaven."

The Aim of Writing the *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*

I, Żiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī, the author of *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*, have systematically described the principles of the knowledge of history in the introduction to this history as well as their benefits, qualities, and excellence. In this manner I am unique amongst the Persian historians. Having described all that, which may appear somewhat lengthy, I wanted to show that seeing so many good qualities and advantages of the knowledge of history, I felt the need to write a history. I wanted to begin with Adam and his twin sons Seth, the father of prophets, and Gayumars, the father of sultans. Then proceeding year by year, age by age, I would arrange the sayings and deeds of the prophets and sultans until the time of Muṣṭafā, the Seal of Prophets, and on to Khusraw Parvīz, the last king of the children of Gayumars. I would continue on to the caliphs and sultans of Islam down to the present king in whose name this book is written. [21]

I was in this line of thought until I remembered Minhāj Sirāj Jūzjānī and his *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*. I was reminded of the miracle of the white hand of Moses that that great man wrote *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* in Delhi about the affairs of the prophets, caliphs, and sultans in twenty-three chapters and organized it from Adam and Seth and Gayumars up to Sultan Nāṣir al-Dīn, son of Sultan Shams al-Dīn Iltutmish and the khans of the time of the Shamsī dynasty. So I said to myself what would readers gain by reading my book on the same subject having read what that great man of religion and rule had already written. If I were to contradict something in his history and criticize it then this will be perceived as brashness and bad manners and put some doubt into the hearts of the readers of *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*. The virtue I saw in writing my own history was that whatever was covered in *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, I would leave out of mine, and whatever was discussed by Qāżī Minhāj al-Dīn, I would not discuss. Rather, I would mention the affairs of the recent sultans of Delhi not touched in his history. I would follow the manner that prophets, caliphs, sultans, their children, and assistants are laid out in *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*. So that if I follow the principles of the knowledge of history and present the correct knowledge of history, the wise, insightful, subtle, and fair minded will comprehend my brief composition, my many arguments, and do me justice by not denying me praise. On the principle of that previous mentioned condition I carried out this investigation.

I took note of the fact that since the reign of those mentioned in *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* ninety-five years have passed. [22] In that time eight kings have sat upon the throne of Delhi as well as three individuals who, whether justly or unjustly, sat on the throne for three or four months. I have dealt with those eight sultans in my brief history beginning with the reign of Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balaban.

The Reigns of the Sultans of Delhi Described in *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*

Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balaban (r. 1266–86)
Muʿizz al-Dīn Kay Qubād (r. 1286–90)
Jalāl al-Dīn Khiljī (r. 1290–94)
ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Khiljī (r. 1294–1316)
Quṭb al-Dīn Mubārak Shāh (r. 1316–21)
Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq Shāh (r. 1321–25)
Muḥammad b. Tughluq (r. 1325–51)
Fīrūz Shāh (r. 1351–88)

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