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THE DIFFERENT  
ASPECTS  
OF ISLAMIC  
CULTURE

VOLUME FIVE

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CULTURE  
AND LEARNING  
IN ISLAM

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*Chief Editor: Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu*

U N E S C O P u b l i s h i n g

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THE DIFFERENT  
ASPECTS OF ISLAMIC  
CULTURE

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## PREFACE

At its nineteenth session, the General Conference of UNESCO authorized the Director-General to take the necessary measures to prepare and publish a work on the different aspects of Islamic culture. The aim was to show these various aspects, both from a historical standpoint and with reference to the present relevance of a civilization whose rôle and brilliance in the future are expected to equal what they were in the past.

In the Middle Ages, the influence of Islamic civilization was felt throughout the world. For the peoples who, from the China Sea to the Atlantic coast of Africa, embraced Islam, it provided a set of cultural references and values that served to fashion their unity while preserving their own specific characteristics. What is more, this civilization, which aspired to universality from its beginnings, exercised an undeniable influence on neighbouring peoples in several fields.

In the early Middle Ages, Muslim thinkers and scientists, drawing on the rich heritage of Greece, developed their own world-views and sowed in the subsoil of the Latin Middle Ages the seeds from which the first shoots of the European Renaissance were to grow. They served as an essential link in that transmission of learning and knowledge which constitutes the most moving illustration of the many-stranded continuity of the epic of humanity.

Muslim philosophers, geographers, physicists, mathematicians, botanists and doctors made their contributions to the adventure of science, which paid no heed to borders. Knowledge flowed in from Sicily and Andalusia. Perhaps the apocryphal story of Averroës in Italy, whose teaching at the University of Padua was to find an echo in Dante's *Inferno*, is emblematic of this itinerancy of knowledge, carried like pollen by the bracing winds of human commerce.

Islamic culture, whose roots plunge deep into the past but which is still alive today, simultaneously developed a conception of the individual and the universe, a philosophy of life and an art of living still attested in the prestigious

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vestiges of its heritage, which form an integral part of the heritage of humanity.

But that culture, momentarily checked in its development by opposing historical trends, has found in its reserves the strength to spring back. Faithfulness to its roots by no means prevents it from wanting to take up its position in the present century, participating in the contemporary debate and being open to the stimulating dialogue of cultures.

The series of volumes on the different aspects of Islamic culture, of which this Volume is the third to appear, will seek to present to the widest possible readership the various facets of this living culture, namely: the theological bases that constitute the pillars of faith and the foundations on which the entire edifice rests; the status of the individual and society in the Islamic world; an account of the expansion of Islam since the Revelation: the Arab, Asian, African and European areas opened up before the new profession of faith, and the way in which the rights of the converted peoples were preserved; the fundamental contribution, in the scientific and technical fields, of Islamic civilization to the adventure of human knowledge; the educational and cultural achievements – in literature, art and architecture – of Islamic civilization; and lastly, Islam today, between faithfulness to its past and the necessary conquest of modernity.

Neither a learned compilation nor an attempt at popularization, this series of volumes on the different aspects of Islamic culture is intended to be a work of a high scientific standard with contributions from eminent scholars in the Islamic world, whom I wish to thank.

This co-operation on a large scale among Muslim scholars is intended by UNESCO to be a modest contribution to the cultural renaissance begun by the Muslim countries upon the recovery of their national independence.

In seeking to show the authenticity of Islamic culture, and at the same time its present relevance, UNESCO is undertaking a task that will require a long and sustained effort. It thus intends to remain true to its mission, which is to preserve and promote the values of each culture of the world in order to strengthen intercultural dialogue as a peaceful and necessary means of understanding among peoples and nations.



*Koïchiro Matsuura*  
*Director-General of UNESCO*

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# INTRODUCTION

*Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu*

And We made you into nations and tribes  
so that you may know each other;  
beyond doubt,  
the most honoured of you in the sight of God  
is the most righteous of you ...  
(Qur'ān, XLIX.13)

A civilization cannot be without culture, and culture cannot be without knowledge (*'ilm*), the quest for which is not merely an optional right but a duty (*fard*) upon the Muslim believer. The Prophet tells us: 'To seek knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman,' and he added: 'Seek knowledge even if it be as far away as China.'<sup>1</sup> The basic law defining the quest for knowledge as a pivotal principle with no limiting frontier of time or place was set here. Knowledge (*'ilm*) always remained as an all-pervasive value impinging on Islamic life through all the diverse disciplines of learning, whether social, political, intellectual, artistic, or spiritual.

This particular volume, the fifth in a series of six, aspires to cast light on some of the cultural manifestations of Islam in the spheres of language and literature, philosophy and mysticism, human sciences and art. For this task, UNESCO has chosen scholars and experts from all over the world, East and West, who belong to widely divergent cultural and religious backgrounds. The choice of authors reflects the amplitude and universality of the concept of knowledge in Islam. The diversity of the cultural expressions found in one single culture reflects the binding spirit and unifying soul behind them, the unity behind the multiplicity. The Qur'ān, too, marks the diversity in men and cultures and the need for mutual knowledge: 'And We made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other' (Qur'ān, XLIX.13).

In this introduction we have tried to rediscover the principles underlying the search for knowledge and the ideal theory located behind the actual reality. The elements of knowledge presented in this volume constitute neither arid erudition nor apologetic polemic, since Islamic culture is alive and its beauty

1. A saying of the Prophet quoted in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, Cairo, 1932, I, p. 191.

speaks for itself. They reflect the objective assimilation achieved by people of knowledge and experience. No organization could better fulfil this task than UNESCO, given its threefold aim: learning through the rediscovery of different cultural expressions, the protection of their unique original cultural visages and the search for a universal unitive bond through the sharing of learning.

‘It is charity to learn, to act accordingly and to teach’,<sup>2</sup> asserts a tradition of the Prophet, thus dividing the acquisition of knowledge into a three-step process: learning, action and sharing.

In Islam, learning is not restricted to particular branches of knowledge. Muslim learning concerns all intellectual disciplines and technical skills. According to Ibn Khaldūn’s classification of sciences, knowledge divides into inspired knowledge (*ilhāmī* or *wijdānī*) and acquired sciences (*kasbī*). The first comes necessarily through religion, while the latter is acquired via sensory and mental faculties and pertains to all people without any exclusiveness. Acquired sciences are ‘those with which man can become acquainted through the very nature of his ability to think and to whose objects, problems, arguments and methods of instruction, he is guided by his human perceptions so that he is made aware of the distinction between what is correct and what is wrong in them by his own speculation and research, inasmuch as he is a thinking human being’.<sup>3</sup>

‘Human beings’ from very different ethnic and religious backgrounds contributed to the development of Islamic arts and sciences. Muslims, Christians, Jews and others together participated in the building of a culture.

Since the very beginning, the constituents of Islamic civilization have shown a great degree of pluralism and diversity. There has even been room for the efforts of the followers of other religions, such as Christians and Jews, within the framework of unity established by the Islamic approach. Islamic civilization also adapted many intellectual and cultural elements from other civilizations, such as Persian, Greek, Indian and others, and thus acquired a cosmopolitan character which made it an important tributary to the European Renaissance, and a major component of international culture.<sup>4</sup>

In the same fashion, in Islam learning is not restricted to a particular social group or class. A man’s value does not inhere in background, origins, colour or race. ‘A man’s value’, announces ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’,<sup>5</sup> ‘consists in what he knows or does well.’<sup>6</sup>

2. Cited in that most useful work, F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant: the Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1970, p. 246.

3. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. F. Rosenthal, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1967, II, p. 436.

4. See E. İhsanoğlu, ‘Cross-Fertilization between Arabic and other Languages of Islam’, below in this volume, p. 103.

5. Cousin of the Prophet and fourth caliph of Islam.

6. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, Beirut, 1963, p. 518.



That the learned man, whoever he was and wherever he came from, enjoyed the high esteem of his community and its leaders, is attested in the following traditions of the Prophet: 'The superiority of the scholar over the pious resembles my superiority over the ordinary among you',<sup>7</sup> and: 'On the Day of Judgment the ink of the scholar and the blood of the martyrs shall be weighed, but the ink of the scholars shall outweigh the blood of the martyrs.'<sup>8</sup> Scholars, philosophers, artists and craftsmen occupied a central place in Islamic society and yet, as individuals, were melted in an all-encompassing *umma*, a collective past, present and future culture. 'As a link in the chain of transmission, an author concealed his own personality behind the prestige of authority and the ranks of previous transmitters.'<sup>9</sup>

Learning implied tolerance and respect towards the bearers of science within the Islamic *umma* itself; but it also advocated tolerance towards the world outside. Islam arose in the Arabian Peninsula but did not confine itself to it. Islam rapidly outgrew its initial limits. Its victorious armies conquered Syria, Egypt, Persia, North Africa and Spain, that is, almost the entire Mediterranean basin, but reaching also the Far East, India and Europe and the Caucasus. The word 'army' tends to connote inexorable force, even to suggest brutal compulsion. Yet we know that the local populations, who were often dissatisfied with the local rulers (the Copts with the Greeks, the Syrians with the Byzantine empire, for instance), looked forward to the Muslims as liberators. While empires were overthrown, the enemy crushed and new lands conquered, the religion of Islam did not spread by force of arms and through sword and violence, but through love and tolerance: 'Some even among the Christian populations of Syria and Egypt preferred the rule of Islam to that of the Byzantines.'<sup>10</sup> '*Lā ikrāha fi-l-dīn*', commands the Qur'ān (II. 256): 'There is no coercion in religion.' The Šūfīs, or Muslim mystics, were the ones who propagated Islam through the love of God and the compassion for mankind they radiated, as witnessed in India for instance, where the Chishti order won many over to Islam and where those who did not embrace Islam also attached themselves with great devotion and love to the Šūfī saints, believing they 'contained the essence of the divine secrets'.<sup>11</sup>

Islam remained for all of them the last and most comprehensive Divine revelation which comprises in itself, and hence abolishes, the laws brought by every previous Prophet. The tolerance of Islamic mysticism consists of its embracing all religions under the crown of that final revelation which was granted to Muhammad.<sup>12</sup>

7. Saying of the Prophet cited in al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, Beirut, 1983, p. 6.

8. *Ibid.*

9. B. Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 154.

10. B. Lewis, *The Arabs...*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

11. A. A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, New Delhi, 1975, I, p. 122.

12. A. Schimmel, *Pain and Grace: a Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth-Century India*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1976, p. 6.

There was no pressure by the conquerors upon the subdued people to adopt their faith or the culture carried by the Muslims – whether they were Arabs from the Peninsula or Ottoman Turks. Arabic was the language of Revelation, and the non-Arab peoples learned Arabic without abandoning their native tongues, which in turn became highly influenced by it. ‘It was natural that they should find in Arabic a rich source of ideas and culture, from which they borrowed countless words and constructions... At the same time, Arabic was influenced by this process of cultural cross-fertilization between Arabic and the other Muslim languages to such an extent that it is often difficult to determine the origin of many Muslim thinkers and writers.’<sup>13</sup> While the first Muslims, proud of their past, preserved their linguistic heritage, including their pre-Islamic poetry, they also started expressing their thoughts and sentiments in a great range of languages and dialects, while maintaining Arabic as the essential tool for their religious and intellectual exchanges.

Language, as the initial cultural vehicle, soon reflects this striking blend of cultures. The fusion is also noticeable in many other fields, such as architecture. The city of Damascus remained for years as it had been under Byzantine rule with its Graeco-Roman architectural tradition, before mosques and other adjoining structures gradually started to be built and the city was transformed into one better suited to the life of Muslims. ‘Muslims were cautious “colonizers”... There was no destruction of property, religious or otherwise. They did not change the language of governance and commerce for almost fifty years... The culture slowly transformed from Graeco-Roman Byzantine-Christian to Arab-Islamic with a healthy mix of ethnically non-Arab Muslims.’<sup>14</sup> In Syria, the Graeco-Roman-Byzantine precedents were retained; in Mesopotamia and Persia, the Sāsānid influence was strongly felt; in Egypt, the Coptic, and in China, the Buddhist style perpetuated themselves. While removing the pagan elements or the symbolism that generated any conflict with the ethical and religious precepts of Islam, the new culture rapidly assimilated all these variegated aesthetic forms of the past to express its own principles through a harmonious personal melding. Glorifying in its local colours, the mosque always remained the centre where all gathered, regardless of national or tribal affiliation. Over great stretches of time the Muslim world retained this pluralistic theme; one thinks, for instance, of the Arab dominion in Andalusia and the Pax Ottomanica – a perhaps unequaled achievement in the history of mankind, when different races and religions lived together and in peace. In Sarajevo, synagogues, churches and mosques were built side by side.

The same also holds true for the philosophical sciences: ‘No... separation is observable in the philosophy developed in the Islamic cultural context and written in Arabic: Muslims, Christians and Jews participated in it and

13. See E. İhsanoğlu, ‘Cross – Fertilization...’, *op. cit.*, below in this volume, p. 103.

14. See G. Haider, ‘The Islamic City’, below in this volume, p. 23.

separated themselves according to the philosophical, rather than the religious doctrines they held.<sup>15</sup> Islamic philosophical sciences were born out of Greek philosophy. It is through the translations into Arabic of the 'great sages' of the past – Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus – that the Muslims developed an interest in philosophy and were able to build their own philosophical system according to the foundations of the Islamic creed, the Qur'ān and the Tradition. 'Ernest Renan exaggerated tremendously when he maintained that Arabic philosophy was only Greek philosophy in Arabic lettering; in fact, the most important Muslim-Arab philosophers not only assimilated Greek philosophy but also developed it, both by elucidating its more obscure or imperfectly made points and by drawing the consequences, but especially by systematizing it all, no easy task in itself.'<sup>16</sup> In turn, the Islamic philosophical system was to be transferred to the West, mainly through the Spanish channel, thus marking the end of the Dark Ages and the rise of the scholastic age in Europe.<sup>a</sup>

This is how the Muslim civilization gave birth to one of the most remarkable examples of cultural interpenetration in a climate marked by clemency and mutual respect. Islamic music, for instance, 'is distinct from that of other cultures throughout history because it is the quintessence of the music of all the peoples and countries which espoused Islam, a religion which has always been receptive to other cultures and arts, provided that they are not in any way linked to paganism and that they are not contrary to any of the Pillars of Islam, especially belief in the Unity of God.'<sup>17</sup> Music and all other cultural manifestations reflect the same sense of spiritual union, not only between individual Muslim peoples, but between different races and religions. This union was not marred but on the contrary enhanced by cultural phenomena that united rather than divided, so that diversity augmented beauty, while multiplicity melted into oneness.

The Muslim pioneers showed respect to other cultures and tolerance towards other human beings, regardless of religion. They were moved by a deep inquisitiveness about the unfamiliar and an insatiable eagerness to learn what they did not know. Learning, absorbing and adaptation all enabled this harmonious symbiosis and union among many cultures, those of the conquered and that of the conqueror. Since the beginning of Islam, the Muslim had been taught the love of knowledge, for knowledge is in any case inseparable from happiness. Just as the search for happiness is innate, being intrinsic to every human being on earth, so too is the quest for knowledge. How then could 'learning' or 'culture' recede or even slacken in the Islamic countries after the twelfth century?

15. See M. S. Mahdi, 'Philosophy in Islam', below in this volume, p. 399.

16. A. Badawi, 'The Way of the Hellenizers: Transmission of Greek Philosophy to Islamic Civilization', below in this volume, p. 383.

17. S. Mahdi, 'Music in Islamic Culture', below in this volume, p. 721.

Islam and its culture were born in Arabia; the Prophet of Islam was an Arab; the Arabic language was a principal medium of expression; the Arabs played a leading rôle in the territorial expansion and cultural amplitude of Islam; and there exist many other elements that confirm the primacy of the Arabs in the building of the Islamic civilization. Yet one should not completely identify Arabness with Islamic civilization, or the Arab rule with the Islamic commonwealth. First and foremost we must address this question: are we discussing Arab rule, or are we surveying Islamic civilization as a cultural entity? After the fall of Baghdad, the political centre-stage was occupied by several non-Arab dynasties, such as the Ayyūbids of Egypt and Syria, the Mamlūks of Egypt, and the Ottomans who restored to the old Arab world its previous geographical integrity and political ascendancy. Likewise the Almoravid and Almohad Maghrib, Saljūk Anatolia, Şafawid Persia and Mughal India. All these dynasties, whether major or marginal, upheld for various spans of time the torch of Islam and brought their own contributions to Islamic culture and civilization, irrespective of whether or not they used the Arabs' linguistic medium. Islamic culture did not die. The Muslim Arab world

neither expired nor stagnated during that time, despite the momentous political, economic and social events that were taking place... the Arab intellectual contribution did not stop with the end of the preceding period but remained active and prolific, despite the introduction of new features that did not adversely affect it but actually enriched it.<sup>18</sup>

Too often has Islamic culture been arbitrarily characterized as one with a period of florescence extending from the time of the early Arab conquests to the Mongol destruction of Baghdad in 655/1258. Until less than fifty years ago, scholars described this era, typically referred to as the 'Golden Age', as having been followed by a period of utter decline, intellectual sterility and cultural stagnation.

Political ascendancy and economic prosperity, while often associated with cultural fecundity, are not a pre-condition for the blossoming of cultures. Material development is not a synonym of culture. In a manner recalling the stages of development evident in the human body or soul, dynasties and cultures, to use the generic Khaldūnian imagery, experience mutations that imply stages of apparent apathy. Yet these stages can in fact conceal processes of self-assessment or the absorption of alien cultural elements, or the maturation of unsuspected dormant energies and latent potential. Although after the period of Arab dominance over the Arabian Peninsula the spotlights shifted to other centres of culture, the Middle East, North Africa, Central and East Asia contributed with their own culture, again the product of their own and of the Islamic culture of the time. Ibn Khaldūn (732–808/1332–1406),

18. See L. Sabbagh, 'Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period', below in this volume, p. 187.

who was North-African born, and likewise Mi‘mar Sinan (894–996/1489–1490–1588), who was Anatolian born, are both distinguished among the greatest cultural figures in Islam, and indeed in the world generally. In the history of cultural genesis, there is no final loss – there is transformation, just as there is no stasis, but dynamic transmutation. Islamic culture is of Arab birth, but it grew into a multifaceted, wide symbiosis between the spirit of Islam and a myriad regional expressions.

While the quest for learning seems to have no boundaries in Islamic culture, the nature of the knowledge to be harvested is circumscribed in the Islamic creed. ‘I take refuge with Thee from knowledge that profiteth naught,’ was the Prophet’s prayer.<sup>19</sup> ‘*Ilm* is not to be a burden of prolix erudition carried by man like – to use this Qur’ānic and universal image – ‘the donkey that carries a load of books’ (Qur’ān, LXII.5).

Learning must be useful. The acquisition of useful knowledge, in both theoretical sciences (*ṣanā’i‘ ‘ilmīyya*) or practical skills (*ṣanā’i‘ ‘amalīyya*), is the first step in the fulfilment of the Muslim’s duty that ‘leads him as far away as China’. After this search comes action. Knowledge (*‘ilm*) precedes action (*‘amal*), it transcends its theoretical framework and is then manifested as good, fertile and fruitful action. Knowledge is perfected when combined with action. Reflection is realized, speculation actualized and imagination finds its outlet in creativity. Literature (*adab*) is useful when it goes beyond empty word play, when it is a mirror of human society leading to good morals, refinement of the spirit, self-improvement, knowledge and action. It is not a coincidence that the term *adab* means at once ‘literature’ and ‘virtuous behaviour’. According to al-Jāhīz (d. 255/869), ‘Literature (*adab*) is a tool that needs to be used in both temporal and spiritual lives.’<sup>20</sup>

Thus the Islamic arts and sciences, whether or not they were directly related to the sacred, were always intertwined and marked by the search for the absolute. ‘There are as many ways to God as there are men’s breaths.’<sup>21</sup> The lives of individual Muslims and of whole Muslim peoples were caught up and oriented towards God. ‘Islamic art... was based on an idealistic model, one in which the artist strives towards the hidden meaning of things, especially the divine. Hence, the aim of the artist was not to satisfy some material need but to plumb the hidden depths of life through his creative powers. The work of exploration is an act of... piety, an attempt to draw closer to God.’<sup>22</sup> There is an interpenetration of the sacred and profane, the secular and religious, the temporal and spiritual. This was achieved without tension or contradiction,

19. al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’...*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

20. See A. Cheikh-Moussa, ‘*Adab* Literature in the Classical Period’, below in this volume, p. 155.

21. Famous saying.

22. See A. Bahnassi, ‘Art and Aesthetic Creativity’, below in this volume, p. 549.

since ultimately everything belongs to God: 'And God created you and what you make' (Qur'ān, XXXVII.96); and religion taught both the art of living in this world and the means of meriting the next.

Human sciences had to have an outward impact on society, but they also had an inward influence on the seeker of knowledge and on his inner development. The ideal traditional Muslim poet, artist or artisan was a righteous person, a self-effacing worker, adorned with the virtues of modesty and humility, confident that the real creator was God and that man is only an instrument or an intermediary. As he struggled to acquire knowledge, a learned man tried to impregnate his inner self with it, strove towards eliminating from his soul all traces of pride and was in turn, in an apparently paradoxical way, rewarded: 'He who shows humility will be elevated by God; and he who shows arrogance will be abased by Him.'<sup>23</sup> Interestingly enough, righteousness and moral virtues hold such a central importance in the quest for knowledge that we are told that 'one of the first signs of the disappearance of knowledge is the disappearance of humility.'<sup>24</sup>

Any art or action should be brought as close as possible to perfection. The quest for knowledge (*ṭalab al-ʿilm*) leads to the search for perfection (*ṭalab al-kamāl*). Mastering a science, a craft or an art is a fundamental part of the training of the soul that also struggles to acquire knowledge and beauty. The perfecting of knowledge in turn leads to self-knowledge and therefore to the perfecting of the seeker of knowledge. As the soul purifies itself from all flaws, the art it engenders comes closer to perfection. A dialectical relation then emerges by which, as the calligrapher patiently moves his pen in the most excellent way possible, the pen in turn shapes the inner self of the calligrapher. As artist or musician, man strives towards acquired knowledge (*ʿilm kasbī*), while his cleansed and purified soul becomes more receptive to divinely inspired knowledge (*ʿilm wabbī*) and is fed and filled with the love of beauty and perfection. By perfecting himself and his art, the artist is led to Divine Perfection. *Al-ʿAlīm*, the All-knowing, and *al-Jamīl*, the Most-Beautiful, are divine attributes of the Creator that must be reflected in man and in the theoretical and practical cultural signs he engenders. We see this in the initiatic training of the artisan brotherhoods (*akhbās*), where a discipline was observed in order to perfect both the art and the artist, the object and the human agent.

The same phenomenon is also observed in the evolution of the science of history. The early *ayyām* chronicles were the expression of bigoted tribal feuds. With the advent of Islam, history became 'the expression of the will of God, and the process of history is the creative meeting of God, man, nature and time.'<sup>25</sup>

23. Saying of the Prophet quoted in al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Istanbul, 1989, XIV, p. 6423.

24. Saying of the Prophet quoted in al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, New Delhi, 1269/1852, pp. 435–442.

25. See A. A. Duri, 'Arab Historiography', below in this volume, pp. 487–510.

History became an objective science, a universal science, and the historian a man in search of objective truth, invaluable to society and to peoples. History became 'the common memory of the *umma* and a basis for its common spirit and for its identity. It arouses national feelings and drives towards unity. The aim of historical studies is to understand the present and to build a better future.'<sup>26</sup>

Thus *‘ilm* is incompatible with such flaws as passivity if not transferred into action, or miserliness if not shared. Knowledge is the only wealth which is undiminished by sharing.

This actuated acquired knowledge and experience must hence be shared, for 'It is unlawful to withhold knowledge;<sup>27</sup> and indeed, while throughout history the Muslims absorbed and acquired knowledge, they also imparted it: they were both students and teachers. During the Middle Ages the Muslims taught the West, precipitating a new era, the Renaissance, following which the process in the transmission of science and technology reversed so that it flowed now from West to East. Refusal to share leads to the loss of knowledge. Ibn Qutayba comments: 'A person who conceals some kind of knowledge is like one who does not know it.'<sup>28</sup> In contrast, 'The most blessed of mankind is the one most beneficial for mankind.'<sup>29</sup> It is through imparting useful, beneficial knowledge that wisdom and experience are transmitted from one person to the next, between 'nations and tribes' and between the cultures of the world, with one underlying aim, 'to know each other' (Qur'ān, XLIX.13). 'Know each other', commands the Qur'ān. In order truly to understand an individual or a society, both past history and present phenomena must be explored.

In the course of history, Islam had had to suffer many, often intense, blows. It had to face the Crusaders (487–668/1095–1270), the Mongol raids and invasions (598–807/1202–1405) and the Reconquista and Inquisition (897/1492); but it always recovered culturally, and even though some wounds might be open still, they seem to be the entailment of political acts; they have never affected the Islamic world in its path of cultural tolerance and thirst for knowledge, or in its material, moral and spiritual values. The extreme criminal acts of violence that the world endures today, although sometimes perpetrated in the name of Islam, have no connection whatsoever with the reality of Islam and are denounced by the Islamic world. Savagery has unfortunately become an international problem, a rampant spreading disease of our modern world, one that belongs neither to North nor to South. One of the aims of this volume is to rediscover the authentic faces of Islam, to help transcend the

26. A. A. Duri, 'Arab Historiography...', *op. cit.*

27. F. Rosenthal, *Knowledge...*, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

28. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*..., *op. cit.*, p. 49.

29. Al-‘Ajlūnī al-Jarrāhī, *Kashf al-khafa' wa-muz'āl al-ilbās ‘ammā ishtabara min aḥādīth ‘alā al-sinat al-nās*, 2 vols., Beirut, 1351/1932, I, p. 393.

political differences and to heal some of these wounds by perhaps bringing to light some peaceful answers through the understanding of culture and civilization. UNESCO is to be commended and thanked for its efforts towards the re-discovery of the true original message of Islam, one that holds knowledge to be the essential pivot in the lives of people and nations and as the sole way to peace.

Today, the Muslim countries have regained their political independence after enduring a long period of colonial rule. Most of the Muslim states find themselves 'behind', 'under-developed', having 'missed' (to use Fernand Braudel's word) the Industrial Revolution, yet 'this revolution did not kill them as a civilization. All that happened was that Europe gained two centuries of rapid material progress, leaving Islam behind.'<sup>30</sup>

The Muslims cling desperately and often awkwardly to their own cultural and spiritual heritage. The majestic past of Islam has never been erased from their minds and hearts; it is still painfully alive in consciences, still an immanent memory. But the Muslims have not given up hope for the future or succumbed to a state of cultural lethargy. Today, the Islamic individual strives towards self-knowledge and knowledge of his own culture, as well as an understanding of the other cultures of the world. Muslims passionately struggle and search for national identities within an Islamic togetherness through the turbulence, contingencies and demands of modern life and movements. They try to reconcile a fidelity to the original message and the quest for past values with a vision of the future which transcends past or present lesions. The Islamic cultural zone might then again be 'many in one' – even as it was in the golden past.

Ibn Khaldūn concluded that a strong *'aṣabiyya* (group solidarity), is the primary factor behind any powerful culture. Islam believed in and promoted a collective and universal solidarity binding all the members of its community, the *umma*. Indeed, 'the primary cause that dominates the changes and movements of culture, once human nature brings culture into existence, is solidarity. The power, extent and endurance of culture are caused by solidarity and depend upon its strength.'<sup>31</sup> It is not the individual or the tribe alone that builds a civilization; it is the community, the *umma*, that unites men, regardless of 'nations and tribes'. We could even go further: today, it is not a nation alone that builds a civilization, it is a cultural solidarity among many nations of the world that brings about culture. Collective *'aṣabiyya* turns into global solidarity through mutual knowledge. Islam achieved this in its beginning. It lent and borrowed, gave and took; it shared with the nations and cultures it contacted. Today this sharing has an even wider, a more universal scope. Real unification,

30. F. Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, trans. R. Mayne, New York, A. Lane, 1993, p. 69.

31. M. S. Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldun's Philosophy of History, a Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1957, p. 261.



*ittihād*, *tawhīd* or *wahda*, is to recognize cultural solidarity, unity in diversity in God's creation.

Now that the world is moving into this new 'global' or 'universal' phase, with boundaries and frontiers everywhere being eroded, this fraternal bond with the world should be remembered. And culture, that most eloquent of messengers, should tell people of the beauty and perfection they need to look for and strive towards. If the Muslims of the past generated a culture that was a creative assimilation of plurality, we may be confident that they will realize a new and global challenge, entailing a new synthesis between their past and their present.

The Creator did not give the Muslims a monopoly over beauty or knowledge. This is why Islam urged the believers, and still urges them, towards their quest for knowledge, 'even in China', and their search for beauty since 'God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty.'<sup>32</sup>

'Learned men never find themselves strangers anywhere.'<sup>33</sup> True knowledge is the faculty that allows its possessor to look for beauty everywhere. And as he sees the beauty in every creature, and in every culture, he also shows compassion to others and to the Other. A man is 'the enemy of that which he is ignorant of', but he shows love to that which he knows. Only true knowledge of 'each other', of 'nations and tribes' (Qur'ān, XLIX.13), can bind through the fostering of understanding, love and unity, irrespective of all disparities.

The project for this fifth volume on *Culture and Learning in Islam* was first brought to my attention by the late Professor Najmouddine Bammate, éminence grise and man of vision, and by the late Dr. 'Abd al-'Azīz Kāmil, who participated enthusiastically in the development of the project.

I would like to pay tribute to them, and to those others whom we have lost during the realization of the volume, namely Dr. 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Rīda, who unfortunately could not contribute to it, and Dr. Şerare Yetkin.

I would like to extend my thanks to UNESCO for its commendable efforts during this extended collaboration of ours. The publication of a volume with such a universal scope demands much constancy, patience and creativity. The Secretariat of UNESCO was most helpful during the preparation; and special mention should be made of Mrs. Celia Zaher who gave such impetus to the project, and of Mr. Abdelrashid Mahmoudi, Mr. Mohamed Salīh Ziadah and Ms. Michèle Zoé Cartron who brought it to fruition. I was able to appreciate their input even more after I was asked, during the November 1996 meeting, to participate in the project as editor-in-chief. This has been a remarkable instance of co-operation between UNESCO and IRCICA Centre,

32. Badī' al-Zamān Furūnzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i masnawī*, Tehran, Intishārāt-i Danishgah-i Tīhrān, 1955, p. 106.

33. Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, Cairo, 1963, II, p. 121.

who also helped to organize and actualize the project. In particular I should mention my assistants, Mrs. Dilek Orbay, Mrs. Turuncan Kevser, Mr. Ahmed Lajimi and Dr. Yumna Özer. Also special mention should be made of Dr. A. K. Irvine who compiled the General Bibliography, revised the manuscript and corrected the proofs of this volume.

During this long association, which involved the planning, choice and editing of a major work containing forty-eight articles by thirty-eight writers, the conditions were not always perfect, since we were pressured by time and confronted with deadlines, having been put in charge of the editing of the volume at a late date. We have tried to do our best and can only hope we have helped to furnish readers with a truer image of the different visages of Islam and by this means contributed, even in a modest way, to knowledge and culture in the world.

- I -

THE  
LANGUAGES  
OF  
ISLAM

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## Chapter 1

# THE ARABIC LANGUAGE: ITS LINGUISTICS AND PHILOLOGY

*Abdelkader Mehiri*

The designation used to refer to the Arabic language in all its forms is *al-lughā al-ʿarabiyya*. Generally distinguished are the written language and the dialects or *lahajāt* – the first being qualified as *faṣīḥa* (eloquent) and the latter as *dārīja* (vernacular).

Arabic belongs to the family of Semitic languages and, more exactly, to their southern branch. The first manifestations of this language appear to go back to the second millennium BC. But the most ancient documents pertaining to Arabic go back to the eighth century BC. Consisting mainly of proper names, such documents do not really yield us sufficient knowledge of the language for these remote periods. The Arabic language as attested in pre-Islamic poetry and also in the specimens of various dialects mentioned by the grammarians and philologists was probably elaborated over a period ranging from the third to the sixth century AD. The dialects referred to were spoken by the nomads of Central and Northern Arabia. Thus *al-lughā al-ʿarabiyya* is the designation first used to refer to the language current in these regions. Tribal migration, however, seems to have favoured from very early on the spread of Arabic vernaculars to Southern Arabia as well as to the regions making up Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia. Indeed, the language of the pre-Islamic poems was understood alike at the court of the sixth-century Ghassānid princes in the area of Damascus and at the court of their rivals in Mesopotamia, the Lakhmids of al-Ḥīra.

The rare epigraphic documents available allow us to suppose that the Arabic script was derived from the Aramaic and was developed from the third century AD. The script received further refinements down to the end of the seventh century AD when the Arabic alphabet was completed with diacritical points and vocalic signs, in order to avoid ambiguities in reading the text of the Qurʾān arising from the old system of writing.

While early Arabic, as might be supposed, was already fragmented into dialects, a true literary language still existed, as attested both by the pre-Islamic

poems and by the Qurʾān. This was a ‘poetic *koine*’ which transcended, as it were, the vernaculars of the various tribes and was understood by all Arabs. This was the language which grammarians and lexicologists then codified, as we shall see below.

## The spread of Arabic

The Islamic conquests, which resulted in the creation of an Islamic State stretching at the height of its power from the Atlantic Ocean to the banks of the Indus, allowed the Arabic language to spread throughout the different areas of this vast domain. The bedouin tribes, who took part in the campaigns of conquest, took their language with them: northwards as far as the Taurus range and the southern reaches of the Armenian highlands; eastwards towards Iran; and westwards to Egypt and North Africa. It seems that the mingling of elements from the different tribes who joined in the campaigns, actually encouraged some uniformity of speech. But then contact between such an Arabic and the various indigenous languages of the conquered lands favoured the gradual emergence of local dialect forms. Arabic did not take root everywhere in the different regions of the Islamic State in the same way. In some areas, Arabic did supplant local vernaculars all together: this was the case for Syria, Iraq, Egypt, North Africa and parts of Sudan. But elsewhere Arabic was long resorted to only as a cultural language, notably in Persia, where it ended by being replaced by Persian for all purposes, and in Andalusia, where Arabic disappeared after the capture of Granada.

Contact with those languages which had been vehicles for higher culture and civilization, such as Persian and Greek, left traces in Arabic. Thus, for example, Arabic borrowed from the Persian its terms dealing notably with crafts, the fine arts and administration. Meanwhile, the translation of Greek works caused translators purely and simply to borrow actual Greek words. Moreover, to convey those ideas and notions of which Islam was the bearer, or those pertaining to the various civilizations of the conquered lands, necessitated the creation of a new terminology and fresh coinages derived from Arabic roots. Sentence structure underwent similar influences. While Arabic in the initial decades of Islam had been mainly a language of poetry and religious preaching, it soon gave birth to prose forms fit for literary creativity, translation and treatises in the most varied fields of learning: theology, linguistics, philosophy, history etc.

One may therefore consider that the advent of Islam, with all the political, social and cultural consequences it entailed, marked a crucial stage in the history of the Arabic language. Arabic not only became the main language in vast, hitherto non-Arab regions, but also a vehicle for the most far-ranging learning. And so, by way of consequence, it had to adapt to the evolution of

Islamic society itself. Stated simply, one might say that a standardized language had taken shape by the ninth century, one that has been used for writing ever since, though not immune to further evolution. While Arabic did tend to turn into a linguistic instrument used by poets, prose-writers and even scientists who were content to follow pre-established patterns and rehash stale clichés, nevertheless considerable variety in style and tone was shown by other writers dealing with the most manifold subjects, nor yet did the written language always escape the influence of local dialect usage. In fact, the capacity of Arabic to convey the subtlest and most profound ideas depended not so much on its particular degree of linguistic evolution as on the intellectual calibre of the individual writer who wielded it. Thus, a writer such as Ibn Khaldūn may have lived in a relatively stagnant period (the late fourteenth century) in the Arabic-speaking zone of Islamic civilization; yet through his creative genius, he was more than able to express, by means of Arabic, the most innovative ideas on history and society by forging the terms most apt, and style most fit, for his own purposes.

## Modern Arabic

A second crucial stage in the history of the Arabic language came with the nineteenth century. Contact between the Arab world and modern Europe, usually considered to have begun with Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition of 1798, left the deepest imprint on Arabic, and especially on its written form. In order to convey the various aspects of modern civilization and deal with the different borrowings from the West to which Arab societies now started to open, the Arabic language showed undeniable evolution. First came terminology: ideas and various facets of modern life had to find expression either through outright borrowing or by having recourse to the internal resources of Arabic. But then came style: for Arabic could hardly escape transposing, through translation, virtual tracings, as it were, of whole English or French sentence structures. Such evolution, against which the purists, to be sure, put up a fight, was nevertheless indispensable if Arabic was to remain a language for communication. A new standardized language thus came into being, one which the French have termed *arabe littéral*, 'standard written Arabic', one understood in all Arab countries and used in books, newspapers and other mass media and also for teaching, conferences, or in official speeches. It might be no exaggeration to say that it was actually the mass media which gave a new lease of life to this 'standard Arabic', which was ultimately, in fact, a new form of the old literary Arabic. For it was indeed the mass media, by reaching out towards a large audience not only through the press but also through radio and television (now present in nearly every Arab home), which made the 'written' language familiar to ever wider sections of the population.

Written Arabic, whether classical or modern, remains distinguished by a certain number of structural characteristics.

It includes twenty-eight consonants, three short vowels and three long vowels. Classification of its consonants may be patterned thus:

*Place and mode of articulation*

place	Voiced	Nasal	Pharyngalized	Voiceless	Pharyngalized
Labial	b	m		f	
Labiovelar	w				
Dental	d	n	ḍ	t	ṭ
Interdental fricative	dh		z*	th	
Alveolar fricative	z			s	ṣ
Apical trill	r				
Lateral	l				
Palato-alveolar	j			sh	
Palatal	y				
Velar stop				k	
Velar fricative	gh			kh	
Uvular stop				q	
Pharyngal fricative	‘			ḥ	
Glottal stop				’	
Glottal fricative				h	

\* Although usually transcribed as *z*, this consonant is actually pronounced as a pharyngalized interdental *dh*.

Arabic morphology uses consonantal roots, which are mainly trilateral. Words are formed by a play of vowels within the consonantal frame and, as may be the case, by adding a prefix or suffix. Conjugation of the verb observes two tenses, the ‘accomplished’ (perfective) and the ‘unaccomplished’ (imperfective). The ‘accomplished’ tense takes suffixes to indicate person, gender and number, while the ‘unaccomplished’ takes both suffixes and prefixes for this purpose.

In terms of syntax, Arabic resorts to two kinds of sentences: a verbal sentence, whose predicate is a verb; and a nominal sentence, whose predicate is a noun. Varying functions are indicated by declension of case. Three cases are distinguished: the nominative, for subject and predicate; the accusative, notably for the object of the verb; and the genitive, for what might be termed the complements to the noun and also for those complements introduced by a preposition. Qualifiers take the case of the word qualified. In a simple sentence, these different functions are normally carried out by nouns. In a complex sentence, one function at least will be taken by a preposition.

## Arabic dialects

While 'literary Arabic' constitutes the favoured means of communication in all sectors of intellectual and written activity, dialects are used in everyday life. It is generally supposed that the origin of the modern dialects is to be sought in the ancient dialects of Central and Northern Arabia. In contact with the underlying speech forms in the conquered regions, these dialects evolved into the various vernaculars of today, which have been influenced not only by the ancient local tongues but also, in more recent times and to a not inconsiderable extent, by European languages such as French, English, Italian and Spanish.

Characteristic of all the dialects, in contrast to 'literary Arabic', is, notably, the jettisoning of case-endings and many verbal inflections; the almost complete disappearance of the passive form as expressed through the play of vowels; the regression or disappearance of the dual form in nouns, as well as the loss of the feminine plural form of the verb; the appearance of an analytic structure to mark possession; the use of a simplified relative form (*elli*); the formation of an interrogative pronoun (*aysh*, *wash*); and the disappearance or slurring of various vowels within the word.

While the morphological and syntactical structure of written Arabic has hardly suffered any notable change down the ages, this has been mainly due to the rigorous codification of such morphology and syntax as was established in the eighth and ninth centuries AD, a codification which then continued to be observed in the following centuries.

Grammatical and philological studies have indeed enjoyed pride of place in the cultural legacy of the Arabic-speaking Islamic world. Many writers through the centuries have lavished attention upon them. The late fifteenth-century author al-Suyūṭī, one of the last compilers of biographical dictionaries, listed more than 2,000 grammarians.

Nor was interest in philology and linguistics accidental. It may be explained by the rôle enjoyed by the Arabic language in the very religion of Islam. Because it was the language of revelation, Arabic acquired sacred status from the very outset of Islam. As the chosen vessel for a divine message addressed to all mankind, Arabic was considered to be the language of all those who converted to Islam, since access to the scripture (i.e. the Qur'ān) depended upon acquiring it.

For all these reasons, it is easy to see why Arabic linguistic and philological studies developed in close relation with concern about the text of the Qur'ān. Indeed there is no indication that Arabic ever benefited from any written codification before the coming of Islam.



## The origins of linguistic science: the Qurʾān

The information we have hardly allows us to define with any precision the different stages of development in the grammatical and philological sciences before the second half of the second/late eighth century. Those who might be regarded as precursors in the field of Arabic grammar and philology became famous on account of the interest they showed in the text of the Qurʾān. At first transmitted orally in the lifetime of the Prophet, the Qurʾān was then set down in written form on the occasion of the recension carried out towards the middle of the seventh century AD during the reign of the third caliph, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān. However, the script as then used noted only consonants, and indeed did not even properly differentiate between consonantal letters of similar form. Need was therefore soon felt to improve this script, especially by noting vowel signs and diacritical points. This task was carried out by personalities also described to us as having been grammarians, men like Abu-l-Aswad al-Duʿalī (d. 69/680) and Yaḥyā b. Yaʿmur (d. 129/746). The latter is, moreover, considered to have been regarded as an authority in the science of ‘readings’, that is to say, in the activity consisting in transmitting variants in the recitation of the Qurʾān, based on a chain of reliable informants going back to the Companions of the Prophet.

Be that as it may, the text of the Qurʾān may be considered, by the second half of the seventh and first half of the eighth century AD, as already providing the focus for manifold activities concerned both with establishing a definitive text and with its correct recitation - along with a proper justification for what ‘reading’ exactly was adopted. Without any doubt, it was these activities which then caused those interested in such matters to go on from the study of the Qurʾānic text to make observations on the functioning of the Arabic language itself.

### Poetic recensions

The study of the text of the Qurʾān was also a major factor which contributed to the effort to collect pre-Islamic poems. For the ‘readers’, who were forerunners in terms of Qurʾānic exegesis, occasionally needed to refer to examples from poetry in order to clarify, or justify, the syntax of certain turns of phrase, or indeed thereby find means whereby to respond to detractors of the Holy Writ - who questioned just how far the text of the Qurʾān truly matched the norms of Arabic speech.

But then occasional recourse to poetic language soon developed into an object of systematic study in itself. Problems sometimes raised in connection with quotations from poetry, in order to explain or justify Qurʾānic usage, then necessarily required cross-checking.

In this way, from the very first decades of the eighth century, a ‘corpus’, as it were, was already made available for grammatical and philological studies, consisting both of the Qur’ān and of preserved texts of ancient poetry. Observations of a grammatical and philological nature thus were continually widened to embrace all linguistic facts. Thereby, the study of how the language functioned was distinguished from Qur’ānic studies proper.

While the texts in verse originated with poets from the Arabian Peninsula, especially from its central and eastern regions, grammatical and philological studies centred on Iraq. The first generations of scholars lived in Basra. Later, another city, Kufa, became an active centre in the field.

### The codification of Arabic grammar

Two men played a pioneering rôle in classifying the data. These were al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. 175/791) and his disciple Sībawayh (d. c. 180/796). The first of these was gifted with undeniable powers of synthesis and a remarkable capacity to marshal and give form to facts; from his scholarship developed several branches of learning. Thus, from the texts of the poems, al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad inferred and drew up the very principles and rules of Arabic prosody, which he schematically presented in a pattern of five circles, whence derive the sixteen metres used in poetry. He conceived the first Arabic dictionary by framing, as we shall see, a method for classifying vocabulary. He also set forth the first known description of the phonetics of the Arabic alphabet. Despite, however, his decisive rôle as a pioneer in these fields, and with all his manifold contributions, only few surviving works can be attributed to him. In point of fact, the lasting mark he made in the history of Arabic grammar lay mostly in his teaching. For his influence may be found in the hundreds of references to his ideas found in the work of his disciple, Sībawayh. Not only do these references prove that Arabic grammar, with al-Khalīl, had already attained the high level of development worthy of an independent science, they also show a thoroughly systematic approach to the material. In one of the rare texts by al-Khalīl which have been preserved, he explains his concern to justify linguistic data and their attendant rules, in other words, his concern to prove linguistic coherence, by comparing himself to a visitor inside a building, trying to understand just how it was put together and made to fit, that is, what was its underlying structural coherence. Such an approach was that of a true scholar, reaching beyond scattered data and various rules in an attempt to see things globally.

Not the least of the master’s merits consisted in adopting as his disciple a grammarian of the calibre of Sībawayh, whose name has become synonymous, in Arabic, with that of absolute mastery in the field of grammar - and whose work became known simply by the title of *al-Kitāb*, or ‘The Book’. This opus is the most ancient document on the material which has come down to us. We

should hardly err in assessing its content as representing all the data of Arabic grammar as drawn from the Qur'ānic and poetic corpus referred to above. Its data were set forth according to a major traditional division, that is, between syntax and morphology. Phonetics was dealt with within the framework of morphology so as to account for the modification undergone by the forms of words – as in the case of assimilation. This portion of the work notably included an exhaustive recension of all the possible patterns of the Arabic word – later grammarians would hardly register any further forms not already found therein. Sibawayh's book represented, indeed, a *summa* of grammatical learning. Not only did it mark the net result of a century of efforts in the field, but it went on in itself to constitute a point of departure for all later Arabic literature on grammar.

### Grammatical controversies

Approaches to grammar now shifted. Once the facts had been assembled and all the rules drawn up, the task in hand henceforth was to furnish their justification. Grammarians now no longer mobilized to show how the language functioned, but concentrated instead on the reasons why.

Such concerns took on importance when rivalry of sorts came into play between the grammarians from Basra and those from Kufa. The followers of the two 'schools' confronted each other in Baghdad. What separated these scholars hardly stemmed from truly fundamental disagreement in their approaches to language. The differences which existed in their methods lay mainly in their respective attitudes towards such concepts as usage and analogy. The grammarians from Basra accorded priority to analogy and looked rather askance at concerns about rare forms of usage. Those from Kufa, however, while not rejecting the validity of the principle of analogy, tended instead precisely to dwell on matters of rare usage. Far from considering linguistic anomalies as stumbling blocks, the Kufan scholars sought them out and exploited them as points of argument, in order to widen and make more flexible the very codification of usage.

The controversies which arose as a result of these different trends actually helped yield a number of principles and points of argument which, despite disagreements, could then be invoked by members of either party - the better to drive home their respective points of view on issues under dispute. All this allowed the elaboration of data under a form which came to be known as 'the basics of grammar'. As in the case of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), grammar too was endowed with rules of methodology. Such rules mainly pertained to the transmission of those linguistic data which grammarians and philologists took into their ken. Other rules laid down under which conditions recourse might be had to the principle of analogy, or what were the various arguments allowing for the statement; and classification, of different facts, with their re-

levant justification. Such rules were inferred, as it were, after the (linguistic) fact, and aimed to mark out the limits which grammarians were expected to observe, both in their appreciation of transmitted data and in their response to the controversies to which such transmitted data gave rise.

## Grammar and logic

Having to grapple with controversial issues often led scholars beyond consideration of mere linguistic practice – and opened the way to pure speculation. Thus, it was no rare occurrence to see grammarians actually draw on arguments more pertinent to those of Greek logic, such as the principle of causality, say, or that of non-contradiction. But can one go so far as to suggest that Arabic grammar actually developed under the influence of Aristotelian logic? So much at least has been argued, from the late nineteenth century onwards, by those orientalists who have believed that the Arab grammarians, from very early on, adopted the categories of Greek logic in order to codify their language. Such a point of view, in the eyes of orientalists of this school, indeed finds support in the existence of such stated rules (among others) as those of the tripartite division of speech, of the notion of gender, or of the treatment of inflected case-endings. Other scholars, however, both Arab and European, have taken issue with this point of view, or even rejected it altogether. Now, while it might indeed go too far to argue that the origin and development of Arabic grammar would have been inconceivable without the decisive influence of Greek thought, it is still allowable to consider that at least some of the grammarians, from the third/ninth century on, were not insensitive to the advantages offered by Greek logic for the purposes of speculation. Reflections of Greek logic may actually be perceived in grammatical disputes. Some remarks go so far as to betray that Greek logic lay at the very heart of certain polemics between different grammarians, or even between grammarians and actual logicians.

At any rate, the fact remains that literature on grammar ultimately integrated many things: a full sum of grammatical rules; varied viewpoints, arguments and concepts of logic which fed the disputes between grammarians; and, finally, examples drawn from the Qurʾān or ancient poetic texts from the very outset, either to buttress a statement of grammatical rule or to justify a matter of usage. By the end of the tenth century, everything might be regarded as having already been said on the matter: rules were definitely fixed, their exceptions identified and principles of method and general explanations laid down.

There was nothing more for posterity to do, then, but to preserve this legacy and transmit it in the form of summaries, handbooks intended for beginners and encyclopaedic reference works. The summaries, sometimes composed in verse to help memorization, usually furnished the basic matter

for the handbooks. Through the centuries, the same works were commented upon and glossed by authors who intended to preserve this heirloom of the ancients and who were keen to present in turn the full sum of their acquired learning. Not that such later works are entirely devoid of interest. Without them, we should lack full or precise knowledge of the transmitted grammatical legacy. Moreover, the explanations which these later books offer, in as far as they reflect the efforts made by the commentators the better to understand the materials themselves, help shed light on certain notions by sharpening focus on what they presupposed, or then implied.

### The main notions of Arabic grammar

The later works, mirroring their more ancient models, generally presented Arabic grammar according to morphology and syntax. The goal of morphology (*taṣrīf*) was defined as ‘the knowledge of words considered under their fixed aspect’, while syntax (*naḥw*) concerned ‘knowledge of the mobile modalities of a word’. It would be difficult, in the limited space available here, to set forth in detail what these two branches of the grammatical sciences entailed, so only the broadest outline will be attempted here.

Data pertaining to phonetics were nearly always set forth within the framework of morphology, in order to explain the aspects of word-endings. But even in this connection, the mass of information offered – however limited the means of study available to these grammarians – showed a sharp sense of observation and a shrewd sense of analysis. Consonants were accurately identified according to their points of articulation: their listed order yields us a shadowy outline, as it were, of the mental image which these grammarians held of the vocal organs. Consonants were thus classified according to what was designated by the name of ‘characteristics’ (*ṣifāt*). Initial classification divided them between the *majhūra* (clearly proclaimed) and the *mahmūsa* (whispered), which we might translate simply by ‘voiced’ and ‘unvoiced’. A second classification went on to divide them between *shadīda* (hard) and *rikbwa* (soft), terms which might be defined as corresponding to ‘plosive’ and ‘fricative’ consonants. Exact notions are also to be found concerning vowel length or changes in vocalic pitch. All such data were made use of in order to explain various occurrences pertaining to the phonetics of combination, notably those dealing with partial or total assimilation, or, on the contrary, dissimilation.

Regarding morphology, the grammarians considered an Arabic word to be made up of a consonantal root, formed by at least three consonants. Only substitute words and particles were excepted in this approach. A root could be turned into a lexical unit, even a minimal one, only by means of vowels. A root could, however, receive, in addition to vowels, various prefixes or suffixes in

order to form more complex units. The term for 'derivation' (*isbtiqāq*) covered all such processes.

In order to study the form of Arabic words, along with whatever irregularities they might show within the framework of the system, the grammarians graphically set forth the different possible structures by means of a pattern. This pattern was drawn around a nucleus made up of the trilateral symbol *f-ʿ-l* (*fīʿl* 'deed'), along with the vowels, prefixes and suffixes which indeed did appear in the units considered. Such a pattern offered an efficient tool for morphological description. The full diversity of word structures could thereby be covered and classified. The patterns were canonic, as it were, and allowed the reader at once to spot apparent anomalies in the word system and search for primordial structures - or what were considered to be such.

The more ancient grammarians do not seem to have had much of a problem in dealing with the notion of the word as a minimal unit. The later grammarians, however, did try to define just what a word was, and also to respond to the various questions raised by such a notion.

For it did not escape these later grammarians that if they merely defined a word as a simple form, conventionally expressing a single meaning, then inherent problems remained to be explained. Cautiously, they sharpened their definition by adding this: a word is a form of which it cannot be said that part of its structure expresses part of its meaning. Or, to put it otherwise, a word was considered to be any unit expressing a meaning, but not divisible into independent component parts, each of which would express part of that meaning. Even this sharper definition, however, failed to resolve all difficulties. For when they happened to be nouns or verbs, units considered to be words were invested not only with a lexical sense but also with a significance pertaining to their grammatical category. In certain cases, as with the regularly formed marks of the plural or the feminized genders, such a grammatical significance corresponded to prefixes or suffixes, that is to say, to elements distinct from the unit, which was invested with the lexical meaning alone. But in other cases, words appeared under, as it were, an amalgamated guise: one not susceptible to division into individual component parts adding up to express a sum meaning. This problem was formulated in a remarkably lucid manner by a grammarian who did not hesitate to consider that regularly formed marks of the plural, feminine forms and even inflected case endings, all belonged to a single order: that of the word. To put it in other words, any noun with the mark of the feminine form or of the regular plural could be analysed as two successive segments, that is to say, as two words.

Words as a whole were classified into three categories: nouns, verbs and particles. No argument was raised against such a tripartite division. In fact, such a classification was considered as the only one possible, and one valid indeed for all languages, language being the means by which 'every human group might express its purposes'. The only need was for nouns, to designate

beings, bodies and concepts; verbs, to designate processes; and particles, to ensure linkage between the other two.

Various definitions for each of these categories were, however, submitted. In addition to the intellectualizing definitions above, which ultimately prevailed, others were put forth to deal either with the function of each category, or with its location in discourse – that is to say, its environment or distribution.

Still, the tripartite division could hardly suffice to account for all the multiplicity and complexity to be found within each category. Notably there was a need for a classification among themselves. Hence, subclasses came to be distinguished: generic nouns; proper names; verbal nouns; substitutes; and the like.

Sentences were obviously described and analysed according to the tripartite division above. The sentence was regarded as the fundamental unit of discourse. It was semantically defined as ‘an expression which exists of itself and suffices unto itself’.

The study of sentence structure was endowed with remarkable form, for it was analysed according to four groups of function. These were the basic nucleus (*‘umda*), made up of the subject and predicate; a group of complements (*fadla*); a group of annexation (*idāfa*); and a group of determinatives (*tābi‘*). Such analysis enjoyed the advantage of presenting a pattern for global organization.

In fact, the Arabic language being a rectional one (whereby a verb governs a grammatically determined complement), analysis of sentences had to take into account two criteria not always easily made to agree with one another: for while one criterion concerned the function of each component part, the other concerned their case-governed rection. The first criterion pertained to what was passively signified, since it corresponded to the relation between units; the second pertained to that which was actively signified.

The grammarians considered inflected endings to correspond to three groups of function: Subject, complement and annexation. But this was a theoretical explanation which could hardly give account for all the complexities of fact. Or to put it otherwise, it was not always an easy matter to explain each case-ending by referring it to the function to which it was supposed to correspond. For no perfect isomorphism existed between each inflected case-ending and a function. A sentence’s subject, for example, might take a direct case (nominative) when preceded by a number of particles. But while complements also took a direct case (accusative), it was not rare for nouns playing the same role to take the oblique case (genitive) when preceded by a preposition. Finally, the criterion defined by function could hardly justify the various inflected case-endings of what was always a verbal predicate performing, as such, a single function. Hence, in practice, the grammarians resorted to a second system of explanation founded upon the notion of rection.

In this system a sentence was analysed according to its active and passive governed terms. Such a system had the advantage of providing, by the same process, justification for all the inflected case-endings, whether these corresponded to truly definable functions, or only appeared to be the consequence of the presence of a particle – with a meaning which changed according to context and accordingly introduced different functions. In the case of verbs, the efficiency of the system was undeniable.

## Arabic lexicography

The earliest appearance of an interest in vocabulary was closely connected with a concern about the Qurʾānic text. Here, too, the issue was to explain certain rare usages – or to justify how they might conform to ideal norms – by exploiting information provided by the Companions of the Prophet. The criteria of such ideal norms – again derived after the (linguistic) fact – were drawn not only from Qurʾānic usage but also from the language of the old Arab tribes, considered to have been linguistically absolutely uncontaminated.

With this goal in mind, examples of usage began to be collected – though in no definite order. Then the material so harvested soon came to be presented in virtual monographs, combining Qurʾānic usages considered to be rare with elements of vocabulary pertaining to the same lexical field. The first philologists composed whole books bringing together all the terms and expressions concerned with, say, the camel, or the horse, or bees, or reptiles, or the date-palm, or mountains, and so on. Despite drawbacks, this way of collecting and presenting vocabulary was adopted for many later lexicographical works. The largest of these, compiled by the Spanish-Arab Ibn Sīda (d. 458/1066), was a sum of all previous monographs on the subject.

## The elaboration of the first dictionary

But the merit of devising a proper lexicographical approach fell, again, to al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad. His method not only allowed an inventory of the vocabulary of Arabic but also its presentation according to a system of classification to facilitate the search for those terms whose meanings one wanted precisely to define. It involved an alphabetical system of classification based on a sequence of phonemes from the laryngeals to the labials. In the introduction to his dictionary, entitled *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* from the name of the phoneme ʿayn, which he believed to be articulated in the innermost recesses of the vocal apparatus, al-Khalīl defined his method of classification, the two most important elements of which were the initial letter of the root and the various combinations of consonants making up the root. This made it possible to draw up a repertory of all the words that were theoretically possible, which could then be controlled through recourse to the accepted corpus. In his



introduction, al-Khalil also set forth his conception of the structural characteristics of the Arabic language. Thus he presented a classification of the phonemes of Arabic according to their characteristics and where they were articulated in the vocal apparatus; identified verbal roots by their component consonants in biliteral, trilateral, quadrilateral or quinquilateral combinations; and calculated the number of such consonant combinations possible within each category.

Al-Khalil's introduction constituted a first theoretical text in the field of Arabic lexicography and testified to the highly formalized structure of Arabic vocabulary.

### The continuity of lexicographical production

Thereafter, Arabic lexicography mobilized many authors. The tenth century in particular saw intense lexicographical activity, which took shape in no fewer than six major dictionaries. Other works, vaster still, saw the light of day through the succeeding centuries down to the eighteenth. Next to these compendia, more limited or specialized works aimed to present condensed versions or particular varieties of vocabulary, such as synonyms, homonyms, borrowings, or words from the dialects. Lexicographical activities blossomed afresh after the middle of the nineteenth century, at first with the efforts of the Lebanese Jesuits, and then with those of the new Arabic Academies, especially that founded in Cairo in 1934, one of whose purposes was specifically to compile specialized dictionaries, including an historical dictionary.

In our times, the most widely used dictionary, *al-Munjid*, was compiled by a Lebanese Jesuit. Another dictionary, *al-Mu<sup>ḥ</sup>jam al-wasīṭ*, was put together by the Academy of Cairo. Endless specialized lexicons continue to appear, dealing with technical terminology relating to such varied fields as medicine, chemistry, sociology, geography, psychology or library science. While some dictionaries are composed by single authors, others are compiled by commissions working under the patronage of inter-Arab organizations such as the Office for the Co-ordination of Arabization, with its headquarters in Morocco.

Lexicography as practised by the successors of al-Khalil down to the eighteenth century was usually characterized by a concern to present the vocabulary of Arabic according to a system of classification allowing easy consultation of a dictionary. The major dictionaries normally followed one of three methods. The first of these was initiated by al-Khalil himself. It consisted in taking account of the first letter of words, respectively obtained through different combinations of consonants ranging from a minimum of two to a maximum of five. This method spawned a number of works not all that easy, however, to use. To search for a word in such compilations, the user had not only to be aware of how to infer its verbal root, but also to bear in mind the different combinations which such a root's consonants might allow.

Still, this was the method drawn upon for a large number of works, of which two enjoy a special place in the history of Arabic lexicography: the *Tabdhīb* (Rectification) by al-Azharī (282–370/895–980) and, in the next century, the *Muḥkam* (Accurate One) by Ibn Sida. But there is no doubt that the method's inconvenience soon caused scholars to search for other criteria of classification, especially one based on alphabetical order, with preference, however, for the last consonant of verbal roots over the first, since the latter could all too often be masked when preceded by prefixes. Many dictionaries came thus to be composed through the centuries. Such were the *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Language of the Arabs) by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311), *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* (The All-Encompassing Lexicon) by al-Fayrūzābādī (d. 817/1415), the *Tāj al-ʿarūs* (The Bridal Crown) by al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1789) and others.

The encyclopaedic character of such dictionaries made them true compilations of the entire legacy bequeathed by successive generations of lexicographers. Although each author would acknowledge the merit of his predecessors, he would not hesitate to justify his own endeavours by arguing that previous dictionaries had not handled the subject exhaustively, or lacked proper methodology. Still, whatever generations they belonged to, the lexicographers never expressed any intention to include new words, nor did they propose to take into account the vocabulary used by the writers of their own age, not even the greatest of them. One should without doubt not go so far as to say that the Arabic dictionaries completely excluded such new words – for if so, compilations like the *Lisān al-ʿArab* would be far less voluminous than they are. Examples of new words incorporated thus included borrowings from the technical terminology of sciences developed in later periods. Still, the myth maintained was that the dictionaries should encompass only the pure language attested by the Qurʾān, and spoken by the early Arab tribes, with no trace of alteration.

In any case, the work of the Arabic lexicographers amounts to a rich legacy. Both in quantity and in quality, their field of study showed remarkable development. The various systems they used to classify their vocabulary disclose an assured concern with method. Whatever the drawbacks in their attempt to preserve the language from all alteration, the result of their efforts was still to impel them to ferret out examples and quotations to justify every definition they submitted. And this allowed them to preserve for us quite a number of examples of usage which, without them, would have perished.

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## Chapter 2

# THE PERSIAN LANGUAGE

*Ali-Asbraf Sadeghi*

Persian is the official language of Iran, one of the two official languages of Afghanistan (named *Darī* since 1345/1966) and, with some differences in pronunciation and grammatical structures, the official language of Soviet Tajikistan (called *Tājikī*). Its early documents in prose date from the fourth/tenth century, though some pieces of poetry have come down to us from the third/ninth century. Although all of these documents come from eastern Iran, i.e. Transoxiana, *Khurāsān* and *Sīstān*, Persian is, as its Persian name *Fārsī* suggests, a south-western language, a language originally spoken in the province of *Fārs*. In fact, Persian is the continuation of the spoken form of Middle Persian (*Pārsīg*), the official language of Iran under the *Sāsānids*, a dynasty originating from *Fārs*.

The spoken Middle Persian was called *Darīg*, an adjective derived from *dar* (door, court, capital city), in late *Sāsānid* times. During this period and even earlier, *Darīg* Persian was extended to *Khurāsān*, mainly the domain of *Parthian*, another Middle Iranian language which finally died out. With the Islamization of Iran, Persian was further extended to Transoxiana and other parts of eastern Iran, absorbing on its way a number of words and forms of the indigenous languages and dialects of those regions. It is this language which was used by the first poets and prose writers and is called *Fārsī-i darī* by them. *Fārsī-i darī*, or simply *Fārsī*, was standardized by the sixth/twelfth century and adopted, as the vehicle of science, theology, literature etc., by all Persian writers. The standard Persian of the period between the sixth/twelfth and ninth/fifteenth centuries is called *Classical Persian*. It is the form of the language which developed into contemporary Persian, *Afghan Persian* (*Darī*) and *Tājik*.

During its course, Persian has been subjected to three foreign influences: Arabic, *Turco-Mongol* and, in recent times, Western languages.

## Arabic influence

The first contacts between Iranians and their Arab conquerors are reflected in certain religious and everyday words, such as *musalmān* (Muslim), *kāfi/ar* (infidel), *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), *ḥarb* (war), *ṣāḥi/ab* (owner), etc. With the Islamization of the country and its direct administration by the Arabs over two centuries, administrative, financial and military terms etc. entered Persian. The adoption of such Arabic terms was all the more facilitated since Middle Persian was gradually falling into disuse. During this period, scholars adopted Arabic as the scientific language, just as poets were using it for their poetic expression. When in the fourth/tenth century, scholars, writers and poets began to make use of Persian in their works, a considerable number of Arabic words had entered Persian, superseding totally their Persian equivalents, or reducing them to colloquial terms. The use of ornate style in letters made poets and writers borrow freely from the Arabic vocabulary, a method which was current in prose writing until the last century, especially in formal and administrative correspondence.

The rate of occurrence of Arabic words at the beginnings of Persian literature was about 25 per cent of the vocabulary (10 per cent of the occurrences in the text). Two centuries later, this amounted to 50 per cent (20 per cent or 25 per cent of occurrences), and it seems to be the same in the contemporary literary language. Most of these elements are everyday words, such as *daftar* (notebook), *ketāb* (book), *farsh* (carpet), *kalame* (words), *edāre* (an administration, a department), *‘elm* (science) etc. But many religious, scientific and literary words are also of Arabic origin.

Some of these words have been subjected to formal and semantic changes, e.g. *kāfir* (infidel) is changed to *kāfar*, *nashāt* (joy) is changed to *neshāt* etc. Examples of semantic changes are *rusūkh*, *shaqāwa* and *tamīz*, which in Arabic mean ‘firmness’, ‘misfortune’ and ‘discernment’ respectively, while in Persian they have acquired the meanings of ‘penetration’, ‘cruelty’ and ‘clean’ respectively.

At present, there is a tendency towards the use of Persian words instead of their Arabic equivalents in some styles of the written language, such as administrative or literary Persian etc. This tendency is dominant in scientific terminology, especially when coining new terms.

## Turco-Mongol influence

With the invasion of Iran by Turkish tribes in the fourth/tenth century and their accession to power, a number of Turkish words entered Persian. The incidence of these words increased in later periods when Turkish tribes settled in different parts of Iran. Such current terms as *āzūge* (victuals), *ordak* (duck), *olāg* (donkey), *qurbāge* (frog) etc. are proof of this influence.

The Mongols' conquest of Iran and the establishment of their government over great parts of the country resulted in the inclusion of a certain number of Mongol words into Persian. Most of these words became obsolete with the disappearance of the Mongol dominance. Such current words as *āgā* (gentleman, sir, Mr.), *kbānom* (a lady), *kbān* (Khan, Mr.) etc. in contemporary Persian are remnants of this influence.

## Western influence

In recent times, contacts with Western countries and the adoption of modern ways of life, Western culture and civilization have been the source of new borrowings from European languages. The first loan-words of this type come from Russian, e.g. *estekān* (a tea-glass), *eskenās* (banknote), *tormoḡ* (brake), *ḡāpās* (reserve stock). The great majority of Western loan-words, however, come from French, which was the second language of the educated classes in Iran up to the World War II. Persian has borrowed all sorts of words from French: common words such as *mersi* (thank you), *ide* (idea), *bolvār* (boulevard), *shāns* (luck, chance), *restorān* (restaurant), etc.; words expressing products and ideas of modern civilization, e.g. *māshīn* (machine, engine, car); *rādio* (radio), *post* (post office), *kelās* (class-room), *tāblo* (blackboard), *dīplom* (diploma), *lām* (bulb), etc.; scientific words: e.g. *bioloḡhi* (biology), *fiḡik* (physics), *shimi* (chemistry), *golobul* (globule), *āmpul* (ampoule), *sorang* (syringe), *sellul* (cell), and hundreds of others.

Borrowings from English are mainly common words, i.e. words denoting concepts of modern civilization and scientific terms, e.g. *seryāl* (TV serial), *short* (pants), *tishert* (T-shirt), *keyk* (cake), *koktel* (cocktail), *tāyp* (to type), *kāmpiyuter* (computer), *terāvelchek* (traveller's check), *londer* (loader), etc.

## Structure

The form of Persian described here is the modern written language as pronounced by educated Tehrani speakers.

### PHONOLOGY

Persian has twenty-three consonants and seven vowels (six simple vowels and one diphthong).

*Consonants*

	labial	labio-dental	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar	postvelar	glottal
Stop	p		t			k	q	'
	b		d			g		
Affricate					č			
					ǰ			
Fricative		f		s	š		x	h
		v		z	ž			
Lateral			l					
Trilled			r					
Nasal	m		n					
semi-vowel					y			

*Vowels*

i	u
e	o
a	ā
	ow

*q* is a velar consonant, pronounced as a voiceless stop in the initial position, but as a voiced fricative between vowels. In the final position, however, it is pronounced as a stop or as a fricative. *p*, *t*, *č*, *k* are slightly aspirated.

Persian does not admit initial consonant clusters. In the final position more than two consonants are not allowed, except in French loan-words containing three final consonants, which in the spoken language, however, are changed either by inserting a vowel between the second and the third consonant or by deleting one of the consonants, e.g. *buster* (chandelier), from Fr. *bustre*, or *tamr* (stamps), from Fr. *timbre*.

No word begins with a vowel. An initial vowel is always preceded by a glottal stop. A sequence of two vowels is avoided by inserting an epenthetic consonant, the nature of which, if not predetermined historically, is determined normally by the vowels of contact. Thus, the syllabic structure of Persian is CV(C)(C)(C), provided we consider the initial glottal stop a phoneme.

Nouns, adjectives, numerals and most of the adverbs are stressed on their final syllable. The simple past and present tenses of the verb are stressed on the final syllable of their stems, provided they are not preceded by *mi-*, *be-* or *na-*: *dauid-am* (I ran), *dauidé-am* (I have run), *mí-dav-am* (I run), *bé-dav-am* (that I run), *nà-dav-am* (I may not run). In the future tense, stress falls on the personal endings: *khāb-ām dauid* (I will run).

MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

Persian is an analytic language. No word indicates by itself its syntactic function. The shortest sentence is either formed by a verbal item followed by

a personal ending, e.g. *dauid-am* (I ran), or by a noun or adjective or phrase followed by the enclitic forms of the verb 'to be' (-*am*, -*i*, -*ast*, etc.): *kebub-am* (I am well), *Aḥmad-am* (I am Aḥmad), *dar manẓel-am* (I am at home). These sentences can be accompanied optionally by the personal pronouns, in which case emphasis is laid on the pronoun.

The position of the direct object is before the verb (O(bject) V(erb)), but other characteristics of Persian are the VO type (use of the prepositions, placing of the adjective after the noun etc.).

A noun phrase is formed by a noun with or without its determinant(s) (three predeterminants and postdeterminants at the most).

There is no definite article in Persian. Definiteness is conveyed by the enclitic *i* (*yā-ye nakare*).

A verb phrase is constituted at most by four elements: *na-rafte bade-ast* (he/she seems not to have gone).

Every verb has two stems, a present stem and a past stem. All the verbal forms are based on these two stems. Persian has a relatively limited number of simple verbs (200 to 250). Most of the ideas expressed by simple verbs in Western languages are conveyed by periphrastic verbs. These periphrases are formed by a noun (Persian or Arabic), an adjective, an adverb, or a phrase, followed by a simple verb meaning 'to do, to become, to have been done' etc. Examples: *kār kardan* (to work, lit. to do work), *ṣabr kardan* (to wait, lit. to make waiting), *vāred shodan* (to enter, lit. to become entering), *bālā āmadan* (to come up), *aẓ dast dādan* (to lose, lit. to give from hand).

The Persian verb has the following forms:

<i>indicative</i>	<i>inferential past</i>	<i>subjunctive</i>
present: <i>mi-dav-ad</i>	perfect: <i>davide bude-ast</i>	present: <i>be-dav-ad</i>
simple past: <i>dauid-Ø</i>	future: <i>kebāhad dauid</i>	past: <i>davide bāshad</i>
imperfect: <i>mi-david-Ø</i>		imperative: <i>bela-dow</i>
inferential: <i>mi-davide-ast</i>		
present perfect: <i>davide-ast</i>		
past perfect: <i>davide bud</i>		

Complex sentences. Coordinated sentences are linked together by the conjunctions *va/o* (and), *ham...ham* (and... and), *na...na* (either...or), *ammā* (but), *vali* (but) etc.

Subordination is assumed by subordinating conjunctions which are either simple or compound.

Conditional conj.: *agar* (if), *che/onānche* (if), *hargāb* (if)

Final conj.: *tā(inke)* (in order that)

Causal conj.: *chun* (because), *ẓirā* (because)

Temporal conj.: *chun* (when), *vaqtike* (when), *haminke* (as soon as)

Concessive conj.: *agarche* (even if, although), *bāinke* (in spite of the fact that)  
 Substantial conj.: *ke* (that)

In some cases the subordinating conjunction is missing, the subordinate relation then being indicated by intonation and the mood of the subordinated clause: *feker mi-kon-am-bi-āy-ad* (I think he will come).

## PERSIAN IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

### *India*

The history of the penetration of Persian into India began with the conquest of that region by the Ghaznawid rulers in the fifth/eleventh century. Persian became the court language of some parts of India for many centuries. During the reign of the Mughal dynasty (sixteenth-eighteenth centuries), Persian was the literary language of their courts and many poets and writers were composing their works in Persian. A number of Persian dictionaries were written in India during this period. The spoken language of India, i.e. Hindustani or Hindi, borrowed many Persian words and forms. A considerable number of the vocabulary items of Urdu, the official language of Pakistan (almost the same language as Hindi), are borrowed from Persian.

### *The Ottoman empire*

The penetration of Persian into the Ottoman empire goes as far back as the first invasion of Anatolia by the Saljūq Turks. The Saljūqs settled in Iran and became sufficiently acquainted with Persian and Iranian culture. A number of the Saljūq rulers of Asia Minor had Persian names such as Kaykā'ūs, Kayqubād, Kaykhusraw etc. With the Mongol invasion of Iran a number of Persian scholars fled to Asia Minor and composed their works in that country. Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, who resided in Anatolia, is their most famous poet. In later periods, Persian was in current use in the Ottoman empire amongst men-of-letters and in courts. A number of Turkish poets composed their poems in Persian, among whom were Fuḡūlī and Sulṭān Salīm. Thus were the original conditions laid for a great number of Persian words to be adopted by Turkish. Some of these words passed through Turkish into Arabic during the Mamlūk reign in Egypt. Others entered the colloquial languages of Iraq and Syria, as well as the Balkan languages.



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Chapter 3  
THE TURKISH LANGUAGE

*Nuri Yüce*

INTRODUCTION

Turkish (like Mongolian and Manchu-Tungus) belongs to the Altaic branch of the Ural-Altaic family of languages. Recent research has shown that there is an interaction between all Altaic languages through the use of many loan-words. However, no relationship among them is provable on the basis of present knowledge.

With a few minor exceptions, Turkish is spoken today from Eastern Europe to north-east Asia, and from the Mediterranean to the Arctic Ocean. In this vast geographical territory, the various groups of Turks generally co-exist with other ethnic groups. In 1991, their population had reached about 160 million, 99 per cent of whom follow the Islamic religion, the remainder being Christians, Karaites, Buddhists and Shamanists. Under the influence of different cultures and religions, the Turks have used a variety of writing systems (i.e. the Kök-Turkic, Brahmi, Manichaean, Soghdian, Uighur, Arabic, Hebrew, Latin and Cyrillic scripts).

PHONETICS

The basic vowels in Turkish are *a, e, é, ı, i, o, ö, u* and *ü*. In most Turkic dialects, vowels in the root syllables are short. Primary long syllables, or their vestiges, survive in some of these dialects. Secondary long syllables, formed by contraction or substitute expansion, exist in all Turkic dialects.

Vowel harmony is respected within individual words, i.e. the words contain either front (palatal) or back (velar) vowels. The pronunciation of the vowels in word terminations depends on that of the vowels in the stem. A distinction is drawn between minor and major vowel harmony. In the for-

mer, only the vowels *a* or *e* are found in the terminations, and in the latter only the vowels *i* and *u* or *i* and *ü*.

The basic consonants in Turkish are the following (classified by the phonation type): occlusive: *q, k, g; t, d; p, b*; fricative: *h, ğ; s, z, v*; affricative: *ç, c*; nasal: *ñ, n, m*; liquid: *l, r, y*. The consonants *f, b* and *z* did not originally exist in Turkish; they have been borrowed from foreign words. The consonants *c, ğ, l, m, n, ñ, r, v* and *z* are not found at the beginning of Turkish words. Words may not begin with a group of consonants. Most syllables are either open, or else closed by a consonant. If a syllable ends with two consonants, the penultimate must be an *l, n* or *r*, e. g. *alp* (hero), *sevinç* (joy), *türk* (Turk).

Some consonants in Turkish differ from one dialect to another. The initial *y*-sound becomes *c*- or *ç*- in most north-western dialects, e. g. *yal* ~ *çal* < *yıl* (year). Phonetic shifts *z, d, l* > *ç*; *ş* > *s* and *s* > *h* are typical of the Bashkir dialect, e. g. *bulha* < *bolsa* (if it becomes). The shift from *z* > *ç* and *s* > *ş* is characteristic of Turkmen, e. g. *qıç* < *qıç* (girl), *şen* < *sen*, familiar 'you' form. The transition from the Turkish *ç* > Chuvash *r* and Turkish *ş* < Chuvash *l* is a particularly important element in the history of the Turkish languages.

The assimilation of consonants is commonly encountered in the north-east and north-west groups. When two successive consonants occur, the second is always assimilated to the first.

Stress is not placed on a particular syllable in Turkish words. As a general rule, either the first or the last syllable is stressed. In place names (apart from the Persian termination *-stān*), the stress is placed on the first syllable, but in personal nouns on the last. The suffixes *-ma/-me-* (negation)<sup>1</sup>, *+ca/+ce* (equative), *+la/+le*, *+n* (instrumental) and *-ken* (gerund) are not emphasized, the stress being transferred to the syllable which immediately precedes them.

## MORPHOLOGY

The Turkish language is agglutinative. Words are formed by adding suffixes to an unchanged stem. Turkish words originally had monosyllabic roots. At most, a second open syllable is encountered. The word stem is either nominal or verbal. No distinction is made between genders of nouns (masculine, feminine and neuter) or between the single and dual forms; hence, there is no adjectival declension. Word groups consist of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, particles and interjections. Particles are postpositions which have the same function as prepositions and conjunctions in the Germanic languages and help to determine the relation between individual words and word groups.

1. The sign – represents the verbal suffix or stem, and + represents the nominal suffix or stem.

FORMATION OF WORDS

Substantival nominals: the suffix  $+l^{\circ}k^2$  ( $+luk$ ,  $+lik$ ,  $+luk$ ,  $+lük$ ) has several functions:

- a) abstract nouns: *açlık* (hunger) (*aç* [hungry]), *iyilik* (goodness) (*iyi* [good]);
- b) the place where something is found: *ağaçlık* (wood, bush, forest) (*ağaç* [tree]), *tuzluk* (saltcellar) (*tuz* [salt]);
- c) occupation, profession: *balıkçılık* (fishery) (*balıkçı* [fisher]);
- d) for an object: *başlık* (cap, capital) (*baş* [head]), *kiralılık* (to let, for hire) (*kira* [rent hire]);  $+c^{\circ}$  ( $+ca$ ,  $+ci$ ,  $+cu$ ,  $+cü$ ),  $+ç^{\circ}$  ( $+ç$ ,  $+çi$ ,  $+çu$ ,  $+çü$ ), forms agent nouns: *avcı* (hunter) (*av* [hunting]), *ekmekçi* (baker) (*ekmek* [bread]);  $+l^{\circ}$  ( $+lu$ ,  $+lü$ ,  $+lu$ ,  $+lü$ ) forms adjectives: *canlı* (living being, creature) (Pers. *cān* [soul]), *tozlu* (dusty) (*toz* [dust]);  $+s^{\circ}z$  ( $+sız$ ,  $+siz$ ,  $+suz$ ,  $+süz$ ) forms the privative: *ağaçsızlık* (treeless) (*ağaç* [tree]), *susuz* (thirsty) (*su* [water]);  $+ak$ ,  $+c^{\circ}k$ ,  $+cak$ ,  $+cığaz$  and  $+cağız$  form diminutives: *başak* (ear) (*baş* [head]), *gölcük* (lakelet) (*göl* [lake]);  $+ca$ ,  $+ce$ ,  $+ça$ ,  $+çe$  form the names of languages: *Almanca* (the German language) (*Alman* [German]), *Arapça* (Arabic);  $+daş$  denotes a companion: *yoldaş* (travelling companion, fellow traveller) (*yol* [way]), *sırdaş* (confidant) (< Ar. *sirr* [secret]);  $+nc^{\circ}$  ( $+nc$ ,  $+nci$ ,  $+ncu$ ,  $+ncü$ ) forms the ordinal numerals: *birinci* (the first), *ikinci* (the second), (*bir* [one], *iki* [two]);  $+ar$ ,  $+er$ ,  $+şar$ ,  $+şer$  form the distributive numerals: *birer* (one each) (*bir* [one]), *altı şar* (each) (*altı* [six]), *onar* (ten each) (*on* [ten]). The following substantival nominals are relatively rare:  $+ki$ ,  $+z$ ,  $+sı$ ,  $+msı$ ,  $+mırak$ ,  $+rak$ ,  $+lu$  .. $+lu$ ,  $+layım$ ,  $+cılayım$ ,  $+an$ ,  $+kek$ ,  $+kan$ ,  $+ç$ ,  $+ka$ ,  $+cıl$ / $+çıl$ ,  $+duruk$ ,  $+man$ ,  $+aç$ ,  $+şım$ ,  $+ak$ ,  $+k$ ,  $+t$ ,  $+tu$ ,  $+az$ ,  $+ay$ ,  $+l$ ,  $+sul$ ,  $+sal$ ,  $+göl$ .

Nominal verb stems:  $+la-$ ,  $+le-$  may be added to all kinds of nouns: *başla-* (to begin) (*baş* [head]), *işle-* (to work) (*iş* [work]);  $+al-$ ,  $+el-$  and  $+l-$  form nouns from adjectives: *açal-* (to diminish, to be reduced) (*aç* [few]), *yönel-* (to be directed) (*yön* [direction]), *kısal-* (to become shorter) (*kısa* [short]);  $+da-$ ,  $+de$ ,  $+ta$ ,  $+te$  and  $+k^{\circ}r$  ( $+kır$ ,  $+kir$ ,  $+kur$ ,  $+kür$ ) form verbs from onomatopoeic nouns: *borulda-* (to snore) (*borul* [snore]), *tükür-* (to spit) (*tü* [fie!]);  $+ar-$ ,  $+r-$  and  $+k-$  form intransitives: *birik-* (to join) (*bir* [one]), *karar-* (to blacken) (*kara* [black]). The other nominal verb stems  $+a-$ ,  $+t-$ ,  $sa-$  and  $msa-$  are rare.

Verbal nominals:  $-mak$ ,  $-mek$  form infinitives: *açmak* (to open), *görmek* (to see);  $^{\circ}ş$  ( $-ış$ ,  $-iş$ ,  $-uş$ ,  $-üş$ ) form nouns naming an action or the result of an action: *bakış* (look) (*bak-* [to look]);  $-ma$ ,  $-me$  form verbal abstracts: *kavurma* (fried meat) (*kavur-* [to fry]), *dondurma* (ice cream) (*dondur-* [freeze]);  $^{\circ}ş$  and  $-ma$  have nearly the same function: *gülme* or *gülüş* (laughing) (*gül-* [to laugh]);  $-m$  denotes action or process in the abstract, result of an action, sometimes measure: *alışım* (business) (*al-* [to take, to buy], *sat-* [to sell]), *ölüm* (death) (*öl-* [to die]);  $-k$ ,  $-$

2. The sign  $^{\circ}$  represents the vowels *i*, *i*, *u*, *ü*.

*ak*, form substantives, those denoting the result or place of an action, sometimes an instrument: *açık* (open) (*aç-* [to open]), *ölçek* (measuring instrument) (*ölç-* [to measure]), or adjectives, those derived from transitive verbs having a passive meaning: *çürük* (rotten) (*çürü-* [to moulder]); *-n* forms verbal abstracts: *ekin* (sowing) (*ek-* [to sow]), *tütün* (smoke) (*tüt-* [to smoke]); *-g°/-k°*: *içki* (drink) (*iç* [to drink]); *-i° < -(g)°cı* forms agent nouns: *okuyucu* (reader) (*oku-* [to read]).

The following verbal nominals are relatively rare: *-ga, -gın/-kin, -gan/-kan, -gış, -gaç, -ağan, -ç, -b, -a, -tı, -t, -l, -sı, -anak, -amak, -mik, -aç, -am, -alak, -arı, -amaç, -maç, -baç, -sal, -man, -sak, -pak, -van, -mur, -cak, -ca, -cama, -maca*.

Participles: agent nouns or participles represent the action of the verb a) as continuing (*-(g)an, -ar* and *-r*): *alan*, or *alır* (one who takes, or taker) (*al-* [to take]), and b) as completed (*-miş, -dı/-ti, -dik/-tik*): *gelmiş* (one who has or is come) (*gel-* [to come]); *-acak* and *-ası* denote future, and *-maz* negative.

Verbal verb stems: *-ma, -me* denote the negative: *yapma-* (not to do) (*yap-* [to do, to make]); *-l-*, the passive or middle: *açıl-* (to be opened) (*aç-* [to open]); *-n-* the reflexive or middle: *görün-* (to appear) (*gör-* [to see]); *-ş-* the reciprocal or co-operative or opposite: *dövüş-* < *döğüş-* (to fight) (*döv-* [to hit, to beat]), *görüş-* (to see one another) (*gör-* [to see]); *-r-, -t-, -dir/-tir-, -dar-, -ar-, -gur-, -z-* form the causative: *kaçır-* (to let escape) (*kaç-* [to flee, to run away]), *bildir-* (to let know) (*bil-* [to know]), *okut-* (to cause to read) (*oku-* [to read]). The verbal verbs *-a-, -t-, -k-, -p-, -y-, -sa-, -msa-* and *-ala-* are rarely used.

## MORPHOLOGY

Plural: *+lar/+ler*, e.g. *at* (horse), *atlar* (horses).

Case: nominative: – (no termination); genitive: Eastern Turkish *+n°n*, Western Turkish *+°n*, after a vowel *+n°n*; dative: Eastern Turkish *+ga*, Western Turkish *+a*, after a vowel *+ya*; accusative: Eastern Turkish *+ı*, Western Turkish *+°*, after a vowel *+y°*; locative: *+da/+ta*; ablative: Eastern Turkish *+dan/+tan*, Western Turkish *+dan/+tan*; equative: *+ca/+ça*, Eastern Turkish *+tek* (< *teğ*).

Postpositions are generally either invariable converbs, substantives with a local meaning, or else loan-words.

Cardinal numbers: *bir* (one), *iki* (two), *üç* (three), *dört/tört* (four), *beş* (five), *altı* (six), *yedi* (seven), *sekiz* (eight), *dokuz/tokuz* (nine), *on* (ten), *onbir* (eleven), *yigirmi* (twenty), *otuz* (thirty), *kırk* (forty), *elli* (fifty), *altmış* (sixty), *yetmiş* (seventy), *seksen* (eighty), *doksan/toksan* (ninety), *yüz* (hundred), *bin* (thousand).

Personal pronouns: *ben* (I), *sen*, familiar singular (you), *o* (he, she, it), *biz* (we), *siz*, plural (you), *onlar* (they).

Demonstrative pronouns: *bu* (this), *şu* (the latter), *o* (the former), plural: *bunlar, şunlar, onlar*.

Reflexive pronouns: *kendi* (own, self), *öç* (own, self).

Possessive endings: +<sup>o</sup>*m*, +<sup>o</sup>*n*, +*ı*, after a vowel +*ı*, plural: +<sup>o</sup>*m*<sup>o</sup>*ŋ*, +<sup>o</sup>*n*<sup>o</sup>*ŋ*, +*ları*. Turkish of Turkey and Adhari (Azəri) use *n* instead of *n* and +*ı*<sup>o</sup> instead of +*ı*.

Interrogative forms: *kim* (who?); *ne* (what?); *neden*, *niçin* (why?); *kaç* (how many?); *hani* (where?); *kaçan* (when?) (< \**ka*+).

Verb forms: vocative: singular 1. -*ayım*, -*ayın*; 2. -, -*gil*, -*gün*, -*çı*; 3. -*s<sup>o</sup>n*, plural: 1. -*alım*, *alın*, -*alık*, -*ayık*; 2. -<sup>o</sup>*n*<sup>o</sup>*ŋ*, -<sup>o</sup>*nlar*; 3. -*sınlar*.

Present: -*iyor*+ (SW), -*a*+ (NW, SE), -*makda*+ (SE,SW).

Aorist: -*r*+, -<sup>o</sup>*r*+, -*ar*+ (+ personal form). This form is also used to obtain the future tense in all dialects.

Past: -*d<sup>o</sup>* +/*-t<sup>o</sup>*+ (+ possessive ending), -*m<sup>o</sup>ŋ*+ (SW), -<sup>o</sup>*p*+, -*gan*+ (+ personal form, SE, NW).

Future: -*r*+, -<sup>o</sup>*r*+, -*ar*+ (in all dialects), -*acak*+ (SW), -*gay*+, -*makçı*+, -*gucı*+ (+ personal form, SE), -*gu*+ (possessive ending, SE).

Conditional: -*sa*+ (+ possessive ending).

The negative of all forms is obtained by adding -*ma*- to the verb stem.

Auxiliary verbs: *i-*, *e-* (< *er*) 'to be', *ol-*, *bol-* 'to become', *tur-* 'to stand'.

Converbs: -*a*, -*arak*, -<sup>o</sup>*p*, -(*g*)<sup>o</sup>*nça*, -(*g*)*ah*, -*gaç*, -*ken*. Many other extended converbs exist.

## The earliest monuments of the Turkish languages

The history of the Turkish language can be divided into the following periods: Old Turkish (sixth to tenth centuries), Middle Turkish (eleventh to nineteenth centuries) and Modern Turkish (since the early twentieth century).

### OLD TURKISH (SIXTH TO TENTH CENTURIES)

The history of Turkish can be traced back continuously to the year 720 AD. The term 'Old Turkish' is used to denote the language of the pre-Islamic monuments of High and Central Asia, in which a variety of alphabets was used. The principal monuments of this period are: a) the runic inscriptions of the Kōk-Turk dynasty (sixth to eighth centuries) in Mongolia; the manuscripts in the b) Brahmi, c) Manichaean, d) Soghdian and, in particular, e) Uighur script (these are generally translations of texts with a religious content).

### MIDDLE TURKISH (TENTH TO NINETEENTH CENTURIES)

Middle Turkish came into existence in the Islamic period with Qarakhānid in Turkistan, Khwarizmian and Chaghatai in the East, and Kipchak and Osmanlı in the West. The Arabic script was used during this period. The Uighur script did, however, also survive for some time. The first Turkish Muslims were the Qarluqs from Sirdaryā and the Shāsh Turks. As new converts to the Islamic

faith, they needed a translation of the Qurʾān to understand its meaning. In the time of the Sāmānid Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ (350–376/961–986), a Persian interlinear translation had already been prepared by a commission, which was also joined by a Turkish scholar from the Turkish-speaking town of Ispicab. The oldest witness of Turkish in the Islamic period known so far is a Turkish interlinear translation of the Qurʾān which must have been made at this time. Copies from the eighth/fourteenth century are extant. However, linguistic peculiarities prove that the archetype of these Turkish translations dates back to the early era of Turkish Islam and must have been prepared in the lower Sirdaryā region or in the Talas Valley.

Other early monuments of Middle Turkish include:

The *Kutadghu Bilig* (The Book of Knowledge which Brings Happiness), written in Kāshghar by Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib from Balāsāghūn in the year 462/1069–1070. It comprises 6,645 Qarakhānid couplets on the ethics of government.

The *Dīwān Luḡhāt al-Turk* (Compendium of Turkish Dialects), compiled by Maḥmūd al-Kāshgharī in the year 466/1073–1074. This dictionary (prepared in the Arabic language, in Baghdad) contains about 8,000 Turkish key-words; it is a rich source of material on the Turkish culture of that time.

The *ʿAtabat al-ḥaqāʾiq* (Threshold of the Truths) by Adīb Aḥmad Yūkneki consists of 121 didactic quatrains.

In the fifth/eleventh century, Turkish appeared in Khwārizm as a literary language, using a mixture of Eastern and Western dialects. Here, Maḥmūd al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) wrote the *Muqaddimat al-adab* for the Turkish ruler, Atsız. This is a didactic work and dictionary in Arabic with Turkish, Persian and Mongolian interlinear translations; the oldest copies have only Turkish translations.

The *Qisaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* (Stories of the Prophets) was adapted into Turkish by Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Rabghūzī in the year 710/1310 from a Persian edition.

Early works of poetry in Khwārizmian include *Muʿīn al-murīd* (712/1313) by a certain Islām, *Khusrev u Shīrīn* (742/1342) by Quṭb and *Mahabbet-nāme* (753/1353) by Ḥusayn Khwārizmī.

The extensive prose work *Nebcū l-ferādīs* (The Road to the Paradises) by Maḥmūd ʿAlī was completed before 759/1358. It consists of vocalized texts with a religious content written in a clear, vernacular language.

Old Osmanlı (or Old Anatolian) Turkish, which represents the earliest form of Western Turkish in Anatolia (from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries), was not used initially as an official language or a vehicle of culture, but purely as a vernacular. Official documents and scientific and literary works were generally written in Arabic or Persian. It was not until 675/1277, when Qaramānoğlu Mehmed Beg prohibited the speaking of foreign languages, that

Turkish works appear in Anatolia. The *Çarh-nâme* by Aḥmad Faqīh, *Yūsuf u Zelhā* by Sheyyād Ḥamza and the *Sheh-nâme* by Dehhānī were pioneering Turkish works in Anatolia. In the fourteenth century, they were followed by the *Poems* of Yūnus Emre and Qāḍī Burhān al-Dīn, the *Garīb-nâme* and *Faqr-nâme* by ʿĀshiq Pasha, the *İskender-nâme*, *Cemshīd u Hurshīd* and the *Poems* of Aḥmadī, the translations *Subeīl u Nevbahār* and *Ferbeng-nâme-yi Saʿdī* by Hoca Mesʿūd, *Kelīle ve Dimne* by Kul Mesʿūd, the *Mantiq al-tayr* by Gūlshehrī, the *Khurshīd-nâme* and *Marzubān-nâme* by Sheykhoghlu, various Turkish translations of the Qurʾān and many other works.

This fertile output in the Turkish language continued in the fifteenth century with *Vesiletü'n-necāt* (or *Mevlid*) by Sulaymān Chelebī, the *Poems* of Aḥmad-i Dāʿī, Aḥmad Pasha and Necātī Beg, *Tevārīkh-i Āl-i ʿOthmān* by ʿĀshiq-pasha-zāde, etc. Heroic epics such as *Dede Korkut*, *Battal-nâme*, *Dānīshmend-nâme*, *Salṭuq-nâme* etc., which had been passed on by oral tradition, were also generally set down in writing during this century. The development of Osmanlı continued into later centuries with thousands of literary, scientific and other works.

The language of the Turkish monuments of the Islamic period in both the East and the West made use of a simple and clear style, with an almost pure vocabulary, until the fifteenth century. Following the massive incorporation of Arabic and Persian words and grammatical elements, Turkish became a typical representative of a lexically mixed language, being known in the East as Chaghatay and in the West as Osmanlı. Both forms flourished between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries as languages of literature and culture and thousands of works were written in them. Only the Turkish sentence-structure remained unaffected by foreign influence. Osmanlı was the language of high poetry, scholarly works and, to some extent, also of cultivated circles of the population. On the other hand, the language of the people remained pure Turkish, with the exception of a few firmly established Persian and Arabic words. During the Reform Movement in Turkey, the Arabic script was abandoned on 19 Jumāda I 1347/3 November 1928 and officially replaced by the roman alphabet. An attempt was then made to replace most of the Arabic and Persian words by Turkish equivalents. Although many of these new Turkish words came into general use, the percentage of Arabic and Persian elements in contemporary Turkish is still very high. In the past one hundred years, many words from European languages were adapted by Turkish as a result of the close ties with European countries.

#### MODERN TURKISH (SINCE THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY)

Until about 1927, the Turks in the Soviet Union used the Arabic script, but this was replaced between 1928 and 1939 by a modified Roman alphabet.

After 1940, the Cyrillic alphabet took over. During this period, many Russian words established themselves in Turkish, alongside Arabic and Persian words.

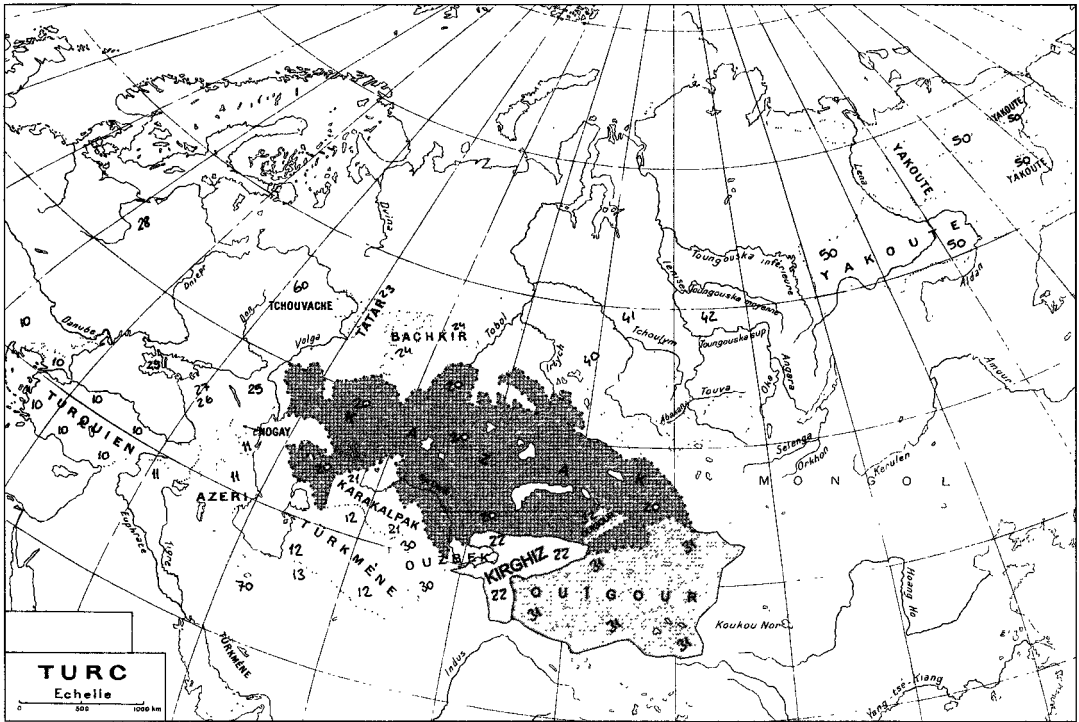
The process of borrowing was not unilateral. As a consequence of long-standing relations with both the Orient and the Occident, many Turkish elements entered Persian and Arabic, and also the Slavonic, Romanic and Germanic languages of Eastern Europe. The widespread use of Turkish also led to the incorporation of many Arabic and Turkish words into other languages. Some languages comprise several thousand Turkish words, e.g. more than 2,100 in Persian, 7,000 in Serbo-Croatian and 5,000 in Bulgarian. Greek, Hungarian, Romanian, Russian etc. also contain a great many Turkish elements.

The Turkish languages can be divided into the following groups:

1. The South-West or Oghuz Group (spoken by about 92 million people in 1991). This group used to be represented by the language of the Saljūq and Ottoman Turks; today it comprises the following dialects: (a) Turkish, used in Turkey (780,600 square kilometres, spoken by 60 million inhabitants, capital Ankara), in the Balkans, in the Dobruja region and in parts of Cyprus and northern Syria. (b) Adharī, used in the Republic of Azerbaijan (86,600 square kilometres, spoken by 7,302,000 inhabitants, capital Bākū), in Nakhichevan and in the Iranian province of Azerbaijan (spoken by about 9 million inhabitants, principal town Tabrīz). The Āynallu, Bocharlu and Qashqāy dialects spoken in the Iranian provinces of Hamadān and Fārs, and the Turkmen dialect of northern Iraq are closely related to Azerī. (c) Turkmen is spoken by some four million people, 2,995,600 of whom live in the Turkmen Republic (488,100 square kilometres, capital 'Ashkhābād); it is also used in the provinces of northern Iran and in north-west Afghanistan. (d) Khurāsān Turkish is spoken by 1,500,000 people in the north-eastern Iranian province of Khurāsān.
2. The North-West or Qoman-Qipchāq Group (spoken by about 27 million people). This group formerly included the language of the Khomans (or of the Codex Cumanicus, fourteenth century), that of the Western Golden Horde, and partly also the language of the Mamlūks in Egypt and Syria. Today, it is represented by the following dialects: (a) Qāzān Tatar in the Tatar Autonomous Republic (68,000 square kilometres, spoken by 6,786,000 people, capital Qāzān), the principal dialects being: Mischer, spoken south of Qāzān, and also in Finland; Tepter in the Urals; Tobol, Tūmen and other forms in western Siberia; (b) Bashkir in the Bashkir Autonomous Republic (143,600 square kilometres, spoken by 1,475,000 persons, capital Ufa); (c) Karaim (spoken by 25,000 people) in Lithuania and Poland; (d) Qarachay (166,400) and Balkar (97,850) in the northern Caucasus; (e) Qumuq (302,500) in Dāghistān;



- (f) Crimean Tatar, used since March 1945 in Uzbekistan (spoken by about 352,000 people); (g) Nogay (82,000) in the northern Caucasus; (h) Kazakh in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2,717,300 square kilometres, spoken by 8,723,000 people, capital was Alma Ata' but since 1997, Astana (1,500,000), and in eastern Turkestan (about 3,000,000 people); (i) Qaraqalpaq, which is a dialect of Kazakh used in the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous Republic (206,000 square kilometres, spoken by 474,250 people); (j) Qirghiz in the Republic of Kirghizia (195,129 square kilometres, spoken by 2,781,600 people, capital Bishkek), Afghanistan and eastern Turkestan.
3. The South-East or Uighur Group (spoken by 38 million people). Old Uighur, Qarakhānid and Chaghatay are earlier representatives of this group. It includes: (a) Uzbek in the Uzbek Republic (447,000 square kilometres, spoken by 18,388,300 people, capital Tashkent) and in northern Afghanistan (1,500,000 people); (b) Neo-Uighur in eastern Turkestan (1,707,200 square kilometres, spoken by about 19.5 million people, capital Urumchi) and in western Turkistan (281,860 persons), with its subgroup Taranci in the Ili Valley, Sariq-Uighur used in Kansu, and Salar-Uighur in the eastern territory of Ts'inghai Province.
  4. The North-East or Siberian Group: (a) Altai (spoken by 75,380 persons) in the Altai territory, (b) Khakass (85,091 persons) in the Abakan Valley; (c) Tuvinian (222,194 persons) spoken in the Tannu-Tuva region.
  5. Yakut, with the Dolgano-Nenets subgroup, in the Yakut Autonomous Republic (3,103,200 square kilometres, spoken by 402,000 people, capital Yakutsk) and in the district of Taimyr on the Yenisei River estuary.
  6. The Bulgarian Group. This was formerly the language of the Bulgars (eighth to fourteenth centuries) in the Volga region, who converted to Islam in the tenth century. Today it includes Chuvash in the Chuvash Autonomous Republic (18,300 square kilometres, spoken by 1,866,816 people, capital Cheboksary). As Chuvash differs substantially from the other Turkish dialects, its importance for linguistic research is considerable.
  7. Khalaj is spoken by about 30,000 people in Central Iran. It assumes a special position among the Turkish dialects because of its many archaic features.



I-3.1 Speakers of Turkish languages

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| 10. Turks in Turkey and in the Balkans | 29. Crimean Tatars           |
| 11. Adhari Turks                       | 30. Uzbeks                   |
| 12. Turkmens                           | 31. Uighurs                  |
| 13. Khurāsān Turks                     | 32. Sariq Uighurs and Salars |
| 20. Kazakhs                            | 40. Altaic Turks             |
| 21. Qaraqalpaqs                        | 41. Khakass                  |
| 22. Qirgiz                             | 42. Tuvinians                |
| 23. Tatars                             |                              |
| 24. Bashkirs                           | 50. Yakuts                   |
| 25. Qumuqs                             |                              |
| 26. Karachays and Balkars              | 60. Chuvash                  |
| 27. Nogay                              |                              |
| 28. Karaims                            | 70. Khalaj                   |

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Chapter 4

THE LANGUAGES OF THE  
INDIAN MUSLIMS

*Annemarie Schimmel*

The Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent boast a large number of literary languages which belong to most different linguistic families of the region.

We can leave aside the numerous Dravidian languages such as Tamil, Telugu, or Malayalam, now spoken in the southern part of India but which have developed a small Muslim literature despite the comparatively limited number of Muslims living in these areas. The only Dravidian language still alive in Pakistan, the Brahui, which exists in complete isolation in Baluchistan, has barely any literary function. Certain influences on its grammar from the enclosing Balchi areas have been noticed in the first major study of Brahui published in 1888 by the indefatigable German scholar and missionary Ernest Trumpp (1828–1885). Most of the Brahui speakers are conversant with Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto and, of course, Baluchi.

The Muslim conquest of the southern part of what is now Pakistan in 92/711–712 led to important new developments, for the Arabs brought their native language into the Lower Indus Valley, the language in which the Holy Qurʾān was revealed and which thus had to be learned by the new Muslims, at least to the extent of correctly uttering the words of prayer. A major problem was that of the script, for as the Arabic alphabet was accepted by most groups of new Muslims, yet the difficulty arose of adapting it to the Indian languages with their completely different sound systems. For, while the Arabic alphabet is perfectly suited for a Semitic language built on three-part roots in an almost mathematical way, Sanskrit-based languages have a complicated grammatical system of their own, as have the Dravidian ones. Only at a comparatively late stage were official Arabic alphabets developed for languages such as Sindhi, Pashto, Kashmiri or Panjabi by adding additional dots or small signs to the basic twenty-eight Arabic letters in order to distinguish aspirant, retroflex and emphatic sounds which are missing in Arabic (to reproduce the *anuswara* was

apparently impossible in Arabic letters). On the other hand, Arabic sounds, adopted into the languages of the Subcontinent, often undergo strange changes in loan-words. The most common one is the exchange of *j* and *z*: Najaf becomes Nazaf; and when, as in Bengali and often in Gujarati, the Arabic and Persian *s* is changed into *sh*, one finds names like *Shirāz al-Dīn*, which represents, in correct Arabic, *Sirāj al-Dīn* (lamp of Religion). In certain areas the Arabic emphatic *ḍ*, which appears generally as *z* (*Ramaḍān* > *Ramaẓān*), is changed into cerebral *l*, so that the name *Murtaḍā*, *Murtaẓā* appears as *Murtalā*. Arabic remained the language of theology and higher philosophical studies, and at partition it was even suggested that it be made Pakistan's national language.

After Arabic was successfully introduced into the southern part of present-day Pakistan (including Arabic building-epigraphy, which remained in use for many centuries), the next in the wave of languages that were brought by Muslims to India was Persian. The armies of Maḥmūd of Ghazna, who invaded north-west India some seventeen times after the year 390/1000, spoke mainly Persian. Neo-Persian, already established in Iran proper as a literary language, was to become the ideal vehicle for literature up to the twentieth century and remained the language of higher education and administration until 1250/1835, when the Macaulay Edict introduced English in its place. Persian is an Iranian language, and the Neo-Persian spoken at Maḥmūd's court in Ghazna had developed in numerous steps from Avestan and Pahlavi to its present, grammatically quite simple form, enriched by an ever-increasing amount of Arabic elements and written in Arabic characters. The Persian-speaking people who came to India, maintained the classical distinction between *majhūl* and *maʿrūf* vowels, that is, between *ē* and *ī*, *ō* and *ū*, a distinction lost in modern Tehrani Persian, but still extant in Afghan Darī and Tājik.

Another Iranian language which was to become an important literary vehicle is Pashto which, like Baluchi, split off from the family to which Neo-Persian belongs at a rather early stage. Amīr Khusraw (d. 725/1325) describes the language of the Pathāns around Multān, where he spent some time around 668/1270, comparing its sounds most unkindly with rattling metal, and the existence of a number of hard sounds (*kh*, like the German *ch* in *ach*, *z*, like the German *z*) induced Pathāns often to compare their mother-tongue to German. In the nineteenth century intense discussions were held concerning the ancestry of Pashto. Even the fine British scholar G. Raverty thought that it might be the language of the lost tribe of Israel, although it does not resemble any Semitic language. Ernest Trumpp, to whom the first comprehensive grammar of Pashto is owed (1873), after H. Ewald's first attempt at a classification in 1839, considered it a link between the Indian and the Zand, i.e. Iranian, languages. However, it seems that features common to some Indian and Iranian languages may have coloured Pashto owing to the geographical connection. It was Wilhelm Geiger (1856–1943) who clearly proved the East Iranian character of Pashto.

Studies of Baluchi started at about the same time (1842) as of Pashto, again mainly by British and German scholars; W. Geiger was able to analyse its two different dialects and explain them in the historical context of Iranian philology.

Ernest Trumpp was the first to offer an extensive grammar of the Sindhi language. This appeared in 1872, long after his sojourn in Karachi (and Peshawar). Sindhi is, according to him, the neo-Indian language which has preserved most features of Prakrit, and he claims that the 'abundance of grammatical forms (in this language...) may cause the envy of other languages'. An extremely rich verbal system, the use of enclitic pronouns, six cases of nominal flexion and, in the early days, the extreme density of the sentence structure make Sindhi a melodious and poetical language. During the nineteenth century it slowly adopted some features from Urdu and has nowadays lost some of its complicated forms to develop into a functional vehicle not only for poetry but also for prose; Sindhi was mentioned as early as c. 663/1265 in Mawlānā Rūmī's *Mathnawī* as a 'source of pride for the Sindhis'. Thus, their love for their mother-tongue is understandable. The problem was, again, transliteration: up to the nineteenth century one finds Sindhi written in Devanagari script (as today among the Hindus in India); in Gurmukhi, as used by the Sikh community; and in Arabic letters with diacritical marks, a system which was only slowly developed until Sir Bartle Frere introduced an official alphabet in 1265/1849. The Ismā'īlī Khoja community wrote Sindhi and its related dialects in the so-called Khojki script. Originally a merchant's alphabet, it was then elaborated to note down the *ginans*, the sacred texts of the community. This script is now known only to a small group of Ismā'īlīs and the *ginans* are generally transcribed into Gujarati letters. Gujarati, another neo-Indian language, connected with Sindhi through Kutchi, has its own alphabet; it is largely used also by the other Ismā'īlī community, i.e. the Bohorās.

In the western dialect of Sindhi, spoken in Las Bèla, barely any literary works exist, while Siraiki, the bridge to Panjabi, is widely spoken in the northern areas of Sind and around Multān; its grammatical structure and pronunciation are simpler than that of Sindhi and it was and is used for folk- and religious poetry.

Panjabi belongs to the same linguistic group and seems to have been spoken from early times in the country of the Five Rivers and the adjacent areas. A powerful language with a comparatively simple grammar, Panjabi was largely used by the Sikhs whose community developed in the rural Punjab; its early literature was therefore preserved in the Gurmukhi script and only comparatively late were Arabic letters more generally used for Panjabi (thus, in commentaries on the Qur'ān or religious texts). After partition, of course, Arabic was made the official alphabet.

As for the structure of medieval Panjabi, it was again E. Trumpp who tried to clarify it while working on his translation of the *Adi Granth*; but while



I-4.1 *Khamsa-i Diblawi* by Ḥasan al-Kātib, 902/1497  
 © Topkapi Palace Library (H-801, fol. 303b)

this translation – although not without faults according to modern standards – was published in 1877, the grammar was unfortunately never printed. At present British scholars such as Christopher Shackleton are working on Panjabi and Siraiki.

Urdu, now the national language of Pakistan and for a long time the *lingua franca* of northern India, bears a Turkish name but its grammar is Indian-based, while its vocabulary is replete with Arabic and Persian terms. Although for the mixed language called Hindustani by Europeans between the late eighteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries, both Arabic and Devanagari characters were used, the Arabicization of Urdu and the Sanskritization of Hindi, as also expressed in the exclusive use of one of these two alphabets, increased in times of rising nationalist feelings. Interestingly, the first traces of what is now called Urdu are found in southern India in the Dakhni-Urdu, spoken and written in the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan, while Urdu became a literary vehicle in the northern areas only around 1118/1707, i.e. after Aurangzeb's death. Refined to its utmost capacities in nineteenth-century Lucknow, Urdu, as the national language of Pakistan, now shows some influences of Pakistani regional idioms and increasingly of English.

The fact that Urdu was declared Pakistan's national language led to protests in Bengal (then East Pakistan), which boasts a rich literary and linguistic tradition, and where it is written almost exclusively in a Devanagari-based alphabet. The tension between the Urdu speakers based in northern India and those now in Pakistan, was one of the main reasons for the break-up of Pakistan in 1971 (just as the differences between Urdu-speaking *mubājirs* from India and speakers of Sindhi still contribute to tensions in Sind).

While one formerly thought of a simple 'Kāfir' language in the mountainous areas of Indo-Pakistan, one soon learned to differentiate between Iranian languages such as Wakhī or Yaghnobi (which were first studied by W. Geiger in his surveys of Pamir dialects), and the group of Dardic languages (which have become better known thanks mainly to the Norwegian scholar G. Morgenstierne and the German authority G. Buddruss). Particularly fascinating is Burushaski, a language spoken in Hunza, which does not belong to any known linguistic family and thus offers a great challenge to scholars, among whom Hermann Berger of Heidelberg is the outstanding specialist. Burushaski Ismā'īlī literature is written in Arabic characters, so that one recognizes at least some Arabic loan-words. Another interesting sample of Hindu Kush languages is Balti, which belongs to the Tibetan family of languages.

Kashmiri, on the other hand, is part of the Indo-Aryan family, but its grammatical structure differs considerably from its distant relatives such as Panjabi and Urdu, as K. F. Burkhard had already stated in his valuable studies on Kashmiri in 1877; later, Herbert Grierson classified all the Indian idioms in his *Linguistic Survey of India* (1916ff.), and his findings are still being refined. One has yet to mention another element which is often overlooked: Turkish.

Not only were many of the early rulers of Delhi (and later of the Deccan) of Turkish Central-Asian origin, but with the Mughals, a new group of Turkish-speaking nobility appeared. Even though the elegant language used at court was Persian, literary works in Turkish continued to be written. The very name of the Urdu language is indicative of the Turkish element in India: Urdu is *ordu* 'the camp' – it was the language of the military aristocracy. Turkish grammars are found as far south as Madras in the early nineteenth century, which shows that a certain knowledge of this language was apparently still regarded as useful.

Thus, the Indian Muslims could express their thoughts in the most diverse languages: the Semitic Arabic, the Iranian Persian (plus Pashto and Baluchi), the Sanskrit-based Sindhi, Siraiki, Panjabi, Kashmiri and, as a mixture, Urdu; furthermore Dardic and Tibetan languages, and finally the Dravidian languages like Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam in the south, and Brahui in Baluchistan.



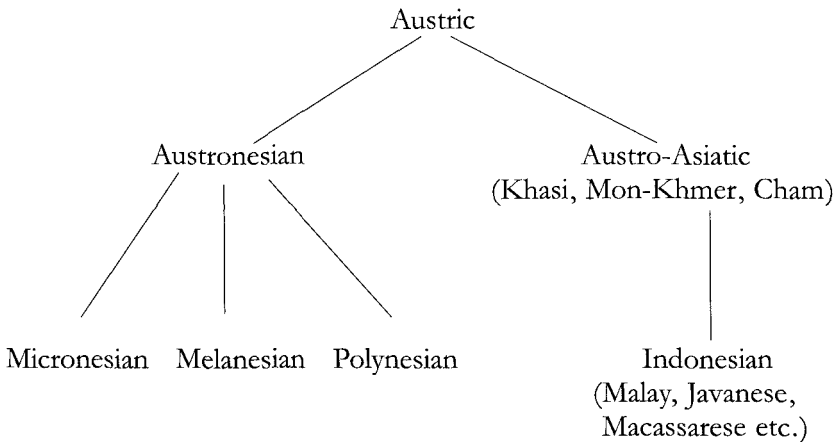
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## Chapter 5

# MALAY

*Mohamed Taib Bin Osman*

The Malay language belongs to the Austronesian family. The older term used was Malayo-Polynesian, and comparative linguists today would illustrate the genetic relationship of these languages as follows:



While pockets of aboriginal ethnic groups still speak languages belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family, most of the population who inhabit the area stretching from Madagascar in the west to the Hawaiian Islands in the east, from southern China and the Indo-Chinese Peninsula in the north to New Zealand in the south, speak languages belonging to the Austronesian family. Covering such a vast area, the Austronesian family is further classified into four sub-families covering the areas of Micronesia (the islands of Pulauan, Chamara, Guam, Truk etc.), Melanesia (New Guinea and the islands nearby), Polynesia (New Zealand, Fiji, Hawaii and the Easter Islands) and Indonesia (from Madagascar in the west to Formosa in the east). The Indonesian sub-family therefore consists of thousands of cognate languages, most of them

rather insignificant because they are spoken only by a small number of people and are comparatively isolated in the interior, while some others, because of the number of their speakers, have achieved greater significance. Bahasa Melayu, or Malay, is one of the latter.

By the second half of the twentieth century, after the end of Western colonial rule in the region, Malay had become the official and national language of Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, the official and national language of Indonesia, which is termed Bahasa Indonesia, and one of the official and national languages of the Republic of Singapore. An early evidence for the existence of this language is to be found in the stone edicts of South Sumatra dating back to the seventh century AD. Obviously belonging to the Srivijaya empire, which was a dominant Malay power in the period extending from the sixth to the thirteenth centuries AD, the edicts reveal a generous borrowing of Sanskrit words in the Malay language.

From the first century AD to the advent of Islam in the twelfth, the world of South East Asia is often referred to by scholars as 'Greater India'. This alludes to the fact that the influence of Indian civilization had held sway over the region. Not only religion, but other aspects of life, such as language and literature, were imbued with Sanskrit influence. Javanese was the dominant language of this civilization. However, Sanskrit loan-words and phrases, still in Malay to this day, reflect the nature of cultural contact with the Subcontinent in ancient times. Sanskrit loan-words occur usually in the realm of religion, philosophy and abstract ideas, that is, words for intellectual usage connected with the more sophisticated aspects of life. Another Indian language, Tamil, emerged later and was mainly connected with the world of trade and maritime activities, as is reflected in the loan-words which survive to this day. Sanskrit influence was much stronger in Javanese than in Malay, but this changed with the advent of Islam and the influence of Arabic and Persian in the early thirteenth century.

In fact, Malay was a vehicle for the spread of Islam throughout the region. Many factors contributed to this. As Malay was the spoken language of the coastal population of the region, who not only were organized into principalities and kingdoms but were also trading throughout the area, it grew to be the regional *lingua franca*. Moreover, waterways like the Malacca Straits, the Sunda Straits and the Macassar Sea, were natural channels for maritime activities, especially trade, as well as the carriers of civilizational elements. It was through such activities that Malay spread widely. Islam therefore followed the routes of trade. The growth of certain kingdoms like Malacca, Atjeh, Brunei, Pattani, Banten or Macassar, based both on trade as well as religious learning, made Malay the language of culture and of the learned, while the general population spoke their own regional languages.

Those who spread Islam in the early days must have been tolerant, because in popular usage Sanskrit words for basic Islamic religious notions are

still current today. Words like *puasa* (fasting), *neraka* (purgatory), or *syurga* (heaven) are Sanskrit. Even for prayer, the old Malay phrase *Sembah Hyang* (obedience to the Deity) was more popular than the Arabic *ṣalāt*. When Islam became more deeply involved in the life of the people, not only did Arabic words come to be used widely (especially to convey abstract thoughts), but also the Arabic alphabet (with minor adjustments) was adopted for Malay writing. Diacritical marks like غ (ng), ف (ny), or ح (ch) were added for Malay sounds which do not have Arabic equivalents, while Arabic letters like ط, ص, or ع (which do not convey Malay sounds) were kept because the Malay Muslim had to read the Qurʾān and use many Arabic loan-words. There have been attempts to apply the grammar of Arabic to Malay, but with little success.

Although contacts with Europeans had already taken place in the sixteenth century, the European influence was not strong before the nineteenth. Actually, this coincided with the increasing influence of European civilization on the local population. Colonial rule saw the Indonesian territories being influenced by the official use of Dutch, while that of English prevailed in the Malaysian territories and Spanish and American English in the Philippines. This explains the extensive Dutch vocabulary in Bahasa Indonesia and the amount of English in the Malay language in Malaysia. The European colonial rule also brought socio-political changes to the Malay world and this fact is reflected in the development of Malay as a modern language, both in Indonesia and Malaysia. This part of the story has its own interesting features.

Just as with the introduction of Islam, the Arabic alphabet was adopted for Malay, so with the colonial rule the roman alphabet (as used by the Dutch and the English) was adopted for Bahasa Melayu in the respective territories. Over the years, however, especially after Independence, a number of spelling reforms were introduced which culminated in a common spelling system being adopted for Indonesia, Malaysia and also Brunei. The following charts illustrate the vowels and consonants of the Malay language.

Vowels in Standard Malay and how they appear in the Arabic and roman alphabets:

1. Malay vowels in phonetic transcription, the roman alphabet (English) and the Arabic alphabet

a	E	a	y	c	u
a	e	e	i	o	u
ا			ي	و	

2. Consonants in the roman alphabet:

b c+ d f g h j k l m n p [q]\* r s t [v]\* w [x]\* y z

3. The Arabic alphabet as adapted for Malay

أ ب ت ث ج [چ] ح خ د ذ ر ز س ش ص ض ط ظ ع غ [غ]  
 ف [ف] ق ك ل م ن ه و [ی]

[ ] letters representing Malay sounds

\* The letters *q*, *v* and *x* do not represent any Malay sound, but are used for loan-words or neologisms.

+ The letter *ε* used to be combined with *h* to convey the sound [ch], but now *ε* is used for this purpose.

The colonial rule also brought about a new approach towards life among the people of the region, and this fact also influenced the language. During their rule of Indonesia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Dutch promoted what they called *Bahasa Melayu Tinggi* (High Malay) as the language of administration, especially when dealing with the local population. And the Japanese military during their occupation of Indonesia between 1942 and 1945 also used the Malay language in administration. However, long before that, in 1928, the Indonesian Youth Congress – one of the manifestations of the political awakening of the Indonesian people – had declared the Indonesian language, which was basically Malay, to be the national language of the newly conceived motherland, Indonesia. So when Indonesia declared its independence in 1945 and was subsequently granted independence by the Dutch after an armed struggle, one of the national priorities was the development of the Indonesian language to meet the demands of a modern state. Not only were Dutch loan-words adopted (especially scientific and technical terms), but also local, indigenous words to enrich the language. Now known as Bahasa Indonesia, it is a binding force in a nation whose population speaks hundreds of local languages and dialects. Although it has developed along its own lines, it remains mutually intelligible to speakers of Malay in other countries of the region.

Language development in Malaysia followed a slightly different path because of the different political background. The transition from colonial rule to independence followed constitutional evolution. However, much of the political inspiration came from Indonesia. The constitution of the Federation of Malaya, which was later transformed into a Federation of Malaysia by including Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah, provided that the national and official

language of the nation be the Malay language. An institution charged with the responsibility of developing Malay and its literature to meet the needs of the nation was established and called *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, or the Institute of Language and Literature of Malaysia. The institution has been very active in gathering technical terms and general vocabulary, in publishing literature and educational books and in developing the language to meet the needs of a fast-growing country.

Today, Malay is not only the official language of administration, but also the language of education used in the national educational system up to university level. Brunei Darussalam followed almost the same path as Malaysia in developing Malay, even in establishing an agency devoted to the same purpose and function. While in Indonesia and Malaysia the roman alphabet has been adopted extensively as the script for the language, Brunei steadfastly holds on to the Arabic alphabet, called *Jawi* in the region, but has also adopted the roman alphabet.

While the usage of the language remains similar in Malaysia and Brunei, in Indonesia, especially in the mass-media, it differs slightly in style and pronunciation. Nevertheless, the local versions of the official language are usually mutually intelligible. There is normally a smooth communication when parties from the Malay-speaking population of the region (consisting of Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, or even Thailand [south]) meet, except that certain local words and phrases would have to be explained and clarified to avoid any misunderstanding or misconception. Especially in Indonesia, where there exist many regional languages like Javanese, Madurese, Ambonese, Buginese and others, the presence of these languages tends to make the resultant Indonesian language not only rich and colourful but also precise in expression.

To encourage the growth of the language in the modern era, the states having Malay as their official and national language (namely Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam) formed a joint council to coin standard common terms for the various fields of knowledge, for use in teaching and to meet other professional demands in intellectual life. However, it is still left to the individual country to adapt according to its own idea of Malay as a national or official language. But linguistically, the challenge facing the Malay language today is to match the pace of development in many fields of knowledge, especially in science and technology. In Malaysia, the present strategy for language politics is to ensure that the Malay language develops as a language of knowledge in order to meet modern needs.

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## Chapter 6

# AFRICAN LANGUAGES

*Jan Knappert and A. K. Irvine*

Although the basic distribution of languages in Africa north of the Sahara is relatively straightforward, with the entire area from the Sudan, through Egypt and on to the Atlantic coast in the west dominated by Arabic dialects, interspersed with a number of Berber languages, predominantly in Algeria and Morocco, a quite different situation prevails in the sub-Saharan regions, where a highly complex picture emerges, with upwards of 800 languages, mostly with few speakers and presenting linguists with major problems of classification. Even in the Arabic-speaking northern part of the continent there is a sharp division in dialects between those of Egypt and the Sudan, which are of Peninsular origin, and those of the Maghrib, which historically reflect the invasions and spread of various bedouin Arab tribes, notably the Banū Hilāl and the Sulaym, in early medieval times. Intercommunication between the speakers of these dialects can be very difficult, so that for literary purposes and for radio and television the Modern Standard Arabic *koine* is generally employed.

It is commonly accepted now that African languages may be classified into four major families: Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, Afro-Asiatic and Khoisan, all, apart from the localized Khoisan (or Bushman) languages of the south, widely distributed over large stretches of Africa and revealing no features which might suggest any genetic relationship with one another. Since relatively few African languages have substantial numbers of speakers, several lingua francas and pidgins have become established for purposes of communication over parts of this area. Amongst these, apart from the European languages of colonization and trade, the most important are Arabic in the north and Muslim areas of Central Africa, Amharic throughout Ethiopia, Hausa and Mande in West Africa, and Swahili on the eastern coast and much of the interior as far as the eastern Congo.

The comparisons within any group of languages necessary to establish the likelihood of a genetic relationship usually concern similarities in the sound

system within the phonology and the shared meaning of individual lexical items in the vocabulary, though in the latter case, to avoid the risk of failure to recognize loan-words, the vocabulary tested must be restricted to a very basic list of items common to human experience, such as personal pronouns, the lower numerals, words for 'father', 'mother', 'water' and the like. It is thus possible to appreciate how, over such a vast area and on a time-scale covering several millennia, diverse sub-groups such as Semitic (whose member languages go back as far as the third millennium BC with Akkadian in Mesopotamia), Ancient Egyptian (along with the more recent Coptic), Berber, Cushitic (represented above all by Oromo and Somali in East Africa) and Chadic (with Hausa and Mande in West Africa), can be subsumed under the general heading of Afro-Asiatic. There is no assumption that there need be any ethnic link among speakers of these language sub-groups. There are, however, a few features which occur widely throughout sub-Saharan African languages of whatever family, the most wide-spread of which is tone, which enables distinctions to be made between phonetically identical words. Several of the languages employed in the African Islamic literatures of East and West Africa possess this feature, for example, Afro-Asiatic Oromo, Somali and Hausa, but it is present in most of the other language families also.

Of the twenty or so African languages which are used to compose literature using the Arabic script, only a few can be described here. In the case of some languages (Afar of the Danakil Depression in Ethiopia, Kanuri in southern Algeria and east of Chad), not enough literature has come to light to warrant an entry in this concise survey. The researcher who has no opportunity to consult local scholars has to rely on the work of others who collect primary source data. There are several languages in Africa which use, or have used, the Arabic script in literature, but there has just not been anyone to study it philologically, publish it and translate it. Examples of such languages are Afrikaans in South Africa, spoken by over 150,000 Muslims, only some of whose prose texts, including a translation of the Qur'ān, have been published. Another example is Zerma, spoken in western Niger by some two million people, all Muslims, who also have a literature in the Arabic script. None of it has been published to the writers' knowledge.

A third group is formed by the languages spoken in nations with a non-Muslim majority. Most of their literary output will be non-Islamic. The Muslim minority may or may not have developed a literature of its own. Examples are Yoruba in Nigeria, spoken by some 20 million people, at least four million of whom are Muslims. Knappert has seen some Yoruba books in Ibadan containing Islamic literature and a translation of the Qur'ān was published in 1924, but no scholar has as yet catalogued these texts. In Natal there are some 15,000 Muslim speakers of the Zulu language. The Qur'ān has been translated into Zulu, but there is, so far as can be ascertained, no other literature yet. On the other hand, in Ethiopia, officially a Christian country, Amharic is spoken

by the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants, whatever their religion. Muslims, too, use this language in their literature, and indeed it was employed for a translation of the Qurʾān published under the patronage of the Emperor Haile Sellassie I in 1968–1969. Fortunately, this small Islamic literature has been studied by A. J. Drewes at Leiden. In Zaire there is some Islamic literature in at least two languages, Kituba, a pidginized form of the Bantu Kikongo tongue, spoken at the mouth of the river Congo, and Ungwana (Kingwana), though not enough is available to warrant a separate entry in this brief survey. The same applies to Makua, spoken by some three million Muslims to the north of the river Zambeze in Mozambique, who embraced Islam as recently as the 1870s.

The following provides an outline in alphabetical order of the languages of Africa whose literature is dealt with in Book II, Chapter 5.

### Berber (see also Shulūḥ)

There is no single Berber language since the Berber tribes were scattered by the Arab invasions after 49/670 and lost their national coherence, though their conversion to Islam followed soon after. Linguistically, Berber refers to a continuum of dialects forming a branch of Afro-Asiatic and dispersed throughout North Africa, between the eastern borders of Egypt and the Atlantic coast, and from the Mediterranean to the river Niger. While the speakers of neighbouring Berber dialects are generally able to communicate with one another, mutual comprehension tends to become lessened the further apart any two tribes are located, until eventually it ceases. This is in marked contrast to the situation with the dialects of Arabic. Nevertheless, shared grammatical and phonological features attest to the overall unity of the group and its distant relationship to the other members of the Afro-Asiatic language family. The Berbers, who number approximately eleven million, approximately half of them speaking a form of Berber, are all Muslim and co-exist in relative harmony with the surrounding Arab tribes, from whose dialects they have borrowed very many items of vocabulary, particularly in the religious and cultural spheres. A certain amount of written material exists in the form of religious writings, but they are rare and of limited scope and very little has been published as yet, though several local and Western scholars are showing an interest in it and actively seeking out manuscripts of such texts.

The Berber dialects fall into five main groups:

1. In the east lies the dialect of the Luwāta (Levatians), to whom belong the Awriḡha (a possible cognate of the name 'Africa'), the Awraba, the Ḥawwāra and the Nafzāwa, extending over Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, al-Jarīd and Awrās (Aures).
2. In the west the Sanhāja live in scattered groups, the Kutāma in Lesser Kabylia, the Zwāra in Great Kabylia, the Ghumāra in the Rif, the



Mašmūda on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, the Gezula (Jazūla) in the High Atlas, the Lamta in southern Morocco and the Īfran between the rivers Khelif and Moulouya, along the coast of the Oran Province.

3. The Zanāra are situated inland from Tripolitania along Jabal ‘Amūr and down to southern Morocco.
4. The Zanāga are found in Mauritania, chief among them being the Trārza.
5. The Touareg are situated in the central Sahara and south of the Niger. They transhume in the vast area between the ancient trading centres of Timbuctoo, Zinder, Ghadāmes, Warjlān (Ouargla), al-Ghardāya, Figuig, Tāfilālt and as far west as the Wādī Dādes.

Since ancient times, the Berbers have possessed a consonantal, quasi-alphabetic script which they call *Tifinagh* (*Punica?*), a word which may derive from the Phoenician. It has been called ‘Libyan’ in Western literature since it was first identified in inscriptions found in Libya, Tunisia and Algeria and dating back to Roman times. Over a thousand of these ‘Libyan’ inscriptions of the pre-Islamic period have been discovered, but, even though the script has been deciphered, the language has defied any attempts at understanding. The same is true of a number of inscriptions in Latin letters.

## Ethiopian languages

Three Ethiopian Semitic languages are dealt with in this survey: Amharic, Gurage and Harari. The term Ethiopic is usually reserved for the now extinct literary language of ancient and medieval times, whose indigenous name is Ge‘ez and which is now used only in Christian theological texts, though imperial chronicles had been composed in it up till the late nineteenth century. All four languages belong to the Ethiopian branch of the Semitic language family (to which the South Arabian languages, ancient and modern, are also directly related) and together they form the so-called South Semitic languages. These must be seen as quite distinct from Arabic (the language of the Qur’ān), which belongs to West Semitic and should not be confused with the languages attested in the ancient South Arabian inscriptions, despite surface similarities. Sabaeen inscriptions have been found in northern Ethiopia and give evidence of colonization there as early as the fifth century BC. However, it is likely that the Ge‘ez language itself may have derived from slightly later waves of immigration from the Yemen. Indeed, the Ethiopic script does show some affinity with that recorded in early graffiti from the western regions of the Yemen.

In spite of the distance in space and time (at least 2,500 years separate the African Semites from those of Arabia), Amharic and Arabic still have many words in common, such as:

	Amharic	Arabic
almond	<i>läwz</i>	<i>lawz</i>
brass	<i>näbas</i>	<i>nuḥās</i>
head	<i>ras</i>	<i>raʿs</i>
horse	<i>färäs</i>	<i>faras</i>
house	<i>bet</i>	<i>bayt</i>
plate	<i>ṣabn</i>	<i>ṣabn</i>
shirt	<i>qāmīs</i>	<i>qamiṣ</i>

The grammatical structures of Amharic, Gurage and Harari likewise show many typically Semitic features, in the first place the fundamental rôle of the verb in word derivation and the ‘tri-radical skeleton’ of the languages, meaning that the derivation system ‘fills in’ the vowels between the three (or four) consonants of the radical or word-stem to form derivatives. This is perhaps more noticeable in the classical language, Geʿez, which for the most part reflects the phonological features of Peninsular Arabic, with the full range of laryngeal sounds and contrasting pairs of emphatics and non-emphatics (*t/ṭ, d/ḍ, s/ṣ*), though throughout Ethiopia the emphatics now have a distinct realization as glottalized ejectives (*tʼ, dʼ, sʼ*). In Amharic above all, the loss of the laryngeals has resulted in the appearance of many bi-radical roots where a laryngeal radical has been lost, and extensive agglutination processes, most noticeably in the complex verbal system, which makes abundant use of auxiliary verbs which become fused with the main verb, as in *tänägriyaččänvälläs* ‘you (fem.) tell them’ (from *tänägrī+áččän+alläs*, ‘you (fem. sing.)-telling + them (pl. common) + you (fem. sing.)-are). Palatalization and labialization of some consonants has resulted in the addition of a number of modifications of letters of the original Geʿez alphabet.

Gurage forms a cluster of related languages spoken between the Awash and Omo rivers to the south-west of the capital, Addis Ababa (from which they are separated by Oromo speakers). They are spoken by communities of both Christians (e.g. Chähä) and Muslims (e.g. Selṭi). Of exceptional linguistic complexity, the main features of Amharic are nevertheless recognizable in these languages, though in the realm of phonology, debility of the liquids and the effects of palatalization and labialization are particularly noticeable. The vocabulary contains many items of Cushitic, usually Sidamo, origin. Till recently, the only available literature lay in samples collected by linguists, notably Wolf Leslau from the 1950s onwards, but in more recent years a limited amount of publication, using a modified Amharic script, has emanated from various missionary sources, both Christian and Muslim.

Lying in relative isolation in Harar Province in southern Ethiopia and surrounded by Oromo- and Somali-speaking peoples, is the Muslim city of Harar. Its language is known locally as Adäre. More is known of the city’s past history than, for example, about the Gurage, thanks to a measure of literacy in

Arabic and Harari within the Muslim population and the availability of Ge'ez chronicles. Maintaining close relations with the Muslim communities of Somalia and the Yemen, it has produced a fair amount of literature, historical and religious, though mostly in Arabic. However, a few songs and a sixteenth-century codification of Islamic customary law in Harari, written in the Arabic script, have also survived. The language itself shows much in common with Amharic, which is likely to replace it in due course.

Two further Semitic languages of Ethiopia might be mentioned here for illustrative purposes, though their Islamic literature does not merit inclusion within this book. Tigre, which consists of a number of dialects spoken in the western and eastern lowlands of the now independent Republic of Eritrea, whose people are Muslims, and in nearby regions of the Sudan, may be descended from a form of South Arabian brought over the Red Sea by tribes which infiltrated the region in early times, but now reveals a strong admixture of Beja and Bilen elements. The speakers do not usually employ their own language for composing literature, but rather Arabic. However, a considerable body of their oral folk-literature was collected and published in a modified Ethiopic script by the distinguished German orientalist Enno Littmann at the beginning of the last century. Unlike the Southern Semitic languages of Ethiopia, the phonology and grammatical features of Tigre are relatively conservative and its relationship to Ge'ez rather more obvious.

The fifth Semitic language of Ethiopia, Tigrinya, is spoken by Christians and a few Muslims, mostly in the Tigray Province of Ethiopia and in Eritrea. There are relatively few dialects and the phonology is similar to that of Ge'ez, with a slight Cushitic influence. The literature is still in its infant stage and contains little of Islamic interest, other than some recent publications by Muslim missionary associations and covering such topics as the Muslim creed, *Hadīth* literature and the biographies of the Companions.

## Fulani

Fulani is the Hausa word for the West African people who call themselves Fulbe, plural of Fullo, or Peul, and their language is Fulfulde. It belongs to the Niger-Congo language family. Many of the Fulani (or Fula) are cattle-herdsmen, with their way of life moulded by their pastoral needs. These particular groups enjoy a higher prestige than do their urban and agriculturalist relatives. Living in the Sahel and along the river banks in Senegal, Gambia, Mali and Guinea, and as far as northern Nigeria and Cameroon, they are all Muslims, though the nomadic pastoralists can be rather lax in their religious practices, almost to the point of paganism. Some of their religious literature has been put into writing in the Arabic script and scholars are now attempting to locate manuscripts of their early writings.

## Hausa

Hausa, the most important West African language, belongs to the Chadic branch of Afro-Asiatic and is spoken with little dialectal variation by approximately 12 to 15 million people in the northern regions of Nigeria, in Ghana and southern Niger, and in Cameroon and Chad. It also serves as a lingua franca throughout much of West Africa. The standard literary form derives from the dialect of Kano and used to be written in a form of the Arabic script. Since the early years of the last century, however, a Latin-based alphabet has been introduced, though the Arabic script remains to this day in use for private use and general correspondence. Their literature covers many genres, from popular tales and religious texts, usually in verse, to modern novels and short stories. Hausa is the only Chadic language to have been reduced to writing. There are approximately 150 other Chadic languages or dialects known, but they are dispersed over a wide area, the number of speakers in each case is usually very small and their classification within Chadic remains uncertain. The Hausas are farmers and traders, as well as artisans. They are to be found in small communities in numerous towns across Islamic Africa.

## Mande

The Mande dialects, which number about twenty-six, are spread across all of West Africa from their centre in Mali, the most important being Bambara of Mali-Guinea and Mande of Sierra Leone. They form a sub-group of the Niger-Congo family and share a number of highly distinctive features not encountered in neighbouring languages, which distinguish them clearly from the other Niger-Congo languages and suggest a long period of development in isolation. Among these may be mentioned a unique use of tones with a syntactic function. All the Mande are now Muslims: they are traders and craftsmen and number about 20 million. Mande is an agglutinative language, like Turkish, with post-positions to indicate the grammatical connections between words.

## Somali

Somali is spoken in several regional dialects by some 12 million people in the Republic of Somalia, north-eastern Kenya, southern Djibouti and the Ogaden in Ethiopia. It belongs to the Cushitic sub-group of the Afro-Asiatic language family and is related to Oromo and 'Afar in Ethiopia, but not to the Semitic languages. Arabic features as a second language in northern Somalia and in the coastal centres. Originally unwritten, other than some occasional use in the past of the Arabic script, after several attempts to create an official

orthography in the early 1900s, a Latin-based script was finally introduced in 1973. This has resulted in the emergence of a modest literature, including short stories and novels. The grammar of the language is extremely complicated and very rich. It is a tone language with a two-tiered verbal conjugation system.

## Songhay

Spoken in the great bend of the river Niger by approximately one million people, all Muslims, in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, Songhay forms a cluster of dialects, Dendi and Danda in the south, Zarma or Zerma based on Niamey, and Songhay itself, radiating from Gao, the ancient capital of the Askiya empire of the late Middle Ages. The Songhay are a negroid group, possibly containing Caucasoid elements. The society is structured on the basis of a nobility, commoners, artisans and, formerly, slaves. They practise small-scale cattle-rearing and fishing, with some cereal production during the rainy season. Their prosperity has largely depended on the caravan trade. Songhay seems to be unrelated to other languages in Africa and possesses a quite complex phonetic system.

## Swahili

A member of the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family, this attractive and logical language dominates all of East Africa, from Lamu Island in Kenya to northern Mozambique in the south, and westwards to northern Zambia and most of the eastern part of the Congo. It is also employed for administrative purposes and in education in Tanzania and Kenya and to some extent in Uganda and the Congo. It is divided into a number of dialects and has, over the centuries, been subjected to a strong influence from Arabic. Its name, indeed, derives from the Arabic *sawāḥilī* (of the coast). However, its Bantu character becomes clear in such features of its grammar as the use of prefixes to rank nouns within classes and to bring other parts of speech into agreement with the subject of the sentence, and its vocabulary is unquestionably of common Bantu stock. Developed over many centuries as a lingua franca to enable Arab traders to communicate with the Bantu peoples of the coast, it spread to the interior of the continent with the slave caravans and in the nineteenth century was employed by the European colonial powers, particularly Germany, as an administrative language. Swahili possesses an extensive written literature, the earliest preserved specimens of which go back to the sixteenth century and were written in the Arabic script, though nowadays the latter has given way to the Latin alphabet.

## The scribes and the script

On the subject of the copyists of the manuscripts we possess in Arabic script, a great deal could be said about some of them at least. Here, we have room for only one or two examples.

In his *Filon du bonheur éternel* (Arabic title *Ma‘dan al-sa‘āda*), Alfa Ibrahim Sow gives many details of the scribe’s art, a little-known aspect of literacy in Arabic script.

In Fulfulde literature, as in Swahili, the scribes had turned their literary endeavours into a fine art. In both cultures, the scribe or copyist was not necessarily the same person as the poet. Many are called, few are chosen. Among the students of one master scribe, who would all be set to copying work, one or two would later excel in ‘nature’s chief masterpiece, the art of writing well’. At the end of his work the scribe would copy the poet’s words:

Here is the place where I completed this work.  
 If any of you readers find a fault,  
 Let him remove it, I will give him thanks.  
 I shall not disagree. I’m ignorant.  
 I did not study long, nor did I read  
 The work of the great master of the pen.  
 May God forgive me. Reader, pray for me,  
 God-fearing, poor, the son of So-and-so.

In this last line the poet and/or the scribe would implicitly ask for some subvention and name himself, sometimes dating his manuscript. Ibrahim Sow names some master scribes and the towns where they taught. In Swahililand, one of the great master scribes lived in Lamu, Muhammad ibn Abu Bakari Kijuma (d. 1945), and in Malindi Ahmed ibn Nassir is continuing the fine tradition. Several Swahili poems begin – after the invocation of God and his Prophet – with an exhortation to the scribe (the poet imagines himself dictating his poem, although most poets are known to have written down their own poems) to use the best Syrian paper, the finest black and red ink, and so forth.

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## Chapter 7

# THE LANGUAGES OF THE EUROPEAN MUSLIMS

*Nimetullah Hafiz*

For centuries there have been indigenous peoples in Europe who embraced Islam during the rule of the Ottoman empire and founded communities in the south-eastern part of the continent, particularly in the Balkans. These indigenous communities are part of the multi-faceted cultural mosaic of Europe, and formed a complex of nations which spoke a variety of European languages, as will be seen in the following pages. The Turks who came from Asia to settle in Europe will also be considered within this context.

Among these indigenous peoples were Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Rumanians, Yugoslavs and Hungarians, whose cultures, customs and languages were greatly influenced by Islam. Included among those who converted to Islam were the Pomaks, who still live in some areas of Bulgaria, Greece and Yugoslavia. They are known as Pomaks in Bulgaria, Torbeshi in Macedonia, and Gorantzi (people inhabiting mountainous regions, from *gora* (mountain) in Serbian) in south-western Serbia, eastern Albania and north-western Macedonia. Then there are the majority of the Albanians in the autonomous region of Kosovo in Serbia, Albania, eastern Montenegro, western Macedonia and north-western Greece, as well as the Bosnians belonging to the Bogomil region in the Sanjak district of Serbia, north-western Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Most of the Roms (Gypsies) living in these countries also became Muslims and continued to live in Muslim communities, preserving their own languages. European ethnic groups developed their own cultural heritage, with an admixture of cultural elements of Islam, and lived in harmony with people of other faiths. The languages used by the Muslim nations of Europe (from the time of the Ottoman rule in the region up to the present day), are the following: Turkish, the Tatar language, Bosnian, Albanian, Serbian, Greek, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Romany (the 'Gypsy' language) and Circassian.

The languages of the Balkan countries during the period of Ottoman rule, such as Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian,

Rumanian and Turkish, are sometimes referred to as 'Balkan languages'. Among them, Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian and Rumanian are Indo-European languages, while Turkish is Ural-Altai. Greek and Albanian belong to separate branches of the Indo-European family. Bulgarian, Macedonian and Serbo-Croatian are Slavic languages. Rumanian belongs to the family of Romanic languages. The term 'Balkan languages' is thus not only a geographically based name. Just as there is a culture and civilization peculiar to the Balkans, these languages, although they belong to separate branches and even different families, share a number of characteristics related to vocabulary and grammar.

There is an extensive exchange among the Balkan languages in terms of vocabulary. Turkish had a strong and pervasive linguistic influence on the region: to cite some examples: Turkish *boya* (paint, dye), Serbian, Bulgarian and Macedonian *boja*, Rumanian *boja*, Greek *mpogia*, Albanian *bojë*; Turkish *dolap* (cupboard), Bulgarian, Macedonian and Serbian *dolap*, Greek *ntolapi*, Albanian *dollap* etc. Apart from a common vocabulary similar to the above, there are common characteristics and mutual influences among some Balkan languages, both phonetically and grammatically.

Turkish had a very strong influence on Bulgarian, Macedonian, Bosnian, Albanian and Rumanian. The following publications provide the best information on this influence: Fr. Miklosich, *Die türkischen Elemente in den südost- und osteuropäischen Sprachen: Griechisch, Albanisch, Rumänisch, Bulgarisch, Serbisch, Kleinrussisch, Grossrussisch, Polnisch* (Wien, 1885–1886, 1890); *idem*, *Über die Einwirkung des Türkischen auf die Grammatik der südosteuropäischen Sprachen* (Wien, 1890); Gj. Popović, *Turske i druge istočnjačke reči u našem jeziku* (Belgrade, 1889); H. Polenaković, *Turski elementi u arumunskom dijalektu* (Skopje, 1939); Heinze F. Wendt, *Türkische Elemente im Rumänischen* (Berlin, 1960); P. Georgiodis, *Die lautlichen Veränderungen der türkischen Lehnwörter im Griechischen* (München, 1974); N. Boretzky, *Der türkische Einfluss auf das Albanische* (Wiesbaden, I, 1975, II, 1976).

There are also quite a few words borrowed from the Balkan languages by Turkish. On this question see Fr. Miclosich, *Die slavischen, magyrischen und rumänischen Elemente im türkischen Sprachschätze* (Wien, 1889); G. Majer, *Die griechischen und rumänischen Bestandteile im Wortschatze des Osmanisch-Türkischen* (Wien, 1893); V. Topçiu, *Albanizmat në të folmat turke të Kosovës*, Zbornik, Filoloskog Fakulteta, XVI–XVII (Priština, 1981–1982); N. Hafiz, *Uticaj srpskohrvatskog i albanskog jezika na turske govore na Kosovu, Dil ve Pratik* (Priština, 1985).

In recent years, these languages, except for Turkish, have been purged of foreign words, but, despite such efforts, none of them is completely purified from the influence of the neighbouring (Balkan) languages.

The following information concerns the languages used by the Muslim nations in Europe from the settlement of the Ottomans in these areas to the present time.



## Turkish

This language is spoken in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, the autonomous region of Kosovo-Metohija in southern Serbia, parts of Montenegro, Rumania and some areas of Albania.

The Turkish language has a long history from the time the Turks reached Europe until the present day. It was first used as the official language of the state. Although many elements were borrowed from other languages, the Turkish nation, consisting of people from different parts of the Ottoman empire, was able to preserve its own language to a large extent. Even after the decline of the Ottoman empire, this language was used by the people who remained in these parts, and is still in use. The Turks in Europe used two alphabets. They adopted the Arabic script until the World War II and Latin characters in the post-war period.

Name	Isoliert	Ende	Mitte	Anfang	Umschrift und Lautwert	Name	Isoliert	Ende	Mitte	Anfang	Umschrift und Lautwert
Elif	ا	ا			—, [e, i, ü, ö]	Ssad	ص	ص	ص	ص	š [β]
Be	ب	ب	ب	ب	b [am Ende oft p]	Sad	ض	ض	ض	ض	ž [d, s]
Pe	پ	پ	پ	پ	p	Ty	ط	ط	ط	ط	ṭ [t, d]
Te	ت	ت	ت	ت	t	Sy	ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	ẓ [s weich]
Sse	ث	ث	ث	ث	ṣ [β]	Ain	ع	ع	ع	ع	‘ [im Türkischen meist Stamm]
Dschim	ج	ج	ج	ج	ǰ [dsch engl. j]	Ghain	غ	غ	غ	غ	ǧ [g in nordd. +Sage.]
Tschim	چ	چ	چ	چ	č [tsch]	Fe	ف	ف	ف	ف	f
Ha	ح	ح	ح	ح	h [h]	Qaf	ق	ق	ق	ق	q [gutturales k]
Chy	خ	خ	خ	خ	ħ [ch in -sch-]	Kjef	ك	ك	ك	ك	k [k, g, n, j]
Dal	د	د	د	د	d [am Ende oft t]	Lam	ل	ل	ل	ل	l
Sal	ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ	ẓ [s weich]	Mim	م	م	م	م	m
Re	ر	ر	ر	ر	r	Nun	ن	ن	ن	ن	n
Se	ز	ز	ز	ز	ẓ [s weich]	Waw	و	و	و	و	w [w, o, ö, u, ü]
ǰe	ژ	ژ	ژ	ژ	ẓ̌ [wie franz. j]	He	ه	ه	ه	ه	h [h, e, a]
Ssin	س	س	س	س	s [β]	Je	ی	ی	ی	ی	j [j, i, u, ü, y]
Schin	ش	ش	ش	ش	š [sch]						

A	a	Ğ	ğ	M	m	Ş	ş
B	b	H	h	Ä	ä	T	t
C	c	I	ı	N	n	U	u
Ç	ç	İ	i	O	o	Ü	ü
D	d	J	j	Ö	ö	V	v
E	e	K	k	P	p	Y	y
F	f	L	l	R	r	Z	z
G	g			S	s		

Because they felt related to the Ottoman civilization, the communities in the Balkan peninsula took a leading rôle in teaching this language, even during the declining years of the Ottoman empire. They had an understandable interest in the subject and published a number of dictionaries and grammar books. Most of these were published in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Macedonia. The following works are the most important: Llija K. Andjelković-Stružanin's *Razgovori srpski, nemački, grčki, turski, francuski i talijanski*, Zemun (1861); the translation of Mehmed Fuad and Ahmed Cevdet's work entitled *Kavâ'id-i Osmâniyye*, Mostar, 1870, by Josip Dragomanović; Djordje M. Pulevski, *Rečnik od četiri jezika* (in Serbian, Albanian, Turkish and Greek), Belgrade, 1873; *Rečnik C Fjalor C Dictionary* (in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish), published under the patronage of Sultan 'Abd al-'Aziz (Belgrade, 1875); Aleksa J. Popović-Sarajlija, *Srpsko-Turski, Tursko-Srpski rečnik* (Belgrade, 1899); Glisa Elezović, *Turski bukvar sa vežbanjima i rečnikom* (Skopje, 1910); Ahmed Kulender, *Tursko-Bosanski rečnik* (Monastir, 1912); Otto Hillmann, *Najnužniji turski razgovori iz svakidašnjeg života* (Sarajevo); Hazim Šabanović, *Gramatika turskog jezika* (Sarajevo, 1944); Hifzi Idriz and Sükrü Ramo, *Dilbilgisi* (Grammar) (Skopje, 1954); N. Bancey, J. Kerimov, G. Klasov, Str. Nikolov and Tr. Popov, *Bulgarian-Turkish Dictionary* (Sofia, 1961); Nikola Vančev, Giliv Giliboc, Genčo Klasov, Trajko Popov and Vasil Stanov, *Tursko-Blgarski rečnik* (Sofia, 1962); Fehim Bajraktarević, *Osnovi Turske gramatike* (Sarajevo, 1962); Gilib D. Giliboc, *Gramatika na turskaja jazik* (Sofia, 1964); Mile Korvezirovski and Kevser Seyfullah, *Macedonian-Turkish Dictionary* (Skopje, 1967); Süreyya Yusuf, *Dilbilgisi* (Grammar) (Skopje, 1975).

Recently, Turcologists all over the world have conducted studies and research on the dialects of the Turkish language used in the Balkans. The Hungarian Turcologist J. Németh examined the dialects in Rumelia in his work *Zur Einteilung der türkischen Mundarten Bulgariens* (Sofia, 1956), separating the Turkish dialects in the Balkan peninsula into eastern and western Rumelian Turkish dialects. The dialects of the Turks who settled to the west of

Köstendil (Kyustendil) are classified under a western group, while the dialects to the east are classified under an eastern group. In addition to this work, there are interesting books and articles by the following authors about various Turkish dialects spoken in the countries, areas and cities cited below: J. Németh, Vidin (1965), Hungary (1970), Stari-Bar (1970), Albania, (1991); János Eckmann, Religions (Macedonia) (1960), Kumanova (Macedonia) (1962); György Hazai, Macedonia (1960), Rumelia (1960), Balkans (1960); Selâhattin Olcay: eastern Thrace (1966); Stanislaw Stachowski, Albania (1967); Suzanne Kakuk, Bulgaria (1960), Ohrid (1972); Olivera Jačar-Nasteva, Gostivar (1970); Şükrü Elçin, Florina (1964); Mefküre Mollova, Florina (1969), Yugoslavia (1980), Balkans (1980); Nimetullah Hafiz, Prizren (1979), Kosovo (1980); Süreyya Jusuf, Prizren (1987).

On the basis of the research carried out on this subject and the edited texts in the dialects, the Turkish dialects which constitute the western group in the Balkans are divided into (a) Turkish dialects in Kosovo; (b) Turkish dialects in Macedonia. The group of dialects in Macedonia and north-western Greece have the characteristics of the dialects of nomads (Yörüks); Turkish dialects in Kosovo and Bosnia share many characteristics, including the change in the consonants  $k > ç$  and  $g > c$ .

## Albanian

The Albanian language (*gjuha Shqipë*) belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and is spoken by the Albanian nation. This language is also spoken in areas outside the political borders of Albania, i.e. in the north and the south, particularly by the Albanians who live in Yugoslavia, and Greece in the east. More than half of the Albanians, who number about 5,000,000, are Muslims.

Albanian (*Shqipë*) is divided into two main dialects: the Geg dialect in the north and the Tosk dialect in the south. The Albanian literary language is a composite of these two dialects, but it is built mainly on the Elbasani dialect, which, in turn, is based on the southern Gegish language.

There are many loan-words in modern Albanian. About 10,000 items in the vocabulary are Albanian; the others are originally Latin, Italian, Rumanian, Turkish, Modern Greek and Slavic words. Many Albanian dictionaries have been published in recent years. Besides the etymological dictionary which G. Mayer published 1891, including the words which he gathered in Skopje and Kalkandelen), there are two other important dictionaries: *Fjalor fjalësh e shprehjesh të huaja*, 1986, published by Mikel Ndreca in Priština, and *Fjalor i fjalëve të huaja*, 1988, published by the Institute of Albanology in Kosovo-Metohija.

In 1850 the German Consul J. G. v. Hahn indicated that there were two old systems of the alphabet in Albania, each known as the 'national alphabet'.

There is also an alphabet prepared by Naum Bythakuqi in 1840. This includes Arabic characters. *Aljamiado* literary texts were recorded in it. *Bashkimi* (Birlik) and Agimi (Şafak) alphabets were created in 1899 and 1901, respectively. The alphabet in the Tosk region was prepared by Sami Frashëri and is named after him. This form, which includes Latin and Greek characters and is partly used in the Geg region, was the most widely used Albanian alphabet until 1908. A congress was convened in Monastir between 1–10 November 1908 where a new alphabet for Albania was designed. This congress adopted the Roman alphabet as the official system of writing, but with some minor changes (for example, using *x* instead of *dz*, *xh* instead of *dzh*, *c* instead of *ts*, *f* instead of *tsb*).

The following is the modern Albanian alphabet:

A,a	G,g	N,n	T,t
B,b	Gj,gj	Nj,nj	Th,th
C,c	H,h	O,o	U,u
Ç,ç	I,i	P,p	V,v
D,d	J,j	Q,q	X,x
Dh,dh	K,k	R,r	Xh,xh
E,e	L,l	Rr,rr	Y,y
Ë,ë	Ll,ll	S,s	Z,z
F,f	M,m	Sh,sh	Zh,zh

Many books have been published about Albanian grammar. These grammar books, which were prepared in various languages between 1870–1930, were published in such cities as Paris, Shkodër, Istanbul, Athens, Vienna, Sarajevo, Milan, Tirana, London, Rome and Naples. Many more grammars were published in Albania and Yugoslavia. Besides, there are important scholarly works by Albanian linguists, such as Eqrem Çabey's *Studime Gjuhësore* (Studies on Language) in seven volumes and Idris Ajeti's work with the same title in three volumes.

## Bosnian

This is the language spoken by the Bosnian Muslims of former Yugoslavia, and is a branch of the southern group of Slavonic languages (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian). On the one hand, this language is related to the Štokav dialect, a literary form of Serbo-Croatian, which belongs to the group of Slavonic languages; on the other, it is influenced by the Rumelian group of dialects of Ottoman Turkish and Turkish used in the Turkish Republic.

The name 'Bosnak' (*Bosanac*, pl. *Bosanci*, in Serbo-Croatian and *Hercegovac* [one from Herzegovina], pl. *Hercegovci*) was used to denote the whole population of Bosnia, i.e. 'Bosnians' in former Yugoslavia, irrespective of religion. However, the word 'Bosnian' in general means Muslim (*Muhamedanac*, pl. *Muhamedanci*) Bosnians, who constitute 45 per cent of the population. The

Bosnians entered World War II as ‘Muslims’. But, after this time, the Muslims (Bosnians) in Bosnia-Herzegovina were registered, by force, as Croats, Serbians or nationless. Later, when Muslim scholars criticized this injustice, they earned the right to their own nationality and were registered as Muslims in official documents. For this reason, Muslim Bosnians are called Muslims in terms of both religion and nationality.

The Bosnian language (*Bosanski* or Bosnian) was used after the conquest of the region by the Turkish armies in 1463. Immediately after the conquest, the majority of Bosnians (such as the Pomaks in Bulgaria and those called the Torbeshi and Gorantzi peoples in Macedonia, Greece and southern Serbia) accepted Turkish as the official language and started to use it. The Turkish spoken by Muslims is called ‘Bosnian Turkish’. The language spoken by Christian (Catholic and Orthodox) Bosnians is called *Bosanski jezik* (Bosnian Slavic) or *Bosanski* (Bosnian)).

The Bosnian Turkish language lived side by side, and even mingled, with (See tables of Cyrillic and Latin alphabets on page 94) Serbo-Croatian. Many works were written in a mixture of both languages. The following quatrain in Turkish by El-Abd Mustafa el-Bosnevî is an example of that mixture (words and phrases in Serbo-Croatian are underlined):

*Bana gözetmezsin, ey yar-i kadim*  
*Aglarem, za tobom jalostan hodim*  
*Kilarem feryad, kad (a) te ne vidim*  
*Hayle zaman oldi görmedim seni.*

O old friend, you do not look at me.  
 I weep and (wander in pain and sorrow because of you).  
 I cry for help (when I do not see you).  
 I have longed for your sight for such a long time.

At first, the Cyrillic alphabet, called *Glagolica* and created by the brothers Cyril and Methodius, was used in the western areas of Bosnia. However, *Bosancica* (the Old Bosnian alphabet) was used more widely in later times. This kind of writing was current among Bosnian noblemen during the Ottoman period and until recently. But later the Arabic alphabet was generally used, first for texts in Turkish, Arabic and Persian, and later for Bosnian. During the Austrian rule, the Bosnians began to use the Latin alphabet alongside the Arabic. All of the old and parts of new works of Bosnian literature are written in Arabic characters. These works were later printed in the same characters. There is extensive information about this alphabet in the section about *aljamiado* literature in Bosnia. Today, Bosnians use firstly the Latin, and secondly the Cyrillic alphabet.

There are many manuscript dictionaries of the Bosnian and Turkish languages, varying in size. Alija Nametak’s work entitled *Rukopisi Tursko-Hrvatsko*

*Srpski rječnici* (Turkish-Serbo-Croatian Manuscript Dictionaries, 1968) dwells on these valuable manuscripts and presents information about all of them. The first printed work of this kind is a small dictionary entitled *Rjeci iz istocnih jezika koje se upotrebljavaju u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Words of Eastern Languages Used in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1910). Later, valuable dictionaries were published, such as Ahmed Kulender, *Tursko Bosanski rečnik* (Monastir, 1912) and Abdullah Škaljić, *Turcizmi u Srpskohrvatskom jeziku* (Sarajevo, 1966). A dictionary containing 6,878 words which was prepared by Abdullah Škaljić, went through six editions. Miloš Okuka and Ljiljana Stanić's work entitled *Književni jezik u Bosni i Hercegovini od Vuka Karadžića do kraja austrougarske vladavine* (München, 1991) is another valuable book about the literary language of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

a) The Cyrillic alphabet:

Name	Antiqua	Kursiv	Schreibschrift	Umschrift und Lautwert	Name	Antiqua	Kursiv	Schreibschrift	Umschrift und Lautwert
A	А а	А а	А а	a	ЕБ	С с	С с	С с	s [β]
B <sup>ie</sup>	Б б	Б б	Б б	b	Т <sup>ie</sup>	Т т	Т т	Т т	t
W <sup>ie</sup>	В в	В в	В в	v [w]	У	У у	У у	У у	u
G <sup>ie</sup>	Г г	Г г	Г г	g	Ef	Ф ф	Ф ф	Ф ф	f
D <sup>ie</sup>	Д д	Д д	Д д	d	Cha	Х х	Х х	Х х	ch [Ach- Laut]
Je	Е е	Е е	Е е	e [je, ja]	Tße	Ц ц	Ц ц	Ц ц	c [tβ]
Jo	Ё ё	Ё ё	Ё ё	ě [jo]	Tsche	Ч ч	Ч ч	Ч ч	č [tsch]
Že	Ж ж	Ж ж	Ж ж	ž [schwaft.]	Scha	Ш ш	Ш ш	Ш ш	š [sch]
S <sup>ie</sup>	З з	З з	З з	z [ʃ]	Schtscha	Щ щ	Щ щ	Щ щ	šč [schtsch]
I dwoinoje	И и	И и	И и	i	Jer	Ъ ъ	Ъ ъ	•	<sup>1)</sup> [hartes Zeichen]
I s totechkoi	*I i	I i	I i	i	Jerü <sup>v</sup>	Ы ы	Ы ы	•	y [i <sup>v</sup> kurz]
I s kratkoi	Й й	Й й	Й й	j	Jer <sup>i</sup>	Ь ь	Ь ь	•	<sup>2)</sup> [stimm- schwaches Zeichen]
Ka	К к	К к	К к	k	Jat <sup>i</sup>	*Б б	Б б	Б б	ě [ja, je]
El	Л л	Л л	Л л	l [soft guttural] [wie poln. ł]	E	Э э	Э э	Э э	é [e, ä]
Em	М м	М м	М м	m	Ju	Ю ю	Ю ю	Ю ю	ju
En	Н н	Н н	Н н	n	Ja	Я я	Я я	Я я	ja
O	О о	О о	О о	o	Fita <sup>v</sup>	*Ө ө	Ө ө	Ө ө	f [ʃ]
P <sup>ie</sup>	П п	П п	П п	p	I'zitBa	*V v	V v	V v	y [i]
Er	Р р	Р р	Р р	r					

b) The Latin alphabet

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOP  
 OPQRSTUVWXYZ &  
 abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz  
 abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ABCDEF

Serbian

This language belongs to the southern group of Slavonic languages. After World War II, the mixture of the Serbian and Croatian languages was called Serbo-Croatian.

Serbian is divided into three main dialects, according to the use of the interrogative pronouns *što*, *ka* or *ča* (what?). The dialects which use these interrogative forms are called Štokav, Kajkav and Čakav, respectively. The Štokav dialect is widespread in Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. The Serbian literary language is based on this dialect.

*Staroslovenski* (Old Slavonic), i.e. the language of the church, was used as a literary language in Serbia until the time of Vuk Karadžić (1787–1864). Karadžić, reformer of the Serbian language, collected Serbian folk literature (poems, riddles, proverbs and stories) and also published a Serbian grammar (1815), the first edition of a Serbian dictionary, with 26,270 words (1818) and the second edition of the same dictionary, containing 47,427 words (1852). He also created the Serbian alphabet (1827), which is still in use.

The Gorantzi people who live in south-western Serbia, Albania and in 18 (see table of Serbian scripts below) villages in north-western Macedonia, speak a dialect which has the characteristics of a mixture of Serbian, Macedonian and Turkish. People who live in the villages of Restelica, Kruševo, Zli Potok, Globočica, Bačka, Dikance, Brot, Kukulijane, Ljubovište, Lještane, Radeša, Vranište, Orčuša, Veliki, Krstec, Mali Krstec, Rapča, Mlike and Dragaš in Serbia use the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet; those who live in the Albanian villages

Name	Antiqua	Kursiv	Schreibschrift	Umschrift und Lautwert	Name	Antiqua	Kursiv	Schreibschrift	Umschrift und Lautwert
A	A a	A a	A a	a	En	Н н	И и	И и	n
Be	Б б	Б б	Б б	b	Enj	Ђ ђ	Ђ ђ	Ђ ђ	nj[n]
We	В в	В в	В в	v [w]	O	О о	О о	О о	o
Ge	Г г	Г г	Г г	g	Pe	П п	П п	П п	p
De	Д д	Д д	Д д	d	Er	Р р	Р р	Р р	r
Diže	Ђ ђ	Ђ ђ	Ђ ђ	đ [d', d <sup>1</sup> ]	Eß	С с	С с	С с	s [ß]
E	Е е	Е е	Е е	e	Te	Т т	Т т	Т т	t
Že	Ж ж	Ж ж	Ж ж	ž [stimmhaft]	T'sche	Ђ ђ	Ђ ђ	Ђ ђ	č [tj <sup>1</sup> ]
Se	З з	З з	З з	z [ʃ]	U	У у	У у	У у	u
I	И и	И и	И и	i	Ef	Ф ф	Ф ф	Ф ф	f
Je	Ј ј	Ј ј	Ј ј	j	Cha	Х х	Х х	Х х	h [ch, Achi, Lani]
Ka	К к	К к	К к	k	Tße	Ц ц	Ц ц	Ц ц	c [tß]
El	Л л	Л л	Л л	l	Tsche	Ч ч	Ч ч	Ч ч	č [tsch]
Elj	Љ љ	Љ љ	Љ љ	lj [l']	Dže	Џ џ	Џ џ	Џ џ	dž, g [dsch]
Em	М м	М м	М м	m	Esch	Ш ш	Ш ш	Ш ш	š [sch]

Serbian Script

of Brje, Shishtevaac, Oreqak, Orgoshte, Pashika, Crnoljevo, Novoselo, Zapot and Kasharishte use the Albanian alphabet; the Gorantzi people who live in the two Macedonian villages of Urvić and Jelovljane use the Macedonian Cyrillic alphabet.

The language spoken by the Gorantzi people is neither completely Serbian nor Macedonian. The dialects which most resemble this idiom are those of the Torbeshi in Macedonia, who are descendants of the Pomaks (like the Gorantzi), and those of the Pomaks in Bulgaria. Because their dialects resemble those of Serbian, Macedonian and Bulgarian, the Gorantzi in Serbia are said to be *Muslimanski Srbi* (Muslim Serbs), the Torbeshi in Macedonia *Makedonski Muslimani* (Macedonian Muslims), and the Pomaks in southern Bulgaria and northern Greece *Bulgarski Muhamedanci* (Bulgarian Muslims).

The only scholarly article on the dialect spoken by the Gorantzi is Radivoje Mladenović's work entitled *Goranski govor u odnosu na granične makedonske i granične srpske govore* (1986). In this article, the author states that the Goran dialect is most similar to the south-eastern Serbian and Prizren-Timok dialects with regard to phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and accent.

The Gorantzi were registered as a Muslim nation in the recent censuses, but they continue to write and publish most of their works in literary Serbian, in the Cyrillic alphabet rather than in roman characters.



Name	Antiqua	Kursiv	Schreibschrift	Umschrift und Lautwert	Name	Antiqua	Kursiv	Schreibschrift	Umschrift und Lautwert
A	A a	A a	A a	a	Ne	Н н	H n	Н n	n
Be	Б б	Б б	Б б	b	Nje	Њ њ	Њ њ	Њ њ	nj [n̥]
We	В в	В в	В в	v [w]	O	О о	O o	O o	o
Ge	Г г	Г г	Г г	g	Pe	П п	П п	П п	p
De	Д д	Д д	Д д	d	Re	Р р	Р р	Р р	r
Gje	Ѓ ѓ	Ѓ ѓ	Ѓ ѓ	gj [d̥]	Sse	С с	С с	С с	s
E	Е е	Е е	Е е	e	Te	Т т	T m	Т т	t
Že	Ж ж	Ж ж	Ж ж	ž [ʒimʒan]	Kje	Ќ к	Ќ к	Ќ к	kj [d̥]
Se	З з	З з	З з	z [ʃ]	U	У у	У у	У у	u
Dse	С с	С с	С с	dz [dʃ]	Fe	Ф ф	Ф ф	Ф ф	f
I	И и	И и	И и	i	Che	Х х	Х х	Ч ч	ch [ʎ: <sup>h</sup> ʎ: <sup>h</sup> ]
Je	Ј ј	Ј ј	Ј ј	j	T/βe	Ц ц	Ц ц	Ц ц	c [tβ]
Ke	К к	К к	К к	k	Tsche	Ч ч	Ч ч	Ч ч	č [tʃh]
Le	Л л	Л л	Л л	l [l̥]	Dže	Џ џ	Џ џ	Џ џ	dž
Lje	Љ љ	Љ љ	Љ љ	lj [l̥]	Sche	Ш ш	Ш ш	Ш ш	š [ʃh]
Me	М м	М м	М м	m					

Macedonian Script

## Macedonian

This language is spoken by the Muslim Torbeshi in Macedonia. Torbeshi (*Torbeši* in Macedonian and in Bulgarian) is the name given to the Pomaks who live in Macedonia.

Macedonian (*Makedonski*), a branch of the southern group of Slavonic languages, is spoken in Macedonia. Upon the establishment of the Macedonian Republic at the end of the World War II, this language was accepted as the language of writing and flourished. It is based on the central Macedonian dialect and united the several dialects diffused over various areas. It has the characteristics of both Bulgarian and Serbian. Turkish has a considerable influence on the modern language. Two interesting books were published about this influence recently: Olivera Jašar-Nasteva, *Turski elementi vo jazikot i stilot na Makedonskata narodna poezija* (Skopje, 1987); Ljubo Micanović, *Sovremen leksikon na stranski zborovi i izryari* (Skopje, 1990).

In former Yugoslavia, the nationality of the Muslim Bosnians in Bosnia-Herzegovina was recorded as Muslim and they are therefore called *Makedonski muslimani* (Macedonian Muslims).

The Cyrillic alphabet is used in Macedonia. Since the dialects spoken by the Macedonian Muslims are quite similar to central Macedonian, they write their literary works in this language and use the Cyrillic alphabet as well.

Name	Antiqua	Kursiv	Schreibschrift	Umschrift und Lautwert	Name	Antiqua	Kursiv	Schreibschrift	Umschrift und Lautwert
A	А а	А а	А а	a	Re	Р р	Р р	Р р	r
Be	Б б	Б б	Б б	b	Sse	С с	С с	С с	s [β]
We	В в	В в	В в	v [w]	Te	Т т	Т т	Т т	t
Ge	Г г	Г г	Г г	g	U	У у	У у	У у	u
De	Д д	Д д	Д д	d	Fe	Ф ф	Ф ф	Ф ф	f
Je	Е е	Е е	Е е	e [ɛ, ɛ̃, jɛ]	Che	Х х	Х х	Х х	ch [Achi, Lani]
Že	Ж ж	Ж ж	Ж ж	ž [stimhaft]	Tße	Ц ц	Ц ц	Ц ц	c [tβ]
Se	З з	З з	З з	z [ʃ]	Tsche	Ч ч	Ч ч	Ч ч	č [tsch]
I <i>prostio</i>	И и	И и	И и	i	Sche	Ш ш	Ш ш	Ш ш	š [sch]
I <i>skratka</i>	Й й	Й й	Й й	j	Schte	Щ щ	Щ щ	Щ щ	št [sch]
Ke	К к	К к	К к	k	Jer goll'a'm	Ъ ъ	Ъ ъ	•	ù' [an ö, ø]
Le	Л л	Л л	Л л	l	Jer mál'ik	Ь ь	Ь ь	•	'¹)[j]
Me	М м	М м	М м	m	Je dwojno	Ѣ ѣ	Ѣ ѣ	Ѣ ѣ	ě [ɛ, ə, ja]
Ne	Н н	Н н	Н н	n	Ju	Ю ю	Ю ю	Ю ю	ju
O	О о	О о	О о	o	Ja	Я я	Я я	Я я	ja
Pe	П п	П п	П п	p	Juß	Ѧ ѧ	Ѧ ѧ	Ѧ ѧ	ä [an ö, ø]

Bulgarian script

## Bulgarian

More than 200,000 Pomaks live in Bulgaria and they are all Muslims. Their dialect resembles Bulgarian. The Greek Pomaks who live in northern Greece, near the Bulgarian border, also speak this language.

The Bulgarian Pomaks are a community living in the Rhodope area. In Bulgarian sources, after the Ottoman period, they were called *Bulgarimohamedani* (Muslim Bulgarians) instead of Pomaks. In 1984 even the Bulgarian Turks were forced to use this name.

In the nineteenth century, the Bulgarian Pomaks lived in the Rhodope area in large communities. Besides, there were also small groups of Pomaks in cities such as Lovča (Lovec), Selvi (Selvievo), Plevne (Pleven) and Rahova (Rahova, Orjahovo) in northern Bulgaria. There is quite a large number of Pomaks in the cities of northern Greece and in Thessaloniki. The dialects spoken by the Torbeshi people in Macedonian cities and villages and by the Gorantzi people who live on the flanks of the mountains in south-western Serbia, do not differ much from each other.

Although the Pomaks adopted Muslim Turkish culture, their dialect is a mixture of Bulgarian and Macedonian. They also use the Bulgarian alphabet since they are educated in Bulgarian schools.

Bulgarian as spoken in Bulgaria is a Slavonic language. It belongs to the southern group of Slavonic languages, together with Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian and Macedonian. The old Bulgarians, who belonged to a Turkish tribe, migrated to the west and settled there. When in AD 863 they were about to be Slavicized in their new home, two Greek brothers from Salonika (Thessaloniki-Solun), named Cyril (Kurillos, Kiri, d. 869) and Methodius (Metodji, d. 885), came from Constantinople to Bulgaria as orthodox missionaries and spread Christianity and the Cyrillic alphabet there. This is still used in Bulgaria (see table).

Romany	Latin	Cyrillic
A, a	A, a	А, а
Ä, ä	-, -	-, -
B, b	B, b	Б, б
C, c	C, c	Ц, ц
Č, č	Č, č	Ч, ч
Kj, kj	Ć, ć	Ќ, ќ
D, d	D, d	Д, д
Gj, gj	Đ, đ	Ѓ, ѓ
Dž, dž	Dž, dž	Џ, џ
E, e	E, e	Е, е
F, f	F, f	Ф, ф
G, g	G, g	Г, г
H, h	H, h	Х', х'
X, x	-, -	Х, х
I, i	I, i	И, и
J, j	J, j	Ј, ј
K, k	K, k	К, к
L, l	L, l	Л, л
Lj, lj	Lj, lj	Љ, љ
M, m	M, m	М, м
N, n	N, n	Н, н
Nj, nj	Nj, nj	Њ, њ
O, o	O, o	О, о
P, p	P, p	П, п
R, r	R, r	Р, р
S, s	S, s	С, с
Š, š	Š, š	Ш, ш
T, t	T, t	Т, т
U, u	U, u	У, у
V, v	V, v	В, в
Z, z	Z, z	З, з
Ž, ž	Ž, ž	Ж, ж

Romany Script

## Romany

The word 'Rom', which is derived from 'Romany', is the name given to the Gypsies. The language used by them is Romany. They emigrated from north-western India in continuous waves from the ninth century AD onwards. They are found in almost every European country, but they are more numerous in Balkan territories, where most of them became Muslims. But there are also Christian Roms.

In the past, the language which the Roms spoke was called 'Gypsy', or 'the language of the Gypsies'. Recently, however, it has been defined as Romany (*Romani chib*). It was derived from the Pastācī dialects of central India. It has been known since 1777 that this language, as spoken by the Roms who emigrated from north-western India to Western Asia, West Africa, Europe, and even America, is related to the new north-western Indian dialects. The language was divided into a small number of branches as a result of this migration. The main branches of Romany are represented in Armenian, Syrian and European dialects. Apparently, these dialects were influenced by the languages of the respective countries where they were spoken (Armenia, Rumania, England etc.). Romany underwent a few changes in the countries where it spread and turned into a secret language in various places. Its grammar was modelled on the native language of the host country where it was spoken; its lexicon, however, was Romany.

The Armenian and Persian elements in Romany clearly indicate the routes which the Roms followed on their migrations to the West. One also comes across Arabic words in Romany. Besides Armenian and Persian words, the form which is spoken in various European countries also contains a few Turkish words. There are also Greek, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Rumanian, Hungarian and Albanian words in the Romany which is spoken in these regions. Despite the differences in the Romany language as used in different areas, the Roms all over the world can communicate with each other, owing to the common characteristics of their dialects.

For a long time, no major literary work was produced in this language which was spoken in so many parts of the world. Upon a suggestion made by Slobodan Berberski in Belgrade in 1969, it was decided that the term 'Rom' be used instead of 'Gypsy'. Thus, all 'Gypsies' in Yugoslavia were registered as 'Roms' during the censuses held in 1971. Immediately afterwards, they started to write their own literary works in their own alphabet and to prepare grammar books in Romany. The first book in this field was Rade Uhlik's *Prepozitivni i postpozitivni član u gurbetskom* (1951), published in Sarajevo. Later, Krume Kapeski and Šaip Jusuf published a book entitled *Romani gramatika – Romska gramatika* (Romany Grammar, 1980), which was the first attempt at a Romany grammar. The second grammar, entitled *Romani fonetika thaj lekhipa – Fonetika i pravopis romskog jezika* (Phonetics and

Syntax of the Romany Language) was published by Marcel Cortiade in Titograd in 1986.

A Department of Romology was opened in the School of Philology in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, in the academic year 1991-1992.

## Circassian

This language, which is one of the main branches of the Abasg-Kerker languages (north-/western) Caucasia, entered the Balkans when some Circassian families settled in the Balkans peninsula. There are Circassian families living in various cities and villages in Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania, Albania and Yugoslavia. Although most of them emigrated to Turkey, some families still speak this language among themselves. It appears that the spoken language experienced a strong influence from Arabic. It was also greatly influenced by Turkish.

We do not know of a special alphabet which would have been used by the Circassians in the Balkans. Most of them continue to use in their writings the alphabets of the languages in which they were educated.

Following the war between the Circassians and the Russians in 1858, 400,000 Circassians emigrated from Caucasia via two routes: some settled in Anatolia and Asia Minor, others in the cities and villages of Rumelian countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Yugoslavia (which were under Ottoman suzerainty). After many wars, including World War I, the majority of the Circassians in the Balkan countries emigrated to Turkey. At present, there are more than hundred Circassian families who have remained in their homeland.

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Chapter 8

CROSS-FERTILIZATION  
BETWEEN ARABIC AND OTHER  
LANGUAGES OF ISLAM\*

*Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu*

INTRODUCTION

Since the very beginning, the constituent elements of Islamic civilization have shown a great degree of pluralism and diversity. There has even been room for the efforts of the followers of other religions, such as Christians and Jews, within the framework of unity established by the Islamic approach. Islamic civilization also adapted many intellectual and cultural elements from other civilizations, such as Greek, Persian, Indian and others, and thus acquired that cosmopolitan character which made it an important tributary to the European Renaissance, and a major component of a universal civilization.

The efforts of the people who embraced Islam laid the firm foundation on which Islamic civilization was based, for when these people converted to Islam, they brought with them elements of their own cultures and many of the intellectual and cultural components thereof, including the language. The languages of these people both enriched and were enriched by Arabic, the language of religion. However, the non-Arab people who embraced Islam undertook to learn Arabic, firstly in the belief that to do so was part of faith, and secondly, in order to become more acquainted with the principles and tenets of the religion. It may be that the enthusiasm of various Muslim peoples for Arabic as the language of revelation prompted generations of them to abandon their own mother tongue for a certain time. When they started again to write in their native languages, it was natural that they found Arabic a rich source of ideas and culture, from which they borrowed countless words and constructions. The strong influence exerted by Arabic over those languages continues to the present day. They borrowed Arabic words and technical terms relating to religious, literary and scientific concepts, and the common

\* Abbreviations: A= Arabic; P= Persian; T= Turkish; U= Urdu.

cultural underpinnings of Islam. At the same time, Arabic in turn was influenced by this process of cultural cross-fertilization between Arabic and other Muslim languages to such an extent that it is often difficult to determine the ethnic origin of many Muslim thinkers and writers in the first centuries of Islam.

What is remarkable here is the emergence of various languages as a result of the conversion of different people to Islam and the strengthening and development of yet other languages, such as Urdu and Malay in Asia, or Swahili, Hausa and Fulani in Africa.

Arabic always had links with other Semitic languages, as well as with the languages of neighbouring people, especially Middle Persian or Pahlavi. Traces of these links are to be found in various archaeological sources such as inscriptions, and in a number of Persian words borrowed by some Semitic languages and Semitic words borrowed by Persian. However, such links were sporadic and in no way comparable to the bonds established between Arabic and the languages of the neighbouring peoples after they had embraced Islam. In the pre-Islamic period, Arabic borrowed terms like *mīl* (mile), *farsakb* (a Persian measure of distance, a 'league'), *barīd* (post), *furāniq* (army guide, courier, letter-carrier), *dīnār* (a coin or monetary unit), *dirham* (a coin or monetary unit) and other words from various languages.

Arabic underwent a number of phases of development following the Islamic conquests. The first phase extends from the beginning of the conquests to the era of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (105–125/724–743), which is the period in which the Arabs began to associate more extensively with other people, contacts having previously been limited to commercial activity. Firstly, there was a need to preserve government offices as they were before Islam for a certain period of time; and then to establish the various institutions of state and to enlist the inhabitants of the conquered countries to run the offices and institutions and to fill the posts for which they were better suited than others. In Basra and Kufa, there were two chanceries, one using Arabic and the other Persian, and this was the case until the latter was abolished by al-Ḥajjāj in 78/698. Muslims and non-Muslims alike participated in the administration of the new state, as was evident in the Umayyad period, when the Islamic state gained control of the most important centres of ancient science, such that the cultural climate became an international one where the cultures of numerous people mingled. The use of Arabic began to spread, particularly following the Islamic conquest of Iran and the regions to the north and east of Iran; after the Persians had embraced Islam they felt a need for Arabic, the language of the Revelation, in order to study the Qurʾān and the practice (*sunna*) of the Prophet Muḥammad, and in order to become acquainted with the precepts of the new religion.

## Arabic and Persian

The Persian language current in Iran before the advent of Islam is known as Pahlavi, and fell out of use about 200 years after the Islamic conquest. Only a few works, mainly Mazdaite religious texts, were composed in it. At this period, Arabic was the sole language of administration and the language of the religious, linguistic, historical and other sciences, in short the language of civilization and culture. Al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1038) wrote: 'He whom God leads to Islam believes that Arabic is the best of all languages and that the endeavour to learn it is part of the faith, since it is the key to religious understanding.'<sup>1</sup> Initially intending to master Arabic, speakers of Persian subsequently contributed to its development, transforming it from a language of literature, eloquence and rhetoric into a scientific and technical language with a precise terminology. They then began to translate Pahlavi texts into Arabic and to write in Arabic themselves. They also were appointed, alongside their influential conquerors, to important posts and worked in the government administration, so that Arabic was established as the sate's language and knowledge of it became indispensable.

The first test of the suitability of Arabic was its use in treaties and for the settlement of matters between the victors and the vanquished, as well as for drafting legal clauses and contracts. Arabic was very exact and concise, having long performed similar functions in the pre-Islamic period and in the time of the Prophet. Arabic began to borrow from Pahlavi innumerable words relating to food, drink, plants and tools, and to construct new technical terms concerning land, surveying and irrigation, administrative divisions, military and diplomatic matters, including such terms as *ṭasq* (land tax in cash or in kind), *ṭassūj* (small unit of weight or currency), *kūra* (town, village, region), *rustāq* (village), *baqt* (furniture, utensils, or a group of people), *biṭrīq* ([Christian] army general), *marzūbān* (satrap, governor of a (border) province), *ardabb* (dry measure, approx. five bushels) and other terms hitherto uncommon in Arabic. Arabic also adopted a host of terms relating to various sciences, especially during the period of organized translation, which lasted from the reign of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik until that of al-Ma'mūn.

The lively translation activity in the ʿAbbāsīd period, in particular from Greek, encompassed the various natural and mathematical sciences, such as medicine, astronomy, arithmetic, alchemy, mechanics and agriculture, and the Arabs became acquainted with various terms designating separate disciplines such as philosophy, music and geography. The existing fiscal and administrative institutions and systems continued to be adapted and their terminology was borrowed. The Arabs cast their eyes as far afield as India, taking an interest in Indian astronomical tables and various works on arithmetic, and

1. Al-Thaʿālibī, *Yatimat al-dabr*, Beirut, 1317/1900, p. 2.



they acquainted themselves with the doctrines of the Ṣabians and the Manichaeans, and borrowed their terminology, too.

Arabic continued to develop in this way and was cultivated by Arabs and non-Arabs alike. It remained dominant until the emergence of the semi-independent Iranian states in ʿAbbāsīd times. The kings of the Būyīd dynasty (320–447/932–1056) still composed poetry in Arabic, and among their ministers were great men of letters using Arabic, such as Ibn al-ʿAmīd and Ibn ʿAbbād.

With the emergence of the semi-independent Iranian states, there were attempts to revive the glory of the Persian kings (*kebnsraw*) and their civilization. The revival of Persian was a major component of this tendency; however, the Persian that reasserted itself with the advent of these minor states, remained subsidiary to Arabic, which was an indispensable tool for all writers and scribes, and a prerequisite for all those who entered the service of the *sultān*. Indeed, non-Arabs, and Persians in particular, employed Arabic and contributed significantly to the Arabic literary heritage.

This New Persian, or Fārsī, which began to emerge around the end of the third/ninth century, arose alongside Arabic, developed under its influence and was written in the Arabic alphabet. Consequently, it used many Arabic words and terms, since Arabic had gained oral currency throughout Iran and had become predominant in the main cities. For a long time Arabic held a monopoly of scientific and artistic terms. The encounter of the Arabs and the Persians was to be of paramount importance for the reciprocal influence between their two languages. New Persian was no longer the Pahlavi of the Sāsānid age.

Persian came under even greater Arabic influence at the end of the Mongol period and was to remain subject to such influence until the Ṣafawīd period. Some Persian writers of that time attempted to follow in the footsteps of the poet Firdawsī, who had sought to avoid the use of Arabic words in his epic *Shāh nāma*. However, there was little support for that approach and the works of the Persian writers, poets, students and scribes continued to be full of Arabic. The two languages were mixed together, especially when used by the cultivated élite and intellectuals; only in popular speech was there a smaller proportion of Arabic words.

Translation of Arabic texts into Persian began with a version in that language of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥa* (the opening *Sūra* of the Qurʾān). Not long after al-Ṭabarī had composed his *Tafsīr* (Commentary on the Qurʾān), the Sāmānid prince Maṣṣūr b. Nūḥ, in the second half of the fourth/tenth century, brought together a number of religious scholars from Transoxiana and asked them to rule on whether it would be licit to have the Holy Qurʾān translated into Persian. He then chose the best and most competent translators to translate al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*. Subsequently, numerous religious scholars composed their own commentaries directly in Persian. Persian religious scholars also began to

translate numerous books from Arabic into Persian, such as the *Sharāʿi al-Islām fi masāʾil al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām* (The Revealed Law of Islam Concerning what is Permitted and what is Forbidden) by Abu-l-Qāsim Jaʿfar b. Shams al-Dīn, known as ‘al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī’, which was translated by Abu-l-Qāsim b. Aḥmad al-Yazdī. Al-Shahrastānī’s *al-Milal wa-l-niḥal* ([Book of] Religious and Philosophical Sects) was translated by Muṣṭafā Khālīqdād al-Hāshimī; whereas the *Taqwīm al-ṣiḥḥa* (The Tabulation of Health) by Ibn Buṭlān of Baghdad was translated anonymously. Al-Qushayrī’s *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya* (al-Qushayrī’s Treatise) was translated by Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan b. Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī; Abu-l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī’s *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣaydana* (Book on Pharmacology) was translated by Abū Bakr ‘Alī b. ‘Uthmān al-Kāshānī; and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī’s *Kitāb al-mabda’ wa-l-ma‘ād* (Book of the Beginning and the Return [i.e. Creation and Resurrection]) was translated by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī Ardakānī (among others). Persians composed a number of Arabic-Persian dictionaries, such as al-Zamakhsharī’s *Muqaddimat al-adab* (Introduction to Literary Cultivation), Qāḍī Khān Badr Muḥammad Dhār’s *Dastūr al-ikhwān* (The Rules of the Brethren), Ḥubaysh b. Ibrāhīm Tiflīsī’s *Qānūn al-adab* (The Principles of Literary Cultivation), *al-Mirqāb* (The Stairs) by the celebrated man of letters Badī‘ al-Zamān (The Prodigy of the Age), al-Madānī al-Nīshāpūrī’s *al-Sāmī fi-l-asāmī* (The Sublime Names) and the *Kitāb al-bulgha (al-balāgha)* (Book of Eloquence) by Adīb Ya‘qūb al-Kurdī of Nīshāpūr (among others). A number of important historiographies were written, such as Juwaynī’s *Tārīkh-i Jahān gushāy* (History of the World Conqueror); Rashīd al-Dīn al-Hamadānī’s *Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh* (Compendium of Historical Events); Ḥamīd Allāh al-Mustawfi al-Qazwīnī’s *Tārīkh-i guzīda* (Selected History); *Tārīkh-i Bal‘amī* (Bal‘amī’s History); *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī* (Nāṣir’s Historical Compendium); *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* (Bayhaqī’s History); Rāwandī’s *Rābat al-ṣudūr wa-āyāt al-surūr* (The Repose of the Hearts and the Signs of Joy) and other general and local historiographies, in addition to books on Ṣūfī mysticism and gnosticism.

When the caliphate was transferred from Baghdad to Egypt in the seventh/thirteenth century, a great transformation occurred in the Persian language, which began to evolve its own rules and move away from a typically Arabic sentence structure, reverting to modes of expression common in Middle Persian. Persian thinkers and scholars such as Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī developed new constructions. Persian writers produced some of the most beautiful examples of Persian prose, such as *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (Kalīla and Dimna) by Bahrām Shāhī (Naṣr Allāh b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd), the *Marzūbān-nāma* (Marzūbān’s Book) by Sa‘d al-Dīn Warāwīnī, Juwaynī’s *Tārīkh-i Jahān gushāy* (History of the World Conqueror), which we have already mentioned and the *Gulistān* (Rose-Garden) by Sa‘dī of Shīrāz. Some of the most exquisite examples of Persian Ṣūfī poetry are to be found in Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī’s *Mathnawī* and *Diwān*.

## Arabic and Turkish

Before examining how Eastern and Western Turkish were influenced by Arabic and Persian, we must first acquaint ourselves with the Turks, with the way in which they first came into contact with the Arabs and the other Muslims, how they converted to Islam and became its loyal servants and standard-bearers. It is clear that there were no direct relations between the Turks and the Arabs in pre-Islamic times. Their initial contacts were mediated through the Sāsānid empire, which had direct relations with both ethnic groups. Turks played an important rôle in the internal affairs of Iran in the days of the Sāsānid ruler Kawādh (AD 485–531). Furthermore, the Arab Lakhmid kingdom of al-Ḥira was under Sāsānid suzerainty and it was the wars of the Sāsānid empire which brought Arabs and Turks into contact for the first time, on the battlefield.

With the transfer of the caliphate to the ‘Abbāsids, the conflict between Arabs and Turks became less acute, and Chinese attacks against Turkistan helped to bring them together. The Turks asked the ‘Abbāsīd governor of Khurāsān, Abū Muslim, for help. He sent an army led by Ziyād b. Šāliḥ to join the Turkish Qarluq tribes and together they defeated the Chinese in a decisive battle on the banks of the Talas (Ṭārāz) river in Muḥarram 134/July 751. Thereafter, fighting ceased between the Muslims and the Turks and political and commercial relations began to be established between them. The Turks began to convert to Islam and to assume important offices in the service of the Islamic empire. ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Yahyā b. Khāqān was the first Turk to assume the office of *wasīr* (chief minister) in 236/851.

The Turks continued to be drawn into the Islamic world and to occupy administrative and military positions until the Shī‘ī Būyids took Baghdad in 334/945, when Turkish influence waned temporarily, reappearing on the Islamic political stage only with the establishment of Muslim Turkish dynasties, such as those of the Qarākhānid, the Ghaznawids and the Saljūqs. In Egypt, the reins of government were seized in 254/868 by Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, who established the powerful Ṭūlūnid dynasty (254–292/868–905). This dynasty was followed by the Ikhshīdids, who ruled Egypt until they were overthrown by the Shī‘ī Fāṭimids (358–567/969–1171). Then the Ayyūbid dynasty emerged (567–648/1171–1250) and in turn gave rise to the Mamlūk dynasty (648–923/1250–1517). The Mamlūk age was one of the most brilliant periods in Egyptian history, during which Egypt became acquainted with the Turkish culture through the Qipchaq dialect that gained currency there. Arab writers such as Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī wrote on Turkish culture. The Mamlūk dynasty was superseded by the Ottoman Turks, who ruled Egypt and the Arab region for four centuries.

The Muslim Turkish states made great efforts to promote the Islamic sciences. At the time of the Qarākhānid, the Ghaznawids and the Turkish

sultanates in India, Bukhārā, Samarqand, Ghazna and Delhi were among the most important cultural centres of the Islamic world. The culturally Turkish region of *Mā warā' al-nahr* (lit. what is beyond the river [Oxus]), or Transoxiana had already begun to produce numerous celebrated Turkish scholars. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal knew the scholar of *Ḥadīth* (Prophetic tradition) 'Abd Allāh b. Mubārak al-Turkī (d. 182/798) and described him as *al-ustādh* (the Master, the Professor).

Turkish was the spoken and written language of the Qarākhānid, and the language spoken at the court and in the armies of the Ghaznawids and the Khwārizmians. It was also the language of the ruling classes and the army in the Turkish Delhi sultanate and of those of the Saljūqs. The Turks had formerly used the Uighur alphabet, but then replaced it with the Arabic alphabet. With the advent of the Ottomans, Western Turkish gained in vigour and came to be used in numerous branches of scholarship and literature. The Ottomans co-existed side by side with the Saljūq Turks and inherited from them their possessions and culture, of which Persian was an important element. The Ottoman language was thus influenced by Persian.

In the works written from the fifth/eleventh to the ninth/fifteenth centuries, the influence of Arabic and Persian on Turkish was relatively weak. In various periods Turkish had borrowed words from Chinese, Sanskrit, Soghdian (an Iranian language), Greek and Armenian, but the number of such borrowings was negligible. Borrowing from Arabic and Persian only began with the emergence of the Eastern and Western Turkish literary languages after the seventh/thirteenth century; these were later to develop into, respectively, Chaghatay, Ottoman (*'Osmanlı*) and Azerī (*ādharī*). When the Turks entered the fold of Islamic civilization, they borrowed numerous words from Arabic, the language of religion, and from Persian, the language of culture. Turkish thus began to move away from the language of the common people and was gradually transformed into the language of the élite, a development which applies as much to Chaghatay and Azerī as to Ottoman.

The history of Turkish may be divided into two basic periods. The early period extends from the first appearance of the language until the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, and is followed by the later period, in which the structure of the language changed, new grammatical rules emerged and the alphabet was replaced. From the point of view of the external form of the language, Arabic and Persian elements began to enter it and continued to do so, albeit not in any great numbers, before the ninth/fifteenth century. In form and structure, Ottoman Turkish is typical of the later period, which is characterized by the disappearance of features of the early period. From the point of view of external form, the earlier period of Old Anatolian Turkish was characterized by simplicity and the predominance of Turkish elements in the sentence; this period continued until the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century. During that century, a balance was established be-

tween the Turkish and the foreign elements in the sentence. Thereafter, the quantity of Arabic and Persian words and constructions suddenly increased. The borrowing of Arabic prosody for Turkish poetry played a major rôle in this increase at that time. Eventually, Ottoman Turkish became extremely complex, with sentences containing few purely Turkish elements apart from the verb and a few conjunctions.

What is of interest here is the way in which Turkish was influenced by Arabic and Persian. Muslim intellectuals saw themselves first and foremost as Muslims, and only secondly as Turks, Arabs or Persians. Hence, Turkish intellectuals were keen to vaunt their refined Islamic cultivation in the form of Arabic and Persian, and neglected their native Turkish. However, when the Turks began to establish their own Islamic dynasties and became aware of the importance of their language, they began to revive it, using, as we have already mentioned, the Arabic alphabet. Turkish thus appeared in a new guise alongside Arabic and Persian, to which Turkish scholars and intellectuals had previously contributed.

Since this form of Turkish was a language which arose under the wing of Islam, it was only natural that it should borrow Arabic words which had previously been borrowed by Persian and did not exist in either language before the advent of Islam. These were terms for purely Islamic concepts, such as *muslim* (lit. he who surrenders [to God]), *mu'min* (believer), *zakāt* (alms tax), *hajj* (pilgrimage), *tayammum* (the performance of prayer ablutions with sand in the absence of water), *qibla* (direction of prayer to the Ka'ba in Mecca) and other such terms. The same Islamic words were also borrowed by other languages such as Urdu, Malay, Bengali and various African languages.

The influence of Turkish on Arabic and Persian began with the emergence of the Saljūq Turks. Turkish words began to creep into Arabic, a few even finding their way into dictionaries of classical Arabic, but most of them being limited to use in popular speech, particularly during the Ottoman period, as a result of the intermingling of Turks and Arabs.

Among the Turkish expressions that entered the Arabic language in various fields such as the military and administration, for example, were *al-bāshā* (*paşa*), *al-bē* (*bey*), *al-jāwīsh* (*çavuş* sergeant), *al-bayraq* (*bayrak*, flag or banner) and *al-bayraqdār* (*bayrakdar*, flag-carrier), *tūkh* (*tuğ*, tuft from a horse's tail attached to the flag as an indication of the rider's rank), *al-ulāq* (*ulak*, official courier in the old sense), *al-damgha* (type of stamp or tax); and, in the area of food, terms such as *basturmā* (*pastırma*, jerked meat), *burghūl* (*bulgur* [boiled and dried] cracked wheat), *buqsumāt* (*peksimet*, rusk or biscuit), *sujūq* (*sucuk*, minced meat stuffed into intestines), *durdī* (*tortu*, dregs or sediment that settles beneath honey, oil or similar substances); in the area of tools and implements, *dabbūs* (*topuz*, mace), *burghī* (*burgu*, auger or gimlet), *bakraj* (*bakraj*, copper coffee-pot), *tanaka* (*teneke*, tin vessel and pot for boiling coffee), *tanjara* (*tencere*, cooking pot

or dish made of copper or similar material); and in other areas, *taqm* (*takim*, a complete set of implements for a particular purpose), *khātūn* (*batun*, noblewoman or lady), *takiyya* (*tekke*, dervish monastery), *khān* (*han*, caravanserai), *takhta* (*karatahta*, blackboard), *shankal* (*çengel*, iron hook for closing doors, windows etc.), *baqshish* (*bahşış*, gratuity), *bayram* (*bayrama*, feast).<sup>2</sup>

Persian and other foreign words which had entered Turkish were borrowed by Arabic, such as P *chawgān* (polo, polo stick, also a kind of 'sceptre', cf. P *chawgāndār*); P *rang* (colour); *khayl al-ūlāq wa-l-yasaq* (the horses of the couriers and law). Many compound words arose consisting of a native Arabic word plus the Persian suffix *-dār* (possessing, holding, guarding): *silāhdār* (sword-bearer, equerry); *daftardār* (book-keeper, accountant, secretary; chief tax collector of an [Ottoman] province); *dawādār* (Secretary of State); *ustādār* (major-domo, steward); or else the Persian suffix *-khāna* (house), in compounds often (place for): *silāhkhāna* (armoury, arsenal); *sharābkhāna* (wine-cask, wine factory, wine cellar); *jabkhāna*, *jabakhāna* (powder magazine, arsenal; ammunition). All these words were new terms in the Islamic states established by the Turks in Egypt and Syria. Al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-a'shbā fī ṣinā'at al-insbā'* (The Dim-Sighted's Dawn on the Art of Composition) gives a detailed examination of these terms, which were widely used by Arab historians, such as Ibn Iyās and al-Jabartī.

It is worthwhile noting the interaction between the Arabic and Turkish cultures in the field of music, thus leading to the enrichment of the Arabic language, which adopted several technical terms of Turkish origin. Interaction between the two cultures was long-lasting and Istanbul, the capital of the caliphate, was also the centre where specialists in literature, scientists and artists from all the Arab and Islamic countries used to meet together to present their works and borrow from the masterpiece works they listened to, and from these encounters originated the remarkable similarity between the contemporary Arab and Turkish pieces of music. Among the great visitors to Istanbul were 'Abd al-Hāmūli from Egypt, 'Uthmān al-Mawṣilī from Irak, 'Ali al-Darwīsh from Aleppo, Muḥsin Zāfir from Libya and Aḥmad al-Ṭawīlī from Tunisia. The result of all this was the emergence of new *maqāmāt* in Arabic music, like *al-Ḥijāz-kār*, *Shāhnāz* and *Naw'athar*, as well as other technical terms of music which were not known in the Arab world.

Numerous Turkish as well as Persian and other words which entered Arabic became common in spoken Arabic. These are often connected with eating, drinking, clothing, military matters and other areas of life. Such words are listed in works dealing with colloquial dialects and foreign words in Arabic. Turkish words (or words from other languages transmitted through Turkish) were not borrowed by Arabic alone; such also came to be used in Persian in

2. See also the *al-Wasīf* dictionary, the *Kitāb al-Mu'arrab* of al-Jawālīqī and Dozy's *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*.

the Saljūq period. G. Doerfer, in his studies, lists 1,727 Turkish words borrowed by Persian.<sup>3</sup>

In the Balkans, the Islamic languages Arabic, Persian and Turkish became influential as the Ottomans gained ascendancy and the Bosnians and Albanians converted to Islam. During the Ottoman period, Bosnia produced over 300 writers using Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Meḥmed al-Bosnevī, known as 'al-Khāneji', wrote *al-Jawhar al-asnā fī tarājim 'ulamā' wa-shu'arā' Bosna* (The Sublime Essence of the Biographies of the Scholars and Poets of Bosnia). Smail Balić dealt with the same subject in *Die Kultur der Bosniaken* (The Culture of the Bosnians), in which he drew attention to the heritage left by the Muslim Bosnians in those three languages.<sup>4</sup> In his study, A. Skaljic noted 7,100 Turkish words and words from other languages transmitted through Turkish which found their way not only into Serbo-Croat, but also into Bulgarian, Greek, Albanian, Macedonian, Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, Czech and Slovak.<sup>5</sup> Turkish words were also borrowed by various peoples living in the Caucasus, between the Black and the Caspian Seas, such as the Circassians (Cherkess), Georgians, Chechens, Ingush and Armenians.

### The emergence of Urdu under the influence of Arabic, Persian and Turkish

Muḥammad b. al-Qāsim al-Thaqafī (d. 98/716) conquered Sind in 93/711. He took Multān and within three years advanced as far as the borders of Mālwa. Sind was incorporated into the Islamic empire. Even before the conquest of Sind, Arab and Persian traders had sailed as far as the western coast of India and commercial relations were established between Muslims and Hindus.

On the Indian subcontinent, a number of Islamic states emerged, such as the Ghaznawid dynasty in northern India with Lahore as its capital. It was followed by the Turkish Delhi sultanate and later the Mughal or Mogul empire. These states used Persian as their official language and as the language of literature and science, alongside Arabic, which was the language of the religious sciences. While Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna, his military leaders and his successors were Turks, they were deeply imbued with Persian literature and Iranian administrative culture. Persian poets and Arab scholars (or scholars who wrote in Arabic, such as Abu-l-Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī and al-'Utḡbī) thronged at the Ghaznawid court.

3. G. Doerfer, *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen. I: Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen; II-IV: Türkische Elemente im Neupersischen*, 4 vols., Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner, 1963, 1975, passim.

4. S. Balić, *Die Kultur der Bosniaken*, Supplement I, Wien, Balić, 1978.

5. A. Skaljic, *Turciźmi u srpskobrvatskom jeziku*, Sarajevo, Svetlost, 1966.

The Muslim armies included Turks, Afghans, Persians and Arabs, of whom the Arabs were the least numerous, especially in the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries. The leadership was reserved for Turks and Afghans. It is said that in the time of Sulṭān Maḥmūd b. Sebükteġin and his son, Sulṭān Mas'ūd, the Ghaznawid army included a detachment of local Hindu troops led by their own commanders. These troops needed to communicate with the Turkish, Persian and Arab members of the army. At the same time, the Turkish, Afghan and Persian soldiers were in regular contact with the local inhabitants of Lahore, Delhi and the Punjab and attempted to speak to them in Turkish and Persian, both of which were influenced by Arabic. The local inhabitants spoke Old Punjabi, Bāshā, or Hindi. As time went on, they tried to find a common language to meet their daily needs, and a new language emerged whose vocabulary was a mixture of Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Punjabi and Bāshā. This was the *ḡabān-i urdū-i mu'allā* (P the tongue of the imperial army camp). Historians of Urdu literature and language indicate that it was first known as *Hindī* or *Hinduḡī* (P Indian), and later as *rēkhta* (P mixed, hybrid). The name Urdu (T and P *urdū* (army, army camp) finally became established in the eighteenth century.

Turkish and Persian exerted a great influence on Urdu, which first emerged in northern India following the conquest by the Ghaznawids, who established their second capital (after Ghazna) at Lahore in the Punjab (now Pakistan). Despite different opinions among experts over where exactly in India Urdu first arose, it is generally agreed that the Ṣūfī mystics, who went all over India, played a major rôle in the dissemination and development of the language, acting as a link between Islam and Hinduism. They used Urdu to spread their message and wrote many books and treatises in it. As a result, it developed and was then used by poets. Muslims used it as a means to achieve their religious, political, social and cultural goals, and subsequently translated into that language the main works of Arabic, Persian, Turkish and, eventually, English literature.

Urdu received encouragement from the ruling circles only towards the end of the Mughal dynasty in the second half of the eighteenth century. It prospered and received much stronger official support in the Deccan than in the north, for it was adopted first by the great Bahmanī dynasty (747–895/1347–1490), who annexed the whole of the south, and then by the court of the 'Adil Shāhī dynasty at Bijāpūr and that of the Quṭb Shāhī kings at Golconda.

However, the Urdu used in the south was somewhat different from that used in Delhi and the north of India, for it was strongly influenced by southern languages, such as Gujarati, Talang, Malayalam and Kannada, not to mention the old scholarly language of India, Sanskrit. The strongest influence on the Urdu used in the north was that of Persian and Arabic, as well as of a number of local northern Indian languages.



When the countries of the south finally submitted to the central Mughal state in Delhi in the days of ‘Ālamgīr (Awrangzīb) at the end of the seventeenth century, a period began in which the northern and southern forms of Urdu began to intermingle in the capital, which had become a magnet for poets and writers. The arrival of the Deccanī (southern) Urdu poet Walī al-Dīn Dakkhinī in the capital at the beginning of the eighteenth century inaugurated a new era in the history of Urdu, and the southern and northern forms of the language merged very quickly.

Given that the native territory of Urdu was the Indian subcontinent, its grammar, constructions, verbs and pronouns were pure Indian. On the other hand, most of its terminology was derived from Arabic, Turkish and Persian; Persian verbs even replaced Indian verbs. The system of versification, including metre and rhyme, was that of Arabic. The language was written in the Arabic alphabet, with a number of additional modified letters.

Translations of the Qur’ān were extremely influential in fostering the use of Urdu prose and enhancing its quality. The most important and celebrated translation was the one made in the late eighteenth century by ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Dihlawī (‘of Delhi’) and his brother, Rafī‘ al-Dīn al-Dihlawī, sons of the famous scholar of the history of Islamic culture in India, Shaykh Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, known as Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, the author of *Hujjat Allāh al-bāliḡha* (The Eloquent Proof of God) on the precepts of Islamic *Shari‘a* (divine law).

Fort William College, established in the late eighteenth century in Calcutta by the directors of the East India Company, also contributed significantly to the advancement of literary prose. The College was founded to teach employees of the East India Company Persian, Urdu, Arabic, Hindi and other languages. The College employed both Muslim and Hindu scholars and writers, who composed dozens of works in Urdu, Persian and Arabic. Urdu thus attained a high degree of development in the nineteenth century. It became the sole language of scholarly writing and the main language of communication, being understood throughout the Indian subcontinent, while Arabic and Persian were increasingly confined to religious schools and only used by a small number of scholars and specialists.

It may be seen from the above that Urdu is an idiom which arose and thrived under Islam. It is a fairly recent Islamic language (in comparison with Arabic, Persian and Turkish). But the number of Urdu speakers in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh is considerable.

## Bengali

Before the advent of Islam, the Arabs maintained maritime trade relations with India, including the region of Bengal. These relations continued after the coming of Islam, and Muslim Arab traders played a major rôle in spreading the

faith in these countries. They actually brought Islam to the coasts of Bengal in the early seventh/thirteenth century, from where it gradually spread throughout the country.

At the end of the sixth/twelfth century, Turkish and Afghan Muslims founded the Delhi Sultanate in India. The Afghan leader Ikhtiyār al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Bakhtiyār Khalījī conquered Bengal at the very beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century and made it subject to the Delhi Sultanate, and hence to Muslim rule for the first time. A new period also began for the Bengali language. While the rulers of Bengal at that time were Turks or Afghans and used Persian as the official language of state, they granted the Bengali language complete freedom and regarded it highly as the language of the common people. It prospered and developed and was gradually influenced by Islamic culture, borrowing numerous Arabic and Persian words. When the dynasty of Ḥusayn Shāh became independent from the Delhi Sultanate in the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century, it gave support to the Bengali language, which continued to develop and flourish until the arrival of British colonialism in India.

No doubt, the fact that Bengal was subject to Muslim rule for six centuries contributed to the spread of Islam throughout the country, and the Bengali language, in addition to Persian and Arabic, played an important rôle in consolidating Islamic culture there. Some linguists describe Bengali as an Indian language (descended from Sanskrit) of the Indo-European family. However, others think that the basic structure of Bengali is Dravidian, rather than Sanskrit, even though the language may later have come under Sanskrit influence, particularly owing to the efforts of Hindu writers.

Writing in Bengali came somewhat later, given that the official languages of the Islamic state and those of education were Persian alongside Arabic. For this reason we find no literary works by Muslims in Bengali before the sixteenth century, with the exception of two poets: Shāh Muḥammad Ṣaghīr, who wrote the didactic poem *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā* (Yūsuf and Zulaykha), and Amīr Zayn al-Dīn, who wrote *Rasūl vijay* (The Exploits of the Prophet). Islamic subjects in Bengali literature subsequently became more popular and Arabic, Persian and Urdu words, expressions and phrases entered the language. There were even some literary works written in the Arabic rather than the Bengali alphabet.

These are the main Islamic languages in the east of the Islamic world, Central Asia and Anatolia, languages which helped to spread Islam and Islamic culture in those regions. Arabic for them was a basic source from which they derived much cultural inspiration and borrowed large amounts of vocabulary and terminology, even though their linguistic structure was quite different from that of Arabic. However, the influence of Arabic was not limited to the languages of these parts of the world but extended also to those of Muslim people in Africa, such as Hausa, Swahili, Berber, the Ethiopian languages and Somali. Furthermore, with the flourishing of science and literature in Europe

in the Middle Ages, a number of Arabic scientific terms entered Latin (and passed from Latin into the modern European languages) as Europe was influenced by Islamic civilization and the lively activity of translation from Arabic into Latin and Hebrew.

When the non-Arab Muslims borrowed Arabic words to use them in their own languages, they adjusted them to their own habits of pronunciation. The Persians, Turks and Indians pronounced the letters *th*, *h*, *ṣ*, *ḍ*, *ẓ*, *Ẓ*, *ʿayn* and *q* differently from the Arabs, as did speakers of Urdu. The Turks accepted *q*, which existed in their language, but did not adopt the other letters. The letters *th* and *ṣ* in Arabic words were pronounced like *s*, the *h* changed to *h*, *ḍ* became an emphatic *ẓ*, *ʿayn* turned into a glottal stop (*hamza*). The Persians changed *q* to *gh*, the Turks changed it to *k*. Speakers of those languages who had studied Arabic, endeavoured to pronounce these letters in the Arabic way.

Similarly, the Arabic words borrowed by various Islamic languages did not remain unchanged, but were assimilated, evolved and multiplied through analogy and derivation. Indeed, many of the Arabic words used in Persian, Turkish and Urdu were not originally used in Arabic in the same form or with the same meaning. Likewise, prefixes and suffixes were attached to some Arabic words, such as Persian *bīshakke* (doubtless) (P *bī* [without], A *shakke* [doubt]), *ikhlāṣmand* (sincere) (A *ikhlāṣ* [sincerity], P *-mand* [-ful, possessing a quality]), *dīndār* (religious, pious) (A *dīn* [religion], P *-dār* [having, possessing]). Arabic elements were combined with Persian elements to form compounds: *waṭanparast* (patriot) (A *waṭan* [homeland], P *-parast* [worshipper]). Many words acquired meanings which were somewhat different from their original meaning in Arabic, such as *nashāt* (A activity, liveliness, P joyfulness); *siyāsa* (A administration, policy, politics; P *siyāsah*, punishment); *hiṣār* (A barrier, blockade, siege; P barrier, wall, fortress); *ṣulḥ* (A reconciliation, peace-making; P peace); *tashannuj* (A contraction, shrinking, convulsion, spasm; P convulsion, fit). We find further examples of such shifts of meaning in Urdu: *maḍbūṭ* (A accurate, precise, controlled; U *mazbūṭ* strong); *himāya* (A protection; U *himāyet* support); *miḥna* (A trial, ordeal, misfortune; U *miḥnet* work); *inkār* (A denial, disavowal, rejection; U refusal); *mustaqill* (A independent; U constant, permanent); *gharīb* (A strange, foreign; U poor).

## Malay

Islam was carried to South East Asia by merchants – both Arabs and Indian converts – from Gujarat. Islamic missionary activity there started in the eleventh/fifteenth century. The number of Muslims grew as trade increased after the devastating Mughal wars; these newcomers mixed and intermarried with the local population, simultaneously influencing and being influenced by them, spread Islam among them and transmitted to them their culture and many of their customs and traditions.

From Sumatra, Islam spread to Malaya. The ruler of Samudra (later Pasai) became related by marriage to the ruler of Malacca (Melaka) on the western coast of the Malay peninsula, who converted to Islam and established an extensive Muslim kingdom. Islam and Islamic influence spread and Malacca became a major Islamic force there. The rulers of these countries embraced the new religion, which spread to neighbouring areas.

Malay is a member of the Malayo-Polynesian or Austronesian family of languages. It comprises a group of languages spoken on a number of islands in the Strait of Malacca, which is a vital region located between the Malay peninsula and the island of Sumatra. Malay is the official, native, literary and intellectual language of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei; it is also the language of one fifth of the population of Singapore and is used by Malays in southern Thailand in the region of Patani, and in the southern Philippines. The total number of Malay speakers is 200 million, who use it in business and at all levels of education.

Malay has been greatly influenced by Arabic, which is the source of one third of its vocabulary. Before European colonization, Malay was written in the Arabic alphabet, with the addition of several letters. Islam played a key rôle in the emergence of Malay literature - with the exception of a few oral narratives concerning the Hindu and Buddhist religions, there are scarcely any works of literature in Malay which predate the arrival of Islam. A clear indication of the extent to which the Muslim Malay people have been influenced by Islam is provided by the Arabic, that is, Muslim phrases used in everyday life, such as *subhān Allāh* (glory be to God; exclamation of surprise, wonderment), *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* (praise be to God; exclamation of thanks, contentment with what fate holds), *mā shā'a llāh* (what God wishes; exclamation of surprise, admiration) and others. Naturally, their language also adopted the same words and terms as did the languages of other Muslims.

When Islam took root in these lands, Malay came to be written in the Arabic script and flourished. Numerous Islamic works were translated from Arabic into Malay, which thus became one of the richest Islamic languages in terms of the number of Islamic works translated into it, works which included, naturally, the Qur'ān, not to mention the books of *tafsīr* (exegesis), *ḥadīth* (Prophetic tradition), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *uṣūl al-fiqh* (the methodology of Islamic jurisprudence) and *sīra nabawīyya* (biography of the Prophet). Communication with the Muslim world improved, and the Islamic laws which were in force in the Ottoman sultanate (as contained in the *Mejelle-yi ahkām-ı 'adliye*, the Ottoman Civil Code [1870–1877]), were translated into Malay in 1910 and became a source which the Sultāns of the Malay States referred to.

Students from these countries used to converge on the main Islamic urban centres in search of knowledge and then return home to teach the religious sciences. Among the most prominent of such students were Shaykh

Dā'ūd 'Abd Allāh b. Idrīs al-Jāwī al-Faṭānī al-Malāyuwī (1769–1847), who wrote and translated numerous works; Shaykh Wān Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Zayn b. Muṣṭafā b. Muḥammad al-Faṭānī (1856–1908), who wrote in both Malay and Arabic; and Shaykh 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Kattānī (1827–1912). The spread of religious education and the large-scale translation activity from Arabic into Malay enriched the latter with Arabic and Islamic terms, which now form one third of the total vocabulary, as previously noticed.

## CONCLUSION

Arabic was truly the original language of the Islamic religion. It played a pioneering rôle in the formative Islamic period (at first alone, and then together with other Islamic languages) in laying the foundations of Islamic civilization and developing it in a variety of directions. It was therefore only natural that these languages should be influenced by Arabic and in turn influence it and that their linguistic terminology should be similar, given the unity of cultural and religious concepts and ideas. With the passage of time and as a result of the lively cultural cross-fertilization between various ethnic groups, numerous words and terms were to constitute a common linguistic edifice for the cultural concepts and values that Muslims share.

- II -

L I T E R A T U R E

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Chapter 1

ARABIC LITERATURE FROM ITS  
ORIGINS TO 132/750

*Mohamed Abdesselem*

'When the Arab makes his first appearance on History's stage, he comes bearing a precious and formidable gift: his profound sense of the beauty of the Word,<sup>1</sup> and it is through the Word that he reveals his creative abilities.

It is regrettable that, as a result of long years of selective, oral transmission, many of the literary works from this past, and the oldest in particular, have been lost to us, and that those which have survived are fragmentary and often of doubtful provenance.<sup>2</sup> We are thus condemned to ignorance about both the beginnings and the early stages of the development of this literature.

It is not until the sixth century AD that the texts become sufficiently numerous and their provenance sufficiently clear, so as to constitute valid documentation.

Analysis does, however, suggest that they are part of a tradition that had long since established its own formal rules and thematic tendencies. It is one of the paradoxes in the history of Arabic literature to begin with what can with no hesitation, and full justification, be called 'classicism', a classicism that reigned for two and a half centuries. Even the message of Muḥammad and the resulting upheaval of ideas and mores could not separate the Arabs from an aesthetic tradition inherited from their distant past. It was not until 132/750, when the Banu-l-ʿAbbās succeeded the Banū Umayya, that Arabic literature began to innovate on a large scale.

1. R. Blachère, 'Le classicisme dans la littérature arabe', in G.E. von Grunbaum (ed.), *Symposium International d'Histoire de la Civilisation Musulmane, Actes*, pp. 279–290, Bordeaux, 1957, p. 280.
2. On this subject see N. al-Asad, *Maṣādir al-shiʿr al-Jāhili wa-qīmatubā al-tārīkhīyya*, Cairo, Dār al-Maʿārif, 1962, and R. Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe des origines à la fin de XV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 3 vols., Paris, G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1952–1964, I, pp. 85–186.

The defeat of the Umayyads, which ended the dominance of the traditional ethical and aesthetic ideas which they had tried to perpetuate for a whole century, opened the door to creative innovation.

Although it remained faithful to the norms of classicism, Arabic literature had nevertheless begun to evolve before 132/750, and this evolution was accelerated by the historical events preceding and following the tragic death of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān.

Shattering the consensus achieved by the Prophet and his early successors, the revolt which culminated in the assassination of the third caliph in 35/655 plunged the Muslim world into theological debates which it could neither resolve nor transcend, and provoked internal schisms with decisive consequences for its future.<sup>3</sup>

Caught up in the controversies produced by this state of affairs, Arabic literature was forced to create new forms of expression which were better suited to the public's preoccupations. The years 35–40/655–660 thus form a 'watershed' in both the literary and the political history of the Arabs, a time which divides the classical period into two clearly demarcated phases.

### Arabic literature from its origins to 40/660

Although it continued for some decades after the appearance of Islam, the hallmarks of the first phase of the classical period are the spirit of Arab bedouinism and paganism, or, to use the stock phrase, the spirit of *Jāhiliyya*.

*Jāhiliyya* is the term which Muslim authors use to designate the period before Islam. Based on a fundamental opposition between pre- and post-Revelation – that is, between ignorance and irrationality on the one hand, and knowledge and wisdom on the other – this term not only tended to disparage the period in question, it also, by presenting it as an undifferentiated whole, obscured any achievement prior to the message of Muḥammad. This thesis does not withstand scrutiny, however. On the contrary, social and religious development in the Arab world was progressive and continuous.

Although there is every indication that the Arabs – like all 'primitive' people – considered blood ties sacred and originally organized themselves in clans, they were able at each stage of their economic and cultural development to adapt their social system to the imperatives of change. Adopting extensive nomadism as a way of life, they used the concept of a real or mythical common ancestry to extend the concept of blood solidarity (*ʿaṣabiyya*), by the clan with the tribe, and by the tribe with the tribal confederation. When converted to caravan mercantilism, they established pacts of fraternity and mutual assistance (*ahlāf*) between the various tribal groups

3. Cf. in particular Ṭ. Ḥusayn, *al-Fīṭna al-kubrā*, Cairo, 1962, and H. Laoust, *Les schismes dans l'islam*, Paris, Payot 1965.



in order to ensure the conditions necessary for the harmonious expansion of their new activities.

Similar changes marked their religious history. As one author put it, "To each socio-political stage of pre-Islamic Arab society, there corresponds a renewed concept of the individual and a specific stage of religious life."<sup>4</sup> These changes took the Arabs from animism and the cult of the ancestor to polytheism and the cult of the idol and then, once the divinities had been brought together in the same sanctuaries and the rites had been unified, to a sort of religious syncretism, of which the pilgrimage to Mecca, the mercantile metropolis *par excellence*, is one of the most significant examples.<sup>5</sup>

Although they introduced innovations and religious practices to their social system as a consequence of constantly changing economic and political circumstances, the Arabs of the pre-Islamic period never doubted that their present was the natural continuation of their past. There was no contradiction in their eyes between

their membership in the clan, that building-block of society that was small but made strong by its ethnic cohesion and the spirit of solidarity that motivated its members, and their adherence to a larger political entity, the tribal confederation, whose strength lay in the number and prestige of the tribes it comprised and the multiplicity and solidity of the alliances that it established.<sup>6</sup>

Nor did they see any contradiction between worshipping their divinities in a familial or tribal setting, and worshipping in communal sanctuaries such as the Ka'ba, since the practices were identical and their idols were present in both places, either alone or 'in the shadow of more powerful gods'.<sup>7</sup>

A second factor that helped convince the Arabs of the eternal validity of their ideals was their attachment to a moral code called honour. This code of values, which was deeply rooted in paganism and 'united all Arabs in a communion of acts',<sup>8</sup> developed in successive generations of this community a sense of belonging to a culture with immutable principles.

Proud of his status as a free man (*hurriyya*), as a member of a powerful and respected social group (*'izzā*), the purity of his lineage (*nasab*) and the illustriousness of his forefathers (*basab*), the young Arab (*fata*) strove at all times to show himself worthy of his glorious history (*majid*) by being loyal,

4. J. Chelhod, *Introduction à la sociologie de l'Islam: de l'animisme à l'universalisme*, (Islam d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui, 12), Paris, G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1958, p. 15.

5. M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *Mahomet*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1957, p. 34.

6. M. Abdeselem, *Le thème de la mort dans la poésie arabe des origines à la fin du III<sup>e</sup>/IX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Tunis, Université de Tunis, 1977, p. 36.

7. J. Chelhod, *Introduction...*, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

8. B. Faris, *L'Honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam*, Paris, G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1932, p. 191.

helpful, brave, generous and hospitable – in a word, by demonstrating a constant desire to surpass himself.

It is easy to see why the Arabs would consider the call to renounce all their divinities save Allāh, to replace the multiplicity of tribal solidarities by the solidarity of faith and their proud assurance by an ethic of humility, as a radical break with their past, and why most of them would, at least initially, fiercely reject such a call.

Monotheism was not completely unknown in Arabia, however. Having escaped the dominant imperialisms elsewhere, the Arab world was a haven of liberty and a refuge for persecuted Christians and Jews who settled in Taymā<sup>2</sup>, Khaybar, Yathrib (later Medina), al-Ḥīra and Najrān. The influence of these communities was very limited, however, being restricted to the urban centres where they had settled.<sup>9</sup>

It would be left to the Qurʾānic message to convert the Arabs to monotheistic concepts and the moral ideas they implied; and it would take a long time to eradicate the traces of ancient beliefs from the collective mind. In the early years of the Islamic era, the spirit of the *Jābilīyya* would continue to determine how the Arabs acted and thought, and provide the central themes for their creative artists.

On the strength of the recensions prepared by the Muslim logographers of the second-third/eighth-ninth centuries, it would appear that the literary heritage of the *Jābilīyya* and the first decades of Islam included not only numerous collections of poetry, but also a rich store of maxims and proverbs, a significant narrative genre and a few sequences of rhetorical prose. However, while this belatedly established *corpus* provides a more or less accurate portrait of Arabic literature in that period, many of the texts it contains, and, in particular, the prose texts, do not withstand critical analysis.

We must remember, first of all, that the current scholarly opinion is that the specimens of ‘divinatory prose’ (*sajʿ al-kubhān*), attributed to pre-Islamic magicians, are fakes.<sup>10</sup> These deliberately abstruse and ambiguous texts are written in a ‘modulated’ rhythmic and rhyming prose, and are clumsy ‘counterfeits’ of the cultic discourses, whose existence is historically documented but which are forever lost. There is nothing surprising about that. For one thing, the Muslim authors did not show great zeal in codifying this category of discourse. Then, it would appear that, as early as the sixth century, the magicians relinquished all power to the tribal chieftains (*sayyid*), who left the

9. R. Blachère, *Histoire*, *op. cit.*, I, pp.51–58; see also T. Andrae, *Les origines de l’Islam et le Christianisme*, trans. J. Roche, Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1955.

10. R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, pp.189–195, and A. al-Maqdisī, *Taʾawnur al-asālib al-nathriyya fi-l-adab al-ʿarabī*, Beirut, Dār al-ʿIlm li-l-Malāyīn, 1960, pp.13–16. Examples of this oratorical prose may be found in al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. ʿA. M. Hārūn, Cairo, 1960, I, p.290.

clergy with nothing except the honorific title of ‘guardians of the sanctuary’.<sup>11</sup> A few decades before the appearance of Islam, political discourse thus took the place of cultic discourse, and it was the *sayyid* who, in addition to his political and martial duties, was called upon to assume the prestigious role of tribune (*khaṭīb*).

Fervent defenders of Arabic eloquence, the Muslim historians of the third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries describe some of these *sayyid*-tribunes in glowing terms,<sup>12</sup> but they often neglect to provide us with examples of their work. The paradoxical result is that they have convinced us of the importance and quality of this oratory prose while leaving us in almost total ignorance as to its aesthetic qualities. The sparse documentation that has come down to us<sup>13</sup> only allows two observations:

1. These ‘discourses’ are usually no more than brief improvisations, appropriate responses to ‘exceptional situations’, and their value lies in their suitability for, or against, the circumstances that inspired them.
2. Forcefulness and concision are the dominant traits of this prose, which stressed ‘lapidary formulas and the balance of phrases, with cadences rich in vocal tones’.<sup>14</sup>

Alongside this political prose, a prose of religious inspiration seems to have developed shortly before the appearance of Islam. The monotheistic churches, and particularly the Christian ones, appear to have had their acknowledged orators, some of whom, such as Quss b. Sā‘ida,<sup>15</sup> achieved fame. Few in number and of varying quality, the texts attributed to them underline the importance of this literary genre, which received a great impetus through the message of Muḥammad, as can be seen in the admirable specimens of oratory prose attributed to the Prophet or his Companions, and in particular the famous Sermon of Farewell (*khuṭbat al-wadā‘*).<sup>16</sup>

Although the sermon assumes new dimensions through a change of subject and tone, the oratory style retains the same characteristics. The sim-

11. J. Chelhod, *Introduction...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–64.

12. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 365.

13. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 317, and II, p. 135; al-Qālī, *al-Amālī*, Cairo, 1953, I, pp. 167–229, and II, p. 168.

14. R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 728 and A. al-Maqdisī, *Tatawwur...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–23.

15. R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, p. 727; Quss b. Sā‘ida of the Iyād seems to have been an itinerant Christian orator who lived until the end of the sixth century AD; al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 308f; Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, *al-‘Iqd al-farīd*, ed. A. Amin *et al.*, Cairo, Lajnat al-Ta‘līf wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1944–1954, IV, p. 128; cf. also *EI*<sup>1</sup>, II, p. 1228.

16. Sermon delivered by the Prophet in the year 10/631. See the text of this speech in al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 31–33, and Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, *al-‘Iqd al-farīd...*, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 57. Other examples of oratorical prose attributed to the Prophet and his Companions may be found in al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 45, 50–56, and in Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, *al-‘Iqd al-farīd...*, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 58–81.

plicity of expression, use of concrete metaphors and skillful arrangement of sonorities and rhythms give these texts a remarkable persuasive power.

Pithy and incisive, some of the sayings of the *sayyid*, the *kebaṭīb*, the Prophet and his Companions were also integrated into the popular fund of adages, maxims and proverbs known under the generic term *amthāl*.

The vehicle of a people's wisdom, this proverbial literature was effectively preserved by collective memory before being codified by the philologists of the second-fourth/eighth-tenth centuries, and we can confidently say that the most reliable examples of ancient Arabic prose are to be found among these texts. Whichever collection<sup>17</sup> we turn to, we are struck by the amount of space allotted to pre-Islamic proverbs, which, despite later additions, remain predominant. The importance of pasturage, the sacred character of tribal solidarity and the praise of prudence, patience, frugality, courage and generosity, constitute the essential themes of these proverbs, whose expressive language clearly bears the mark of the desert.

From the point of view of form, the texts in the *amthāl* collections are quite diverse. In addition to the proverbs as such, there are maxims, adages, a few fables and a large number of proverbial expressions, in particular comparisons using the relative *af<sup>c</sup>alu min* followed by the name of a famous man or a wild animal: *akram min Khātīm* (more generous than Khātīm)<sup>18</sup> next to *akbath min dbi<sup>2</sup>bin* (more cunning than a fox (wolf)).<sup>19</sup>

Finally, it should be remembered that very few of these *amthāl* are attributed to specific speakers, historical or legendary personalities such as Luqmān<sup>20</sup> or Aktham b. Ṣayfī.<sup>21</sup> The majority of these sayings are, on the contrary, anonymous. This is, of course, normal, since proverbial expression is by definition the consensual expression of a people's wisdom.

Denying the obvious, the exegetes of the *amthāl* strove to determine the circumstances in which these proverbs were uttered. They thus gathered a

17. The oldest collections of the *amthāl* are those of al-Mufaḍḍal al-Dabbī (d. 170/786) in the recension of al-Ṭūsī (d. 263/876); al-Mu'arrij (d. 204/819), transmitted by his disciple Abū 'Alī al-Yazīdī (d. 263/876); Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/838); Abū 'Ikrima al-Dabbī (d. 245/860); al-Mufaḍḍal b. Salama (d. 250/864); Abū Bakr b. al-Anbārī (d. 328/940); Ḥamza al-Isfahānī (d. after 350/961) and Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. 395/1005). Cf. the analysis of these collections in the article 'Mathal' by R. Sellheim in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

18. This refers to Ḥātīm al-Ṭaṭī, the *sayyid* of the Ṭayy, who supposedly lived until the dawn of the sixth century; see R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 267.

19. *EI*<sup>2</sup>, IV, p. 809; see examples of these proverbial expressions in al-Qālī, *al-Amālī*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 11.

20. On this hero of southern Arabian legends and wise man quoted by the Qur'ān, see R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 748–749 and *EI*<sup>2</sup>, art. 'Luqmān'.

21. Aktham b. Ṣayfī, a wise man whose speech was condensed into sayings and succinct expressions, was a native of the Tamīm and reportedly lived until the year 9/630. Cf. R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, p. 726 and *EI*<sup>2</sup>, art. 'Aktham b. Ṣayfī'.

mass of historical and pseudo-historical accounts supposedly narrating the events that inspired them.

This narrative literature, which often reveals the preoccupations of the thinkers of the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries, must be clearly distinguished from the *amthāl* proper. While the latter are valuable examples of archaic Arabic prose, the texts that accompany them probably belong to the narrative literature of a later period.

If the anthologists of the third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries are to be believed, Arabic narrative literature from the period before 40/660 constituted a rich and varied corpus. Authors as serious as al-Jāhīz,<sup>22</sup> Ibn Qutayba<sup>23</sup> and al-Qālī<sup>24</sup> did not hesitate to attribute to this period many enjoyable stories about fools and cowards, particularly crafty or gifted individuals, and marvellous accounts of fabulous animals or mythical creatures.<sup>25</sup> Historians as celebrated as Ibn Hishām,<sup>26</sup> al-Ṭabarī<sup>27</sup> and al-Masʿūdī<sup>28</sup> reflect upon these ancient times in many of their historical or semi-historical accounts, such as the *chanson de geste* of al-Iskandar Dhu-l-Qarnayn, the adventures of al-Zabbā<sup>29</sup> and the glorified tales of battles between Arab tribes, known as the *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, 'the Days of the Arabs.'<sup>30</sup>

Although some elements of these legends, stories and accounts probably date from that period, it has nevertheless been established that these narrative texts were not written down until the second/eighth century. It was then that

22. Al-Jāhīz is the nickname of one of the most famous Arab writers and thinkers, named Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr b. Baḥr. Born in Basra around 160/776, he died there in 255/868. See the biography and bibliography in the article 'al-Djahīz' by C. Pellat in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.
23. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh b. Muslim al-Dīnawarī, theologian and man-of-letters, born in Kufa in 213/828 and died in Baghdad in 276/886. See the article 'Ibn Qūṭayba' by G. Lecomte, in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.
24. Abū ʿAlī Ismāʿīl b. al-Qāsim al-Baghdādī, Arab philologist born in 288/901, died in 356/967; see the article 'al-Ḳālī' by R. Sellheim in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.
25. Such as *al-ʿAnqāʿ* (the long-necked one), a type of unicorn (cf. the art. al-ʿAnḳāʿ in *EI*<sup>2</sup>), and the evil spirits named *al-ghūl* and *al-Saʿlāt* (cf. the art. 'al-Ghūl' in *EI*<sup>2</sup>).
26. Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Malik b. Hishām, known mainly for his biography of the Prophet, died in 218/833; see the biography and bibliographical references in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.
27. Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, traditionalist and historian known for his exegesis of the Qurʾān and his historical annals, *Taʾrīkh al-risul wa-l-mulūk*. Born in 224/838, died in 310/923.
28. Abu-l-Ḥasan ʿAli b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī, author of an important historical work entitled *Murīj al-dhabab*; born in 280/893, died in 345/956. Cf. the article 'al-Masʿūdī' in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.
29. On Iskandar Dhu-l-Qarnayn, probably Alexander the Great, see the article by W. Montgomery Watt in *EI*<sup>2</sup>; on al-Zabbā (=Zenobia?) see R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 785; on the various pre-Islamic legends see M. Agina, *Asāfir al-ʿArab ʿan al-Jābilyya*, unpublished Ph. D. thesis, University of Tunis, 1991.
30. On the literature devoted to these 'Days', see the art. 'Ayyām al-ʿArab' in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, and M. al-Yaʿlawī, *ʿAdab ayyām al-ʿArab*, *Hawliyyāt al-Jāmiʿa al-Tūnisīyya*, 20, 1981, pp. 57–135.

they lost the fluidity and instability which are characteristics of oral transmission and were set in fixed forms.

Since these works date from a later period, they cannot be used to help us determine the formal characteristics of the ancient narrative prose.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the story-teller, however talented he might have been, would not have been considered an 'artist of the Word' by the ancient Arabs – this status was reserved for the *khaṭīb* and, especially, the poet.

The poet enjoyed immense public prestige because of his essential social rôle and his almost magical gift. First acquired at a time when poetry was in the service of cultic practices, this esteem continued and was consolidated when the poet, renouncing his religious role, became the interpreter of his ethnic group, dedicating his verses to the defence of his tribe, immortalizing its exploits, glorifying its chiefs and mourning its dead.

Transmitted orally for three centuries or more, the poetic works of that era came down to us in fragmentary form, profoundly altered and inextricably mixed with a significant amount of apocryphs.

The state of the *corpus* – first mentioned by some critics in the second/eighth century, and in particular Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī in his admirable work entitled *Ṭabaqāt al-shuʿarā*<sup>32</sup> – was used by some historians of Arabic literature at the beginning of the twentieth century as a pretext to express a radical scepticism about pre-Islamic poetry, which they challenged in its entirety. Following the example of D. S. Margoliouth, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn maintained that almost all the texts attributed to the pre-Islamic poets were forgeries.<sup>33</sup>

This extreme position, which aroused the indignation of Arab intellectuals profoundly attached to their heritage, has since been declared unfounded because 'based on false premises.'<sup>34</sup>

By demonstrating the inconsistency of the arguments used by the proponents of systematic doubt and by providing proofs that the majority of the pre-Islamic *corpus* available to us is, if not authentic, then at least 'representative' of the works of the era, recent studies are based on a more accurate and detailed textual analysis, free from methodological assumptions and hence, of great importance for the history of Arab literature.<sup>35</sup>

31. See W. Marçais, 'Les origines de la prose littéraire arabe', *Articles et Conférences*, Paris, 1961, pp. 49–57.

32. See Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shuʿarā*, ed. M. M. Shākīr, (Dhakhāʿir al-ʿArab, 7), Cairo, Dār al-Maʿārif li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1952, pp. 21–24; on Muḥammad b. Sallām al-Jumāḥī (139–231/756–845) see the article 'Ibn Sallām al-Djumāḥī' in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

33. D. S. Margoliouth, 'The Origins of Arabic Poetry', *JRAS*, 1925, pp. 417–449 and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Fī-l-shiʿr al-Jāhili*, Cairo 1926, republished in a toned-down version under the title *Fī-l-adab al-Jāhili*, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat al-ʿIṭimād.

34. H. R. Gibb, art. iArabiyya' in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

35. See the exhaustive accounts of these viewpoints in R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 166–186, and N. al-Asad, *Maṣādir*, *op. cit.*, pp. 352–478.

The resolution of this issue was particularly crucial, because pre-Islamic poetry, with its very elaborate poetic form, served as the model for many generations of Arab poets.

Apart from the *arājīz*, short improvisations in the *rajaḥ*-metre with no pretensions to being considered works of art, ancient Arabic poetry used two very elaborate structures: one reserved strictly for the funeral elegy, the *marthiya*, and the other, the *qaṣīda* (the ode), serving as the framework for all thematic developments.

Heir to the rhythmical chanting during the lamentation for the dead – one of the funeral rites of paganism – the *marthiya* retains the bipartite composition and specific tonality of its origins.

An analysis of the examples passed on by the anthologists as models of the genre shows that the themes developed in these elegies are organized around two focuses. The first brings together the themes describing the pain which the poet and his companions feel and the event's great impact; the second is dedicated to the evocation of the deceased's eminent social rôle. The *marthiya* could thus be described as lamentation-glorification.

Noticing that the poets did not hesitate to use stereotyped formulas in these elegies, some critics decided that the sentiments expressed were pure convention, which seems a somewhat hasty conclusion. In general, the poet was bewailing the death of someone close, whose loss was deeply felt by the group. While not always original, the formulation of this distress is often moving.

It is also worth noting that it is quite common to find – interspersed in the *marthiya*'s lyrical developments – meditations on the inevitability of death and the patience necessary in the face of the unfathomable reasoning of the al-mighty *dabr* (Time-Destiny). Set in a proverbial mould, these reflections give ideas dealing with personal events a universal scope.<sup>36</sup>

Except in unusual circumstances when he was called upon to mourn a death, the Arab poet used a tripartite poetic structure called the *qaṣīda* to communicate his thoughts and transmit his emotions.

In the first part of the ode, he recalls his youth, the loves of yesteryear and some of the special moments from his past. In these passages, in which he evokes the 'passing of time', his tone is naturally lyrical.

The second part is, by contrast, descriptive – of the space surrounding and challenging him, the desert, and of the animal best adapted to this environment, the camel, his mount and ally in his struggle with the forces of nature.

The third part of the *qaṣīda*, which is, in fact, the core (*gharaḥ*), is dedicated to immediate and concrete matters relating to the daily life of the poet

36. On the problems posed by the *marthiya* and the characteristics of this thematic structure, see M. Abdesselem, *Le thème...*, *op. cit.*, passim.

and his group; celebration of the martial exploits of his tribe and its allies; refutations of the accusations of hostile tribes; or expressions of his gratitude to a generous and hospitable lord.

It is also the thematic content of this last part which determines the 'genre' of the entire poem – *madh* (panegyric), *hijā'* (epigram), *fakhr* (boasting poem), or *ḥamāsa* (epic poem). Whatever the genre, though, the *qaṣīda* had to be tripartite and, despite the thematic diversity of its constituent sequences, to achieve a perfect unity of tone.

By what secret alchemy did the ancient Arab poets, setting off with such heterogeneous elements, produce such homogeneous wholes? That is the question which continues to fascinate critics to this very day – although for long they accepted without debate the interpretation offered in the third/ninth century by Ibn Qutayba, who maintained that the introductions to the *qaṣīdas* were merely exercises in verbal virtuosity designed to impress the patron to whom the poetic work was dedicated, and that the description of the perils encountered during the imaginary crossing of the desert had no other purpose than to justify the presented request and the desired recompense.<sup>37</sup>

This explanation, based solely on the relationship between the poet and the patron as the primary, and indeed exclusive, audience for ancient Arab poetry, seems too restrictive to be valid. In fact, it applies to only one genre, and that is a relatively late one, the court panegyric.

Ibn Qutayba's erudite analysis – while fairly suitable as a 'recipe' for beginner poets – is of no help to those seeking to penetrate the secrets of Arabic poetic art and it is surprising that such absurd statements satisfied numerous generations of critics.

Putting an end to this surprising state of affairs, the modern studies of this question formulated new theories based on a symbolic interpretation of the various sequences of the *qaṣīda*. It is, of course, unfortunate that some authors could not avoid excessive theorizing and textual interpretation, but there is no question that challenging the traditional point of view had a salutary effect. It brought to light the extent to which ancient Arabic poetry was rooted in its spatial and temporal realities, and it focused attention on the web of correspondences that gives each *qaṣīda* a perfect homogeneity of style and tone.<sup>38</sup>

An artistic triumph such as this would not have been possible had the poets not had a fully developed linguistic instrument and a highly elaborate poetic art.

37. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'*, Beirut, 1964, I, pp. 20f.

38. See, for example, Y. Khulayyif, 'Muqaddima li-dirāsāt al-qaṣīda al-Jāhiliyya', *al-Majalla*, 98, 1965, pp. 100, 104; A. al-Zubaydi, *Muqaddima li-dirāsāt al-shi'r al-Jāhili*, Ben Ghazi, Manshūrāt Jāmi'at Qaryunis, 1978; A. Hamori, *On the Art of Medieval Arabic Literature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1974; A. al-Battal, *al-Sūra al-fanniyya fi-l-shi'r al-ʿArabī*, Beirut, 1980.



It appears to be well established that, in the late pre-Islamic period, the Arabs used both their own dialects and a common language that enabled them to communicate and be creative.<sup>39</sup>

With its rich and concrete vocabulary, its syntactic system which allowed multiple and varied derivations, and its phonemes of contrasting sonorities, this poetic *koiné* was the best tool poets could have had to produce their creations while at the same time respecting a rigid method of versification characterized by uniformity of rhyme and metre – a metre whose hallmark was the alternation of long and short syllables – and, as a result of the prosodic accent, strong and neutral beats.

Three successive generations applied this poetic art and imposed it as a literary model on their successors.

The first generation (AD 500–550) apparently deserves the credit for perfecting the thematic structure of the *qaṣīda*. The most famous of these pioneers are al-Muhalhil ‘Adī b. Rabī‘a of the Taghlib, al-Muraqqish ‘Awf b. Sa‘d of Ḍubay‘a and Imru’ al-Qays b. Ḥujr of the Kinda.

The poets of the second generation lived during the second half of the sixth century and died before the appearance of Islam. It is among this group that we find the most celebrated masters of pre-Islamic poetry, such as Ṭarafa b. al-‘Abd of the Ḍubay‘a, Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā of the Muzayna, al-Nābigha Ziyād b. Mu‘āwiya of the Dhubyān, ‘Amr b. Kulthūm of the Taghlib, al-Ḥārith b. Ḥilliza of the Bakr, ‘Antara b. Shaddād of the ‘Abs, al-A‘shā Maymūn of the Qays and al-Shanfarā of the Azd.

The third generation (turn of the sixth century AD) is the generation of the *mukhaḍramūn*, those who knew both paganism and Islam. The most famous are Ka‘b b. Zuhayr of the Muzayna, Labīd b. Rabī‘a of the Kilāb, Ḥassān b. Thābit of the Aws, Abū Dhu‘ayb Khuwaylid b. Khālid of the Hudhayl, al-Ḥuṭay‘a Jarwal b. Aws of the ‘Abs, Tamīm b. Ubayy b. Muqbil of the ‘Ajlān and the elegiac female poet al-Khansā Tumāḍir bint. ‘Amr of the Sulaym.<sup>40</sup>

The works of all these poets are admirable examples of classical poetry, but they are still varied, and indeed singular, compositions which express the concerns and temperaments of their authors – individuals whose social status, way of life and character diverge to the point of being antipodes. Whereas ‘Amr b. Kulthūm and Imru’ al-Qays were lords, al-Shanfarā was a beggar.<sup>41</sup> While Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā and Tamīm b. Muqbil remained tribal poets their entire lives, al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī and Ḥassān b. Thābit were court poets,

39. R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 79–82 and pp. 365–368.

40. Biographies and bibliographies of these various poets may be found in R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 248–329.

41. On the subject of poets such as al-Shanfarā, who were forced to live on the fringe of tribal life, see Y. Khulayyif, *al-Shu‘arā’ al-sa‘ālik fi-l-‘aṣr al-Jāhili*, Cairo, 1959.

and al-A‘shā Maymūn was a ‘wandering poet’, forever seeking a generous patron. Where the tone of ‘Amr b. Kulthūm’s ode is angry, al-Ḥārith b. Ḥilliza adopts a measured tone in response. While ‘Antara b. Shaddād’s *Mu‘allaqa*<sup>42</sup> on the conflict between Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā<sup>43</sup> resonates with martial accents, Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā’s ode on the same event is distinguished by its sage appeals for harmony and peace.

The same diversity is evident when we examine the introductions to these poems. For example, the amorous prologue to Ka‘b b. Zuhayr’s *qaṣīda*, in which he begs the Prophet’s forgiveness, expresses great anguish, while the prologue to the *Mu‘allaqa* of his father is marked by its perfect serenity.

We can thus say with confidence that, despite the demands of a rigid poetic tradition animated by a common spirit of glorification, the *mufaḥkhara*, the poets of the first classical period succeeded in imprinting the original accents of their individual sensibilities on their poetic discourse, and therein lies the value of these works, admired for many centuries, and held up as an aesthetic model.

### Arabic literature from 40-132/660-750

Unanimously respected poetic forms, the *marthīyya* and the *qaṣīda* acquired considerable prestige and became recognized as classic structures of Arabic poetry.

However, while the *marthīyya*, which was perfectly adapted to its purpose, was never really challenged or subjected to any notable change, the *qaṣīda*, which was quickly deemed too complex and too clearly marked with the imprint of bedouinism, soon became more and more restricted in scope, gave way to new forms of poetic expression and was no longer used except for official compositions such as court panegyrics, or certain genres of typically ancient inspiration such as the *mufaḥkharāt* (poems of glorification).

Nevertheless, the majority of famous poems from the first/seventh century used the *qaṣīda* form. This is mainly due to the policy of the Umayyad caliphs and their powerful governors, who made it their responsibility to maintain the Arab cultural tradition, of which they had proclaimed themselves the guardians. On the one hand, they required their bards to depict them as perfect desert lords; on the other, they encouraged the poets in their service –

42. This is the laudatory term applied to ten or so pre-Islamic odes; see M. Abdeselem, ‘Fi-l-qaṣā’id al-sab‘, *Ḥawliyyāt al-Jāmi‘a al-Tūnisīyya*, 2, 1965, pp. 5–15.

43. A sixth-century conflict between the ‘Abs and the Dhubyān, who belonged to the same tribal group of Ghaṭafān; Dāḥis and al-Ghabrā were the cause of this war, which seems to have lasted nearly forty years.

in particular the celebrated trio of al-Akḥṭal,<sup>44</sup> al-Farazdaq<sup>45</sup> and Jarīr<sup>46</sup> – to hold poetic jousts amongst themselves, lauding the merits of their tribes and denouncing the infamies of their adversaries.

To read the *naqā'id*, poems in which boasting goes hand in hand with satire, is to be whisked back to pre-Islamic times. Fortunately, however, these works perpetuating the spirit of bedouinism constitute only a portion of the poetic corpus of the first/seventh century.

In order to respond to the concerns of a society undergoing a profound change – a society marked by the teachings of Islam, by the cultural symbiosis produced by its rapid expansion and by the political and religious controversies dividing the Muslim community at the dawn of its history – poetic discourse had to find a new subject and invent new forms.

Rejecting what they saw as the yoke of the *qaṣīda*, the poets most sensitive to the realities of their era took poetic expression in three new directions: exploration of the self, political commitment, and deeper meditation.

This produced a total renewal of the themes of Arabic poetry and, most importantly, it produced three new genres, the love poem (*ghazal*), the political poem (*shi'r siyāsī*) and the ascetic poem (*ṣubḥiyya*).

A minor theme of Arabic poetry, love was dealt with, before 40/660, only within the confines of the poetic developments that served as a prologue to the *qaṣīda*. Halting his mount at the place where he met his beloved, the poet recalls their passionate adventure, celebrating the beauty of the one who had seduced him and recounting the emotion that seized him at the hour of their parting, because, for these nomads, amorous interludes were as fleeting as the stops that punctuated their wandering life. Short-lived passions could inspire only melancholic laments. The only light touches in sombre pictures, the scintillating images of female beauty were barely able to dispel the gloom in these memories of lost loves.

Following the example of their illustrious predecessors, the majority of first/seventh-century poets continued to evoke their amorous experiences in the introductory portion of the *qaṣīda* and used all their skill to reinvigorate the themes inherited from a distant past.

Feeling that this restrictive framework did not allow them to express their amorous emotions fully, some poets decided to free themselves from the

44. Al-Akḥṭal is the nickname of a Christian poet named Abū Mālik Ghayth b. Ghawth, of the Taghlib, born around 20/640, died around 91/709. Cf. R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 466–473.

45. Nickname of Ḥammām b. Ghālib of the Mujāshif, born around 20/640, died in 110/728; see the biography and bibliography in R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 495–505.

46. Abū Ḥazra Jarīr b. 'Aṭīyya of the Kulayb, born in 33/653, died in 114/732; R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 484–495.

tradition that restricted their inspiration and to give love a specific thematic structure, the love poem.

This new poetic genre was so favourably received by the public that some of the best poets devoted most of their efforts to it. Although all, or almost all were originally from the Ḥijāz, the creators of this new structure did not develop a single, unified discourse. They favoured two divergent concepts of love.

The first was adopted by bedouin poets such as Jamīl,<sup>47</sup> Majnūn Layla<sup>48</sup> and Kuthayyir,<sup>49</sup> who were collectively known as the ‘Udhrites in reference to the ‘Udhra tribe (although, in fact, not all of them belonged to it). This conception took a closer look at the traditional concept of romantic relations – relations which were thwarted by society and condemned to be unhappy. The new aspect which distinguished this group of poets from their predecessors was their insistence on the absolute, exclusive and eternal character of their passion. Intrinsically contrary to the prevailing norms, this sentiment was forbidden, created an impossible situation, subjected the lover to the most arduous trials and led him to madness and death.

This tragic concept of love was not shared by the urban poets such as ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a,<sup>50</sup> al-Aḥwaṣ,<sup>51</sup> and al-‘Arjī,<sup>52</sup> whom the historians of Arabic literature unjustly labelled with the pejorative term *ibāḥiyyūn* (permissives).<sup>53</sup> In fact, seizing the transitory rather than the enduring aspect of love, they depict the pleasant banter, the ephemeral joys and the superficial ‘bruises’. This is badinage love in which the beloved ceases to be simply the object of desire on a pedestal. She is, on the contrary, an active and coquettish

47. Jamīl b. Ma‘mar of the ‘Udhra, born around 40/660, died around 82/705; on this poet and his love for Buthayna, see R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 653–657.

48. Majnūn Layla of the ‘Āmir b. Ṣa‘ṣa‘a, from his real name Qays b. Mulawwaḥ; on this poet transformed into a love hero, see R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 657–660.

49. Abū Ṣakhr Kuthayyir b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān of the Khuzā‘a, born in the middle of the first/seventh century, died in 105/723. The *rāwī* of Jamīl, he composed love poems dedicated to his beloved ‘Azza; a supporter of the Kaysānite Imam Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya, he proclaimed his faith in his verses, but that did not prevent him from extolling the merits of the Umayyad caliphs. Cf. R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 609–616.

50. ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a of the Makhzūm, born in 24/644, died in 103/721; see R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 629–642.

51. Al-Aḥwaṣ is the nickname of a poet named ‘Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad of the Hubay‘a, born in 35/655, died in 110/728; on this Medinan aristocrat, see R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 626–629.

52. Al-‘Arjī is the nickname of ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar, grandson of the Caliph ‘Uthmān, born around 75/694, died before 120/738; see R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 642–646.

53. This expression – used by Ṭ. Ḥusayn in a series of articles published in the journal *al-Siyāsa*, September, 1924, and then brought together with other studies in a collection entitled *Ḥadīth al-arbi‘ā* (Cairo, 1962, I) – has since become a recognized term in Arab literary criticism.

partner who knows how to fan the flame of a wavering affection with only an insistent regard or equivocal smile, a vague promise or ambiguous message, but who can also, with no drama or tears, put an end to those sweet but perilous exchanges with feigned anger or leave a meeting leading nowhere.

Delightful portraits of the erotic games of a rich, cultured and carefree social group, these poems, evoking 'the loves of a day', were greatly appreciated by the Ḥijāzian aristocracy, held under the Umayyads in gilded inactivity by a political power which mistrusted it. Put into music by the most famous contemporary musicians in Mecca and Medina and first sung before the idle lords of those two cities, they quickly gained a wide audience not only in al-Ḥijāz but in the various urban centres of the Arab-Islamic world.

And it was thus that the love poem earned its spurs and became a wholly distinct poetic genre.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike the love poem, the political poem was distinguished from the traditional poem, not by the specificity of its theme or the uniformity of its structure, but by the purpose of its discourse, which was one of political commitment. Inspired by an unshakable faith in the justness of their cause, the poets used their works to describe their partners' political positions, eulogize their chiefs and mourn their martyrs.<sup>55</sup>

This new genre was developed primarily among the opponents of the Umayyads, who were condemned for having usurped power, for having transformed the caliphate into an hereditary royalty and for acting, along with their governors, as pitiless tyrants. There were two groups of poets, the Shī'ites, supporters of 'Alī and his descendants, and the Khārījites, former allies who broke away from the first group after the arbitration 'affair' during the battle of Ṣiffin.<sup>56</sup>

The political philosophy of the Shī'ites centres in the concept of the Imāmate.<sup>57</sup> The 'Chosen One of God', the *imām* is the infallible interpreter of the law and the holder of all power. Welcomed in Iraq but fiercely opposed in the other Muslim provinces, Shī'ism in the early centuries was marked by aborted revolts followed by bloody reprisals.

Even more ready than the Shī'ites to take up arms, the Khārījites were also subjected to terrible repression, which they bore with courage, convinced that their fight was a sacred duty to defend Islam.

54. On this genre, see the article 'Ghazal' by R. Blachère in *EI*<sup>2</sup>, and his *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 661–717, which includes an exhaustive bibliography on the question.

55. On this type of poetry see N. al-Qāḍī, *al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya fi-l-shi'ar al-Umawī*, 1970.

56. Famous armed confrontation in 36/656 between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya who, seeing that he was losing, raised the Qur'ān and declared that he would put his fate into the hands of two wise men, one from each camp. This stratagem merely had the effect of splitting the supporters of 'Alī.

57. On this concept central to Shī'ite thinking see the article 'Imāma' in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

While the Khārijites demonstrated a remarkably democratic attitude to the caliphate, proclaiming that any pious and virtuous Muslim, regardless of tribal or ethnic origin, could accede to the supreme magistrature, they displayed an excessive and even intolerant rigour on the theological and moral level. They felt that practice was part of religion in the same way as faith; they thus regarded sinners as unbelievers and imposed the same sanctions upon them. Convinced that they belonged to the only sect that had remained faithful to the Qur'anic message, they declared that all those who held a different point of view were not part of the Muslim community and declared a holy war against them.<sup>58</sup> To die in combat against such heretics was an enviable privilege which God reserved for the most faithful of His servants. This was the source of the fervour and unshakable optimism that inspired their poetical works, whatever the subject.

In this, these works differed radically from the Shī'ite works, in which the tragic tone predominated. Enumerating the sufferings of their partisans and stressing the continued martyrdom of their imams, the Shī'ite poets tried to win the indignant sympathy of their readers.<sup>59</sup>

The works of the political poets differed not just in theme and tone, but also in structure. It must be remembered, first of all, that the court poets felt obliged to back up the legitimacy of the Umayyad caliphs and to celebrate their splendid accomplishments by using the traditional form of the *qaṣīda*. The Shī'ite and Khārijite poets adopted less rigid structures, which were more suited to their purpose. In general, the Khārijites chose the short poem centred on a specific subject, while the Shī'ites, such as al-Kumayt b. Zayd al-Asadi,<sup>60</sup> author of the *Hāshimīyyāt*, showed a clear preference for poems developed at length, combining polemic, epic and elegiac sequences in long pleas for their cause.

The poets' political commitment infused their compositions with a remarkable sincerity, a hallmark of accomplished works.

Faced with the serious socio-political events shaking the Muslim world, the political poets quickly took a passionate stance; others, however, adopted a more basic and balanced attitude. Meditating on the Qur'ān, they came to the conclusion that 'only living a life of piety, and abstinence from all transient things by the extinction of desire'<sup>61</sup> can ensure for mortals peace on this earth and salvation. The exhortation to such behaviour constituted the central theme of a new poetic structure called *zuhdiyya*.

58. On the doctrine and history of this politico-religious party see the article 'Khārijites' in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

59. See M. Abdesslem, *Le thème...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 245–261.

60. On this poet and his *Hāshimīyyāt* cf. R. Blachère, *Histoire...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 518–521.

61. L. Massignon, art. 'Zuhd' in *EI*<sup>1</sup>.

It is customary to situate the birth of this poetic genre in the second/eighth century, and there is no doubt that it was thanks to the poets of this era that the *ḡubdiyya* earned its spurs; yet, a careful examination of the Arabic poetic heritage reveals that this genre was developed several decades earlier. Even if we dismiss the *ḡubdiyyāt* attributed to the Caliph ‘Alī as forgeries, we must accept the authenticity of those attributed to poets such as ‘Imrān b. Ḥiṭṭān (Khārījite chief, died in 86/770), A‘shā Hamdān (Shī‘ite, pro-Yemenite, executed in 82/701 for his part in the revolt of Ibn al-Ash‘ath) and especially Sābiq al-Barbarī (Sunni Qādī of al-Raqqā under ‘Umar II, 99–101/717–720). A point worth noting is that despite their divergent political allegiances, all these individuals were *qurrā’*, ‘readers of the Qur’ān’. It is thus obvious that the Qur’ān recited, meditated on and practised was the source of asceticism (*ḡubd*).<sup>62</sup> Although foreign influences may well have affected this line of thought during a later period, it is clear from an analysis of the oldest specimens of *ḡubdiyyāt* that the Qur’ānic message was the inspiration for the earliest ascetic poets. It was from this sacred text that they drew the essential themes of their works – the inevitability of death, the ephemeral nature of worldly things, the need to exercise the soul in overcoming desires and the exhortation to live a God-fearing, abstemious life.

The remarkable development of Arabic poetry at the end of the first/seventh century and the beginning of the second/eighth century was accompanied by a major renewal of literary prose which took the form of a diversification of the art of rhetoric, a new definition of the epistle and the acclimatization of a borrowed genre, the fable.

The political conflicts, the theological controversies, the need to address a crowd of believers every week at the Friday sermons and the growing importance of the rôle played by the preachers (*quṣṣāṣ*), were all factors in the thematic and formal development of oratory discourse. Noted personalities – such as the Caliphs Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz,<sup>63</sup> and the governors Ziyād b. Abīhī, Rawḥ b. Zinbā‘ and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf<sup>64</sup> – often made use of their eloquence to counter the propaganda of opponents whose leaders were often skilful orators. Such was

62. L. Massignon, *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane*, 2nd ed., Paris, Vrin, (Études Musulmanes, 2), 1954, p. 104.

63. The first Umayyad caliph, Mu‘āwiya, reigned from 41–60/661–679; ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān 65–86/684–705; and ‘Umar II (‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz) from 99/717 to 101/719. See examples of their oratorical works in al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 59, 120 and 131, and Ibn ‘Abd-Rabbihi, IV, pp. 81, 83, 87, 88, 90, 92 and 95.

64. Ziyād b. Abīhī was governor of Iraq under Mu‘āwiya, Rawḥ b. Zinbā‘ governor of Palestine during the reign of Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya, and al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf governor of Iraq under ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān; see some fragments of their oratorical prose in al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 61, 138, 145 and 307.

the case with ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr,<sup>65</sup> the Shī‘ite Imām Zayd b. ‘Alī,<sup>66</sup> and the Khārijite Amīr Qutārī b. al-Fujā’a,<sup>67</sup> to name only the best known.

The moving sermons of a number of preachers respected for their knowledge and their piety, such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Muṭarrif b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥarashī and Muslim b. Jundub al-Hudhalī,<sup>68</sup> gained the oratory genre the favour of a wide public.

Yet another group of orators, who had no other ambition than to dazzle with their verbal giftedness – including Ayyūb b. al-Qirriyya, Khalīd b. Salama and Khālid b. Ṣafwān – rivalled the others in the art of discourse.<sup>69</sup>

These convergent factors favoured the emergence of a more conscious and elaborate form of eloquence. Sharing the creative literary space with poetry, it attempted to curb its outpourings, diversify its themes and refine its expression. Like its illustrious rival, it would remain an oral art – that is, an art which sought an immediate effect, and thus favoured concrete images and contrasting rhythms.

It was only in practising a new genre, the epistle, that Arabic prose embarked on paths other than ‘orality’.

The title of ‘founder of the Arabic epistolary genre’ is usually given to ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā b. Sa’d, better known as ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib<sup>70</sup> or ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kabīr. This attribution is not, however, fully accurate. It has been established that from the founding of the Muslim state, and probably for some decades before then, the Arabs corresponded not only among themselves but also with authorities in neighbouring countries. If the anthologists of the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries are to be believed, two or three generations of scribes appear to have applied their talents to this epistolary art and composed very accurate, concise and original missives. What ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd did was to transform what had been considered an administrative exercise – sensitive perhaps, but limited by its dimensions and pretensions – into a literary genre or, to be more accurate, into

65. Born in Medina in 2/624, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr b. al-‘Awwām refused to recognize the Caliph Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya. Recognized as caliph by numerous provinces after the death of Yazīd, he was finally vanquished by the troops of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and died in battle at Mecca in 72/692; cf. the article ‘‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr’ in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

66. Zayd b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, renowned Shī‘ite imam, chief of the Zaydite sect, put to death following his rebellion in 122/740. See al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. M. Abu-l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1960, VII, pp. 180–191.

67. Khārijite chief, died in 79/698; see samples of his oratorical prose in al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 126, and Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, *al-‘Iqd al-farīd*, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 141.

68. On these *quṣṣās* cf. al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 363–69, and the article ‘Ḳāss’ in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

69. On these orators and their oratorical art see al-Jāhīz, *al-Bayān...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 328, 336, 346, 358 and 392; al-Iṣfahānī, 1927–1950, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 16 vols., Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, VIII, pp. 80f.

70. See the article ‘‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā b. Sa’d’ in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.



a literary structure adaptable enough to serve for centuries as a model for prose works.

Two factors would appear to be decisive in the genesis of this genre: the Arabization of the government (the *dīwāns*) on the order of the Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and the rapid assimilation of the non-Arab elite by Arab society. In fact, it was because they wished to retain the major administrative positions which they had occupied before the Muslim conquest that this elite was quick to learn and master the Arabic language. It is therefore not surprising that the first great prose-writers were non-Arabs.

First, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib himself. After a few years of teaching, this *mawlā* of the ‘Amir b. Lu’ayy became a public servant in the central government. He ended his career as secretary to the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān b. Muḥammad, whose tragic fate he shared in 132/750.

Reflecting the political and social situation at the beginning of the second/eighth century, the epistles attributed to him set out his ideas on power, government and the army, and remind his correspondents of the principles which must guide their conduct and inspire their actions. Written in a generally fluid and direct style, these epistles are not completely free of the characteristics of the oratorical and poetic style, in that they use picturesque expressions and strongly accented rhythms.

Such influences are less noticeable with the second of these prose-writers, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Muqaffa<sup>c</sup> (102–139/720–56). Like his elder and friend, Ibn al-Muqaffa<sup>c</sup> was a *mawlā* and worked as a secretary, first to certain Umayyad governors, then to ‘Īsā b. ‘Alī, uncle of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Manṣūr, and it was on the orders of this sovereign that he was executed at the age of 36.

Despite his premature death, he left a significant *corpus* of work. His best known work is *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ‘a collection of Indian fables for princes [...] translated from Sanskrit to Pahlavi by Burzōē and from that language to Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa<sup>c</sup>, who did not hesitate to insert numerous additions setting out his political and religious ideas. This book’s immense success among a readership unfamiliar with this genre of fables somewhat eclipsed the other works of Ibn al-Muqaffa<sup>c</sup>. Two of his epistles, however, deserve special mention: *al-Adab al-kabīr*, a series of practical counsels for the sovereign and his coterie, and *al-Risāla fi-l-Ṣaḥāba*, in which he developed daring ideas on social problems similar to those of his own era.

Through the originality of their content, the diversity of their sources of inspiration and the subtleness and elegance of their style, the works of Ibn al-Muqaffa<sup>c</sup><sup>71</sup> inaugurated a new literary period which was the expression of an Arab culture renewed by the various contributions of all Islamicized peoples.

71. Al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 524.

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Chapter 2(a)

POETRY OF THE EAST

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Poetry continues to evolve in a Muslim society, whose religious basis defines political structures and ethical principles as well as the general lines of culture. Learned writings centre around the Qurʾān, establishing and elucidating this text and drawing from it the material necessary to constitute theological, juridical and moral thinking. This epistemological endeavour needs a linguistic tool. Lexical and grammatical thinking had recourse to poetry as one of its authenticating sources. Starting from a highly diversified use of Arabic (over the centuries and depending on the region), there appeared a theory of the unity of the Arabic language. Philologists established a poetic reference system, *shawāhid*. Hence, their need to constitute a corpus going back to the Jāhiliyya so as to establish a model canonical style. For a number of reasons they overlooked many aspects of earlier poetry, and were even led to what may have been serious intrusions into a corpus which had been entrusted for too long to memory alone. In this way they defined a model language and even a poetic form following a theory devised by Ibn Qutayba (d. 275/889). A whole unifying movement grew which defined the nature and function of poetry. It comprised linguistic unity, which instituted classicism; ethico-political unity, which provided those in power and their supporters with poets dedicated to singing their praise; and aesthetic unity, which mapped out thematic areas and linked them to constitute the *qaṣīda*. Al-Khalil b. Aḥmad (d. between 159/776 and 174/791), an outstanding grammarian and lexicographer, developed a prosodic system, the *ʿarūḍ*. He created a technical language, established the metres and wrote on melody and rhythm. An examination of rhetoric began in the ninth century and ruled on the use of figures of speech. Critics such as Ibn Qutayba (212–275/828–889), Qudāma b. Jaʿfar (259/873–between 319/932 and 338/948), ʿAlī al-Jurjānī (d. 291/904), al-Āmidī (d. 369/980), Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. after 400/1010) and ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 470/1078) sought to propound a theory of poetic writing. From the tenth up to the

thirteenth centuries, logicians and philosophers such as al-Fārābī (d. 338/950) and Ibn Rushd (Averroës, 519–594/1126–1198) analysed the poetic imagination of what they considered to be the Aristotelian tradition.

However, contrary factors were at work, gaining their impetus from the mingling of people, changing mentalities, and generally from a surge of creativity in reaction against orderly classicism. The expression of the passions of love, pleasure and spirituality cast classicism aside and chose a more appropriate language.

### Canonical poetry: the formal *qaṣīda*

The *qaṣīda* was divided into three parts: a brief elegiac introduction, usually known as the *nasīb*; a descriptive passage symbolizing the poet's approach to his protector, the *raḥīl*; and a laudatory part, the *madīḥ*, which formed the main theme of the poem. This pattern was not finally adopted until the ninth century. It may be recalled that in the seventh century half of the panegyrics of al-Farazdaq contained no *nasīb*. Eulogizing themes are to be found earlier in braggart poems (*fakhr*) and poems glorifying the virtues of a tribe, clan or town, but it was only gradually that they became a standard exercise, with rules laid down by theoreticians.

Thus philologists, in particular in the eighth century, took decisive action to codify both the meaning of words and their syntactic relations. They first gave way to contemporary poets, who illustrated this model language. Ibrāhīm b. Harma from Medina (90–175/709–792), of the Quraysh tribe, whose work has come down to us in a largely mutilated form (630 lines out of 8,000), was in their view one of the last poets to master the exemplary use of poetic language. By contrast, Marwān b. Sulaymān (d. 180/797), a member of the Ibn Abī Ḥafṣa family, who came from al-Yamāma and settled in Baghdad, is the subject of conflicting judgements. Bashshār b. Burd corrects him and al-Asma'ī (d. 212/828) criticizes him severely, but Ibn al-A'arābī (149–230/767–845) regards him as the last of the great poets. This proves that the transition to classicism was not all plain sailing. Marwān b. Sulaymān remains a master of well-turned utterance; his poetry is expansive, strongly rhythmical, and his phrases follow each other in a continuous movement which gives his *qaṣīda* the strength of an oratorical period.<sup>1</sup>

The *qaṣīda* of *madīḥ* has a political key role illustrated by the supporters of the 'Alids. For example, al-Kumayt b. Zayd al-Asadī (60–125/680–743), who knew al-Farazdaq and al-Ṭirimmāh, represents the Shī'ism of Kufa. His 300-line poem *al-Mudhabhaba* is aimed against the Yemenis and was probably

1. See J. E. Bencheikh, art. 'Marwān al-Akbar b. Abī Ḥafṣa' and 'Marwān al-Aṣghar b. Abi-l-Djanūb', in *EP*<sup>2</sup>.

the cause of his assassination. His 56-line *al-Malhama* glorifies the Quraysh and, oddly enough, the Umayyads. His collection of *Hāshimīyyāt* is devoted to the Prophet, to ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalīb and to his descendants. His seven poems, four of them containing more than 100 lines, are entirely in conformity with the thematic sequence of the *qaṣīda*. While philologists have sometimes criticized his vocabulary and borrowings, he is nevertheless an important representative of oratorical poetry.

A younger poet, Abū Hāshim Ismāʿīl, nicknamed al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī (d. 170/787), was also a Shīʿite, but an extremist, since like Kuthayyir (39–104/660–723) he was a follower of the Kaysāniyya. Though he was an undeniably talented poet, his work suffered from censorship due to his violent attacks on the Companions and wives of the Prophet. His style is firm and combines elegance with purity of language.

Even a poet using the *rajaz* or *urjūza* metres, such as Ruʿba (d. 144/762), son of the poet al-ʿAjjāj, devotes most of his output to panegyrics of this kind. One of his poems, 278 lines long, is dedicated to the last Umayyad Caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad (126–132/744–750); another, 400 lines long, to al-Saffāḥ or the ʿAbbāsīd caliph al-Manṣūr (136–158/754–775). His compositions are of great lexical interest and especially make frequent use of rhetorical figures which were soon to characterize the so-called *badīʿ* mannered style.

Poets such as Muslim b. al-Walīd (129–207/747–823) and Abū Tammām (190–230/806–845), and even more so al-Buḥturī (205–283/821–897) and Ibn al-Rūmī (221–282/836–896), finally set the seal on classicism. They can be regarded as supporters of canonical poetry, *shīʿr ʿamūdī*, using a language governed by the rules of the *fushḥā*; an extensive vocabulary, devoid, however, of terms which were rare (*gharīb*) or unfamiliar (*waḥshī*), a form of rhetorics devoted to clarity of expression, and a precisely organized thematic sequence. The *madīḥ* accounts for 45 per cent of the number of poems of Abū Tammām and 51 per cent of al-Buḥturī. With both these poets, however, 70 to 100 per cent of poems of more than ten lines are laudatory. The works of these poets represent a considerable volume. Abū Tammām wrote 7,104 lines, and there remains a total of 16,185 for al-Buḥturī and nearly 17,000 for Ibn al-Rūmī.

Muslim b. al-Walīd should be regarded as an important link in this chain of development. Born in Kufa, it was in Baghdad that he achieved success and became court poet of the ʿAbbāsīds and their high dignitaries. Out of a total estimated output of some 8,000 lines, less than 2,000 survive. More than half of his poems are eulogies. There is already evidence for a tendency to the mannered style which was to culminate in Abū Tammām; Muslim b. al-Walīd delights in metaphor and rhythmic speech. He also wrote light poetry on the subjects of love and wine.

Abū Tammām al-Ḥabīb b. Aws, the son of a Christian innkeeper and apprentice to a weaver, was the disciple of Dīk al-Jinn al-Ḥimṣī (160–234/777–849). The latter never left Syria, wrote panegyrics in honour of the ʿAlīds and is

known for his beautiful eulogies on his Christian wife, whom he assassinated out of jealousy. Abū Tammām is not regarded as a classical poet either by certain contemporaries or by subsequent theoreticians. He is sharply criticized for what they consider to be his excessive use of sound and stylistic effects and loose metaphors. He eulogized the chief dignitaries of his time and dedicated to the Caliph al-Mu‘taṣim (217–227/833–842) eight major odes regarded as his finest, on a level with the ode he pronounced in 223/838 on the capture of Amorium. However, the decorative exuberance of his rhetoric, his use of an outdated vocabulary unfamiliar to philologists and his complex syntax incurred the displeasure of those who favoured limpidity of style. His style, called by rhetoricians the poetry of *badī‘*, was to trigger off one of the most violent battles in the history of literary Arabic and inspire several comparative treatises.

The young Syrian Abū ‘Ubāda al-Walīd al-Buḥturī, a member of the same tribe, was for long to represent the classical ideal. The most important of his panegyrics were dedicated to the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (232–246/847–861). When the caliph was assassinated, he continued his career as a poet and sang the praises of six sovereigns and a number of ministers. Of a grasping nature and with lax moral principles, he dissimulated his Shī‘ism so as to stay in favour. His *qaṣīda* made notable use of lyrical movement, description and laudation. His language, lofty but flexible, avoided both the hermetic quality of Abū Tammām and the popular inspiration of Abu-l-‘Atāhiya, but he had neither the turbulent genius of Abū Nuwās nor the impassioned insolence of al-Mutanabbī.

Abu-l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-‘Abbās b. al-Rūmī was the son of a Byzantine freedman and a Persian mother. A Shī‘ite and a Mu‘tazilite who took part in the Zaydite revolt in Kufa in 249/864, he increasingly showed his hostility to the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty. However, he found favour with the regent of the empire of al-Muwaffaq (d. 277/891), who was more conciliatory towards the ‘Alids. Ibn al-Rūmī sought patrons among families such as the Banū Ṭāhir, the Banū Wahb, the Banu-l-Furāt and others, but his pride and irascibility did not make things easy and his life ended in great poverty. He was the author of an enormous *ḏiwān* and his panegyrics incontestably bear the stamp of classicism, already foreshadowing the temperament of al-Mutanabbī. He also wrote poems ‘whose spontaneity, sensitivity, naturalness and clarity prefigure the expressive poetry of the *Rūmiyyāt* of Abū Firās and the nature-poems of al-Ṣanawbarī’.<sup>2</sup>

This century also produced Di‘bil and ‘Alī b. al-Jahm. The former, nicknamed Abū ‘Alī Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Khuzā‘ī (147–245/765–860), grew up in Kufa and then went to Baghdad, where he became a member of the literary set around Hārūn al-Rashīd from 178/795 to 193/809. Though a disciple of Muslim b. al-Walīd, an enemy of Abū Tammām and a firm Shī‘ite,

2. S. Boustany, art. ‘Ibn al-Rūmī’, in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

he nevertheless eulogized a number of ʿAbbāsids. He could be violent in invective, but his poems are simple in style and language. He wrote a *Kitāb al-Shuʿarāʾ* (Book of the Poets), completed in 231/846. This omitted the name of Abū Tammām and preceded the *Kitāb al-Shiʿr* of Ibn Qutayba; only fragments of it have survived.

ʿAlī b. al-Jahm (188–248/804–863), who came from an Arab tribe of Bahrain, was the son of a senior official in the service of the Caliphs al-Maʿmūn (197–217/813–833) and al-Wāthiq (227–232/842–847). He held an appointment as magistrate under al-Muʿtaṣim (217–227/833–842) before becoming the poet of al-Mutawakkil (232–246/847–861). But he fell into disgrace, was imprisoned and then exiled. He was killed on the Syrian frontier. A friend of Abū Tammām but an enemy of al-Buḥturī on account of his opposition to the ʿAlids, he left a strong mark on poetry.

Abu-l-Ṭayyib Aḥmad al-Mutanabbī (302–343/915–955) is regarded by the Arabs as the master of language. In his youth he was much influenced by the egalitarian ideology of the Qarmatians, their negation of the divine nature of forms of worship and their rejection of the social organization imposed by religion. But after this youthful rebellion, he came back to the fold and his panegyrics ceased to show any signs of subversion. He idealized the Arab race, noting its qualities of pride and honour. As a man of the desert, he developed an epic bedouinism well suited to a lofty traditional style of writing. A past master of the Arabic language, exploiting its full range of resources, he continually sought to achieve in his poetry the right sound effects and well-turned images. This quest, in particular his choice of vocabulary, frequently carried him away into preciousness and bombast, but his style ultimately always convinces. 'Pessimistic and haughty, finding in rigour and austerity the arguments which fed his vanity, despising honours yet always unsatisfied with those offered him, he was unmistakably a person out of the common rut.'<sup>3</sup> He also composed three cynegetic poems in the *rajaz* metre.

His contemporary, Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī (319–357/932–968), a cousin of King Sayf al-Dawla, fought against the bedouins in the Syrian desert and later against the Byzantines, who held him as a prisoner from 350/962 to 355/966. The image of a valiant Muslim, he began by writing odes about the history of the Ḥamdānid dynasty, tried his hand at short love poems and wrote poems with a Shīʿite and anti-ʿAbbāsid slant. He achieved fame with his *al-Rūmiyyāt* (The Byzantines), very fine poems composed during his captivity in Constantinople, describing his homesickness and despair. In these, his lyricism is expressed in a highly limpid style. He also wrote a long cynegetic poem combining hunting and hawking themes.

As noted by Qudāma b. Jaʿfar in his *Naqd al-shiʿr* (Criticism of Poetry), the *rithāʾ*, or poetry of lamentation, is central to canonical poetry. The *marthbiya*,

3. J. E. Bencheikh, art. 'al-Mutanabbī', in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, 1985.

dedicated to an important personality, expresses political thinking or a religious choice. For example, al-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, Di‘bil, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī and Miḥyār al-Daylamī drew their inspiration from the tragedy of the ‘Alids. The poetry of the Khārijites is similarly influenced. In fact, all the major poets accepted the duty of commemorating the dead. Abū Nawwās composed a score of such poems. Ibn al-Rūmī laments the members of his family. Al-Mutanabbī combines praise of the heir with commemoration of the dead. It is obvious that threnody had great difficulty in distancing itself from the panegyric and even the *ḡhāḍīyya*, which also offered a meditation on death. Only the thematic sequence distinguished the *riḥā’*, which no longer contained either *nasīb* or *raḥīl*, but the style and language remained the same for both genres.

### The inventions of lyricism: the *ghazal*

Decisive factors contributed to setting a new course for the poetry of passion. The creation of urban centres such as Basra, Kufa and above all Baghdad brought about a change in outlooks; the emergence in society and ruling circles of non-Arab ethnic groups, in particular the *mawālī* of Persian origin, enriched sensitivities; and the gradual exclusion of the bedouin from the places which represented centres of thought, defined morals and decided on genres, and gave new inspirational impetus. While the legacy of the love poetry of earlier centuries was still felt, the eighth century marked a profound change. Islamic doctrine sought to govern a common culture, incidentally not without controversy or opposition; but individual and emotional life frequently escaped its hold. Whole areas of human life withdrew from the injunctions of the scholars of the law. The passion of love was henceforth to define a space within which poetry expressed its creativity and introduced a rhetoric of love.

The second/eighth century opened with the birth of Bashshār b. Burd (95–168/714–785), the blind bard of Basra, a man of low birth and Persian origin, the poet of conflict and dissension who died at the hand of an assassin. His killing, on grounds of *ḡandaqa*, i.e. heresy, in fact a mingling of Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism, may have been ethnically and politically motivated; it also cloaked hostility to a kind of poetry which expressed agonizing doubts in conflict with official moral teaching. Bashshār b. Burd is credited with 40,000 lines of poetry, only 7,000 of which remain. All his writings, whether love poems, eulogies or satires, evince the same temperament since ‘his relation to the world, ambiguous, conflicting, a mix of defiance and submission, love and hatred, always expresses his irresistible temptation to make comprehensive statements which continually refer to happenings in one’s innermost depths.’<sup>4</sup>

4. B. Najar, art. ‘Bashshār b. Burd’, in *Dictionnaire Universel des Littératures*, Paris, 1994.

When he alludes in his panegyrics to the writings of earlier poets, he internalizes them. Addressed to Umayyads, 'Abbāsids or 'Alids, these panegyrics already enter into the classical thematic canon. In his satire, he includes abuse, makes extensive use of sarcasm and is a deft caricaturist. But above all, he devotes to love some 3,500 lines, representing half of the *dīwān* which has come down to us. Among all his many lovers, it was 'Abda who symbolized his passion. The dream of womanhood takes on new features. Throughout the courtly elegy run the accents of desire, but sensual pleasure turns to gloom, making way for an agonizing nostalgia for the absolute. Existential anxiety is expressed in scepticism. Dissatisfaction mars fulfilment. Gradually the poet idealizes the loved one in a form which not only inspires the portrait of an unreal lady but also reflects the anguish of being.

We now come to the society of refinement, or *ẓarf*, which defined a subtle code of love. This code formed part of the general development of a moral code of existence which princes and princesses, senior functionaries, *kuttāb*, artists and, generally speaking, the members of the high society of Baghdad and provincial courts sought to exemplify. This society included slave girls, *qiyān*, chosen as children for their beauty. Educated in both the sciences and literature, they were also talented musicians and singers who, besides the princesses, were the only representatives of womanhood in cultured circles. They were continually criticized by men such as al-Jāhīz (159–254/776–868) and al-Washshā', who excluded them from the courtly ideal of *adab*. Dispensed from the duties of virtue, they illustrated the rights of talent. They were loved passionately, and poetry from Baghdad to Andalusia was to be constantly inhabited by their presence. Thanks to them, the language of love was fine-tuned to express the stages of passion, its aspects, dangers and obligations. This rhetoric of love is to be found in epistles such as the *Kitāb al-Zabra* (Book of the Flower) of Ibn Dāwūd (d. 294/907) and the *Tawq al-ḥamāma* (Neckband of the Dove) of Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (383–456/994–1064). One of its most attractive themes is the strategy of confidentiality, *kitmān*, developed for three reasons. The most common reason was the desire not to harm the reputation of a lady of high rank. The most ambiguous concerned the problem of homosexuality, which was widespread in this society of codifiers of emotional, social and moral relations. The third was the idea of the absolute sacrifice owed to the object of one's desire. Here, Love found in Death its highest justification. Not to avow one's love was not only self-imposed despair but also a voluntary wasting away in the search for the Absolute, which was never to be shattered by the spent desire of possession. Here, we are on the frontiers of mysticism. In this poetry, the themes of union, friendship, faithfulness, constancy, nostalgia, devotion to the Other and the Like, are subtly expressed and developed in a refined and elegant language.

Among the ninth-century female singers, we may note Badhl and her pupil Mutayyim and, above all, 'Arīb al-Ma'mūniyya (d. 276/890), perhaps the



daughter of Jaʿfar b. Yahyā al-Barmakī. She, it is claimed, left a voluminous correspondence in both verse and prose, and also many notebooks in which she wrote down all the airs she sang.<sup>5</sup> Musicians such as Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī (162–224/779–839) and Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (149–235/767–850), himself the son of a famous artist, played an important part in developing the poetry of love, making texts well known by setting them to music. Outstanding among the poet-secretaries of the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries were Ibn al-Zayyāt (d. 233/848), Ibrāhīm b. al-ʿAbbās al-Ṣulī (175–242/792–857), several members of the Banū Wahb and Banū Mudabbir families, ʿAlī b. Yahyā b. al-Munajjim (201–275/817–889) and Khālid b. Yazid (d. 262–269/876–883). Though not creators, they enriched the poetic literature of courtly inspiration.

A notable example of this literature was the work of al-ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf (132–192/750–808), an Arab of pure descent who grew up in Baghdad and became the table-companion of Hārūn al-Rashīd and the Barmakids. All his work is devoted to love and dedicated to Fawz, a historically identifiable but, from the literary point of view, mythical lady. Here,

the lady is the unattainable, the distant incarnation of a desired being which one owes it to oneself to love while obeying a self-imposed rule never to try to go beyond dreaming. Renunciation is the law imposed from the moment when the heart ceases to heed the reason; nothing can permit one to dream of being healed from an affliction sent by fate.<sup>6</sup>

This poetry is not encumbered with any lexical research and uses short metres which call for a musical setting.

A poet who is still little appreciated and whose work deserves more attention is Mihyār b. Marzawayh al-Daylamī (d. 428/1037). A Mazdaean, he did not adopt Islam until 394/1004. He was the disciple of al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (359–406/970–1016), who gave him his education and converted him to Shiʿism. Little is known of his life, but his *diwān* attests to indisputable mastery and talent, not so much in his long panegyrics as in the *ghazal* poems and very beautiful funeral elegies, in particular the lament for his teacher. Also noteworthy are Ibn Sukkāra (d. 384/995), al-Salāmī (d. 393/1003) and Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 391/1001). But it was from Andalusia that new accents were to be heard.

5. A. Cheikh-Moussa, 'Examples of Female Slave Singers in the ʿAbbāsīd period', in *Figures de l'esclavage au Moyen-Âge et dans le monde moderne*, 1994b.

6. See R. Blachère, art. 'Ghazal. i. The Ghazal in Arabic poetry', in *EI*<sup>2</sup>.

## The adventures of desire: from the passion for life to a well-tempered hedonism

The eighth century began with the prince and poet al-Walīd b. Yazīd (89–126/708–744). Initially excluded from power, he plunged into a life of pleasure, surrounded by dissolute poets, artists, buffoons and beautiful slave girls. He did not change his life style on ascending the throne in 125/743.

Passionately in love with freedom, always deeply nostalgic for the bedouin way of life, now distinguished from the urban, merchant empire of the new masters of Islam, al-Walīd joined a movement which, from Ṭarafa to Abū Nawwās and the Andalusian poets, was from then onwards continually to nurture Arabic poetry.<sup>7</sup>

The hundred fragments preserved of his work express an elegant lyricism and sensitivity, which left their mark long after his death by assassination.

But the subject of desire inspired poets of much greater stature, in particular the most gifted of all, Abū Nawwās al-Ḥasan b. Ḥānī? (d. c. 197–199/813–815). Born in al-Ahwāz between 129/747 and 144/762 of a Persian mother and a *mawlā* of a southern Yemeni tribe, he was taken up in Kufa by a formidable band of libertines, mostly homosexuals, such as Wālība b. al-Ḥubāb (d. 169/786), Khalaf al-Aḥmar (114–179/733–796), Muṭīf b. Iyās (d. 168/785), Abān al-Lāḥiqī (d. 199/815) and the three Ḥammād: ‘Ajrād (d. towards 163/780), al-Rāwiya (74–155/694–772) and Ibn al-Zibriqān, all accused more or less of *ẓandaqa*, but who were certainly sceptics rather than genuine Manichaeans. Severe moral judgement was passed on this group, which might be described, in the terms used by Calvinists and Jansenists in the eighteenth century, as a ‘raging fanatical sect’ and ‘public poisoners’. They were in fact licentious, despised prejudice, flouted worship and trampled morals underfoot. But their vital rôle in the development of poetry should not be overlooked.

Abū Nawwās was highly educated, since his teachers included the famous philologist Abū ‘Ubayda (109–208/728–824). He attended courses in Qur’ānic exegesis and the Prophetic traditions, *Ḥadīth*; and he increased his mastery of language in a bedouin environment. Settled in Baghdad, he became friendly with the Barmakid family and left for Cairo after their fall. Returning to the capital, he became the table-companion of the Caliph al-Amīn (193–197/809–813), whose assassination he lamented in poignant threnodies. He died between 197/813 and 199/815.

In the Baghdad society,

he was the poet who gave the liveliest expression to conflicting views, both held and experienced. He claimed the right to pleasure to assuage the existential anguish which dogma failed to allay. He indulged in the kind of insolence which

7. J. E. Bencheikh, art. ‘al-Walīd b. Yazīd’, in *Dictionnaire Universel des Littératures*, Paris, 1994.

was condemned by the law. He ridiculed the bedouin life style, and in so doing levelled his shafts at Arab ethnicity, seen in its original bedouin form and also as laying claim to cultural and political supremacy. Thus his hedonism denoted not only personal impulses. He bore witness to resistance to a dogmatism which sought to govern society.<sup>8</sup>

Abū Nawwās raised the *khamriyya* to its highest point, starting from a heritage which went back to the Jāhiliyya, the precursors of al-Ĥira and to the Ḥijāzī and subsequently Iraqī Bacchic poetry of the seventh century. However, it was in Kufa that this genre found its masters, with Abū Dulāma (d. 159/776), Ḥammād ‘Ajrad and, above all, Abu-l-Hindī al-Riyāhī, who wrote nothing but Bacchic poems and must be considered an outstanding poet, the first to emancipate this genre. Abū Nawwās exploited this inspiration and produced work unique of its kind, not confining himself to coarse sensations but expressing an aesthetic of taste, perfume and colour. His art is intense, linking drunkenness to sensuality, pleasure to peacefulness – in a word, a love of life to the mercy expected from a God one would like to believe in.

After him, the *khamriyya* lost its violent character and instead sang the praises of an agreeable pleasure linked to music, lovers’ talk or simple conversation as such. Al-Ṣanawbarī also produced Bacchic poetry in his description of nature and its charms. But even though there are occasional felicitous lines, it is obvious that in the tenth century the source of inspiration had dried up and that the Bacchic poem had in turn become an academic exercise which achieved depth only in the spiritual intoxication of the mystics, and violence only in the dissolute Bohemianism expressed by Ibn Quzmān (d. 451/1060) in the Andalusian *zajal*.

The love poems of Abū Nawwās should be analysed in the same way as his *khamriyyāt*. ‘From annihilation to beyond its limits, from the depths of intoxication to its illusions, from voluptuous physical pleasure to the ecstasy of passion, the poet ranges through all the spheres where, liberated from himself and freed from everyday life, he experiences the brief eternity of artificial paradises.’<sup>9</sup>

But this was not the end of his talents. The fifty-two cynegetic poems, or *tardiyyāt*, are those of an aesthete and master of language. Written in the *rajaz* metre, they deal with hunting, falconry and the art of training goshawks. It was under the Umayyad caliphs at the beginning of the eighth century that this genre flourished with Ru’ba b. al-‘Ajjāj (d. 144/762) and was developed in the poems of al-Faḍl al-Raqāshī (d. 199/815), Aḥmad b. Abī Karīma and Ibn al-Mu‘adhhal (d. 239/854). ‘Abd Allāh al-Nāshī

8. J. E. Bencheikh, art. ‘Abū Nuwās’, in *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, 1985.

9. J. E. Bencheikh, art. ‘Abū Nuwās’, in *Dictionnaire Universel des Littératures*, Paris, 1994.

(d. 293/906) devoted twenty-one poems to it; and Abu-l-Faḥḥ Maḥmūd al-Sindī, known as Kushājim (d. 349/961), also an author of *khamriyyāt*, wrote a treatise on hunting, the *Kitāb al-Maṣāyid wa-l-maṭārid* (The Book of Snares and Spears), a compilation of the best-known *ṭardīyyāt* with the addition of twenty-four of his own.

Abū Nawwās also composed fierce and spirited satires. Likewise – and this is less surprising than one would think – he wrote poems of meditation, *ḡubdīyyāt*, which express not so much religious faith as his anguish at the fate of humanity, his own torments and his unquenchable hope of obtaining God's pardon. Enormously provocative, he was still lucid enough to admit these questionings.

The adventures of desire also inspired al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḍaḥḥāk (162–248/779–864), who was nicknamed *al-khalī*<sup>c</sup> (the debauchee). A childhood friend of Abū Nawwās, he settled in Baghdad in the service of all the succeeding caliphs. He frequented the court and also sought his pleasures in taverns and monasteries. His work has come down to us only in fragments totalling less than 1,000 lines. These include threnodies and panegyrics, but are mainly of Bacchic and erotic inspiration. Without being either provocative or obscene, they convey a highly acute sense of voluptuous pleasure. The language is ethereal, but never employs dialect. The prosody of the poems lends itself to short metres and subtle assonances, which encouraged composers to set them to music.

Abu-l-ʿAbbās ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Muʿtazz (246–295/861–908) was the son of the thirteenth ʿAbbāsīd caliph, and even reigned for one day before being assassinated, like his grandfather and father before him. A pupil of the greatest teachers of his time, but having no official rôle, he wrote numerous poems on love and pleasure, dedicated elegies to the great members of his family, or described their palaces in poems which have remained famous. He wrote a 417-line *urjūza* for his cousin, the Caliph al-Muʿtaḍid (276–289/892–902), who invited him to settle in Baghdad. His work is of first-class quality, particularly in his descriptive passages. An enthusiastic huntsman, he composed fifty-four *ṭardīyyāt*, including forty-four in the *rajaḥ* metre. He also wrote three interesting works: the *Kitāb al-Badī*<sup>c</sup>, one of the first studies of figures of speech; the *Ṭabaqāt al-sbuʿarāʾ al-muḥdathīn*, which combine anecdotes and poems, many of which are not to be found elsewhere; and a Bacchic anthology, *Fuṣūl al-tamāthīl fī tabāshīr al-surūr* (Chapter of Examples in the First Signs of Joy), which also records subjects of discussion in literary circles. The work of this well-read prince and poet partakes of the three types of canonical poetry we have described, while conferring on them the natural poise of a man of his rank. He loves with elegance, drinks without excess and praises with dignity, and his language confirms that in all these genres classicism has finally found its place. Poems of pleasure now reflected social relations, which thus toned down their violence.

Also in the tenth century we note the *khamriyyāt* of Kushājim, al-Šanawbarī and al-Waʿwāʿ, ‘a Damascene poet of simple and harmonious language [who] returned to the Bacchic tradition in rediscovering, sometimes with felicity, the Nawwāsian inspiration.’<sup>10</sup>

## The meditation on being and the four last things

In the same way as love poetry and the expression of desire, spiritual poetry broke away from canonical writing. In the eighth century, the Basran preacher Šāliḥ b. ‘Abd al-Quddūs, executed for *ẓandaqa* in 166/783, and the Baghdad poet Maḥmūd al-Warrāq (d. 229/844) set the pattern for ascetic poetry, *ẓuhdiyya*. But it was Abu-l-‘Atāhiya (129–209/747–825) who established its pedigree. Born in Kufa of an Aramaean family converted to Islam, he was of very modest social background and frequented in Baghdad the licentious group of poets referred to above. He pronounced the eulogy of the Caliph al-Mahdī (158–168/775–785) and composed panegyrics in which he commemorated the pro-Arab policy of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (169–193/786–809). His love poems, dedicated to ‘Utba, drew attention. After some years of a brilliant and eventful existence, he turned to the poetry of asceticism. He chose to express himself concisely, even if one of his poems runs exceptionally to 300 lines; he used short metres and a language of great simplicity, for which he was criticized in the same way as he was to be criticized for not singing the praise of Islam and its Prophet. Some critics have even regarded him as a heretic influenced by Manichaeism. The truth is that he expressed a fervent meditation on death and the vanity of existence. He thus came close to the form of mystical expression epitomized from the beginning of the seventh century by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 109/728), Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya (d. 187/801) and Dhu-l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 244/859), and culminating in al-Ḥallāj (242–309/857–922). But was he really a poet? As Louis Massignon noted, he did not consider himself as one. When his *diwān* was compiled in the eleventh century, it was in the form of *maqāmāt*. While he is listed in dictionaries of poets, the eleven poems and sixty-nine fragments which remain, touched up and even censored, reveal that this is a moot question. The Šūfī style is so internalized that texts which have no poetic form – pauses, *mawāqif*, prayers, prose passages – are charged with a power which has no need of verse to express itself. Moreover, a poem may be found in a prose treatise by way of illustration, for example the *Kitāb al-‘Atf*, a treatise on mystical love by al-Daylamī (d. early eleventh century). Even the fundamental registers of the poetry of *taṣawwuf* – the longing for love, *‘ishq*, the intoxication of losing oneself in God, the call to self-immolation – all encompass medieval Arabic

10. J. E. Bencheikh, art. ‘Khamriyya’, in *ET*<sup>2</sup>.

poetry far more than they are encompassed by it. Symbols, metaphors and vocabulary are worked on with a soaring mysticism to the point where they cannot be analysed without conducting a deep doctrinal investigation. Borrowings from Bacchic poetry, the *ghazal* and elegies involve such a metamorphosis of language that it is no longer possible to establish a link with a school or genre. Not until our own period can one find a style of writing which is so free from rules, or reduces them to absurd conventions.

What may be called the poetry of the eleventh century is dominated from afar by the vastly imposing personality of Abu-l-‘Alā’ Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ma‘arrī (362–449/973–1058). Born of a family of Shāfi‘ī scholars which included magistrates and poets, he became blind at the age of four. He was given a thorough education, in part by his father, a great connoisseur of poetry to whom he dedicated a beautiful funeral elegy in 394/1004. He travelled to Syria and to Baghdad, where he stayed for several months working in libraries. In 400/1010, he retired to Ma‘arrat al-Nu‘mān, which he was to leave only once more in his life, in 416/1026, ‘a prisoner in his two prisons’, blindness and his dwelling-place. A vegetarian, roughly clad, refusing to marry since he considered procreation a sin and saw no solution to the problem of humanity save extermination, he was without doubt a very singular character. He fell foul of Baghdadian theologians, but his dwelling was visited frequently by ministers, scholars and disciples. He corresponded extensively, in verse or prose, with outstanding personalities, some of whom were to comment on his poetic work. He became closely involved with Ismā‘īlis, who visited him in 438/1047 and 448/1057 at the time when the Cairere Fāṭimids were trying to rally the Syrian chiefs against the Saljūqs, who were now in power in Baghdad.

Al-Ma‘arrī wrote two collections of poems. The *Saqt al-ḥand* (The Spark of the Flint), reflects contemporary events such as the decline of the Ḥamdānids in Aleppo, the rise of the Mirdāsids, Byzantine and Fāṭimid threats to northern Syria and the sieges of Aleppo. The panegyrics, dedicated for example to a Fāṭimid general, a senior Ḥamdānid functionary, or even to Sa‘īd al-Dawla, are usually in the classical form, even if they are not introduced by a *nasīb*. His eulogies are sometimes excessive and were regretted by the poet himself. His second collection, *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* (The Non-Obligatory Requirements) was given this title since the author felt he must use a specially rich rhyme scheme. He presented it as ‘an admonition to the forgetful and a warning to the negligent... a word of caution to a world which disregards God. Yet his existential and religious meditation is in no way orthodox. He trusts reason more than faith. He takes a look at human beings and sees little justification for their lives. He examines the mediation of the Prophet and has little or no belief in resurrection and divine retribution. His opinions were harshly attacked by men such as Ibn al-Jawzī (519–596/1126–1200), his grandson Sibṭī (580–653/1185–1256) and Ibn al-Qifṭī (567–645/1172–1248), but were supported in an epistle by Ibn al-‘Adīm (567–660/1192–1262). He

also rose to his own defence in a partly conserved text, the *Zajr al-nābih* (The Carper Rebuked). A great admirer of al-Mutanabbī, he peopled the next world with poets in his *Risālat al-ghufrān* (The Letter of Pardon) and wrote several works on poetry: *Muʿjiz Ahmad* (The Miracle of Ahmad) and *al-Lāmiʿ al-ʿazīzī* contain commentaries on al-Mutanabbī; *ʿAbath al-walīd* (The Jest of the Boy) is remarkable both for its critical establishment of the text of the *dīwān* of al-Buḥturī and for its lexical, grammatical and metrical analysis of that text. *Dhikrā Ḥabīb* (Remembrance of Ḥabīb) deals with the *Dīwān* of Abū Tammām.

## ADAB LITERATURE IN THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

*Abdallah Cheikh-Moussa*

### Adab and power

The Golden Age of what since the last century has been known as classical Arabic literature (*adab*) lies between the ninth and twelfth centuries. Its early works are characterized by 'a concern for literary elaboration, recourse to the appropriate resources of the language, especially phonetic',<sup>1</sup> and a predominance of ethical themes. This literature was developed mainly by *kuttāb* (scribes) who were non-Arabs (*mawālī*) working for the caliphal administration: Sālim Abu-l-ʿAlāʾ (active c. 105–125/724–743), ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā (d. 132/750), Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 139/757),<sup>2</sup> and Sahl b. Hārūn (d. 214/830).<sup>3</sup> The use of the written word seems in fact to be directly linked with power, and from the end of the eighth century onwards tends to be used as a strategic instrument of political practice, springing from the ruler's order or will. From

1. A. Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11<sup>ème</sup> siècle*, (Civilisation et sociétés 7, 37, 68, 78), Paris, Mouton, 1967–1988.
2. I. ʿAbbās, 'Naẓra jadīda fī baʿd al-kutub li-Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ', *Majallat al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī al-ʿArabī*, 52, 1977; J. Ashtiany et al., (eds.), *ʿAbbasid Belles-lettres*, (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983; P. Charles-Dominique, 'Le système éthique d'Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ d'après ses deux épîtres dites 'al-Ṣaḡīr' et 'al-Kabīr', *Arabica*, 12, 1965, pp. 45–66; F. Gabrieli, 'L'opera di Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ', *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 13, 1931–1932, pp. 197–247; S. D. Goitein, 'A Turning Point in the History of the Muslim State', in his *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1966; Ch. Pellat, *Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, mort vers 140/757, 'Conseiller du calife'*, (Publications du Département d'Islamologie de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 2), Paris, G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1976; D. Sourdel, 'La biographie d'Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ d'après les sources anciennes', *Arabica*, 1, 1954, pp. 307–323.
3. M. Yaji, *Sahl b. Harun: vie de l'écrivain et glanes encore existants*, unpublished thesis, Sorbonne, Paris, 1956; A. Mehiri, *Les théories grammaticales d'Ibn Jinnī*, (Publications de l'Université de Tunis, VI<sup>e</sup> Série, Philosophie Littéraire, 5), Tunis, Université de Tunis, 1973; al-Kaʿbī, *Sahl b. Hārūn*, Tunis, 1980.



this time, too, the figure of the *kātib* begins to emerge. This term denotes an official, but also, particularly when it is someone of the calibre of Sālim Abu-l-‘Alā’ or ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib, a master of the written word and a guide, if not a necessary intermediary, of the prince’s actions. The duty of promoting an ideology, formerly the privilege of the poet (*shā‘ir*), of the scholar, theologian or traditionalist (‘*ālim*), of the orator (*khaṭīb*) or the preacher (*qāṣṣ*), now fell to the *kātib*.

The scanty texts which have come down to us from these early writers are, on the one hand, private or official correspondence, the latter being regarded as unsurpassable stylistic models prescribed for the whole Arabic-Islamic administration; on the other, such works as a ‘Correspondence’ between Aristotle and Alexander translated into Arabic by Sālim Abu-l-‘Alā’,<sup>4</sup> Director of the chancellery under Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik; letters (*rasā‘il*), mostly very short, like the last Umayyad caliph’s to his son, edited by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib;<sup>5</sup> and finally fables, such as the renowned *Kalīla wa-Dimna*<sup>6</sup> of Ibn al-Muqaffa’, translated from a Pahlavi version of the Indian *Pančatantra*,<sup>7</sup> or the *Book of the Panther and the Fox* by Sahl b. Hārūn. Whether written originally in Arabic, adapted, or translated, on the initiative of the *kātib* or by order of the prince, all these works make up what could be called an art of government: of oneself and others. Their fundamental aim is to structure the exercise of power by instituting a new practice of ethics and politics and codifying social interaction, or more precisely relations between the ruler and his entourage and between the different members of that élite group.

The function of the *kātib*, with its assumed dependence on power, is also found, though in a less institutionalized way, in the *adīb*, who produced the writings known as *adab*. With the emergence of this personage, the prince,

4. M. Grignaschi, ‘Les “Rasā’il Aristātālīs ilā-l-Iskander” de Sālim Abu-l-‘Alā’ et l’activité culturelle à l’époque omayyade’, *Bulletin des Etudes Orientales*, 19, 1967, pp. 7-83; *idem*, ‘Le roman épistolaire classique conservé dans la version arabe de Sālim abu-l-‘Alā’, *Le Muséon*, 80, pp. 211-269, 1967b; *idem*, ‘La “Siyāsatu-l-‘Āmmiyya” et l’influence iranienne sur la pensée politique islamique’, in *Monumentum H. S. Nyberg*, 3, (*Acta Iranica*, 6), Leiden, E. J.
5. I. ‘Abbās (ed.), ‘*Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā al-Kātib wa-mā tabaqqā min rasā’ilihī wa-rasā’il Sālim Abi-l-‘Alā’*’, Beirut, Tawzī‘ al-Markaz al-‘Arabī, 1988; A.F.L. Beeston *et al.*, *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, 1) Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983; A. Cheikh-Moussa, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Yaḥyā (al-Kātib)’, in B. Didier (ed.), *Dictionnaire Universel des Littératures*, 3 vols., Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1994; A. Schönig, *Das Sendschreiben des ‘Abd alḤamīd b. Yaḥyā (gest. 132/750) an den Kronprinzen ‘Abdallāh b. Marwān II*, Wiesbaden/Stuttgart, F. Steiner, 1985.
6. Many editions of these fables have been issued on the basis of very late manuscripts. Thus, it is impossible today to distinguish between Ibn al-Muqaffa’s own writing and rewriting or additions of later centuries; cf. e.g. Ibn al-Muqaffa’, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ed. M.H.N. al-Murṣafī, fourth ed., Beirut, 1981; L. Cheikho, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, 12.ed., Beirut, 1973; A. Miquel (trans.), *Le Livre de Kalīla et Dimna*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1957.
7. E. Lancereau, *Pančatantra*, intr. by L. Renou, Paris, Gallimard, 1965.

caliph, vizier or provincial governor – through the practice of dedication and patronage of literary works – continued to be the first recipient of *adab*, and his circle the place where these works were most frequently received, judged and their authors duly appraised. The court circle formed what was in effect an assessment panel<sup>8</sup> and had some influence on the nature of *adab*, its form and its themes, and on the success and the circulation of the works. This was the place where the *adīb* had to face not only rivals, hardly likely to be sympathetic, but also a prince who was well informed and a connoisseur of poetry and belles-lettres and who might himself have been a poet or scholar. As the only real arbiter of style, of art and letters,<sup>9</sup> his pleasure was unquestioned and his verdict was usually unchallenged.

## A place for dialogue

With its aphorisms, proverbs, exemplary verses, its short edifying narratives and amusing anecdotes, *adab* is at one and the same time the product of, and destined for, the cenacles of the prince and his high officials, where the art of conversation and disputation was a vital requirement and the only really effective weapon. All these fragments were put before the ‘man of the court’ to shine and to convince, to embellish a discourse or support an argument and, by the same token, to reduce opponents and competitors to silence. It is certainly for this reason that so little place is given to action in the texts known as *adab*, including the Sessions (*Maqāmāt*) of al-Hamadhānī<sup>10</sup> and al-Ḥarīrī<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 1), *The Physicians’ Banquet* (*Da‘wat al-aṭībā*) of Ibn Buṭlān,<sup>12</sup> *The Epistle of Pardon* (*Risālat al-ghufrān*) of Abu-l-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī,<sup>13</sup> and, to a lesser degree, the *Narrative* (*ḥikāya*) of Abu-l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī by Abu-l-Muṭahhar al-Azdi.<sup>14</sup>

8. J. E. Bencheikh, ‘Le cénacle poétique du calife al-Mutawwakil (m. 247 H.): contribution à l’analyse des instances de légitimation socio-littéraires’, *Bulletin des Etudes Orientales*, 29, 1977; *idem*, *Poétique arabe: essai sur les voies d’une création*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989.
9. G. E. von Grunebaum, ‘Aspects of Arabic Urban Literature mostly in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries’, *al-Andalus*, 20, 1955, pp. 259–281, 1955, pp. 276–281; also in *Islamic Studies*, 8, 1969, pp. 292–295, and in his *Themes in Medieval Arabic Literature*, London, 1981.
10. Al-Hamadhānī, *al-Maqāmāt*, ed. M. ‘Abduh, Cairo, 1889.
11. Al-Ḥarīrī, *Les séances de Hariri*, ed. and trans. Silvestre de Sacy, 2nd ed., revised by J. T. Reinaud and J. Derenbourg, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1847.
12. F. Klein-Franke (trans.), *Das Ärztebankett*, Stuttgart, Hippokrates, 1984; *idem* (ed. and trans.), *The Physicians’ Dinner Party*, Wiesbaden, O. Harrassowitz, 1985.
13. Al-Ma‘arrī, *Risālat al-ghufrān*, ed. A. Bint al-Shāṭi’, 5th ed., Cairo, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1969.
14. A. Mez, *Hikayat Abi al-Qasim al-Bagdadi: Abulkāsim, ein Bagdāder Sittenbild*, Heidelberg, C. Winter, 1902. This work has been re-edited by ‘A. al-Shalji, 1980, who attributes it to Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī with the title *al-Risāla al-Baghdādīyya*, see A. al-Shalji (ed.), *al-Risāla al-Baghdādīyya*, Beirut, Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub, 1980. See also F. Gabrieli, ‘Sulla “Ḥikāyat Abi-l-Qāsim” di Abu-l-Muṭahhar al-Azdi’, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, 20, 1942, pp. 33–45.

وَأَثَرُهُمُ الصَّوَابُ وَالْغَلَطُ وَإِنْ جَلِيَّتَهُ الْحَكْمُ عِنْدِي فَأَرْضُوا بِتَقْدِيرِي وَلَا تَسْتَفْتُوا أَحَدًا



بِعَدِّي هـ اعْلَمُوا أَنَّ صِنَاعَةَ الْأَنْشَاءِ أَنْفَعُ وَمَا عَدَى الْإِسْمَاعِيلِيَّةِ إِلَّا الْكَلْبَةُ

II-2.1 Maqāmāt of al-Ḥarīrī

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Pride of place is given instead to dialogues, declamations and various kinds of discourse. The arts of language are here enhanced and put forward as the only means of persuasion. It would seem that this is also why the works of *adab*, and in particular the great anthologies, appear so exceedingly heterogeneous. For, in effect, we see here a succession of fragments, quoted just as they are and strung together, without the 'composer' (*mu'allif*) having tried to integrate them into a single account. Al-Jāhiz (d. 254/868) asserted that *adab* means 'taking a little of everything (*al-akhdh min kull shay' bi-ṭaraf*)' and since the last century he has often been quoted, leading to the conclusion that *adab* had always adopted as its method compilation and repetition, eclecticism and digression, with a deplorable lack of coherence or cohesion, which was thus said to be the distinguishing feature of classical Arabic literature.

However, to take this view is to forget that to compile or compose an eclectic work, it is necessary to proceed by means of selection and re-organization. While the *adab* text may consist not only of the expressions and words of its presumed author but also of previously existing texts, this does not mean that all the author has done is to copy or plagiarize; on the contrary, this text rereads, rewrites and redistributes the materials in a different way. It makes use of them for its own ends, as the basis for its own authenticity. The other texts are not used simply as quotations, but as raw material, and one can almost speak in this context, with Cl. Lévi-Strauss,<sup>15</sup> of 'bricolage'.

If, then, an *adab* work reprocesses materials which have already done duty elsewhere in other texts, in other situations, or even in other cultures, this is in order to reconstruct them with a new significance and with different aims. By fitting them into a new structure, with a different layout, it gives them a new rôle. The fragments thus reused are given a resonance and, consequently, make the *adab* text 'dialogic', a space of confrontation and controversy, affirmation or denial. The relationship between these varied fragments can be one of conflict. The text which receives them, or more precisely contains them, brings together very disparate kinds of discourse which then enter into dialogue, oppose one another and argue, thus entering the genre of disputation. It can also be negative, when the old materials are taken up and assembled, only to be rejected, denied, by the current context. Similarly, it can be affirmative. When the different elements thus juxtaposed are not in opposition to the framework in which they are placed, but echo, renew and affirm an identical meaning, they are the authority which guarantees its recognition and the basis of its truthfulness. The relationship between these varied fragments is reminiscent of the discussions in the literary gatherings (*majlis*) or in the *ḥalaqa* of a mosque or *madrassa*, gatherings of students or scholars around a master. The conclusion and the lesson drawn, which give meaning and cohesion to the whole discussion or to the confrontation between the various fragments, are

15. Cl. Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*, Paris, Plon, 1962, pp. 26-47.

left to the reader, or more precisely the listener. For these works, although composed in written form, were very often communicated and circulated 'orally'.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the lack of precision, the complexity and infrequency of the act of writing, and similarly the unaccommodating nature and relative expense of the material, and thus the unavailability of books,<sup>17</sup> meant that the vast majority of texts, at least until the tenth century, were conveyed orally in mosques, later in educational establishments, or in private cenacles belonging to a man of high rank or a scholar who was in vogue.

Borrowings, whether from predecessors or even contemporaries, were not considered reprehensible at that period and can therefore not be classed as plagiarism (*sariqa*). Authenticity does not seem to have been a major concern of the ancient 'authors'. Al-Ḥuṣṭī (d. 412/1022) puts this very clearly and very neatly in his *Jam' al-jawābir* (The Collection of Jewels): 'When these virginal anecdotes are sought in marriage, their genealogy is not questioned (*wa-huwa adab la yukhṭabu abkāruhu bi-l-nasab*).'<sup>18</sup> It was, however, vital that a text should be attributed to an author, for this was a measure of its reliability. Unless related to a name, or to an authority, a statement could not be taken into consideration. However, this attribution and the concept of authorship which it assumes are very different from what we understand by authorship today. In all probability closely modelled on the *Ḥadīth*, the transmission of the Traditions of the Prophet, 'the author's function fits into a strategy of the validation of knowledge, a whole system of knowledge enclosed by the *sanad*, a network of masters on whom authority has been conferred across space and time; the author is regarded only as an intermediary, a transmitter of knowledge whose validity rests on his own reputation; he is not seen so much as a separate individual, but merely as a link in the vast network to which he of necessity belongs.'<sup>19</sup>

Like its 'author', the *adab* text works within a system referring to other texts, other discourses. The relationships of this 'singular' text with all its predecessors and contemporaries will then duplicate those of the author with the chain of authorities in whose wake he follows and the relationship between the selected fragments established through their sharing the same space. Thus, the *adab* text only has meaning with reference to all that which it evokes and which would undoubtedly be present in the mind of the reader or listener of that time. Its unity is thus fundamentally variable and relative and

16. See our 'Présence et effets de la voix dans les textes d'adab', in *Voice et calame en Islam médiéval*, ed. Y. Ragheb, *Arabica* 44, 1997, pp. 333-435.

17. We must remember that the diacritical points, for instance, were not used in a systematic way before the tenth century.

18. Al-Ḥuṣṭī, *Jam' al-jawābir*, ed. 'A.M. al-Bijāwī, Cairo, 1953, p. 111.

19. A. Cheddadi, *Le voyage d'Occident et d'Orient. Ibn Khaldun: autobiographie présentée et traduite de l'arabe*, (Bibliothèque Arabe), Paris, Sindbad, 1980, p. 21.

its significance unstable: it is only built up, and can only be grasped, on the basis of the total sum of discourses to which it is related, whether by refuting them or agreeing with them. It is often said that *adab* texts have no coherence. They do, but it is of a totally different kind. This is not a coherence of a linear or ‘chronological’ nature – as for instance in texts which are mainly narrative – but rather a matter essentially of association or topology.

So there is continuity and, at the same time, a modifying process of creation between a single text and the series of texts, preceding or contemporary, which it uses or merely refers to. However, the more this reproduction of ancient discourses and narratives is simply repetition, the more *adab* tends to become a literature of stereotypes, and its works become anthologies of varying comprehensiveness.

### Religious or profane literature?

*Adab* has long been considered as profane literature which must be held completely distinct from religious literature bearing the stamp of Islam. To paraphrase the words of Francesco Gabrieli, for instance, we may say that from the first century of the Hijra, *adab* took on an intellectual meaning which was added to the original ethical and social meaning, before a further distinction was made: *adab* is the totality of knowledge and know-how which renders a man courteous and urbane, it is profane culture (in contrast to *‘ilm*, science, or rather religious science, Qurʾān, *Ḥadīth* and *fiqh*).<sup>20</sup>

It should be noted that between the sacred and profane, the temporal and spiritual, there is hardly any contradiction or incompatibility which could allow *adab* writings to be distinguished from those described as religious and which deal with the same subjects or related themes. Furthermore, the interpenetration of the religious, of whatever persuasion, and the profane was so complete in the minds and culture of the period that it would be at best artificial, if not anachronistic, to try to separate them clearly. The religious inspiration and tone of the *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*<sup>21</sup> (The Book of Animals) of al-Jāhīz are no less obvious than in the *‘Uyūn al-akhbār*<sup>22</sup> (The Wells of Information) of Ibn Qutayba (d. 275/889) or even the *Makārim al-akhlāq* (The Noble Qualities of Character) of Ibn Abi-l-Dunyā (d. 260/874).<sup>23</sup> Besides, these writers were all theologians, even if al-Jāhīz belonged to the Muʿtazilite tendency, usually considered more rationalist, while the other two were more traditional. ‘Know

20. The brackets are those of F. Gabrieli, see art. ‘*Adab*’, *EF*<sup>2</sup>.

21. Al-Jāhīz, *Rasāʾil al-Jāhīz*, ed. ‘A. M. Hārūn, 2 vols., Cairo, Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1965–1979.

22. Ibn Qutayba, *‘Uyūn al-akhbār*, ed. A. Z. al-‘Adawī, 4 vols., Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1923–1930

23. See J. A. Bellamy, *The Noble Qualities of Character by Ibn Abi-d-Dunyā*, (Bibliotheca Islamica, 25), Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1973.

then', said al-Jāhīz in his epistles *On the Future Life and the Life here Below*,<sup>24</sup> 'that *adab* writings are instruments as useful in the spiritual life as in temporal affairs (*wa-li-anna-l-adab innamā hiya ālāt taṣluḥu an tusta'mala fi-l-dīn wa-tusta'mala fi-l-dunyā*).'

This affirmation, already put forward by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd and in the introduction to *al-Adab al-kabīr* of Ibn al-Muqaffa',<sup>25</sup> whose Islamic convictions are questioned, was continually repeated. Thus, Ibn Qutayba writes in his *'Uyūn al-akhbār*:

The path which leads to God is not one, and the Good is not contained only in nightly prayers and continual fasting and in the knowledge of the lawful and the unlawful. The paths which lead to Him are many, and the doors of the Good are wide. The religious order goes hand in hand with the temporal (*wa-laysa-l-ṭarīq ila-llāh wāḥidan wa-lā kull al-khayr mujtami'an fi tabajjud al-layl wa-sard al-ṣiyām wa-'ilm al-ḥalāl wa-l-ḥarām bal al-ṭuruq ilaybi kathīra wa-abwāb al-khayr wāsi'a wa-ṣalāḥ al-dīn bi-ṣalāḥ al-ẓamān*).<sup>26</sup>

*'Ilm*, religious science as Francesco Gabrieli understands it, can thus be opposed to *adab* only in the sense that, in setting forth the ideal rules of behaviour which should assure happiness in this life as in the next, it is based directly upon a precise corpus of dogma and established laws (*sharī'a*). These, with their necessary dependence on the Qur'ān, *Ḥadīth* and the decisions of the great Companions of the Prophet or of the masters of theological-legal schools, define what is lawful and what is not.

*Adab* in itself never refers explicitly to the doctrinal corpus which forms its basis, nor to a precise legal framework, but always to a *doxa*, an opinion, or to a Tradition which is deemed to have decided what is fitting or blameworthy, appropriate and effective. This opinion can be conveyed by the sources or the great figures just mentioned, as well as by pre-Islamic and non-Muslim figures. Starting from here, it is true the aims of *adab* and *'ilm* can diverge. The former seems to aim only at consent and persuasion, while the latter, by the sword, if necessary, or threat of damnation, seeks to impose the Truth, a single intangible truth, as it is declared to be of divine origin and all must therefore

24. Al-Jāhīz, '*Risālat al-ma'ād wa-l-ma'āsh*' [also known as '*Fi-l-adab*'], in *idem*, *Rasā'il...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 87–134, and in *idem*, *Majmū'at rasā'il al-Jāhīz*, ed. P. Kraus and M. T. al-Ḥājīrī, 1979, VIII; French trans. by Ch. Vial, *al-Ġāhīz: quatre essais: arba'a rasā'il li-l-Jāhīz*, (Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire. Textes et Traductions d'Auteurs Orientaux, 8), Cairo, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1976–1979.

25. In M. Kurd 'Alī, (ed.), *Rasā'il al-bulaghā'*, 3rd. ed., Cairo, Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1365/1946, pp. 40–106.

26. Ibn Qutayba, *'Uyūn al-akhbār*, *op. cit.*, p. yā'. For a revised translation, see G. Lecomte, *Ibn Qutayba (mort en 276/889): l'homme, son œuvre, ses idées*, Damascus, Institut Français de Damas, 1965, p. 423.

submit to it. Finally, Francesco Gabrieli's proposed definition of *'ilm* is very reductionist. It does not pay any attention to the other branches of learning (*'ulūm*) of the time, which are also governed by precise and supposedly immutable rules, such as grammar, geometry and arithmetic.<sup>27</sup>

## An all-embracing literature

Equally, it would be reductionist to say that the purpose given to *adab* is one of education in the spheres of morality and culture and to seek to dissociate these two spheres. From its beginnings, *adab* was seen as an all-embracing literature. Setting out to be both a mirror of the subject and a mirror of human society,<sup>28</sup> it sought to guide in equal measure both knowledge and action, which it states are inseparable (*al-'ilm wa-l-'amal bibi*). The works of Ibn al-Muqaffa<sup>c</sup>, and even more those of al-Jāhīz, Ibn Qutayba, Ibn 'Abd Rabbih<sup>29</sup> (d. 328/940), al-Tawhīdī (d. 413/1023) and al-Ḥuṣṣī<sup>30</sup> (d. 412/1022), and all those works known collectively as '*Mirrors for Princes*' (*naṣīhat al-mulūk*, literally 'advice for kings'),<sup>31</sup> are a perfect illustration, though in differing degrees, of this pragmatic determination to be all-inclusive. It is, to say the least, illusory and artificial to try to distinguish different types or categories within what the ancient authors call *adab*, and to affirm, for example, that

as soon as the transition occurs from oral to written transmission, the precepts, rules of conduct, traditional knowledge and the teachings which make up this *adab* give rise to three categories of books. The first comprises writings of a moral nature, what could be called the *adab* of exhortation; the second, collections for the use of society men and composed of fragments of prose or verses, of various traditions, of witticisms, of anecdotes which can be put to good use in refined conversation, the *adab* of worldly culture, to which is attached the *adab* of good manners; the third, manuals intended for members of certain intellectual professions, types of guide or vade-mecum, the *adab* of professional training.<sup>32</sup>

27. See al-Jāhīz, *Rasa'ul*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 35, where he contrasts *adab* with '*ilm* and 'the true, the false, prodigality, economy, the serious and the amusing' with '[calli]graphy, arithmetic, grammar, rules of inheritance and metrics'.
28. The *Book of Animals* (*Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*) of al-Jāhīz is certainly the most successful example.
29. Ibn 'Abd Rabbihī, *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, ed. A. Amīn et al., 7 vols., Cairo, Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, 1944–1954.
30. Al-Ḥuṣṣī, *Zahr al-ādab wa-thamar al-albāb*, ed. 'A. M. al-Bijāwī, Cairo, 1969.
31. *Mirrors for Princes* are understood in the sense of political mirrors intended for a whole élite, for the prince, his companions, and all those with ambitions to be at court.
32. Ch. Pellat, 'Variations sur le thème de l'adab', in *Correspondance d'Orient. Etudes*, V–VI, Brussels, 1964, p. 21; also in *idem*, *Etudes sur l'histoire socio-culturelle de l'Islam (I<sup>er</sup>–XI<sup>es</sup> s.)*, London, Variorum Reprints, 1976.



Ibn Qutayba is wrongly accused by moderns of having cut back and limited the horizon of *adab* in trying to codify it. Yet he, in the introduction to his *‘Uyūn al-akbbār*, clearly attributes to this literature the task of including all aspects of human existence and activity: knowledge, belief, the art of fine speaking and writing, action, the relationship to oneself and others, etc. He even goes as far as to recall that his various works are only successive stages of a single process of education. The three categories of books which some have seen fit to distinguish are, in fact, but the stones of one and the same building and the necessary components of ‘a complete art of being’. In addition, he suggests that the apprentice *adīb* should take in the whole field of what is known or can be known, covering all the areas of a topic, of an unending space, which thus calls for additions, new developments or different arrangements.<sup>33</sup> Were it not for this desire to include everything, it would be hard to explain the tendency towards encyclopaedism which *adab* developed from the end of the tenth century onwards.

### Literature of exemplarity

Whether *adab* took the form of an epistle or an anthology, its main object was to set out rules of conduct, to provide maxims and advice for conversation or action as was deemed appropriate. Its value is both aesthetic and directive, setting a model for a man’s development. Whether they come from myth or history, whether attributed to Arabs, Persians or Greeks, the narratives and sayings which this literature contains are proffered in order to be enjoyed, meditated upon and imitated. *Adab* texts generally proceed in one of two ways. They start with an episode in the life of some real or legendary person, or with an individual saying, which they transform into a universal model of behaviour and through which they present an example of major principles or moral values which should be the basis of behaviour or speech. Conversely, they can transform a universal paradigm of ethics into a specific narrative, a particular story, or a fable, thus giving an illustration and example of the conduct or speech regarded as appropriate in a particular situation. Even the *nādīra* and *mulḥa*, amusing narrative and witticism, where the intention to amuse and entertain would seem to be uppermost, involved the ethical-rhetorical dimension, and the emphasis is laid on the aesthetic and edifying value of the story or saying in question. It is indeed this ever-present ethical element which, for the learned tradition, distinguishes *adab* from so-called popular literature and which leads to the exclusion from literature of stories like, for example, those of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

33. On the concept of ‘mirror’ or *speculum* in the Middle Ages as an open scholarly genre and on the purposes of compilations, see M. Beaujour, *Miroirs d’encre: rhétorique de l’antiportrait*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1980, pp. 30–34 and 171–185.

Taking as its starting-point examples recognized as models of knowledge and of action – virtuous ancestors, the masters of learning and lofty language, ancient sages or great names of Arabic poetry and oratory – *adab* has aspects in common with the Greek *paideia*,<sup>34</sup> understood in the humanistic sense of a conscious ideal of culture and of self-perfection and based on an a-historical concept of *‘aql* (reason or common sense) considered as the universal instrument of the Good and the Beautiful. A timeless and intangible, and also an aesthetic, ethical and socio-political order from then on found itself withdrawn from the contingency inherent in an individual, a particular social group or a particular period. Once separated from a particular time, the contents of these ancient texts and the attitudes of great personages of the past remain topical, and the norms preserved by tradition still efficient.

The knowledge conveyed by *adab* is, in fact, always already there. It exists prior to its possessor, who has the duty to transmit it. ‘*Adab* is nothing more than the *‘aql* of others which you add to your own (*wa-innama-l-adab ‘aql ghairika tazīduhu fī ‘aqlika*),’ said al-Jāhīz.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, it is an experiment by proxy; the experience of others, earlier or contemporary, is introduced to add its own contribution and round off one’s own personal experience. However, this common sense and the knowledge it requires need to be internalized. At any rate with the authors of the classical period, the tradition is not seen as a ready-made truth, which only needs to be repeated and must be followed blindly. It must be rediscovered, if not completely re-invented, with the help of the right intellectual disposition, an inquiring mind and perseverance. The true *adīb* is someone who is able to revivify and actualize it by taking it over for himself, as much through thought and feeling as speech and action.

At the end of the quest (*ṭalab al-adab*), the grantee is bound to modify radically his existential system. At the end of his apprenticeship or initiation, *ta’addub*, he is considered to have moved into a completely different existence from the one he led before. He must become, strictly speaking, another person. What *adab* urges him to do is to comply with a real discipline, in every possible sense of the word. He must cover all the areas of instruction, that is, the various branches of learning, with the corollary of direction of conscience, and this will confer polished behaviour and refined language. Also necessary are the upholding and observation of norms shared by members of a social group and intended as a means of ensuring good order and harmony. As B. Lafaye said, this discipline ‘teaches one to be what one should be and the way to achieve it, it leaves less freedom; it covers all the details of behaviour; it

34. On this, see the classic study by W. Jaeger, *Paideia, la formation de l’homme grec*, trans. A. and S. Devyver, Paris, Gallimard, 1964.

35. Al-Jāhīz, *Risālat al-ma’ād wa-l-ma’āsh*, op. cit., p. 6; see also the introduction to the *Adab al-kabīr* of Ibn al-Muqaffa’.

does not even allow one to do good, if one has not been so instructed'.<sup>36</sup> *Adab* can therefore be considered as a 'form of subjectivation.' On the one hand, it seeks to compel the reader or listener to act in conformity with the patterns and exemplary figures of the Tradition, a tradition which it develops, communicates and renews, and which, with its authoritative discourse, justifies this subservience. On the other hand, it aims to make the reader/listener into a conscious, thoughtful, ethical 'subject', one who considers his behaviour and his actions, and who consequently should seek to improve, to reform himself, not because he is forced to by the rule of law, but because he has internalized the will to transform himself and the models set before him.<sup>37</sup>

In this regard, it should be noted that the self-knowledge so highly prized by *adab* is not the same as that preached by the religious moralists or the mystics. For these it may entail fleeing from the things of everyday life, drawing apart so as to practise self-observation better and examining one's conduct or inclinations in order to reform them and bring oneself into line with the divine will and directions. For its part *adab* asks the *adīb*, a member of the élite, to indulge in serious reflections on his conduct in order the better to be able to judge his relationships with others, to discipline his conduct as a man of the world and to acquire greater 'distinction' and effectiveness. And if a man is required to know himself and his own passions as he does those of all men, this is to be more able to interpret the slightest movement or change in others' attitudes to himself, while concealing his own and revealing nothing.

### A 'caste ethos'

Knowledge and culture acquired through *adab* are thus not an end in themselves, but help shape a man and give him self-mastery and control over others. However, they are also sought as a 'sign of social distinction (and) as a mark of belonging to an élite.'<sup>38</sup> *Adab* was addressed to the *khāṣṣa*, the socio-political, but also the intellectual and linguistic, élite, and to it alone. Thus, as A. Kilito remarks, *adab* was in fact 'incompatible with the common people or with any vulgarity, it is bound up with the well-born, and with the refined language. Speaking of *adab* (necessarily) entails explicit or implicit reference to a social level and a level of language.'<sup>39</sup> Al-Jāhīz, for example, speaking of his

36. *Dictionnaire des synonymes de la langue française*, Paris, 8th ed., 1903.

37. See M. Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité, 2: l'usage des plaisirs*, Paris, Gallimard, 1984, pp. 32–39.

38. M. Rodinson, 'La place du merveilleux et de l'étrange dans la conscience du monde musulman médiéval', in M. Arkoun et al., *L'étrange et le merveilleux dans l'Islam médiéval. Colloque de l'Association pour l'Avancement des Etudes Islamiques*, Paris, 1978, p. 178.

39. A. Kilito, *Les séances, récits et codes culturels chez Hamadhāni et Ḥarīrī*, Paris, Sindbad, 1983, p. 172.

own writings in the opening passages of the epistle entitled *On the Difference between Enmity and Envy*, says this very clearly:

These works, beautiful, noble, illustrious, far outshine the others for their curious and beguiling stories, their elegant and refined traditions and their narratives which inspire virtue and noble actions with lasting and memorable effects... raise them to the level of the nobility of the great (*wa-innamā nabulat hādbibi-l-kutub wa-ḥasunāt wa-baraʿat wa-baddhat ghairahā li-musbākālātihā sharaf al-asbrāf bimā fibā min al-akhbār al-anīqa al-gharība wa-l-āthār al-ḥasana al-laṭīfa wa-l-aḥādīth al-bāʿitha ʿalā-l-akhlāq al-maḥmūda wa-l-makārim al-bāqiyā al-maʿthūra*).<sup>40</sup>

And if, by chance, *adab* literature should deal with other social groups or with the common people (*ʿamma*), it is always to satirize or to reprove their conduct.

Their main concern being to trace influence and search for origins, historians of classical Arabic literature very seldom inquire into the purpose of these texts and the nature of the milieu which has raised and received them. It is generally still forgotten today that all these works, even if translated from Pahlavi, Greek or other languages, were mainly intended for the prince and the court, sometimes even being directly commissioned by the ruler, whether Umayyad or ʿAbbāsīd. In this way, works, which were purely collective in their meaning, are related back to individual will and initiative.

The authors of this period were part of what we can call, with A. Greimas, a semi-autonomous socio-semiotic group, or a restricted language community; they are possessors of a particular knowledge and discursive ability which makes them form a group set apart from the rest of society and within which closed circuits of communication are set up.<sup>41</sup> Within this restricted community it is important to recognize the whole Arabic-Islamic élite, and not, as has often been suggested, only the *kuttāb* (scribes of the chancellery) of Persian origin; these, to challenge and take a stand against Arab political, social and cultural dominance, should have sought to review their past glories and their centuries-old culture. There is no doubt that there was real rivalry between the Arab members of the *khāṣṣa* and the others, who were known slightly as *shuʿūbiyya*;<sup>42</sup> but there was nonetheless a shared interest in preserving a socio-political system which would guarantee all, Arabs and Persians alike, their positions of privilege and, consequently, an equal share in devising the standards which would perpetuate this system and these positions. It is very likely, moreover, that the Arab rulers, especially the ʿAbbāsīds, an-

40. Al-Jāhīz, *Majmūʿat rasāʾil*, *op. cit.*, p. 99; see also *idem*, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. M. ʿA. Hārūn, 3rd ed., 8 vols, Cairo, Sharikat Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlādihi, III, p. 367.

41. A. Greimas, *Sémiotique et sciences sociales*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1976, pp. 25 and 53.

42. H. A. R. Gibb, 'The Social Significance of the Shuʿūbiyya', in his *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, ed. S. J. Shaw and W. R. Polk, London, Routledge/Boston, Beacon Press, 1962; R. Mottahedeh, 'The Shuʿūbiyyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 7, 1976.

xious not to be dependent on any one group, would manipulate their rivalry for marks of distinction and their struggles over the attributes and benefits of social power. Through the interplay of etiquette and the system of gifts or allowances granted to the most illustrious of their members, the cenacles certainly worked as a power structure which allowed the prince to divide and rule, balancing the tensions, and to make the disputes and the power relationships work in his favour. This would make it possible to understand why al-Jāhīz, for example, was ordered to compose, in turn, eulogy and satire on one socio-political<sup>43</sup> or ethnic group or another.<sup>44</sup> The matter in question is not an individual's inclination to recant, but an undertaking which concerns the whole of the social order, and whose purpose was not only to bring about a balance between the different groups but to place them equally in the debt of the ruler.

It is thus hardly surprising to find in *adab*, from the time of Ibn al-Muqaffa', or even of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib and his epistle addressed to chancellery scribes,<sup>45</sup> the affirmation that social superiority lies in political and symbolic submission and that this is the only means of achieving distinction and success. Hence, the insistent demand that a member of the élite, or anyone laying claim to *adab* or *ẓarf* (refinement), should become a master in what must be called the art of 'honest dissimulation'. He was required to possess certain psychological and behavioural aptitudes, as, for instance, the art of making his speech conform in style and content to established rules, which nevertheless had to take full account of circumstances, of his own position and that of the person he was talking to. The result would turn life into theatre, the most complete illustration being given in the *Mirrors for Princes* and the work of al-Washshā'<sup>46</sup> devoted to *ẓarf*. The position of the individual ruled his conversation, his actions, his attitudes, as if life were only meant as an exhibition and acting-out of this status. The man of *adab*, in order not to demean himself, had to show forth in word and deed what he was supposed to be; he had to become his own text, to be nothing other than what he said, what he appeared. There had to be a total conformity between the level of

43. He is the author of a treatise entitled *Fī dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb*, in al-Jāhīz, *Rasā'īl*, *op. cit.*, II, pp.187–209; French trans. by Ch. Pellat, 'Une charge contre les secrétaires d'Etat attribuée à Ġahīz', *Hespéris*, 49, 1956, pp.29–50; and of a eulogy on the secretaries (*Fī madḥ al-kuttāb*), a lost work which is mentioned, among others, by Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Fihrist*, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. R. Tajaddud, Tehran, 1971, p.211.

44. Al-Jāhīz is thus said to have written *Fuḍl al-'Arab 'ala-l-mawālī* (On the superiority of the Arabs over the Clients), and *Fuḍl al-mawālī 'ala-l-'Arab* (On the superiority of the Clients over the Arabs); see Ch. Pellat, 'Nouvel essai d'inventaire de l'oeuvre jahizienne', *Arabica*, 31/2, 1984, pp.117–164.

45. References in note 6.

46. Al-Washshā', *Kitāb al-Muwashshā'*, ed. R. E. Brunnow, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1886; *idem*, 1985, *Kitāb al-Zarf wa-l-ẓurafā'*, ed. F. Sa'd, Beirut, 1985; Spanish trans. by T. Farulo, Madrid, 1990.

words or behaviour and the socio-cultural and political level, a conformity which, at the same time, gave members of the *khāṣṣa* and masters of *adab* their identity and confirmed it by giving it visible expression.

Court society,<sup>47</sup> the place of origin and destination of this literature, certainly assumes some confusion between the private<sup>48</sup> and public domain. Attitudes or expressions, just like works of the intellect, are, on the one hand, judged in accordance with criteria of propriety and their suitability in aesthetic, rhetorical/discursive, social or moral terms – in short, as compared with the established models of refinement and good manners; and, on the other hand, they are experienced as so many indications of a position occupied in a strongly hierarchical system. Thus, there should be no difference between the social existence of an individual and its representation as projected by him and accepted by others. It is failure in respect of this duty which gives meaning to such works as the *Kitāb al-Hafawāt al-nādira*<sup>49</sup> (The Book of Unusual Errors) of Ghars al-Ni‘ma b. Hilāl al-Šābi<sup>3</sup> (d. 407/1017) or the *Kitāb al-Ḥamqā wa-l-mughaffalīn*<sup>50</sup> (Book of Weak Judgement and Simpletons) of Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 596/1200). It explains, too, why *adab* literature is so dominated by the approach or ‘genre’ called *al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-masāwī*,<sup>51</sup> where the virtues sustaining honour and social prestige are highly praised while deviations and vices are described and denounced. *Adab* is seen as a veritable institution in which existence, communication and social standing meet and merge; and it is precisely in this way that al-Jāḥiẓ views it, criticizing the scholars and members of the élite portrayed in the *Kitāb al-Bukhalā*<sup>52</sup> (The Misers), or pouring scorn on Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in the *Kitāb al-Tarbī‘ wa-l-tadwīr*.<sup>53</sup> It is again in the name

47. This expression refers not only to the entourage of the caliph, but to all the circles, provincial governors’ courts or literary gatherings of high officials, where the princely court was the model for taste and behaviour.

48. The only private domain, in the sense understood today, which was not subject to *adab*, was the relationship of a man with his wife/wives or his lawful concubines. The classical authors hardly ever touch on this subject. The only relationship discussed, or where recommendations are given, is that between a man and a female slave singer (*qayna*), since she was the only woman who would go outside the harem to mix with men.

49. Al-Šābi<sup>3</sup>, *Kitāb al-Hafawāt al-nādira*, ed. S. al-Ashtar, Damascus, 1967.

50. Ibn al-Jawzi, *Akhhār al-Ḥamqā wa-l-mughaffalīn*, ed. K. al-Muzaffar, Najaf, 1966.

51. Certain *adab* works do have this title, as for instance the work of al-Bayḥaqī, *Kitāb al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-masāwī*, ed. A. Schwally, Giessen, 1902, and ed. A. F. Ibrāhīm, 2 vols., Cairo, Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1961; see also I. Geris, *Un genre littéraire arabe: al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-masāwī*, (Publications du Département Islamique de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 4), Paris, G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larosse, 1977

52. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Bukhalā*, ed. M. T. al-Ḥājirī, 1976, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Cairo; French trans. by Ch. Pellat, *Le livre des avarés de Gābiẓ*, trans. C. Pellat, (Islam d’Hier et d’Aujourd’hui, 10), Paris, G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1951.

53. Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Kitāb al-Tarbī‘ wa-l-tadwīr*, ed. Ch. Pellat; French trans. by M. Adad, *Arabica*, 13, 1966, pp. 268–294, 14, 1967, pp. 298–319.

of *adab* thus defined that more than a century later al-Tawhīdī<sup>54</sup> considers it appropriate to denounce the morality of the two celebrated viziers, each a skilled *adīb*, Abu-l-Faḍl b. al-ʿAmīd (d. 359/970) and al-Ṣāhib b. ʿAbbād (d. 384/995). For al-Jāhiz, as for his most distinguished pupil, to fall short in any one requirement of this institution meant inevitably to be unworthy not only of a position among the élite but also of learning, rhetoric and the virtues.

Through alternating discourse on praise and blame, *jidd* and *hazl*, the earnest and the jest,<sup>55</sup> and also by the systematic use of authoritative texts and constant recourse to a rhetoric of moderation and the golden mean, the purpose of *adab* texts was thus essentially prescriptive. The model figures of wise men, poets, orators and governors, whether historical or legendary, were the socio-cultural paradigms chosen by an élite group to demarcate the axiological framework, commending certain modes of action and banning others, and therefore specifying for the subject obliged to watch over his own behaviour both what was in conformity with the group's identity and also what was considered deviant and, if not reformed, would bring about condemnation and exclusion. As a 'caste ethos' and as political discourse not stamped as political, *adab* served as an ideological weapon for a *khāṣṣa* who, wishing to maintain the existing order, were obliged to explain and justify it by giving it an ethical and aesthetic foundation and by presenting it as based on reason and having universal significance.

54. Al-Tawhīdī, *Akhlāq al-wazīrāyn: Mathālib al-wazīrāyn al-Ṣāhib Ibn ʿAbbād wa-Ibn al-ʿAmīd*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṭanjī, Damascus, al-Majmaʿ al-ʿIlmī al-ʿArabī bi-Dimashq, 1965.

55. See al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 25 and 37, and Ch. Pellat, art. 'Djidd wa-hazl', in *EJ*<sup>2</sup>.

POETRY IN THE MUSLIM WEST:  
SECOND TO FIFTH/EIGHTH TO  
ELEVENTH CENTURIES

*Brabim Najjar*

Methodology

The political history of the Muslim West from the eighth to the eleventh centuries AD is a roll-call of dynasties swiftly obtaining freedom from Eastern power: the Aghlabids accommodating themselves to the purely formal suzerainty of the ‘Abbāsids; the Zīrids escaping from submission to the Fāṭimids in Ifrīqiya; the Umayyads first establishing themselves as an autonomous caliphate and then disintegrating into rival princedoms in Spain; and finally, the Almoravids spreading out the tentacles of the empire they had installed in Morocco. In literature, however, the history of the period is one of seamless continuity with the cultural heritage of the East, and nowhere more so than in poetry which, throughout these years, continued to follow the models put forward by the ‘modernists’ or *mumwalladūn*.<sup>1</sup> This is not to say, as certain critics would have it, that these models brought the Arab poetic discourse, including its Western segment, into the embrace of a closed system which excluded all possibility of invention. The fundamental point is, rather, that Arabic poetry, by virtue of its unique linguistic texture (a language bearing the hallmark of Qur’ānic revelation) and by virtue of its equally unique prosodic structures (fixed metres, single rhymes and the infinite phonose-

1. With the *qaṣīda*, the poets of the Golden Age established a unified structure, a framework which imposed its authority immediately and without any apparent process of evolution, as well as introducing both a homogeneous cultural code (a set of invariants, forever connoting the civilization of the desert) and registers of expression (configurations of motifs, formulaic expressions and schemes of rhyme or syntax). The second and last attempt to create models before the modern era came from these Baghdad poets, who proceeded to reshape the framework of the *qaṣīda*, to broaden the code and the registers, and so to lay down for more than a millennium the only forms in which poetry could be written.



mantic variety springing from the derivational processes of the language), was able within the space of just a few generations to strike a perfect internal balance between ancient and modern, a balance which conferred unity and consistency within a context of continuity, so that, by the eighth century, this poetry already appeared to everyone the ideal towards which all subsequent creative work should tend. Though the *muwashshah* genre, a typically Andalusian product (ninth-twelfth centuries), might no doubt constitute an attempt to break away from this continuity, it did not initiate an evolutionary process, a breaking of the mould which could give rise to a new model of poetry.

Such then are the constant features of this poetry.

Are we to conclude, therefore, that the poets of the Muslim West – who were, after all, latecomers to the literary scene, the bulk of their work stemming from the tenth and eleventh centuries – contributed nothing (apart from the original but ephemeral *muwashshah*) worthy of comparison with the great figures of the East, nothing bearing the stamp of their genius? The answer is, as we shall see, that these poets, while continuing with varying degrees of success to develop the models they had inherited, in much the same way as their counterparts in the East, proved themselves genuine innovators in a small but significant portion of the works produced. That this came about was due to their initiative and pioneering work in broadening the field of writing on certain major themes in the legacy of tradition, such as Love, Nature and Death.

Our task here is to avoid the errors of judgement of certain critics who, with their nostalgia for lost greatness and exemplars and their penchant for a regional literature founded on national or ethnic particularity,<sup>2</sup> would go so far as to treat Zīrid Kairouan, Umayyad Cordoba or ‘Abbādid Seville as exceptional areas of creativity, distinguished by exceptional men, innovators through and through, like al-Ḥuṣṣrī, Ibn Zaydūn and Ibn Khafāja. This review of method has been necessary in order to focus more closely on the different facets of this Western segment of Arabic poetry, which we believe – notwithstanding the hasty judgements and bias of others – remained inseparable from its Eastern matrix.

## General context: the East-West equation

The progress of poetic activity in the Muslim West from the eighth to the eleventh centuries falls into two clearly defined periods:

2. This tendency is perfectly illustrated in Ch. Bouyahya, *La vie littéraire en Ifriqiya sous les Zirides* Paris, 1972, or H. Pérès, *La poésie andalouse en Arabe classique au XIe siècle: ses aspects généraux, ses principaux thèmes et sa valeur documentaire*, 2nd ed., (Publications de l’Institut d’Etudes Orientales, Faculté de Lettres d’Alger, 5), Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1953.

1. *A slow period of apprenticeship and growing maturity, covering three centuries (eighth - tenth centuries).*

The later stages of this long development saw the emergence of a small number of poets, profoundly influenced by the Eastern model but by no means lacking in talent of their own, whose well-differentiated works were already indicating the main directions this poetry would follow in the future. Three names, fairly representative of the period, have come down to posterity and, for once, we have collections of their works (*diwāns*) in our possession. From Andalusia, we have Ibn Darrāj al-Qaṣṭallī (346–407/958–1017) and, from Ifrīqiya, the Andalusian-born Ibn Hānī<sup>2</sup> (319–362/932–973) and the Fāṭimid Tamīm b. al-Mu‘izz (336–374/948–985).

It should be noted that, during this long period of maturation, Kairouan and Cordoba, two fast-growing cities, were the centres of cultural influence in the region and the focus of the activity of the age. These ‘emblematic’ cities both served, in varying degrees, as melting-pots in which, over many generations, the great enterprise of integrating the arts of the Arab East took shape. Here, there emerged a pleiad of men-of-letters, scholars and linguists – all of them poets in their time – whose seminal works prepared the way for the subtlety which was to be the hallmark of the great poetic talents of the next century (in Andalusia, see the *‘Iqd al-farīd* of Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940) and the *Amālī* of al-Qālī (d. 356/967); in Ifrīqiya, see the *Mumtī‘* of al-Nahshalī (d. 404/1014) and the *Zabr al-ādāb* of al-Ḥuṣṣrī.

2. *A second period of maturity with a remarkable expansion of poetic output, covering the whole of the eleventh century and the following two or three decades.*

This development was supported by the great patrons of the age: Amīrids and Jahwarids in Cordoba, ‘Abbādids in Seville and its sphere of influence, and an outstanding Zīrid ruler, al-Mu‘izz, in Kairouan. The period was exemplified by a dazzling array of names (al-Ḥuṣṣrī, Ibn Zaydūn, Ibn Khafāja, Ibn Ḥamdīs *et al.*), who wrote some of the finest pieces of Arabic poetry. It must also be added that this second period, the Golden Age of poetry in the Arab West, generated a reaction of pride among those active on the literary scene, who had often been taxed with slavishly following the fashions which came from the East. This feeling can be seen in their epistles, works of *adab* and other writings intended as a *défense et illustration* of the culture acquired in the West. It was illustrated in works like the *Ṭawq al-ḥamāma* of Ibn Ḥazm (383–456/994–1064), the *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra* of Ibn Bassām (459–542/1067–1148), or in various epistles, for example, one critical from Ibn al-Rabīb al-Qayrawānī (d. 431/1040), one emphatic from al-Shaqundī (d. 628/1231) or, finally, one more measured and subtle from Ibn Ḥazm.<sup>3</sup>

3. These three epistles are reproduced by al-Maqqarī, *Nashḥ al-ḥib min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-ratīb*, ed. I. ‘Abbas, 8 vols., Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1968, III, pp. 156–223.

It should be stressed, furthermore, that, given the prejudices entertained by the cultural élite of the East, who mocked the 'illiteracy'<sup>4</sup> of the inhabitants of Ifriqiya and Andalusia, this literature of *défense et illustration* was also intended to affirm a deeply rooted Arab identity which had no need to envy those who in the East claimed the title of 'eternal founders' and sole depositaries of Arabism. A perfect example is the *Risāla al-hazliyya*, an epistle from the poet Ibn Zaydūn, a masterpiece of irony and erudition, serving as an Andalusian reply to another famous epic, i.e. that of the oriental al-Jāhiz (d. 255/869) entitled *Risālat al-tarbi<sup>c</sup> wa-l-tadwīr*. With a mastery which comes from perfect knowledge of the sources, the author presents a kind of encyclopaedic summary of the cultural heritage of the Arabs in all its complexity, a feat which lets it be understood that, contrary to the claims of Baghdadis like Ibn 'Abbād,<sup>5</sup> the common heritage belonged no more to the East than to the West, and that Cordoba could as well be its guardian as Kufa, Basra or Baghdad.

The same mastery of the cultural heritage is evident from epistles by two other authors who wrote in both poetry and prose: Ibn Sharaf (d. 459/1067) of Kairouan in the *Risālat al-intiqād*, and Ibn Shuhayd (d. 426/1035) of Cordoba in the *Risālat al-tawābi<sup>c</sup> wa-l-ḡawābi<sup>c</sup>*, a kind of critical summary of the centuries of development of Arabic poetry. However, as we all know, prejudices are not easily overcome. Thus, the old prejudice that 'the Orient leads, the Occident follows' – the illusion that the East had been granted precedence by virtue of anteriority – continued through the years until the age of the *Nabḡa* and its echo is still to be heard, even in our own day.

## The poetic corpus

An analysis of the sources relating to the poetry of the period<sup>6</sup> immediately reveals two fundamental features shared with the poetic corpus of the East:

4. Al-Qālī, newly arrived in Andalusia from Baghdad, wrote that the people of Kairouan and Andalusia were 'ignorant and lacking in understanding' (*ghabāwa wa-ḡillat al-fahm*), see Ibn Bassām, *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra fī maḡāsin ahl al-Jazīra*, ed. I. 'Abbas, 8 vol., Beirut, Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1979, I, pp. 14f.
5. Ibn 'Abbād (d. 384/995), vizier, man-of-letters and great patron at the time of the Būyids. Speaking of the *'Iqd al-farīd*, a work of the Cordoban Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, he delivered the arrogant, if often-quoted, epigram: *hādhibi biḡā'atunā ruddat ilaynā* (they are just giving us back what we gave them).
6. The works of authors of the period were collected in the *Unmūdbaj al-ḡamān fī shu'arā<sup>3</sup> al-Qayrawān* of Ibn Rashīq (d. 456/1064) and the *al-Ḥadā'iq* of al-Jayyānī (d. 365/976). These primary sources, however, are lost and all that now remains of the poetry of that age are the *membra disiecta* contained in later compilations, notably three works: the *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra* of Ibn Bassām, the *Qalā'id* of al-Faḡh b. Khāqān and the *Nafḡ al-fīb* of al-Maqqarī.

*The emergence of a multitude of poets.* Ibn Rashīq in his *Unmūdhaj*, lists more than one hundred for Ifrīqiya<sup>7</sup> alone. This confirms a perennial aspect of the Arab cultural scene, namely that poetry above all else was the instrument which gave expression to a linguistic rather than an ideological or racial monopoly. In an often-quoted remark, the Bishop Alvar complained that the young people of the Christian community were so attracted by the poetry of their neighbours that they had abandoned Latin to study Arabic.

*The state of preservation of the corpus* and the rôle played in its dispersion by the anthologists, critics and compilers, the professionals of recension and copying, through whose efforts the corpus was scattered piecemeal in quotations and selected pieces of varying size, hewn from living works, now vanished for the most part. For the genuine lover of poetry, they were the weft of the 'dazzling assemblages' making up the works of *adab*, of which the jewel in the Andalusian crown is the *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra* of Ibn Bassām. Of all this, nothing now remains but for a few collections (*dīwāns*),<sup>8</sup> probably put together during the lifetime of their authors. Is it a coincidence that these were among the most illustrious poets of their age? However, as the distinction between *poetae maiores* and *poetae minores* is less marked here than in the East, our study will not be confined to a few illustrious names. Equal weight will be given to that fragmented part of the corpus represented by the so-called minor poets who, sometimes as much if not more than the greatest of their contemporaries, bear witness to the whole diversity of the times, even if, in most cases, literary tradition has retained only a few jewels, sparse fragments of works long since vanished.<sup>9</sup>

7. The phenomenon of the virtually endless proliferation of poets in the Eastern region (another feature in common) was noted by Ibn Qutayba, who, in his *al-Shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'*, wrote that the poets, 'ancient and modern', were beyond all measure, and any attempt to number them was doomed to failure. It will be recalled that Ibn Bassām listed some 120 poets for the great century of the *Reyes de Taifas* in Andalusia.
8. *Dīwāns* of Tamīm b. al-Mu'izz (Fāṭimid), Ibn Hānī<sup>2</sup>, Ibn Darrāj (already cited), Ibn Zaydūn, al-Ḥuṣrī, Ibn Ḥamdīs and Ibn Khafāja.
9. Recensions seeking to reconstruct the whole poetic corpus of the epoch are few and far between. Among the mini-collections which have appeared recently, we may note: Ibn Rashīq, ed. Yāghī, Beirut, 1961; Ibn Sharaf, *Dīwān*, Tunis, 1989; al-Ilbīrī, *Dīwān*, Damascus, 1976; al-Ballanūbī, *Dīwān*, Baghdad, 1976; al-A'mā al-Ṭuṭaylī, 1965; *Dīwān 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Hurayra*, ed. I. 'Abbās, Beirut; Ibn al-Zaqqāq al-Balansī, *Dīwān*, Beirut, 1964; and al-Ruṣāfi al-Balansī, *Dīwān*, Beirut, 1964. Moreover, we must not forget the two remarkable recensions of Ch. Pellat, *Ibn Shubaid*, Beirut, 1963, and R. Souissi, *al-Mu'tamid b. 'Abbād*, Tunis, 1977.

## The poets

Baghdad, Kairouan, Cordoba: wherever Islam settled, city life predominated. An urban tradition,<sup>10</sup> preserving a way of civilized life strongly impregnated with Persian traditions, spreading outwards in concentric circles from the banks of the Tigris to the banks of the Guadalquivir, reproduced almost everywhere the same pattern of life in the city and dictated to the poet virtually the same strategy of existence. And poetry – hitherto the foundation of a cultural order born of the desert, perfectly illustrated by the trio of al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī (d. 794), al-Qurayshī (d. 183/800) and al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 215/831) – was, in much of the work that came to be produced, transformed into the repository of a new urban cultural order. But the status of the poet changed hardly at all. Tied basically to the powers that were, he remained a court poet, dedicating his finest verse to protectors and patrons, even if occasionally certain of his works, like the *muwashshah*, broke with traditional structures and followed original paths of creation.

The events which marked the political history of the Muslim West in the eleventh century – the disintegration of the Umayyad caliphate in Spain, the Hilālī invasion in Ifrīqiya and the crumbling of the Arab presence in Sicily – favoured not only the emergence of autonomous provincial powers and the multiplication of petty princelings with their rival courts, but also various other developments which made an impression on Andalusian society in particular. Peaceful co-existence with Christians on the margins of a composite society, a shift in attitudes towards greater tolerance, refinement of manners and civilized relationships, all in turn left their mark on a poetic landscape characterized henceforth by the following features:

### A MORE ACTIVE PATRONAGE

Patronage became a genuine institution, in which the same class aspirations combined concern for prestige, pre-occupations of a socio-political nature, or simply questions of affinity. Under the Zīrids in Ifrīqiya, the Amīrids in Cordoba and the ʿAbbādid in Seville, there emerged the beginnings of an organization called the *ḍiwān al-munādama* or the *ḍiwān al-shiʿr*,<sup>11</sup> a functional body responsible for overseeing the selection of persons who would figure on an ‘approved list’ of official poets. The patronage

10. The feasts of Nayrūz and Mahrajān, Persian in origin, still formed part of city festivities in fifth/eleventh-century Andalusia.

11. See al-Marrākushī, *al-Muʿjib fī talkhīṣ akhbār abl al-Maghrib*, ed. Saʿīd ʿIryān, Cairo, al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-l-Shuʿūn al-Islāmiyya, 1949, p. 117; see also G. Palencia (trans.), *Historia de la Litteratura Arabigo-Española*, Cairo, 1955, p. 65.

system also became more concerned with the quality of the works, while the patrons themselves were often poets or lovers of *belles-lettres*, two of the most celebrated being the Zīrid sovereign Tamīm b. al-Muʿizz (d. 501/1108) and the ʿAbbādid al-Muʿtamid (d. 487/1095). Finally, this was patronage on a scale and of a generosity which was not forgiven when the Almoravids annexed Andalusia and denounced the deposed princes for squandering public funds.

Patronage, however, differed markedly between the two halves of the Arab world. In the Orient, it tended to favour the emergence of clans and schools, which quickly turned into coteries, imposing the dominion of an Abū Nawwās, an Abū Tammām, an al-Buḥturī, or an al-Mutanabbī. The great names then made themselves the sole focus of critical activity, a mandarinat which excluded generations of young talents. In the Occident, the situation was quite different. Patronage here was much more decentralized, less élitist, and more responsive to audacious innovation. There was no opposition to a widening of the field of competence and the welcome extended to greater numbers helped to avoid sharp distinctions. Two great collections of the period testify to this spirit: the *Ummūdhaj* of Ibn Rashīq and the *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra* of Ibn Bassām, in which the authors, perceptive critics and men of taste, offer us the full range of the talents of the age.

#### A GREATER MOBILITY

Poets might have to spend their lives in two or three countries and move from one continent to another. The examples are numerous: Ibn Rashīq, fleeing from the sack of Kairouan by the Hilālīs, ended his days in Sicily; Ibn Ḥamdīs, a native of this same Sicily, abandoned the island before the Christian advance to become successively the companion of al-Muʿtamid at Aghmāt (in present-day Morocco) and the poet of the last Zīrids at Mahdia, of the Khurāsānids of Tunis and the Ḥammādids of Bougie; al-Ḥuṣrī, born in Kairouan, went into exile in Spain, settling successively in Seville, Malaga, Denia, Valencia, Almeria and Murcia, before his death in Tangiers. Let us also note the example of the Andalusian, Ibn Hānī<sup>2</sup>, who moved to Ifriqiya and became the court poet of the Fāṭimids before they installed themselves in Cairo. Similarly, the poet, writer and scholar Abu-l-Ṣalt Umayya left his native Denia to settle first in Mahdia and then Cairo.

GREATER SCOPE FOR THE MAJĀLIS

These were private festive gatherings at which poets held a place of honour and where the pleasures of wine, women and song were freely enjoyed.<sup>12</sup> This was an élitist world in which culture and leisure were intimately linked and good taste was cultivated in an aesthetic system expressive of an *art de vivre* brought from the East and spread by men such as Ziryāb (d. 242/857). In the Orient, the salons of Baghdad were already blossoming with *zurafā'*, outstanding representatives of elegance and refinement, musician-singers such as the 'Abbāsid princess 'Ulayya bint. al-Mahdī (d. 209/825), who would, as we shall see, be mirrored by the Andalusian princess Wallāda.

In much of their work, the authors of *muwashshah*<sup>13</sup> (poems written in stanzas, the opening generally being sung) and of *adab* leave us with a lingering echo of these *majālis*, imprinting an image of cities like Seville, which would remain forever in the collective memory of the Arabs. The entertainments (*tarab*) held in the homes of princes and notables are recalled in various places.<sup>14</sup> Another celebrated *majlis* was the salon held by the princess Wallāda (d. 483/1091), daughter of the last Umayyad caliph and herself a poet. In both behaviour and verse, she broke with conformity, taking the poet Ibn Zaydūn as her lover and inviting the reader to enjoy a liberated erotic vision of life, elevating the 'sexual', an unmentionable taboo, to the level of the respectable, *mujāhara bi-l-ladhdha*.<sup>15</sup>

12. A life of pleasure echoed in a Hebrew poem by the Jewish vizier of the Zirids of Granada, Samuel b. Negrella (d. 1056): 'Cinq choses comblent le coeur de joie,/Chassent la tristesse, Suscitent la liesse:/Une belle femme,/Un beau parc,/Du bon vin,/Le rouslis d'une rivière, /Un chant' (Five things fill the heart with joy,/Drive out sadness,/Awaken gaiety:/A beautiful woman,/A fine park,/Good wine,/A rolling stream,/A song.) (trans. by Ami Bouganim, *L'or et le feu: le judaïsme espagnol*, Jerusalem, 1992, p. 137; quoted in *Communauté Nouvelle*, Jan-Feb. 1993, Paris); see Ibn Bassām, *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra*..., *op. cit.*, I, pp. 761–769.
13. To harmonize with the taste of an age in which music and song were experiencing an unprecedented expansion, the *muwashshah* genre broke with the traditional structure of the *qaṣīda* and relied on a stanza structure in which different metres and rhymes alternated. The themes, however, remained virtually unchanged and here, as in conventional verse, *madḥ* and *ghazal* predominated. H. Ghāzī's recension (*Dīwān al-muwashshahāt al-andalusīyya*, Alexandria, 1979) has two pieces for the Umayyad period and some seventy for the period of the *Reyes de Taifas*. However, it was not until the twelfth-thirteenth centuries that the *muwashshah* reached its apogee (around 270 pieces).
14. Ibn Bassām, *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra*..., *op. cit.*, III, p. 385, IV, p. 185; al-Tujībī, *al-Mukhtār*..., p. 14–16; Ibn Rashīq, *al-Unmūdhaj*, Tūnis, al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1986, p. 171 and 255.
15. Ibn Bassām, *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra*..., *op. cit.*, I, p. 429.

GREATER PARTICIPATION OF POETS IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE CITY

This policy was favoured by princes who were themselves poets, such as the already cited Tamīm b. al-Mu‘izz and al-Mu‘tamid b. ‘Abbād, or the Aftasid al-Muẓaffar of Badajoz and the Banu-l-Mu‘taṣim of Almeria. Ibn Zaydūn, a great figure in the poetry and politics of the period, is a perfect illustration of this prolific generation of poets – not to mention prose-writers – who occupied the highest posts of government. In Andalusia, for example, there were the viziers Ibn ‘Ammār, Ibn ‘Abdūn and Ibn Wahbūn and, in Ifrīqiya, the chancellery secretaries al-Raqīq and Ibn Abi-l-Rijāl.<sup>16</sup>

The broadening of the scope for poetry in the city in turn favoured the expansion of an aristocracy of culture, of which the poets were the finest flower. This highly civilized élite, admirably portrayed by the Cordoban poet Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) in his *Ṭawq al-ḥamāma*, cultivated solidarity, interaction and dialogue among its members. This solidarity was marked by acts of solicitude. An example: Ibn Ḥasdāy, vizier of the Banū Hūd, a Jewish poet and highly regarded letter-writer of the time, intervened on behalf of two poets of his generation, al-Ḥuṣrī and Ibn al-Ḥaddād. Social interaction was favoured by the profusion of fashionable gatherings, with poetry and literary circles providing the perfect ground on which to cultivate the art of *mubādaba* (impromptu exchanges) and *munāshada* (friendly poetic jousting). Nothing illustrates these social exchanges better than the much cultivated practice of epistolary correspondence (*tarāsul*), a genuine exercise in style, characterized by refinement of form, in which the poet would extend his versifying into prose. In their writing, they frantically pursued an aestheticism linked with striking details, which remained the hallmark of the genre. Models of considerable originality are to be seen in the *Risāla jiddīyya* of Ibn Zaydūn and in the fragments surviving from the letters of al-Ḥuṣrī or, again, of Ibn Ḥasdāy<sup>17</sup> and Ibn al-Ḥaddād.

It is worth noting here that, unlike the poets of the Orient who, with the exception of al-Ma‘arrī, only rarely turned their hand to the various prose genres, a galaxy of Western poets slipped the shackles of the epistolary form and found freedom in more original forms of writing. Examples abound. The poet and theologian Ibn Ḥazm offers us an essay on love and lovers, in which the exposition, couched alternately in prose

16. We might recall the unfortunate oriental poet al-Mutanabbī (d. 353/965) and his frantic but vain quest for privileges and honours.

17. For all the poets cited in this paragraph, see the notes devoted to them by Ibn Bassām in his *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra*..., *op. cit.*: Ibn Ḥasdāy (III, 457–485), Ibn al-Ḥaddād (I, 691–704), Ibn Ḥazm (I, 167–180), Ibn Zaydūn (I, 336–428), al-Ḥuṣrī (IV, 245–278), Ibn Sharaf (IV, 169–238), Ibn Shuhayd (I, 191–336), Ibn Rashīq (IV, 597–645), Ibn al-Shahīd (I, 670–691).



and verse, marries the rigour of philosophical thought with the freshness of psychological and personal observation; Ibn Sharaf (d. 452/1061) presents literary analysis or social satire in the form of portraits; Ibn Shuhayd (d. 457/1065), in the celebrated epistle quoted above and in deft touches through texts scattered here and there, offers a critical portrait of the learned society in his time; Ibn Rashīq (d. 462/1070) gives us his treatise on rhetoric; Ibn al-Shahīd (d. 451/1060?) narrates burlesque tales or writes in the rhythmic prose of the *maqāmāt* (sessions).<sup>18</sup>

## The works

After the passage of a thousand years, nothing now survives of the poetry of the period but a few collections<sup>8</sup> and a considerable number of *membra disiecta* from works now vanished, which the researcher can find only by constant delving and sifting through a great mass of *adab* works. Nevertheless, the works which remain are sufficiently homogeneous and representative to permit an overall appreciation. Thus, irrespective of the quantity of the works conserved, the distribution of content gives us a general picture which probably reflects the original state of these works. For each poet this content can be subdivided into two main sets, differing in inspiration and construction. The distribution differs hardly at all from that which governed the poetry of the East and corresponds perfectly to the status of the poet in the city as both a public figure and a private individual.

The first set consists of poetry of circumstance, such as eulogy, threnody, satire, boasting etc., and in these the poet diverges hardly at all from accepted models. The construction is generally on a classical scale (e.g. the eulogy by Ibn Hānī<sup>9</sup>, rhyme *mī*, metre *ṭawīl*, extending to 200 lines), with a twofold distribution of themes into prelude and central motif. The metres chosen are full metres and the rhymes sonorous, while lexis and syntax are recherché. Poetry of this kind constitutes the bulk of the works and accounts for some two-thirds of the total output of the period.<sup>19</sup> As a rule, the poems follow the conventional themes of *madḥ*, *fakhr*, *hijā'* or *rithā'* and significant innovation is rare. Anxious to ensure that their works would stand as legitimate examples, the poets continued to incorporate into their poetic universe the common legacy of lexicography, genealogy and toponymy, referring back to the high traditions of the old Arabs. Almost invariably, they returned to the ancients and to those who maintained their tradition, and at some key point in their poems we glimpse the shadow of

18. Ibn Bassām, *Kitāb al-Dhakhira...*, *op. cit.*, I, 681–685: a very significant story with a monastery (*dayr*) setting.

19. For example, poems of circumstance constitute 75 per cent of the *Diwān* of Ibn Zaydūn.

al-Khansā', Ṭarafa or 'Antara, or chance upon 'Umar, Jamīl, Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Mutanabbī, or even an immediate predecessor, al-Ma'arrī. Some examples:

- a love poem by Ibn Hānī' (rhyme *im*, metre *ṭawīl*, 35 lines), which recalls – but certainly does not copy – the tone and sequencing of themes of a poem by 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a, recounting one of his amorous adventures;
- a long eulogy of Ibn Shuhayd (rhyme *am*, metre *majzū' al-kāmil*, 71 lines), in which the balance of the poem is skewed to allow a prelude stretching over 56 lines, a multifaceted picture which brings together nature and love, play and pleasure and recalls a poem of the same structure (rhyme *ānī*, metre *mutaqārib*, 43 lines) by a poet of Baghdad, Abu-l-Shīṣ (d. 196/812);
- a threnody of Ibn al-Zaqqāq of Valencia (rhyme *īdū*, metre *ṭawīl*, 30 lines), in which the stress and rhythmical modulations are reminiscent of a poem of Ibn al-Rūmī, weeping for one of his sons;
- a eulogy by Ibn Zaydūn (rhyme *dā*, metre *ṭawīl*, 47 lines), the overall structure of which (lexis, syntax, prosody) recalls a poem of the same rhyme and metre by al-Mutanabbī, dedicated to Sayf al-Dawla of Aleppo;
- and finally, there is the long lament of the blind poet, al-A'mā of Tudela (rhyme *ānī*, metre *ṭawīl*, 47 lines), a poem in which three echoes – if not three presences – come together: to begin with, that of another blind poet, al-Ma'arrī, inspiring the first 10 lines, a brilliant display recalling his poem in *ānī* rhyme, opening with the famous interjection *'allilānī* (console me!); the presence, too, of Muṭī' b. Iyās (d. 168/785), who is explicitly referred to in the body of the poem; and, lastly, an echo of the cry of pain rising from a poem of the same rhyme and metre by Tahmān al-Kilābī, a poet of the seventh century condemned to wander the earth in flight from Umayyad justice.

However, we should not lose sight of the fact that this mass of poems contains a ring of originality here and there. In a certain eulogy or in a lament by Ibn Ḥamdīs, for example, the composition is marked by movement towards a *more free form* of expression, with passages on the conflict between Islam and Christianity, a nostalgic evocation of homeland or meditation on life and death. We should also note the many successful attempts to reinvent and rewrite the classical models. Here, a poet who has interiorized a culture in all its depth applies his genius to a task of reincarnating it, without necessarily resorting to an existing model. This approach is admirably illustrated in laments by al-Ḥuṣrī, eulogies by Ibn al-Darrāj or Ibn Hānī', or boasts by Ibn Shuhayd.

In the second set, the poet turns away from conventional genres and looks inwards to find a more personal inspiration. Here, the poetic construct changes, appealing to a different sensibility with shorter pieces, an independent ordering of themes, a broadening of codes and registers in following 'modernist' patterns, and an adaptation of the language to the taste of the times. These works are suffused with the light of three semantic categories, three major tones often associated in the same poem, namely Love, Nature 'forever renewed' and the poignant sense of the passage of time.<sup>20</sup>

## LOVE

Under this heading, which covers a multitude of forms, let us consider three names, beginning with al-Ḥuṣrī in his *Mu'ashsharāt*, twenty-nine ten-line poems all based on the *ṭawīl* metre. The rhymes which are used represent the twenty-nine letters of the alphabet, which are repeated each time at the start of each of the ten lines composing the poem. This original structure would inspire, among others, the Andalusian Ṣūfī master Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 637/1240). The poem is a virtuoso work, recalling al-Maʿarrī in his *Luzūmiyyāt*, but, at the same time, one which, in its unity of thought and desperate search for the beloved, remains a hymn vibrant with love, a poignant plaint, repeated twenty-nine times, dedicated to the 'lost' lover.

There is Ibn Zaydūn in his poems dedicated to the princess Wallāda. One example is a short piece (rhyme *āqā*, metre *baṣīṭ*, 15 lines), in which the themes of love and nature are commingled and entwined in nostalgic memories. Another is the prelude to a eulogy in honour of a Jahwarid (rhyme *ākī*, metre *kāmil*, 12 lines), a love song which, nine centuries later, inspired Shawqī to write a 'double' (*mu'āraḍa*), which was set to music by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. And, finally, a famous work (rhyme *īnā*, metre *kāmil*, 51 lines), which some modern critics consider to be the 'finest love poem in Andalusian literature'. The flow of the verse is enriched with rhyme, and the rhythmic interplay of derived and associated correspondences is the backdrop for a remarkable theme of courtly love, the precursors of which were the Ḥijāzī innovators of the seventh century, Jamīl and ʿUmar b. Abī Rabiʿa, reworked later by Bashshār b. Burd, ʿAbbās b. al-Aḥnaf and Abū Nawwās. The poem – though filled with the language of absence, nostalgia and suffering (*firāq*, *shawq*, *bukāʿ*, *yaʿs*) – is also a hymn to beauty and *joie de vivre*, combined with an evocation of the welcoming nature of Andalusia (*waṣl*, *uns*, *saʿd*, *labw*, *ladhdha*, *riyād*).

20. However, a fourth category – though small in scale – must not be forgotten. This is the poetry of laughter, of diversion, of humour (*fukāha*), of irony (*sukhrīya*). This segment of the corpus, with its burlesque tinge, was disregarded by critical tradition. Its oriental models (Abu-l-ʿIbar, Ibn al-Ḥajjāj) would inspire the Andalusian poet Ibn Masʿūd (see Ibn Bassām, *Kitāb al-Dhakhira...*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 549–562).

Finally we may consider Ibn al-Ḥaddād of Guadix (a writer of epistles and author of an original treatise on prosody, in which metre and music are combined) in his poems dedicated to a Christian girl. This model of love across the religious divide had been exemplified in the tragic jealousy of Dīk al-Jinn, a Syrian poet of the eighth century. The cult of the Christian favourite is also illustrated by Mudrik al-Shaybānī (forth/tenth century) in his long poem *Muḥdawija* and by al-Shābushtī in his work on monasteries and convents (*diyārāt*).<sup>18</sup>

This love poem would carry to extremes the cult of the 'Lady' (or her avatar, the beautiful youth), as in the work of the two Andalusian poets Ibn al-Labbāna and al-Ramādī. Modern critics have associated this trend with the almost contemporaneous lyricism and courtly ideal of the troubadours of the Romance period.

#### NATURE

Starting out from oriental models, such as Ibn al-Rūmī, al-Ṣanawbarī and the like, the Andalusian poets in particular evoked nature in infinite variations throughout their works. In some cases, as with Ibn Khafāja, dubbed *al-Jannān* (Painter of Gardens), nature was central. These variations were set down with rapid touches in independent sequences or various arrangements which excluded virtually no poetic genre. However, while they attest an eagerness to renew poetic forms (Ibn Zaydūn, Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Ḥamdīs *et al.*), they do not represent the fierce artistic commitment which would make of nature something other than pure decoration, a mere set of arabesques in which the composition – as in still-life – is an end in itself. An example of this 'exercise in style' was a poetic tourney reported by Ibn Bassām.<sup>21</sup> Seven poets took part and each one, taking inspiration from a basic model in the same rhyme and metre, offered his own composition. This was the opening of a eulogy in which the motif of a floral *parterre* presents correspondences with the qualities of the person being praised. A further example is a poem by Ibn Khafāja (rhyme *rik*, metre *majzū' al-kāmil*, 12 lines), in which the poet associates love and nature, term for term, in a finely crafted network of metaphorical correspondences throughout the poem.

#### THE PASSING OF TIME, THE POETRY OF MEMORY

The eleventh century was punctuated by a series of breaks with the past. The destruction of Kairouan, the first summons of the Papacy to the Crusades, the strengthening of Norman power in Sicily, the sack of Cordoba, the collapse of the caliphate and the tightening of the vice of the *reconquista* with the fall of

21. Ibn Bassām, *Kitāb al-Dhakhīra...*, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 202–206.

Toledo. At the same time, life for the ever-growing number of poets was becoming increasingly uncertain and precarious, with many of them forced to resettle or to go into exile. As a result, much of the work in the second set of poetry of the period is tinged with sadness and profound nostalgia. One group of poems, often personal in tone, illustrates this section of the corpus. Of these jewels of Arabic verse, let us note the following:

- al-Ḥuṣrī in his *Iqtirāb al-qarīb*, which we would render as ‘Hymn to Sorrow’. This collection of 2,200 lines poignantly expresses the pain of a father in exile, weeping over the premature death of a son, to whom he pledges everlasting love. The sheer scope and genuine feeling of this masterpiece have no parallel in Arab literature, save in the work of al-Khansā<sup>22</sup>.
- Ibn Shuhayd in the poems in which he anticipates and announces his death, expressing the solitude of a human being confronted with his destiny.<sup>22</sup>

Let us also note:

- all the various laments over towns laid low with fire and blood in the civil wars, and especially the cries of desolation from Ibn Sharaf, Ibn Rashīq and al-Ḥuṣrī at the destruction of their native city, Kairouan; or, again, as exemplified by Ibn al-Labbāna or Ibn ‘Abdūn and later, in the twelfth century, by al-Rundī, these ‘plaintive elegies in long mourning robes’, weeping for vanished states and dynasties extinguished. Nevertheless, here, too, it must be remembered that the great precursors and masters of this genre were the oriental poets, such as al-Khuraymī first/(seventh century), lamenting for Basra, and Ibn al-Rūmī (third/ninth century) weeping for Baghdad.
- These nostalgic evocations of the past, these memories of Paradise lost, offering us glimpses here and there of a faraway woman, the sparkle of a cup, the delicate gestures of an ephebe, the rhythmic movements of a dancer, the coquetry of a musician singing to the music of her lute, the beauty of a landscape, a place or a dwelling – are all admirably illustrated by Ibn Ḥamdīs (110, rhyme *rāhā*, metre *mutaqārib*, 37 lines) or Ibn Zaydūn (the two *muwashshah* poems in the *Diwān* and the poem rhyming *hā*, metre *ṭawīl*, 19 lines).

Such then are the main characteristics of a poetry which enjoyed its Golden Age in the fifth/eleventh century, a time when poetic inspiration in the East was already showing signs of flagging, with poets such as Ibn al-Ḥabbāriyya, al-Ṭughrā<sup>23</sup> or Ibn al-Khayyāṭ. Our study has led us to stress the relationship of this poetry with a culture, with a status of writing and with a status of the poet. These three factors have enabled us to show the degrees of originality in the works produced.

22. Ibn Shuhayd, *Diwān*, 18, 28, 45, 53.

A certain school of criticism, however, continues to approach this poetry (like that of the Orient) along purely philological lines. Hence, it is frequently argued

- that because this poetry often confines its explorations to the search for a rare word or a ‘striking detail’, it must be uninventive. Yet, in response, are we not justified in echoing Voltaire and saying that it is precisely these striking details which make poetry? Are we not entitled to ask with Alberto Moravia: ‘Is not the essence of a culture (of which poetry forms an integral part) the detail which makes it unique?’
- that, taken as a whole, this poetry amounts to no more than *mu‘āraḍa*, a work of constant repetition, with infinite variations on the same themes, in which the quality of the performance is measured by the degree of conformity to the original model. Yet, did not Paul Valéry say that poetry is simply an ‘exercise’ in which the poet – like the musician (or indeed the calligrapher, the miniaturist, the engraver, the painter of ceramics) seeks ‘to produce a diversity of variants or solutions on the same theme? To this extent, it might be said that the poets of the Muslim West were excellent musicians, excellent calligraphers, excellent miniaturists, excellent engravers – but that is not the least of their merits.

Let us, then, give this poetry its due. Though much of the work produced was – as has often been said – devoted to variations and arabesques and to an excessive refinement in the quest for detail, both traits marking the onset of decadence, let us allow with Jean Cocteau that ‘decadence may be the great moment at which a civilization becomes exquisite’. Let us conclude, too, that the apogee of this poetry – in the eleventh century when Andalusia had sheltered many of the poets joining the exodus from Ifrīqiya and Sicily – was just such an exquisite moment. And its echo may be heard to this day in the *malouf* of the Maghrib countries. For the lyrics of this typically Arab-Andalusian music are nothing other than the *muwashshahāt*, often indeed the very same as those sung nine centuries ago in Seville, Granada and Malaga.

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Chapter 3

ARABIC LITERATURE IN THE  
POST-CLASSICAL PERIOD:  
SIXTH TO TWELFTH/TWELFTH  
TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

*Leila Sabbagh*

During this period, the Arab-Islamic world witnessed some significant political changes. In the East the Saljūq Turks moved on to Iran and Iraq from their positions in Transoxiana (*Mā Warāʾ al-Nahr*) and imposed their sovereignty on the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate in Baghdad in the year 447/1055. This was followed by the invasion of the region by the Crusaders in 490/1096, and then in turn by the Mongols, who brought down the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate in Baghdad in 656/1258. These events led to a succession of non-Arab dynasties that ruled this region, such as the Zangid-Ayyūbid dynasty in Egypt and Syria, who toppled and replaced the Shfʿī Fātimīd caliphate in Egypt in 567/1171 and who fought the Crusaders and ousted them from most of their locations, especially Jerusalem. The Mamlūks (648–923/1250–1517), who withstood the Mongol invasion, destroyed the last of the Crusader strongholds and restored the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate in Cairo. They were succeeded in the tenth/sixteenth century by the Ottomans (923–1336/1517–1918), who extended their sovereignty throughout nearly the entire Arab world. During this time, many Mongol dynasties came to power in Iran, Iraq and Transoxiana, some of them reaching as far as India in the tenth/sixteenth century, although Iraq and Iran had dispensed with them at that time.

In the West the Spanish Reconquista gained strength in Andalusia and – despite assistance provided to the Muslims there by the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties (from the Amazīgh, or Berbers, the original inhabitants of the Arab Maghrib countries) – the Arabs relinquished city after city until Granada, their last stronghold, fell in the year 897/1492, thereby bringing an end to the Muslim rule in Spain. A variety of dynasties followed the Almohads (524–668/1130–1269) in the Maghrib (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) until the

Ottoman Empire took control over Algeria, Tripoli and Tunisia in the tenth/sixteenth century.

These political developments – with their accompanying wars and destruction, the collapse of economic and cultural life, and social upheavals – naturally left their mark on Muslim thinking, and therefore also on the Arabic language and literature. Most historians consider these effects to have been extremely negative and branded this lengthy period with such epithets as ‘intellectual sterility’, ‘decline’ and ‘stagnation’, ready to adopt the widespread view that Arab civilization, which took root and flourished during the period of Arab political dominance under the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate (which they call ‘the Golden Age’), was weakened and squandered by this non-Arab hegemony. Thus, they associated the decline in intellectual activity with the deterioration of the Arab political situation and the domination of the political scene by non-Arabs. This was one of the reasons why academics in the past have refrained from studying the literature of this extensive period, especially since much of it is still in manuscript form or has been lost. However, some contemporary orientalist and Arab scholars and historians have drawn attention to the importance of this period in Muslim intellectual life and put forward objective reasons for its neglect.

And so research resumed mainly with Muslim scholars and historians, some of whom began to divide the post-classical period into shorter periods, associating these with specific areas of the Muslim world and the successive ruling dynasties there, for each period in any particular region or dynasty had its own peculiar literary characteristics. Many focused their research on the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods in Syria and Egypt, others concentrated on literary or scientific figures living during the period but ignored the Ottoman era. This latter stage, however, has begun to warrant further research and evaluation.

Various studies of this period do attest the fact that intellectual life in the Muslim world neither expired nor stagnated during that time, despite the momentous political, economic and social events that were taking place, and that the Arab intellectual contribution did not stop with the end of the preceding period but remained active and prolific, despite the introduction of new features that did not adversely affect but rather enriched it. The pure and deep-seated Islamic civilization stamped the ruling non-Arab dynasties with its Arab-Islamic character. Their leaders embraced the Muslim religion, taking it upon themselves to fight on behalf of Islam and establish its principles by all possible means in the face of extraneous and damaging ideas. They adopted Islamic legislation as the primary basis for government and lived together with their new subjects under the many different Islamic social and administrative systems. These dynasties thus evolved into ‘civilized states’, their leaders being concerned with Islamic learning and its dissemination and with Arabic literature in all its variety, just as in the so-called ‘Golden Age’. It was the Turkish



Saljūq dynasty, for example, whose Persian minister, the scholar and man-of-letters Nizām al-Mulk (408–85/1018–1192), set up the *madrasas* (schools) known after him as the *Nizāmīyya*, which set about producing scholars versed in the Sunna and worked towards establishing and defending Islamic culture throughout the Islamic world. Indeed, some Saljūq rulers were steeped in the classical Arabic language and literature, and so also were the rulers of all the various dynasties in the Arab East and West during this period. They sought to gather around them scholars and writers, encouraged them to be more productive and set up *madrasas* and other seats of learning in all areas which were under their control. In fact, Islamic civilization was able to impart to Europe, the then invader of Arab lands, a wealth of its cultural experience, including the essence of its expertise, during a time of friction between the two sides in Syria, Andalusia and Sicily. The age of the European Renaissance then followed. Whether referred to by historians as the ‘Turkish Mongol Era’ in the Islamic East and ‘Amazigh Era’ in the Arab West, or as the ‘Era of the Successive Dynasties’,<sup>1</sup> this period is one of rich and abundant literary and scientific endeavour that cannot possibly be covered fully in a single article. Indeed, it is hard even to give a brief outline of the descriptive or critical elements of the material because of the vast scope of this period both in time and place, the abundance of writers and scholars and the diversity and encyclopaedic nature of their contributions. However, it is possible to identify certain common features in the literature, which will be summarized in the remainder of this chapter.

## The development of the Arabic language as a means of literary expression

Having conducted exhaustive theoretical and practical research, philologists of the preceding period had sought to preserve the purity of the vocabulary of the Arabic language, its rules and constructions, so that, by the third/ninth century, it had become a rigid system to which writers adhered in their poetry and prose and their various compositions. From the fourth/tenth century, classical Arabic was no longer spoken at the ‘Abbāsīd court or by the ruling classes: grammatical errors had started to creep in, interspersed with vulgarisms, and inflectional vowels (rules of *i‘rāb*) were seen as a sign of pedantry and affectation. As the break-up of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate into smaller states gained momentum, each society acquired its own dialect for day-to-day usage. These were the beginnings of the local dialects, or of colloquial Arabic, even though classical Arabic remained the language of literature for Arabs and non-Arabs alike and, for many, retained its exemplary

1. See N. al-Murṣafī, *Adab al-luġha al-‘Arabīyya*, Cairo, 1326/1908.

eloquence and style. This can be seen, for example, in the work of writers like Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī (d. 383/993), Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 398/1008), author of the famous *Maqāmāt* (Sessions), and Abu-l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī (d. 449/1057). However, their stylized language was no longer understood except by the educated élite, which meant that it was necessary for commentaries to be provided, either by the writers themselves or by their students, so that listeners or readers could understand it. The literary language had also been infiltrated during this long period by many non-Arabic expressions and terms from Turkish, Persian and the colloquial language. This gradually increased as literature, even in the fourth/tenth century, became more accessible to the popular classes, with the use of expressions and constructions borrowed from their dialects, as in the *Qaṣīda al-Sāsāniyya* (The Sāsānid Ode) by the wandering poet Abū Dulaf (d. c. 345/956), and also when certain Arab and non-Arab writers appeared on the literary scene who were not versed in the rules of Arabic or who may have been overcome by the language of their profession or their own non-Arab mother tongue.

The establishment of New Persian in the Islamic East had a real impact on the Arabic language, following its former adoption as the official language by the Sāmānid dynasty, which became independent from the ʿAbbāsids in Transoxiana and Khurāsān (261–395/874–1005). It not only replaced Arabic at the court and amongst the upper classes, but also in poetry, the arts and other secular as well as religious literatures. It was also the language adopted by the Saljūq dynasty in its sovereign areas and spread as far as India. The Ottomans also adopted it as one of the three main languages of education, namely Turkish, Persian and Arabic.

The picture of the Arabic language that emerges from the Saljūq period and what followed, is therefore a complex one. Literary prose was written in a sophisticated, classical Arabic, as, for example, the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122) [Fig.1]; and poetry imitated the former master poets, though only a small number of literary and educated people were able to understand and appreciate it. On the other hand, there were scholars and writers from Persia who wrote in both Fārsī and classical Arabic, and others whose collections contained elements of the colloquial dialects, especially since many poets began modernizing their poetic styles, either by adopting the colloquial style of their contemporaries, like the Egyptian poet Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zuhayr (d. 656/1258), or by making use of local dialects, like the Andalusian Ibn Quzmān (d. 555/1160), who invented the *ṣajal* (popular strophic verse), and the Egyptian Ibn Dāniyāl of Mosul (d. 710/1310), who merged poetry with popular prose in his dramatic dialogues in *khīyāl al-ṣīll* (shadow-play). This, in conjunction with the new poetic forms that came into Arabic poetry, such as *dūbayt*, *mawāliyyā*, *muwashshah*, *kān wa-kān* and *qūmā*, and the relaxation in the use of inflection, which may have been more appropriate for accompaniment by music and singing, accelerated the spread of grammatical errors. Philologists

began to accept expressions proscribed by their predecessors, and others, like Ibn Yaʿīsh al-Ḥalabī (d. 643/1245), wrote in a style in which they disregarded the rules that they themselves had set in place. Consequently, a literary form that did not preserve the pure, classical Arabic language appeared, particularly literature that its authors intended for the masses in order to incite them to fight the *jihād* against the Crusader and Mongol invaders, to teach and remind them of the Muslim moral code, kindle the Ṣūfī spirit in their hearts or simply entertain and delight them. In this way, the colloquial language even encroached into the works of famous historians towards the end of the Mamlūk period, such as those of the Egyptian Ibn Iyās (d. 930/1524) and Ibn Ṭūlūn of Damascus (d. 953/1546), while poets such as the Egyptian Ibn Sūdūn (d. 868/1464) and many others, composed their odes exclusively in the vernacular.

The Ottomans' use of Turkish as an official language also had an influence on Arabic, although it did not lead to the latter's disappearance from the countries of the Arab East or West which came under Ottoman control, because they allowed the people there to retain their Arabic language, which, in any case, retained its status in the minds of the Muslim Turks as the Holy Language, the language of the Revelation and the Qurʾān. The colleges established in Istanbul, therefore, taught Arabic, one of the main languages of Turkish culture, and in which important works were written by the Turks themselves. In fact, many of the books written in Turkish or Fārsī had Arabic titles. The Arabic language and Muslim learning, particularly in its religious aspects, were essential elements in the education of individual Turks, especially in the upper, ruling echelons of society, both religious and political. There is no better evidence of this than the fact that a number of the Ottoman sultans and administrators were conversant in classical Arabic and that some had a solid educational grounding in Arabic literature, especially poetry. Indeed, some sultans were so proficient that they spoke in poetry, while some Turkish writers were good enough to write books in Arabic,<sup>2</sup> thereby enriching the Islamic legacy. The most prominent names in this field were Ibn Kamāl (Kamāl Pāshāzāda) (d. 940/1534), who left twenty-six works in Arabic on a variety of subjects, Tāshköprüzāde (d. 968/1560), Kātib Chelebī (Ḥājī Khalifa) (d. 1067/1657) and Munajjim Bāshī (d. 1113/1702). None of this, however, prevented a large migration of Turkish words into Arabic.

Colloquial Arabic in its various dialects crept into Arabic literature in the Arab East. It also did so in Andalusia, especially when Andalusian Arabic poetry emerged from its traditionalist phase. The blind Abu-l-ʿAbbās al-Tuḥfī (d. 520/1126) introduced the *mumwashshah* there and, later, Ibn Quzmān in-

2. See L. Sabbāgh, *Min aʿlām al-fīkḥ al-ʿArabī fī-l-ʿaṣr al-ʿUthmānī al-awwal: Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Muḥibbī al-muʿarrif wa-keitābuhu Khulāṣat al-āthār fī aʿyān al-qarn al-hādī ʿashar*, Damascus, al-Sharīka al-Muttaḥida li-Tawzīʿ, 1986, p. 11, n. 1.

vented the *zajal*. Although the *muwashshah* was composed in classical Arabic, setting it to music weakened its inflection. The Arabic language completely disappeared in Spain during the tenth/sixteenth century, following the fall of the city of Granada to the Spanish in 897/1492, and the remaining Muslim Arabs were forced to abandon their religion and their language. They therefore combined the Castilian language, that had been imposed upon them, with elements of Arabic; the product, which they wrote in Arabic script and called *aljamia*, has its own literature, which scholars have recently started to study.

As regards the countries of the Maghrib, there were areas where the Amazigh (Berber) language was spoken (and is still spoken today), but wherever Arabic spread, the classical form always intermingled with the local dialects, producing in time a new poetic language known as *malhūn*. This enjoyed increasing popularity in the Maghrib during the tenth/sixteenth century, although it did not stop classical Arabic from being used as the written literary language by most writers.

It is worth pointing out here that, during this period, classical Arabic accompanied the spread of Islam and the Qur'an beyond the boundaries of the Muslim world and was used by scholars and writers of jurisprudence, theology, history and the other literary arts in India, East and Central Africa, Malaysia and the Indonesian archipelago.

## Developments in the field of Arabic lexicology

Throughout the Islamic world, writers and scholars of grammar and morphology appeared, who were concerned about the serious nature of the grammatical errors and bad usage entering classical Arabic and the grave implications these could have for the understanding of the Qur'an and *Ḥadīth*. They began to compile works on Arabic lexicology, reminding people of the proper rules and constructions of the language and warning of the danger of foreign loan-words and inflectional errors. They reviewed the previous works in the field, providing explanations, commentaries, summaries and classifications for present and future generations of Arabs and newcomers from elsewhere.

There were so many involved in this undertaking, both Arabs and non-Arabs from the East and West, that any attempt to list the most famous of them, together with their works, would fill more than a whole volume. However, the most prominent were Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), al-Jawālīqī (d. 539/1145), al-Muṭarrizī (d. 610/1213), the Egyptian Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 647/1249), al-Astarābādī (d. 688/1289) and, in Andalusia, Ibn Sīd al-Baṭalyawsī (d. 521/1127), Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274) and Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344). The latter two left Andalusia to live in the East and were innovators in their field. Ibn Mālik gathered together the rules of grammar in a poem of a thousand verses in the *rajaz* meter, known as the

*Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik*, in order to help students learn and remember them. Until recently it was still taught in the Muslim world. Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī compiled the rules of Fārsī, Turkish and Ethiopic, and produced a critical and comparative study of the works of the philologists and what was available in those languages. Later, his pupil Ibn Hishām (d. 761/1360), who eclipsed the reputation of his master, distinguished himself in Egypt with his famous philological work, the *Mughnī al-labīb* (The Sufficient for the Intelligent Man), which remained in circulation as an interpretation and commentary until the thirteenth/nineteenth century. In the Maghrib, there were many working in this field, including al-Makkūdī (d. 807/1404) and Ibn Zakrī (d. 899/1494), and, during the Ottoman period, Abū Bakr al-Shanawānī (d. 1019/1611), the Egyptian writer al-Khafājī (d. 1069/1659) and many others. The Maronite Archbishop Germanus Farḥāt (d. 1145/1732) from Aleppo also made his contribution.

Just as the defects that arose in the classical Arabic literary language produced such a positive reaction, so, too, the spread of the new, innovative literary arts in poetry and prose, like *sajʿ* (rhyming prose), for instance, and associated forms like *tawriya* (double-meaning) and *jinās* (paranomasia), caused philologists, who were worried by this new development, to assemble the material on these arts into standard educational textbooks. The most famous of those who undertook such a task was al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229) from Khwārizm, whose book entitled *Miftāḥ al-ʿulūm* (The Key to the Sciences) gave rhetoric the form it has kept to this day. This work became the subject of interpretation and commentary in most of the books on Arabic lexicology that appeared during the centuries that followed. Among the best-known commentators were al-Taftazānī (d. 791/1389), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya of Damascus (d. 751/1350) and the poet Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1349), who included examples of the various forms of *badīʿ* (an extremely ornate and figurative style of verse) mentioned in the book in his own *badīʿ*-style eulogy of the Prophet Muḥammad, *Badīʿiyya*. Ibn Ḥijja of Ḥamā (d. 837/1434) did the same.

## The compilation of encyclopaedic lexicons

The reaction of Muslim philologists was not confined to stopping the Arabic language deviating from its original and pure path, as previously mentioned. They also turned their attention to the individual words and their meanings handed down over the years and attempted to continue the work of their predecessors in compiling dictionaries and lexicons in order to record these words and their meanings. They were no longer content with simply providing a brief explanation of the meaning of the word, but added all that was known about its occurrence in the Qurʾān, the *Ḥadīth* and the works of the master poets; this prompted contemporary researchers to sort these lexicons into the

encyclopaedias that were compiled during this period. They employed a scientific method of classification, arranging the words alphabetically, according to the letters at the beginning or end of the words, with the explanations being given in a logical sequence. The most famous compilers in this field were the Egyptian Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) with his encyclopaedic lexicon entitled *Lisān al-ʿArab* (The Tongue of the Arabs) and al-Fayrūzābādī of Shīrāz (d. 817/1415) with his book *al-Qāmūs al-mubīn* (The Ocean Encircling). In Ottoman times, Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790) with his dictionary *Tāj al-ʿarūs fī sharḥ al-qāmūs* (The Crown of the Bride) achieved particular renown.

Amongst these encyclopaedic works came a new lexicon of the Arabic language which was devoted to the explanation of a variety of technical terms and their meanings, something that had not been covered by previous lexicons. It was called *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn* (The Explorer of Artistic Terminology) and was compiled by the Indian philologist Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Tahānawī in 1158/1745.

Coinciding with the advent of lexicons was the compilation of collections of Arabic proverbs, arranged alphabetically and by subject, as in the *Majmaʿ al-amthāl* (Collection of Proverbs) of Abu-l-Faḍl al-Maydānī (d. 518/1124) and similar works by Abu-l-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), Abu-l-Ḥasan Zahr al-Dīn al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169) and others.

## The scholastic Madrasiyya movement and its spread throughout the Islamic world.

The Madrasiyya was strongly associated with the revival of the Sunnī religious movement, adopted by the Saljūqs and the dynasties that proceeded from them in the East, as well as by the Ottomans. It was also associated with the Šūfī movement, which burst on to the scene, particularly in the Muslim East during the fifth/eleventh century, at about the same time as the unitarian movement of Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130) in Morocco. The focusing of instruction on to the *madrassa* [Fig. 2], which constituted the new, systematic method of teaching - introduced, as mentioned above, in 458/1066 by Nizām al-Mulk - helped to promote the scholastic movement and its influence. Teaching then took on an official air, having been largely informal in the past. Teachers and scholars were required to prepare instructional books for students. Thus, the textbook, which was based on a collection of all the material on any particular subject that had previously been used to teach students, together with commentaries, explanations, reviews, summaries and logical classifications for easy comprehension, replaced the free book, which relied on creativity and innovation. The college textbook in turn became the subject of further interpretation and comment by other scholars and teachers. And so it continued. This occurred in every branch of the arts and sciences, even in poetry.

While this large and diverse collection of books succeeded in assembling the rich Islamic legacy in its entirety, from its very beginnings up to the time at which the books were compiled, thereby saving from extinction much which would otherwise have been lost during the Crusader and Mongol invasions, it could be accused of not having produced creative and innovative thought. However, the explanatory comments themselves, the occasional critical commentary and the logical, scientific structure of these books all form a new and original body of literature that may contain a hitherto unexploited and unstudied load of creativity.

This trend towards scholastic compilation appeared amongst the first generation of scholars and writers who taught at the Nizāmiyya *madrasa* in Baghdad, such as Abū Bakr al-Ṭabrīzī (d. 502/1109) and the Shāfiʿī *fuqabāʾ* (religious jurists), including the imam of the Two Mosques (*imām al-ḥaramayn*), al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), and his pupil, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), in his first books dealing with methodology and the scholastic defence of Sunnism against Greek philosophy and Muslim heretics. The mainstream Sunnī *fuqabāʾ* followed in the footsteps of this group of writers and scholars throughout this long period of time and produced a vast body of literature, especially in the religious sciences, whose authors and compilers are too many to enumerate, although, in the field of doctrine, scholars like Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142), ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355) and Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 892/1486) stand out from the rest. On the subject of *Ḥadīth*, famous names included Majd al-Dīn b. al-Athīr al-Jazarī (d. 606/1210), al-Haythamī (d. 807/1405) and the Indian ʿAlī al-Muttaqī al-Hindī (d. 975/1567) with his *Kanẓ al-ʿummāl* (The Workers' Treasure). In *fiqh* (jurisprudence), many works were compiled and, among the various branches and *madhhabs* (schools) of *fiqh*, each one tried to record its own discipline in special compilations. The collections of *fatwās* (legal opinions), which were issued by each *madhhab* and concern certain problems affecting Muslim society during this period, were an unprecedented development. The most famous *fatwās* were those of the Ḥanbalī *faqīh* of Damascus, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). In the field of the religious sciences, one must not ignore the complete or partial exegesis of the Qurʾān. It was during this period that the most famous interpretations of the Qurʾān were written, such as those of al-Zamakhsharī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) and al-Bayḍāwī of Shīrāz (d. 685/1286). Another contributor was the Turkish Arabist and *muffī* Abu-l-Suʿūd (d. 982/1574).

It is true that all the religious sciences, including those that concerned knowledge of Qurʾān-reading (*ʿilm al-qirāʾāt*) and the distribution of legacies (*ʿilm al-farāʾid*), remained throughout the period a process of collection, interpretation and interpolation, most of which was in keeping with the *madrasa* methodology. Despite that, the force and novelty of the concept often forged a way ahead through these works. This is especially clear in the original and

innovative ideas of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Taymiyya and his pupil from Damascus, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), who entered into a fierce debate about Ṣūfism and the inflexibility of the *madhhabs*. These ideas bore fruit in the twelfth/eighteenth century in the revolutionary movement of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb of Najd (d. 1206/1791). Such innovation also appeared to a lesser extent in the work of the Egyptian-Damascene Shāfiʿī *faqīh* Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) and the Ḥanafī Ibn Nujaym al-Miṣrī (d. 970/1563).

This method of compilation of religious material was also adopted by Shīʿī scholars, who in turn wrote books on doctrine and *fiqh*, using similar methods of collection and classification. The most famous scholars in this field were al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1326) and Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī (d. 1110/1699).

## Encyclopaedism

In this field, Arabic literature during the period under consideration achieved a high degree of sophistication. It seemed that Islamic culture had reached maturity and that Islamic thought had become more profound and far-reaching. The idea was to compile the full range of the Muslim cultural legacy since its beginnings and to present it as a continuous and integrated whole. This would, at the same time, free it from its disorganized and disparate state, save it from being lost and allow it to be transmitted to succeeding generations and to inquiring minds eager to become acquainted with it, as a single, cohesive and systematic collection. This encyclopaedic trend manifested itself in many ways during the period, throughout which it followed various scientific approaches for the collection of the material and its classification, the most common method being an arrangement in alphabetical order. It began with the book entitled *al-Ansāb* (Genealogies) by Tāj al-Dīn al-Samʿānī (d. 551/1156), followed by the geographical work *Muʿjam al-buldān* (Geographical Dictionary) by Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229). The method was used widely in the collection of biographies of personalities who contributed to various aspects of Islamic culture, and not just the transmitters of the *Ḥadīth*, as was the case beforehand. A collection was made of the biographies of great Muslims in history from the dawn of Islam up to the time of the compilation. The best and most celebrated example of this was the *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* (Obituaries of the Nobilities) by Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282) from Irbil. It comprised 865 biographies, for which the author had taken the trouble to record the names and genealogies, specify their dates, relate the virtues of the individuals concerned and the main events of their lives, highlight examples of their poetry and stories and identify the places mentioned in them.

Certain categories of religious scholars and literary figures were gathered in specific biographical collections. For scientists, for instance, there were the



works of Ṭahīr al-Dīn al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169) and al-Qiftī (d. 646/1248); for physicians, the work of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa (d. 669/1270); writers, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī in his *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ* (Dictionary of Men of Letters); *fuqahāʾ* by *madhhab*: for the Shāfiʿīs, the work of Ṭāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, for the Ḥanafīs, that of Ibn Quṭlūbughā (d. 879/1474), for the Mālikīs, Ibn Farḥūn (d. 799/1397), with a supplement by Aḥmad al-Bābā of Timbuktu (d. 1036/1626), and for the Ḥanbalīs, Ibn Abī Yaʿlā (d. 526/1131); for scholars of Qurʾān-reading, Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429); for the Companions of the Prophet, ʿIzz al-Dīn b. al-Athīr al-Jazarī (d. 630/1233); for representatives of the science of *Ḥadīth*, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1448) and Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348); and for philologists and caliphs, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505).

The encyclopaedic trend in collecting the biographies of writers and scholars was also apparent in the collection of biographies of eminent people from every city. Examples of this large category are the *Tārīkh Dimashq* (History of Damascus) by Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176) and the book by Ibn al-ʿAdīm (d. 660/1262) on Aleppo, those of Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) and Ibn Ṭaghribirdī (d. 874/1469) on Egypt; the work of the Andalusians Ibn Bashkuwāl (d. 578/1183) and Ibn al-ʿAbbār (d. 658/1260) on Andalusia, and that of Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Khaṭīb on Granada; and the work of Tāshköprüzāde (d. 968/1560) on the Ottoman scholars.

Another method of collecting biographies was the compilation of biographical dictionaries, in respect of the entire Muslim world, for each individual century, usually the century in which its author lived; indeed this approach has been employed from the seventh/thirteenth century up to the present. The best-known were the works of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī on the eighth/fourteenth century, the Egyptian al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) on the ninth/fifteenth century, Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī of Damascus (d. 1061/1651) and Ibn al-ʿAydarūs of Haḍramawt (d. 1038/1628) on the tenth/sixteenth century, al-Muḥibbī of Damascus (d. 1111/1699) on the eleventh/seventeenth century and al-Murādi of Damascus (d. 1206/1791) on the twelfth/eighteenth century.

The collection of biographies using these various methods was not confined to the Sunnis. Shīʿī scholars and writers followed the same practice. The Shīʿīs called this biographical science ‘the science of men’, the most famous work in the field being *Amal al-āmil fī ʿulamāʾ Jabal ʿĀmil* (The Expectation of the Hopeful on the Scholars of Jabal ʿĀmil) by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1104/1692), with an appendix by Sayyid Muḥammad al-Baḥrānī (d. c. 1180/1766).

Into this type of encyclopaedism came bio-bibliographies of Arabic works and their authors or bibliographical encyclopaedias, the outstanding example of them being from the Ottoman period, entitled *Kaṣḥf al-zunūn* (Uncovering the Doubts) by the Turkish Arabist Kātib Chelebī (Ḥājī Khalifa) (d. 1067/1658).

The encyclopaedism described above does not encompass the full range of learning and sciences. It is true that the first indications of the idea of collecting such a wide and diverse body of knowledge appeared in the preceding period among the literary works of al-Jāhiz (d. 255/868), Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) and the Andalusian Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940). However, these works generally lacked a scientific structure. One can say that encyclopaedic compilation did not come into its own until the Muslim Arabs became involved in the classification of knowledge in the ‘clear’ sciences, as did al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), al-Khwārizmī (d. fourth/tenth century) and the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’ (*wa-khillān al-wafā’*, Brethren of Purity) in the same century. The Epistles of these letters are considered an encyclopaedia, albeit somewhat Shī‘ī, which prompted al-Ghazālī to write his book *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) to defend the Sunna. The *Muqaddīma* (Prolegomenon) of Ibn Khaldūn was, in fact, also a concise, abridged encyclopaedia of Muslim learning and science.

It was what happened to the Islamic legacy after the Crusader and Mongol invasions that really caused a group of encyclopaedists to produce vast encyclopaedias of learning, with a long-term aim of preserving the legacy at a time when the Muslim world faced a number of dangers, and, in the short-term, to provide the *kuttāb* (state secretaries) with the right kind of information since, according to them, they were the ‘eyes of the Kings to see, their ears to hear, their tongues to speak and their minds to comprehend’.<sup>3</sup> Egyptian writers of high cultural standing began to compile these encyclopaedias, foremost of them being al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333) in his work *Nihāyat al-‘Arab fī funūn al-adab* (The Ultimate Goal in the Literary Arts), which took him seventeen years and amounted to 9,000 pages in thirty-one volumes. He classified its contents into five disciplines, each of which was divided into five sections, which in turn were divided into chapters. The first discipline comprised a description of the world, the creation of the earth and its component elements, ending with a description of Egypt, its inhabitants and antiquities. The next three disciplines concerned living beings: people, animals and plants. The fifth discipline was set aside for history and comprised two-thirds of the encyclopaedia. In it, he set out the history of the world from the Creation up to his own time. The encyclopaedia was described as a gigantic work, encompassing a diversity of subjects and containing a wealth of information. It was a balanced collection of both science and literature, as if its author not only wanted to educate the *kātib* (official secretary), but also to form a kind of noble and highly cultivated man.

The second encyclopaedia was the *Masālik al-abṣār* (Paths of Discernment) by Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī (d. 749/1349), to which the author

3. See al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a‘shā, fī ṣinā‘at al-inshā*, ed. M. ‘A. Ibrahim, Cairo, Dar al-Kutub al-Khadawīyya, 1331–1338/1913–1920, XIV, p. 14.

appended *al-Taʿrīf bi-l-mustalah al-sharīf* (The Definition of the Noble Term), and which included a great deal of information on religion, jurisprudence, politics, administration, geography, history and cosmography. The work was no less considerable than the first encyclopaedia.

The third of the great encyclopaedias was the *Subḥ al-aʿshā fī šināʿat al-insbāʿ* (Dawn of the Short-Sighted in the Art of Secretaryship) by al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), which the orientalist C. E. Bosworth described as 'stupendous'.<sup>4</sup> It took twenty-three years to complete, was printed in fourteen volumes, contained a very full introduction and a conclusion and was classified into ten discourses. The author provided a general study of the theoretical sciences and practical knowledge in which the *kātib* was required to be proficient. He categorized 'official administrative prose' into thirty types, with examples of each. In one of the epistles, on the rare subject of the relative importance of the sciences, numbering some seventy disciplines, he began with lexicology and finished with the art of history, indicating the importance of each science over the one that preceded it. The encyclopaedia included original documents going back to the beginnings of Islam and covered all the Arab authors who had treated the art of 'official' writing and the sciences associated with it, especially history and geography. The *Subḥ al-aʿshā* demonstrated that Arab-Islamic culture was extremely fertile and made a rich and diverse contribution at every stage, and that it lost none of its vitality and richness during this period but had its share of innovation and ingenuity.

Another aspect of encyclopaedism during this period can be seen in the endeavours of encyclopaedists who compiled works on a range of scientific disciplines, like the physician ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (d. 629/1231) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), who left more than 500 books on various aspects of science and knowledge; and there were many others like them.

A further aspect of encyclopaedism was the size of the historical works, the variety of methods employed and their coverage of the history of every part of the Muslim world, which caused amazement and admiration and prompted the French orientalist Claude Cahen to comment that 'the historical sciences imbued classical Arabic with a profound splendour'.<sup>5</sup> The scope of the present article is insufficient to cover even a small proportion of the most significant historical works. Writing world history in the form of annals followed, accompanied by the science of obituary. The most famous historians in this field were Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) with his book *al-Muntaẓam* (The Well Ordered), Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) with his important and extensive work entitled *al-Kāmil* (The Perfect Book), followed in greater scope by Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī (d. 654/1257), the afore-mentioned al-Nuwayrī, al-Dhahabī

4. See C. E. Bosworth, art. 'Ḳalkaskandī', in *EF*<sup>2</sup>.

5. Cl. Cahen, *Taʾrikh al-Arab wa-l-shuʿūb al-Islāmiyya*, trans. Badr al-Din Qāsim, Beirut, Dār al-Ḥaqīqa, 1972, II, p. 377.

(d. 748/1348) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373). Egypt was teeming with outstanding historians in the Mamlūk period, some of whom have already been mentioned, such as al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, Ibn Ṭaghribirdī, al-Sakhāwī and al-Suyūṭī. In Ottoman times, there were historians like Muḥammad b. Abi-l-Surūr al-Bakrī al-Ṣiddīqī (d. c. 1063/1653) and al-Jabartī (d. 1241/1825). Muslim history was also compiled as the history of ruling Muslim dynasties, as in the renowned historical work of Ibn Khaldūn entitled *al-‘Ibar*, which is distinguished by relating the history of the Berbers; or as regional or urban history, from East and Central Asia to the farthest reaches of West Africa and Andalusia. Rashid al-Dīn (d. 718/1318) wrote the *Tārīkh al-Mughūl* (History of the Mongols) in Fārsī, which he then translated into Arabic. The history of India up to the author’s own time was written by ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ulūgh Khān (d. after 1020/1611), that of Andalusia by al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1632) and sub-Saharan Africa by al-Sa‘dī (d. 1066/1656).

The crowning glory of such a vast body of history was the *Muqaddima* of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), which established the author as ‘the true founder of social science’ and in which he laid down the principles for the scientific methodology of historical research (especially the critical techniques), centuries before they were identified in Europe. He also examined and developed the laws governing societies and states. All critics amongst Arabs and orientalisists are agreed that he was the greatest historical philosopher of his time and one of the greatest historians of all time. Al-Sakhāwī joined in the polemic surrounding the science of history and defended it with an open mind and well-founded arguments. His book *al-I‘lān bi-l-tawbīkh li-man dhamma abl al-tārīkh* (The Open Denunciation of the Adverse Critics of the Historians) included, in addition to the scientific methodology of history, history itself, the various types of compilation in that field, together with the details on most prominent historians.

## The development of poetry

This period presents those studying it with a very rich tapestry of poetic endeavour. Poetic output was very copious and the collections of poetry abundant. Poetry retained its favoured position with sultans, ministers and rulers and was not confined to professional poets. Many other groups of people became involved because they looked upon it as a kind of hobby, through which they expressed themselves, corresponded with one another, and with which they filled their evenings talks, especially the new art forms that were accompanied by music and singing, like the *muwashshah* and *zajal*. It became part of the Ṣūfī *dhikr* (worship) and entered the realms of entertainment and recreation in equal measure. Thus, poetry reflected the real lives of the people at all levels and became absorbed in all aspects thereof. It added to its former genres, such as *madīh* (panegyric), *rithā’* (elegy), *ghazal*

(love poetry), *fakhr* (self-praise), *hijā'* (satire), the description (*wasf*) of nature, the praise of flowers, *khamriyyāt* (wine parties), mystical love, the love of boys and Crusader and Turkish women (particularly in Syria), describing *ḥashīsh* and *barsb* (drugs that were used by all sections of society), coffee and tobacco (coffee was first introduced to the Muslim Arab world during the tenth/sixteenth century, while tobacco arrived during the following century; the *fuqahā'* and poets held controversial views on the two substances). Historical poetry, puzzles, riddles, didactic verse and other forms also appeared. Perhaps the most glorious of these genres during the period was the poetry of battle or *jihād*, which appeared during the Crusades in the Arab East and in Andalusia during the Hispano-Muslim conflict. It incited *jihād*, describing the armies, the machinery of war, the castles and battles, and extolled the virtues of courage and bravery. It was also represented in the Arab East in eulogies and elegies for the sultans, princes and commanders who gained victories over the Crusaders and Mongols. Among the best-known poets, and there were many, were the Syrians Muḥammad b. Nasr al-Qayṣarānī (d. 548/1153), Ibn Munīr al-Ṭarābulusī (d. 548/1153), the Egyptian al-Jawwānī (d. 588/1192), the historian 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 597/1200), Ibn al-Sā'ātī (d. 604/1207), the Egyptian Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk (d. 608/1211), al-Sharaf al-Anṣārī (d. 662/1264), al-Shihāb Maḥmūd (d. 725/1325), Ibn Nubāta al-Miṣrī (d. 768/1366) and the Syrians Manjak (d. 1080/1669) and Ibn al-Naqīb (d. 1081/1670).

Many eulogies of the Prophet Muḥammad were composed during this period and whole collections on the subject appeared. Some of them were referred to as *mawlidīyyāt* because they spoke of the glory of his birth. One can, however, classify them as *jihād*-poetry, because they reminded Muslims of the Prophet's *jihād* for the Muslim cause and of his character and teachings. The best-known ode in this genre is that of the Egyptian poet al-Būṣīrī (d. 694/1295), entitled *al-Burda* (The Mantle), which has no less than ninety explanatory commentaries in Arabic, Turkish, Fārsī and Berber and which has been translated into German, French, English and Italian.<sup>6</sup> It has also been imitated by Arab poets up to the present day, foremost among them being the great Egyptian poet Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1351/1932).

Poetry throughout this long period either followed the 'Traditionist' or the 'Modern School' or both. The former preserved the general structure and traditional format of the *qaṣīda*, with the usual monorhyme and sixteen metres. The followers of this school tried to imitate the master poets of the previous period like Abū Tammām (d. 231/845), al-Buḥturī (d. 284/897) and al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965), with a greater inclination towards using the arts of *badī'*, such as *tawriya*, *ḥibāq*, *jinās* and other forms. The most famous of these were Ṣafi-l-Dīn al-Ḥillī and Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī, as well as the other poets already mentioned. The latter was the school of the 'modern poetic arts' and

6. P. Hitti, *Ta'rikh al-'Arab al-muṭawwal*, Beirut, Dār al-Kashshāf, 1951, p. 814.

was distinguished by its use of poetic metres derived from the sixteen traditional metres, as well as the new forms like *muwashshah*, *dūbayt*, *mawālīyā*, *kān wa-kān* and *qūmā*. The *maqṭaʿiyyāt*, with a limited number of verses, replaced the long *qaṣīda*. The most popular form among poets in the Arab East was the *muwashshah*, which originated in Andalusia and of which the Egyptian poet Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk, who excelled in it, provided a critical explanation to those who would follow his lead in this field in his book *Dār al-tirāz* (House of Embroidery). The *zajal* also spread from Andalusia and was a popular verse form written in the colloquial language. It was used in a variety of genres, including, in particular, social and political criticism. The most famous exponents of *zajal* during the Mamlūk period were, in Egypt, Ibrāhīm al-Miʿmār (d. 749/1348) and, in Syria, al-Aqsātī (eighth/fourteenth century). Among the well-known popular *qaṣīdas* during the Ottoman period in Egypt was *Haṣṣ al-qubūf* (The Shaking of the Skull-Caps) by the poet al-Shirbīnī (d. c. 1098/1687).

Just as the poets of the Muslim East amalgamated the old and modern schools, so too did the poets of Andalusia. There, poets like Ibn Khafāja (d. 533/1138) took an interest in the description of nature, *khamriyyāt*, *ghazal* and youth pleasures. The most celebrated poets were al-Ruṣāfī (d. 572/1177), Ibn Sahl (d. 649/1251) and the master of Andalusian writers, Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1374).

One must also mention didactic poems, in which the *fuqahāʾ* and scholars composed compendia in verse (using the *rajaḥ* metre) on a variety of subjects, such as grammar and morphology, *fiqh*, prosody, history and even ṣūfism and other matters, in order to make it easier for students to remember them. Examples of these are the *Alfiyyat Ibn Mālīk* and *al-Ajurrūmiyya* (attributed to the philologist Ibn Ajurrūm al-Sinhājī (d. 723/1323) for grammar, *al-Shāṭibiyya* for the science of Qurʾān-reading (attributed to Qāsim b. Firruh al-Shāṭībī, d. 590/1193) and *al-Khazrajīyya* for prosody (attributed to Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh al-Andalusī al-Khazrajī, seventh/thirteenth century).

Poetry lost much of its vitality and purity when certain poets introduced other forms not yet mentioned here and which literary critics have termed the *Tufayliyya* (Parasite),<sup>7</sup> such as geometric verse, common rhymes, *tashjūr* and *mukballaʿāt*, in which *qaṣīdas* were read in different ways.

Just as this period was taken up with the collection of the inheritance of the past in all its forms, a number of writers tried to collect the poetic legacy, especially of their own era. In Andalusia, we have *al-Dhakhīra fī maḥāsīn al-Jazīra* (Treasures of the Peninsula) by Ibn Bassām al-Shantarīnī al-Andalusī (d. 543/1148), in Iraq, Mubārak b. Abī Bakr al-Mawṣilī (d. 654/1256) and, in Syria and Egypt during the Ottoman period, al-Khafājī al-Miṣrī (d. 1069/1659) with his book *Rayḥānat al-alibbāʾ* (The Sweet-Smelling Flower for those of

7. See N. al-Himsī, *Nahwa fahm jadīd li-adab al-duwal al-mutatābiʿa wa-taʾrīkhīha*, University Books and Publication Department, 1978, I, pp. 365–377.

Intelligence) and al-Muḥibbī al-Dimashqī (d. 1111/1699) with his *Nafḥat al-rayḥāna* (The Fragrance of the Scented Flower).

## The diversity of literary prose

In addition to prose works in the various scientific fields, writers continued to produce prose literature in a variety of genres, including political, religious, martial and exhortative rhetoric; sultanic, fraternal and mystical letters, diverse descriptive literature, as well as epistles more akin to modern essays on particular subjects, such as *jihād* or the virtues of cities. They also adopted the style of the *maqāmāt*, with modifications to its structure. This type of prose was interspersed with *sajʿ* (rhyming prose) in particular, which reached its zenith during the sixth/twelfth century before declining slightly, but not in the works of the *kuttāb*, nor of those who imitated the *maqāmāt*, nor in introductions and dedications of books. It reappeared during Ottoman times in the *Rayḥānat al-alibbāʿ* of al-Khafājī al-Miṣrī, in the *Nafḥat al-rayḥāna* of al-Muḥibbī al-Dimashqī, in the *Sulāfat al-ʿaṣr* (The Choice Wine) of Ibn Maʿsūm (d. 1119/1707) as well as in a number of other books.

The *kuttāb* of the successive ruling dynasties in the Arab East and West displayed a great interest in the literature of the *kātib*, until such time as it became known as the science of *inshāʿ* (composition). This literature, in which the *kātib* composed a variety of state documents, including contracts, diplomas, signatures, decrees and official letters, flourished in the elegant style of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī's *kātib* (d. 596/1199), a style that was interspersed with *badʿ* forms such as *tawriya*. The science of *inshāʿ* reached a high degree of sophistication in the book *al-Taʿrīf bi-l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf* by Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī and in al-Qalqashandī's *Subḥ al-aʿshā*.

New genres appeared in the field of technical literary prose during this period, such as autobiography, memoirs and diaries, which dealt with the writers themselves, providing vivid pictures of their lives and times, as, for example, the book *al-Iʿtibār* (Memoirs) by Usāma b. Muṣṭafī (d. 584/1188) and Ibn Khaldūn's autobiography. During the Ottoman period, there were the *Yawmiyyāt Ibn Kannān* (Diaries of Ibn Kannān) (d. 1153/1740), a historian from Damascus, and the work of al-Ḥallāq al-Budayrī (d. after 1175/1762), also from Damascus.

Some writers wrote *qiṣaṣ* (tales), the best example of which was the philosophical *qiṣṣa* entitled *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān* (The Living One, Son of the Awake) by Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185), the Andalusian physician and philosopher, inspiration for which he drew from an Eastern example written by the philosopher-physician Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037).

Travel literature also flourished during this period, until it became almost customary for any scholar or writer travelling through the world to record his observations and the things he had seen. The most famous of these journeys

were those of Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāṭī (d. 565/1169), Ibn Jubayr of Valencia (d. 614/1217) and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa of Tangier (d. between 770–779/1368–1377). In the East, the journey of ‘Alī b. Abī Bakr of Harāt (d. 611/1214) was of comparable fame. There were many other accounts by travellers during the Ottoman period, perhaps the most prominent of whom was a Ṣūfī from Damascus, ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731). In addition to these journeys, there were the reports produced by official emissaries while on assignment, like that of Abu-l-Ḥasan al-Tamghrūṭī (d. c. 1000/1591) from Morocco.

Among the developments in technical prose in both the East and West was the prose form associated with *jihād* and warfare, which was similar to the battle poetry mentioned above. A book by Ibn Hudhayl of Granada, written in 763/1362 and entitled *Tuḥfat al-anfus wa-shi‘ār sukkān al-Andalus* (The Gift of Souls and Emblem of the Inhabitants of Andalusia), and its abridged version *Ḥilyat al-fursān* (Ornament of Knights), are perhaps the best examples in this field.

One can add to that the popular tale, which was more akin to epic literature since it told of heroic adventures during certain periods of pre-Islamic and Islamic history, such as those of ‘Antara, Sayf b. Dhī Yazan, Sīdī Baṭṭāl, the tale of the *Banī Kilāb ma‘a-l-Rūm*, the *Mughāmarāt Banī Hilāl* and the *Sīrat al-Zābir Baybars*. Such popular tales reached the pinnacle of their development with *Alf layla wa-layla* (A Thousand and One Nights), which contained particularly rich and fanciful stories, drawn from all periods of Arab history and from the experience of the different classes of society. Associated with this popular literature, albeit of a different hue, were the playlets devised by Ibn Dāniyāl, to which we have already referred, and for which he used puppets or figures made out of stiffened card to present the characters to the people.

Also amongst the various prose genres of this period was morality literature, which was, in fact, included in the other branches of prose, although a separate branch was created by the book *Aṭwāq al-dhabab* (Necklaces of Gold) by al-Zamakhsharī and *al-Zawājir fī iqtirāf al-kabā‘ir* (Restricting the Commission of Grave Errors) by the Egyptian Shāfi‘ī *faqīh* Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 974/1567), described by the orientalist Schacht and Van Arendonk as being the most important extant work in existence on the practical morality of Islam.<sup>8</sup>

Technical literary prose in Andalusia was influenced by Eastern examples, as can be seen in the *Sirāj al-mulūk* (The Light of Kings) of Ibn Abī Randaqa al-Ṭurtūshī (d. 525/1131), in the commentary on the *Maqāmāt al-Sayrī* by al-Sharīshī (d. 619/1222) and the large encyclopaedic body of literature of Lisān al-Dīn b. al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1375).

8. See J. Schacht and C. Van Arendonk, art. ‘Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī’, in *IEP*<sup>2</sup>.



## The spread of Šūfī literature

Šūfism, which had met with fierce opposition from Sunnī scholars in its early stages, following defections by some of their number from the Sunnī articles of faith, returned to the fold during this period, as evidenced by the book *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* by the Šūfī scholar al-Ghazālī and in the exhortations and Sunnī writings of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī (d. 561/1166). Thus, the *khānqāh* (monastery) and Šūfī *ḡāwiyā* (corner) found their places in every region of the Muslim world, alongside the *madrassa* of the Sunnī revival, and received the same support from the ruling class as the religious scholars. However, it was not long before the Šūfī movement resumed its dissemination of ideas drawn from Neoplatonism and illuminism, which led to the execution in 587/1191 of the Šūfī Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī, who had adopted the mystical illumination philosophy. This became established in the Muslim Orient and was expounded during the eleventh/seventeenth century by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1050/1640). At the time, both the Muslim East and West were being influenced by the Šūfī thinking of Muḥyi-l-Dīn b. al-'Arabī, who had moved from Andalusia to Damascus, where he died in 638/1240, and who advocated the universality of God and the unity of being. His ideas were expressed in many prose works that subsequently influenced the Arab, Turkish and Indian Šūfī movements. Their widespread dissemination can be attributed to their systematic presentation in the book *al-Insān al-kāmil* (The Perfect Man) by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Jīlī (d. 832/1428).

Arabic Šūfī prose literature was gradually influenced by the *Madrasiyya*, especially after most of the religious scholars eventually embraced Šūfism. An abundant Šūfī prose literature then developed, although it was more popular and more concerned with the miracles and noble deeds of the masters than with their thinking. This is evident, for example, in the book *Bahjat al-asrār* (The Splendour of Secrets) by al-Shaṭṭanawfī (d. 713/1314). Many religious scholars of the Ottoman period also wrote about Šūfism, including the Egyptian 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565) and Raḡī al-Dīn al-Ghazzī of Damascus (d. 935/1529). However, the most prominent Šūfī figure during the period was 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī of Damascus (d. 1143/1731) on account of both his prose treatises and his poetry. Many of the writers and thinkers of the twelfth/eighteenth century in Syria, Egypt and the Maghrib were influenced by him.

Perhaps even more important than the prose compositions of Šūfī literature was its body of poetry, which played a major rôle in imbuing its followers with religious zeal. The main characteristic of such poetry was the adoption of themes from the *khamriyyāt* and *ghazal* genres and superimposing a Šūfī spiritual significance on them, either in the time-honoured *badī'* style of the traditional poetic art or with *muwāshshah* style verses about divine love and

divine ecstasy. The best examples of the first type are by the Egyptian Ṣūfī poet ‘Umar b. al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235). However, Muḥyi-l-Dīn b. al-‘Arabī surpassed him with his prolific output and by demonstrating his extraordinary musical skill in composing Ṣūfī *qaṣīdas*, not just in the traditional style but also in that of the *muwashshah*. The Egyptian ‘Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) and his son Shams al-Dīn, also known as al-Shābb al-Zarīf (d. 688/1289), followed his lead.

## The introduction of scientific methodology into literary composition

This emerged from the logical classification followed in the various encyclopaedias. The writings and compilations of the preceding period, despite their original and innovative ideas, were not presented in a logical and consistent arrangement; they were more the product of a random subjectivity than of any systematic treatment. During this period, however, writers attempted to analyse their subject matter and arrange it into logically flowing sections, chapters, categories and sub-divisions, in order to create a single homogeneous and integral collection. It included an introduction and epilogue and made reference to the sources from which the writer drew his material. The *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (The Book of Animals) by the great literary figure al-Jāhīz (d. 255/868), for example, does talk about animals, and much of it is new, but it is not a dictionary of animals. Al-Damīrī (d. 808/1405), in his book *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān al-kubrā* (Larger Life of Animals), arranged the names of the animals in alphabetical order and accompanied his material on each animal with, in the first instance, philological observations, followed by a description of the animal, the references made to it in the Qur’ān and *Ḥadīth*, whether it was edible, proverbs in which it was mentioned, its medicinal qualities and an interpretation of the dreams in which it appeared. This methodology became prevalent in all types of literature during the period, even in the classification by poets of their collections, and occasionally in the arrangement of their *qaṣīdas* and rhymes.

One can see in this scientific methodology the growing trend towards ‘specialization’ in the different branches of knowledge. Despite the intellectual encyclopaedism adopted by most of the writers and thinkers of this period, the focus on any particular branch of knowledge within a compilation or treatise became that much clearer.

The continuation of the process of scientific compilation: the influence exerted by translations from foreign cultures, especially the Greek

These seven centuries produced a considerable number of scholars of the rational sciences, such as mathematics, astronomy, physics and medicine, whose works were innovative and creative. Many were encyclopaedists and wrote about more than just science, occasionally adding philosophy. Some were Persian and wrote in both Arabic and Fārsī. In the mathematical sciences, the encyclopaedist Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1273), Kamāl al-Dīn al-Fārisī (d. 719/1319), Ibn al-Bannā' al-Marrākushī (d. 721/1321), the encyclopaedist al-Qalaṣādī of the Maghrib (d. 891/1486) and al-Kāshī of Persia (d. 832/1429) - all excelled in their field. In astronomy, alongside al-Ṭūsī, al-Fārisī and al-Kāshī, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311), Ibn al-Shātir al-Dimashqī (d. 777/1375) and Taqī al-Dīn b. Ma'rif al-Rāshid (d. 993/1585) became renowned in the East. Ibn Bāja (d. 533/1138), Ibn al-Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185), al-Bītrūjī (d. c. 601/1204) and others also became prominent in Andalusia. In medicine, many physicians continued to collect information from both the past and present. Syria, Egypt and Andalusia, during the sixth and seventh/twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were distinguished for their wealth of valuable works on medicine. Hibat Allāh b. Jumay' of Egypt wrote a book at the end of the sixth/twelfth century on psychiatry and psychology, the Egyptian Ibn al-Nāqid (d. 584/1188) on ophthalmology, Ibn al-Nafis of Damascus (d. 687/1288) - who explained the nature of the blood-circulation system centuries before it was understood in Europe - on general medicine. Dā'ūd al-Anṭākī (d. 1008/1599) also wrote a particularly celebrated work during the Ottoman period. In Andalusia, Ibn Bāja, Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) and Ibn Zuhr (d. 558/1162) became famous. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a (d. 669/1270), the greatest medical historian of the Islamic world, provided in the only book of its kind in Arabic literature, the '*Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā'*' (Sources of Information on the Classes of Physicians), the names of a large number of writers in this field. Among these physicians were those who wrote on drugs and pharmacology, with particular emphasis on the use of plants. Two of the most famous names in the field were al-Ghāfiqī, the physician from Cordoba (d. 560/1165), and Ibn al-Bayṭār of Malaga (d. 646/1248 in Damascus).

Other sciences covered during that period included zoology, in which the encyclopaedia by the afore-mentioned al-Damīrī was an important example. Scholars like Ibn al-ʿAwwām al-Ishbīlī (d. 580/1185) and Raḍī al-Dīn al-Ghazzī of Damascus (d. 935/1529) also produced works on agriculture.

Arabic compilation in world, regional and astronomical scientific geography reached a high level in al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī of the Maghrib, who compiled the *Kitāb Ruḡār* with maps for Roger II of Sicily in 548/1154, and in the *Taqwīm al-buldān* (Survey of the Countries) by Abu-l-Fidā' al-Ḥamawī (d. 732/1331).

This development opened the door for compilations to be made in the new and comprehensive science of cosmography, an example of which can be seen in the work of Shams al-Dīn al-Dimashqī (d. 727/1327) and in the encyclopaedia of al-Nuwayrī.

The Muslims during this period produced works on a science that nobody had addressed before, namely, that of navigation and the seas. Shining examples in their field were Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Mājīd (at the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century), who was reputed to have piloted Vasco da Gama to India, and his contemporary Sulaymān al-Mahrī. The French scholar, Gabriel Ferrand, devoted a great deal of time to studying their works.

The Muslims of this period did not stop producing works on philosophy, as is clear from the books of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, as well as al-Ghazālī in his *Tabāfut al-falāsifa* (Refutation of the Philosophers). In the Islamic East, however, it changed to Ṣūfī philosophy, as it did also in Andalusia, following the appearance of the great Muslim philosophers already mentioned, such as Ibn Bāja, Ibn Rushd and Ibn al-Ṭufayl. There, Ṣūfī philosophy flourished in the collections of Muḥyi-l-Dīn b. al-ʿArabī, who had moved to the East, and Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 668/1269).

One can see from this brief essay that the Islamic world and the Arab region, in particular, were host to an active and fertile literary movement throughout this long period. Such was the amount of material produced that the description of this period of history by some academics and historians as a period of decline can never be justified. It was a period marked by the presence of many of the greatest thinkers of Islamic civilization, who provided in every one of their works a legacy of the past, enriched by novelty and innovation, appropriate to the thinking and diversity of the period in which they lived.

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Chapter 4

THE MODERN AND  
CONTEMPORARY PERIOD OF  
ARABIC LITERATURE

*Mustapha Badawi*

Modern Arabic literature began to emerge halfway through the nineteenth century; it was the product of the meeting of the indigenous Arabic literary tradition and Western cultural influences. In certain respects, it was a continuation (with significant modifications) of this tradition, while in others it constituted entirely new departures. Its development was a slow process marked as much by conservative opposition as by revolutionary zeal. It started in Egypt and Syria (which then included Lebanon), from which it spread to the rest of the Arab world, slowly at first, but in recent years the movement has gathered momentum, so that at present new experimental modes of writing can be found in what was once seen as the periphery of Arabic culture, namely North Africa and the Gulf States.

Historians probably exaggerated the extent of the decline of Arabic literature under Ottoman rule, which began in the sixteenth century, but there is no doubt that by the eighteenth century there was an unmistakable loss of vigour and originality, with poets and prose writers alike being enamoured of an excessively ornate and artificial style of writing in which more attention was given to manner than matter. Creative writing consisted mainly of *maqāmas* (short narrative pieces written in a highly ornate mixture of rhyming prose and verse) or *maqāma*-like epistles, pious verses in praise of the Prophet, popular Šūfī poems, empty panegyrics addressed to local notables, verse celebrations of trivial social occasions, numerous conventional love poems employing stock imagery and a cliché-ridden language. It was a literature of an exhausted and introvert culture, living virtually in cultural isolation from the West, complacent and convinced of its own superiority. Out of this complacency it was rudely shaken by Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798, which revealed at once the great superiority of the well-organized and technologically advanced French forces.

The French occupation of Egypt lasted only three years; yet, its consequences, both direct and indirect, were incalculable for the political, social

and cultural development of the whole of the Arab world. This violent encounter with the West had such a profound and traumatic effect upon the Arab imagination that the East-West opposition continued to be, in one form or another, a leading motif in Arabic literature. The occupation also marked the beginning of Western colonization or domination of virtually the whole of the Arab world, with the result that the nationalist struggle for independence became an almost obsessive preoccupation for writers for a long time. An indirect result of the French campaign was the rise to power of Muḥammad ‘Alī, the Albanian officer who came to Egypt with the Ottoman forces to help drive out the French, but who became the virtual ruler of Egypt in 1805, founding a dynasty which ended only with the deposition of King Farouk by the army revolution led by Nasser in 1952, an event which, amongst other things, helped to change the course of modern Arabic literature. Having seen the military superiority of the French, Muḥammad ‘Alī launched a programme of *military reform*, importing Western technicians and Western forms of education and sending educational missions to Europe. He superimposed upon the country a Western type of educational system, different from the traditional theocentric one of the Azhar university.

The drive for modernization begun by Muḥammad ‘Alī and strengthened by his grandson Khedive Ismā‘īl, resulted in the introduction of secular education, printing, journalism and much translation, at first of Western science and technology and subsequently of thought and literature. Consequently, a new readership public was formed which, thanks to the introduction of printing, had access not only to modern ideas, but also to the Arabic classics, hitherto available only in a few manuscript copies. Likewise, a new conception of literature emerged. Inspired by growing political and social consciousness, rising nationalism and the conflict between Islam and Westernization, writers sought to reflect and indeed change social and political reality, instead of being largely contented with the display of verbal skill. Together with translations of scientific works, journalism helped gradually change the style of Arabic prose, ridding it of excessive rhetorical devices and making it a simpler and fitter vehicle for conveying ideas as well as for sustained narrative.

The editing of the first official Gazette in Egypt was assigned to the man who came to be regarded as the father of modern Arab thought, Rifā‘a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801–1873), an Azharite by training, who in 1826 was sent to France, where he spent five years acting as Imām to mission students. After his return, he published in 1832 an account of his trip to Paris in which, as well as in his numerous other writings, he expressed his admiration for the rationality and good organization of the social and political institutions of the West. Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī included in his account specimens of what must be the first Arabic translation of French verse, which had formed part of his training as a translator. Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī later held the position of Director of the newly established Cairo School of Languages (1835), where Italian, French and English

were taught, as well as of the Translation Bureau (1841), which marked the beginning of a major translation movement that is still flourishing today. Muḥammad ʿAlī's liberal attitude towards Europeans made the decade of the Egyptian occupation of Syria (1831–1840) crucial in that it led to a dramatic increase in French, British and American missionary and educational institutions. The graduates of these institutions, mostly young Christians, were eager to experiment in new literary forms, unknown in classical Arabic literature, such as drama and the novel.

Both in Egypt and in Syria the newspapers provided a forum for political activists and religious and social reformers, resulting in the birth and development of the modern essay – from the rather crude attempts at providing information in official or semi-governmental periodicals to the more powerful and impassioned work of politically or socially committed writers, including women. At the hands of some of these writers, particularly the Egyptians Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Māzinī (1890–1949) and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1886–1973), the essay attained its most elegant form from the second decade of the twentieth century onwards. A close connection between journalists and serious literature was forged to the extent that we find not only poems and short stories, but also works of literary criticism (e.g. by Ṭāhā Ḥusayn), and even whole novels, such as those by the Lebanese Egyptian Jurjī Zaydān, appearing (serially) in newspapers or magazines. Even today, the Egyptian Najīb Maḥfūz's novels first appeared in instalments in *al-Abrām*.

The history of modern Arabic literature can be divided roughly into three main periods. The first extended from 1834 to 1914 and may be called the Age of Translations, Adaptations and Neo-classicism. In 1834, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī published his celebrated account of his trip to Paris, while around 1914 Arab authors produced works which go beyond the stage of adaptation, revealing their virtual mastery of the imported literary forms: in the novel, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* and in drama, Ibrāhīm Ramzī's comedy *Admission to the Baths* and his historical drama *The Heroes of Mansura*. The second period, covering the years between the two World Wars, may be termed the Age of Romanticism and Nationalism, while the third, beginning from the end of World War II and continuing to this day, may conveniently be called the Age of Conflicting Ideologies and Experimentation, since it embraces a wide variety of schools, approaches and styles.

In poetry, the modern revival was a slow process. For a long time after the initial contact with the West, Arab poets continued to pursue the same path as in the eighteenth century. It is in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the work of the Egyptian Maḥmūd Sāmī al-Bārūdī (1839–1904), that we can detect signs of change. Here was a conscious return to the classicism of early medieval poetry, that of the ʿAbbāsīd period (132–655/750–1258), an attempt to rid the language of poetry of excessive artificiality and to recapture the tautness and forceful rhetoric of the past, combined with an

ability to express the poet's own earnest mind and impressive personality, thus making poetry more relevant to modern life. This is clear even in his long traditional panegyric on the Prophet Muḥammad, a poem exceeding 400 lines, in which he traces sketchily the main events of the Prophet's life. In a sense, the return to the past glory of Arabic poetry was an expression of the Arab's drive for self-assertion in a world dangerously threatened by powerful alien forces. It is not, therefore, surprising that, until the beginning of the World War II, the poets who were most popular in the Arab world were neo-classical poets: followers of al-Bārūdī, for instance, the Egyptians Aḥmad Shawqī (1868–1932) (the greatest of them all) and Ḥāfiẓ Ibrāhīm (1871–1932), the Iraqis Jamīl Ṣidqī al-Zahāwī (1863–1936) and Ma'rūf al-Ruṣāfi (1875–1945), and among the younger generation the Iraqi Muḥammad Mahdī al-Jawāhirī and the Syrian Badawī al-Jabal, the last great survivors of the neo-classical school.

The neo-classical poets accepted as their norm the old Arabic polythematic ode, *qaṣīda*, with its monorhyme and monometre, its heavy reliance upon rhetoric and declamation and the sonority of its music. They even sometimes borrowed its traditional desert imagery and structure. However, they did not regard it as a sacrosanct ideal. Within the formal and stylistic limitations of the *qaṣīda* and using the language of statement at its highest potency, they managed to give expression to modern problems and pre-occupations, whether social, political or even psychological. They played the role of community spokesmen with such frequency and seriousness that they had a lasting effect upon the later development of modern Arabic poetry, which has never been entirely free from social or political commitment.

The reaction against the neo-classical conventions was felt first around the turn of the century, but it was best expressed in the work of the major poet Khalīl Muṭrān (1872–1949), a product of Lebanese-Christian missionary education who emigrated to Egypt at the age of twenty. Muṭrān knew literature well and his reaction against the limitation of Neo-classicism was an expression of a much wider movement towards Westernization. He set out to write specifically 'modern' poetry (*'aṣrī*) and introduced a number of assumptions which were fully incorporated into the poetic thinking of later generations, to the extent that he can be regarded as the father of the new or modern school of poetry. Briefly, these assumptions are: first, the unity of the poems; second, the primacy of meaning; third, the view that the uncommonness of the imagination and the strangeness of the subject are essential qualities which he tried to realize in his own poetry. These qualities, which are a far cry from the conventional themes, poetic diction and poetic vision of the neo-classicists, bring Arabic poetry closer to the work of the European Romantics, who valued originality and creative imagination highly.

Muṭrān wrote a number of intensely subjective poems revealing an overwhelming emotion very different from the generally controlled and im-



personal character of neo-classical poetry. In them, the lonely figure of the introspective poet appears in the presence of nature, communing with himself and revealing an essentially romantic sensibility which finds a deep spiritual affinity between external nature and the mind of man. Here, too, Muṭrān exercised a profound influence upon many of the younger generation of poets, who developed further this romantic attitude to nature. Yet, there is much in Muṭrān's use of language which, with its occasional archaisms and relative lack of spontaneity, harks back to the 'Abbāsids and prevents him from being a thorough-going Romantic. In this respect, he resembles the so-called *Dīwān* group of Egyptian poets: 'Abd al-Raḥmān Shukrī (1866–1958), 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād (1889–1964) and al-Māzinī who, despite the important rôle they played in the development of Arabic poetry through their polemic criticism in helping to dethrone Shawqī and the neo-classicists from their position of eminence, were less gifted poets than Muṭrān. Under the influence of English Romanticism they held an exalted view of poetry. The poet, in their opinion, is not a craftsman or commentator on his society but a man with a deep emotional experience and a personal attitude or philosophy.

The tension between language and sensibility which marks the work of Muṭrān and the *Dīwān* group, disappears altogether from the work of the Romantic poets, whether they belong to the expatriate *Mahjar* (the Lebanese Arabs who emigrated to America around the turn of the century in search of fortune or freedom) or came from the Arab world itself. Their works are marked by a great lyricism and spontaneity, simple and evocative language, subjective feelings, a sense of mystery and wonder, reverence for nature and life in general, and in particular for women, who are highly idealized, a deeper self-awareness, coupled with more freedom in handling stanzaic forms. The part played by the *Mahjarī* poets (particularly Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān (1883–1931), Mikhā'īl Nu'ayma (1889–1988), and Iliyyā Abū Maḍī (1889–1957) in spreading romantic attitudes was considerable. Because of their popularity among the young, they exercised a liberating influence upon modern Arabic poetry, adding a spiritual dimension to it. They turned away from rhetoric and declamation in favour of a more quiet tone of voice, keeping the feeling of homesickness and nostalgia, yearning to return to nature and the simple rural life and introducing biblical themes and images into their poetry, in which they had a distinct preference for short metres and stanzaic forms.

In the Arab world itself, the person who played the largest rôle in spreading romantic poetry was the Egyptian physician, Aḥmad Zakī Abū Shādī (1898–1955), who, with the help of another physician, Ibrāhīm Nājī (1898–1953), edited the poetry review *Apollo* (1932–1934). The spirit of Romanticism swiftly spread and dominated much of the poetry written in the thirties and forties in most Arabic-speaking countries. The most outstanding figures were undoubtedly Abu-l-Qāsim al-Shābbī (1909–1934) of Tunisia, Ilyās Abū Shabaka (1903–1947) of Lebanon and 'Alī Maḥmūd Ṭāhā (1902–

1949) of Egypt. Ṭāhā enjoyed enormous popularity in the Arab world, partly because of his highly developed sense of music, partly because of his attractive romantic themes of nostalgia and mysterious longing for strange and undefined objects, the strong emotive appeal of the unknown, vague metaphysical doubts about the end and meaning of existence and the feeling of a loss of direction, together with a hedonistic attitude to life. By encouraging a whole generation of younger people among his admirers to imitate his themes and images, thereby rendering them the mere stock-in-trade of facile romantic poetry, Ṭāhā unintentionally hastened the downfall of the romantic ideal.

By World War II, Romanticism was felt to be too vague and escapist, too full of beauty and day dreams, too sugary and sentimental to express the increasingly harsh social and political reality of the Arab world. The horrors of urban life intensified by the war, the chasm separating the rich and the poor, the increasing appeal of Marxist thought, and momentous events such as the Palestine tragedy of 1948 and the Egyptian army revolution of 1952 under the leadership of Colonel Nasser made it difficult for poets to continue dreaming about a world of beauty and love instead of following the general call for political commitment. Even a romantic poet like the Syrian Nizār Qabbānī was converted to socially and politically committed writing in 1955. Besides commitment, whether to Marxism or Arab nationalism, one of the factors that contributed to the demise of Romanticism was the Arab poets' increasing knowledge of the Western post-Romantic poetry of Symbolism and Modernism, as is seen in the Beirut *avant-garde* poetry magazine *Shi'ur*, founded in 1957 by the Lebanese poet Yūsuf al-Khāl. The work of T. S. Eliot in particular exercised a strangely powerful influence on the development of modern Arabic poetry. Formally, the revolt of what was then called 'new poetry' against the past, whether Marxist or Symbolist-Existentialist, was more extreme than any previous movement in the history of Arabic poetry. The traditional Arabic verse line that consisted of two hemistichs of equal length or metrical value was replaced by lines of unequal length with the single foot becoming the unit instead of a fixed number of feet or a combination of certain different feet per line. This new form, which gradually found acceptance throughout the Arab world, was connected with the names of the Iraqi poets Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb (1926–1964) and Nāzīk al-Malā'ika (1923–1992). An even more extreme form, which does without the principle of prosody altogether, is the prose poem as used by the Lebanese Unsī al-Hājī, the Palestinians Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā (1919–1995) and Tawfīq al-Ṣāyigh (1923–1971) and the Syrian Muḥammad al-Māghūt, perhaps the greatest poet of all, and which spread widely later on.

The modernist poets who fell under French symbolist and surrealist influence, such as the Syrian Adūnīs, developed a view of poetry with metaphysical and mystical dimensions. Others, influenced by modern English poetry (particularly that of Eliot), like the Lebanese Khalīl Ḥāwī (1925–1982),

Yūsuf al-Khāl (1917–1987), the Iraqi Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb and the Egyptian Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr (1931–1981), resorted to the use of asides, interior monologue, mythology, allusions to popular songs and beliefs and occasionally colloquialisms. However, by far the most important feature of all ‘new’ poetry is its handling of language. Its syntax and its peculiar use of imagery are the features that link it to a lot of contemporary Western poetry. Whether he is a Marxist or an existentialist, the modern Arab poet deliberately avoids the language of statement. Having learned from the Romantics how to exploit the evocative power of words, he has gone a step further in resorting to an oblique style, to imagery as a means of objectifying his emotional experience. In the process, he sometimes transcends logic and it is often the absence of all explicit connections that makes this poetry as difficult as the most obscure Western poetry. Unfortunately, this obscurity has become damagingly common in much of contemporary Arabic poetry.

Among the distinguished committed poets of the ‘pioneers’ of Modernism are the Iraqi ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī (b. 1926), Badr Shākīr al-Sayyāb and Buland al-Ḥaydarī, the Egyptians Ṣalāḥ ʿAbd al-Ṣabūr and Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Muʿtī Ḥijāzī (in their earlier work) and the younger Palestinian Maḥmūd Darwīsh (b. 1942), who is perhaps the greatest poet of his generation. Among the Symbolists-Existentialists mention must be made of the Lebanese Yūsuf al-Khāl and Khalīl Ḥāwī and, of course, the Syrian Adūnīs (ʿĀli Aḥmad Saʿīd, b. 1930), the most articulate champion of Modernism, whose influence on the subsequent development of contemporary Arabic poetry is probably greater than that of anyone else, including the Iraqi Marxist ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī. Nowadays, Arab Modernism is no longer the shocking phenomenon that it appeared to be in the Fifties and Sixties. It has been adopted by many of the younger generation of poets throughout the Arab world, e.g. Muḥammad Bannīs (Morocco), Muḥammad al-Ghuzzī (Tunisia), Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥayy (1944–1989) (Sudan), Amjad Nāṣir (Jordan), ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Maqālīḥ (Yemen), Muḥammad ʿAfifī Maṭar, Amal Dunqul (1940–1982), Ḥasan Ṭilib and Aḥmad al-Shahāwī (Egypt), Yūsuf Ṣāyigh, Ḥasan al-Shaykh Jaʿfar, Saʿdī Yūsuf and Fawzī Karīm (Iraq), ʿAbbās Bayḍūn and Shawqī Bazī (Lebanon), ʿAlī al-Jundī, Mamdūḥ ʿUdwān and Nūrī Jarrāḥ (Syria) and the Palestinians Murīd Barghūthī, Walīd Khāzindār and ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Manāṣira. One striking feature of contemporary Arabic poetry, especially in the past two decades (which is partly but not wholly due to the influence of Adūnīs), is the growth of interest in and the increasing impact of Islamic mysticism, particularly as represented in the work of the tenth-century Iraqi Ṣūfī al-Niffarī. Inevitably, this added to the obscurity of this poetry.

Unlike poetry, in which the problem the authors faced was one of accepting new idioms and attitudes, the novel as a literary form was new to Arabic literature and, therefore, initially viewed with suspicion and, for a long time, not regarded as serious literature at all. Yet, of the literary genres bor-

rowed from the West, the novel proved, despite the technical difficulties it presented, to be most alluring and most important in the modern Arabic literature. Arguably, it has replaced even poetry in status. Few writers receive the universal respect accorded to the Nobel Laureate, the Egyptian novelist Najīb Maḥfūz.

Although an Arabic translation of *Robinson Crusoe* appeared early in the nineteenth century, it is in the 1860s and 70s that the movement of translating Western novels and short stories into Arabic really commenced in Lebanon and Egypt. Significantly, one of the early translators was Rifʿat al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, who published his translation of the French writer Fénélon's *Télémaque* in Beirut in 1867. The movement gathered momentum and a vast number of novels and tales was translated primarily from the French – a mixture of heterogeneous standards and types, ranging from sentimental stories of love and adventure to didactic novels, from historical romances to science fiction, crime and detective stories. Despite their serious shortcomings, these adaptations and translations generally contributed to the development of the Arabic novel in that they helped to familiarize readers with the novelistic genre, even though not at its best, and encouraged Arab authors to try their hand at writing novels. Besides, by using the simple and more straightforward language of journalism, they also helped literary Arabic prose to shed many artificial features such as its rhymes, far-fetched conceits and other laboured figures of speech, thereby rendering it eventually a more suitable medium for narration.

Lebanese authors made the first experiments in the novel. The didactic *Forest of Truth* (1865) by Faransīs Marrāsh was followed by the historical *Love in Syrian Gardens* (1870), dealing with the Islamic conquest of Syria, by Salīm al-Bustānī, who published serially in his periodical *al-Ṣinān* nine novels, historical and non-historical. Many imitations followed, a noteworthy feature of most of which was the introduction of Western characters and settings. This was not due simply to copying Western models, but also to the difficulty of treating love, which was regarded as an essential ingredient of the novel, within the restrictive context of traditional Arab Muslim life. For a specifically Arab setting and specifically Arab characters, we have to wait for the Egyptians Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī's *Ḥadīth ʿĪsā b. Hishām* (The Story of ʿĪsā b. Hishām, 1907), a work cast partly in the *maqāma* form but with certain novelistic features, and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab* (1913). In the meantime, the Lebanese-Egyptian Jurjī Zaydān (1861–1914) continued the historical novel tradition by publishing serially in his periodical *al-Hilāl* 21 novels (1891–1914) dealing with Arab history. These earliest attempts at writing historical fiction were in fact a curious combination of historiography and popular romance; yet, they still maintain their popularity in the Arab world.

Muḥammad al-Muwayliḥī's *Ḥadīth ʿĪsā b. Hishām*, originally a series of newspaper articles published in Cairo between 1898–1902, deals, through a number of situations and characters loosely held together by a narrative

thread, with the impact of Western or modern culture upon Islamic society in Egypt. The clash it represents between Western and traditional Islamic values proved to be one of the chief themes in modern fiction, found in various forms in the work of the Egyptians Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm (1898–1987), notably in his *A Bird from the East* (1938), and Yahyā Ḥaqqī (1905–1994) in *Qindil Umm Hāshim* (1944), translated as *The Saint's Lamp*, which also deals with the question of religious faith and doubt within an Islamic context, in the Sudanese al-Ṭayyib Sāliḥ's celebrated *Season of Migration to the North* (1969), and in the Saudi Arabian 'Abd al-Raḥmān Munīf who, in his *Cities of Salt* (1984–1989), depicts the tragic impact of Western capitalism and technology (mainly the oil industry) on traditional Islamic values in Arabia. See Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal's *Zaynab*, which betrays the strong influence of French literature, is subtitled 'Scenes and characters from the country life.' It is about love and the place of love in Egyptian society, both among the peasant class and the middle class of the landlords. It set the pattern for many subsequent novels in the juxtaposition of country and city life. Its protagonist, Ḥāmid, a young man from a well-to-do family, returning from the city where he studies to his home in the village to spend his summer vacation there, is exposed to unsettling and thought-provoking experiences and becomes the prototype for many figures in future novels, mainly by Egyptian writers such as Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm and 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī.

It is generally agreed that with *Zaynab* the novel as a serious genre of Arabic imaginative writing was born. The next important novel to appear was *Ibrahim the Writer* by the Egyptian Ibrāhīm 'Abd al-Qādir al-Māzinī, published in 1931. But the years in between witnessed the appearance of the Egyptian Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's classic autobiography *al-Ayyām* (translated as *An Egyptian Childhood*), which first came out serially in the periodical *al-Hilāl* between 1926–1927. Although more an autobiography and a work of social criticism than a proper novel, it is distinguished by its irony and detachment, its vivid characterization, its humorous and pathetic situations. (Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, in fact, did subsequently write several straightforward novels, one of which has a profound influence on the famous *Trilogy* of Najīb Maḥfūz, but the first of them, *The Call of the Curlew*, did not appear until 1934.) Besides, during this period many experiments with Arabic prose narrative took place. The short story, as a serious branch of Arabic literature, began to assert itself and was eventually destined to become one of the most important literary genres in Arabic. The short story had its beginnings in the short didactic fictional pieces published in Egypt by 'Abd Allāh Nadīm (1854–1896) in his weekly magazine, in which he dealt with contemporary social and political problems in a relatively simple language. From these modest beginnings the short story gradually developed, either in realistic, humorous and satirical vein or emotional and sensational mode, in the works of the Egyptian Manfalūṭī and Muḥammad Taymūr, as well as the Levantine Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān, Khalīl Baydās and

Mikhā'il Nu'ayma. It can be said that this new form attained its maturity in the Twenties, in the works of the Egyptian Maḥmūd Taymūr (1894–1973) and, especially, Maḥmūd Zāhir Lāshīn (1894–1954), a member of a group calling themselves 'The Modern School', with their own periodical *al-Fajr* (1925–1927). Inspired by French and Russian literature, they were possessed by an intense desire to write specifically Egyptian literature, which has a manifestation of the growth of nationalism at the time, already to be seen both in the novel *Zaynab* and in the plays of Muḥammad Taymūr. Their works abound in characters from Egyptian urban life as well as Egyptian village types.

The short story soon became a very popular genre and its later development produced some of the finest achievements of modern Arabic literature. For instance, amongst Ṭāhā Ḥusayn's most original works is his collection of short stories *ʿAlā ḥāmish al-Sīra* (On the Margin of the Life of the Prophet), in which he expresses his deeply spiritual experience of Islam in a language of great lyrical beauty, redolent of religious fervour. The names of those who distinguished themselves in the short story are so many that it is difficult to enumerate them all. For lack of space only a few can be mentioned: Yahyā Ḥaqqī, Maḥmūd al-Badawī (1908–1986), Yūsuf Idrīs (1927–1991), Yūsuf al-Shārūnī and Edwār al-Kharrāṭ in Egypt; Muḥammad Khuḍayyir and Fu'ād al-Takarlī in Iraq; ʿAbd al-Salām al-ʿUjaylī and Zakariyyā Tāmir in Syria; al-Tayyib Sālīḥ in Sudan; Tawfīq Yūsuf ʿAwwād (1911–1989) in Lebanon; and the Palestinians Samīra ʿAzzām (1927–1967), Ghassān Kanafānī (1936–1972) and Emīle Ḥabībī (1921–1996). The themes of their stories range from the social and political to the psychological, existential and mystical and the mode of treatment varies accordingly from the realistic and documentary to the symbolic, the poetic, the expressionist and the downright surrealist.

But to return to the novel. During the Thirties, it continued to grow in strength, particularly in Egypt. Two major Egyptian writers began to publish novels then: the great humorist and ironist Ibrāhīm ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Māzinī and the much-talented Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm. After the semi-autobiographical *Ibrāhīm the Writer*, al-Māzinī went on to produce his memorable *Return to a Beginning* (1943), which affectionately draws a vivid picture of a middle-class Egyptian family, marked by the author's tolerance, irony and urbanity of spirit. It ranks among the great works of humour in Arabic literature. Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm continues the autobiographical type of novel, to which *Zaynab* and *Ibrāhīm the Writer* belong, in his *The Return of the Spirit* (1933), which tells the story of a middle-class Egyptian family which the author finds a symbol for the whole nation. Al-Ḥakīm wrote five novels in all, but perhaps the most important is his *Diary of a District Attorney* (1937, translated as *The Maze of Justice*). The main theme of the book, from which much of its pathos derives, is the opposition between a highly elaborate legal system borrowed from a sophisticated modern European culture, and the simple and rather naïve villagers upon whom the system is imposed and who view its workings and its

direct impact upon their lives with helplessness and inarticulate incomprehension. In 1939, Maḥmūd Taymūr published his *The Call of the Unknown*, which is an Arabic experiment in the Romantic Gothic novel and marks the end of a stage in the development of the Egyptian Arabic novel.

From the Forties onwards, a new type of novelistic writing emerged which was soon to dominate the scene; it emphasized social injustice and pushed to the background the world of individual emotion and private sorrows. Unlike the established writers, the pioneers in whose work the novel constituted only one of the several genres they attempted, many of the younger generation of novelists devoted themselves almost exclusively to the novel. In addition, the Forties witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of novels written. As a form, the novel acquired sufficient respectability for the Egyptian Ministry of Education to initiate in 1941 a novel-writing competition. Three of the five novels declared best were, interestingly enough, the works of young university graduates who later became the most significant novelists of their generation: ʿĀdil Kāmil (b. 1916), ʿAlī Aḥmad Bākathīr (1910–1969) and Najīb Maḥfūz (b. 1911). They all sought to express their intense preoccupation with the social and political conditions of contemporary Egypt, indirectly at first by writing historical novels. Kāmil and Maḥfūz chose Pharaonic Egypt as their setting, while Bākathīr turned to events from Islamic history. Space allows a consideration of Maḥfūz only, the greatest of them all, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1988. He wrote three historical novels (1939–1944) before he turned to contemporary Egypt for material. In them, he used the distant Ancient Egyptian setting as a vehicle for commenting on the political and social situation in contemporary Egypt. With *Khān al-Khalīlī* (published in 1945), he began a series of eight novels in which he proved himself to be the master of the Egyptian realistic novel. He took the titles of his novels from the names of streets of Old Cairo, offering a panoramic vista of the Egyptian lower and lower-middle classes, recording vividly and lovingly the minute details of their daily lives. The powerful impact that Cairo has upon the lives of his characters is as memorable as that of Dickens's London, Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg, or Zola's Paris.

There is little doubt that Maḥfūz's realistic art reaches its pinnacle in his *Trilogy* (published 1956–1957), which stands as a unique monument in the history of the modern Arabic novel. The work traces the fortunes of a Cairene middle-class family over three generations, covering a huge canvas, with a gallery of unforgettable characters, offering a panorama of Egyptian society from 1917 to 1944. Keenly sensitive to the passage of time and recording the minutest changes in social and political life, including those of women, the *Trilogy* testifies to Maḥfūz's admirable architectonic sense and his ability to design in almost epic dimensions. After a baffling period of silence lasting five years, Maḥfūz wrote one of the few Arabic allegorical novels, *Awlād ḥaratinā* (1959), translated as *The Children of Gebelawi*, dealing with man's quest for

religion from Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, right down to the last of the prophets, the modern man-of-science, indirectly responsible for the death of their ancestor Gebelawi, the Mountain Man, who clearly stands for a certain conception of God. Despite its imperfections, particularly its inordinate length and loose episodic structure, this novel points to Maḥfūz's future works in its spiritual preoccupation and its existentialist terror of death. The next novel, *The Thief and the Dogs*, signals the beginning of a new phase of shorter novels, generally concentrating on one protagonist. They are more dramatic in nature, more lyrical in style, more symbolical in mode, and in them, Maḥfūz employs interior monologue and some of the stream-of-consciousness techniques, dreams and flashbacks and other modernistic devices. They afford an indissoluble mixture of the political, the psychological, the metaphysical and the mystical. *The Thief and the Dogs* even has an Ṣūfi *shaykh* as one of its main characters to counterbalance the rôle of the militant revolutionary mentor of the protagonist. The shock of the 1967 Arab defeat had a stunning effect upon the Egyptian literary scene, to which Maḥfūz was not immune. After a number of short stories characterized by their dark, irrational and surrealistic vision of reality, he resumed writing novels in 1972, which marks yet another phase in his development as a novelist, a phase of bold experimentation in form and mode of writing, ranging from fantasy to unadorned realism, documentary and traditional Arabic narrative. All in all, whatever his mode of writing, Maḥfūz emerges as the chronicler of twentieth-century Egypt and its most eloquent social and political conscience.

Maḥfūz's steadily growing reputation since the publication of the *Trilogy* tended to overshadow the work of his Egyptian contemporaries, particularly his younger ones, many of whom were distinguished novelists in their own right, such as 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī (1920–1987), whose *al-Ard* (1953), translated as *Egyptian Earth*, gives a panoramic view of village life and the different types of village inhabitants and sets the socialist-realist trend in Egyptian fiction. Al-Sharqāwī even wrote, in 1962, an imaginative biography of the Prophet entitled *Muḥammad rasūl al-ḥurriyya* (Muḥammad, the Apostle of Freedom) in which the Prophet is presented almost as the prototype of some kind of active Marxist revolutionary. Yūsuf Idrīs (1927–1991), a great ironist, wrote with considerable sensitivity and insight about the relation between politics and love and the great moral issues raised by Egyptian society. Biting social satire marks the work of Fathī Ghānim, whose *The Man who Lost his Shadow* (1962), using the multiple-viewpoint narrative technique, excels in portraying the moral and spiritual aridity of Egyptian society.

A reaction against social or socialist realism, accompanied by a great desire for experimentalism, set in during the late Sixties with the rise of a new generation whose work expressed alienation at all levels and a sense of political impotence as a result of living under an authoritarian regime, a mood of disillusionment following the traumatic defeat in the Six Day War. The heroic



protagonists of earlier novels, strongly committed to a socialist or nationalist ideal, were replaced by anti-heroes, diffident and emasculated, wracked by self-doubt and incapable of mastering their destiny. The emphasis is now laid on the inner world, to the deliberate neglect of a well-constructed plot and linear narration, in favour of blurring the line separating dream from reality and employing flashbacks and a poetic language, making full use of the potentialities of indigenous myth and folklore together with the Islamic Arab literary heritage. Their best works display an impressive fusion of the modernist techniques derived directly or indirectly from the West and the creative use of the classical Arabic prose tradition. Among the most distinguished novelists who expressed this 'New Sensibility', as it has been termed, mention may be made of Edwār al-Kharrāt, Ṣun' Allāh Ibrāhīm, 'Abd al-Ḥakīm Qāsim (1935–1990), Yūsuf al-Qa'īd, Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī and Bahā' Ṭāhīr. The last two decades also witnessed a steady rise in the number of interesting Egyptian women writers, such as Nawāl al-Sa'dāwī, Salwā Bakr and Raḍwā 'Ashūr.

Outside Egypt, novels of literary merit developed slowly. In Lebanon, the first mature novel, *al-Raghīf*, by Tawfiq Yūsuf 'Awwād, set in a Lebanese village during World War I, dealing with Arab nationalism and social justice, came out in 1939. But from the Fifties onwards, several important novelists began to emerge, such as Suhayl Idrīs, Ḥalīm Barakāt (whose experimental fiction displays a successful use of modernist techniques), as well as a number of remarkable women novelists, beginning with Laylā Ba'albakkī, then Laylā 'Uṣayrān, who portrayed the existentialist young woman in rebellion against man-made society, and Emily Naṣr Allāh, and culminating in Hudā Barakāt and Ḥanān al-Shaykh, perhaps the most talented of them all. Set against the background of the horrors and absurdities of the Lebanese civil war, Ḥanān al-Shaykh's novel *The Story of Zabra* (1980) unfolds, through a subtle use of modernist narrative technique, the personal tragedy of the heroine, whose mental illness is a powerful metaphor for the tragically diseased Lebanese society.

The mature Palestinian novel began to make its impact with the work of Ghassān Kanafānī, whose series of novels, especially *Men in the Sun* (1963), revolve around the plight of the Palestinians, without ceasing to be at the same time works of art. This also true of the fiction of the late Emīle Ḥabībī, whose use of pastiche of medieval Arabic prose, combined with a modern idiom (which bears some resemblance to the work of the Egyptian novelist Jamāl al-Ghīṭānī), his employment of devices borrowed from the picaresque as well as the traditional *maqāma*, from science fiction and farcical situations, paint a bitterly ironic and even tragic picture of the life of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel. Another major figure in the Palestinian novel is the multi-talented Jabrā Ibrāhīm Jabrā, whose works, starting with *The Ship* (1969), portray the problems and sufferings of the Palestinian intellectuals in exile. One of Jabrā's novels, *Mapless World* (1982), was written in collaboration with one of the most

important figures in modern Arabic fiction, whose work in some respects can stand comparison with that of Maḥfūz, namely the Saudi Arabian ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Munif (b. 1933). Especially in his monumental five-volume *Cities of Salt* (1984–1989), he proved to be the novelist of the desert *par excellence*, just as the distinguished Syrian novelist Ḥannā Mīna (b. 1924) is the novelist of the sea. In Iraq, which is still to produce a novelist of the calibre of its great poets or short-story writers, the most significant novel to date is *The Distant Echo* (1980) by Fu’ad al-Takarī. Sudan, on the other hand, produced one of the masters of modern Arabic fiction, al-Ṭayyib Ṣālih, whose *Season of Migration to the North* (1969) provides, amongst other things, one of the subtlest treatments of the themes of the confrontation between East and West. In North Africa, where the Arabic novel was also slow to develop, several names can be mentioned. To choose but a few, we may mention the Libyans Aḥmad al-Faqīh and Ibrāhīm al-Kawnī, the Tunisians Maḥmūd al-Mas‘adi and al-Bashīr Khurayyif, the Algerians ‘Abd al-Ḥamid b. Ḥaddūqa and al-Ṭāhir Waṭṭār, the Morrocans ‘Abd al-Karīm Ghallāb, ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Arwī (Laroui), Muḥammad Barrāda and Aḥmad al-Madīnī. Of these, perhaps the most remarkable is al-Ṭāhir Waṭṭār who since 1974 has published novels of considerable artistic complexity and great national and universal interest, such as *The Ace* and *The Earthquake*, which are an eloquent testimony to the high standard which the modern Arabic novel has reached.

Arabic drama was consciously and deliberately imported from the West by the Lebanese Christian Mārūn al-Naqqāsh (1817–1855) in Beirut in 1847 and the Egyptian Jew Ya‘qūb Ṣannū‘ (1839–1912) in Cairo in 1870. Al-Naqqāsh’s first play, *The Misery*, was inspired by Molière, but he also turned for his material to the *Arabian Nights*, which continued to be the source of inspiration for many Arab dramatists to this day. Ṣannū‘, on the other hand, dealt with issues raised by contemporary Egyptian society. Both dramatists were also men of the theatre who viewed drama primarily as a text to be produced on the stage. For various reasons, their theatres proved to be short-lived, but the tradition was continued in Egypt by several theatrical troupes, Syrian and Egyptian, and there, drama developed much faster and reached maturity long before the rest of the Arab world, and this despite the considerable moral and social opposition it encountered for a long time before it reached respectability. By 1915, the Egyptian Ibrāhīm Ramzī (1884–1949) produced the first fully-fledged Egyptian comedy of intrigue and social satire, *Admission to the Baths*, as well as his historical drama *The Heroes of Mansura*, which uses the Crusades to comment on burning issues of the moment. In 1921, the Egyptian Muḥammad Taymūr (1891–1921), who in a series of plays had set out to write specifically Egyptian drama, produced *The Precipice*, a bourgeois tragedy dealing mainly with the problem of drug addiction and the need for responsible relations between married couples. Even more impressive is *The Sacrifices*, written by the Lebanese-Egyptian Anṭūn Yazbak in

1925, which is drafted in the colloquial and is the most tragic work of the first half of this century. It treats the problems of marriage and the question of the emancipation of Egyptian Muslim women within the context of a mixed marriage (an Egyptian husband and a European wife).

The most important figure in the history of modern Arabic drama is undoubtedly Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm. Al-Ḥakīm wrote more than eighty works over a period of half a century, from the twenties to the seventies, a period which witnessed the full flowering of modern Arabic drama. He started while still a student by writing, for the popular stage, musical drama and satires on political and social issues, such as the British occupation of Egypt and women's emancipation. During his three-year stay in Paris, he learnt to regard drama as a serious form of literature. After his return to Egypt, he wrote a remarkably wide variety of plays ranging from the comedy of manners, emphasizing the war of the sexes, to dark comedies of social criticism in which the playwright probes deeply into the psychology of his characters, and to the dramas of ideas, of which the best known examples are *The People of the Cave* (1935), hailed by the Egyptian critic Ṭāhā Ḥusayn as the first serious drama in Arabic (based upon the Qur'ānic version of the Christian legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus [Sūra XVIII]), and *Shahrazād* (1934), in which he put forward his ideas of time and place, art and life, illusion and reality. He even dramatized the life of the Prophet in his play *Muḥammad* (1936). Al-Ḥakīm's major contribution to Egyptian Arabic drama, clearly seen in these plays, is the philosophical dimension he added to it and for which he was partly indebted to the *avant-garde* European dramatists whose work he had come to know in Paris, notably Luigi Pirandello. Al-Ḥakīm continued to develop and experiment in his plays. His early enthusiasm for the 1952 Revolution was expressed in plays in which a true marriage was effected between his so-called theatre of the mind and popular theatre, while his later disillusionment was conveyed in darker plays which use some of the techniques of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Al-Ḥakīm's prolific output and constant experimentation tended to overshadow the more traditional work of his distinguished Egyptian contemporaries, Maḥmūd Taymūr and 'Alī Aḥmad Bākathīr. A remarkable revival of the Egyptian theatre occurred in the fifties and sixties, following the mood of euphoria and optimism created by the 1952 Revolution and the encouragement the theatre received from the new régime. The new dramatists were young men, more eager to experiment with the form and the language of drama than the older generation, with the exception of al-Ḥakīm. Because of the banning of political parties, authors used the theatre to express their political views, often obliquely, particularly later in the growing disillusion with the Revolution and the anger at the crushing of the individual by a totalitarian régime. Among the new dramatists, mention may be made of Nu'ṣmān 'Ashūr (1918–1987), Sa'd al-Dīn Wahba, Yūsuf Idrīs, Mikhā'il Rūmān (1927–1973), Alfred Faraj, Rashād Rushdī (1913–1981), Maḥmūd Diyāb (1938–1983), and

‘Alī Sālim. Verse drama, which had started with the interesting work of the neo-classical poet Aḥmad Shawqī in the thirties, received a fresh impetus in the experimental work of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sharqāwī and, particularly, Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Ṣabūr, whose contribution to Arabic poetic drama was considerable even in his first play *Ma’sāt al-Ḥallāj* (The Tragedy of al-Ḥallāj, 1965), which deals with the martyrdom of the ninth-century Iraqi Ṣūfī al-Ḥallāj, emphasizing the social and revolutionary aspects of Islamic mysticism.

The Egyptian theatrical revival had its impact upon many parts of the Arab world – Syria and Lebanon, Iraq and North Africa. But perhaps the most distinguished non-Egyptian Arab dramatists to date are the Syrians Sa‘d Allāh Wannūs and Muḥammad al-Māghūṭ. Wannūs, who received his training in Cairo and Paris, set out, under the influence of Piscator and Brecht, to use the theatre as a means of educating people politically. Al-Māghūṭ, resorting to surrealist as well as farcical technique, produced the most powerful and haunting dramatic statements of political oppression and tyranny in the modern Arab world. What characterizes contemporary Arabic drama on the whole - apart from its almost obsessive concern with politics – is the persistent search everywhere for a specifically Arab form of drama, be it based on the popular traditional Egyptian village entertainment *al-sāmīr*, the Lebanese storyteller *ḥakawātī*, the medieval *maqāma* or the shadow play. This is yet another manifestation of the desire in modern Arabic literature to emphasize Arab identity *vis-à-vis* the modern world.

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## Chapter 5

# PERSIAN LITERATURE

*Jalal Matini*

### The Persian language

The Persian language belongs to the family of Iranian languages, which linguists divide into three periods:

1. Old Persian, the language of the Achaemenids (559–321 BC).
2. Middle Persian or Pahlavi, i.e. the language of the Sāsānians (AD 224–653). Among the surviving examples of Middle Persian, other than inscriptions and religious texts, are some secular works. Apart from these, during the first centuries of Islam, Iranians translated a remarkable number of Sāsānian works into Arabic. Thus, surviving to this day is a full Arabic translation of the *Kalīla wa-Dimna* [Fig. 1] and a complete Persian translation of the *Nāma-i Tansar*, as well as the translations of such books as the *Khudā-i nāmak*, *Ā'īn nāmak* and *Tāj nāmak*. Arabic translations of these were extant until the ninth-tenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>
3. New Persian, the Persian of the Islamic period, which dates from the middle of the ninth century and is used to the present day. This article is concerned solely with the New Persian period.

### New Persian literature

Any discussion of the beginnings of New Persian literature requires a preamble about the two centuries that elapsed between the fall of the Sāsānians in the middle of the seventh century and the emergence of that literature well into the ninth century. Subjected to repeated Muslim Arab assaults during the reign of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, Abū Bakr (d. 12/634)

1. Al-Mas'ūdī, 1967, pp. 104ff.; Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn al-akhbār*, Cairo, 1963, I, pp. 11, 15, 27, 45, 59, 84, 96.



II-5.1 *Kalila wa-Dimna* by Bidpay, translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa<sup>c</sup>, eighth/fourteenth century

© Topkapi Palace Library (H-363, fol. 54b)

and ‘Umar (d. 23/644), the Sāsānian empire was effectively overthrown in 20/641 or 21/642 after the Battle of Nihāwand, known in Arabic as the ‘Victory of Victories’ (*Fatḥ al-futūḥ*). Later, during the reigns of ‘Uthmān and the Umayyad caliphs (40–132/661–750), the Arabs took control over the Iranian lands in their entirety. The two centuries between the Arab conquest of Iran and the appearance of New Persian literature are known as the ‘Era of Severance’ (*Dawra-i inqitā‘*).<sup>2</sup> Periodization such as this is only valid on the assumption that the Iranians themselves did not govern the country during those centuries, or that no written work of literature in New Persian was produced then. However, from other points of view, the era is considered one of the most eventful periods in Iranian history. During these two centuries, Iranians who had converted from Zoroastrianism to Islam rejected the religion time after time and the caliphal armies waged wars against them. After the ‘Abbāsīd caliph had ordered the murder of Abū Muslim, the leader of a revolt in eastern Iran which overthrew the Umayyad caliphate in 136/754, several uprisings aimed at avenging his murder or at destroying the religion of Islam (such as the revolts of Sindbād, Ustādh Sīs and al-Muqanna‘) broke out. Other revolts aimed at liberating Iran from the caliphal rule (like those of Bābak-i Khurramdīn, Māzyār and Afshīn) also took place. All these uprisings were suppressed by the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs (from 131/749 onwards) and as a result, not only did the entire Sāsānian empire come under Arab control, but almost all Iranians gradually converted to Islam. The process of conquest and conversion extended into the ninth and tenth centuries.

Of course, there were a number of Iranian converts who mastered Arabic, the language of the Qur’ān and Islam, and who wrote works in the language on Islam, various sciences and even on Arabic itself. Perhaps the first books Iranians wrote protested against the pro-Arab racial policies of the Umayyad caliphs. Basing their objections to the assertion of Arab superiority over all other Muslims on a particular passage in the Qur’ān (XLIX.13) which says that God created nations and tribes, they became famous as the Shu‘ūbiyya or ‘Nationals’.<sup>3</sup> Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (20–109/641–728), who laid the cornerstone of the science of *kalām*, was Iranian on both sides of his family.<sup>4</sup> Al-Ḥasan’s student Wāṣil b. ‘Aṭā’ (79–130/699–748), who is often said to have founded a philosophical movement whose adherents, the Mu‘tazilites, used dialectical means to defend Islam against rival theologies, was also among the non-Arabs who embraced Islam. The polymath al-Jāhiz

2. M. M. Malāyirī, *Tārīkh wa-farhang-i Īrān dar dawrān-i intiḡāl az ‘aṣr-i Sāsānī bih ‘aṣr-i Islāmī*, 2 vols., Tehran, Intishārāt-i Yazdān, 1372/1993, p. 552.
3. Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm; a Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, trans. B. Dodge, (Records of Civilization. Sources and Studies, 83), 2 vols., New York, Columbia University Press, 1970, I, p. 30.
4. M. M. Malāyirī, *Tārīkh wa-farhang-i...*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 23.

(d. 255/869) also mentions an Iranian prodigy of bilingualism, Mūsā Uswārī, who in the first century of Islam could engage in the exegesis of the Qurʾān to Arab and Persian audiences, and his audience of native speakers – Arabic speakers to the right, Persian speakers to the left – were at a loss to say in which language he was more eloquent.<sup>5</sup> Two of the greatest Arabic poets of the Era of the Interregnum were Iranian by race, namely, Bashshār b. Burd (d. 166/783) from Ṭukhārīstān and Abū Nuwās (d. 198/814) from Khūzīstān. The Grand Imām Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 149/767), leader of one of the four principal schools of Sunnī Islam, was from the Iranian rural gentry (*dihqāns*) of the Sāsānian period. The same can be said of distinguished scholars in other fields. For example, the greatest grammarian of Arabic, the Persian Sībawayh (d. 176/793), wrote *al-Kitāb* (The Book), which was considered the last word on the subject for centuries. Other eminent Iranians wrote books on mathematics, philosophy, medicine, rhetoric etc. in Arabic.<sup>6</sup> It should also be noted that some of the zoroastrian priests wrote works in Pahlavi. During the period of Islamization, some poems in the local dialects of Iran were recorded in Arabic texts.

What is clear from this brief survey is that during the two centuries after the Arab invasion of Iran, when there was no sign of independent Persian rule in the country, in addition to instigating various social and political revolts against caliphal hegemony, Iranians were responsible for many valuable works in Arabic. One should also not fail to note that the pace at which Persians authored Arabic works increased markedly after the eighth century. It is no coincidence, but nevertheless remarkable, for example, that in the ninth century all six compilers of the most authoritative collections of the *Ḥadīth* (sayings and reports of the Prophet Muḥammad), known collectively as ‘The Six Sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) Ones’, were Persians from the Iranian towns of Bukhārā, Nīshāpūr, Qazwīn, Sijīstān, Tirmīdh and Nasā. The most comprehensive commentary on the Qurʾān, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Comprising All there is to Say on the Exegesis of the Qurʾān), and the first world history in Arabic, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (The History of the Messengers and Kings), are the works of an Iranian, Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). Such authors as the physician and encyclopaedist Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā al-Rāzī (d. 312/925), the physician and philosopher Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 369/980), the scientist Abu-l-Rayḥān Muḥammad al-Bīrūnī (d. 442/1051), the theosopher or reviver of Islamic doctrine al-Ghazālī (d. 504/1111) and the mathematician and poet ʿUmar Khayyām (d. c. 515/1122) are renowned representatives of the hundreds of Iranians who produced significant works in Arabic.

5. Al-Jāhīz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. M. ʿA. Hārūn, 3rd ed., 8 vols, Cairo, Sharīkat Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-Awlādihī, 1969, I, p. 30.

6. Dh. Safā, *Tārīkh-i adabīyyāt dar Irān*, 3 vols., Tehran, 1335/1956, I, pp. 111–116.



In addition to composing works in Arabic, Iranians also influenced how the language itself was written. The epochal contributions of two Iranians in particular to the development of Arabic prose, namely, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib (d. 129/747), the scribe of the last Umayyad Caliph Marwān, and Ibn ‘Amīd (d. 358/969), vizier to Rukn al-Dawla al-Daylamī, are epitomized in the Arabic saying: ‘Writing began with ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd and ended with Ibn ‘Amīd.’<sup>7</sup> Another Iranian, Badī‘ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 397/1007), created a new genre, the *maqāmāt*, a mélange of prose and poetry that became one of the most important and entertaining means of story-telling in the language.

When it looked as if the stage had been set for Arabic to become the official language of Iran, Persian suddenly revived and supplanted it and, as the second language of the Islamic world, is alive and well until this day. The reason for this unexpected linguistic resurgence must be sought in the fact that Iranians generally differentiated between the religion of Islam, to which they had converted, and acquiescence to the rule of the caliphs, which they resisted. The continuous political and military uprisings mounted by Iranians during the first two centuries of Islam, all of which ended in defeat, were aimed at gaining independence. The first effective step towards this end taken by Iranians was the revolt of Abū Muslim (132/750), which put an end to the Arab supremacy of the Umayyad dynasty, but ended in 136/754 when the second ‘Abbāsīd caliph conspired against and killed Abū Muslim. The next phase came when Persians penetrate the ‘Abbāsīd court and occupied so many prominent positions that they were able to revive Sāsānīan administrative and ceremonial practices in the Baghdad caliphate. The first governor of Iranian background was Ṭāhir Dhu-l-Yamīnayn, who had helped the Caliph al-Ma‘mūn (r. 197–217/813–833) in his power struggle by killing his brother al-Amīn (r. 193–197/809–813) and was rewarded with the governorship of Khurāsān in 205/821. Ṭāhir soon eliminated the name of the caliph from the public sermon (*khutba*), but members of his family continued to rule in Khurāsān until 259/873.

Iranian independence, however, was actually achieved by a series of native rulers whose common objective was the conquest of Baghdad, the centre of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate. Ya‘qūb b. Layth (r. 252–265/867–879), the founder of the Ṣaffārid dynasty, who laid the basis for Iranian autonomy, led an army against Baghdad but did not live long enough to take the city. The founder of the Ziyārid dynasty, Mardāwīj (314–323/927–935), after defeating the ‘Abbāsīd commander and taking Iṣfahān and Khūzistān, tried to complete the task Ya‘qūb b. Layth had started. His attack on Baghdad was thwarted in 323/935, when one of his Turkish slaves murdered him. Finally, in 333/945 one of the Shī‘ite kings from the Būyid dynasty (319–453/932–1062) captured

7. Al-Tha‘ālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, Beirut, 1983, III, p. 183.

Baghdad. From this point onwards, Būyid kings began to install and remove caliphs and had the public sermons in the mosques and pulpits of the city read in their names. It is this struggle for political autonomy that explains why New Persian supplanted Arabic as the official language of Iran.

#### THE COMPASS OF NEW PERSIAN

With this introduction to the so-called 'Centuries of Severance' in mind, it is now possible to begin a discussion of literature in New Persian. The official language of Iran and Tajikistan and one of the two official languages of Afghanistan, New Persian was one of the dialects of the Persian used in Khurāsān and Transoxiana. In texts dating from the tenth century, New Persian is known as Fārsī, Fārsī-i Darī and Darī, which are synonyms. Hereafter in this article we will use 'Persian' instead of 'New Persian'. Local dialects existing in other parts of Iran at that time include Rāzī, Gīlākī, Ṭabarī, Azarī, Lūrī etc. We possess written works in some of those dialects, for example, in Ṭabarī and Rāzī. When the founder of the Ṣaffārids, Ya'qūb b. Layth, overcame his enemies, poets imitated the Baghdad court practice and composed panegyrics to him in Arabic. Ya'qūb b. Layth objected to their using a language that he did not understand.<sup>8</sup> Thereafter, his court poets used their local dialect, Fārsī-i Darī, to praise him, which was the first step for this dialect to become the official court language. When the time came for the Sāmānid emirs to rule parts of Iran (203–395/819–1005), they used the same dialect as the official literary and scholarly language. It was in this period that a number of books were written in Persian or translated from Arabic. The next major dynasty to rule in Iran, contemporary Afghanistan and parts of the Indian subcontinent, the Ghaznawids (366–581/977–1186), like the Sāmānids made Persian their official court language, even though they were not Persian but Turkish by race. Many court poets praised Sultan Maḥmūd (r. 387–420/998–1030), the Turkish-speaking founder of the dynasty, in skilful panegyrics which detailed his victories both in and outside Iran.

All the Turkish dynasties that followed the Ghaznawids evince the same pattern of Persianization. The Turkmen Saljūqs (429–590/1038–1194) and other dynasties such as the Khwārizmshāhs (469–628/1077–1231), the Īlkhāns (653–750/1256–1353), the Timūrids (771–911/1370–1506), the Qarā Qoyunlū (781–872/1380–1468) and the Aq Qoyunlū (779–913/1378–1508), which ruled over all or parts of Iran, relied on the military to maintain power. Since the chiefs of these groups had no experience in empire, they entrusted the administration of the territories under their control to Iranian viziers, secretaries and overseers. Thus, just as had happened among the Ghaznawid dynasts, Persian became the official court language of all these

8. *Tāriḫ-i Sīstān*, Tehran, Mu'assasa-i khawar, 1314/1935, pp. 209–212.

Altaic rulers. If they had been bearers of the rich and literary Turkish language, they would doubtlessly have chosen Turkish as their official court language.

These Turkish rulers were also responsible for the spread and popularity of Persian in the non-Iranian lands they conquered. As a result of Sultan Maḥmūd's forays into India (391–416/1001–1026) and those of the Saljūq Alp Arslān into Anatolia and Asia Minor (461/1069), for example, communities of Persian speakers and readers came into being. After the era of the Ghaznavids, Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥammad, the founder of the Ghūrid dynasty, came to power in northern India in 570/1175. He, in turn, allowed one of his vassals to take control of Delhi and to found the Slave King Sultanate (602–962/1206–1555). During the reign of one of these sultans, Niẓām Khān Sikandar II Lōdī (894–922/1489–1517), Persian literature gained a wide currency in India. Persian poets and scholars flocked to his court, natives of India engaged in Persian language education and, by necessity, a productive era in monolingual Persian lexicography began in India. Past enthusiasms notwithstanding, however, no period in the spread of the Persian language and literature throughout India can compare to the era of the Great Mughals (932–1274/1526–1858). The founder of this dynasty, Zāhīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur, although the author of a Chaghatay memoir, composed verses of a metaphysical nature in Persian. The Golden Age of Persian literature in India came during the reign of Akbar I (963–1013/1556–1605), when a style of Persian poetry known as 'Indian' (*sabk-i Hindī*) emerged in Iran and India. In 989/1582, Akbar decreed that Persian should become the official language of the seat of government as well as of the entire Mughal empire. One of the enlightened rulers of his time, he tried to promote harmony between his Muslim and Hindu subjects by ordering that sacred Sanskrit texts, the most important of which were the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*, be translated into Persian.<sup>9</sup>

Persian poetry flourished in India not only because of the many Iranians who migrated to India over a period of eight centuries, but also because of the remarkable number of indigenous writers and scholars, both Muslim and Hindu, who appeared on the scene there. Among the more famous of the hundreds of Persian poets of India are Mas'ūd Sa'd Salmān (born in Lahore c. 437/1046 or 438/1047), Abu-l-Faraj Rūnī (born in Lahore and died at the turn of the eleventh-twelfth centuries), Amīr Khusraw (650–725/1253–1325) and Ḥasan (650–728/1253–1328), both of whom were from Delhi.

Needless to say, Persian prose writers also found the Subcontinent a fertile ground. Works on mysticism, literary biography and monolingual Persian lexicography, and studies on various sciences, such as medicine, were written in India. The pull of Persian in India was so strong that even after

9. J. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. Karl Jahn, Dordrecht, D. Reidel, 1968.

English replaced it as the official language, prose writers and poets continued to produce compositions in Persian. Two of the greatest native authors during the Raj were Asad Allāh Ghālib (1210–1285/1796–1869) and Muḥammad Iqbāl (1293–1356/1877–1938), both of whom wrote poetry in Persian.<sup>10</sup>

On another front, as previously mentioned, Persian entered Asia Minor with the armies of Alp Arslan. The Saljūqs of Anatolia (469–706/1077–1307) had a completely Persianized court, with many of the viziers and figures being Iranian. From the standpoint of Persian poetry, the Saljūq court was on a par with the court of Maḥmūd of Ghazna. In addition to renowned poets from Iran, natives of Asia Minor also composed poetry in Persian. There is Saljūq correspondence in Persian which has survived, and by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, most of the books in these areas were written in that language. Of course, one of the factors in the pronounced influence of Persian in these areas was the Mongol invasion of Iran in the middle of the thirteenth century. This caused many Iranians, the most famous of whom was the great mystic poet of Persian Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (603–671/1207–1273), to migrate westward to Saljūq lands. The Mawlawī Ṣūfī order, established by Rūmī, played a very important rôle in fostering Persian in the area.

After the Saljūqs, Asia Minor came under the rule of the Ottomans (679–1342/1281–1924), whose empire began with Mehmet I the Conqueror's conquest of Constantinople in 856/1453. The Ottoman sultans attached great importance to the Persian language. Much of the imperial correspondence was conducted in Persian; however, it soon became less important, a province of only the nobility or the élite. Persian also travelled with the Ottoman armies to the Balkans, where signs of its influence are still evident.<sup>11</sup> It should also be noted that a number of kings who were ethnically Turks composed Persian poems in Iran, India and Asia Minor.

The foregoing epitomizes the expansionist phase in Persian. By the sixteenth century, several factors conspired to limit the influence of the language in areas that had been receptive to it. First, the Ṣafawid (906–1200/1501–1786) declaration of Shīfism as the official creed of Iran tended to cut the country off from its Sunnī neighbours in northern Khurāsān. Second, north of Iran, the establishment of the Khānates of Bukhārā, Samarqand etc., by the Turkish speaking Uzbeks and the Czarist interventions there tended to isolate Persian literature from what was formerly fertile ground. Finally, the Soviets changed the Perso-Arabic alphabet to the Cyrillic writing-system,

10. J. Rypka, *History...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 711–734; S. 'Abd Allāh, *Adabīyyāt-i Fārsī dar miyān-i Hindūwan*, trans. M. 'A. Khān, Tehran, Majmū'a-i Intishārāt-i Adabī wa-Tārikh-i Mawqūfāt Duktur Maḥmūd Afshār Yazdī, 1371/1992, pp. 21–52.

11. M. A. Riyāhī, *Nuṣūḥ-i zaḥān wa-adabīyyāt-i Fārsī dar qalamraw-i 'Uthmānī*, Tehran, Amīr Kabīr, 1350/1971, pp. 5–27.

which severed the literary links between Iranians and their fellow Persian speakers in the north. In India, the British declared English the official language in 1250/1835, and, after the founding of the Turkish Republic, in 1346/1928 Mustafa Kemal changed the alphabet from the Arabic-based writing-system to the roman one. The Soviets in Tajikistan also changed the name 'Persian' to 'Tājiki' and in Afghanistan, in an attempt to assert cultural independence from Iran, the name 'Persian' was changed to 'Dari'.

## Linguistic adaptation in Persian

In the Islamic period the Iranians replaced the Pahlavi alphabet, which the Sāsānians had used, with the Arabic. Although this last did not accommodate the vowel sounds of Persian, it was still simpler than Pahlavi. From this point of view the choice was a correct one. Moreover, Arabic letters could be modified to represent the Persian consonants *p*, *ch*, *z̄h*, and *g*.

As for loan-words, Persian borrowed terms from many other languages. In the twelve centuries from the birth of Persian, words from several foreign languages entered the language. In the beginning, from the Arabic language, the language of Islam, the number of words used in Persian was limited; however, as Iranians became more familiar with Arabic literature, the use of Arabic words and phrases in Persian poetry and prose increased to such an extent that 'knower of Arabic' was considered a mark of erudition and learning among poets and other writers. Of course, Iranians generally used these Arabic words with altered pronunciations and, in some cases, with altered meanings. In the present century there has been a discernible decrease in the use of Arabic words. In the Mongol and Īlkhānid periods, a number of Mongolian words entered Persian. In the last two centuries, a limited number of words from European languages have also been adopted, first from Russian and then, especially in the case of the terminology of modern sciences, from French and English. During the Constitutional Period a stock of administrative and political terms from modern Arabic found its way into Persian through the influence of the Ottoman state. In Tajikistan, a considerable number of Russian and Uzbek words, and, in Afghanistan, a number of French words have entered Persian; these words are not used in Iranian Persian.

## Persian literature

We shall now consider the most important works in New Persian literature under two headings: first, classical literature (which is subdivided into a. Verse and b. Prose); and second, modern literature.

CLASSICAL LITERATURE

a. *Vérse*

Classical Persian poetry has two fundamental elements: metre and rhyme. Each poetic unit is called a *bayt* (line), which is divided into two *miṣrāʿ* (hemistichs). In each poetic form the metre and length of all the hemistichs are the same. The manner of rhyming at the end of a hemistich or line depends on the kind of poetic form. In some cases, the poet repeats a word or several words after the rhyme in each line; this is called the *radīf* (refrain). Moreover, in Persian verse it is fundamental that the lines be independent in meaning.

Metre. Because the metres and rhythmical structures share the same names in Persian and Arabic, many scholars thought that the metrical system of Persian was derived from Arabic prosody. This view is not correct for a number of reasons: (a) the Persian language is an Indo-European language, while Arabic belongs to the Semitic languages; (b) verse existed in Middle Persian (Pahlavi); (c) the most important difference between the two languages lies in the pronunciation of vowels: in Arabic there are three vowels, each of which has two forms, one short and one long, while in Persian the articulation and timbre of these vowels differ from one another and therefore there are six, not three, basic vowel sounds in the language; (d) for this reason some of the metres commonly found in Arabic, like *basīf* and *kāmil*, are rarely found in Persian; even the metres that are common in both languages have their own particular forms, respectively; and (e) the metres of the *rubāʿī* (quatrain) and *fablaviyyāt* (regional songs) are unprecedented in Arabic. In one case, the *mutaqārib* metre (which is devoted to martial epics in Persian), there is speculation that it is Iranian in origin. In view of these differences, from the eleventh century onwards Iranian prosodists did not follow Arabic metrical schemes totally, and spoke in their books of ‘the metrical circles of the Persians’.<sup>12</sup>

Poetic Forms. There are more than ten poetic forms in Persian, six of which I shall deal with in this article: *qaṣīda*, *mathnawī*, *ghazal*, *rubāʿī*, *qitʿa* and *fablaviyyāt*.

It should be noted that classical Persian poetry is in no way analogous to poetry in European languages; the differences go beyond considerations of metre, rhyme and poetic form, encompassing the manner of expression, use of words, rhetorical and semantic devices and other such matters. For example, Europeans who are familiar with lyric poetry in their own languages ‘will not easily grasp the points of difference between individual (Persian) poets, especially lyric poets (like Rūdakī, Farrukhī, and Saʿdī), when examining

12. P.N. Khānlari, *Wāḡn-i shiʿr-i Fārsī*, Tehran, Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1345/1966, pp. 75–77, 84, 88, 107, 125, 168–173, 214–216.

their artistic characteristics, quite apart from the finer shades of meaning'.<sup>13</sup> The styles of Persian poetry, moreover, are not comparable to European literary styles; the oldest European style, Classicism, dates back to the seventh century AD, while the oldest Persian poetic style goes back to the ninth. Persian poetic styles are generally divided into four categories: (a) *Khurāsānī* (ninth to the end of the twelfth centuries), in which the *qaṣīda* and the *mathnawī* forms predominate; (b) *ʿIrāqī* (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), which is the period of the *ghazal*; (c) *Hindī* (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries), in which the *ghazal* achieves a semantic intricacy and complexity; and (d) Return (from the eighteenth century onwards), in which poets imitated the *ʿIrāqī* and the *Khurāsānī* styles.

With the foregoing remarks in mind, we will now introduce the predominant poetic forms in Persian and the important works that were written in each form.

The *qaṣīda* (ode) is the most important of the poetic forms in Persian, with rhymes and metres that follow those of the opening line throughout. The total number of lines ranges between thirty and fifty, though there are shorter *qaṣīdas* and longer ones that reach 300 lines. The genre in Persian is formed in imitation of Arabic *qaṣīdas*. Poets employ ponderous metres and diction in them. They were first used for panegyrics of the shah and the élite and, later, for venting themes, such as various religious, ethical, moral, philosophical, mystical, satirical, plaintive subjects. In panegyric *qaṣīdas*, poets usually devoted an introduction of some five to fifteen lines to eroticism or descriptions of wine-drinking, these being called the *taghazzul* or *nasīb*; or they began with descriptions of nature or complaints about the times etc., which are called the *tashbīb*. The line which links the introduction and the panegyric part of the poem is called the *takballuṣ*. In the panegyric *qaṣīda*, the poet also devotes a few lines at the end of the poem to prayer and benediction for the patron. As we already indicated, there are also *qaṣīdas* in which the poet begins directly with the praise of the patron, or the main topic of the poem.

The *qaṣīda* thrived in periods from the ninth to the end of the thirteenth centuries. At first, simplicity in diction and meaning were fundamental to this form; and one also finds in it a concern for national customs and pride and the primacy of *joie de vivre*. However, from the second half of the fifth/eleventh century onwards, simplicity and frankness gradually gave way to complexity and verbosity, and poets, to demonstrate their erudition and learning, included what they knew of the fields of science, philosophy and religion in their poetry. They began to use obscure Arabic words more frequently in poetry and chose complicated rhymes and refrains. They even repeated a word or words in each hemistich or line, so that their attention was focused on rhetorical devices, similes and metaphors.

13. J. Rypka, *History...*, *op.cit.*, p. 89.

The oldest complete panegyric *qaṣīda* is from Rūdakī of Samarqand (d. 328/940–941), who is known as the ‘Father of Persian poetry’. The number of *qaṣīda*-composing poets in this and succeeding periods was great. From the point of view of diction and meaning, only the *qaṣīdas* of Sa‘dī (d. 691/1292) differ from the *qaṣīdas* of other poets, because for the first time he advised his patron like a father or venerable teacher would, giving advice and counsel, not merely praising him. The *qaṣīdas* of Khāqānī (second half of the sixth/twelfth century) are perfect examples of masterly and difficult *qaṣīdas* in Persian. The poet of renown as far as religious *qaṣīdas* are concerned was Nāṣir-i Khusrāw (d. some time between 464/1072 and 469/1077), for mystical *qaṣīdas* Sanā‘ī (d. 524/1130–1131), and for defamatory *qaṣīdas* Sūzānī of Samarqand (d. 568/1173–1174).

The *mathnawī* (couplet form) is a poem in one metre and composed of independently rhyming hemistichs. The number of lines in the *mathnawī* is not limited nor is the number of metres. Because there is no limit on the number of lines, the *mathnawī* accommodates long narratives with a variety of subjects. The number of *mathnawīs* composed in Persian is great; there is much variation in the length: there are short *mathnawīs* as well as others approaching some 75,000 lines.

Five masterworks of Persian literature were composed in the *mathnawī* form.

The *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī [Fig. 2] was written around 364/975–976. Ḥakīm Abu-l-Qāsim Firdawsī (d. some time between 410/1020 and 416/1026), having obtained a copy of the prose *Shāhnāma-i Abū Maṣṣū‘ī*, which had been written in 345/957, began to compose a verse *Shāhnāma* and worked on it for thirty years. The *Shāhnāma* contains the legendary history of Iran, which Iranians at the time accepted; this covers from the creation of Gayūmart, the first shah or human, until the Arab Muslim invasions of Iran, which makes it one of the longest epics in the world. The first half is about the heroic and legendary eras of Iran, while the second is devoted to historical events from Alexander the Great’s foray into Iran to the Arab Muslim invasion. For a millennium, the *Shāhnāma* held the attention of the great mass of Iranians, which explains why today there are more than a thousand manuscripts of this extensive work (which contains between 50,000 and 60,000 lines) held in libraries throughout the world. Over the centuries, various strata of society, from kings to the common folk, became familiar with the *Shāhnāma*. In past centuries and even to this day, people known as ‘*Shāhnāma*-reciters’ have recited the epic’s famous stories in public places. One must also bear in mind that the work owes its fame and immortality not only to its subject matter but also to Firdawsī’s language and manner of expression, which are unrivalled and exemplify the heights of eloquence. Nizāmī ‘Arūdī, in his *Chahār maqāla* (written between 549–551/1155–1157), commented on the rarity of this eloquence: ‘I know of no poetry in Persian



سپه دار کا تختگان آید	از شمشیر زار و سوار آسمان	کار اهر تر از ادرم مسلح	ز بویا و در جهان دور بگریخت	و بنی بر کاه تو ایام	سپه دار کا فاذ فوا آید
تو زبانه چهار کلاست	ز ما یک یکت در کج بگریخت	اینست بر او تو آید	ایام جز تو کجی با کج	باید کنی بود دانستی	بر دم همزه با کجست کن
بیا یای یا نور زنتی تو	با ضربت و بسیل بر آن تو	سویبت درم از آن تو	برون رفتی از میان	زین و کس بر بار و کس	باید بر آمد بر آن کن
چو جادو بدین کج	عرو با بر او لاجی کج	بوزدم تو کجست تو	سکتی جز از کج	بچشش کج تیغ و آید	بکجده ستنش کج تیغ
زنتی تو کجست	کج از عرو سحر کج	ز روی او البر کج	ز روی او از کج	کے دست او در طاعت	صمان شد و بار کج



مرا کشتا کج و سپه دار	فردی تو سپه دار کج	بند را کجست کج	بند بر ما بر روز	بر بند از آن کج	بند بر ما بر روز
مردی کجست کج	نشد زان روز	بیک کجست کج	از بند کج	میتعنا کج	میتعنا کج
شما کجست کج	نزد کجست کج	مرا کجست کج	مرا کجست کج	و در هر روز	و در هر روز
کجست کج	کجست کج	بهر زمان کجست	بهر زمان کجست	تو کجست کج	تو کجست کج
سویبت کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج
وا تو کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج
مرا کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج
مردی کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج
کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج	کجست کج

II-5.2 *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsi by Mas‘ūd b. Manṣūr b. Aḥmad al-Mutaṭayyib, 772 /1370  
 © Topkapi Palace Library (H-1511, fol. 82b)

which equals this, and but little even in Arabic.<sup>14</sup> He excepted only the Qurʾān, and Ibn Athīr went so far as to call the *Shāhnāma* the ‘Qurʾān of the Persians’.<sup>15</sup> After Firdawsī, a number of poets composed epics with nationalistic, historical and religious themes in imitation of the *Shāhnāma* and in its metre (*mutaqārib*). The entire epic or parts thereof have been translated into a number of European and Asian languages.

The *Khamsa* of Nizāmī Ganjāwī (d. some time between 599/1203 and 607/1211) [Fig. 3]. He was not the first poet to compose romantic poetry. Before him, Fakhr al-Dīn Asʿad Jurjānī, around the middle of the eleventh century, attempted to turn the Parthian romantic tale of *Vīs and Rāmīn* into a *mathnawī* of about 10,000 lines and completed the task. However, by writing the *Khamsa* Nizāmī became the acknowledged master of that form in Persian. This 28,000-line poem is composed of five separate *mathnawīs*, each with a different metre: *Makḥẓan al-asrār*, an ethical and mystical *mathnawī* of about 2,000 lines; *Khusraw wa-Shīrīn*, the 6,500-line story of the love between Khusraw Parvīz, the Sāsānian king, for Shīrīn, an Armenian princess; *Layla and Majnūn*, an Arabic romantic tale of 4,500 lines; *Haft paykar* or *Bahrām-nāma*, a 5,000-line poem about the legendary adventures of the Sāsānian Bahrām Gūr V and seven daughters of the kings of the seven climes, each of whom is associated with a particular day of the week, a planet, a colour and a scent; and the *Iskandar-nāma*, a two-part epic which portrays Alexander the Great of Macedonia, not as he is known in history but as he is pictured in Islamic and Iranian sources, which elevate him to the status of a prophet.

Nizāmī in the *Khamsa* possesses his own particular poetic expression, and for this reason no poet has been able to imitate his style. The extraordinary success he achieved by writing the *Khamsa* caused others to try and write *mathnawīs* in imitation of him in Persian, Urdu and Turkish. The only poet to achieve notable success in this effort was Amīr Khusraw of Delhi (d. 725/1325), the great Persian poet of India.

The *Mathnawī* of Rūmī. Before Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, two poets began the composition of mystical epics: Sanāʾī of Ghazna (d. 524/1130–1131) and ʿAṭṭār of Nīshābūr (d. 616/1220). Sanāʾī’s *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqa* (The Garden of the Truth) is well known, and among ʿAṭṭār’s epics his *Mantiq al-tayr* (The Eloquence of the Birds) has achieved world-wide fame. However, Rūmī’s *Mathnawī* has eclipsed all mystical epics before and after. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 671/1273) was originally from Balkh, but after he emigrated to Qonya (in present-day Turkey), he became known as Rūmī (the Greek). His work, which is composed in the *mathnawī* form and has become known simply as the *Mathnawī*, comprises six books and 26,000 lines. It is like an en-

14. Nizāmī-i ʿArūdī, *Chahār maqāla (Four Discourses) of Nidhāmī-i-Arūdī-i-Samarqandī*, trans. E. G. Browne, London, Luzac, 1900, p. 79.

15. D. Naṣr Allāh, *al-Mathal al-sāʿir fī adab al-kātib wa-l-shāʿir*, Cairo, 1312/1895, p. 324.



II-5.3 *Khamsa of Nizāmī* by Abū Muḥammad Īlyās b. Yūsuf b. Mu'ayyad Nizām al-Dīn Ganjawī, 896/1490  
 © Topkapi Palace Library (H-1008, fol. 491b)

cyclopaedia, containing all mystical ideas and Islamic knowledge of the time. To frame the difficult concepts of mysticism and religion in the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī used parables and, by selecting apposite tales, he made the understanding of difficult matters easy for readers. Rūmī, unlike other poets, considered meaning and subject first, not stylistic beauty. In the view of Persian-speaking Ṣūfis or those familiar with Persian, the *Mathnawī* is the most important book which is read in lodges, and for this reason in past centuries there were several individuals who were known as ‘*Mathnawī*-reciters’. Ṣūfis, as Rūmī said, know the *Mathnawī* as ‘a ladder to heaven’ and, next to the Qur’ān, held this book in the highest esteem. The *Mathnawī* has been translated into several Asian and European languages; a complete English translation by Reynold A. Nicholson enjoys world-wide fame.

The *Bustān* of Sa‘dī of Shīrāz. Sa‘dī (d. 691/1292) – who was an absolute master of romantic *ghazals* and the author of a mélange of prose and poetry called the *Gulistān* – exhibited his artistry in the *Bustān* (The Rose Garden), an ethical *mathnawī*. He wrote this masterpiece in ten chapters and 39,000 lines in the *mutaqārib* metre, which is generally used for heroic and martial epics. As one scholar said, Sa‘dī depicted the Utopia he was searching for in the *Bustān*: ‘... the world of the *Bustān* is all goodness, rectitude, justice and humanity, i.e. the world as it ought to be.’ Sa‘dī expressed all these subjects in short and captivating tales and parables with the most beautiful, eloquent and simple language and style.<sup>16</sup> It is for this reason that experts believe that Sa‘dī’s expression in poetry and prose is ‘simple yet impossible’. It took centuries before the *Bustān* was translated into a number of European languages and praised by Western literary critics. Among them is Henri Massé, who called the *Bustān* a moral book and Sa‘dī’s masterpiece. He traced the poet’s popularity in Europe to his affinity to Western genius. The important point here is that Sa‘dī’s breadth of thought, liberality and humanitarianism made all translators of the *Bustān* sing his praise.

The *‘Irfān* of Bīdil. Mīrẓā ‘Abd al-Qādir Bīdil (d. 1133/1721) was of Uzbek ancestry but born in India. His mother tongue was Bengali and he learned Persian in school. The most famous of his five *mathnawīs* and other works is the *‘Irfān* (The Perception), which is composed in 11,000 lines. This work contains fairy tales, historical notes and gnostic matters, as well as the author’s philosophical, social and ethical opinions. Bīdil combined his own opinions with difficult and subtle subjects, metaphors and allusions. He brought the Indian Style to its pinnacle. His works became very famous in northern India, Afghanistan and Central Asia from the middle of the eighteenth century and his poetic style was emulated. His popularity in those regions was such that a week of ‘Bīdil-recital’ was organized, in which his works

16. Sa‘dī, *Bustān*, ed. Ghulām Ḥusayn Yūsufi, Tehran, Intishārāt-i Khwārizmī, 1368/1989b, p. 17.

were read and discussions of his ideas and thoughts were held<sup>17</sup> – just as in Iran *Shāhnāma*- and *Mathnawī*-recitals were held. Despite his popularity in Iran, few people know Bidil and rarely do literary people read his works. Perhaps the reason for this is that works in the Indian Style have generally not been to the taste of Persian-speaking Iranians.

*Ghazal*. Although in Arabic the term *ghazal* connotes dallying with women and lovemaking etc., in Persian it refers only to a type of poetry that has generally between seven and fourteen lines, with a uniform metre and rhyme established, as in the *qaṣīda*, in the opening line. In the *ghazal*, unlike the *qaṣīda*, the accepted metres are appropriate to the delicacy of the meaning and diction. Poets generally mention their pen-names in the last line. Thematic *ghazals* first and foremost are devoted to erotic subjects, whether true or fanciful; secondly, they take up mystical, philosophical and social themes. *Ghazals* with these specifications came into being in the peculiar political and social circumstances of Iran during the Mongol period.

Until the twelfth century we do not have an independent *ghazal* in Persian poetry. During earlier periods, the term was used for poetry that had an erotic or sensual side and was mostly accompanied by music. Good examples of such poetry were composed by Rūdakī, Farrukhī, and Manūchihri. However, in the twelfth century the *ghazal* separated from erotic lyricism and became an independent poetic form. Two important factors in this process were the spread of Ṣūfism and the decrease in the number of courts in which poets would compose panegyrics. Several twelfth-century poets set the stage for the great *ghazal*-writers in Persian. In this article I will deal with four famous poets in that genre.

Rūmī. The *ghazals* of Rūmī (d. 671/1273) uniformly deal with the poet's impatience to be united with his eternal beloved; they were generally sung while adepts were dancing at Ṣūfī musical gatherings. In them, Rūmī did not pay much attention to literary details. His *ghazals* amount to over 30,000 lines. They are not all of a kind. At times, he uses heavy and inappropriate metres, and likewise he composed *ghazals* of considerable length. At the end of his poems Rūmī, unlike other *ghazal*-writers, would mention Shams-i Tabrīzī in place of his own pen-name, for the latter changed his life completely and led him on the path to spiritual enlightenment. For this reason his collected *ghazals* became famous as *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, or *The Complete Ghazals of Shams*.

Sa'dī of Shīrāz. The *ghazals* of Sa'dī differ from those of Rūmī in many ways. Despite the fact that he had not completely left the Ṣūfī path, he generally dealt with a physical beloved. The key to Sa'dī's fame is the fluidity and simplicity of his writing and the appropriateness of his choice of metre for his *ghazals*. Moreover, it is evident from them that he was no stranger to the realms of love. In most of his *ghazals*, as in those of Rūmī, the standard of

17. J. Rypka, *History...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 515–520.

unity of meaning is observed. In some of them themes relating to gnomic wisdom and advice and homiletics are introduced. Although Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār pioneered this type of *ghazal* in Persian, they were mostly concerned with mystical problems while Sa'dī focused on the actual homiletics and wisdom themselves.

Ḥāfiz of Shirāz. Ḥāfiz (d. 719/1320) chose his particular pen-name because he was one of those who memorized the Qur'ān (*ḥuffāz*). Among Persian speakers and those familiar with the language he is known as *Lisān al-ghayb* (Tongue of the Unseen World). Accordingly, his *diwān* has been used in bibliomancy. To say that until one or two generations ago there would be a *diwān* of Ḥāfiz next to the Qur'ān in every Muslim Persian-speaking household is not to exaggerate. Ḥāfiz has left less than 500 *ghazals*, which do not amount to 5,000 lines. He mixed the *ghazal* styles of Rūmī and Sa'dī in his own poems. Some of his *ghazals* are mystical in nature, but in some the eroticism is completely palpable. In the majority of them erotic love, mysticism, wisdom and advice are amalgamated. An important theme of Ḥāfiz's *ghazals*, as opposed to those of Rūmī, is his artistry in choosing appropriate metres and diction and in using rhetorical devices and juxtaposing words which makes his art like that of a jewel-smith who places precious coloured stones next to each other. Thematically, Ḥāfiz's enmity for religious hypocrites and Šūfis who turned their Šūfism into a business is fully evident. On the other hand, some critics have taken some of his *ghazals* to task for not having a uniformity of theme in so far as this element is considered one of the characteristics of the Persian *ghazal*. It is also important to note that from the fourteenth century to this day *ghazal*-composers, with the exception of followers of the Indian Style, generally use Ḥāfiz and Sa'dī as rôle-models, without achieving any success. Furthermore, for several centuries now singers in Persian-speaking regions have used the *ghazals* of Sa'dī and Ḥāfiz as lyrics of their songs.

Šā'ib of Tabrīz. Šā'ib (d. 1080–1081/1670 or 1085–1086/1675) is the best-known *ghazal*-writer in the Indian Style. The lines of his *ghazals* number at least 100,000. His style is grounded in complexity and ambiguity of meaning, subtlety of thought, exaggerated conciseness and, especially, in finding 'alien meaning' and innovation. In this way he created a style that few poets were able to imitate. His particular art was *tamthīl* (analogy), in which he would express a general meaning in one hemistich and exemplify or rationalize it with a concrete or palpable image in the second. In his *ghazals* there is no thematic uniformity, to the extent that in some the number of themes amounts to the number of lines.

*Rubā'ī*. The basic form here is two lines (four hemistichs) with one exclusive metre and, occasionally, one rhyme throughout, but more often than not with the first, second and fourth hemistichs rhyming. Poets use one metre so exclusively for the *rubā'ī* that they never construct other forms with that metre. Since the poem has only two lines, any form of pleonasm or extraneous

material is alien. The first, second and third hemistichs introduce the statement of the basic theme in the fourth. *Rubāʿī*-composition began with Rūdakī (d. 328/940–941) and many poets composed *rubāʿīs* with a variety of themes.

ʿUmar Khayyām of Nīshābūr. The outstanding figure in *rubāʿī*-composition was ʿUmar Khayyām of Nīshābūr (d. 515/1122), a mathematician, astronomer, cosmologist and philosopher. In Iran and the Islamic world, ʿUmar Khayyām is acknowledged as a ‘savant’ in those disciplines. Though all of his works on these subjects are in Arabic, the person who is responsible for his fame as a poet in Iran and the rest of the world was Edward Fitzgerald, who freely translated his poetry into English verses in 1275/1859. Fitzgerald’s translations of the *rubāʿīs* were then translated into various other languages. We should also note that ʿUmar Khayyām reciprocated and brought about Fitzgerald’s world-wide reputation.

*Qitʿa*. This form consists of several lines of uniform metre and rhyme, but generally, unlike the *qaṣīda* and the *ghazal*, does not have an opening line. A *qitʿa* has at least two or more lines, but good ones run from five to twelve lines. The *qitʿa* is composed in various poetic metres. Whenever a discerning poet noticed some witty or subtle point, he would put it into the *qitʿa* form. Often the point of the poem would be made in the last line. What is worth noting is that there is no better source for information on a poet’s mentality, thoughts, beliefs and morality than the *qitʿas* in his *diwān*. Though a lot of poets wrote *qitʿas*, the most famous ones in Persian poetry are those by Ibn Yamīn (d. 769/1368) and, next to him, Anwārī (d. 584/1189–1190). From the eleventh century onwards, *qitʿas* have survived which contain panegyrics and eulogies, invective and humour, short narratives, literary jokes and drolleries, wisdom and advice, etc.

*Fablawīyyāt* or *du-baytī*. These terms refer to poetry and song of a dialectical or local nature as found in the central and western parts of Iran, and which have a specific metre different from the *rubāʿī*. No doubt a great number of people composed poetry in local dialects over the centuries. However, due to the ascendancy of Persian and its poetic metres, the names of *fablawī*-composers and their poetry are rarely found in books. The important point is that the metres of *fablawīyyāt* do not fit into the classical Arabic metrical system, yet with the passage of time the local metres came to be considered variants of the classical ones. Some scholars believe *fablawī* metres are extensions of Middle-Persian poetic metres. The characteristics of *fablawīs* are simplicity of language, similes and clarity of meaning.

#### b. Prose

Apart from writings in or translations from Arabic, Persian prose styles appear about one century after the poetic forms, under the tutelage and encouragement of the Sāmānid rulers (203–395/819–1005). All of the works from this

period are in simple language with few Arabic words. However, from about the mid-eleventh century to the end of the twelfth, as time passed since the establishment of Islam in Iran and as more Iranian writers became familiar with Arabic literature, simple Persian prose was influenced by the more artful and conventional prose of Arabic. As a result not only did Arabic words and phrases increase in Persian prose, but also simplicity and concision gave way to formality and prolixity. Prose-writers also began to use rhetorical devices and tropes like poets, and by employing the rhymed-prose forms, as in Arabic, created an ornate and rhythmic prose style. The mimicry of ornate Arabic prose became so slavish that by the late twelfth century the most formalized specimen of rhymed prose in Persian, the *Maqāmāt-i Ḥamīdī*, was written in 550/1156 in imitation of the Arabic *maqāmāt*. The ornate prose style of writing was more common in court correspondence or books of tales and works of a literary character, but not in scientific or Šūfī works. However, with the Mongol invasion of Iran at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Hūlāgū's sacking of Baghdad in 655/1258 and the fall of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate, the importance of Arabic decreased considerably and the Persian language enjoyed a corresponding growth in several areas. The prose style of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries continued in the vein of that of the twelfth century, except for a number of Turkish and Mongol words which made their way into Persian. In the latter period, the writing of works on eminent Šūfīs, caliphs, kings and viziers, of heroic tales and large collections of the correspondence of noted secretaries was in vogue. However, after the fifteenth century no work of Persian prose worthy of consideration was produced. The writers of this period tried to create works in the ornate prose of the writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but none was successful. The salient feature of the prose of this period is prolixity of the most wearisome kind. In the period of the Return, some writers who tried to imitate the style of writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries produced noteworthy results.

Introducing the thousands of books written in the last ten centuries on various topics in Iran, India, Asia Minor, Afghanistan and today's Central Asia is not possible in an article such as this. An index of all such books has not even been compiled, nor have most of the works been published. Moreover, separating literary works from purely scientific ones from the period under discussion is a difficult task, because in Persian we even have works of historiography that have been written in an ornate, literary prose.

So that readers may become acquainted with the Persian works written or translated during the approximately one hundred years between the mid-tenth and the mid-eleventh centuries, I will list the most important ones here: *Shāhnāma-i Abū Manšūrī*; *Tārikh-i Bal'amī* (a translation of al-Ṭabarī's *Tārikh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*) and *Tarjama-i Tafṣīr-i Ṭabarī* (a translation of his *Jāmi' al-bayān fī tafṣīr al-Qur'ān*); a *Risāla* on Ḥanafī jurisprudence; the geography *Ḥudūd al-'ālam min al-mashriq ilā l-maghrib* (The Limits of the World from the East to the



West); the medical work *Hidāyat al-muta'allimīn fī-l-ṭibb* (The Guidance for Students of Medicine) (all written in the second half of the fourth/tenth century); *Dānishnāma-i 'Alā'ī* (The Book of Knowledge for 'Alā') (on natural science and mathematics) and *Risāla-i nabdh* (on medicine), both by Ibn Sīnā (d. 427/1036); *al-Taḥfīm li-awā'il ṣinā'at al-tanjīm* (Instructions in the Basics of Astronomy) by Abū Rayḥān al-Bīrūnī (d. 439/1048); *al-Abniya 'an ḥaqā'iq al-adwiya* (Fundamentals of the Facts of Drugs) on pharmacology by Abū Maṣṣūr Muwaffaq b. 'Alī al-Harawī (fifth/eleventh century); *Tāriḫ-i Sīstān* (the first half written in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century), *Tāriḫ-i Bayhaqī*, (written in the middle of the fifth/eleventh century), both on history; and more than ten volumes in Persian by Muḥammad b. Ayyūb Ṭabarī, a mathematician of the second half of the eleventh century. This list reveals that at the outset of Persian prose, writers valued above all scientific and scholarly works. Another matter that we ought to mention here is that Persian writers of this period would try to use Persian terminology in their scientific works instead of Arabic, while at the same time they had no compunction about using Arabic terms.

Of the thousands of works written after the mid-eleventh century in Persian I will mention only a few. Information about the rest will be found in Dhabiḥ Allāh Ṣafā.<sup>18</sup> We have, for example, the *Qābūs-nāma* of 'Unṣur al-Ma'ālī Kaykāyūs, a Mirror for Princes written in 474/1082–1083; the *Sīyasat-nāma* (Manual of Administration) of Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk (killed 484/1092), the famous Saljūq vizier, a treatise on civil administration and politics; the Ṣūfī treatises of Khwāja 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī (d. 480/1088); and the mystical *Asrār al-tawḥīd fī maqāmāt al-Shaykh Abū Sa'īd* (The Secrets of Unity in the Sessions of Abū Sa'īd) written in 591/1195, which is notable for the way it was composed. Outstanding as far as ornate prose is concerned is *Katīla wa-Dimna*, which is a free translation by Naṣr Allāh Munshī (between 535/1141 and 538/1144) of an Arabic translation by Ibn Muqaffa', which became the standard text. One of the works written to this standard is the *Marzbān-nāma* of Sa'd al-Dīn of Warāwīnī in the first quarter of the thirteenth century; another is the *Anwār-i Suhaylī* (Illuminations of Suhaylī) written by Mullā Ḥusayn Wā'iz-i Kāshifī (d. in the first years of the tenth/sixteenth century). All these works are collections of fables in which animals and plants speak. One must also mention the *Gulistān* of Sa'dī (written 655/1258), the masterpiece of Persian prose. The *Gulistān* was written in eight chapters containing short tales in a mixture of prose and poetry. It had more readers in the Persian-speaking world than any other prose work. Sa'dī's great achievement was to free Persian prose from the clutches of debilitating conventionality, theory and ornamentation, and from obscure Arabic words and phrases. Because of the fame of the *Gulistān*, several writers produced works imitating it. Until about sixty years ago it served as a

18. Dh. Ṣafā, *Tāriḫ-i...*, *op.cit.*

textbook in all the regions in which Persian was used. Another fact about this work worth mentioning is that some 400 phrases and lines from it have become familiar quotations in Persian.<sup>19</sup> Since the seventeenth century, the *Gulistān* has been translated into several European languages.

Among the collections of heroic tales, apart from the works on pre-Islamic figures, most of which are lost, three works are worth mentioning: *Samak-i Ayyār* (The Vagabond's Fish), written by Farāmarz b. Khudādād b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Kātib al-Arrajānī; the *Dārā-nāma* (The Book of Darius) of ʿIṣṣāq al-Ṭarsūsī; and the Story of *Firūzshāh* by Mawlānā Bīghamī.

#### MODERN LITERATURE

Iran's very limited familiarity and contact with Europe towards the end of the Qājār period (1133–1343/1721–1925) – which witnessed the establishment of the College of Arts in Tehran, the hiring of several Europeans to teach the new sciences and, later, the sending of a small number of students to Europe, the travels of some prominent figures to Europe, the translation of various European works of literature into Persian and an acquaintance with the simple prose of the press and laws governing European countries –, had two remarkable and beneficial results. One was the Constitutional Revolution in 1906. The other was a fundamental change in Persian literature, which for several centuries prior to that time had undergone stagnation and precipitous decline. In this way, court poetry and the composition of erotic and mystical *ghazals* in imitation of poets of previous centuries gave way to themes like social and political criticism, defense of freedom and the rule of law and opposition to tyranny. Likewise, the convention-bound and difficult prose of the past several centuries gave way to a simpler style of writing. During the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1925–1941), the trend towards contact with Europe, acquaintance with European literature and borrowing from European institutions and cultural matters grew apace, while, at the same time, there were still noted poets in this period – and even until the time of the present article – who composed poetry in the style of classical poets, albeit with new themes and in their own special modes of expression. In their poetry the attempt at innovation is more or less evident. The most important of these poets include Malik al-Shuʿarāʾ Bahār, ʿIraj Mīrẓā, ʿĀrif, ʿIshqī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shahriyār, Parvīn, Iʿtiṣāmī, Rahī Muʿayyīfī and Mīhdī Ḥamīdī.

However, in order to find the direct effect of some Iranians' acquaintance with European literature, especially literature in French, one must examine modern poetry in Persian. ʿAlī Isfandi-yārī, known as Nīmā Yūshij (d. 1960), and his familiarity with French language and literature changed the course of Persian poetry. He did not reject metre and the use of rhyme.

19. See Saʿdī, *Bustān*, *op.cit.*, p. 38.

However, he brought about changes in them and stated that poetic forms should serve the theme. Some of the faults in his theory, which resulted from an incomplete grasp of the finer points of the metrical system, were removed by poets later on. During the reign of Muhammad Reza Shah (r. 1941–1979), modern poetry gained a great number of adherents. It should be said that the publication of this poetry in magazines, and even in newspapers, was the cause of its wide currency. It should also be remembered that, in 1934, the first Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers declared the traditional forms of classical Persian poetry in Tājik literature too limited and confining to express new ideas. In Tajikistan the cultural revolution entered the arena with the slogan ‘The democratization of form and content’. The Hizb-i Tūdeh (Toilers’ Party) of Iran, which was subordinate to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, followed Soviet policy in this regard without referring to the Union of Soviet Writers’ decision. Among Nīmā Yūshij’s followers, who first composed poetry in the framework of his ideas and later went on individually to stake out their own independence, we find Khānlārī, Farīdūn Tawallulī, Majd al-Dīn Mīr Fakhra’ī (Gulchīn-i Gīlānī), Farīdūn Mushīrī, Nādir Nādirpūr, Hūshang Ibīhāj (Sāyeh), Furūgh Farrukhzād, Suhrāb Sipīhrī and Akhawān-i Sālis. In 1947, with the publication of *Abanghā-i Farāmūsh Shudeh*, Aḥmad Shāmlū declared the existence of *Shi’r-i Sīpīd* (White Poetry) in Persian literature. In the year 1965, the first ‘new wave’ in Persian poetry emerged; its founders were Aḥmad Riḍā Aḥmadī, Sīpānlū and Bīzhan Allāhī, and their theoretician was Ismā’īl Nūrī ‘Alā’. Later splits developed in the followers of Modern Persian, and among those who went their own ways was Yad Allāh Ru’yā’ī, the author of *Shi’r-i hajm* (the Poetry of Volume). After the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979) and the eight-year war with Iraq, poets entered the arena who declared themselves the ‘third wave’. They called Nīmā Yūshij the ‘first wave’, the poets of the sixties and seventies the ‘second wave’. They also took their inspiration from the poets of the sixties and seventies as well as from foreign sources like the Japanese Haiku. On another front, during this same period some of the modern poets returned to composing *qaṣīdas* and *ghazals* in the classical mode, but each with his own particular style and with remarkable innovations. These poets include Sīmīn Bihbihānī, Hūshang Ibīhāj and Akhawān-i Sālis.

We have said that as a result of the growing acquaintance with the press and various of the works of European literature and translations of them into Persian, a simple form of writing took the place of the convention-bound prose of previous centuries in Persian literature. In some instances, journalists even turned to colloquial prose, the best example of which is *Charan Parand* (i.e. the colloquial language with satire) of ‘Alī Akbar Dihkhudā (‘Dakhaw’). Some authors began to write educational, historical and social novels in imitation of European models. The first step in the writing of the short story in the European style was taken by Sayyid Muḥammad ‘Alī Jamālzāda (b. 1892)

with his collection *Yakī būd yakī nabūd* in 1921–1922, which was praised by foreign and Iranian critics alike. Ḥasan Muqaddam (1898–1925), the author of the satirical play *Ja‘far Khān az farhang āmada*, achieved great success when the play was performed in Tehran in 1923.

In short-story writing, Jamālzādeh was followed by Ṣādiq Hidāyat (1903–1951), who achieved great fame in and outside Iran with his collections *Zinda bi-Gūr*, *Sī qaṭra kbūn*, and especially his *Būf-i kūr*. After him, individuals like Buzurg ‘Alavi, Ṣādiq Chūbak, Ibrāhīm Gulistān, Muḥammad Ijtīmādzāda (famous as ‘Bih Āzīn’) and dozens of others created prose works, each with his own special techniques and to a greater or lesser extent with an eye toward Ṣādiq Hidāyat.

Novel writing continued as it had gone on during the previous several decades. Among the works published are *Shuhbar-i Ābū Khānum* by ‘Alī Muḥammad Afghānī and *Kālidar* by Maḥmūd Dawlatābādī.

In the field of essay writing, which is relatively recent in Persian, the following individuals are among the well-known figures: Muḥammad ‘Alī Furūghī (Dhakā’ al-Mulk), ‘Abbās Iqbāl Āshtiyānī, Muḥtabā Mīnovī, Parvīz Nātil Khānlarī, Sa‘īd Nafīsī, ‘Alī Dashtī, Iḥsān Yārshāṭir, ‘A.A. Sa‘īdī Sīrjānī, M.A. Bāstānī Pārīzī and Jalāl Āl-i Aḥmad.

On another front, in the last sixty or seventy years a number of Iranian scholars have produced valuable works of literary research and critical editions of classical texts. In addition to the several hundred classical Persian literary texts edited in a scholarly manner, and besides the translations of hundreds of books from various languages into Persian, several valuable literary journals were published, such as *Armaghān*, *Mīhr*, *Yādīgār*, *Sukhan*, *Yaghmā*, *Rābnāma-i Kitāb* and the journals of the Faculties of Literature of the Universities of Tehran, Tabrīz and Mashhad (Firdawsi).

We must identify the period of modern Persian literature with the blossoming of Persian prose and agree with Parvīz Nātil Khānlarī, who called it ‘the age of prose’, for in it, after ten centuries, Persian prose overtook Persian poetry.

It is necessary to mention that classical Persian literature – with the exception of folklore – shared the same general framework in various countries from its beginnings to the end of the nineteenth century. However, from the beginning of the twentieth century, basic changes appeared in that common framework in Tajikistan and, more or less, in Afghanistan. Contemporary Tajikistan was part of old Transoxiana, which the former Soviet Union declared to be one of its Central Asian Republics. Soviet ideology, as we said before, called the Persian of Tajikistan Tājīkī, nominally separating it from the Persian used in Iran and Afghanistan. It replaced the Perso-Arabic alphabet with the Cyrillic script for writing Tājīkī and, in 1934, determined that the traditional forms of Persian poetry were unsuitable, declaring the ‘democratization of form and content’ a necessity. As a result, Tajikistan followed Soviet cultural

and political theories. In the first generation of poets and prose writers of Tajikistan was Šadr al-Dīn ‘Aynī, who is rightly called the ‘Father of Tājīk literature’. In the last decades, a gradual return to classical Persian forms reflecting the ancient heritages of Persian literature has come into being, and from 1989 onwards we see an amalgam of the traditional and the innovative and a reliance on the literary past and the roots of Tājīk society, which are deeply embedded in the Persian world. It must also not go without saying that Tājīkī differs from the contemporary Persian of Iran by virtue of its phonology, grammar and Turkish and Russian loan-words.

In Afghanistan, which became independent in 1921, literary modernism appeared later than it did in Iran. Maḥmūd Ṭarzī (1865–1933) was one of the pioneers of this movement. The publication of newspapers, the writing of novels and short stories and the composition of modern poetry generally imitated the works of prose writers and poets of Iran. In the same way, Marxist literature of recent years is also in every way imitative of the Hizb-i Tūdeh of Iran. Writers began to write short stories around 1940. In the early sixties, a kind of literature that is revolutionary, engagé and in tune with socialist societies appeared in Afghanistan. In contrast to the writers of this movement stands a group of short-story writers, novelists and poets whose only common ground is that they oppose the engagé writers.

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Chapter 6

TURKISH LITERATURE

*Günay Kut*

Pre-Islamic Turkish literature

The Turks, who lived over a broad area of Central Asia stretching from Siberia in the north to the Himalayas in the south, from the Ural river to Lake Balkhash and from the Caspian Sea as far as China, embraced Islam between the second half of the seventh and the mid-tenth centuries AD. One of the Turkish communities that converted *en masse* to Islam during the tenth century was the Itil Bulgars (310/922) in the north-west (around the Volga and Qāzān). The Qarākhānid Khāqān Satuq Bughrā became a Muslim in 308/920, taking his people with him, while the Oghuz Turks converted in 349/960.

Although Turkish literature dates back to the earliest periods of Turkish habitation in Central Asia, it is extremely difficult to trace oral literature through written records. Data concerning the oral tradition can only be gleaned from translations into other languages, from later observations in Turkish and from ongoing traditions. The earliest evidence concerning the oral tradition of poetry is a *qoshma*-like quatrain relating the rout of the Huns in 119 BC, which is encountered in the Chinese sources. While the *aghit* (lament) of Alp Er Tungha, regarded as a fragment of the oldest legend, was written down in the eleventh century AD, it was composed for the Saka ruler, who was killed in 625 BC. The *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* and the *Qutadghu bilig* mention Alp Er Tungha, who appears as Afrāsiyāb in the Iranian sources. Most of the poems in the *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* very probably date to pre-Islamic periods when the Turks used *hece* (syllabic metre) in quatrains, with the rhyme-scheme *aaab-cccb-dddb*... Information regarding Turkish legends is also found in some Arabic and Persian historiographical literature.

Important data concerning the written literature of the Köktürk period have been obtained from tombstones and some inscriptions dating from the sixth and seventh centuries. The stones on which these literary data, known as

*Bengütash* literature, are inscribed were generally found in the Yenisei region and are known as the Orkhon inscriptions. The most important of them are the Köl Tigin, Bilge Qaghan and Tonyuquq monuments found in the valley of the Orkhon river. The Köl Tigin *Bengütash* was erected by Bilge Qaghan on 21 August 732, that of Tonyuquq between 724 and 726 and the Bilge *Bengütash* in 735. As well as being the first known written examples of Turkish literature, these monumental stones also contain considerable information about the life of the Turks at that time. After the stones were discovered, various scholars worked at a feverish pace to decipher them.

In 745, the Uighurs defeated the Köktürks and established their hegemony over the Orkhon region. Accepting first the Manichaean religion and then Buddhism, the Uighurs developed two separate literatures known as Manichaean and Burqandji under the influence of these two religions.

## Turkish literature under Islamic influence by periods

### THE QARĀKHĀNID PERIOD: KHĀQĀNIYYA OR KĀSHGHAR TURKISH

In 840, the Qirgiz Turks destroyed the Uighur dynasty, forcing them to shift their centre to East Turkistan. Simultaneously the Qarākhānids ruled over a region immediately adjacent to the Uighurs, where the cities of Balāsāghūn, Tarza and Kāshghar were located in the west of East Turkistan. Their official state and written language was Khāqāniyya Turkish. As Maḥmūd of Kāshghar points out in his *Divān Lughāt al-Türk*, the Turkish language is divided into two branches, eastern and western. Western Turkish is Oghuz Turkish, Eastern Turkish the language of the Qarākhānid state. The language of the latter Kāshghar and Balāsāghūn, exhibits a close affinity with the Turkish spoken by the Chigil, Yaghmā, Arghūn and Uighur Turks.

While the Uighurs still adhered to Mani and Buddha, the Qarākhānids had become Muslims. This coincided with the rule of ‘Abd al-Karīm Satuq Bughrā Khān, whose conversion to Islam eventually became a legend known as the *Tadhkirat-i Satuq Bughrā Khān*, which exists in a number of different versions. Although the first great literary work of the Qarākhānid period is the *Qutadghu bilig* (Happiness-giving Knowledge) written by Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājib in 462/1069–1070, it is highly probable that other literary works had been written around 390/1000 as forerunners of a work of this magnitude. Some of the poems of uncertain date in the *Divān Lughāt al-Türk*, for example, can be dated to this period.

The Islamic metre called *mutaqārib*, which is both a verse form and a metrical scheme known as *Shāb-nāma* metre, was used in the *Qutadghu Bilig*, which is dedicated to Tabghach Bughrā Khān. There are, however, 173 quatrains of this work that are rhymed according to the *aaa* scheme. Furthermore, occasionally a rhyme appears at the beginning of the hemistich

in accordance with the Uighur tradition. A verse and prose introduction at the beginning of the work is a later addition not written by Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Hājib. Although it is not known who wrote it, it is nonetheless important for information about his life.

In the *Qutadghu Bilig*, an allegorical *mathnawī*, four principal personages represent four abstract qualities: the ruler Kün Toghdı (rising sun), justice; the minister Ay Toldı (full moon), prosperity; the minister's son Ögdülmüş (highly praised), intelligence; and the minister's brother Odghurmush (wide awake), prudence. The work, which consists of the *munāẓara* (debates) among these four, is thus a so-called 'Mirror for Princes', or a manual of moral and political advice.

As well as the importance of the subject, the preponderance of terms relating to the organization of the state indicates the level of culture and civilization among the Turks of the time. Similarly, the pure Turkish used throughout the work (there are only about one hundred Arabic and Persian words) makes it worthy of study. The intellectual fabric of the *Qutadghu Bilig* is also strongly Islamic, even though traces of pre-Islamic customs and traditions and numerous interactions with neighbouring China are also evident.

The *Divān Lughāt al-Türk*, written by Maḥmūd of Kāshghar, is one of the seminal and chief works of Turkish literature of the Qarākhānid period and also the first dictionary of the Turkish language. Lost for a long time, it was finally recovered for the scholarly world as the result of a fortuitous purchase by 'Alī Emīri (d. 1924). This work, which was completed on 10 Jumāda II 466/10 February 1074 and presented to Abu-l-Qāsim, son of the Caliph Muḥammad al-Muqtaḍī, was written to teach Turkish to the Arabs. Its explanatory sections are thus in Arabic. The *Divān Lughāt al-Türk* is the single source we have today for the various literary genres, the properties of the language, the richness of folklore, the legends, epics, proverbs, vocabulary and, finally, the social characteristics of the Turks of that time. Unfortunately, the exact date of the verse fragments in this work, which reflects Qarākhānid literature in a variety of examples, is unknown. These examples, however, can be assumed to have been recited for several centuries. The poems narrating the wars of the Qarākhānids with other Turkish tribes definitely belong to the Qarākhānid period. Most of the quatrains in the *Divān* are in 7-syllable syllabic (4+3 with caesura) verse. The next common form is 8-syllable (4+4 with caesura). The rhyme-scheme of the quatrains is as in the *qoshma*. The subject is usually war or, as a secondary theme, spring. There are also lyrical poems on the subject of love and the beloved. Some poems in the *Divān* are in the form of couplets in 'arūd (traditional Arabic prosody).

The *Atabat al-ḥaqā'iq*, written by Adīb Aḥmad Yuknaki in Khāqāniyya Turkish in the twelfth century, is dedicated to Dād Sipahsālār Muḥammad Beg. In subject matter, it is a book of morality written in the *Shāhnāma* metre and exhibiting the verse techniques (*munājāt*, *na't*, *madhīyya*, *sabab al-talif* etc.)



observed in works of the *mathnawī* genre in classical *dīwān* literature. The forty opening couplets are in *qaṣīda* form, while the rhyme-scheme becomes *aaa* where the work actually begins. *‘Atabat al-ḥaqā’iq*, which belongs to the genre of the *naṣīḥat-nāma* (book of counsel), consists of 101 quatrains on the benefits of knowledge, the fickleness of the world, praise of generosity and criticism of greed, humility and courtesy, benevolence, patience and other virtues, and the corruptness of the age, as well as the writer’s apology.

At the end of the *‘Atabat al-ḥaqā’iq* is a quatrain by an unknown writer, another quatrain by Sayf al-Dīn Barlas, known by the pen name Sayfī, and a verse of ten couplets by Arslān Khocha Tarkhān. The quatrain by the unknown writer, which gives information about Adīb Aḥmad and the work, tells us that he was born blind. While it resembles the *Qutadghu Bilig* in subject matter, this work contains a larger number of Arabic and Persian words.

Aḥmad Yasawī, who was born in the town of Sayrām (Isfijā) in West Turkistan at the end of the eleventh century, wrote his poems in Qarākhānid Turkish. But Yasawī’s aphorisms (*ḥikam*), which have undergone linguistic alteration if not changes in content during their survival to the present, do not exhibit a perfect harmony with Qarākhānid Turkish. The heartfelt and sincere poems he wrote spread widely among nomadic people, virtually weaving a legend that overshadowed even such contemporaries of his as Adīb Aḥmad and Yūsuf Khāṣṣ Ḥājīb. Aḥmad Yasawī, who lost his father as a small child and moved to Yesī, where he joined the followers of Arslān Bābā, became a *shaykh* in 555/1160. Through his religious-mystical aphorisms he tried to teach Islam to the Turks; for him, poetry was thus a mere means to an end. Most of his aphorisms are in the form of quatrains using syllabic metres and half-rhymes. Although some are written in the *ghazal* style of Arabic prosody, his use of the characteristic Turkish verse forms, syllabic metre and rhyme-scheme ensured that his poems, which spread widely among the common people, were not forgotten over the centuries and his aphorisms were copied numerous times. In Anatolian Turkish literature, Yūnus Emre was especially influenced by Yasawī.

#### LITERARY PRODUCTS OF KHWĀRIZM AND THE GOLDEN HORDE

At a later date, we find products of the Turkish language which had developed in eastern Central Asia in Kāshghar and its environs, in places such as Khwārizm, Yedisu and Marw-Bukhārā. Most prominent among these centres is Khwārizm, which freed itself from Saljūq rule and established its economic hegemony in the eighth century. The development of Khwārizm Turkish was completed in the eighth/fourteenth century when it was replaced by Chaghatay Turkish, which is largely a continuation of it. Literary developments in the fourteenth century are observed particularly in the Golden Horde. The oldest known work here is *Khusraw wa-Shīrīn*, translated by Quṭb in

honour of Tini Bey Khān and his wife Melike Khātūn. This work is of special importance since Nizāmī's *Mathnawī* of the same name was the first translation (741/1341) in Turkish literature.

The most important written work of the Khwārizm region is a book of *ḥadīth* (traditions of the Prophet), *Nahj al-farādīs*, thought to have been written by Maḥmūd of Kerder. Its literary importance lies in the fact that it is the first example of its genre, and in the material it contains. Its linguistic importance is based on the vowel points in the Istanbul copy, which were done according to Khwārizm Turkish. As Fuad Köprülü points out in his *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, the *Nahj al-farādīs* is an important link in the chain of development from Khāqāniyya to Chaghatay Turkish.

The language of an *‘Ilm-i ḥal* (catechism), entitled *Mu‘īn al-murīd* and written in 713/1312–1313 by someone called Islam, while not very different from Khāqāniyya Turkish, exhibits the phonetic characteristics of Oghuz Turkish since it was written in the Khwārizm region. Noteworthy in this work is the evidence of an interaction with Qipchaq-Oghuz Turkish as a result of the impact of the Mongol invasions of Khwārizm. *Mu‘īn al-murīd* must nevertheless be classified among the works in Eastern Turkish.

Another work from this region is the religio-mystical work *Jawābir al-asrār*. Since it is found as a gloss in the margins of a collection containing the *Mu‘īn al-murīd*, written in quatrains with the same rhyme-scheme as well as being similar in subject matter, it brings to mind the possibility that it was written by the same writer. While the author of the *Maḥabbat-nāma* gives no definite information about Khwārizm, the work implies that it was written in 754/1352 for Muḥammad Khwāja Beg. Copies of this work, a *mathnawī* (poem in rhymed couplets) in the *rajaḥ* metre of *‘arūd*, exist in both Uighur and Arabic script. A work entitled *Mi‘rāj-nāma* in Uighur script by an unknown writer is one of the major products of Islamic Turkish literature in terms of subject matter. The fact that it had been copied in 840/1436 places its original composition in an earlier period.

There are a number of divergent views concerning when and where the *Qisās al-anbiyā’*, written in 710/1310 for Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭuq Bugha by Burhān al-Dīn Qāḍī Nāṣir (pen name Rabghuzī), was actually written. While Caferoğlu considers the work a product of West Turkistan in the Kāshghar dialect, Köprülü locates it in Khwārizm and Radloff regards it as Uighur.

Works were also written in Qipchaq Turkish among the Mamlūks in the thirteenth/fourteenth centuries. In addition to works such as the *Kitāb al-idrāk li-lisān al-Atrāk* on lexicography, the *Kitāb bulghat al-mushtāq* and the *Kitāb al-tuhfat al-ḥakiyya fi-l-luḡha al-Turkiyya*, the chief literary work is Sayfī Sarāyī's translation of the *Gulistān*, which was completed in 793/1391 and exhibits the characteristics of Qipchaq Turkish.

CHAGHATAY LITERATURE

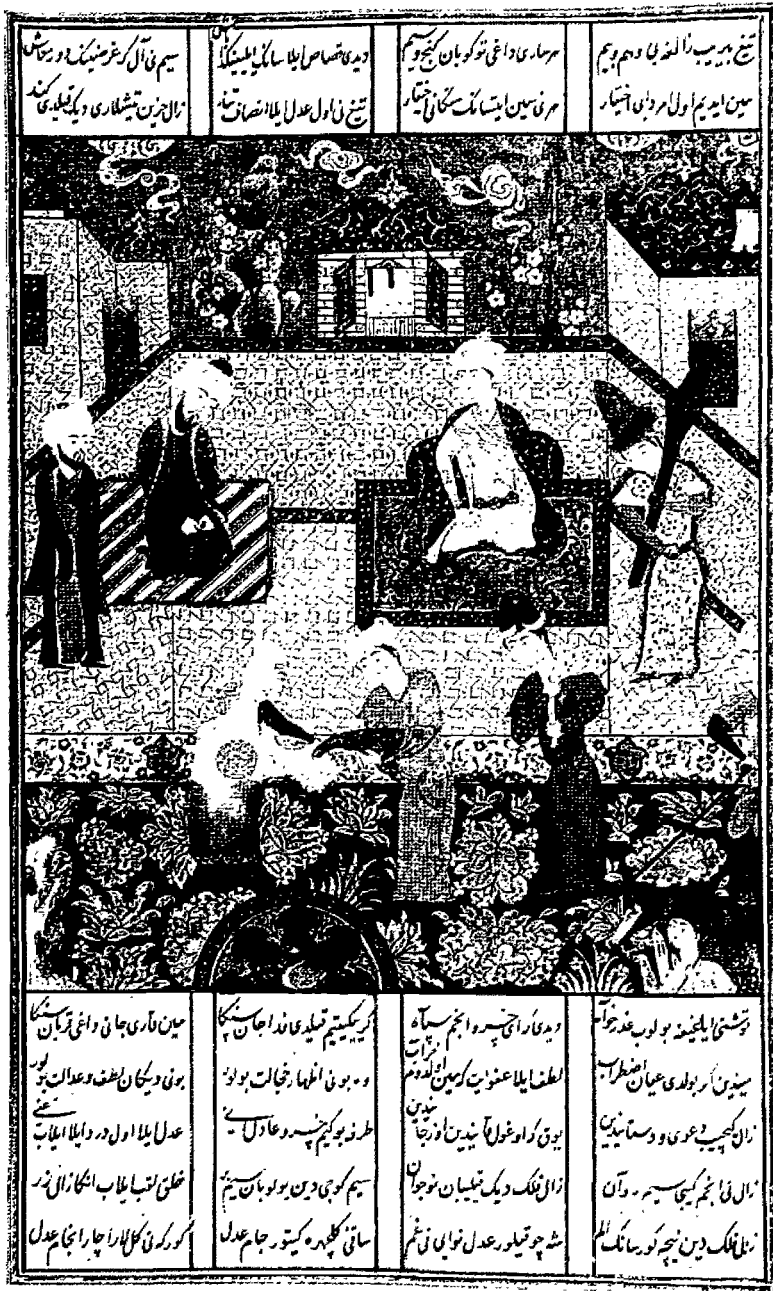
The term Chaghatay has been interpreted variously by historians of literature. While Fuad Köprülü defines it as the Central-Asian literary dialect that developed in the thirteenth/fourteenth centuries within the framework of the states (Chaghatay, İlhānid, Golden Horde) founded by the sons of Genghiz Khān, Samaylovich regards it as the literary language of Central Asia between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries. M. A. Şerbak considers Chaghatay Turkish a period of Uzbek. J. Eckmann, who regards it as the third period of Central-Asian Turkish, following Qarākhānid and Khwārizm Turkish, thus divides it into three periods, whereas Fuad Köprülü divides it into five.

Among poets in Chaghatay literature who lived between the second half of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries are Sakākī, the first great poet and composer of a *dīvān* (collected poems); Ḥaydar Tilbe, known for his *naẓīra* (emulative poem) of Niẓāmī's *Makbẓan al-asrār*; Mawlānā Luṭfī, author of a *dīvān* and translation of the historical work *Zafar-nāma* by Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī; a love *mathnawī* called *Gül ü-Nawrūz* translated in 814/1411 from a Persian work of the same name by Jalāl al-Dīn Ṭābib; Yūsuf Amīrī, known for his mixed prose-verse *munāẓara* (debate) called *Beng ü-Chaghbir*, a *mathnawī* called *Deb-nāma* consisting of ten letters, and a *dīvān*; Saydī Aḥmad Mīrzā, author of a *mathnawī*, *Ta'ashshuq-nāma*; Aḥmadī, known for his *munāẓara* on stringed instruments; and Yaḳīnī, known for his work entitled *Oq yeyning münāẓarasi*. The greatest poet of the classical age is 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī, who not only influenced the poets of his own period but also those of subsequent times in Central Asia and whose fame was legendary among the poets of Anatolia, too.

In Turkish literature Ḥusayn Bayqara – actually Ḥusayn Mīrzā b. Mansūr b. Bayqara, known as Ḥusayn-i Bayqara (842–912/1438–1507) – was a poet-ruler of the Tīmūrid dynasty who succeeded to the throne of Khurāsān in 873/1469. A *dīvān* and a *risāla* (treatise) exist by him, using the pen name Ḥusaynī Ḥusayn. Bayqara is also important in Turkish literature for the interest taken in him by the prominent poet, writer and vizier of the time, 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī (844–906/1441–1501), who was his close friend. Never had any other poet been so exalted by the supreme ruler as 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī.

Nawā'ī, who found himself in literary circles and composed poems already as a child, at various times collected his poems in *dīvāns* with various titles and modes of arrangement. In the final arrangement, he organized his work in four *dīvāns* called *Gharā'ib al-ṣiḡbar*, *Nawādir al-shabāb*, *Badāyidī 'al-wasaṭ* and *Fawā'id al-keibar*. He also has a Persian *dīvān* in which he used the pen name Fānī.

Nawā'ī was not merely a court poet but also a thinker. Translating several famous *mathnawīs* from Persian into Chaghatay Turkish, he also added a great deal of his own. Besides the *khamṣa* (set of five *mathnawī*) consisting of *Ḥayrat al-abrār* (888/1483), *Farḥād wa-Shīrīn* (89/1484), *Laylā wa-Majnūn*, *Sab'a-i Sayyār* (889/1484) and *Sadd-i Iskandarī* (890/1485), he also translated 'Aṭṭār's



II-6.1 Khamsa-i Nawā'i by 'Alī Shīr Nawā'i, 937/1531

© Topkapı Palace Library (H-802, fol. 19b)

*mathnavī*, *Manṭiq al-ṭayr*, under the pen name Fānī, making his own additions and calling it *Lisān al-ṭayr* [ Fig. 1].

The *Nasāʾim al-maḥabba min shamāʾim al-futuwwa*, written in prose in 901/1495, is a translation of Jāmī's work *Nafaḥat al-uns min ḥaḍarāt al-quds*. Nawāʾī, who was strongly influenced by Jāmī, as well as being his friend, belonged to the Naqshbandī order of dervishes, like Jāmī. He is important as the writer of the first *tadhkirat al-shuʿarāʾ* (biography of poets) in Turkish literature. He took Jāmī's *Bahāristān* and Dawlatshāh's *Tadhkirat al-shuʿarāʾ* as his models for his own *tadhkira*, *Majālis al-nafāʾis*. With his work entitled *Muḥākamat al-luḡhatayn*, written to prove the superiority of Turkish over Persian and in reaction to the practice among the enlightened and cultured class of Chaghatay Turks of writing their works in Persian, he inaugurated a new period in the history of the Turkish language.

His *Munshaʾāt* (epistolography), as well as *Nazm al-jawābir* and *Miẓān al-awẓān* on Arabic prosody, show Nawāʾī's extreme versatility, while his *Waqfiyya* gives extensive information about the various *awqāf* (pious foundations) he established.

Nawāʾī influenced numerous people in both his own and later periods. In fact, some Anatolian poets literally started a fad of including one *ghazal* in Chaghatay Turkish in their *dīwāns*.

Another poet of the period of Ḥusayn Bayqara is Ḥamidī, known for his *mathnavī*, *Yūsuf ile Zulaykhā*. J. Eckmann places this poet in the classical period of Chaghatay literature.

In the tenth/sixteenth century, Chaghatay literature lived on in two separate regions, Central Asia and India. After the death of Ḥusayn Bayqara in 912/1507, the nomadic Uzbeks put an end to the Ṭīmūrīd rule. Harāt declined in importance while Samarqand and Bukhārā flourished again. Thus, the Chaghatay language and literature continued to thrive in the Shaybānīd period. When Bābūr was unable to capture Khwārizm from the Uzbeks, he migrated to India and founded a Turco-Indian empire there. Starting with Bābūr himself, Chaghatay literature went on producing works under Kāmran Mīrzā and Bayram Khān until the eighteenth century.

Important poets in Central Asia are Shaybānī Khān, ʿUbayd Allāh Khān and Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ. Shaybānī Khān (855–916/1451–1510) wrote classical poems as well as verses in the *ḥikmat* genre out of his great esteem for Aḥmad Yasawī. Besides a *dīwān* he also has a treatise on Islamic law called *Baḥr al-hudā*. Among the Shaybānīs, ʿUbayd Allāh Khān (d. 945/1539) is a ruler-poet with a *dīwān* as well as a work on Islamic law, *Kitāb Masāʾil al-ṣalāt*, and a prose work, *Tarjuma-i qawāʾid al-Qurʾān wa-fawāʾid al-furqān*, while Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ (d. 941/1538–1539) has a verse chronicle entitled *Shaybānī-nāma*.

The most important Chaghatay writer and poet of the sixteenth century is Ghāzī Zāhīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābūr b. ʿUmar Shaykh Mīrzā (888–937/1483–1570), who, as pointed out earlier, was the founder of the Turco-Indian

empire. Bābūr, who succeeded to the throne at a tender age (899/1494), waged a number of struggles in which he fought against and defeated Shaybānī Khān. In 909/1504, he took Kabul and, penetrating as far as Sind in 910/1505, became *Pādīshāh*. Bābūr left behind his memoirs, which reflect his own intelligence, powers of observation and wit, and which are also of sociological, folkloric, geographical, ecological and historical significance. Commonly known as the *Bābūr-nāma* this work was entitled *Waqāʿiʿ* by Bābūr himself.

Apart from his memoirs, Bābūr has left a number of other works: a *dīwān*, a treatise on *ʿarūd*, a verse work called *Mubayyan* about Islamic law of the Ḥanafī school and a *mathnawī* entitled *Risālat-i wālidiyya* on the ideas of ʿUbayd Allāh Aḥrār, a Ṣūfī of the Timūrid period. Other works from this period include the *Shejere-i Terākime* of Abu-l-Ghāzī Bahādur Khān (1011–1073/1603–1663), one of the Shaybānīd Uzbek Khāns, and his *Shajarat al-Atrak*, which was completed by his son.

Although the Astrakhāns succeeded the Shaybānīds after the eleventh/seventeenth century, they were unable to prevent the break-up of Central Asian Turkish unity. While Chaghatay literature appears to have lived on in centres such as Bukhārā, Khīwa and Khoqand, it declined in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries and gave way to the Uzbek written language by the twelfth/eighteenth century.

The Turkish people of Central Asia encountered Western literature in the nineteenth century. This experience had a significant impact on their concept of literature. In the second half of that century, a brand-new Uzbek literature was thus born, with poets such as Furqat, Muqīmī, Dhawqī, Muḥyī, ōmīdī and Kāmil Khwārizmī. They published their first newspaper, *Türkistān Wilāyetinin Gazetesi*, in Tashkent in 1883. In this newspaper, Uzbek artists and authors wrote articles about widely diverse topics, ranging from Russian civilization to the life of the poet Furqat. The first theatrical work in Uzbek literature was Behdūdī's *Peder-kūsh*, written in Tashkent in 1913.

## TURKISH LITERATURE IN ANATOLIA AND LITERARY WORKS IN WESTERN TURKISH

### *Founding Period*

The development of Turkish literature in Anatolia occurred in five phases. The first or founding period covers approximately the years from 648/1250 to 857/1453 and can be termed the Period of Eastern Anatolian Turkish. The founding period of Turkish literature runs parallel with the political development of the Ottoman Empire.

The Turkization of Anatolia began with the arrival of Alp Arslān (r. 455–464/1063–1072). In the Great Saljūq Empire set up by Sulṭān Malikshāh (r. 464–485/1072–1092) in the fifth/eleventh century, Persian was the lan-

guage of culture and Arabic the language of the state. Since most of the Turks who came to Anatolia were Oghuz, the literary dialect developing there was based on the Oghuz language.

Literary developments in the second half of the thirteenth century occurred in two areas: poetry and prose. The Turks' greatest achievement in this century is to have carved their name in history and culture through their works in the Turkish language. Of course, such efforts to write in Turkish can also be observed in works of the fourteenth century. In 676/1278, the Qarāmānid Mehmed Bey, who had claims to the Saljūq throne, published a decree proclaiming Turkish the official language in order to win the support of the Turkish people. Although Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (604–672/1207–1273) still wrote in Persian, he influenced through his work the fledgling Turkish poets as well as the Turkish thinkers, poets and writers who emerged in subsequent centuries. Following him, his son Sulṭān Walad (623–712/1226–1312), the founder of the Mawlawī order of dervishes, spread his father's ideas in his own works. The *Ibtidāʾ-nāma* (compiled in 690/1291), *Rabāb-nāma* (compiled in 701/1301) and the *ḏiwān* of Walad, who preferred to write all his works in Persian, contain a total of 367 Turkish couplets. Walad's poems can be regarded as the first written examples of Eastern Anatolian Turkish. Although some Turkish scholars have cast doubt on whether Dehhānī, who came from Khurāsān and settled in Qonya, was a poet of the thirteenth century, according to Fuad Köprülü he lived in the time of 'Alā' al-Dīn Kayqubād III (d. 702/1302), and according to Hikmet İlaydın in the time of 'Alā' al-Dīn Kayqubād I (d. 634/1237). First introduced to the scholarly world by Fuad Köprülü, Dehhānī, whose non-religious verses are extant, was a precursor of classical Turkish poetry.

Yūnus Emre, regarded as having lived in the last half of the thirteenth and the first half of the fourteenth centuries since his death date is given as 720/1320 in the extant sources, has been remembered over the centuries for the power and lyricism of his poems, characterized by a sincere expression of feelings shared with the common people. His poems have been passed down from generation to generation, enshrining him in legend. Verses by other Yūnuses who emulated his style and regarded him as their master have even been confused with his own. The Yūnus *Ḍiwān*, a unique example of Turkish national literature regarded as the first product of the classical literary culture, is not only important as the first *ḏiwān* in Turkish literature but is also the Turks' most priceless treasury of knowledge about the Turkish spoken in this century. In form and content, Yūnus was influenced by both Yasawī and Rūmī. There is a *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā* story, translated from the Crimean language (Desht) into Turkish by Khalīloğlu 'Alī, which is reminiscent of Qul 'Alī's *Qiṣṣa-i Yūsuf* in Eastern Turkish and sustains in quatrains the tradition of ancient Turkish poetry. The single fact available today concerning Aḥmad Faqīh, whose life and dates are controversial, is that there was in this century

more than one Aḥmad Faqīh, one of whom wrote a religio-mystical poem on the perennial 'world-man-death' theme of the *ḏiwān* literature. While the original consisted of one hundred couplets, only eighty-three have survived from this poem, a *qaṣīda* known in Turkish literature as *Charkeb-nāma*. Another work attributed to Aḥmad Faqīh is the *Kitāb Awṣāf masājīd al-sharīfa*.

It has now been firmly established that Shayyād Ḥamza, thought until recently to have lived in the thirteenth century, in fact lived in the fourteenth. His place in Turkish literature is determined by his 1,529-couplet *mathnawī*, *Yūsuf wa-Zulaikbā*, the first translation in Western Turkish.

The translation of 'Aṭṭār's mystical *mathnawī* *Manṭiq al-tayr* by Gülshehrī is the first example of this genre in Turkish literature (717/1317). Faithful to the framework of the story in his translation, Gülshehrī replaced some of 'Aṭṭār's stories with stories from the *Mathnawī*, *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and the *Qābūs-nāma*.

The approximately 12,000-couplet *mathnawī*, *Gharīb-nāma*, written by 'Āshiq Pāshā (670–733/1272–1332) in 730/1330 was composed to disseminate mystical teaching among the common people.

Another masterpiece of translation from this century is the 5,300-couplet love-*mathnawī* *Subayl wa-Nawbahār*, made by Mas'ūd b. Aḥmad in 751/1350. Another work by this writer, *Farhang-nāma* (written 755/1354), is a versified translation of the *Bustān* of Sa'dī of Shīrāz (d. 691/1292).

Also in this period Shaykhoğlu Şadr al-Dīn Muşṭafā (741-before 812/1340–1409) made translations from diverse genres. Although the source of the subject and the heroes in the love-*mathnawī* – known variously as the *Khurshīd-nāma* or *Khurshīd wa-Farāḥshād* or *Shabristān-i 'Usbshāq* – is not specified, the work is Iranian in origin, as claimed by Hüseyin Ayan. The first example of this genre of *Siyāsat-nāma* (manual of morality and policy) in Western Turkish is a prose translation of the *Marzūbān-nāma*, very similar to *Kalīla wa-Dimna* with its elements of the story and fairy tale embodying homilies and political advice based on fables. This is based on the work of Sa'd al-Dīn al-Warāwīnī, a thirteenth-century writer. A translation of the *Qābūs-nāma* is another prose work in the genre of the political manual, written by Amīr 'Unşur al-Ma'ālī Kayqāwūs in 745/1082 for his son Gilānshāh. A translation, called *Kanḫ al-kubarā' wa-maḥaqq al-'ulamā'* (written 803/1401), of a final section of the work entitled *Mirṣād al-'ibād min al-mabda' ıla-l-ma'ād* by Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 654/1256), together with some additions, was also made by Shaykhoğlu.

A poet named Fakhri translated *Khusrāw wa-Shīrīn* in 768/1367 for 'Īsā b. Meḥmed Aydīn, one of the Aydınoğulları. A work entitled *'Ishq-nāma*, written by a poet named Meḥmed in 800/1398, the *mathnawī al-Iskandar-nāma* and *Jamshīd wa-Khurshīd* of Aḥmadī Tāj al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. Khīḍir (735–815/1334–1412), the Turkish translation of Maḥmūd Shabistarī's (d. 720/1320–1321) *Gulshan-i rūz* by Elwān-i Shīrāzī in 829/1425, Shaykhī's (d. 834/1431) translation of *Khusrāw wa-Shīrīn* into Turkish for a second time, the *mathnawī Warqa*



*wa-Gülshāh* translated from Arabic by Yūsuf Maddāh in 770/1368–1369, and the *Farāḥ-nāma* (written in 789/1387), compiled from Arabic, Persian and Turkish works by Kamāloğlu, are among other *mathnavī* translations of this century.

In addition to the above-mentioned verse works, a major prose translation of universal value is that of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, again produced in the founding period. Originally in Sanskrit, this was translated into Turkish from the Persian translation by Qul Mas‘ūd at the behest of ‘Umar Bey (709–748/1309–1342–1343), son of Meḥmed Bey, one of the Aydınoğulları. As a manual of morality and policy, *Kalīla wa-Dimna* is of enormous importance and has been translated at various times over the centuries.

Alongside religio-mystical and moral texts based largely on translations, religio-epic works also begin to appear in the founding period. Important in this connection are Ashrāfoğlu Rūmī’s (d. 873/1469) *dīvān*, *Muzakkk al-nufūs*, and ‘Ashiq Pāshā’s son Elwān Chelebī’s (d. 760/1358) verse *manāqib-nāma* (religious epic), *Manāqib al-qudsiyya fī manāṣib al-unsīyya*. The verse and plain-prose works of Qayghusuz Abdāl (d. 848/1444), an admirer of Yūnus Emre, in particular his *Budalā’-nāma*, *Mathnavī-i Bābā Qayghusuz* and his *dīvān*, were extremely popular and often recited among the common people.

‘Ārif ‘Alī (d. after 762/1360), keeper of the Tokat castle, wrote a prose account of the legendary victories of Malik Dānishmand Ghāzī (d. 360/970) of the Baṭṭāl dynasty. Among works dealing with Khurūfism, Rafī’s two *mathnavīs*, *Bashārat-nāma* (written in 811/1408) and *Ganj-nāma*, and ‘Abd al-Majīd b. Firishta’s works entitled *‘Ishq-nāma* (833/1430), an abridged version of Faḡl Allāh’s *Jāwidān-nāma*, and *‘Ākhirat-nāma* are significant for showing the influence of Faḡl Allāh and Nasīmī on Anatolian Turkish. The disruption of the Ottoman state by the battle of Ankara (804/1402) was followed by a ten-year succession dispute among the princes of the line. This period of instability, which was finally ended when Chelebī Meḥmed succeeded to the throne in 814/1411, had an unsettling effect on poets and writers as well. Despite the upheavals, one of the poets born in this period, Aḥmad Dā‘ī, presented his 1,440-couplet *Chang-nāma* to Amīr Sulaymān in 808/1406. Aḥmad Dā‘ī has a Turkish and Persian *dīvān*, a translation of the *Jāmāsh-nāma* and an Arabic-Persian dictionary in verse entitled *‘Uqūd al-jawābir*, which he wrote while he was the tutor of Murād II.

Another work of interest for its religious content, its language and its subject matter is a *mathnavī*, *Khalīl-nāma*, written by a poet named ‘Abd al-Wāsi‘ in 817/1414–1415 about Ibrāhīm’s sacrifice of his son Ismā‘īl. The *mawlid* (nativity poem of the Prophet Muḥammad), *Waṣīlat al-najāt*, by Sulaymān Chelebī of Bursa (d. 825/1422) was a model for the over sixty *mawlids* written afterwards. Sustaining its popularity, it has been recited at gatherings over the centuries. Yazijioğlu Meḥmed’s *mathnavī*, *Muḥammadīyya* (written in 853/1449), is another religious work as popular as the *mawlid*.

Among the *dīwāns*, Aḥmadī's (d. 815/1412) *dīwān* and, especially, the 333-couplet work entitled *Dāsītān-i tawārīkh-i mulūk-i Āl-i 'Uthmān* (appended to the end of his *Iskandar-nāma*), made an important contribution to Ottoman history. It is now certain that the translation of 'Aṭṭār's *Asrār-nāma* was made by a different Aḥmadī. The *dīwān* of Shaykhī (d. 834/1431), whose real name was Yūsuf Sinān, his *mathnawī*, *Khusraw wa-Shīrīn* and his *Khar-nāma* – one of the outstanding examples of satire in Turkish literature – are famous.

THE TRANSITION PERIOD FROM MEḤMED II  
TO BĀYAZĪD II (857–918/1453–1512)

Prior to the conquest of Istanbul, the Ottoman sultans had lived together with their people as one of them. After the conquest, under the title *sulṭān*, they took up residence in the palace, which had become synonymous with the imperial administration, and began to lose direct links with the people. A new genre of literature thus emerged in the palace and its circle, where artists and important men-of-state and learning assembled. Meḥmed the Conqueror is known to have valued artists and scholars and to have invited those he favoured (like 'Alī al-Qushjī, the mathematician and astronomer to Istanbul, even to have created for them a climate for discussion in his own presence.

The poems of Aḥmad Pāshā (d. 902/1497), a poet of the Meḥmed the Conqueror's period famous for his *qaṣīdas*, have been severely criticized as mere translations of Persian poets. Aḥmad Pāshā, who rose to the rank of Minister in the palace, was arrested owing to the excessive interest he took in one of the sultan's companions. Although he was pardoned, thanks to the penning of his *Kerem qaṣīda*, he was exiled to Bursa and never allowed to return to Istanbul. Another poet of the period, who was loved especially for his *ghazals*, was Najātī (d. 914/1509). Earning fame while at Qaṣṭamūnī, he became an intimate of the palace circle after coming to Istanbul. He was introduced to the sultan by one of his companions, Yorgo Amiruki, and appointed clerk at the court. Today, only the *dīwān* survives of Najātī, who earned the titles *Khusraw-i Rūm* (Khusraw of Anatolia) and *Malik al-shu'arā'* (King of Poets). Najātī owes his success to his vivid images and to the inclusion of Turkish sayings, proverbs and traditions in his poems. A woman poet, Mihrī Khātūn of Amasya (d. 912/1256), who was influenced by Najātī and, much to his chagrin, made a name for herself by imitating his verses, was present at the social gatherings of Bāyezīd's son Prince Aḥmad (d. 918/1512) while he was governor of Amasya. As evidenced by her line *Bir mü'enneth yigdurur kim ehl ola/Bin müdhekkerden ki ol nā ehl ola* ('One competent woman is better than a thousand incompetent men'), Mihrī was perhaps the first Ottoman woman poet to express openly her ideas as a woman.

The poet Ja'far Chelebi (d. 921/1515), also from Amasya, is known by the name Tājī Begzāde. He was a teacher in a *madrasa* and became Bāyazīd II's *nīshānji* (inscriber of the Sultan's imperial monogram on all imperial letters-patent). Although he was dismissed briefly for having been embroiled in succession disputes, he became *nīshānji* again on Selīm I's accession to the throne. In 921/1515, this poet was executed for his alleged involvement in a Janissary uprising. Apart from a *dīwān*, his works include a *mathnavī*, *Hewes-nāma* (written 899/1443), important for its local elements, *Munsha'āt*, *Anīs al-‘arīfīn* and *Mabrūsa-i İstanbul*.

Another important court poet of this period is Masīhī of Priština (d. 918/1532), who introduced a new genre, the *shebr-engīz* (rouser of the city), into the *dīwān* literature. The oldest extant *shebr-engīz* are those of Dhātī and Masīhī. Masīhī also wrote a work entitled *Gül-i sad-berke* consisting of hundred letters in the *inshā'*, or ornate prose style.

Other than Meḥmed II (pen name ‘Awnī) two prominent court poets to be remembered in this period are Jem Sultān and Bāyazīd (pen name ‘Adlī), who were sons of Meḥmed II. Both composed *dīwāns* in Turkish, and Jem also has a Persian *dīwān* as well as a work entitled *Jemshīd u-Khursīd* based on the Iranian poet Salmān-i Sāwajī.

The five *mathnavīs* in the *Khamsa* of Aq Shams al-Dīnoğlu Ḥamd Allāh Ḥamdī (d. 914/1508), who achieved fame through this work, are *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā* (written 817/1491–1492), *Laylā wa-Majnūn* (written 905/1499–1500), *Tuhfat al-‘ushshāq*, *Qiyāfat-nāma* and *Mawlid* (908/1494). Among these, *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā*, which is to some extent based on his own life, became the most popular.

Apart from *mathnavīs* on the theme of love, mystical and allegorical works in this genre include Darwish Shams al-Dīn's *Deb Murgh*, Aḥmad and Muḥibbī's *Mawlid*, the voluminous mystical *mathnavī* entitled *Ma‘navī* or *Gulzār-i ma‘navī* by Ibrāhīm Gulshanī (d. 939/1533), founder of the Gülshenī order, and Sharifī of Āmid's (d. 920 or 930/1514) translation of the *Shāh-nāma*. Other prominent works besides these are Khalīlī's *Furqat-nāma* in the *Hewes-nāma* genre, written in the nature of a *ḥasb-i ḥāl*, or friendly chat; Anwarī's verse *Dustūr-nāma* (written in 869/1464–1465) in the genre of the *ghazawāt-nāma* or chronicle; Ḍa‘īfī's *Ghazā-nāma*, relating the military exploits of Murād II; and, finally, Uzun Firdawsī's *Quṭb-nāma*.

Sinān Pāshā (845–891/1440–1486), the major prose writer of the period, wrote his Turkish works while he was a teacher at the *Dār al-ḥadīth* at Edirne during the reign of Bāyazīd II. Sinān Pāshā is known in Turkish literature for his mystical work entitled *Taḍarru‘-nāma*, written in the ornate style. He also has a translation of the *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'* and a *Ma‘arīf-nāma*, known as *Naṣīḥat-nāma*, on Islamic ethics.

Among mystical writers, Ashrafoğlu Rūmī (d. after 874/1469) is known for his *Muxakki-l-nufūs*, and Aḥmad Bījān (d. 870/1465) for his *Anwār al-*

‘āshiqīn (written 855/1451), *Durr al-maknūn*, ‘*Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt*, *Muntahā* (written 870/1465–1466), *Rūḥ al-arwāḥ* and *Bustān al-ḥaqā’iq*. The *Tawārīkh-i Āl-i ‘Uthmān* (Chronicles of the Ottoman Dynasty) is a genre which appeared for the first time in works of the fifteenth century written by ‘Āshiq Pāshāzāde, Nashrī, Oruj Beg and anonymously, and is of literary interest for its content and style. In addition to these, a history entitled *Salāṭīn-nāma* by one Kamāl, the *Tārīkh-i Abu-l-Faṭḥ* in ornate style by Tursun Beg, and the prose-verse heroic poem of military exploits entitled *Fāṭīḥ-nāma-i Sulṭān Mehmed* by Qiwāmī are the chief works of this period.

Abu-l-Khayr Rūmī, about whose life nothing is known, was commissioned by Jem Sulṭān to write up the life of Sari Şaltūq by collecting tales of his military prowess and miracles from the oral tradition. This work, which is one of the finest examples of Ottoman plain prose style, can be regarded as another link in the *Baṭṭāl-nāma* tradition. One work of this genre is the *Abū Muslim-nāma*, which relates the military expeditions on behalf of Islam undertaken by Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī. Extant *Abū Muslim-nāmas* have also been translated from Persian. When the campaigns mounted against the Byzantines in 98–122/717–740 by an Arab commander, ‘Abd Allāh Baṭṭāl, became legendary, this gave rise to the appearance among the Arabs of the romance *Sīrat Dhi-l-himma* (*Delbemma*), and to the *Baṭṭāl-nāma* texts among the Turks. Sayyid Baṭṭāl stories are also widespread among the Turks outside Turkey.

The *Book of Dede Qorqut*, whose writer is uncertain but which is surely a fragment and continuation of the Oghuz epic, is the written form given in the fifteenth century to the oral traditions of the Oghuz following their settlement in the Middle East.

#### THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

(SELĪM I TO AḤMED I, 918–1011/1512–1603)

Selīm I, Sulaymān the Magnificent, who wrote under the pen name Muḥibbī, and Murād III (pen name Murādī) were both sultan poets. Dhātī of Balikesir, one of the first representatives of this period, is famous for his *dīwān*, a *mathnawī* entitled *Sham‘ wa-parwāna*, his prose *Laṭā’if* and his *shebr-engīz* about Edirne. Dhātī, who trained the famous sixteenth-century poet Bāqī, was recognized as the master of the time by young poets. Taking wordly love as its subject, Dhātī’s *mathnawī*, *Sham‘ u-Parwāna*, is quite different from Lāmi’ī’s and Muḥidī’s of the same name.

Lāmi’ī of Bursa (877–938/1472–1531/1532), who won fame as ‘the Jāmī of Rūm’ for his translations of the works of the widely known Jāmī (d. 898/1492), noteworthy for his large number of verse and prose works and his treatment of a variety of subjects, was a Naqshbandī Şūfī like Jāmī. Lāmi’ī’s works number over thirty. Among his verse compositions, in addition to a *dīwān*, are his translations of ‘Unşurī’s (d. 431/1039–1040) *Wāmiq wa-‘Adbrā’*,

Fakhr al-Dīn Jurjānī's *Wīs wa-Rāmīn*, *Farhād wa-Shīrīn* from 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī's (d. 906/1501) version, 'Arīf's (d. 853/1449) *Gūy wa-chawgān*, Nizāmī's (d. 610/1214) *Haft paykar*, Ehlī-i Shīrāzī's (d. 942/1535) *Sham' wa-Parwāna*, Jāmi's *Absāl wa-Salamān* and his *Tuhfa*, compilations such as *Maqṭal-i Husayn* and his *shebr-engīz* of Bursa, and, finally, among his prose works, translation of Jāmi's *Nafahāt al-uns*, *Shawāhid al-nubuwā* and a translation of Fattāḥ-i Nīshābūrī's (d. 853/1449–1450) verse-prose *Husn wa-Dil*.

Khayālī (d. 964/1557) is noteworthy among the court poets of this period for his refined images and sincere form of expression. The poet, who won the favour of Sulaymān, took part in the Baghdad campaign and met Fuḍūlī during this time.

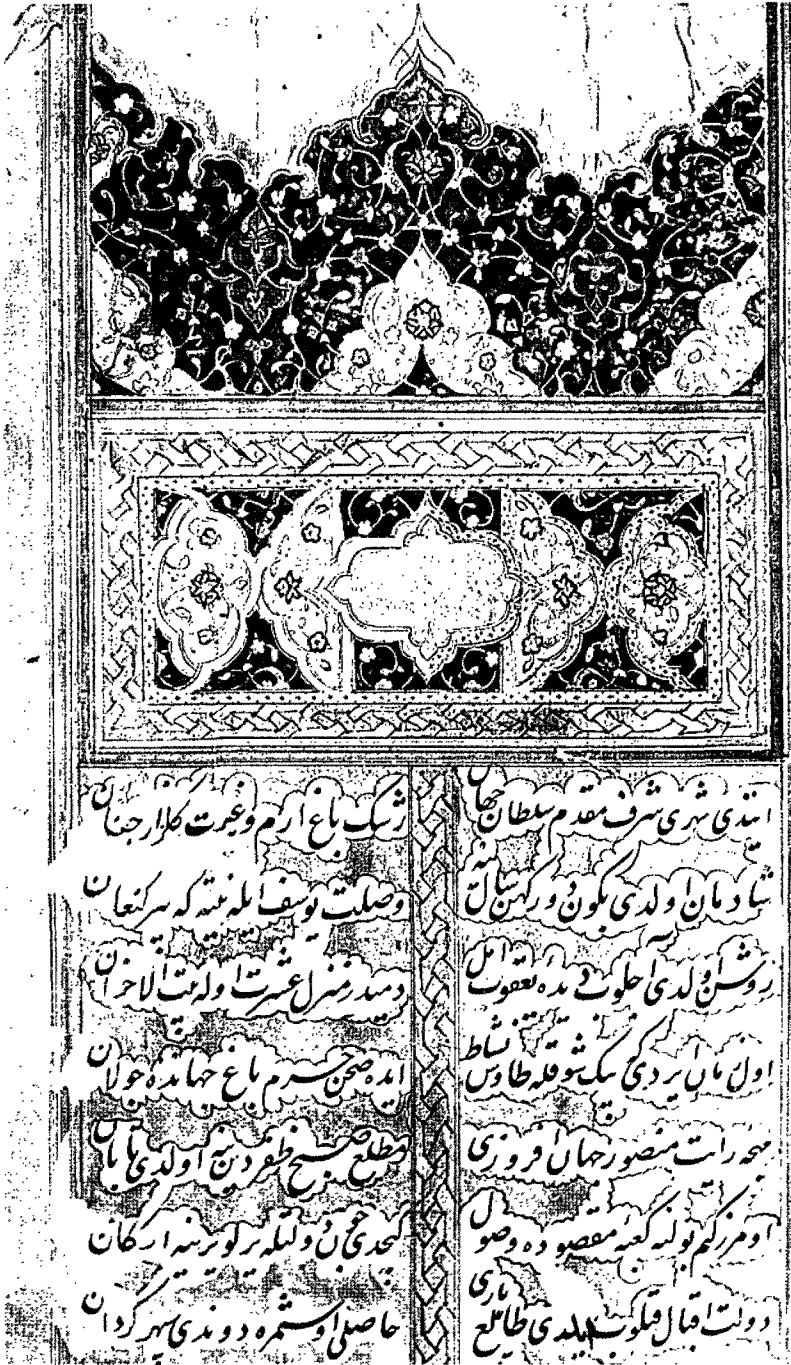
Bāqī (932–1008/1526–1600), whose *ghazals* are characterized by an epicurean tone, exhibits in his poems the splendour of the age through his beautiful Turkish. Although he was ambitious, he never succeeded in becoming *shaykh al-Islām*, despite engaging in a number of intrigues to this end. Nadīm's reference to the *ghazals* of Bāqī, *Hāletī ew-i rubā'ide uçar 'Anqā gibi Olamaz ammā ghazelde Bāqī wü-Yahyā gibi* (Hāletī soars like the phoenix in the *rubā'ī*, but in the *ghazal* he will never be like Bāqī and Yahyā), confirms the position in Turkish literature of this poet, who expressed the transitoriness of the world in his poems and, with advancing age, one's need to avenge oneself on it. Bāqī, who also has prose works, won fame with his *dīvān*. [Fig.2]

Tashlijālī Yahyā Beg (d. 990/1582) is better known for his *Khamsa* than for his *dīvān*. In the *Khamsa* consisting of *Shāh wa-Gedā*, *Genjīna-i Rāz*, *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā*, *Kitāb-i Uṣūl* and *Gulshan-i Anwār*, only the first is original.

Although Gelibolu Mustafā 'Alī (d. 1008/1599–1600), who has two *dīvāns*, is better known as a historian, besides his four-volume *Kunh al-akhbār*, he also produced works in a number of different genres, such as *Naṣīhat al-salāṭīn*, *Mawā'id al-nafā'is fī qawā'id al-majālis*, *Fuṣūl al-hall wa-'aqd wa-uṣūl-al-kharj wa-naqd*, *Manāqīb-i Hünērwerān*, *Jāmi' al-khubūr dar Majālis-i Sūr*, *Haft majlis*, *Nusrat-nāma*, *Rāḥat al-nufūs* and *Mīhr u-Māh*.

Again at the start of this period, Nazmī of Edirne (d. 955/1548) and his friend Maḥramī of Tatawla (d. 943/1548) launched the *Türkī-i basīṭ* (Plain Turkish) movement, which defended the necessity of writing poems in a Turkish purged of Arabic and Persian words. Although Maḥramī wrote a work entitled *Basīṭ-nāma* on this subject, it is unfortunately lost. Nazmī of Edirne composed his *dīvān* in line with the principles he advocated. But it never became popular since its language was devoid of euphony. The 'Plain Turkish' movement came to an end with these two poets.

In the tenth/sixteenth century, Sahī of Edirne (d. 955/1548) produced the first work in Anatolia in the *tadhkira* (biography of poets) genre with his *Hasht bihisht*, which he wrote under the influence of Nawā'ī's *Majālis al-nafā'is*. Between Sahī's *Hasht bihisht* and Faṭīn's (d. 1283/1866) *Khātimat al-ash'ār*, twenty-four *tadhkiras* were written in the Ottoman realm.



II-6.2 Bāqī, *Dīwān-i Bāqī*

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The appearance and popularity of Saḥī's *tadhkira* inspired other poets, and Laṭīf of Qastamonu (d. 990/1582) produced one almost immediately in 953/1546–1547. 'Ahdī of Baghdad produced his *tadhkira*, *Gulshan-i sbu'arā*, in 971/1563, with a later, revised version in 1001/1592–1593. 'Āshiq Chelebi (d. 979/1571) produced a *tadhkira* called *Mashā'ir al-sbu'arā* (Fig.3), which he arranged in abjad order, i.e. according to the numerical value of the Arabic characters. Qinalizāde Ḥasan Chelebī (d. 1012/1597) and Bayānī (d. 1006/1597) followed them. Among mystical works, the most prominent is Wāḥidī's *Khāja-i jibān wa-natīja-i jān* (or *Tawā'if-i 'ashara*), written in 928/1522 and dealing with aspects of the various Dervish orders. Among the important commentaries of this period are those by Sham'ī (d. 1000/1591) and Sūdī (d. 1005/1596–1597), translated from Persian.

THE PERIOD FROM AḤMAD I TO MUŞṬAFĀ II  
(1011–1114/1603–1703)

Although the eleventh/seventeenth century was a period of political and economic instability in the Ottoman empire, its literature was characterized by developments, even innovations. With his *qaşidas* and satirical verses, Naf'ī (d. 1044/1635), whose real name was Ömer, was at once a rebel and the victim of the century. Besides his *dīvān*, his *Sibām-i qaḍā* (Arrows of Fate) satirized poets such as Nādirī, 'Aṭā'ī, Waysī, 'Alī Pāshā, Yaḥyā, and even his own father, as well as many a man-of-state. He also has a *dīvān* in Persian and a Persian *qaşida* called *Tuḥfat al-'ushshāq*. Although Naf'ī swore an oath in the presence of Murād IV that he would pen no more invective, he was later murdered by strangling when he satirized Bayram Pāshā, who was married to the sultan's sister. Naf'ī was influenced by the *sebk-i Hindī* (Indian style), a movement of Turkish literature in this period.

Among pioneers of the *sebk-i Hindī* in the eleventh/seventeenth century, Riḍā, one of the *tadhkira* writers of the century, characterized the *dīvān* poet Nā'īlī (d. 1077/1666), who was a member of the Gulsanī order, as a creative poet and Guftī as a 'miracle-working' poet. Shaykh al-Islām Yaḥyā (968–1045/1561–1644), the greatest contemporary master of the *ghazal*, was not influenced by the Indian style. With his subtle witticisms, his epicurean *ghazals* and his pure Turkish, he earned the esteem of all the other poets of the age, including Naf'ī. Another *shaykh al-Islām*, Bahā'ī Efendi (1010–1064/1601–1654), also attracted attention for his *ghazals*. Bahā'ī, who wrote sentimental verses, was influenced by Bāqī and Yaḥyā. The *sebk-i Hindī* poet Nashāṭī (d. 1085/1674) produced a *dīvān*, written in his own hand, as well as works entitled *Shebr-engīx-i Edirne*, *Ḥilya-i Anbiyā*, *Sharḥ-i Mushkilāt-i 'Urfī* and *Qawā'id-i Fārisiyya*. Jawrī (d. 1065/1654), a Mawlawī and a calligrapher like Nashāṭī, wrote a *dīvān* and other works entitled *Ḥilya-i chahār Yār-i Guẓm*, *Hall-i Tahqīqāt* and *Salīm-nāma*.



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II-6.3 *Mashā'ir al-shu'arā'*, *tadbkīra* (Biography of poets)  
 by 'Āshiq Chelebī (d. 979/1511)  
 © Millet Library – Ali Emiri. (Tarih 772)



Fahīm (d. 1058/1648), who began writing poetry as a child, has a *dīwān* and a pornographic *Shebr-engīz* titled *Baḥr-i ṭawīl dar chand Zabān*. Another renowned poet is Nābī (d. 1124/1712), known for his *ghazals* in the aphoristic style of the century. Nābī, who valued simplicity in language, said that the *ghazal* was not meant to be a lexicon and should be written so as to be understood. Apart from his *dīwān*, he also has a book of homilies in *mathnawī* form, entitled *Khayrī-nāma* or *Khayrīyya*, written for his son Abu-l-Khayr; a *mathnawī* called *Khayr-ābād*, an expanded version of a story taken from ‘Aṭṭār’s *Ilāhī-nāma*; a translation of Jāmi’s *Ḥadīth-i arba‘īn*; a *Sūr-nāma*; and two prose works, *Tuhfat al-ḥaramayn* and his *Dhayl* (supplement), based on Waysī’s (d. 1037/1627–1628) biography of Muḥammad. Waysī of Alashehir, known for his *siyar* (biography of the Prophet) entitled *Durrat al-tāj fī sirat Ṣāḥib al-mi‘rāj*, made a name with his prose works, *Khawāb-nāma* or *Wāqī‘a-nāma*.

The two famous *khamsa* writers of the period are Naw‘īzāda ‘Aṭā‘ī (990–1055/1582–1635?) and Nargīsī (d. 1044/1635) with his prose *khamsa*. In addition to his *khamsa* consisting of ‘*Ālam-numā*, *Naḥat al-aḥbār*, *Ṣubḥat al-abkār*, *Haft Khān* and *Ḥilyat al-afkār*, ‘Aṭā‘ī also wrote a work entitled *Dhayl-i Shāqā‘īq*.

Two Ottoman sultan-poets were Aḥmad I, who wrote poems under the pen name Bakhtī and who has a *dīwān*, and ‘Uthmān II, who wrote under the pen name Fārisī. Other poets of this period who composed *dīwāns* include Ḥāletī (d. 1040/1631), master of the *rubā‘ī*, Maṅṭīqī (d. 1045/1635–1636), Riyāḍī (d. 1054/1644–5) with his *Sāqī-nāma* and *dīwān*, Ṣabrī-i Sharīf (d. 1055/1645–1646), who has a *dīwān*, Ṣabūhī Dede (d. 1057/1647), a Mawlawī *shaykh*, ‘Iṣmatī (d. 1076/1665–1666) and Nadīm-i Qadīm (d. 1081/1670–1671).

*Tadbkiras* by poets of this period include Riyāḍī Meḥmed’s (d. 1054/1644) *Riyāḍ al-shu‘arā’* (written in 1018/1609), presented to Aḥmad I, Qāfzāde Fā‘īdī’s (d. 1031/1621) *Zubdat al-ash‘ār* (written in 1030/1620), Riḍā’s (d. 1082/1671) *Tadbkīra* (written in 1050/1640), Yumnī’s (d. 1073/1662) *Tadbkīra*, ‘Āṣim’s (d. 1086/1675) *Dhayl-i Zubdat al-ash‘ār* and Guftī’s (d. 1088/1677) verse *Tashrīfāt al-shu‘arā’*.

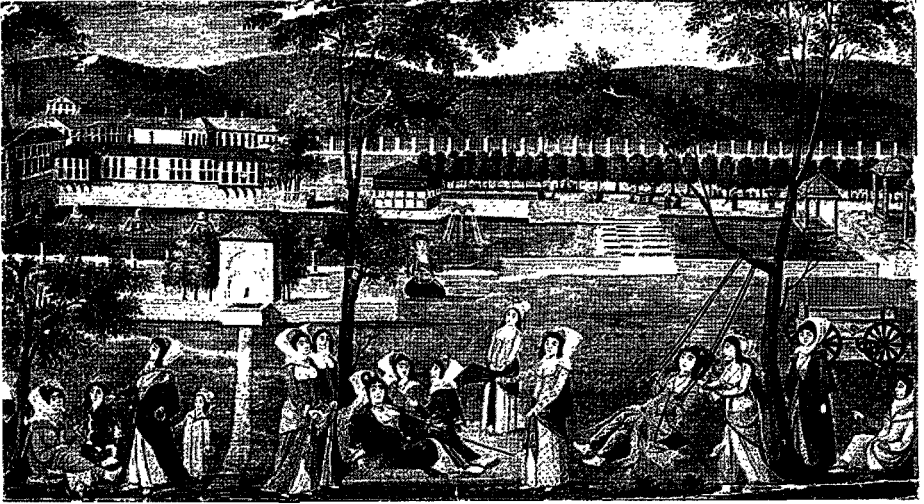
Kātib Chelebī (1017–1069/1609–1657), who attracted the attention of the Europeans with his works on such diverse subjects as bibliography, history, geography and logic, was one of the leading figures of this period. As well as being of literary and cultural importance, he also arranged all the existing works of Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature in alphabetical order in his work entitled *Kashf al-ẓunūn ‘an asāmi-l-ḥutub wa-l-funūn*, written in simple Arabic, which was the first example of its genre. Apart from this, Kātib Chelebī also produced a total of twenty-three major works such as *Tuhfat al-kibār fī asfār al-biḥār* (written in 1067/1657) about naval campaigns, a general history entitled *Taqwīm al-tawārīkh*, *Jibān-numā* on geography and *Dustūr al-‘amal fī iṣlāḥ al-ḥabal* (written in 1063/1652–1653) dealing with the organization of the state budget. His last work is the *Mīzān al-ḥaqq fī ikhtiyār al-aḥaqq* on logic.

Neither the name nor the biography of Awliyā Chelebī (1020–1096/1611–1684), known for his ten-volume *Sīyāhat-nāma* and fascinating personality, is encountered in the old sources. Only in the *Tanzīmāt* (Reforms) period did it become possible to glean information about this outstanding work. A keen observer, Awliyā Chelebī wrote up his travels in 1050–1086/1640–1675 through the Ottoman realm and neighbouring lands. The writer and his work were first introduced to the scholarly world by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. One of the foremost prose writers in Turkish literature, Awliyā Chelebī wrote his *Sīyāhat-nāma* in a style midway between plain and ornate prose.

Among the renowned commentators of the period, Ismā‘īl Rusūkhī Efendi (d. 1040/1631) and Şarī ‘Abd Allāh (d. 1071/1660) are the most important. Major representatives of ‘*āshiq* literature in this period include ‘Āshiq Ömer (d. twelfth/eighteenth century), Emrāh of Erjīsh (twelfth/eighteenth century), Ghāzī ‘Āshiq Ḥasan (d. after 1110/1699), Gawharī (d. after 1127/1715), Qayikchi Qul Muştafā (eighteenth century), Qöroghlu, Öksüz ‘Āshiq and Şun‘ī. In addition to his *Dīwān*, ‘Āshiq Ömer also has a work called *Shā‘ir-nāma*.

#### THE PERIOD OF LOCALIZATION (1111–1255/1700–1839)

This period, which appears to be a continuation of the previous one in terms of its aesthetic concept, is one in which poets outdid themselves in producing works that surpassed those of earlier periods and were constantly in search of the new. As well as the *sebk-i Hindī*, this quest also produced the movement known as ‘Localization’. Nadīm composed a *türkü* (folk song) in syllabic metre and the writing of *sharqī* (songs) also became fashionable. This was the path followed by Shaykh Ghālib. Again, during this period, known as the Tulip era, poets added colour to literature by the chronograms they wrote to adorn the many buildings constructed in extensive public-works projects. The introduction of printing through the printing-house set up in 1140/1727 by İbrāhīm Müteferriqa (d. 1158/1745), a Hungarian and Unitarian who converted to Islam in 1102/1691, was a major turning-point in Turkish culture. Receiving a *fatwā* from the then *Shaykh al-Islām* and a *firman* from Aḥmad III, he set up his *Dār al-ṭibā‘a* (printing-house) and printed his first work, the Wanqulu (d. 1000/1592) translation of Jawharī’s (d. 400/1010) *Lughat-i şīhāb*, on 1 Rajab 1141/31 January 1729. Only seventeen books were printed between 1141/1729 and 1156/1743. The printing business was interrupted by Müteferriqa’s death in 1158/1745. Later, in 1169/1755–1756, it was restarted by a new *firman*, but only seven works could be printed up to 1209/1794–1795. Meanwhile, a second Turkish printing-house was established in the *Mühendis-kehāne* (Engineering School) in 1210/1795–1796. The third printing-house was the lithographic press of H. Cayol, a French lithographer and convert to Islam, set up under the auspices of Khusraw Pāshā in 1217/1802.



II-6.4 *Khubān-nāma*, *mathnavī* (poem in rhymed couplets)  
by Faḡil-i Andarūnī (d. 1225/1810)  
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The leading court poet of the period, Aḡmad Nadīm (1092–1141/1681–1730), expressed the climate of the period in his *ghazals*, *qaṣīdas* and *sharḡīs*. Nadīm, who won the favour of Ibrāhīm Pāshā, was employed as a librarian of his library and appointed to the translation board. At the behest of Ibrāhīm Pāshā, he translated the chronicle of the Chief Astrologer, entitled *Jāmi‘ al-duwal*. The famous Istanbul *qaṣīda* of Nadīm, who also wrote a *dīwān*, together with his poems immortalizing palaces and pavilions such as *Sa‘d-ābād*, *Chirāghbān*, *Khayr-ābād* and *Nashāt-ābād*, reflects the myriad facets of the period. ‘Uthmānzāde Tā’ib (d. 1136/1724), a contemporary of Nadīm, first used the pen name Ḥamdī and later Ṭā’ib. He earned the titles *Malik al-shu‘arā’* (King of Poets) and *Ra’īs-i Shā‘irān* (Chief of Poets) for his *qaṣīda* written in honour of the birth of Prince Ibrāhīm. In addition to a *dīwān*, which has not survived, his chief works include *Ḥadīth-i arba‘īn sharḡ*, *Şiḡhat-ābād*, *Ḥadīqat al-wuzarā’*, which contains biographies of all the Ottoman grand viziers up to 1118/1706–1707, his summary of *Ḥadīqat al-mulūk*, consisting of biographies of all the Ottoman sultans up to Muṣṭafā II, and an abridged version of the *Humāyūn-nāma*. Sayyid Wahbī (d. 1149/1736), who emulated Nadīm and adopted the philosophical style of Nābī, was famous more for his *Sūr-nāma* than for his *Dīwān*. He also translated the *Ḥadīth-i arba‘īn* and completed the *Laylā wa-Majnūn* left unfinished by Qāfzāde.

Sunbulzāde Wahbī (d. 1224/1809) is another of those known as Chief Poet in his time. His works include a *dīwān*, his *Lutfiyya*, written for his son Luṭfī in the style of Nābī's *Khayr-nāma*, a Persian-Turkish verse *tuhfa* and an Arabic-Turkish verse *nukhbā*, and his *Shebr-engīz* in the form of a debate. Fāḍil-i Enderūnī (d. 1225/1810), who produced the finest examples of the period of localization, won fame with his five *mathnavīs*, *Defter-i 'Ashq*, *Khubān-nāma* (Fig. 4), *Zanān-nāma*, *Changī-nāma* and *Raqqāṣ-nāma*, as well as with a *dīwān*.

The Mawlawī mystical poet of the period, Shaykh Ghālib (1171–1213/1757-1758–1798), used the pen names As'ad and, later, Ghālib. Having already composed a *dīwān* by the age of twenty-four, Shaykh Ghālib wrote his allegorical work *Husn u- 'Ashq* to demonstrate his reaction against the notion that such a beautiful work could never again be written after Nābī's *Khayr-nāma*. *Husn u- 'Ashq* virtually expresses the essence of *dīwān* literature. Besides his other works, Ghālib began a *tadbkīra* on Mawlawī poets, which was later completed by Asrār Dede, who named it *Tadbkīra-i shu'arā-i mawlawiyya*.

Fiṭnat Khānim (d. 1194/1780), a female poet, wrote a *dīwān*. Enderūnlu Wāṣif (d. 1240/1824) was the author of a *dīwān* and representative of the Localization movement. 'Izzat Mullā (d. 1245/1829), a Mawlawī poet, wrote two *dīwāns* called *Bahā-i afkār* and *Khazān-i āthār*, as well as *Gulshan-i amwār*, and *Mihnat-kashān* (The Sufferers), expressing the pangs of exile. Another poet of the period, Naḥīfī (d. 1738), won fame with his translation of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's *Mathnavī* as well as writing a *dīwān* and other works, such as a *Mawlid*, *Hijrat al-Nabī* and *Mi'rajīyya*.

Among *tadbkīra* and other prose works, the following are from the eighteenth century: the *Tadbkīra* (written in 1134/1721) of Mūjīb, about whom nothing is known, which is a supplement to Riyāḍī's; Safāyī's *Tadbkīra* (written in 1134/1721), known by his own name; Sālīm Meḥmed Amīn's (d. 1156/1743) *Tadbkīra* (written in 1134/1721); Balīgh's (d. 1142/1729) *Tadbkīra*, entitled *Nukhbat al-āthār li-dhbayl Zubdat al-ash'ār* (written in 1139/1726); Rāmiz Husayn's (d. 1200/1785) *Ādāb-i zurāfā'* (written in 1198/1783) and appended to the *Tadbkīra* of Sālīm; The *Tadbkīra* of Şilāhdār (written in 1204/1789); and, finally, Kamiksiz-zāde Şafwat Muṣṭafā's (d.?) *Tadbkīra* (written in 1198/1782) entitled *Nukhbat al-āthār min farā'id al-ash'ār*. Nineteenth-century *tadbkīras*, include the *Tadbkīra* (written in 1229/1813) of Shefqat (d. 1242/1826), known by his own name, Tawfiq's *Majmū'at al-tarājim* (written in 1242/1826), the *Tadbkīra* (written in 1250/1834-35) of 'Arif Hikmat Bey (d. 1275/1859) and the *Tadbkīra* of Faṭīn (d. 1283/1866) entitled *Khātimat al-ash'ār* (written in 1269/1852).

Also noteworthy are the *Ma'rifat-nāma* (written in 1163/1750) of the renowned contemporary scholar Ibrāhīm Ḥaqqī (d. 1186/1772) of Erzurum. A book of stories entitled *Mukhbayyilāt* by 'Alī 'Azīz of Girit (Crete) (d. 1211/1796) constitutes a bridge between the ancient story-telling tradition and the

genre of the short story adopted from the West, while his *Thousand and One Nights* is the last link in this chain.

Formeost among those who established reputations in the nineteenth century is Dhilhnī of Bayburt (d. 1276/1859), a folk-poet who wrote a *ḍiwān* and other works entitled *Sergüdbesht-nāma* and *Hikāya-i Gharība*. Sayrānī of Kayseri is known for his *destān* (epic poem) on the abolition of the Janissaries, and two other epics, *Siyāhat destānī* and *Wijūd-nāma*.

Although the innovations introduced by the *Tanzīmāt* changed the course of court literature, which suffered yet another series of setbacks later on, there is still a handful of poets who left their mark in this field and continued to produce works up to the second half of the twentieth century. Among them, Shaykh al-Islām ʿArif Hikmat Bey is known for his *ḍiwān*, Ghālib of Lesqofcha (d. 1284/1867), leader of the *Enjūmen-i Shuʿarāʾ* (Poets' Society), for his poems in the style of Shaykh Ghālib, and ʿAwnī of Yenishehir (d. 1301/1864) for his *ḍiwān*, his translation of the first three volumes of the *Mathnavī* and his works entitled *Mirʿat-i junūn* and *Ātesh-kede*. The final links in this chain are Kāzım Pāshā (d. 1297/1878), Nāmiq Kamāl (1295–1306/1840–1888) and Yahyā Kamāl Beyatlı (d. 1960).

#### TURKISH LITERATURE FROM THE *TANZĪMĀT* TO THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD (1255–1341/1839–1923)

After the seventeenth century, the Ottoman empire became conscious of its political, administrative and, particularly, military decline in the face of Europe and initially attempted some reforms in the military field alone. When efforts were made to form a new army (*Nizām-i Jadīd*) in the time of Salīm III (1203–1222/1789–1807), the Janissaries revolted, costing Salīm III his life. Despite the abolition of the Janissaries (*Waqʿa-i Khayrīyya* in 1241/1826) in the time of Maḥmūd II (1223–1255/1808–1839) and the modernization of the army, the empire's capitulation to the West was inevitable. As a remedy, European civilization was adopted as a model in the cultural and administrative spheres. Institutions of learning, such as high-schools, a war academy and a medical school, were opened, dress was altered, students were sent to Europe and, most importantly, newspapers began to be published (*Taqwīm-i Waqāʾiʿ* in 1247/1832).

During the reign of ʿAbd al-Majīd (1255–1277/1839–1861), Muṣṭafā Rashīd Pāshā, with the reforming sultan's support, put an end to the Ottomans' classical notion of government through his Gulkhāne Rescript of 8 Shaʿbān 1255/3 November 1839, known as *Tanzīmāt-i Khayrīyya*. But since the reaction of the ʿulamāʾ was feared, not all the old institutions could be abolished. The new was therefore added to the old, with the result that the old educational system as well as the old laws and courts now existed alongside the new educational institutions and European-style legislature and judiciary. From the

Tanzîmât up to the Turkish Republic, Turkish literature passed through four periods: *Tanzîmât*, *Therwet-i Funûn*, *Fajr-i Âlî* and National Literature.

*TANZÎMÂT* LITERATURE (1859–1895)

The founder of this literature, which took Western literature as its model, was Shinâsî (1826–1871), who introduced the genre of Western-style theatre into Turkish literature with his play *Shâ‘ir ewlenmesi* (The Wedding of the Poet, 1860). The Turkish people, who only knew the traditional *orta oyunu* (folk - theatre), initially became acquainted with Western theatre and actors (1842); later, local groups staged a number of plays in translation. Some Turkish intellectuals had encountered this genre abroad. Shinâsî, for example, returned from Paris in 1855, where he had been sent in 1849 by Faḥrî and Rashîd Pâshâ. In 1859, he made verse translations from French poets such as Racine, La Fontaine and Lamartine under the title *Tarjuma-i manzûma*. At this time, some Western novels were also translated into Turkish. Yûsuf Kâmil Pâshâ’s (d. 1875) translation of Fénélon’s *Télémaque* (printed 1862), Munîf Pâshâ’s (1828–1910) *Muhâwarât-i hikamiyya*, translated from various French thinkers, and the *Tarjumân-i Ahwâl* (1860), brought out by Shinâsî and Âgâh Efendi, were the first products of this process. The translations of both *Télémaque* and *Les Misérables* were serialized in *Jarîda-i Hawâdîth* in the same year. Meanwhile, *dîwân* literature, whose world view had survived over the centuries, still addressed the Turkish people.

*Tanzîmât* poetry, which had dealt with social and metaphysical themes as well as love and nature, had now turned to a form that had nothing to do with the imaginary world of the *dîwân* literature. Shinâsî was one of the pioneers of this literature in both language and thought. Apart from his above-cited works, he also produced the *Muntakhabât-i ash‘âr* (compiled 1862), which is an anthology of his own poetry resembling a small *dîwân*, as well as the *Durûb-i amthâl-i ‘Uthmâniyya* (1863).

Ḍiyâ’ Pâshâ (1829–1880) collected his poems first under the title *Ash‘âr-i Ḍiyâ’* and later *Kulliyât-i Ziyâ’*. The versified *Zafar-nâme*, which he wrote in Paris, was intended to lampoon ‘Alî Pâshâ, while his *Ru‘yâ*, though written in London, was an attack on the Grand Vizier ‘Alî Pâshâ. His famous anthology *Kharâbât* was printed in three volume in 1874. Ḍiyâ’ Pâshâ, who displayed here a viewpoint diametrically opposed to his own innovative ideas – in particular, to his own article *Shi‘r wa-inshâ’*, was ruthlessly criticized by Nâmiq Kamâl in his *Takhrîb-i kharâbât* and *Ta‘qîb*. Ḍiyâ’ Pâshâ also produced *Andalus târîkhi*, *Warâthat-i Salṭanat-i Saniyya*, translations from Molière, J.-J. Rousseau and Fénélon, as well as articles in the newspapers *Mukhbîr* and *Hurriyyat*. The third great poet of the *Tanzîmât*, Nâmiq Kamâl (1840–1888), is a poet whose life followed a lively, but occasionally sad, course. Apart from his poems, he also experimented with all the new genres that came in with the *Tanzîmât*.

Rajāʿīzāde Maḥmūd Ekrem's (1847–1914) principal books of poetry are the three-volume *Zemzeme* (printed 1882–1885), *Tafakkur* (1888) and *Peşmurde*, 1895. Ekrem too used the new verse forms in his poetry. He also produced works of literary history and criticism, such as *Taʿlim-i adabiyyat* (1871) and *Taqdīr-i alḥān* (1886). ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Ḥāmid (1852–1937) achieved fame with his poems entitled *Şabrā* (1879), an example of pastoral verse, *Kursī-i Istighrāq* and *Bir wāʿiẓa bir mawʿiẓa*, as well as *Maqbar* (1885), which he wrote upon his wife's death. The latter not only departs widely from the old poetry in terms of prosody, but also incorporates original ideas on the subject of death. *Ölü*, which deals with metaphysical subjects, *Ḥajla*, *Bālādan bir ses*, written in syllabic meter, *Wālidem* (1913) about his mother and his childhood, and *İḥām-i Waṭan* (1916), containing poems about World War I, are his principal works in this genre. Finally, the works of Muʿallim Nāji (1850–1893) include *Ateş-pāre* (1883), *Şerāre* (1885), *Furūzan* (1886), *Sumbula I* (1890) and *Yādīgār-i Nāji* (1896).

*Tanzīmāt* literature was influenced by French literary movements such as Classicism, Romanticism, Realism and Naturalism. Writers like Shināsī, Aḥmad Wafiq Pāshā and Teodor Qasab opted for Classicism, Nāmiq Kamāl, Aḥmad Midḥat, Rajāʿīzāde Maḥmūd Ekrem and ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq Ḥāmid for Romanticism, and Sāmī Pāshāzāde Sezāʿī, Nābīzāde Nāzim and Bashīr Fuʿād for Realism and Naturalism.

It has already been mentioned that the Turks became acquainted with the genre of theatre in the 1840s. There were French and Italian (Naum Theatre) theatres in Beyoğlu. Following these first experiments and a few theatrical troupes formed by Armenians, the first Turkish theatre to stage Turkish plays was the Ottoman Theatre set up at Gedikpāshā (1868). At this theatre, under the direction of Güllü Agop, dramatic works by both Turkish and Western writers, as well as Western operas and the first Turkish opera, were staged. Theatre of the *Tanzīmāt* period is divided into two branches, drama and comedy.

Shināsī's (1826–1871) theatrical work *Bit şbāʿir ewlenmesi*, which criticizes traditional marriage customs, is the first Turkish play. Its model was Molière's *Le mariage forcé*. Aḥmad Wafiq Pāshā (1823–1891), besides historical and lexicographical works, also translated sixteen plays while he was governor of Bursa and adapted Molière's play to the taste of the Turkish audience. Some of the most popular of these are *İnfiʿāl-i ʿashq*, *Zor nikāh* (1869), *Zoraki ṭabīb*, *Yörghaki dandini*, *Qojalar maktabi* and *Qadinlar maktabi*. While ʿAlī Bey (1844–1899) is known for his contributions to the humorous magazine *Diyogen*, the first of the *Tanzīmāt* period, published by Teodor Qasab, he also worked with Nāmiq Kamāl and Güllü Agop in the Ottoman Theatre at Gedikpāshā.

Among the dramatists of the period, Nāmiq Kamāl wrote *Waṭan yākhūt silistre* (1873), *Zawallī chojuq*, *Gulnibāl* (1875), *ʿAkef Bey* (1873), *Jalāl al-Dīn-i*

*Khwārizmshāh* (1875) and *Qara Belā* (1908), and ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Ḥāmid (1852–1913) *Ichli Qiz* (1875), *Dukhtar-i Hindū* (1876), *Nesteren* (1877), *Ṭariq yākhūt Andalus Futūḥi* (1880), *Teẓer* (1880), *Esbber* (1880) and *Finten* (1916). Shams al-Dīn Sāmī (1850–1904), who is known as the first novelist in Turkish literature, not only translated plays but also wrote his own plays such as *Besa* (1875) and *Saidī Yahyā* (1875) in five acts on a tragic theme, as well as producing the lexicographical studies on which his true fame rests.

Aḥmad Midḥat’s (1844–1922) first play is *Ayyāb*. Although he later wrote *Achiq bash* (1875), *Ḥukm-i dil* (1875), *Furs-i Qadīm’de bir faji’a* (1877), *Chengi weyā Dānīsh Chalabi* (1877), *Cherkez önderler* (1883) and *Sıyānūsh*, this prolific writer is more famous for his novels. He also produced short stories, essays and critical writings.

The Western novel entered Turkish literature through translation, starting with Yūsuf Kamāl Pāshā’s above-mentioned translation of Fénelon’s *Télémaque* in 1862. But that work cannot be said to have influenced the Turkish novel. *Les Misérables* (trans. 1862), *Robinson Crusoe* (trans. 1864), *The Count of Monte Christo* (trans. 1871) and *Paul et Virginie* (trans. 1873), however, certainly did have an impact. The first Western-style Turkish short story is Aḥmad Midḥat’s *Qışadan hissa* (1870), while the first attempt at a Turkish novel is Shams al-Dīn Sāmī’s *Ta’ashshuq-ı Tal’at wa-Fitnat* (1872).

Some of the major stories and novels of the period are Aḥmad Midḥat’s *Laṭā’if-i rivāyāt* (1871–1896, in twenty-five parts), *Ḥasan mellāḥ* (1875), *Ḥusayn fallāḥ* (1875), *Felātūn Bey ile Rāqim Efendi* (1876), *Henüz Onyediyashında* (1882), *Dürdāne Khānim* (1882), *Aḥmad Metīm wa-Shīr’zād* (1891) and *Jön Türk* (1908). Nāmiq Kamāl’s *Intibāh* and *Jazmī* are also worthy of mention. Realism became the predominant influence on the Turkish novel after 1885, and Sāmī Pāshāzāde Sezā’ī’s (1858–1930) novel *Sergüdbest* (1888) is regarded as the first example of this current. This is followed by Nābīzāde Nazīm’s long stories (1862–93) *Qara bibik* (1892) and *Sewiyya-yi tanāsukh* (1892) and his novel *Zabrā* (1890), and by Rajā’izāde Ekrem’s novel *‘Araba sawdāsi* (1898) and Mizanjī Murād’s (1852–1914) *Turfanda mi Yōqsa Turfa mi* (1890).

Aḥmad Jawdat Pāshā (1822–1895) contributed to the genre of the ‘memoir’ which was developing in *Tanzīmāt*, literature with his works *Tadhākīr wa-ma’rūḍāt*, Ḍiyā’ Pāshā with his *Defter-i a’māl*, Mu’allim Nājī with his *‘Ömer’in chojuqlughu* and *Madrassa khātīralari* and Aḥmad Midḥat with *Menfā*. A number of writers pioneered in criticism and the essay: Nāmiq Kamāl with *Lisān-i ‘Uthmānīnīn adabiyāti ḥaqqında ba’di mulāḥazāt shāmīl*, *Takhrīb-i kharābāt* and *Ta’qīb*, Ḍiyā’ Pāshā with *Shi’r wa-inshā’,* and Rajā’izāde Ekrem with his foreword to *Zemzeme III* and *Taqdīr-i alḥān* expressing his thoughts on poetry.



THERWET-I FUNŪN LITERATURE (1896–1901)

After 1888 the younger generation, centred around Rajāʾizāde Ekrem, formed a group with a Western literary orientation. They termed their movement *Adabiyāt-i Jadīda* (New Literature), but are also known by the name *Therwet-i Funūn* (The Riches of Science) since they wrote for a magazine of that name. This magazine, which first appeared in 1891, had little to do with science but was entirely literary in nature, with poems, stories, novels, criticism and essays. Prominent among *Therwet-i Funūn*'s staff of sixteen were such figures as Tawfiq Fikrat, Janāb Shihāb al-Dīn and Ḥusayn Sīrat. After Tawfiq Fikrat took over the editorship, the magazine attained the level of its Western counterparts. In this period, Arabic prosody was again employed in poetry, while a few ideas from French poetry were transferred into Turkish. The new concepts, generated by introducing Persian and Arabic terms, non-existent in Turkish, as well as a passion for foreign words, led the *Therwet-i Funūn* writers to use an ostentatious and artificial style writing.

Those who adopted the style of the New Literature produced works in all genres observed in the period of *Tanzīmāt* literature, with the exception of theatre. But ʿAbd al-Ḥamid II's oppressive regime deterred them from dealing with social issues. The only new genre in this period was the prose poem. The three principal poets of the New Literature were Tawfiq Fikrat (1867–1915), Janāb Shihāb al-Dīn (1870–1934) and Ḥusayn Sīrat (1872–1959). Tawfiq Fikrat generally wrote poems of social content (*Khasta chojuq*, *Baliqchilar*, *Warin zavallilara*, *Sabāh olursa*, *Sis*, *Tārikb-i qadīm*, *Khān-i yaghmā*). Among Fikrat's major books of poetry are *Rubāb-i shikeste* (1900), *Tārikb-i qadīm* (1905), *Khalūq'un defteri* (1911) and *Shermīn* (1914). Other poets wrote poems in which love and sentiment predominate. While the story-writers and novelists of the period were influenced by the French realists and naturalists (Stendhal, Balzac, Zola), under the pressures of the ʿAbd al-Ḥamid II period they dared not deal with social problems but turned rather to personal subjects. Works like Khālid Dīyāʾ Ushaqligil's (1866–1945) *Ferdī wa-Shūrekāsi* (1894), *Māʾi wa-siyāb* (1897), *ʿAsbq-i mamnūʿ* (1900) and *Qiriq hayātlar* (1924); Meḥmed Raʾūf's (1875–1931) *Ailul* (1900); Ḥusayn Jāhid's (1874–1957) *Khayāl icinde* (1901); Müftüoğlu Aḥmad Hikmat's (1870–1927) *Kharistān* (1901) and *Chaghlayanlar* (1922) are the major novels by the chief representatives of *Adabiyāt-i Jadīda*. Among them, Ḥusayn Jāhid is a writer whose reputation was largely based on the field of journalism.

There were also poets and writers who opposed the *Therwet-i Funūn* principle of 'Art for art's sake' and thus remained outside this current. The poems in Riḍā Tawfiq Bölükbashi's (1869–1949) *Serāb-i ʿÖmrün* (1934), for example, reveal that he was influenced by the *divān* literature and took the Bektāshī poets as his model. Emulating the folk poets, he used the syllabic metre as well as *ʿarūd*. Another poet outside this group was Meḥmed Amīn

(Yurdaqul) (1896–1944). This poet, who fought in the Turkish War of Independence, produced books of poetry entitled *Türk sazı* (1914), *Ey Türk uyan* (1915), *Tan sesleri* (1915), *Muştafâ Kamâl* (1928) and *Anqara* (1939), the last two combining prose and verse. Defending the principle of ‘Art for society’, Mehmed Amîn, who was full of national feeling, vitally injected this into his poems and was accordingly crowned as the ‘National Poet’.

Another social poet was Mehmed ‘Âkif (Ersoy) (1873–1936). ‘Âkif, who began issuing a magazine called *Sirât-i Mustaqîm* in 1908 (changed to *Sabîl al-Rashâd* in 1912), published a large number of articles and poems. A supporter of Islamic unity, he collected together his books of poetry, *Şafahât* (1911), *Sulaymâniyya kürsüsünde* (1913), *Haqqın sesleri* (1913), *Fâtih kürsüsünde* (1914) and *Khâtiralar* (1915), under the title *Şafahât*. Among other poets who did not join the *Therwet-i Funûn* the most important are İsmâ‘îl Şafâ (1867–1900), Mehmed Jalâl (1867–1912) and Nigâr Khânim (1856–1919). They were not, however, opposed to theatre. Hısayn Raĥmî (1864–1944), who followed the path struck by Aĥmad Midĥat, adopted the principle of ‘Art for the sake of society’ and wrote with the purpose of opening the eyes of the uneducated masses, dealing with the peculiar results of social change and breaking down superstition. His major novels are *Murabbıyya* (1899), *Metres* (1900), *Shıpsawdı* (1911), *Sawdâ peshinde* (1912), *Gbulıyabanı* (1912), *Ben deli miyim?* (1927) and *Qoĥotlar maktabi* (1929); he also wrote short stories.

Aĥmad Râsim (1865–1932), who earned fame as a journalist, was another who supported ‘Art for the sake of society’. In technique, he emulated Aĥmad Midĥat in his novels and short stories. *Güzêl Eleni* (1891), *Maktab arqadashim* (1895) and *İki güzêl günabkâr* (1922) are his best-known stories and novels; his newspaper articles are collected in *Shabir maktûblari* (1912–1913, 4 vols.) and *Ashkâl-i zâmân* (1918). His memoirs and historical works include *Fuĥsb-i ‘atıq* (1922, 2 vols.), *Fâlaqa* (1927), *Rasimli wa-khariṭali ‘Uthmânli târikihi* (1910-19-12, 2 vols.) and *İki khâtirât – üç shakhsıyyat* (1916).

When the *Therwet-i Funûn* broke up in 1901, a new generation interested in literature appeared during the seven years leading up to the proclamation of the Second Constitution in 1908. These youths again gathered around *Therwet-i Funûn*, dubbing themselves *Fajr-i Âlî* (The Coming Dawn). They included Aĥmad Hâshim, ‘Alî Jânib, Aqa Gündüz, Ya‘qûb Qadrî, Taĥsîn Nâhid and Mehmed Bahjat. They were later joined by Shihâb al-Dîn Sulaymân, Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fu‘âd, Rafîq Khâlid, Jalâl Sâĥir and Fa‘îq ‘Alî. They published a manifesto in which they proclaimed that the *Therwet-i Funûn* was outmoded and that their own group was going to work for progress in language, literature and the social sciences by taking the West as a model. Although they clashed with the *Therwet-i Funûn* writers in order to prove themselves in literature, they eventually joined them, only to disband within two years, leaving behind some works, nonetheless. Later on some of these writers would appear again in the period of National Literature (1911–1922).

The proclamation of the Second Constitution was instrumental in galvanizing the enlightened nationalists, who claimed that Islamism and Westernization were not valid policies which would produce results; these people formed the *Türk Derneği* (Turkish Society) in 1908. Among the founders of the society, which aimed at cultural union among all the Turks in the world, were famous names such as Aḥmad Midḥat, Najīb ‘Āşim, Bursali Zāhir, Aqchuraoğlu Yūsuf and Riḍā Tawfiq. In 1911, the society’s name was changed to *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland), Meḥmed Amīn was made chairman and a publication of the same name began to appear. Although the name was changed again a year later to *Türk Ojaḡhi* (Turkish Hearth), the magazine continued to appear up to 1931. Although the pan-Ottoman movement had lost momentum following the empire’s defeat in the war and the shrinking of its borders, the pan-Islamic and pan-Turkist movements remained strong. The most important figure among the pan-Turkists is Ḍiyā’ Gökālp (1876–1924). Gökālp, who had met ‘Ömer Sayf al-Dīn and ‘Alī Jānīb in Salonica, wrote articles and poems for their magazine, *Genç Qalemler* (Young Pens), and later published his poems under the title *Qizil elma* (1914). His major works include *Türkechülüḡhüm esāsları* (1923) and *Türk töresi* (1923), which expound the principles of Turkism and Turkish nationalism.

Another of the major movements of this period is that of language simplification. The head article, *Yeni lisān* (New Language), which appeared on 11 April 1911 in the magazine *Genç Qalemler*, published in Salonica by ‘Ömer Sayf al-Dīn (1884–1920), ‘Alī Jānīb and Ḍiyā’ Gökālp, and other articles with the same title that appeared in later issues (No.17) launched a new period in Turkish literature. The advocates of National Literature proposed a simplification of the language, the abolition of Arabic and Persian grammatical constructions, the use of words with their Turkish meaning and the acceptance of the Istanbul dialect as a standard language. This aroused a reaction among the *Therwet-i Funūn* writers. When Salonica was lost, the writing staff continued their activities in Istanbul.

While poetry in ‘*arūd* continued to be written in this period by Meḥmed ‘Ākif, Aḥmad Hāshim and Yaḡyā Kamāl, ‘Ākif espoused realism, Hāshim symbolism and Yaḡyā Kamāl romanticism. Other famous poets of the period, Meḥmed Amīn (1869–1944), Riḍā Tawfiq (1868–1949), Khālīd Fakhri (1898–1973) and Orkhan Sayfi (1890–1972), wrote in syllabic metre.

There was a movement in the writing of short stories and novels as tales of the provinces and the villages entered these genres. Works in this framework include Ebübekir Khādīm’s *Küchük Pāshā*, Rafiq Khālīd’s *Mamlakat hikāyeleri* and Rashād Nūrī’s *Chaliquşbu*. The first important writer of this period in the genres of the novel and short story is Khālīda Adīb Adıwar (1884–1964). Taking part in the National Struggle with her husband, she left the country when he fell out with Atatürk and lived in France and England until 1939. Among her twenty works, the most important are *Memoirs of Halide*

*Edip* (1926), *Turkey Faces West*, *The Turkish Ordeal* (1928), *The Clown and his Daughter* (1935), originally in English, and, in Turkish, *Sinekli baqqāl* (1926) and *Türkün âteshle imtihanı* (1962).

A new era in theatre was also ushered in during this period. The famous French actor Antoine was invited to Turkey (1914) and the drama school known as *Dār al-badā'i*<sup>c-i</sup> *‘Uthmānī* was founded.

Genres such as the article, short column, essay, memoir, satire, dialogue, analysis, humour and literary history were all given impetus in this period. As a result of the Balkan Wars, World War I and the serious losses sustained by the Ottoman empire, followed by the National War of Independence, Muṣṭafā Kamāl Atatürk founded the Republic of Turkey on 29 October 1923 and immediately undertook a program of continuous reform, which he pursued until his death in 1938. The new state was guided by the principles of secularism and nationalism and an effort to catch up with contemporary civilization. It was decided to adopt the Latin alphabet in order to make learning more widespread, since the Arabic alphabet, adopted by the Turks together with Islam, did not fit Turkish phonetics and was difficult to learn; the alphabet reform was therefore launched in 1928.

## Ādherī literature

Ethnographically, the term Ādherī means ‘the land of those speaking the Ādherī dialect’, thus ‘belonging to Āzerbayjān’, and has been used since the tenth century. Strengthened by the founding of the Saljūq states, the Oghuz tribes rapidly settled in Āzerbayjān, Iraq and Anatolia. Starting in the fourteenth century, for geographical, historical and social reasons, two dialects developed in Turkish: Ādherī and Anatolian Turkish. The complete Turkification of Āzerbayjān occurred in the period of the İlkhānids and Jalā’irids. Ādherī Turkish, which can also be called Eastern Oghuz Turkish, is distinguished from Anatolian Turkish, or Western Oghuz Turkish, by certain phonetic and morphological differences and by some small differences in verb tenses, personal endings and the use of participles and gerundives.

The earliest poet in Ādherī literature is Shaykh ‘Izz al-Dīn Isfarāīnī (fourteenth century), who wrote his poems under the pen-name Ḥasanoğlu. Although he wrote in Persian, Nizāmī of Ganjāwī is also known to have been Ādherī. Muṣṭafā Zarīr, an important poet and writer from the Ādherī area, wrote *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā* as well as other works in prose on religious and historical subjects. His true place in Turkish literature is determined by his five-volume translation, based on the works of Ibn Ishāq and Abu-l-Ḥasan, which he made in 779/1377–1378 and which is known variously as *Tarjumat al-Zarīr* or *Siyar-i Zarīr*. Nasīmī (d. 824/1421) was flayed to death at Aleppo because of his beliefs in Khurūfism, founded by Faḍl Allāh Khurūfī. Nasīmī, who left behind a *divān* embodying both mysticism and the principles of Khurūfism,

played a major rôle in the spread of this order among the Turks of Iran and Anatolia. Qāḍī Burhān al-Dīn (d. 800/1398), whose *dīwān* is important for exhibiting mystical principles and the impact of Faḍl Allāh and Nasīmī on Anatolian Turkish, also produced two works in Arabic.

In the ninth/fifteenth century, Iraq and Ādherī came under the hegemony of the Qarā Qoyunlū (Black Sheep) (1380–1436) and the Aq Qoyunlū (White Sheep) (1403–1508) Turcomans, whose rulers contributed significantly to the development of Iranian and, equally, Turkish literature. The Qarā Qoyunlū ruler Jahānshāh b. Yūsuf (d. 873/1467) compiled a *dīwān* under the pen-name Ḥāqīqī. Ḥabībī, who earned the patronage first of the Aqū Qoyunlū ruler Sultan Ya‘qūb and later the Şafawid ruler Shāh Ismā‘īl, was a fifteenth-century Ādherī poet. His receipt of the title *malik al-shu‘arā’* from Shāh Ismā‘īl and his inclusion in the Ottoman *tadhkiras* of ‘Āshiq Chelebi, Laṭīfī and Ḥasan Chelebi prove his fame in his period. Ḥabībī came to Istanbul and died in the time of Salīm I. Among poets of Sultan Ya‘qūb’s time, those worthy of mention are Khatāyī, who wrote his *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā* for the sultan, and Shaykh ‘Umar Rūshanī, who was from Aydın but who settled in Tabriz. Ḥāmidī, who came to Anatolia from the Shīrwān region and attached himself first to Jandaroglu Ismā‘īl Beg and then, after 864/1459, to Muḥammad II, penned a *dīwān* in his own hand to present to the sultan. Later he fell out of favour with the sultan and was exiled to Bursa, where he died. The Turkish of his poems is thoroughly Ottoman in syntax as well as spelling. Ḥāmidī is mentioned here purely as a poet who hailed from the Ādherī region. Shāh Ismā‘īl (1487–1524), who used the pen name Khaṭā‘ī and was a prominent ruler-poet in sixteenth century Ādherī literature under Şafawid rule, has, apart from his *dīwān*, a *mathnawī* called *Deh-nāme*, consisting of some *madhiyya* (eulogies) of Ḥaḍrat-i ‘Alī. Shāh Ismā‘īl, who was a Shī‘ite, also wrote quatrains in the form of *qashma* for religious propaganda purposes.

The lyric poet Fuḍūlī (d. 963/1556), who has a special and permanent place among Turkish poets, wrote his works in Ādherī Turkish. Apart from his *dīwān*, the work which made him famous is his *Laylā wa-Majnūn*. Another of his major works is the *Ḥadīqat al-su‘adā’*, which he based on Ḥusayn Wā‘iz [Fig. 5] Kāshifī’s (d. 910/1505) *Rawḍat al-shuhadā’*; it is interspersed with rhymed sections. Fuḍūlī, who remained with the Şafawids until Sulaymān the Magnificent captured Baghdad in 1534, stayed on in the city afterwards. He was influenced by the Chaghatay poet Nawā‘ī as well as by Anatolian Turkish poets and the Ādherī poets Ḥabībī and Nasīmī. Apart from the above-mentioned works, Fuḍūlī’s Turkish and Persian *dīwāns*, his *Ḥadīth-i arba‘īn* and his prose letters are best known.

Ādherī writing continued to develop in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries under the influence of Iranian and Ottoman literature. During the reign of the last Şafawid ruler, ‘Abbās I (d. 995/1587), *mathnawīs* such as *Dām u-Dāna*, *Zenbūr u-‘Asal* and *Warqa wa-Gulshāh* were written. The prominent poets



II-6.5 *Ḥadiqat al-Su'adā'* by Fuḡūlī (d. 963/1556)

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of the Şafawid period are Şafî Qulî Beg, who won fame with his seventeen *ghazals* and some Persian-Turkish *mulammas*, Şā'ib of Tabrîz (d. 1081/1671), who influenced Ottoman poets such as Nābî, Rāghib Pāshā and Munif, 'Abbās II, who wrote Turkish and Persian poems using the pen name Thānî, as well as Zārzî, Mihri 'Arab and Darūnî, and finally, in the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, Mîrzā Muḥsin (pen name Tathir), who is known for his *dîwān* and *mathnawîs*, and Mîrzā Dhalāl Shahrastānî, who wrote poems in Turkish as well as Persian.

After the Şafawids, Ādherî Turkish was unable to sustain its earlier development under the Afshārs, Zands and Qājārs. Nevertheless, a major work such as the *Sang-lakh* was written in this period. The most important change in Ādherî literature in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries was the development of a classical literature parallel with folk literature; verse folk-stories such as *Köroğlu*, *'Ashiq gharîb*, *Shāh Ismā'îl* and *Astî wa-Kerem* formed a bridge between classical literature and the local dialects, and poets such as Masîhî, Şā'ib Tabrîzî, Qawsî, Widādî and Wāqif were popular with the masses.

Tabrîz, the centre of Ādherî literature, gave way to Tiflis in the nineteenth century and later to Bakū. Then, in the second half of that century, literature began to decline in Āzerbayjān, which was divided into North and South. Among the many poets in this century who wrote either in Persian and Turkish or exclusively in Turkish, such names as Mîrzā Muḥammad Taqî (1235–1309/1819–1820–1891–1892) with his *Kanz al-maṣā'ib*, Rājî (1247–1293/1831–1832–1876) with his *Dîwān*, Maraghālî Mullā Ḥusayn with his six-volume *Maqṭal*, the *Dîwān* poet Dilsüz and his anecdotes, and Mîrzā 'Alî Khān (1261–1325/1845–1907) with his *Dîwān* are symbolic of the age. A period of innovation began in Ādherî literature in the nineteenth century under Russian and European influence and Faṭḥ 'Alî Ākhundzāde (1812–1878) ushered in a new age with fresh new genres such as the novel and theatre, which were popular in Europe.

Starting in 1882, theatre made significant progress through the efforts of writers such as Najaf Beg Wazîrlî, Hāshim Beg Wazîrlî, Sulṭān Majîd Ghanîzāde and Sulaymān Beg Ākhundzāde (1875–1939), who wrote theatrical works such as *Tamabkār*, *Shāh sanem gülperî* (about women's rights), and *Lachin yuvvasî* dealing with ideological and social issues.

The nineteenth century was also the period in which journalism was launched in Ādherî literature. The first Ādherî-Turkish newspaper, which began to appear on 22 July 1875, was closed down three years later by the Tsarist regime. Ḥasan Beg Zerdābî (1841–1907), the publisher of this newspaper, *Ekinji*, was a pioneer of the innovation movement. Until the Russian revolution in 1905, the newspapers *Ḍiyā'* and *Ḍiyā'-i Qafqas* in 1897–1884, *Kashkūl* in 1883–1891 and *Sharq-i Rūs* in 1903–1905 covered social issues of concern to the Adherî people, as well as publishing articles on the educational system. Following the proclamation of the Second Ottoman Constitution and

the Russian Revolution, Akhund Beg Aghaoğlu (Agayef) issued the newspapers *Hayāt*, *Irshād* and *Taraqqī* and ʿAlī Beg Husaynzāde (1864–1940) published a magazine that fostered the development of national ideas in Āzerbaijān.

Husayn Jāhid (1882–?), who is cited as the most powerful writer of this period, was influenced by Hāmid and Fikrat and wrote plays in verse such as *Shaykh Sanʿān*, *Shaydā*, *Payghambar*, *Uchurum* and *Iblīs*, and also published a magazine.

Recognized names in Ādherī literature after 1905 include Neriman Nerimanof, authoress of the first Ādherī novel, *Babādir wa-Suna*, Jalil Meḥmed Qulizāde with his magazine *Mullā Naṣr al-Dīn* and his play *The Dead*, ʿUzayr Beg Hājji with his operettas *Arşin māl alan* and *Bu olsun*, and Şābir (d. 1911), who collected his numerous satirical verses under the title *Hop-Hop-nāma*.

The best-known contemporary Ādherī poet is Shahriyār, who rapidly achieved fame in Iran, northern Āzerbaijān, Iraq and Turkey with his long verse work *Haydar babaya salām*. Many poets have imitated this work and Shahriyār has written verse replies to some of them.



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## Chapter 7

# LITERATURES OF THE MUSLIMS IN THE INDO-PAKISTANI SUBCONTINENT

*Annemarie Schimmel*

The Indo-Pakistani subcontinent boasts a vast amount of literature in the most diverse languages. One finds works in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Turkish, as well as in Sindhi, Panjabi, Pashto, Balochi, Kashmiri and Bengali; in the southern part of India, Malayalam, Telugu and Tamil contain literary works which are rarely studied.

### Arabic

The Arabs conquered Sind in 92/711–712, but hardly any literary works from that period are known. It seems, to judge from the *nisbas* of some scholars, that one studied *Ḥadīth*, and Abū ‘Aṭā whose father came from Sind, is noted as a poet in Arabic whose verse was included in the *Ḥamāsa*. Arabic works on mathematics conveyed Indian knowledge to Iraq. But only after the Muslim conquest of north-western India in the days of Maḥmūd of Ghazna did the first major Arabic works appear, such as collections of *Ḥadīth* and commentaries on Ḥanafī *fiqh*. The famous *Ḥadīth* scholar al-Saghānī hailed from Lahore (d. 649–650/1252); Bengal was likewise a centre of *Ḥadīth* studies, especially in the fourteenth century. The *madrasas* which were founded in India during the twelfth century later remained the repositories of Arabic studies throughout the centuries and kept an interest in the theological language of Islam alive. Yet, in tune with the course of instruction, not only were theological works composed in Arabic but, as the *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī* formed part of the syllabus, they were imitated several times in India.

Muslim kings developed an interest in Arabic and sometimes tried to attract authors from Arab lands as, for example, the Bahmanid court at Gulbargā in the fourteenth century, from where Arabic missions were sent to the Yemen and Iraq to import scholars. The same holds true for the later Deccani kingdoms, especially for the Quṭbshāhī court at Golconda, where the

Arab author Sayyid Aḥmad and his son Sayyid ‘Alī played an important rôle in literature and politics in the seventeenth century. Situated on the way from India to Mecca, Gujarat, too, attracted a number of scholars and Ṣūfis, mainly from South Arabia, the most famous name being that of the Yemeni ‘Aydarūs family, some of whose members helped popularize al-Ghazālī’s work in India.

Arabic literature flourished also in the far south, in the Carnatic and Madras, where Arab settlements were founded at the beginning of the Islamic era - the conversion of a South-Indian king, Shakrawarti Farmād, was attributed to his beholding the miracle of the Splitting of the Moon from his homeland, whereupon he embraced Islam. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa witnessed the numerous *madrasas* on the Konkan coast, where boys and girls were taught Arabic, and in the community of the *Nawā‘it*, Arabs married to Indian women served for centuries in maintaining Arabic literature, collecting vast libraries with mainly religious texts as well as participating in writing Arabic poetry in honour of the Prophet. This art was widespread in the Subcontinent; two of the masters in Arabic religious poetry were ‘Abd al-Jalīl Bilgrāmī and his grandson Āzād Bilgrāmī (d. 1199/1785), both of whom were accomplished poets in Arabic and Persian and excelled in skilful chronograms. The multifaceted Āzād – historian, biographer and poet – was praised as the ‘Ḥassān al-Hind’ for his Arabic poetry in honour of the Prophet; it was he who composed a book, *Subḥat al-marjān* (The Rosary of Corals), in which he tried to show the close relations between Arabic and Indian culture and literature.

Arabic was not neglected at the Mughal court either; a somewhat strange example is Fayḍī’s (d. 1004/1595) commentary on the Qur’ān in exclusively undotted letters – a rather useless *tour de force*. Much more important is the work of ‘Alī al-Muttaqī, born in Burhānpūr (d. 976/1568), whose collection of *Ḥadīth*, *Kanz al-‘ummāl*, was used for centuries. While commentaries and supercommentaries on the Qur’ān and *Ḥadīth* constantly kept growing, philosophical and scientific works were composed in Arabic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; but the most far-reaching work in Arabic written in India is Shāh Walī Allāh’s (d. 1176/1762) *Ḥujjat Allāh al-bāliḡha*, a first attempt at understanding and seeking a cure for the dismal political and economic situation of Indian Muslims in the eighteenth century. It may be mentioned in passing that al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, known as al-Zabīdī (d. 1212/1797), author of the dictionary *Tāj al-‘arūs*, was born and raised in India. Among the numerous Arabic works of the later period of Indo-Arabic literature one should mention the *Manāqib al-Ḥaydarīyya* by the Arab writer Aḥmad al-Shirwānī at the court of Lucknow; his entertaining, *maqāma*-like work gives some interesting insights into the life of King Ghazī al-Dīn Ḥaydar of Oudh. It was the first book ever to be printed (in 1227/1812) on the recently introduced Arabic letter-press at Lucknow.

## Early Persian writers

While Arabic literature in the Subcontinent is predominantly learned literature, Persian covers all aspects of life. But few people realize that the Persian literature written in the Subcontinent is larger than that composed in Iran proper. After Maḥmūd of Ghazna's conquests of north-western India, Persian, the language in which masterpieces were composed at Maḥmūd's court, was taken over into the Panjab. The first book ever to be composed in Persian on theories of Šūfism was written in Lahore by 'Alī al-Jullābī al-Ḥujwīrī (d. c. 464/1071). Al-Ḥujwīrī, called by the people Data Ganj Bakhsh, is venerated to this day in that city. About the same time, poetry began to flourish in Lahore. The names of Abu-l-Faraj Rūnī (d. 484/1091), admired by Anwarī, and even more of Mas'ūd b. Sa'd-i Salmān (d. c. 525/1131), were well known in Iran; Sanā'ī collected Mas'ūd's verse. He is the first and one of the few poets to introduce Indian forms into his *Dīwān*, such as the *bārahmāsa*, the Twelve-Months poem, a form widely used in the indigenous tradition.

With the expansion of the Muslim empire eastward and the choice of Delhi as a capital in 603/1206, numerous authors appeared on the scene. Many of them had fled, after 514/1120, from Genghis Khān's hordes and found shelter at the court of Qubācha in Uchh in the southern Panjab, which was conquered by the Delhi kings in 625/1228. Among the refugees was 'Awfī, whose *Lubāb al-albāb* is a highly important source for early Persian poetry. In Delhi, a good number of Persian historical works were composed, and in 651/1253 one of the greatest figures in Persian literature was born in Patiala as the son of a Turkish father and an Indian mother. This was Amīr Khusraw, 'India's parrot', who wrote elegant panegyrics for the seven kings under whom he lived. But his fame rests mainly upon his delightful, highly refined lyrics, which are in most cases very singable, for Amīr Khusraw is also regarded as the founder of Hindustani music and the inventor of the sitar. To this day, his *ghazals* are important ingredients of *qawwālī* sessions. Widely travelled due to his attachments to certain princes, the poet gives interesting insights into the conditions of the kingdom, which he loved deeply; his complicated epistolographical work, the *Risāla-i i'jāz*, reflects different customs as well as stylistic levels in Indo-Muslim society. Like most medieval poets, Amīr Khusraw also imitated Niẓāmī's *Khamsa* and his renderings of the five poems *Maṭla' al-anwār*, *Khusraw wa-Shīrīn*, *Laylā Majnūn*, *Hasht bihisht* and *Ā'mā-i Iskandarī* later were often illustrated and imitated. Besides, he was the first to compose *mathnawīs* about contemporary events in epics such as *Qirān al-sa'dayn*, *Duwal Rāmī Khidr Khān* and *Tugbluq nāma*, which shed light on events in political history. Amīr Khusraw was not only a most versatile poet but also a disciple of the great Chishtī saint of Delhi, Niẓām al-Dīn Awliya<sup>2</sup>, and was buried close to his mausoleum after dying shortly after him in 725/1325. His lifelong companion, Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, was among the large number of people

from the Delhi elite whom Sultan Muḥammad Tughluq sent to the Deccan in 727/1327; Ḥasan Sijzī's lyrics are sweet and delightful, but his main contribution to the development of Indo-Persian literature is his *Fawā'id al-fu'ād*, the sayings (*malfūẓāt*) of Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā'. This first collection of *malfūẓāt* became a model for later Ṣūfīs, and the *malfūẓāt* of almost every major saint were collected in the following centuries. These offer an insight into the life not only of the religious leaders but also of the common people who came to ask help and guidance from them. Another genre that developed over the centuries was the letters of spiritual guidance, among which the impressive *Hundred Letters* of the Firdawsiyya master Sharaf al-Dīn Manērī (d. 782/1380) were often copied. The letters of the Naqshbandī reformer Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1033/1624) are another important example of this literary genre. Introductions to Ṣūfī doctrine in prose or rhyme are not lacking either.

Persian became the generally used official language at the Muslim courts. This is why Hindus, who often served as officials, became acquainted with it. Rūmī's *Mathnawī* was read in Bengal by Hindus in the late fifteenth century, and up to our century Bengali intellectuals, such as Rabindranath Tagore, have enjoyed the flavour of Ḥāfiẓ's and Rūmī's Persian verses.

In the eighth/fourteenth-century Delhi kingdom, excellent Persian chronicles, such as Baranī's work, were composed, and Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Nakhshabī (d. 751/1350) wrote a Persian version of the *Tūẓī-nāma*, an Indian parrot-story; his rendering made the work (which was also beautifully illustrated) known all over the Persian-speaking areas, in Turkey and, thence, in Europe. Ṣūfī poets like Bū 'Alī Qalandar (d. 724/1324) of Panīpat and, somewhat later, Gēsūdarāz of Gulbarga (d. 825/1422 at the age of one hundred years) added to the melodious Ṣūfī poetry that became part and parcel of Indo-Muslim culture.

In Kashmir, Persian literature began in the late ninth/fourteenth century. Strengthened by the Ṣūfī leader Sayyid 'Alī al-Hamādānī (d. 839/1435), a long line of poets took over the classical Persian diction; translations from the Sanskrit were made under the benevolent Sultan Bādshāh (r. 823–875/1420–1470). The Deccan likewise offered a wide range of Persian literature, which was strengthened by the influx of Persian intellectuals after c. 834/1430. Among the early prose writers, Maḥmūd Gāwan (d. 887/1482), for some time the *de facto* ruler of the Bahmanid kingdom, excelled in his work on epistolography; he was a friend of Jāmī of Harāt.

## Chaghatay Turkish

Bābur's victory over the Lōdī sultans (again patrons of poetry) in 932/1526 marks the beginning of a new period of Persian literature in India. To be sure, Bābur himself wrote his autobiography in Turkish and Chaghatay Turkish, which had been used at the court of Harāt as well, remained a language of conversation at several Indian courts. Besides, it certainly influenced some

structures in the growing Urdu language. The fact that Fakhri Harawī's *Rawḍat al-salāṭīn* and its sequel, the *Jawābir al-‘ajā’ib*, composed around 937/1530 at the Arghun court of Thattha (Sind), contain numerous verses in Turkish composed by earlier noblemen and women shows that the ruler must have been acquainted with his ancestral language (the Arghuns hailed from Harāt). Turkish was spoken at the Mughal court up to the late eighteenth century, as some manuscripts from that time attest. But the history of Indo-Turkish literature has still to be written.

### The ‘Indian style’ of Persian

The Mughal emperors contributed largely to the growth of literature in India. Under Bābur's grandson Akbar (r. 963–1014/1556–1605), major historical works were composed, in particular the *Āīnā-i Akbarī* and *Akbarnāma* by the emperor's confidant Abu-l-Faḍl (d. 1011/1602); he describes his master's rule with highly hyperbolic statements, but also offers useful information about the administration of different offices at court. His adversary (and former friend) Badā'ūnī (d. c. 1024/1615) later became extremely bitter about Akbar and his *Muntakhab-i tawārikh* contains a highly interesting, though often scathing, description of the life at court and the people in the emperor's entourage. One has to read both books to appreciate Akbar's complex personality correctly.

Akbar was interested in the translation of Hindu works into Persian, in which Badā'ūnī successfully participated (though with great aversion). Another translation that was offered to him was that of his grandfather Bābur's *Memoirs (Tuzuk)* from Turkish into Persian. The translator was the famous generalissimo of the Mughal court, Khān Khānān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm. Like his father, Bayram Khān, to whom Akbar's father Humāyūn largely owed his return to India from his Persian exile, Khān Khānān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm wrote tender verses in Persian, Turkish and Hindi, but more importantly, he was the greatest patron of poets in India. Nihāwandī's *Ma‘āthir-i Raḥīmī* enumerates no less than 104 poets who eulogized him or lived under his protection; Hindi poets likewise were fond of him. His library was the great treasure-house of Persian and related literature. One of the poets he patronized was ‘Urffī (d. 999/1591) who, like many Persian poets, had migrated to India from Iran because Shāh Ṭahmāsp (after his ‘sincere repentance’) and his successors were mainly interested in religiously coloured poetry. This migration fertilized Persian literature in India. ‘Urffī was without doubt one of the most impressive *qaṣīda*-writers in the history of Persian. Many critics have blamed him for his extreme self-aggrandizement and his literary feuds with his rival, Akbar's favourite Fayḍī (d. 1004/1595), the brother of the historian Abu-l-Faḍl); but some of his poems, filled with dark and moving images, are more than mere masterpieces of rhetoric – they also reveal a deeply suffering human heart. The comparison between ‘Urffī and Fayḍī (who also wrote an imitation of

Niẓāmī's *Khamsa*, introducing the Indian theme of Nal and Damayanti) was a favorite topic for literary critics, even in Turkey; Ottoman *qaṣīda*-writing is greatly influenced by 'Urffī's work.

'Urffī is the first representative of those poets who are called masters of the Indian style, *sabk-i Hindī*, which Hermann Ethé has elegantly styled as the 'Indian summer of Persian poetry'. 'Seek a far-fetched comparison, look for a difficult metre!' says Naẓīrī (d. 1021/1612), one of the leading masters of this style. He and Ṭālib-i Āmulī (d. 1037/1627), and somewhat later Kalim (d. 1061/1651) and Ghanī (d. 1072/1661), are typical of the new development. Traditional images are broken up; strange grammatical forms are used, such as infinitives in the plural; high-soaring philosophical thought is combined with practical wisdom; and the language is enriched by new metaphors that reflect the new items introduced into India and are often represented in painting. The hour-glass, spectacles, Chinese porcelain and velvet appear, and the use of the word *shikast* 'broken' is typical of this style, especially in the later period, which fits well with the melancholic feeling that permeates this poetry. The poet who is perhaps the easiest to understand is Kalim, to whom we owe not only fragile lyrics but also topical descriptions of palaces, manuscripts and landscapes. Zuhūrī, in the Deccan, had tried his hand at such descriptions – though even more fancifully – of the cheerful life at the court of Ibrāhīm 'Adil Shāh II of Bijāpūr.

Poetry and historiography were not restricted to the Mughal and Deccani capitals but also appeared outside the centre, such as in the province of Sind, where some valuable historical books were produced in the early seventeenth century, and where indigenous poets took up the local folk-tales such as *Sassui Punhun* when imitating Niẓāmī's *Khamsa*.

Hagiography likewise flourished and, just as the Mughal rulers were immortalized by their historiographers (see, for example, the *Pādīshāh-nāma*), the venerated saints of this or that area were also enumerated in vast volumes (thus, for example, the saints of Gujarat).

The emperors and their families indulged in literature as well. Just as Bābur wrote his *Tuzuk* in Turkish and his daughter Gulbadan the *Humāyūn-nāma* in the same language, later princes produced lyrics in both Persian and Turkish; and the heir-apparent in Shāh Jahān's days, Prince Dārā Shukōh, composed and compiled mystical texts and hoped to unite 'the two oceans', that is, Islam and Hinduism, on the basis of mystical thought. For this reason he translated, with the help of some pandits, fifty Upanishads into Persian. Dārā Shukōh was executed at the hand of his younger brother Aurangzēb in 1070/1659 and so was his favorite poet, Sarmad, a Judeo-Persian poet turned Ṣūfī, who was one of the greatest masters in the art of the *rubā'ī* (quatrain). Dārā Shukōh's elder sister Jahānārā and his niece Zēbunnisā both wrote in Persian (the latter's poetry is very moving), and, like their male relatives, they were patrons of writers and commentators on classical Ṣūfī literature such as

Rūmī's *Mathnawī* (of which, incidentally, Aurangzēb was also very fond). In the philosophical and mystical writings of the seventeenth century the influence of Ibn al-ʿArabī's theories becomes more and more evident.

The Indian style culminated in the works of Nāṣir ʿAlī Sirhindī (d. 1109/1697) and Mīrzā Bīdil (d. 1132/1721), whose works were described by the Persian refugee and poet ʿAlī Ḥazīn as completely incomprehensible. Bīdil's lyrics, of extreme difficulty, fill more than 1,000 pages in print, and his *Chār ʿunṣur*, a philosophical work in mixed prose and philosophy, as well as his *Muḥīṭ al-aʿẓam*, which point to the constant upward movement of everything created, have never been fully studied by Western scholars. But, despite the aversion of Persian scholars in Iran against Bīdil, he has greatly influenced the literatures of Afghanistan and Central Asia, and the works of both Ghālib and Iqbāl bear witness to this. The persevering reader will find, in his verse, many exquisite poetical pearls.

### Persian literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Bīdil was certainly the major figure at the turn of the eighteenth century, but not the only one. A considerable number of writers composed works in poetry or prose, often on religious themes: thus, for example, Khwāja Mīr Dard (mainly known as an Urdu poet; d. 1199/1785). His mystical *ʿIlm al-kitāb* and his Four *Rasāʾil* are written in a complicated but enjoyable Persian style. He tries to explain the mysteries of the Muḥammadan path, but also the loneliness of a religious seeker in the time of disasters. Mīr Dard's compatriot and contemporary, Shāh Walī Allāh, who wrote in Arabic as well as Persian, served the Muslims of India through his Persian translation of the Qurʾān, which was called by his admirers *iʿjāzī* (miraculous). His sons were to do the same in Urdu.

Among the poets of the nineteenth century, Mīrzā Ghālib of Delhi stands out. Although he is known mainly for his Urdu verse, he regarded his Persian poetry as much superior to his 'colourless' Urdu poetry. His *ghazals*, and even more his *qaṣīdas*, show the influence of Bīdil's convoluted style and his metaphors often seem too far-fetched. But again, as in the case of Bīdil, single verses are so moving that they became almost proverbial.

In the twentieth century it is in the first place Muḥammad Iqbāl (1877–1938) who must be mentioned among those Indo-Muslim poets who used Persian in most of their works. Inspired by the hope that his verse might reach Muslims other than those living in India, Iqbāl, first known as an Urdu poet, turned to Persian in his *Asrār-i khudī* (The Secrets of the Self), (1915), a *mathnawī* written, like all his *mathnawīs*, in the metre of Rūmī's *Mathnawī*. While he taught in this work the development of human individuality, *khudī*, he preached the strengthening of the community's Self in the *Rumūz-i bekhubdī* (The Mysteries of selflessness). In the *Payām-i Mashriq* (Message of the East),

he gave a poetical answer to Goethe's *West-Östlicher Divan*, and his *Zabūr-i 'Ajām* (1927) contains powerful, sometimes rebellious, prayer-poems. Iqbāl's masterpiece in Persian is the *Jāwīd-nāma*, a *mathnawī* describing his journey in Rūmī's company through the spheres into the Divine Presence, while discussing his political and religious ideals with representatives of various currents inside and outside Islam. The reader is amazed by the poet's wide-ranging imagination and the deep insights offered in this *mathnawī*, which is interspersed with *ghazals*, partly those of poets such as Ghālib or Nazīrī.

Iqbāl's poetry makes use of all the inherited metaphors and poetical forms, which he, however, filled with new contents and messages to brighten up the Muslims' future. Their strong rhythmical quality makes his poems easy to memorize.

## Urdu in the beginnings in the South

Iqbāl's other works are written in Urdu, and we now turn to this language and its literature. An indigenous Indian language, enriched by Arabic and Persian elements, it was usually called Hindwī in the later Middle Ages. It was filled with Islamic concepts and was written in Arabic letters (often *nasta'liq*). As a language of literature, Urdu developed first in the Deccan, perhaps thanks to the immigrants from Delhi who settled there after 727/1327. Mawlawī 'Abd al-Ḥaqq, the Bābā-i Urdū, emphasized the role of the Ṣūfis in its development into a literary language and indeed, as in other regional languages, it was the mystical preachers who first used the folk language to preach the basic concepts of mystically tinged Islam to those who did not know Arabic or Persian. Attempts at using the popular language began not only in Urdu but also in Bengali around 1400 and it is still disputed whether Amīr Khusraw's Hindwī riddles and some Urdu works ascribed to Giṣūdarāz are genuine. In Gujarat, Urdu mystical romances like Muḥammad Khūb Chishtī's *Khūb tarang* were written around 1009/1600, at a time when a major Urdu literature was already flourishing at the courts of Golconda and Bijāpūr. The Quṭbshāhī kings of Golconda were very interested in poetry and Muḥammad Quli Quṭbshāh (r. 988–1021/1580–1612), under the pen-name Ma'ānī, is the author of a collection of Dakhnī Urdu poems that reflect the colourful life at his court. His descriptive, fresh verse is quite different from the complicated Persian style in northern India. He and his successors attracted many poets, among whom Mullā Wajhī wrote a romance called *Quṭb Mushtarī* 'Polaris and Jupiter', alluding to the dynasty's name. He is also the author of one of the earliest prose works in Dakhnī Urdu, *Sab Ras* (All Senses), an allegorical story based on the Persian *Ḥusn u-dīl* (Beauty and Heart) of Fattāhī, in which all senses are involved in the love-story between the children of King Reason, who lives in the West, and Love, the ruler of the East. Ghawwāṣī wrote a *mathnawī* about the old love-story of *Sayf al-mulūk*, a favourite with Indian



writers, and a Dakhnī variant of the *Tūfī-nāma*. Among the stories inspired by classical Arabic tradition, San'atī's *Qiṣṣa-i bēnazīr* (The Incomparable Story) is based on the adventures of Tamīm al-Dārī, the Prophet's Companion, and somewhat later a highly romantic *mathnawī*, *Gulshan-i 'ishq*, (The Roseparterre of Love) was composed by Nuṣratī.

A similar development is visible in neighbouring Bījāpūr, where Ibrāhīm II 'Adilshāh (r. 988–1036/1580–1626) is credited with a small collection of singable Dakhnī verse, the *Kitāb-i nawras*, in which Hindu deities and the Muslim saint Gīsūdarāz are invoked side by side.

The Deccan was apparently also the area where, at the Shī'ī court of Golconda, *marthiyas* were first written. Such *marthiyas*, threnodies for the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn and the martyrs of Karbalā, became increasingly important and reached their culmination at the Shī'ī court of Lucknow in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. The poets Anīs (d. 1874) and Dabīr (d. 1875) extended the detailed descriptions of the suffering of the Prophet's family over hundreds of stanzas, using the medium of the six-lined *musaddas*, which thus became associated with elegiac and educational poetry. For this reason, the great reformist poems in Urdu, such as Ḥālī's *Ebb and Flood of Islam* (1879) and Iqbāl's *Shakawā* (Complaint) and its *Jawāb* (Answer) (1912) are written in *musaddas* form.

## The development in the North

While Dakhnī has produced a remarkably vast literature in the south, poets in the Mughal empire learned to use the *Urdū-i mu'allā*, 'the language of the court', comparatively late. One reason for the interest in this language around 1112/1700 may be that Bījāpūr and Golconda had been incorporated into the Mughal empire in 1686 and 1687 respectively, or else because with the death of Awrangzib in 1119/1707 the whole fabric of the empire dissolved and, instead of the Persian that served as a kind of umbrella, regional languages now became more eloquent. It is said that the arrival of Walī Deccani (d. after 1119/1707) in Delhi – whose poetry is delightful, playful and full of puns – triggered the interest of the Delhi poets in the possibilities of developing a new literature. Meetings of poets who worked on the refinement of the generally spoken language took place in the first decades of the eighteenth century in the *Zinat al-masājīd* mosque near the Red Fort in Delhi and, with the help of Khān-i Arzū, 'who did for Urdu what Aristotle did for logic', as Āzād wrote, the rhetorical rules and regulations were elaborated. Persian metres were taken over, but the problems of scanning, the treatment of aspirated consonants etc. had to be solved. Earlier literary critics held that the decisive rôle in this development was played by the 'Four pillars of Urdu', i.e. Mazhar Jan-i Jānān (d. 195/1781), a member of the Naqshbandī order who, however, wrote mainly in Persian; Mīr Dard, whose very brief Urdu *Divān*

contains some of the tenderest mystical Urdu verse ever written – flighty like footprints on water or the dew on the rose, to use two of his favourite expressions; the great lyricist is Mīr Taqī Mīr (d. 1225/1810 at a great age), who in a very sweet, often colloquial, language sings of his hopeless love and is perhaps the most ‘lyrical’ writer ever in the Urdu language; the fourth one is Mīrzā Sawdā (d. 1195/1781), a staunch Shī‘ī, who wrote *marthiyas* but whose main fame rests upon the satires in which he describes life in the disintegrating northern-Indian society in merciless but witty terms. His satires against the quack Dr. Ghawth and the story of a soldier and his miserable horse, *Tadhīk-i rūzgār* (The Laughing Stock of the Age) give a picture of the deplorable situation in Delhi. The city had been sacked by Nādir Shāh of Iran in 1152/1739 and was pillaged time and again by enemies and ‘helpers’ alike. Both Mīr Taqī Sawdā and Mīrzā Mīr speak of the fate of the once-glorious capital where ‘now tears flow instead of the river’. No patronage of poetry was left and only religious leaders such as Maẓhar and Mīr Dard remained in the ruined town, while Sawdā, and later also Mīr, migrated to Lucknow, where the *nawābs*, later kings, of Oudh extended their realms and introduced a lavish cultural life.

Instead of Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān, a modern critic would probably choose Mīr Hasan (d. 1206/1791) as the fourth pillar of Urdu because he left a delightful epic, *Sībr al-bayān* (Magic Speech) – one of those highly romantic fairy tales in which early Urdu abounds. Mīr Hasan, too, went to Lucknow, where a new style developed. The language was constantly refined until ‘it tripped on the tongue’, as M. Sadiq wittily states. The poets delighted in charming love-poems, in descriptions of their more or less frivolous beautiful friends (it was the high time of courtesans), and some poets even took to writing in *rikkhī*, the women’s idiom. Others, extremely fertile, knew how to play with the different languages of the kingdom (thus Rangīn). The *marthiya*-writers moved their audience to tears, and all the festivities connected with memorials of the imams seemed to transform Lucknow into a place of constant feasting. Even a first attempt at dramatic art was made at Lucknow. Amānat’s *Indar Sabbā* is a musical play about the ‘court of Indra’. The ‘orchid house’ Lucknow was taken over by the British in 1856 and the last king banished to Calcutta.

The British were trying to introduce a less complicated, straightforward Urdu literature for the benefit of their administrators and the publications issued in Fort William, such as *Bāgh u-bahār* (Garden and Spring), proved useful in facilitating the style, although they were never taken seriously by the true masters of Urdu literature.

One has also to mention that the old genre of the *dāstān*, the long-winded tale, continued to blossom, and there was at least one poet who did not fit into the general schema of classical Urdu, i.e. Nazīr Akbarābādī (d. 1830), whose matter-of-fact, extremely colloquial verses are a far cry from the sophisticated lyrics of the Lucknow poets. They are important as genre-pictures of the life of the lower classes of society and as a repository of very colloquial expressions.

Delhi regained some of its old importance, and round the 1830s poets rallied once more around the Mughal throne. The aged monarch Bahādur Shāh Zafar (r. 1839–1857) was a gifted calligrapher and author of some of the most lovable Urdu songs, although his poetry is certainly not as ‘great’ as is Ghālib’s. Ghālib (1797–1869) had tried hard to associate himself with the king, competing with Dhawq, whose verse is nowadays barely quoted. Ghālib’s small Urdu *Dimān* has become the favourite of most Urdu-speaking people because of its clever combination of a most sophisticated use of the ‘Indian style’ and fluent colloquial language. After the fall of Delhi in 1857, Ghālib complained about this fact in extremely archaic Persian prose but at the same time wrote his letters in fine colloquial Urdu. The great threnody on the city of Delhi, ‘which was the heart of men, jinns, nay, of the universe’, was composed by Dāgh (d. 1905), who found a niche at the Nizām’s court in Hyderabad (Deccan), a growing centre of Urdu literature.

## Post-1957 trends

After 1857 Muslim thinkers began to reconsider their approach to history and life. New literary styles developed, partly under British influence. Lucknow’s poetry appeared too frivolous, mystical poetry too escapist, and Ḥālī’s criticism of poets and poetry as well as his *musaddas* tried to introduce a new attitude into Muslim poetry and prose in order to awaken the slumbering Muslims. Novels appeared for the first time, often with educational goals. Women’s education was advocated in many of them and the past glory of the Muslims was highlighted. Such ideas were expressed in clear, simple Urdu in the work of the reformer Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (d. 1898), the founder of the Anglo-Muslim College of Aligarh, and they reached their summit in the work of Muḥammad Iqbāl. His *Complaint* and *Answer* (in which God tells the Indian Muslims that they, oblivious of their religious duties, do not deserve a better fate) soon became centre-pieces of the newly developing progressive Urdu poetry, and Iqbāl attempted in all of his later Urdu work – such as *Bāl-i Jibrīl* (Gabriel’s Wing) and *Darb-i Kalīm* (The Stroke of Moses) – to remind the Muslims of their past glory and instil strength in them for a happy future. A typical example of Iqbāl’s poetry is his ode on the mosque of Cordoba (Spain figures prominently in Indo-Muslim literature from the late nineteenth century).

In the 1930s, then, new trends appear in Urdu literature, as virtually everywhere in the Muslim world. The traditional forms were largely abandoned and free verse became the preferred vehicle, although some of the inherited symbols and images remained alive – such as the theme of ‘gallows and rope’, originally connected with the martyr-mystic al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), which is often used to allude to the fate of freedom-fighters who suffer for

their convictions. The names of Jōsh Malihābādī and even more of Fayḍ Aḥmad Fayḍ (d. 1984) stand out among the poets of modern Urdu. But even more active were and are prose-writers whose work reflects all trends and styles that appear in Western literature, so that it is difficult to predict what the future development of Urdu is going to bring.

## Sindhī, Panjabi

About the same time that Dakhnī-Urdu mystical poetry was composed in southern India, folk-poetry began to flourish in the other regional languages of the Subcontinent. The fifteenth century marks the beginning of mystically inspired poetry in various areas. This poetry is very similar in character in the Indus Valley and in the country of the five rivers, Panjab. First of all, the poets did not use the Persian metrical rules but rather went back to the indigenous forms and they took their imagery from their environment. The ubiquitous roses and nightingales of Persian and, in part, Urdu literature appear rather rarely; instead, images from the Indian tradition are taken over (the swan that feeds on pearls, the banyan-tree etc). Poetic metaphors and allegories are based on the folk-tales of the great lovers such as *Sassui Punhun* or *Sohni Mehanval*, common to Sindhī and Panjabi, while *Hir Ranjha* is typical of the Panjab and *Lila Chanesar* (a historical tale) and *Omar Marui* (the story of the abducted village girl who remains faithful to her home) are typical of Sind. The brave women in these stories, who reached union with their beloved through death after long suffering, became, in mystical writings, symbols of the longing soul, the *vīrahini* of Indian tradition.

The first known mystical verses in Sindhī, a highly complicated Prakrit-based Indian language, are Qādī Qādan's (d. 957/1551) *dōhās* (two-lined verses) which capture the atmosphere of the country very well. Shortly after him, Mādhō Lāl Ḥusayn of Lahore (d. 1001/1593) sang in powerful Panjabi verses of his mystical infatuation, while about the same time the Pathan warrior Šūfī Bāyazīd, the *Pir-i Rawshan*, preached his doctrines in his native Pashto. Thus, as in the case of Dakhnī Urdu, the foundations of literature were laid by mystical teachers. Of course, there existed a large amount of orally transmitted folk-poetry – such as lullabies, riddles, wedding-songs and ballads – but the beginnings of literature proper date to the early Mughal time. Poets in the plains (as in the Deccan) took over the spinning-songs, using the spinning of cotton as a metaphor for the *dhikr*, the thousandfold repetition of God's name or religious formulas; just as cotton becomes finer by spinning, thus the heart becomes subtler by constantly remembering God. In the late seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries, both Sindhī and Panjabi reach their zenith. In Panjabi, Sultan Bāhū of Jhang (d. 1103/1692) expressed the growing of the divine presence in the lover's heart under the image of the jasmine-tree in his *Šiharfī* (Golden Alphabet); somewhat later appear the two major figures in

Sindhī and Panjabi. Shāh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf’s (d. 1165/1752) Sindhī *Rasāʾil*, a collection of mystical songs, is almost a sacred scripture for the Sindhī, Hindus and Muslims. The poet saw the heroines of the folk-tales as models of the soul’s quest; he speaks of the Yogis as the true ‘men of God’, and praises the Prophet as the generous rain-cloud that brings mercy to the parched hearts of people. Yet Shāh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf never opens the last veil before the mysteries of union; that was left to his contemporary, the Panjabi Bullhē Shāh (d. 1167/1754), who sings without inhibition of the union between the soul and her Divine Beloved (under the imagery of *Hīr Ranjha*). He defies all distinctions of creed, race and person and numerous poets in both the Panjabi and the Sindhī tradition followed him. In Sindhī, it was especially Sachal Sarmast (d. 1826) who expressed his rapture in Sindhī and Siraykī (a dialect between Sindhī and Panjabi) as well as in Urdu and Persian. Somewhat earlier, Wārith Shāh had given the story of *Hīr Ranjha* its classical form in Panjabi after it had been rendered into Persian verse dozens of times.

In Sindhī, the ecstatic Ṣūfī poetry was somewhat modified by the sober Naqshbandīs, who used the language to explain the teachings of the Qurʾān and *Ḥadīth* in simple verses. Makhdūm Muḥammad Hāshim’s (d. 1761) *Muqaddimat al-ṣalāt* is one of the first works of this character. Slightly later, *mawlūds* were sung, small poems in honour of the Prophet and his birthday, and numerous legends about the miracles of the Prophet and the saints were composed in Sindhī. Ballads tell about historical events. From the beginning of the British occupation of Sind in 1843, the language was carefully studied, in the first place by the German missionary Ernest Trumpp, who wrote the first Sindhī grammar, based mainly on Shāh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf’s poetry. Reading-books and journals emerged, printed in Arabic, Gurmukhi and Devanagari characters, although the Arabic alphabet remains in use to this day. The indefatigable Mirzā Qalīch Beg (1854–1929) wrote more than 300 books in his mother-tongue and can be called the father of modern Sindhī literature. He translated dozens of Persian and English works, tried to use the Arabo-Persian metrical system for Sindhī poetry and wrote novels and plays, while his novel *Zinat* (1892), which deals with female education, is much more progressive than many books published in the following decades. In the first half of the nineteenth century the majority of Sindhī writers – journalists, novelists, historians – were Hindus; many of them developed a deep interest in the mystical poetry of the country without, however, realizing the deeply Islamic background of this literature, which seemed to them ‘Hinduized Islam’. After the partition in 1947 most Hindus left for India, but a remarkable activity in all fields of literature emerged. The activities of the Sindhī Adabi Board in the preservation of classical and folk-literature are very praiseworthy.

The situation in the Panjab was slightly different as most Panjabi authors who wanted to write poetry or higher prose turned to Urdu (Iqbāl is a prime example). Since much Panjabi was written in Gurmukhi script, the alphabet of

the Sikh community, the Muslims were not particularly keen on writing in this language, which all of them spoke and whose folk-poetry they enjoyed. Only comparatively recently do we find a greater output of Panjabi literature printed in Arabic characters.

## Pashto, Balochi, the Hindu Kush languages

Besides the languages of Indian background, two Iranian languages are used in the Subcontinent (now Pakistan). Both Pashto (also spoken in Afghanistan) and Balochi contain many powerful ballads and folk-tales. Balochi literature was only rarely written down, but the history of Pashto goes back to the Middle Ages. Developed then under the influence of religious leaders like Pīr-i Rawshan and his adversary Ākhund Darwāza, Pashto produced a masterly poet in the tribal chief Khushḥāl Khān Khattak (d. 1100/1689), who for some time was imprisoned by Awrangzīb in India, which he compared to hell. His poetry comprises of all genres, from passionate love-lyrics to educational quatrains, from mystical songs to practical advice on falconry and medicine. His language, though following to a certain extent classical Persian models, is straightforward and matter-of-fact, quite different from the involved Indo-Persian verse written during his lifetime. As a good number of Khushḥāl's forty-nine sons were also active in poetry, he has been rightfully called 'the father of Pashto poetry'.

The mystics who wrote in Pashto rarely indulged in the vast imagery of 'Unity of Being' as did the mystics of the plains; their style, especially in the case of Raḥmān Bābā (d. c. 1118/1707), is reminiscent of early Persian Ṣūfī poetry and some poems remind the reader of the deep piety and sonorous sound of the Psalms.

Pashto boasts a delightful popular poetry. Besides expressive ballads, one finds the genre of *landay* or *tappa*, verses that consist of two lines of nine plus thirteen syllables and express love, tenderness and courage; this genre is somewhat similar to the Japanese *haiku*.

The Dardic languages of the Hindu Kush, such as Shīna and Khowar, have their own literary forms. Recent linguistic research (especially by German scholars) into these and other slowly disappearing idioms brings to light interesting religious poetry; the genre of radio play has become quite popular in the Hindu Kush valleys.

As for Burushaski, a language not connected with any other linguistic tradition, it has old folk-traditions (such as fairy-tales), but there is also religious poetry in Persianizing style written by some members of the Ismā'īlī community of Hunza. It would be interesting to compare these poems to the Ismā'īlī tradition of the plains, the so-called *gināns*.

## Gujarati

These *gināns*, noted down in Khojki script, which is used only by the Ismāʿīlīs, are ascribed to the medieval *pīrs*, the missionaries who converted parts of the population in Sind and Gujarat to the Ismāʿīlī version of Islam. They are often composed in mixed language (Sindhī, Cutchi and Gujarati constitute the main elements) and contain devotional songs and exhortations, but also semi-mythological stories such as the *Dasamo avatār*, with ʿAlī, the first Shīʿī imam, appearing as the hoped-for tenth *avatār* of Vishnu. This literature is becoming available only recently.

Like its northern neighbours, Gujarati too has a long tradition of mystical songs on the folk level. The Bohorās, an Ismāʿīlī sect, use Gujarati (besides Arabic) for educational and exhortative poetry and prose; some mystical verses are known from the Middle Ages. The Aghakhānī Ismāʿīlīs use it for *firmāns* (orders) of the Agha Khān, but also in the process of modernizing and simplifying the complicated language of the *gināns*.

## Kashmīrī

Kashmīrī, an Indo-European language, has a lovely indigenous lyrical tradition but has also adopted epical works from the Persian tradition, such as *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā*. But the province became an important home for Persian from c. 802/1400 (see above).

## Bengali

It is remarkable that the same theme of *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā* (based on Sūra XII of the Qurʾān) also inspired some of the earliest works in medieval Bengali. This language is replete with Islamic legends and their elaboration because the country's literature grew under Šūfī influence and thus most themes that occur in classical Persian were reflected in Bengal. Rūmī's *Mathnawī* was known even among the Hindus as early as the fifteenth century, and Bengali mystical poetry sometimes blends the reed-flute that is invoked at the beginning of the *Mathnawī* with Lord Krishna's flute. Such syncretism is particularly visible in the songs of the *bauls*, or folk mystics. Bengali writers composed epics about the Prophet's night journey (*mīʿrājīyya*) and the life of the Prophet (*Rasūl vijāy*) as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Unfortunately, Muslim Bengali literature has not yet found a researcher who is willing to do justice to this poetry by recognizing the strongly Islamic roots in the imagery instead of tracing back generally known Šūfī concepts to Hindu influence. Since Partition, the artistically minded Bengalis have excelled in poetry and fine short stories, while the late Jāsim al-Dīn skilfully blended tradition and folk-themes in his poems and plays.

## Malayalam and Tamil

It is not only the languages spoken by Muslim majorities and which generally have Indo-European roots which have produced Muslim literature, but also the southern-Indian Dravidian languages. Brahui, the only Dravidian language spoken in Pakistan, has hardly any literature, but there is literature in Malayalam, for Muslim settlements on the Konkan coast of India go back to early times. The leading author in Malayalam in our day, Valkom Bashir Muḥammad, is a Muslim (some of his short stories are available in English). His writings reflect the problems of Muslim families in Kerala and the hardships the Muslim minority has to face there.

Even more important is the Muslim Tamil literature. Stories of Arabic origin, such as the saga of Tamīm al-Dārī, a favourite with the Deccani writers, were elaborated in Tamil and in the early eighteenth century one finds a lengthy poetical description of the life of the Prophet (*Sirapurāna*), which must have catered to the spiritual needs of the Muslim population in South India. Even more surprisingly, there are lullabies and rocking-songs for 'baby Muḥammad', as Paula Sanders has recently shown. More research may produce even more unexpected features.

The Muslim literature of the Subcontinent, which has developed over nearly 1,000 years, well reflects the variety of races and languages of the Muslim community, which comprises of every possible aspect of literature, from Arabic theological writing to emotional love-songs for the Prophet, from complicated Persian lyrics to powerful epics and ballads in Pashto. It shows the Muslim world in its fullness, but much research is still to be done before all its treasures will be discovered.



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## Chapter 8

# MALAY LITERATURE

*Mohamed Taib Bin Osman*

### INTRODUCTION

Scholars have found it logical to describe Malay literature as having two parts: classical literature and modern literature. The former refers to the literary expression nurtured within the traditional society, while the latter refers to the writings resulting from socio-cultural contacts the Malays experienced with the West since the nineteenth century. Chronologically, the nineteenth century is the watershed between the two expressions of literature as well as of the nature of the society that nurtured them. However, in reality the two overlap, as even in the present century traditional literary elements prevail.

Traditional society can be said to be the heritage of the past. The accumulated collective memory of civilization is encapsulated in the various forms of literary expression. Although these were mainly the products of a certain period – Malay Islamic civilization began in the thirteenth century and was moribund by the nineteenth century – they reflect the Malay civilization over the ages. Thus in oral tradition, mythologies, legends and folktales, the collective memory goes back to the animistic beliefs of the people. The period of Hindu-Buddhist influence which began in the first century AD and extended to the thirteenth century had left not only the great Hindu epics the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*, but also ideological concepts such as god-kings, the laws of *karma* and the pyramidal structure of society. But the main bulk of classical literature relates to the Malay-Islamic civilization, for this era saw the crystallization of the Malay mind and the epitome of Malay culture and social values.

The West established its presence in the Malay world in the sixteenth century, but it is not until the mid-nineteenth century that it brought extensive and irreversible changes to the local culture, albeit more in the material and physical sense. Ideological influences are also present, but not enough to transform the bases of local civilization. In literature, although the seeds of a

modern literary tradition were sown by the mid-nineteenth century when realism in writing made its appearance, it was not until the twenties that a break with the traditional forms was concertedly attempted. In the Dutch-held territory, the novel in its true form appeared in 1922 along with new poetic expressions. But the conscious effort to forge a modern literary tradition in Malay, which by then had been adopted as a vehicle for Indonesian nationalism, was made in 1933 when the literary magazine *Pujangga Baru* (New Writer), became the rallying point for a new breed of writers. The modern writing in Malay developed into full bloom after the War of Independence, propelling yet a further dynamism in literary expression. However, from the seventies until today, there has not been a marked and significant development in literature in Indonesia.

In the British-held territory, the twenties saw some innovating elements in literary expression and this trend continued until the outbreak of the 1941 war in the Pacific. But modern literature did not emerge until some young writers – inspired by events in Indonesia (including the dynamism in literary output) – formed a group calling itself *Angkatan Sasterawan' 50* (Generation of Fifties Writers). Contact with British colonial rulers did not include intellectual nourishment. Western education provided the basic skills to live in a colonial society but failed to awaken the bulk of the subjected people to the richness of Western intellectual tradition, barring some political philosophy which was used to turn the table on their colonial masters. Since the days of *Angkatan Sasterrawan' 50*, writing in Malay has continued to develop into a modern tradition within a short span of time, although with some support from the official quarters.

## Classical literature

Classical Malay literature can be categorized as follows, reflecting the variegated expressions which survive to the present century:

### THE FOLK OR ORAL TRADITION

In the traditional society of the Hindu-Buddhist era, the royal centres, whereto the learned and the Brahmin (priests) flocked, were the focus of the 'great tradition', while in the villages and settlements outside the pale of the civilizational centres, the 'little tradition', or folk tradition, flourished. This dichotomy continued up to the twentieth century. However, in a modern society the 'little tradition' can exist among the 'unlettered' populace, even in the cities.

*Myths and mythologies*

Myths are narratives pertaining to the belief in gods or a pantheon, deities, giants, ghosts and other supernatural beings believed to wield powers that can influence the life of man. Surviving up to the twentieth century are Malay myths rationalizing the powers invoked by the *bomob* and *pawang* (traditional specialists) in conducting rituals such as healing the sick, breaking ground for an agricultural venture or even locating lost items. A common theme is the nature or origin of the beings invoked or the subject being dealt with. Besides, there are myths supporting the structure of the society. These tales relate the origin of chiefs, rulers and kings, coming from the bamboo-clump, arising from the foam in the sea or being carried on the head of an elephant. The extraordinary genesis of the ruler therefore justifies his position as the head of his kingdom or territory. Other categories of these myths have come down as tales explaining nature and the origin of the natural elements such as mountains and lakes, the power of lightning and thunder, the nature or being of supernatural entities such as ghosts and deities, the unusual shape of landmarks and rock-formations, or the meaning of the names of localities or even states such as Kelantan or Perak.

*Legends*

Legends are folk-stories, relating events purporting to have taken place in the past, especially to explain present phenomena; telling the great deeds of the heroes of the past, but still revered today; or accounting for the local history of places and landmarks. To the first belongs the legend of Si Tenggang, the ungrateful son who was cursed and turned into stone by his mother for not wanting to acknowledge that she was his mother in the presence of his rich and beautiful wife. To the second belong the legends of great personages like Badang (the strong man of old Singapore) or Panglima Hitam (the Robin Hood of Kedah peasants). And the third includes the legends of Bukit Merak in Kelantan or the dragon of Tioman Island.

*Animal tales*

The repertoire of the old Malay story-teller (known as the *penglipur lara*, 'soother of woes') of animal tales must have been very rich. The characteristics to be seen in animals are accounted for in tales such as why the python lost its venom, how the tiger acquired its stripes, or why the sea-snake is the most deadly of its kind. The Islamic story about the escape of the Holy Prophet from his pursuers provides favourite tales for the Malay folk. It rationalizes the killing of the house-lizard on Friday eve because it is told that the lizard tried to betray Muḥammad by pointing with its tail to where he was

hiding. But it was sinful to harm the spider because it had spun its web at the mouth of the cave, thus side-tracking the Qurayshī pursuers. But most epical is the *Sāng kāncil*, the mouse-deer. Like the trickster it is, it has become the focus of many tales, cheating and outwitting much bigger and stronger animals in the Malay jungle of old.

*Malay folk-tales*

Besides the *penglipur lara*, some localities feature a specialized way in story-telling. In Kedah and Perlis, known as *Awang Batil*, the teller beats a rhythm on a metal bowl while reciting his tale. He embellishes further by donning appropriate masks to highlight his story-line. In Kelantan and Terengganu, *Tuk Selampit* intones his tale accompanied by a rebab, a kind of stringed fiddle. In Hulu (upriver) Tembeling, Pahang, the female story-tellers rely on their melodious voices to relate stories, which sometimes take two or three night-sessions (two to three hours per session) to complete. These tales belong to the *Märchen* category, telling stories about the adventures of princes and princesses, colourful romances and battles and of course superhuman feats and magic.

To have a glimpse at how an epic of the 'great tradition' was converted into a folk-tale, we have the example of *Hikayat Seri Rama*, collected in the last century in Perak. Some *dramatis personae* and place names were localized – such as Tuan Puteri Si Kebun Bunga for Sita, Shah Numan for Hanuman, Kacapuri for Langkapuri, or *lebai* and *haji* (local village dignatories) in place of the epical warriors. Only the basic story-line and names such as Seri Rama, Rawana and Raja Laksamana help us to recognize its true origin, the Hindu epic of *Rāmāyana*. There are hundreds of these folk-tales collected and published so far. But those retrieved from the well-known story-tellers of the previous century (like Pawang Ana and Mir Hasan) could reveal the nature of these tales through their titles like *Raja Donan*, *Awang Sulung Merah Muda*, *Malim Deman* or *Raja Muda*. They all allude to the main character, who bears a high-status name in the village environment.

Subsumed under the folk-tales are those which are supposed to invoke mirth and amusement among their audience. The tales of the straight and dull-witted Pak Pandir; the luckless pious man, Lebai Malang; the sharp and tricky Si Luncai and Pak Belakang; the silly Pak Kadok, whose fighting-cock wins but his village is lost as a stake, are some examples. Mat Jenin is a dreamer who, while climbing the coconut-palm, dreams of the fortunes he would rake from his commercial ventures, beginning with the sales of the coconuts he intends to pluck. But alas, his dreaming makes him lose his hold and causes his death. Thus the saying *angan-angan Mat Jenin* (dreams of Mat Jenin) refers to a dream unattainable and futile. However, the new Malay generation gives the tale a twist: Mat Jenin makes his dreams come true, an inspiration for the modern entrepreneur.

## THE 'GREAT' OR WRITTEN TRADITION

Literary products belonging to the 'great' or written tradition are usually written in the Jawi script, adopted from the Arabic alphabet, and had their origins in the royal centres which supported cultural and religious activities and personages; they survived because they were copied again and again by later scribes. A great many survived to this day because they were usually preserved in the homes of the Malay aristocrats, who regarded them as heirlooms, and also because of the activity of the European colonial officials and scholars who collected and preserved them in the learned centres and museums in Europe. Surveying classical Malay literature, we can conveniently categorize them as follows:

*Epic literature*

A heritage from the Hindu-Buddhist era, Indian epics like that *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* and lesser works like the stories of the Pandawas and Bhoma were popular in Malay literary circles. They are believed to have been derived and translated from Javanese literature, which is richly imbued with Sanskrit literary elements. In spite of the religious injunction against it by a Muslim scholar as early as the seventeenth century, Indian epic literature remained popular not only in Malay culture, inspiring the folk-tales with its colourful and grandiose description of battles and romances, but also in Malay theatrical art, such as *wayang kulit* (shadow play). Attempts to give it an Islamic colouring extended from minimal to total adaptation, rendering it into a tale with prominent Muslim elements. The *Ḥikāyat Seri Rama*, which is the *Rāmāyana*, has a part inserted at the beginning linking the epic to the story of the Prophet Adam, thus rationalizing the epic's presence in a Muslim civilization. But an extensive adaptation is also possible, as the *Ḥikāyat Marakarma* is transformed into *Ḥikāyat Si Miskin*, and the *Ḥikāyat Serangga Bayu* is also known as *Ḥikāyat Ahmad Muḥammad*. Epics of Indian provenance would be known as *Ḥikāyat Seri Rama*, *Ḥikāyat Pendawa Lima*, *Ḥikāyat Sang Bhoma*, *Ḥikāyat Sang Samba* and *Ḥikāyat Pendawa Jaya*.

Javanese literature bequeathed the epic called the *Panji* cycle. Many *Panji* tales are spun around the figure of Prince Inu Kartapati of Kuripan and his betrothed, and later consort, Raden Galoh Cindra Kirana. The leavening element of the epic cycle is the numerous plots surrounding the adventures of the two lovers, who were constantly in disguise, and the various circumstances in which their paths crossed, and yet they are not aware of the presence of their true selves. Some of the epical tales are rendered in a poetic form, called the *syair*, such as *Syair Ken Tambuhan* or *Syair Panji Semarang*. In prose, among many others, are *Ḥikāyat Raja Kuripan*, *Ḥikāyat Cekel Waneng Pati*, *Ḥikāyat Charang Kulina* and *Ḥikāyat Panji Wila Kesuma*.

A truly Malay heroic epic is the *Ḥikāyat Hang Tuah*. It must have been put together after the fall of Malacca to the Portuguese in 1511, for it centres around the exploits of Hang Tuah, who served his lord, the Sultan of Malacca, and made the kingdom the epitome of Malay greatness. Hang Tuah was not only a warrior well known throughout the Malay world for his prowess, but also as a faithful servant, a good son, a smart trader, a reliable diplomat, a polyglot and a lady-killer. In fact he is a composite character representing all the ideals one wishes for a Malay youth. A classic example of literary tragedy is to be found in *Ḥikāyat Hang Tuah*, which gives rise to many dramatic presentations conveying different points of view. True to his fealty to his feudal lord, Hang Tuah chooses to combat and kill his closest friend, who had rebelled against the ruler for wrongfully punishing Hang Tuah.

Epics from the Islamic world in the Middle East, depicting Muslim warriors from the first days of Islam, were known to the Malays quite early. The tales of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya and Amīr Ḥamza have been mentioned as the epics requested by the Malaccan warriors on the eve of the Portuguese invasion of that city.

#### *Sejarah or histories*

The Malay-Islamic civilization, which spans a period from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, saw the rise and fall of numerous polities identified as sultanates along the trade routes. Some became prominent in their time and some had a short existence. One common feature of these polities was that they left their histories, or *sejarah*. Probably written by court scribes and then slavishly copied by others, even as late as in the nineteenth century, the *sejarah* mainly focuses on the reigns of the rulers, their order of succession over the period, their genealogies and a record of significant events and happenings. Linked very much to the dignity of the state, the *sejarah* seems to buttress the pyramidal social structure of the polity.

However, unlike the Hindu concept of *deva-rāja* or god-king, Islam introduced through the *sejarah* the concept of just guardianship of the ruler over his *rakyat*, or people. The sultan was Allāh's representative on earth, looking after his people as a shepherd would his flock. The genealogy of the Malaccan rulers, for example, traces their ancestors to the great warrior kings, from al-Iskandar Dhu-l-Qarnayn to the mythical kings of the Indian sub-continent (e.g. Rāja Suran) and through just rulers like Anūshirwān the Just of Persia.

Some of the well-known histories include *Ḥikāyat Rāja-Rāja Pasai* (Samudra-Pasai), *Sejarah Melayu* or *Salatus-Salātin* (Malacca), *Silsilah Rāja-Rāja Brunei* (Brunei), *Ḥikāyat Aceh* (Acheh), *Ḥikāyat Patani* (Patani) or *Ḥikāyat Merong Mahawangsa* (Kedah). Besides such histories, another type of historical writing includes a direct narrative of events, sometimes in *syair* (such as *Syair Perang Makassar* or *Syair Inggeris Menyerang Kota*).

*Islamic religious literature*

Subsumed under this genre are various forms of religious writing, from spurious traditions to scholarly *kitābs* by the ‘*ulamā*’ and Šūfī writings. Popular traditions emphasizing the miraculous powers of the Holy Prophet were widespread, such as *Ḥikāyat nūr Muḥammad*, *Ḥikāyat Bulan Berbelah*, *Ḥikāyat mu’jizat Nabī*, or *Ḥikāyat Nabī Wafāt*. Tales of the prophets were to be found in *Kitāb Qiṣas al-anbiyā*, *Ḥikāyat Nabī Nūḥ* or *Ḥikāyat Nabī Yūsuf*. Other spurious traditions include *Ḥikāyat Rājā Jamjuma*, *Ḥikāyat Rājā Handak* or *Ḥikāyat Rājā Khibar*. Such writings appealed to the unlettered folk, but played their part in the early propagation of Islam.

At the royal centres such as Malacca, Aceh, Brunei or Banten, serious religious works were turned out by the ‘*ulamā*’ in the service of the ruler. Malacca and Samudra-Pasai, according to *Sejarah Melayu*, used to pose theological questions to each other, while the court of Aceh hosted well-known ‘*ulamā*’s like Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranirī, Ḥamza Fansurī and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatra’ī. The latter two were local scholars who were also renowned Šūfī thinkers. The court of Aceh has bequeathed a rich religious literature to the Malay world, including translations of works by leading Islamic scholars, works on religious principles and issues in Malay (known as *Kitāb Jawi*) and monumental Šūfī poetry.

Ḥamza Fansurī’s collections of *syair* – such as *Syair Perahu*, *Syair Dagang*, or *Syair Burung Perigai* – are still revered today for their poetic skill as well as their erudite Šūfī thought on ‘being’, or *wujūdīyya*. Even books on statecraft were written, such as the *Bustān al-salāṭīn* or *Tāj al-salāṭīn*, giving the mundane subject a religious as well as a philosophical dimension.

*The romances*

The romantic *ḥikāyat* derives mainly from the treasure-house of Arabic, Persian and Indian literature, with which the Malays had come into contact. The tales were either translated or retold and carry titles like *Ḥikāyat Lang-Lang Buana*, *Ḥikāyat Gul Bakawali* or *Ḥikāyat Marakarma*, which must be of Indian origin. Others, like *Ḥikāyat Isma Yāsīm*, *Ḥikāyat Bustamam* or *Ḥikāyat Bakhtiyar*, must have originated from Persia or Arabia. There is a preponderance of moral messages in the narratives and this seems to be a mark of Muslim romantic literature. *Ḥikāyat Bayan Budiman* and *Ḥikāyat Kalīla wa-Dimna* are two cycles of moral stories already popular in Muslim countries. These romances must have circulated widely in the urban centres when lithographic printing was introduced in the nineteenth century. They provided material for the leisure-reading of the urban dwellers in Singapore and Penang.

*Poetry*

The quatrain rhyming *abab* with two sections – the first two lines, the *pembayang maksud*, and the last two conveying the message – is the mainstay of traditional poetic form. Called *pantun*, it is even used for a competition, not only to test the poetic skills of one side, but the wit and sharpness of the message as well. But usually *pantun*, which is essentially oral poetry, is invoked to grace various occasions, from a welcoming speech to betrothal and wedding ceremonies. For example, to express gratitude, one is bound to quote a stock *pantun*:

*Pisang mas di bawa belayar  
Masak sebiji atas peti  
Hutang mas boleh dibayar  
Hutang budi dibawa mati.*

The first two lines have no connection to the second two lines except to provide the rhyming scheme. It is the last two that matter and convey the meanings: If gold is owed, it can be repaid, But if it is gratitude, it's carried to the grave.

The stock *pantun* functions like a proverb. However, the beauty of the *pantun* is that it can be improvised as the occasion demands it. Two important elements need to be observed: the rhyming scheme and the terseness and appropriateness of the message. Although essentially oral poetry, *pantun* has become a written tradition as literacy spreads in the Malay world.

*Syair* is written poetry, consisting of four-line stanzas rhyming *aaaa* in a flowing narrative. However, the narrative may not be a story or a tale, but can be an exposition conveying a teaching or advisory message. We have seen the *syair* form being used as a vehicle for histories or *sejarah*, epics, romances, religious teachings and Şūfī thoughts. The form appears to be rigid as each stanza faithfully keeps to the *aaaa* rhyme, but the content can be as versatile as the fancies of the author. The art has survived until the present century, as indicated by the work of Sultan ‘Umar ‘Alī Şāfī al-Dīn of Brunei, who chronicled his country's constitutional development in his *Syair Perlembagaan Brunei*.

There are other forms of poetry in Malay, such as *gurindam*, *seloka*, *mentera*, *teromba* and the foreign-inspired *mathnawī*, *rubā‘ī* and *ghazal*, but they are not very popular and rarely invoked, unless the occasion calls for them. *Pantun* and *syair* are therefore the basic poetical forms in classical Malay literature.

MODERN LITERATURE

*The beginnings*

By the nineteenth century there were already entrenched colonial pockets throughout the Malay world, in Batavia (now Jakarta in Indonesia), Singapore or Penang. Although literary activities in these places still appreciated classical



works, the need for a new form of writing had emerged. The printing-press, newspapers and the requirements of urban life helped its emergence. Although classical romances were ready materials for the lithograph press at the time, the revolution in thinking that moulded the new literary expression was more important. The writings of ‘Abd Allāh Munshī, dubbed the Father of modern Malay literature, reflect such thinking.

Essentially a language teacher and a clerk to Stamford Raffles, the so-called founder of modern Singapore, ‘Abd Allāh Munshī was a chronicler of his time. His accounts of early Singapore are embodied in his *Ḥikāyat ‘Abd Allāh* (The Story of ‘Abd Allāh) and his voyage to Kelantan, a traditional Malay kingdom on the north-east of the peninsula, was recorded in *Kisah pelayaran ‘Abd Allāh* (‘Abd Allāh’s Sea Voyage). Not properly belonging to the traditional Malay society, ‘Abd Allāh Munshī can be said to be an outsider looking in. But not belonging to the new colonial society either, he was also looking into such a society from the outside. The result was that his writings are said to be harsh towards the old Malay society and at the same time paint his English benefactors rosily. Thus, he earned from his contemporaries the epithet *‘Abd Allāh padri* (‘Abd Allāh, the padre) and, from later commentators, *talibarut Inggeris* (English sympathiser).

‘Abd Allāh Munshī’s ‘world-view’ represents a new outlook on the Malay world. Gone are the days of the kings and princes, ghosts and demons, fairies and goblins, or even the *nakhoda* (sea-captain) or the *khoja* (merchant) of Malay literature. Such narratives gave way to newspaper-reporting, serious textbooks for schools and news from abroad. The presence of the newspapers and the beginning of a new educational system helped to mould the new way of thinking. But serious literary works were not attempted until the Twenties.

### *The rise of the novel*

It was no accident that the novel as a modern form appeared first on the horizon of modern Malay literature. It has close affinities to the folk-tale or the written romantic *ḥikāyat*, except that the novel does not dwell on the never-never land, but is firmly anchored to this world. However, the evolution of the Malay novel follows progressive stages. The novels of the twenties were still entitled *ḥikāyat*, like *Ḥikāyat Farida Hanum* (The Story of Farida Hanum) published in 1926 and *Ḥikāyat Percintaan Kasih Kemudaan* (The Story of Youthful Love) published in 1927. The former, by Saiyi Shaykh al-Hādī, a Muslim reformist bent on modernizing Malay Muslim society based on Islamic teachings, is set in Egypt and dwells on the issues of the emancipation of women, correct behaviour between males and females, patriotism towards one’s fatherland and modernism in the Islamic way. The modern *ḥikāyats* by Saiyi Shaykh al-Hādī, and those by other writers, feature a foreign background, thus not far removed from the setting in fairy-lands and heavenly kingdoms.

Novels with a local setting and *dramatis personae* also made their appearance by the mid-twenties. *Kawan Benar* (True Friend) by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Rashīd appeared in 1927, others like *Lakah Salma?* (Is it Salma?) by the same author appeared in 1929, and *Perjodohan Yang Setia* (The Faithful Marriage Match) by ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ḥājj Aḥmad appeared in 1926. Translated novels of Western origin were also introduced by the colonial government through the Education Service. *Treasure Island*, *Coral Island*, *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *The Invisible Man* were some of the works translated by the Malay Translation Bureau from simplified editions. Starting in 1925, the Bureau was attached to Sultan Idrīs Teachers’ Training College and was made responsible for the production of readers under its two programmes: the Malay School Series and the Malay Home Library Series.

In the Dutch-held territory there appeared by the twenties some serious novels, mainly by Sumatran writers, taking up the issues of outdated *adat* (customs) still practised by the traditional society, causing dislocation to young men already imbued with Western thinking. The favourite theme is true love engendered by a cosmopolitan life-style and threatened by traditionally regulated matches already arranged by the elders back in the village. Novels like *Azab dan Sangsara* (Sufferings) by Merari Siregard, *Siti Nurbayal* – also known as *Maksud tak sampai* (Desire Unattained) – by Marah Rusli, or *Salah asuhan* (Wrong Upbringing) by Abdul Moeis were considered pioneers of the modern novel in Malay.

But it was the thirties that saw a conscious literary awakening in the Malay world. Spearheaded by a group of intellectuals in Batavia who founded the movement *Pujangga Baru*, novels with clear and conscious messages were attempted. *Layar terkembang* (Full Sail) by Sultan Takdir Alisjahbana, which appeared in 1936, is a well-constructed novel dealing with the dilemmas of an emancipated modern woman. *Belunggu* (Shackles) by Armijn Pane tackles the pitfalls of women too emancipated in a modern society. Even on the Malay peninsula, new horizons in novel-writing emerged. Led by the intellectuals who were aware and conscious of the colonial stranglehold on the native people, novels dealing with the theme of patriotism and nationalism were published. *Putera Gunung Tahan* (The Son of Mount Tahan) by Ishak Ḥājj Muḥammad and *Mari kita berjuang* (Let Us Struggle) by ‘Abd Allāh Sidek are two among many. In fact, a series invoking the greatness of the Malays during the Malaccan Golden Age was written by Aḥmad Bakhtiyar. The historical novel was a favourite genre to convey the spirit of nationalism against colonial surveillance.

The Japanese occupation and the ensuing struggle for independence from Dutch colonial rule brought new heights to novel-writing among writers in Indonesia. Not only did the war experience provide a fertile ground for subjects to write about, but the novel furnished the writers with sensitive insights into man himself. *Jalan tak ada hujung* (An Unending Road) by Mukhtar

Lubis deals with the various forms of fear that man has to grapple with; *Atbeis* by Achdiat K. Mihadja tackles the issue of godlessness in a society traditionally imbued with religiosity, albeit in various forms; *Keluarga gerilja* (Guerilla Family), by the internationally acclaimed writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer, depicts the various facets of suffering a family is caught in during unusual times, such as the War of Independence. By the seventies, however, novel-writing did not seem to bloom in Indonesian circles except for works that emerged once in a while, including new attempts by previous writers like Pramoedya Ananta Toer upon his release from detention on Buru Island. Such works include *Grotto Azura* by Sultan Takdir Alisyanhbana or *Bumi Manusia* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

The post-war years saw a renewed vigour in novel writing on the Malay peninsula. The early years up to the fifties were a continuation of the pre-war traditions. Didactic novels portraying social ills and their remedies, indirect expressions of patriotism and contemporary social issues dominate the themes. Aḥmad Luṭfi's *Pelayan* (Waitress), *Bilik 69* (Room 69) and *Subuh di Tepi laut* (Dawn by the Beach) are examples of the first theme; *Panglima awang* (Awang the Warrior) by Hārūn Amin al-Rashīd and *Barisan Zubayda* (The Zubayda Movement) by Ḥamza represent the second; while *Rumah itu duniaku* (The House in My World) by Ḥamza and *Musāfir* (Wanderer) by Ḥasan 'Alī represent the third.

Independence in 1957 brought the creation of *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, a government agency charged with the task of promoting the national language and literature. It organized competitions in novel-writing from time to time and many well-written novels resulted from such efforts. By the sixties, there emerged ground-breaking novels, such as *Salina* (Salina, the protagonist of the story) by Samad Said, *Desa pingitan* (Nurturing Village) by Ibrāhīm 'Umar, *Tidak ada jalan keluar* (No Way Out) by S. Markasan and *Angin hitam dari kota* (Black Wind from the City) by Wahab 'Alī. These efforts signalled more to come. Writers who have etched their names as novelists and have consistently turned out respectable works include Arena Wati, Shanon Aḥmad, Keris Mas, A. Samad Said, A. Samad Ismail, 'Abd Allāh Ḥusain, Anwar Ridwān, Azīz Jahpin, Alias Hārūn, Yaḥyā Ismail and many others. Women novelists would include Adība Amin, Khadija Hāshim, Salmi Manja, Zahara Nawawī and Fāṭima Busu.

### *The short story*

The short story, or *cerpen* (acronym for *cerita pendek*), is a popular genre because it has been the tradition of Malay newspapers to carry a short story at least once a week. It has, as its antecedent, anecdotal tales of traditional literature. In the thirties, a well-known short-story writer was 'Abd al-Raḥīm Kajai, whose contributions appeared in the newspaper he edited. It was the

post-war years that saw the short story being developed stage by stage into the matured form it is today. Beginning with didactic tales like those of ‘Abd al-Rahīm Kajai, giving advice to the readers through examples in the narrative, the short story became a vehicle for national aspiration, redressing social ills, voicing protests for the oppressed, crying for the poor and all sorts of social dissatisfaction. As such it was topical. However, the exposure to other literature and a better educational background of the writers – including university graduates – has matured the short story, which now transcends narrow and limited visions. It is not uncommon today to read short stories with philosophical slants, psychological insights, ideological leanings or sociological analyses. The novelists also delve into short-story writing, and so we get names like Shahnnon Ahmad, Keris Mas, Samad Said and Samad Ismail besides younger writers like ‘Azīzī ‘Abd Allāh, Affandi Hassan, ‘Uthmān Kelantan, ‘Alī Majod, Alias ‘Alī, Nora, Mana Sikana and a host of others. The women writers include Khadija Hāshim, Salmi Manja, Fāṭima Busu, Zahrah Ariff, Sri Diah, Zahara Nawawī and others.

### *Poetry*

The free verse called *sajak*, whose poetic forms like *pantun* or *syair* are rigidly regulated, is symbolic of the break with the past. The transition can be seen in the twenties when poets such as Rustam Affendy or Muḥammad Yamīn in the Dutch-held territory gave vent to their feelings, although the *pantun* and *syair* four-line structure was still retained. The thirties saw the stalwarts of *Pujangga Baru* such as Amīr Ḥamza, Sanusi Pane, Sultan Takdir Alisjahbana, Armijn Pane or R. M. Dajoh penning their ideas and insights into *sajak*, although the four-line stanza was still evident. The post-war years witnessed the rise of young writers who revolutionized poetry-writing in Malay. The trauma of the war, the struggle for independence and the deprivation and ravages entailed by that had sharpened the writers’ sight so as to bring out in their poetry the true image of man. Working with the slogan ‘human universalism’, poets like Chairil Anwar, Sitor Sitomurang, Ajip Rosidi and others were no longer bound to the confines of their political or cultural boundaries in the quest of their poetry writing.

The growth of modern *sajak* in Singapore and Malaysia was inspired by writers in Indonesia in the early post-war years. ‘Uthmān Awang and Masuri S. N. were two among many whose experimentations with *sajak* attracted much attention. A. Samad Said came later, but the three can be said to be the model usually emulated by aspiring young poets who vied for a place in the newspapers. Some of the poems have been collected in anthologies so that it is now easy to trace a well-known *sajak*, for otherwise one would simply be buried under the heap of the newspapers. Besides the three mentioned above, the names of Kemala, T. Alias Taib, Baḥār al-Dīn Ismail, Salmi Manja,

Muhammad Hajj Salleh, Jaffar H.S., Rejab F.I., Lim Swee Tin, Latif Mohiddin, Dharmawijaya and Suhaimi Hājj Muhammad are some of the many that have graced the newspaper and magazine pages with their poetry. Apart from their preoccupation to convey significant and in-depth ideas, the poets are very conscious of their craft. Perhaps a quotation from a poem by Jaffa H.S. would encapsulate the world of modern poetry in Malay:

When love poems become mute,  
I would still persuade the world to sing,  
And in the misty morning I would stand,  
With a computer I would dub faith,  
And design an entity,  
Which I would call God.

It is a world reflecting the unending drive to seek freedom from the shackles of society and time.

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Chapter 9

LITERATURE IN AFRICAN  
LANGUAGES

*Jan Knappert*

Ever since the first Islamic literature was printed in Africa just over a hundred years ago, an incredible wealth of literary works has been published for the benefit of the scholar, and much of it has been translated for the benefit of the literary enthusiast. Yet, that is only the tip of the iceberg. In Swahili alone, a whole library is waiting to be published; this literature is partly preserved in manuscripts in Arabic script, partly still present in the minds of the senior Swahili scholars living their modest lives along the East African Coast. In West Africa too, discoveries of old manuscripts are still being made and oral traditions are at last being recorded, edited and published.

Vast is the field and few are the workers, partly because the Islamic literatures of Africa are enjoying neither the interest of anthropologists, nor that of students of African literature.

Manuscripts in Arabic script are known to exist in not less than twenty African languages, namely, Fula, Dagomba, Ganda, Gurage, Harari, Hausa, Kabyle, Kanuri, Mandika, Makua, Malagasy, Nubian, Oromo, Somali, Songhai, Soninke, Swahili, Tamasheg, Wolof and Zenāga.

This list is probably not complete, and one cannot speak of a literature when only a few manuscripts are known to exist. However, the incredible wealth of oral traditions in Africa has only begun to be recorded. When we finally have a complete inventory of African tales, songs and proverbs of the Islamic traditions, then we can undertake a real survey of the Islamic literatures – but that will be a long time from now. What follows is a condensed survey of the chief Islamic African literatures, in the same order as the list of the languages.

### Berber

In the great literature of the Berbers, the Biblical and Qurʾānic prophets are well represented. Noah, i.e. the prophet Nūḥ, landed with his ark on the Jabal

al-Jūdī (Qurʾān XI.45) which, we are told in Morocco, is one of the Riffian mountains. Noah's son and daughter are buried in Morocco, like their father, who founded the town of Saleh. Moses, Nabī Mūsā, also visited the Maghrib, accompanied by the mysterious al-Khiḍr. It was also on the coast of Morocco that the fish spewed out Jonah, or Nabī Yūnus, when the latter had done penance to God's satisfaction. Nabī Sulaymān, King Solomon, ruler of the *jinn*, is identified with a Moroccan sultan. Nabī Yūsuf, or Joseph, is sung in a Berber poem which has some features in common with the Swahili epic. The purpose of all these legends is the edification of Muslim youth. As for the Prophet Muḥammad, the Berber relate a tradition in which Fāṭima spoke: 'My father told me that my sons would be killed by Arabs, but that their descendants would be well received by the Berbers, who are better than Muslims.'

Of the many beautiful Berber songs only a few can be quoted here. In the following song a religious man-of-the-people comments on the public display of wealth:

O cloth! What makes you proud? You clothe the lepers.  
 O pearl! What makes you proud? The harlots wear you.  
 Fortress! What makes you proud? The heathens built you.  
 Fountain! What makes you proud? The camels drink you.

There are many poems about love, and a few gems about friendship. It is not suggested here that 'friend' refers to the Divine proximity or spiritual reality, even though a great deal of *taṣawwuf* literature in Arabic exists in North Africa. Here is one such song:

When your heart is broken, who will heal it,  
 If not the presence of your friend, his soothing words?  
 If your heart has no one to console it,  
 It is like exile. Who is happy without friends?  
 To be betrayed by one who was a friend is bitter.  
 To see one's friend shed tears of hopelessness is bitter.  
 To be without a friend in loneliness is bitter.  
 To suffer for your best friend's sorrow, that is bitter.

Apart from longer poems on the lives of Joseph (see above), there is also one on Job (Ayyūb, as in Swahili), but even better known is a long poem *Sabi*, from south-west Morocco, published by René Basset.<sup>1</sup> *Sabi*, the title-hero of the epic, is an orphan who studies the Qurʾān and the traditions of the Holy Prophet diligently, especially the terrors of the Day of Judgment, on which there is a long passage. Finally, *Sabi* dies and arrives in Paradise, hoping to join his parents there, only to be told that they were sinners and are now in Hell. *Sabi* prays to God for their release and God graciously grants him the release of

1. R. Basset, 'Le poème de Çabi', in *Journal Asiatique*, 10 série, 13, 1879, pp. 476–508.

one parent of his choice. Hastily, Sabi travels to Hell where he explains to its ruler, who is seated on a throne of fire, what his parents look like. But O terror! When they are finally found, they are both black, scorched by hellfire. When Sabi announces that God will release one of them, his father says:

Here, take your mother with you, son, let her go free, let her be saved.  
 She carried you inside her womb, she tired herself out for you.  
 She suffered labour pains for you, she fed you milk from her own breast.  
 I will stay here, my heart is steel, the flames no longer frighten me.

And his mother says:

Your father has worked hard for us, take him, my son, to Paradise.  
 He laboured while the sun was hot, he kept the watch in freezing nights.  
 He has suffered enough. Let him go free. I will do penance here.

(See also Shulūḥ.)

## Ethiopian

The principal modern language of Ethiopia is Amharic, which is the official language of the Ethiopian state (see also Gurage, spoken further south in Ethiopia, which is 40 per cent Islamic).

### AMHARIC

Amharic is the chief Semitic language of Ethiopia, now spoken by over 20 million people. It is not known when Islam began to penetrate the Ethiopian highlands – the heartlands of the Amharic language, called Amārā or Amāriyā by its speakers – but it appears that at least the eastern part of the country was definitively affected by Islam from the thirteenth century onwards. The capital Addis Ababa was founded by the Emperor Menelik II only about a century ago. Its language is Amharic, but its inhabitants descend from all the different peoples of the country; that is why the citizens, who include over 50,000 Muslims from various parts of the country, have only one common language: Amharic. Of course, the religious leaders, most of whom are shaykhs of the Qādiriyya order, learnt Arabic, but the broad layers of the population only know Amharic. For this reason, all the learned works on Islamic law and theology are in Arabic while the liturgical works are in Amharic and can be obtained in the three Islamic bookshops of Addis Ababa. The subjects are *fiqh*, the six points of the creed, the *‘ibāda*, and an outline history of the Prophet Muḥammad’s life. A few of these books – less than a dozen – are printed. The majority exist only in manuscript form, always written in the Amharic script. Here are some fragments of the Islamic liturgy, called *ṣiker* in Amharic, intended for recitation.



*The Merits of Friday*

When the dawn arrives on Friday,  
 Hell turns into glowing embers.  
 For the Muslims in the Fire  
 Punishment will be suspended.  
 Even for the unbelievers  
 Punishments will be much lighter.  
 Whoever dies on Friday  
 will not suffer in the Fire.  
 On Friday, by God's favour,  
 will the souls converse together.  
 On the night preceding Friday,  
 Muslims should perform the *zīkr*.  
 (Free, after Drewes's translation)

*Zīkr for the Holy Prophet*

Prophet, whose neck is like a golden flask,  
 Whose eyes, adorned with black antimony,  
 Shine like the moon in the darkest night,  
 You are my medicine, my amulet,  
 Come quickly, help me, a true slave of God.

Prophet, whose fingers shine like stars at night,  
 Who leads the faithful into Paradise,  
 We all, who say Muḥammad is our guide,  
 We all, who make perfection our high goal,  
 May be safe when Resurrection comes.

Prophet, whose calves resemble golden cups,  
 Our hearts are pure of sensuality,  
 For soon our bodies will fall into dust.  
 We love you, we are yearning like dry land  
 For your own love. May it soon fall like rain.

To you God had assigned His Paradise,  
 Where virgins, clothed in silk, rest on divans.  
 O ruler of the world, o king of kings  
 You are for me like trousers, like a shirt.  
 Please help me when my soul feels overcome.

GURAGE

The Gurage live in central Ethiopia between the Awash and Omo rivers. They form a dialect cluster belonging to the family of Ethiopian Semitic languages. They are divided into seven (according to most authorities) tribes speaking rather different dialects. One group of these tribes, the Silt'e, is Islamicized.

They belong to the eastern Gurage and use their own language for their Islamic literature, as well as Amharic, which at least the educated among them speak as well as their own. All Gurages are conservative Shāfi'is. The men migrate to Addis Ababa once a year after the harvest to earn some supplementary income and there they learn about Islam rather than in their own mountainous countryside.

It is possible, but unproven, that Islam was introduced to East Gurage by missionaries from Harar some 300 years ago. One female saint, Makkula, is particularly venerated, especially in the Makkula mosque near her grave, where the *zikr* is recited every Thursday night. The present leader of the Gurage Muslims is Sayyid Budala Abbaramuz, known as Getoch or Shekhoch, the head of the Qādiriyya order for all the Gurage, the *qutb* (pole) of the age, who was created before Adam, so his followers say. He writes his own *zikr* hymns, all in Arabic, which are printed for the liturgy of his followers. The rules of Islam (prayer and fasting) are very devoutly observed by the Eastern Gurage. They have schools where they study the grammar of Arabic, the Qur'ān and *fiqh*. Schools and teachers are paid from the *zakāt*, which the Muslims pay in the form of sheep, bread and cheese. Finally, here is the last stanza from a long poem in praise of Shekhoch, written by a Silt'e Gurage (after Drewes):

By God's good grace this poem is complete.  
 Your faithful follower is drunk with love,  
 With love for you who were created first.  
 Lord, may our end be good on the Last Day.  
 May his light shine upon us. Bless Muḥammad.

## Fulani

The name Fulani is originally Hausa, being the plural indicating the people who call themselves Fulbe, singular Pullo. The French call them Peul and their language Poular; various branches of the nation are called Toucouleur (Tuculor), Fula etc. The Fulbe call their language Fulfulde and are very proud of it. Indeed, its intricate structure has exercised the minds of some of Europe's most prominent linguists, such as Meinhof, Klingenberg, Gaden, Labouret and Arnott.

Fulfulde belongs to the West Atlantic family of languages and its origin must be sought in the extreme west of Africa. From there, the Fulani spread towards the east along the savannah belt of West Africa, so that they are now well established as far east as Cameroon. They are cattle owners and thus a large part of their oral literature centres around their herds and their herding work. The beginning of this eastward movement in search of fresh grass is unknown, but it has certainly taken the Fulani several centuries. At some stage during their wanderings they were Islamicized, perhaps as early as the late

Middle Ages, although the process called Islamization must be seen as a long evolution, from adopting a few semi-Islamic customs – such as wearing talismans made from folded-up chapters of the Qurʾān – to instituting schools of theology where the Qurʾān is properly taught and interpreted. It was only in the mid-eighteenth century that reform movements seriously began, usually preceded by a *jihād*, which resulted in solidly Islamizing the Fulani and most of the people they conquered. The central leader of the Fulani at the close of the century was ʿUthmān ibn Fūdī, better known by his Hausa name Osman dan Fodio (Fulfulde: Usman bii Fooduye). He styled himself *almami* (i.e. *imām*) of the region which comprised most of what is now northern Nigeria and the surrounding districts. Finally, he was recognized as caliph and established his capital at Sokoto. Apart from ruler and general, he was also scholar and author, writing Islamic works in both Arabic and his native Fulfulde. This Islamic empire lasted for about a century, until 1903, when the British occupied Sokoto and the modern period of history began.

The oldest texts in Fulfulde we possess were written by the reformists of the late eighteenth century, prominent among whom were Osman dan Fodio himself and his brother ʿAbd Allāh, who, being more intellectually inclined than his warrior brother, devoted himself to study and may be the inventor of Fulfulde literary forms. It was a well-tried device in Islamic scholarly circles that works on doctrine and duties had to be composed in verse in the vernacular, so that local preachers could memorize these works and recite them before their illiterate audiences in the villages.

One of the first poets to use Fulfulde, writing Arabic script, was the famous scholar Muḥammadu Tukur, an older contemporary of Osman dan Fodio. He is still revered as a saint in the area where he was born, in Zamfara, south-east of Sokoto. He lies buried in the same region, in the village of Matuzzigi. The poem from which the following lines are selected, comprises 1,000 lines and may be dated as early as 1203/1789 according to Haafkens, who edited and translated it:<sup>2</sup>

- 163 Spoke Abū Lahab: ‘If you are a prophet, prove it,  
That we may see a thing we never saw before.
- 164 When Ibrāhīm and Mūsā did appear on earth,  
They showed their signs so that the people followed them.’
- ...
- 167 Spoke Zāhir: ‘Yes, by God, Muḥammad, show us signs  
So that we know that the Creator sent you down.’
- 168 Muḥammad spoke: ‘All things are light for the Creator.  
Prepare yourselves to watch the signs that He will show.’

2. J. Haafkens, *Chants musulmans en Peul: textes de l’héritage religieux de la communauté musulmane de Maroua, Cameroun*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1983, pp. 37, 171.

169 Muḥammad called the sun: 'Come down and greet me here.'  
The sun descended, bowed and spoke: 'Salām, O Prophet!'

Praise songs are also composed in honour of saints and fellow poets. Especially famous is an elegy mourning the death of Buuba Ndiang, the great poet, composed in 1927, in which the expression of the poet's sadness at the death of the master is followed by an assurance that he is entering Paradise as a result of his many virtues and a sermon about the recompense for virtues and the punishment for sins.

The commonest theme in the poetry of oral tradition is the pastoral poem, the praise song for the herdsman's favourite animal. Towards the end of March, the dry season causes severe heat in the Sahel so that the grass soon dries out, except in the river valleys, *burgu*, where the water – already vanished – has left enough humidity for the grass to grow. The cowherds lead the cattle of their clan into these valleys, descending ever deeper along the gorges. This period is called 'descent', *degal*. During several months, the entire summer, the young herdsman is alone with his cows and bulls. He whiles away the long days by composing a praise-song for his cattle, describing their beauty as well as the landscape, the sky and other natural phenomena. When the Niger begins to rise again in autumn so that the creeks along its lower valley are filling up once more, the men drive the cattle back to reunite with their fellow-herdsmen. The animals are mustered by the elders of the tribe as they pass in their thousands along the place where the jury sits. The fattest animals get prizes, and so does the best poet, as each herdsman recites the poem he has composed during the lonely weeks. Here are some specimen lines (after Seydou):<sup>3</sup>

Have patience! Patience! Soon there will be a change:  
The *dori*-stars are not yet in the sky;  
The geese from Egypt have not yet returned;  
The first warm drops of rain have yet to fall;  
The last green grass is drying in the sun;  
The sand is hot like ashes in the hearth;  
No cloud, no plume or feather in the sky;  
No mist that rests upon the sandy hills.  
Patience, my cow with copper-coloured back!  
Patience, white-bellied bull with twisted horns!

The two genres – pastoral and scholarly poetry – meet in some poems in which the (often anonymous) poet may compose a few lines of both genres in the same metre, addressing his animals in one line, praising the saints in the next. Christiane Seydou has published one poem, chanted in Bandiagara by a

3. C. Seydou, *La geste de Ham-Bodédio: ou Hama le Rouge*, (Les Classiques Africains, 18), Paris, Armand Colin, 1976.

blind bard, Hammadi Missi by name. It was composed by two poets of the Fodiya Moussa family, uncle and nephew, who flourished around 1800. The poem has 140 lines, 28 stanzas of five lines, in *takbmis*. Each stanza ends either with the name Aḥmadā or Muḥammadā, the final *ā* being the epenthetic vowel needed in most word-final positions. Here are a few specimen lines, a poor imitation of the original:

When the sun rises from behind the hills,  
 Who fails to feel its penetrating rays?  
 When the moon brightens, breaking through the clouds,  
 Who can withhold its splendour from the world?  
 The brightest light of all shines forth from Aḥmad.

My camel has strong feet, like tree roots standing firm,  
 Her legs are like the posts that hold the weaver's loom,  
 Across the rocky plain it walks without delay.  
 She never hesitates. How graceful is her step!  
 My camel, carry me towards Muḥammad's grave!

My camel left the caravan a long, long way behind.  
 They said: How lightly steps your camel, like the wind.  
 Her nostrils and her eyes wide open, her ears up!  
 The sun has set behind me. God has lit the stars.  
 Tonight the moon will rise over Muḥammad's grave.  
 My camel carry me. May I pray there at dawn.

In 1937, Gilbert Vieillard published four poems in the Fulfulde of Fouta Djallon with translation;<sup>4</sup> they date from about 1910 and apparently reached Vieillard in the form of manuscripts in Arabic script. Unfortunately, he does not discuss the question of authorship, although he does give the names of two famous poets of that period: Tierno Samba of Mombea and Seleyanke of the Kollade, who flourished in the late nineteenth century. Vieillard concludes his brief introduction with the words:

It is not surprising that the Fulani, who has created a feudal state founded on serfdom and the Holy War in their hilly grazing lands, cannot forgive us for having destroyed it; their Muslim fraternity was exceptionally solid in Black Africa. We have torn them out of their contemplative life of hermits and herdsmen, we have robbed them of the proud joys of warriors and master, offering them jobs as labourers, drivers and storekeepers in our service.

The following lines are an attempt at recreating in English the contemplative mood of these poems, which reflect so well the spirit of despair that descended upon all the Muslim people after their lands had been conquered:

4. G. Vieillard, 'Poèmes peul du Fouta Djallon transcrits et traduits', *Bulletin du Comité d'Études Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 1937, pp. 255–311.

I praise the Lord, my Master, One, Omnipotent,  
 And may He bless His favoured Prophet eloquent.  
 I am His humble slave, I speak the truth, by God,  
 But no one listens to the scholars of Fouta.

Men are divided by desire and walk the path  
 Of crookedness, yearning for wealth instead of faith.

For money, women, houses, horses and for slaves  
 They have corrupted sons and daughters, and their souls.

## Harari

The Harari language is used for literary works in the Arabic script in the city of Harar, eastern Ethiopia. The chief prose work is the *Kitāb al-Farā'id* (in Harari), which Cerulli edited.<sup>5</sup> It contains the basic doctrinal and moral precepts of Islam. Much of the poetry in Harari is liturgical, called *zikri*, intended to be recited during nocturnal prayer-meetings, often under the supervision of the local leaders of the Qadiriyya. Here are a few of the almost 600 lines of the *Zikri* of 'Abd al-Malik.

O Prophet, may God's blessing be upon you,  
 We seek our refuge with you from our problems.  
 You are a medicine for all diseases.  
 Praying to God for you will be salvation.

O Prophet, whom the Lord of Light created  
 From light that is more radiant than sunshine.  
 O Prophet, who revealed the hidden knowledge,  
 Whose name was first of all the names God mentioned.

O God, admit the people who have studied,  
 And love the humble servants who implore Thee.  
 Open for us the shining gate of mercy,  
 As Thou hast showered mercy on Thy Prophet.

O Prophet, who hast filled our heart with splendour,  
 Pray God for us that He may give us blessing.  
 His blessings have no end and no beginning.  
 May you guide us towards the gate of Heaven.

(Free, after Drewes)

5. E. Cerulli, *La lingua e la storia di Harar*, (Studi Etiopici, 1), Rome, Istituto per l'Oriente, 1936.

## Hausa

Hausa-Islamic literature is classifiable according to the following seven categories:<sup>6</sup> *waazu* and *zuhudi*, describing death and resurrection, the interrogation in the grave, divine reward and punishment on Judgment Day.

1. *madib an-Nabi*, panegyric to the Prophet and sometimes to other saints.
2. *taubidi*, didactic and mnemonic verse setting out the attributes of God and the basic principles of Muslim theology.
3. *fikihi*, didactic and mnemonic verse dealing with the precepts of Islamic law and personal duties (prayers, abultion, inheritance, etc.).
4. *sira*, the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, including his campaigns and his miracles. Best known in this category is the *Wakar sira* by ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad.
5. *tarihi*, history. There are several versified chronicles in Hausa.
6. *ilmin nujumi*, astrology, or *hisabi*, calculation of auspicious days. There are numerous works on the subject which prove its popularity in Nigeria.
7. Minor compositions, e.g. political verse; *addua* (invocation). Much of this category is secular rather than Islamic.

It might be of interest to note that all these categories also exist in Swahili literature, though their relative importance is different. In Swahili, there are only a few chronicles and all the works on astrology are in Arabic. There is, however, a very important subcategory of the Swahili *qaṣīda*, namely the *maulidi*, panegyrics sung at the Prophet’s birthday during the week following 12 Rabīʿ I. However, in this *maulidi* literature, all the conventional praises are repeated that Hiskett mentions in this Hausa category (see 2 above): the palace of the Persian king caved in when Muḥammad was born while the sacred fires of the Magi were extinguished; old and shrivelled goats gave milk when the Prophet touched them etc.

Charles Robinson collected a volume of Hausa manuscripts in Arabic script, which he published with transliteration and translation. Here is a specimen from a poem on Resurrection, Hell and Paradise, by Shehu Usman of Sokoto, composed in 1802, and first written down by his brother ‘Abd Allāh in 1843:<sup>7</sup>

Those who pass along the bridge will  
Come to Kawthar, do not doubt it.  
They will bathe in crystal water  
Which removes all sin and blemish.

6. M. Hiskett, *A History of Hausa Islamic Verse*, London, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1975.
7. C. H. Robinson, *Specimens of Hausa Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1896.

They come out pure white and shining,  
They will then put on clean garments.

They will mount on dappled horses  
And on light-brown woolly camels,  
Harnessed, groomed and decorated.  
Seated in their golden saddles  
The Believers will ride forward,  
Following the Holy Prophet.  
All the friends will be together,  
All rejoicing and conversing.  
Into their palaces they enter  
Through gates of shining rubies.  
In the rooms inlaid with coral  
Where the young houris await them  
Saying: 'Welcome home, my master.'  
The believers will then marry  
These young brides who never weary,  
Who will not grow old and ugly,  
But make life forever happy.

It is again striking to realize how close this literature is to Swahili poetic writings on these subjects.

## Mande

The Mande or Manding people are spread over a large area of western Africa between Gambia and Upper Volta. They are found as Dyula traders as far south as the Ivory coast, while some live as farmers along the Senegal river. As they ramify and settle in various regions of West Africa, so they are known by different names: Mandika in the west, Bamana in the north, Bambara in the east, and also Mandigo, Mandigue or Malinke. They have been in contact with Islam probably since the eleventh century, but their Islamization was a slow process, so that many practices survive which orthodox Muslims regard as paganism. During these centuries, the Mande developed an intricate culture and social system with the king, *mansa*, who was always accompanied by his *jail*, or praise-singer, at its top. It is to these singers that we owe almost all our knowledge of Mande literature, since it was the singers' well-trained memories that preserved the ancient traditions, in prose and verse, proverbs and songs included. Although the Mande scholars, as Muslims, were familiar with the art of writing, they used the Arabic language for the composition of their numerous learned works. Mande was already a written language before the arrival of the European scholars who took down oral traditions from dictation or asked Mande scholars to write them down themselves, which some did, in Arabic script. Nevertheless, the written documents in Mande are extremely



scarce so that there is little traditional written literature. The traditional Mande literature has been written down and published by European scholars, such as Delafosse, Labouret and Innes, and by those African scholars who had received a Western education, such as Moussa Travélé, Camara Laye and other modern writers, who wrote mainly in French, neglecting to develop their own language as a literary medium.

## Shulūḥ

Shulūḥ is the Arabic name for a Berber tribe with its own language. It is called Chleuh in French and, by its speakers, Tashelhit. It is spoken in the area between Morocco and Mauretania along the Atlantic coast. The region was under Spanish influence for many centuries. It is inhabited by the Ayt Bamran, who belong to the Chelha subdivision of the Berber (also spelled Chleuh or Shulūḥ), whose language is spoken in large parts of southern Morocco. Arcadio Palacin has described a special kind of traditional song (*cancion*) which is sung by a professional bard, *rais*, literally ‘chief’ (probably because these bards sometimes conduct companies of dancing boys). The songs which the *rais* sings resemble in structure the Persian and Urdu *ghazal*, a type of which there are a few examples in Swahili. It consists of a string of stanzas of the same prosodic scheme, is sung to the same tune, but deals with different subjects, romantic, religious or lyrical. Even the songs with narrative themes contain stanzas which are philosophical or lyrical digressions from the main theme. For our present study, we are concerned only with the religious Islamic aspects of Ifni poetry. Here are some specimen of stanzas:

Whither, o faithless world, have the good people gone?  
 From those you treat with grace, only contempt.  
 For only God is grateful; only He will last.  
 His grace is medicine for healthy men and sick.  
 Whatever we may eat, we eat it by His grace.  
 Whatever clothes we wear, we wear them by His grace.  
 Whatever alms we give, it's only by His grace.  
 Thus, friends, be free of care, He is your warranty.  
 The world prays God that He may save it from decay,  
 That He may free it from its want and misery.  
 There are more ruins than good buildings in the world.  
 Pray God eternal and His Prophet of the Truth,  
 That they may give you peace in this life and the next.

There is an extensive literature in this language, preserved in manuscripts in Arabic script. Little has been published.

## Somali

The Somali language is spoken in the Horn of Africa, the eastern corner of the continent, roughly east of a line that runs down from north to south, from Djibouti to the point where the Equator meets the shore of the Indian Ocean. In places, the Somali 'bulge-out', spilling over to the west in search of fresh grass, successfully pushed the older Bantu population westward into central Kenya, as the Somali countryside dries out as a result of overgrazing. Similar attempts to push north-westwards into Ethiopia were met with such fierce resistance that the Somali had to withdraw into Somalia again. Those people are now called refugees.

The Somali were Islamicized probably in the late Middle Ages when they still lived in what was to become British Somaliland, from where they expanded south and west during the following centuries.

We leave aside the turbulent history of those centuries, which can be found in the textbooks of Ethiopian history.

Somali literature was not written until 1972 when at last an orthography was agreed on, based on the Roman script. In quick succession, numerous books were published containing the traditional prose and poetry of the Somali. The Islamic literature of the Somali was written in Arabic. B.J. Andrzejewsky said that there is no truly Islamic literature in the Somali language. That may be so; nevertheless, the influence of Islam is well illustrated by the following love poem, composed by a caravan guide:

No oryx will expose her young one to the hunter's eye;  
Then why do you so shamelessly expose your thigh?  
A flash of lightning, which thirst can it satisfy?  
How can my heart be happy, when you just pass by?

When I am being carried to the grave,  
Come to my bier and whisper a sweet word.

I strained my eyes to get a glimpse of you.  
It was like lightning flashing in the distance.

My heart is single: no-one can divide my love.  
Alas! The object of my love is distant like the moon.

Until I die I will continue singing songs.  
With my last breath my last verse will go out.

(Free, after Andrzejewsky)

The poem shows some typical features which betray the Arabian inspiration. The oryx occurs frequently in Arabic poetry; the description of repeated lightning-flashes preceding the long-awaited rain is found in the poetry of many peoples of eastern Africa; an early Arabic example is quoted by Arberry.

The next poem was composed in the late Middle Ages, when Islam started to expand:

No house can hold a saint, a friend of God.  
 He does not own a building or a field.  
 He leaves the fields, and travels to the hills.  
 The desert weeps when he has gone away.  
 The saint will pray to God while shedding tears:  
 'O Lord, my heart is broken and distressed!  
 'What I will ask of Thee is not a house,  
 'Nor precious stones, nor buxom concubines;  
 'Not even any of those gardens high,  
 'Where all the trees are full of scented fruits.  
 'I only want your presence near my soul,  
 'For ever after may I see Thy light.'

This poem was written by Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ismā'īl (d. 897/1491), who was an important figure in the history of the Somali people in what is now northern Somalia. His work in the Djibouti region preceded the great expansion of Islam, which was checked only by the Portuguese coming to the aid of the Ethiopian emperor.

## Songhay

The Songhay language is spoken in Niger along the river just above the north-western corner of Nigeria. The Songhay rulers once commanded a vast empire, straddling the river and stretching across to what is now Niger, Mali and parts of Upper Volta. The Songhay people were Islamicized from the later Middle Ages onwards. Only a small part of their extensive oral traditions has been published, all of it with French translations. One might argue that this oral epic poetry is not Islamic, but rather of a pagan origin. Nevertheless, one will find numerous allusions in it to the Islamic faith of the poet and the people. Here is the beginning of the *Legend of Dinga*, a poem of about 400 lines of irregular length, in which the exploits of the mythical hero Dinga are sung. The bard's recital is interrupted at every pause in his singing by his audience shouting: 'Dinga hey!' to show him their appreciation; this shouting is repeated more frequently after each of Dinga's epithets:

Here is the tale of Dinga, Dinga of the spears! (Dinga hey!)  
 He was a child of cunning as soon as he was born.  
 Only a fortnight later his mother left the world.  
 She left this little infant, her soul has gone to God.  
 His mother's younger sister then looked after the child.  
 Only a fortnight later she also left this world.  
 She left the little infant, her soul has gone to God.  
 His father's younger brother then looked after the child.  
 Only a fortnight later, he also left this world.

He left the little infant, his soul has gone to God.  
 The people said: 'This orphan has brought us all bad luck.'  
 They threw him in the forest, they left him in the bush.  
 A leopard mother found him, a panther gave him suck.  
 He grew up wild and savage, strong like an elephant.

## Swahili

Swahili Islamic literature began as a series of oral traditions in the Middle Ages, mostly legends about the Prophet Muḥammad and the other prophets, but also songs of devotion and praise.

The oldest surviving manuscript of Swahili literature is a *qaṣīda* in Arabic script, the famous *Ḥamziyya* of the Egyptian poet al-Būṣīrī, translated into beautiful Swahili by Aidarusi of Pate in 1062/1652. This date makes it the oldest extant poem in an African language south of the Sahara. However, the sophisticated metre suggests that it was the fruit of a long poetic evolution.

The next oldest known text is a manuscript of the *Herakali*, i.e. the battle of Tabūk, in Swahili verse of 1,150 stanzas, dated 1141/1728, also composed at Pate, which was then a great sultanate.

The next two poems, the *Sesebani* or *Katirifu* and the *Utenzi wa-Fatuma*, the epic of Fāṭima, daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad, were also written in the middle of the eighteenth century, by Bwana Mengo, his son Abu Bakari and other poets, all in Pate.

In the nineteenth century, Lamu became the centre of Swahili Islamic poetry, both written and oral, as well as of scholarly prose. The greatest poets were Muhiuddini Kahatani (d. 1869 at Lamu), and Saiyidi Abu Bakari Mansabu, born at Lamu in 1828 and buried there in 1922. Many poets followed their great example.

In Tanga, now in Tanzania, there existed, during the nineteenth century, an illustrious school of poets of the al-Buḥrī family. They wrote long narrative poems on the lives of Muḥammad and Ḥusayn.

In Dar es Salaam, the poet Hamisi Juma was still alive in 1964. He wrote a complete *Sīra*, or life of the Prophet, in over 6,000 stanzas, the longest known epic poem in any African language.

In Zanzibar, the poet Hajji Chumu, wrote an epic poem on the battle of Uḥud and one on the Day of Resurrection.

Today, Mombasa is the undisputed centre of Swahili poetry, with thirty-three poets flourishing in the city, some still writing in Arabic script.

The liturgical poetry has been described and published in my *Swahili Islamic Poetry*.<sup>8</sup> This work contains several versions of the text of the *maulidi* celebrations commemorating the life and death of the Prophet.

8. See J. Knappert, *Swahili Islamic Poetry*, 3 vols., Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1971.

The lyrical poetry has been anthologized and translated in my *A Choice of Flowers. An Anthology of Swahili Love Songs*.<sup>9</sup> There are numerous allusions to Islamic ideas, customs and beliefs in these very popular songs.

The mythology of Islamic literature with particular reference to Africa has been collected in my *Islamic Legends*.<sup>10</sup> This work is intended to serve as background information, as a handbook for the student of Islamic works.

A general literary work surveying the history of the Swahili people and their literature can be found in my *Four Centuries of Swahili Verse* (London, 1988).

The *utenzi* or *tendi* poetry, that is epic and didactic verse in Swahili, has been described and exemplified in my *Traditional Swahili Poetry*, an analysis of the cosmology of East African Islam.<sup>11</sup>

The *dua*, hymns or sung prayers in Swahili, perhaps the finest poetry their poets have ever composed, has been collected in my as yet unpublished *Religious Songs of the Swahili*.

A survey of narrative verse in Africa can be found in my *Epic Poetry in Swahili and Other African Languages*.<sup>12</sup>

The famous *tarabu* songs (*taarabu* is not correct) have been illustrated in my 'Swahili Tarabu Songs'.<sup>13</sup>

9. See J. Knappert, *A Choice of Flowers, Chaguo la Maua: an Anthology of Swahili Love Poetry*, London, Heinemann, 1972.

10. See J. Knappert, *Islamic Legends: Histories of the Heroes, Saints and Prophets of Islam*, 2 vols., (Religious Texts. Translation Series, NISABA, 15), Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1985.

11. See J. Knappert, *Traditional Swahili Poetry*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1967.

12. J. Knappert, *Epic Poetry in Swahili and other African Languages*, (Religious Texts. Translation Series, NISABA, 12), Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1983. See for a brief summary in English of one of their epic poems, pp. 30ff.

13. J. Knappert, 'Swahili Tarabu Songs', *Afrika und Übersee*, 60/1-2, 1977, pp. 116-155.

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## Chapter 10

# THE LITERATURE OF THE MUSLIM PEOPLE IN EUROPE

*Nimetullah Hafız*

It is said that the influence of Islam in the Balkan peninsula was first felt in the twelfth century when the missionary Şarı Şaltuq travelled and settled in this area. Unfortunately, the only traces remaining from this figure are the widespread oral legends among Muslims and Christians and the tombs attributed to him by both faiths. There are graves in Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia and Albania which, according to the Muslims in these countries, belong to Şarı Şaltuq. According to Christians, he is buried at the church of Aya Spiridon in Kırk, or at the church of Aya Naum in Ohri. Other than the above, there are no reliable extant documents about him. After the time of Şarı Şaltuq, the influence of Islam in the Balkans continued with the coming of the Ottomans when Sulaymān Pāshā arrived in Rumelia, passing through the Dardanelles with forty companions in 756/1356. Ghāzī Evrenos Bey entered western Thrace in 762/1361. Following the wars of Maritza and Kosovo in 786/1385 and 791/1389, respectively, and particularly after the conquest of Constantinople in 856/1453, the Balkan peninsula became the crucial focal point for the surrounding states. Thus, consecutive wars saw the Ottoman armies in the plains of Hungary and near Vienna.

The Ottomans established control over the neighbouring territories in the course of their expansion. These territories were turned into the status of tributary vassals who had to provide troops for the campaigns. In this way they kept their political identities. In the second stage, the Ottomans formally annexed the regions and introduced the *timār* system there, and thanks to this system they were financially strengthened and formed troops that served them loyally in campaigns. They also protected the village people and the population from the oppressions of local authorities and at the same time tolerated the indigenous nobles and the military class. Most of the soldiers who served in their army, supplied by the tributary vassals, were non-Muslims. Thus, a conquered domain was gradually Ottomanized by tolerating the local population, rather than in an abrupt and radical way.

Due to the historical developments and changes which followed Ottoman rule in southern Europe and almost all of the Balkan peninsula, the culture, education, language, traditions and customs of the people in this area changed considerably. The Ottomans not only built mosques, bathhouses, derwish lodges, tombs, bridges, caravanserais and fountains in these lands, but they also introduced, in a very short period of time, various crafts of their homeland. Commercial and economic life developed quickly. Moreover, Turkish became the official language of the state. In that period, some families in the Balkan territories accepted Islam in order to keep up with the standard of living in these areas while others became Muslims for the sake of Islam. The Bosnians, Albanians, Roms (Gypsies), Pomaks, the Torbeshi and the Gorantzi people form the majority of those who accepted Islam between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries. They embraced Islam en masse. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the Islamization of Muslim nations in Europe in order to study the histories, languages, literatures, customs, traditions and folklores of each of these nations. Since Islamization in Europe is beyond the scope of this paper, we will focus on Muslim literature.

When the Ottomans first reached Europe, Turkish officers and soldiers, and later Turkish officials, merchants, workers and villagers settled in cities and villages, established households and tried to expand their cultures and protect their language, literature, traditions and customs with great care. The best examples of Turkish oral folk-literature and, later, of Arabic and Persian folk-literature spread in places where the Turks settled and Islam was accepted. These oral genres of Islamic literature were first recited in military barracks, later in the homes of Muslim people, their quarters, schools and the *madrasas*, and afterwards, gradually, in various ceremonies such as the religious festivals, *Bayram* and others, weddings and circumcision feasts, even at the dervish lodges of different religious orders, which were widespread, and in many other places of gathering. Thus, the foundations of Muslim folk-literature in Europe were laid down. Anatolian Turkish folk-literature, and on a smaller scale that of Arabic and Persian were preserved by word of mouth or passed on from generation to generation in their original form, or with minor changes, until the present day. During the spread of Muslim folk-literature, many of its genres must have disappeared completely. Most of them became the properties of Balkan nations such as the Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, Macedonians, Albanians, Montenegrins, Bosnian, Muslims, Rumanians and Hungarians. The Pomaks, the Torbeshi, the Gorantzi and the Muslims (Bosnians), who had settled in the Balkans as a result of various raids before the Ottoman period, immediately embraced Islam as introduced by the Turks and started to create the genres of their own literature in this period.

## Muslim literature in Europe under Ottoman Sovereignty

## THE RICH MUSLIM FOLK-LITERATURE

The Muslims, who penetrated as far as Vienna under Ottoman rule, settled in these regions. In time, following the wars of independence started by the Christian nations, the Ottoman armies and the Muslim people retreated again to the south, settling in Bosnia, the region of Kosovo-Metohija in southern Serbia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and even in what is today modern Turkey. For this reason, quarters for emigrants were established in many cities after the Balkan Wars. These peoples' languages and literature flourished in the new regions where they wandered and settled. The genres of folk-literature which developed in these places form the voice of the Ottoman State in Europe. For example one can mention in oral folk-literature the idioms, proverbs, riddles, *mānī* (a form of Turkish folk-music), lullabies, folk-songs, anecdotes, fairy tales, tales and stories; in written folk-literature we find in syllabic metre *qoshma* (musical compositions played and sung in free form), *varsagī* (a folk-music form), *semā'i* (a rhythmic pattern with three beats), *ilāhī* (hymns), *nefes* (hymns of the Bektāshī order), epic poems and folk-songs; in prosody, one sees the *dīmān*, *selīs*, *semā'i*, *qalenderī* (a mystical poem sung to the accompaniment of *sāz* music), *mu'ammā* (riddle), *satranj* etc. In this period, there were quite a few folk-poets called *'āshiq*. Manuscripts indicate that many minstrels flourished who improvised songs and music. Among them are Ferkī, Püvderī, Semā, Savfet, Mu'atī, Fikrī, Mustafa, Şefki and Hivzī.

The anecdotes of Naşr al-Dīn Khoja are as rich as those of other Muslim countries in the East. A number of books have been published about these anecdotes in Bosnia-Herzegovina (in Bosnian), Serbia (in Serbian), Albania, Kosovo in southern Serbia, and Macedonia. New anecdotes which are told in the Balkan countries must be added to these.

There are also Turkish folk-tales, such as *Kerem and Ash*, *Ṭābir and Zübire*, *Āşık Garib*, *Köröğlü* and *Asuman and Zican*. These were told in their original forms, and versions included in manuscript collections of folk-poems. However, neither are any studies written about them, nor are any of these versions published.

Most of this treasure-house of Turkish folk-literature was recorded in old manuscript collections of folk-poems and on pieces of paper, thus surviving to the present. Unfortunately, these examples of common Muslim folk-literature were not published in a collected form in the Balkan countries until today. Some studies of the texts of folk-literature, excluding newspapers and periodicals, were published in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia after the Second World War and in Rumania in recent years. The following books appeared in this field:

*Bulgaria*: Yusuf Kerimof and Beytullah Şişmanoğlu, *Türk atasözleri ve özlü sözler* (Turkish Proverbs and Sayings, 1955); Rıza Mollof, *Edebī makaleler* (Literary Articles, 1958) (jingles, *mānis*, lullabies and folk-songs); Mefküre Mollova,



*Bilmeceler* (Riddles, 1958); Yusuf Kerimof, Beytullah Şişmanoğlu and Sabahattin Bayramof, *Türk atasözleri* (Turkish Proverbs, 1965); Salih Baklaciéf, *Yanılmayan var mı?* (Is there Anyone who is not a Mistake?, 1966) (anecdotes and short stories); Emil Boev and Hayriye Memova Sülaymanova, *Rodop Türküleri* (Rhodope Folk-Songs, 1966) and *Rodop Türk halk masalları* (Rhodope Turkish Folk-Tales, 1963); Şekibe Yamaç, Slavoyko Martinov and Muhittin Mehmediminof, *Türk masalları* (Turkish Tales, 1957); Ahmet Timişef, Mehmet Bekirof and Ismail İbişef, *İğneli şakalar* (Satirical Jokes, 1965) (anecdotes and epigrams).

Based on all these books containing the texts of Turkish folk-literature in Bulgaria, Nimetullah Hafız published these texts collectively under the title *Bulgaristan'da Türk halk edebiyatı metinleri I, II* (The Texts of Turkish Folk-Literature in Bulgaria I, II, 1990).

*Yugoslavia*: Mustafa Ramiz, *Rumeli Türküleri* (Folk-Songs of Rumelia, 1958); Nimetullah Hafız, *Kosova Türk halk edebiyatı metinleri* (The Texts of Turkish Folk-Literature in Kosovo, 1985) and *Makedonya Türk halk edebiyatı metinleri* (The Texts of Turkish Folk-Literature in Macedonia, 1989); Aluş Nuş, *Rumeli Türküleri* (Folk-Songs of Rumelia, 1988); Sevim Piliçkova, *Makedonya Sosyalist Cumhuriyeti'nde Yaşayan Türklerin manileri* (The *Mānis* of the Turks from the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, 1986) and *Prilog kon proučavanjeto no narodnite poslovi kai Turcite od Sr Makedonija*, 1987.

*Greece*: Abdurrahim Dede, *Bati Trakya Türk folkloru* (Turkish Folklore in Western Thrace, 1978); Rahmi Ali, *Ay ile Güneş* (The Moon and the Sun, 1982); and Hüseyin Alibabaoğlu, *Durdur ile Kurkur* (Durdur and Kurkur, 1982).

Selections from the texts of Turkish folk-literature were made available much later in Rumania. There are two valuable books published by Mehmet Ali Erkan, entitled *Bülbül sesi: Dobruca Türkleri folklorundan seçmeler* (Voice of the Nightingale. Selections from the Folklore of the Dobrudja Turks, 1981) (folk-songs, plays, *mānis*, poems, lullabies, epic poems, tales, anecdotes of Naşr al-Dīn Khoja, proverbs and puzzles) and *Tepegöz* 1985 (Tales from the Dobrudja), which he co-published with his wife Hilmiye.

There are also Muslim peoples such as the Crimean and Nogay Turks, the Gagauzes as well as the Tatars who live in eastern Rumania and produce works of folk-literature together with the Turks. The only printed collective works which are available at present are the books entitled *Boztorgay*, published by Mehmed Nagi G. Ali, Mehmet Ablai and Nuri Vuap in 1980, and collections of folklore such as folk-songs, *mānis*, poems, proverbs, *aytıms* (*bozlaws*), couplets, riddles (*topşamalar*), epic poems, jingles, stories and tales.

In addition to the specimens of Turkish folk-literature, Muslims (Bosnians), Albanians, Roms, Gorantzi and the Torbeshi people made collections of genres of oral folk-literature, such as idioms, proverbs, lullabies,

folk-songs on lyric, epic, epic-lyric, historical and other themes, and anecdotes (those of Naşr al-Dīn Khoja and others) in their own languages. Today, some of these works have been collected into books. The primary work of folk-literature produced by the Muslims is Mula Mustafa Şefki Başeski's *Mecmua* published by Mehmed Mujezinoviç (second edition 1987). Later, the following works were published: Mehmet Kapetanoviç (1968); *Narodno-Blago* (1888); Kosta Hörman, *Narodne pjesme Muhamedovaca u Bosni i Hercegovini* (1888), *Istočno Blago* I (1889), II (1890), (idioms, proverbs, anecdotes, tales about animals, historical folk-songs and stories); Hamid Dizdareviç, *Sevdalinke* (Love Songs, 1944); Alija Nametak, *Junačke Narodne Pjesme Bosansko-Hercegovackih Muslimana* (1967), *Od bešika do motika* (1970) and *Narodne pripovijesti Bosansko-Hercegovackih Muslimana* (1975); Nasko Frnjiđić, *Muslimanske junačke pjesme* (1969) and *Narodni humor i mudrost Muslimana* (1972) (rumours, anecdotes, humorous poems); Sait Orahovac, *Stare narodne pjesme Muslimana Bosne i Hercegovine* (1976) and *Sevdalinke, balade, i romanse Bosne i Hercegovine* (1978). The works entitled *Može li biti što bit ne može* (1991) and *Zaman Kule po čenaru gradi* (1991) contain the epic and lyric folk-songs of the Muslims in Sanjak.

Johann Georg von Hahn published a work in two volumes entitled *Albanesische Studien* in Vienna in 1853. In this work, he first presents information on Albanian history and language and then includes various examples of Albanian folk-literature. Later, many books which contain texts of folk-literature were published in Albania as well as in Kosovo-Metohija. Among them are the following:

*Folklor Shqiptar* I, *Proza Popullore (Anecdota)* (1972); Demush Shala, *Këngë Popullore Lirike* (1972) and *Këngë Popullore Historike* (1973); Anton Çetta, *Ballada dhe ligjenda* (1974) and *Përalla*, I, II (1979); Rrystem Berisha and Muzafër Mustafa, *Këngë dashurie*, I, II (1979); Anton Çeta and Anton Berisha, *Këngë Dasmë*, I, II (1980); Nuhi Vinca, *Këngë të ndryshme popullore* (1982); Sadri Fetiu, *Këngë dhe Lojera të Femijeve* (1983); Rexhep Munishi, *Këngët Malsore Shqiptare* (1987); Anton Çeta, Fazli Sylë and Anton Berisha, *Anecdota* I (1987), II (1988); Jorgo Panajoti and Agron Xhagolli, *Fjale të urta shqipe* (1987).

The texts of Albanian folk-literature such as proverbs, riddles, lyric and epic poems, anecdotes of Naşr al-Dīn Khoja and others, fairy tales, tales and stories etc., produced by Muslim Albanians, have been brought to light through the above publications and others.

The texts of the folk-literature of the Roms have neither been collected nor published. The only published work is entitled *Përallë Rome të Kosovës* (The Tales of the Roms in Kosovo, 1985) by Ali Krasniç.

Harun Hasani's *Goranske Narodne Pesme* (1987) (lullabies, jingles, epic and lyric works, weddings, customs and folk-songs) is the main work on the folk-literature of the Gorantzi (Gorantzi Pomaks).

The genres of the folk-literature of the Pomaks in Bulgaria, Greece and Macedonia are the property of the nations of Bulgaria and Macedonia.

Since their languages are quite similar, the Bulgarians and Macedonians considered the texts of the folk-literature of the Pomaks as their own property and published them. The best example for that are the claims made in Greece to the effect that Naşr al-Din Khoja was a Greek, and that many such anecdotes are associated with Hitir Petir in Bulgaria and with Peyo in Macedonia.

### The Muslim literature of Europe in Oriental languages (Turkish, Arabic and Persian)

In addition to folk-literature, Muslim nations in Europe also created and developed a classical school of poetry, with contributions from the Turks and other Muslim nations in Europe. Generally speaking, it was Muslim intellectuals who created the classical school of poetry in Europe as in the Ottoman state. Almost all of the Ottoman writers, regardless of their nationality and mother-tongue, produced their works in Ottoman Turkish, which is composed of Turkish, Arabic and Persian. The authors who wrote works in Arabic and in Persian are quite famous. The writings consist of stories in verse in the form of *mathnawās*, biographical memoirs, histories in verse, *ghazals* (lyric poems of a certain pattern), *qaşīdas* (eulogies or commemorative poems) etc. Most of the men-of-letters who were educated in Europe also collected their works in anthologies arranged alphabetically (*diwāns*). They wrote valuable historical studies as well. Unfortunately, most of these precious manuscripts were lost before they could be published. A number of them survived to the present day since they were preserved in various state and private libraries all over the world. Some of these manuscripts are important not only in Turkish literature but in world literature as well. What proves this case best are the Ottoman and other biographical memoirs and studies carried out by orientalists all over the world. The following biographical works are very important in this field: Adnī's *Gulshan-i shu'arā* (1563–1564), 'Ashiq Chelebī's *Maw'arā'* (1566–1567), Faṭīn's *Khātimat al-ash'ār* (1852–1853), Ḥasan Chelebī's *Tadhkirat al-shu'arā* (1585–1586), Laṭīfī's *Tadhkira-i Laṭīf* (1546–1547), Riḍā's *Tadhkirat al-shu'arā* (1640–1641), Sālim's *Tadhkirat al-shu'arā* (1897–1898) and Sharīfī's *Hasht bibisht* (1538–1539). These works present information on the names, lives and works of various authors who were educated in the Ottoman state. They were born and brought up in European countries and later settled in the Ottoman lands. The names of hundreds of authors who flourished in European countries were recovered by examining the above-mentioned biographical memoirs and manuscripts in addition to printed works such as E. J. W. Gibb's *A History of Ottoman Poetry* I–IV (1900–1909), Franz Babinger's *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre Werke* (1927), Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's *Die Geschichte*

*der osmanischen Dichtkunst* I, IV (1836–1838). The work jointly published by Haluk Ipek, Mustafa Isen, Recep Toparlı, Hacı Okçu and Turgut Karaboy, entitled *Tezkiirelere göre divan edebiyatı isimler sözlüğü* (Dictionary of Names in the Classical School of Poetry according to Biographical Memoirs), gives a most extensive list of authors by referring to the biographical memoirs in manuscript form. Based on the examination of all the above-mentioned biographical works, the best-known authors in Europe who produced works in the classical school of Ottoman poetry are the following:

*Greece:* ‘Uşūlī (d. 1538), Gharībī (d. 1547), Ḥayālī (d. 1557), Āgāhī (d. 1577), ‘Arifī (d. 1647), Darūnī (d. 1650), Ṭab‘ī (d. 1666), Aḥmad (d. 1701–1702), Zuhdī (d. 1772), Qāzīm Ḥusayn (d. 1814–1815);

*Bulgaria:* ‘Alī Chelebī (d. 1543), Ḥazānī (d. 1571), Wuşlatī (d. 1588–1589), ‘Awnī (d. 1664–1665), Shukrī (d. 1670–1671), Faydī (d. 1688–1689), Şarīf (d. 1748–1749), ‘Abd al-Bāqī Efendi (d. 1812).

*Serbia:* Adnī (d. 1474), Masīhī (d. 1592), Sham‘ī (d. 1530), Bahārī (d. 1551), Sūzī (1455/1465–1525), Sujūdī (d. 1538).

*Macedonia:* Zārī (d. 1509), Işhāq Chalabī (d. 1541–1542), Farīdī (d. 1546), Wuşūlī (d. 1598), Waznī (d. 1578), Tījī (d. 1618), Sihrī (d. 1717–1718).

*Bosnia-Herzegovina:* Ḥasan Kāfī Prushchak (1544–1616), Darwīsh Pāshā Beyazidagich (1560–1603), Ḍiyā‘ī (d. 1584), Kaymī (d. 1599), Majāzī (d. 1610), Nerjīsī (d. 1634), Fawḍī Mostarī (d. 1747), Muşṭafā Pruschak (d. 1755), Sīrī (1785–1847), Waḥdatī (d. 1598), Faḍīl Pāshā Sherifovich (1802–1882), Ghaybī (end of the seventeenth century), Akif Ḥikmet (1839–1903), Bosnewī (second half of the nineteenth century), Basheskī (1731/1732–1809).

*Albania:* Yahyā Bey of Tashlica (d. 1682), Darwīsh (d. 1645), Wajdī (d. 1669–1670).

*Rumania:* Helākī, Ṭarīqī, Zarīfī.

*Hungary:* ‘Arif (d. 1724), Mīrī (d. 1690).

Some European countries under Ottoman rule attempted to publish the originals or translations of works by authors of their own nationality who wrote in Turkish, Persian and Arabic. Yugoslavian Muslims produced the most successful and valuable studies in this field. Through the publication of the following works, many Muslim writers from Bosnia-Herzegovina were brought to light: Savfet-beg Bašagić, *Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u islamskoj književnosti* (1912 and 1986) Hazim Šabanović, *Književnost Muslimana Bosne i Hercegovine na orijentalnim jezicima* (1973); Fehim Nametak, *Književnost Bosanko-Hercegovackih muslimana na turskom jeziku* (1989) and *Divanska književnost XVI i XVII stoljeća u Bosni i Hercegovini* (1991).

ALJAMIADO LITERATURE IN EUROPE

Some men-of-letters in the Muslim nations of Europe did not cultivate the eastern parnas literature, a branch of the classical school of Ottoman poetry which flourished in Europe. They wrote and later published their literary works in their mother-tongue, but in Arabic characters which were also used by the Persians and Turks, just as in the Muslim Arab world. After the Arabs left Spain, Spanish songs and other works continued to be written in Arabic characters for a long time. Such valuable works, which are still extant today, are called *aljamia* or *aljamiado* literature by the Spanish. In almost all Balkan countries that were under Ottoman rule, the nations which embraced Islam produced works in Turkish, Arabic and Persian as well as in their mother tongues, but written in Arabic characters. This genre of literature in Europe was also called *alhamijado* and *aljamijado* literature.

Among the oldest texts of the *aljamiado* genre are two short manuscripts which the sultans used in order to learn foreign languages and which are presently kept in the library of the Hagia Sofia Museum. These two works, both entitled *Lughāt*, are in four languages (Arabic, Persian, Greek and Serbian). They were both copied before 917/1512. Polish Muslims (the Tatars in eastern Poland) also have works of this kind which are written in Arabic characters but in the Polish language and Belorussian (White Russian). Greek Muslims translated Birgivi's grammar into Greek and wrote it in Arabic characters.

Based on an examination of the *aljamiado* texts which are still available in Bosnia, the writing of such literary texts began in the first half of the seventeenth century and became customary after the eighteenth. Most of these texts are monumental linguistic, cultural and historical works. Later, the script used in *aljamiado* texts was used in schools and *madrasas* and many books were published in these characters.

Among the works of this genre of literature are versions of Sulaymān Chelebi's *Mawlūd* which were translated into other languages and written in Arabic characters. Gagević first translated this work in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It has several editions in the Latin alphabet.

The authors who produced the first works on *aljamiado* texts written by Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina were Otto Blau, F. S. Krauss, M. Braun, A. Bebler, W. Lehfeltdt, V. Čorović, Ā. Kemura and Karl Patschu. They were followed by Derviş M. Korkut, Alija Nametak, Mehmet Handžić, Osman A. Sokolović, Kasım Dobraća, Hivzija Hasandedić and Fehim Nametak. The published works which offer critical collections of *aljamiado* texts, presenting the richest information on this subject, are the following: Abdurahman Nametak, *Hrestomatija Bosanske alhamijado knjizevnosti* (1981) and Muhamed Huković, *Alhamijado knjizevnost i njeni stvaraoici* (1986). Judging by the above studies, it appears that *aljamiado* literary texts contain materials such as lyric

and epic folk-songs, religious articles and counsels, dictionaries in the form of couplets and *qaşidas*. The principal authors in Bosnia-Herzegovina who produced their works in this alphabet are the following: Muhamed Hevai, Uskufi, Hadži Jusuf Livnjak, Mehmet-aga Prušća, Ilhamī, Sulejman Tabaković, Mehmet Bjelopolac, Muhamed Ruždi, Omer Humo, Abdulah Bjelovac, Salih Kalajdžić, Hasan Kaimi, Mustafa Firaki, Hasan Kadija, Abdulah Iljami, Mula Mustafa Bašeski, Abdurahman Sirri, Abdulah Bjelavac and Mustafa Firaklija. They used the following Arabic alphabet:

آ	a A
ب ب	b B
ج ج	c C
چ چ	ç Ç
د	d D
ج ج	dz DZ
ج ج	d D
ء ء	e E
ف ف	f F
غ غ	g G
ح ح	h H
ای ای	i I
ی ی	j J
ق ق	k K

ل ل	l L
لّ لّ	lj Lj
م م	m M
ن ن	n N
ؤ و	o O
پ پ	p P
ر ر	r R
س س	s S
ش ش	ş Ş
ت ت	t T
ؤ و	u U
و و	v V
ز ز	z Z
ژ ژ	z Z

Likewise, numerous works in *aljamiado* literature were written by Albanian Muslims. These were first produced in Albania itself, and a century later by Albanians in Kosovo-Metohija and Montenegro. The oldest specimen of this branch of literature, entitled *Mucizade*, is dated 1136/1724 and comprises seventeen quatrains. But the most important works in this field are the *Divān* of Nazim Berati (or Nazim Frakula) (1680–1754), followed by the writings of Sulejman Naibi (d. 1760). Hasan Zuko wrote the first *mawlūd* in Albanian (eighteenth century); Ismail Floqi translated Sulaymān Chelebi's *mawlūd* from Ottoman Turkish into Albanian for the first time, but unfortunately this work was lost before it could be published. Ali Rıza Ulçinaku (d. 1913) wrote his

work *Tercüme-i Mevlūd ala Lisān-i Arnavud* in Arabic characters and published it in Istanbul in 1878. A copy is located in the Yıldız library in Istanbul. Afterwards, *shaykhs* and derwishes such as Tahir Boshnjak, Regjep Voka and Shejh Maliç who were trained in derwish lodges, wrote *dīvāns* using the following alphabet:

أ = a	ع = g	ن = ll	ت = t
ب = b	ك = gj	م = m	ث = h
چ = ç	ه = h	ن = n	و = u
د = d	اي = i	ن = nj	ي = y
ذ = dh	ي = j	ؤ = o	و = v
ه = e	ق = k	پ = p	ز = z
ء = E	ك = q	ر = r	ظ = x
ف = f	ل = l	ر = rr	ج = xh
		س = s	ژ = zh
		ش = sh	

There are also studies which give information on *aljamiado* literature in Albania. The first work which gives a brief description of this subject is Osman Muderizi's article entitled *Letërsija shqipe me alfabetin arab*. Later, Hasan Kaleshi provided the most extensive survey of this literature in his two articles entitled *Prilog poznavanju albanske književnosti iz vremena preporoda* (1956) and *Albanska aljamiado književnost* (1970). Recently, this branch of Albanian literature has grown even richer with the addition of new *aljamiado* texts to books about Albanian culture and language.

### Muslim literature after the period of Ottoman Rule

After Ottoman rule ended in the Balkans, the literature of each nation gradually underwent changes. Since the Ottomans did not leave all Balkan countries at the same time, such changes in the literature of these nations did not occur simultaneously. For example, Bosnia-Herzegovina fell under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian empire between the years 1878–1918. During

this period, new works were produced in the Muslim literature of this area in the genre of eastern *parnas* and *aljamiado*; in particular, Albanian and Muslim (Bosnian) national literature began to flourish. *Književnost muslimana za vreme prepodoroda* (Muslim literature during the period of Renaissance) emerged in the literature of the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the rule of the Austro-Hungarian empire. At the time, the following newspapers and periodicals were published in Bosnia-Herzegovina: *Vatan* (Motherland), *Rebber* (Leader), *Babar* (Spring) (for one year only) in Turkish and *Gayret* (Zeal) in Bosnian and Turkish, bilingually, and *Boşnak*, *Musavat* (Equality) and *Gayret* (Zeal) only in Bosnian. The principal men-of-letters who were involved with these newspapers and periodicals were Mehmed Beg Kapetanović-Ljubušak, Safvet Beg Bašeski, Ethem Mulabdić and Musa Čazim Čatić.

New authors emerged in Albania who belonged to the new literary current called *Letërsa Shqipe e Rilindjës Kombëtare* (Albanian Literature of the Renaissance). It began in 1878 concurrently with the Albanian movement of national feeling for the independence of Albania. The most important authors in this new literature were Rrapo Hakeli and Zenel Gjokela. Some authors among Albanian Muslims who were fond of religion and religious orders continued to write their works in eastern *parnas* literature, like the Muslims in Bosnia. Most of them were the *shaykhs* and derwishes from the derwish lodges. The information based on manuscripts shows the emergence of authors who were trained in these lodges. Among them are Fakirî, Yarî, Sirrî, Zaptî, Rahbî and Nafiz. However, there is no further information about the life of these authors. Two men-of-letters among them wrote about Islamic history, the more eminent being Naim Frashëri, who wrote the work entitled *Qerbelanë* (Karbala).

## Muslim literature between the two World Wars

Between the two World Wars, Muslim peoples such as the Albanians, Bosnians, Pomaks, Torbeshi, Gorantzi, Gypsies and Circassians continued to live in the Balkans. They had their own writers, but these were less in number compared to previous periods. Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Sanjak continued to publish their works in their mother-tongues, in newspapers and periodicals; the Turks published them in Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo and Macedonia, the Albanians in Albania, Greece and Yugoslavia.

The new literary society and its publications invigorated Muslim literature between the two World Wars. The most important periodical of this period was *Novi Beha* in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The year-books called *Narodna uzdanica* and *Gajret* are particularly important in this new literary activity. Besides Ethem Mulabdić, who started to produce his works during Austrian rule, the best-known authors are Ahmed Muratbegović, Alija Nametak, Hasan Kikić and Zija Dizdarević.



In Albania as in Herzegovina, Muslim literature started to develop around a few newspapers and periodicals published by the Muslims. These were: *Shkupi*, *Drita*, *Ittihad-ı Millîyye* and *Bashkimi Kombëtar*. These publications are fewer in number than those in Bosnia-Herzegovina since most of the Muslim Albanians who wrote works in this period belonged to the numerous religious orders. Most of these authors were members of the Bektāshī order and wrote their works on the religious orders and religious subjects. Among the well-known figures are Mula Husejin Dobraçi, Mula Salih Pata, Shejh Ahmed Elbasani, Shejh Sulejman Tenani, Haxhi Ahmed Beg Tirana, Kazim Baba of Yakova, Sulejman Efendi of Priëtina, Shejh Abdülkadër of Mitrovica, Ali Hoxha Muderis, Shejh Maliq of Prizren, etc.

## Muslim literature after World War II

Following World War II, the modern European states gained their independence and preserved their culture and literature. The Muslim Bosnians, Albanians, Turks, Torbeshi, Pomaks, Gorantzi and Roms, along with the Christian nations, continued to expand their contemporary literature and tried to write and publish in almost all genres.

The Muslim nation in the Balkans (Muslim Bosnians), whose population exceeded three million, continued to contribute works to their contemporary literature between the two World Wars. Like the Catholic Croatian, Orthodox Serbian and Montenegrin nations, they wrote and published all kinds of literary materials in their mother-tongues as spoken in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. Since the war, more than fifty Muslim men-of-letters have published works up to the present time. The most important authors are the following:

*Bosnia-Herzegovina*: Edhem Mulabdić (1862–1954), Savfet-beg Bašagić (1870–1954), Šemsudin Sarajlić (1887–1960), Musa Čazim Čatić (1878–1915), Hamzo Humo (1895–1970), Ahmed Muradbegović (1898–1972), Hivzi Bjelavac (1886–1982), Hasan Kikić (1905–1942), Alija Nametak (1906–1987), Salih Alić (1906–1982), Enver Holaković (1913–1976), Čamil Sijarić (1913–1989), Skender Kulenović (1910–1978), Zijo Dizdarević (1916–1942), Zaim Topčić (b. 1920), Nusret Idrizović (b. 1930), Izet Sarajić (b. 1930), Meša Selimović (1910–1982), Mak Dizdar (1917–1971), Derviš Sušić (b. 1925), Sead Fetahagić (b. 1935), Nedžad Ibrišimović (b. 1940), Abdulah Sidran (b. 1944), Muhamed Kondžić (b. 1932), Irfan Horozović (b. 1947), Kemal Mahmuddefendić (b. 1942), Enes Kišević (b. 1947), Hamdija Demirović (b. 1954), Džemaludin Latić (b. 1957), Ferida Duraković (b. 1957), Selim Arnavut (b. 1962).

*Montenegro*: Sait Orahovac (b. 1909), Alija Hoždić (b. 1929), Husein Bašidić (b. 1938), Fehim Kmajević (b. 1945), Ismet Marković (b. 1948).

*Serbia*: Muhamed Abdagić (b. 1916).

*Croatia*: Sead Begović (b. 1954).

These authors wrote in almost all literary genres. Their poems and stories are examples of a most brilliant artistic creativity. A few novelists have come to prominence recently. The principal authors among them are Alija Isaković and Dževad Karahasan.

After World War II, many Albanian newspapers and periodicals were published in Albania and Kosovo. These publications played a great rôle in the development of Albanian literature. Albanian Muslim literature developed in several regions, but the mother of this contemporary literature is Albania. The Albanians, who live in Kosovo-Metohija (1,500,000), Macedonia (500,000), Montenegro (150,000) and Greece (300,000), were very productive in this literature. Following the example of the Albanians of Albania, those of Kosovo-Metohija wrote the most impressive works. They have an institute called *Gjurmime albanologjike* (Institute of Albanology) and also an *Akademija Shkencore* (Academy of Science), similar to the one in Albania. Thousands of books were published within the framework of the programme of the Institute and the Academy. The most valuable works on Albanian literature are *Historija e letërsisë shqiptare* (1983); Rejep Qosja, *Atologjia historike e letërsisë Shqipe I*, *Poezia dhe proza* (1985); Hasan Mekuli, *Pesme Gorke i ponosne Poezija Siptara FNRJ* (1962); Agim Deva, *Antologji e poezisë shqipe për femijë* (1978) etc., published by the Albanian Academy of Science.

On the basis of publications such as the above and books published about the writers and their works, the principal authors of contemporary Albanian literature are the following:

*Albania, Kosovo-Metohija*: Jusuf Bugjovi (b. 1946), Fahredin Gunga (b. 1936), Rahman Dedaj (b. 1939), Nebil Duraku (b. 1934), Enver Gjergjeku (b. 1928), Ibrahim Kadriu (b. 1945), Ramiz Kelmendi (b. 1930), Rifat Kukaj (b. 1938), Agim Mala (b. 1951), Din Mehmeti (b. 1932), Adem Gajtani (b. 1935), Ali Podrimlja (b. 1942), Nazmi Rahmani (b. 1941), Mustafa Spahiu (b. 1948), Qerim Ujkani (b. 1937), Sabri Hamiti (b. 1950), Sinan Hasani (b. 1922), Azem Shkreli (b. 1938), Muharem Shahiki (b. 1927) and Agim Deva (b. 1948).

*Macedonia*: Fejzi Bojku (b. 1937), Rahman Zejneli (b. 1952), Murat Isaku (b. 1932), Abdylaziz Islami (b. 1930), Kemal Komina (b. 1950), Ferit Muhik (b. 1943), Murteza Peza (b. 1919), Lutfi Rusi (b. 1923), Nehas Sopaj (b. 1954), Luan Starova (b. 1941), Sejfedin Sulejmani (b. 1938) and Resne Shabani (b. 1944).

*Montenegro*: Esad Mekuli (b. 1916) and Rejep Qosja (b. 1936).

The literature of the Roms in Europe dates back to the post-war period. Before the war, these people were not called by the name 'Rom'; they had neither a Rom literature nor Rom authors. It was only in the eighties that they started to call their nation, scattered over various countries of Europe, by the

name 'Rom' and developed the Rom alphabet. With this, they laid the foundations of their literature in their mother tongue and during the 1991–1992 academic year established the Department of Romanology in their Faculty of Philology in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. Romany, Rom literature, folklore and folk-literature are examined and research is carried out in this department.

The principal men-of-letters of the Roms up to the present day are the following:

*Serbia:* Ismet Jašarević, Eslan Drudan, Dževad Gaši, Ali Krasnići (b. 1952).

*Montenegro:* Ruždija, Ruse Sejdović, Izeta Sejdović.

*Macedonia:* Ilyas Šaban, Šaip Jūsuf, etc.

Some Rom authors continue to write and publish their works in other languages. For example, Muharrem Serbezovski, the Rom musician from Skopje, published his three novels in Serbo-Croatian in Sarajevo, and Iljaz Saban wrote his works both in Macedonian and Romany.

Between 1944 and 1950, and afterwards, very few books were published in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece. But the members of the Turkish nation who continued to live in these countries began to publish their first literary works in newspapers and periodicals such as the following:

*Bulgaria:* *Işık, Eylülcü Çocuk, Yeni Işık, Yeni Hayat, Halk Gençliği, Yeni Işık* and *Yeni Işık-Nova svetlina. Hak ve Özgürlük* and *Filiz* were published after the proclamation of democracy.

*Yugoslavia:* *Birlik* (1944), *Piyoner, Sevinç, Tomurcuk, Sesler, Tan, Çevren, Kuş, Esin* and *Çiğ*.

*Greece:* *Hakyolu, Sebat, Akın, Muhafazakâr, Azınlık Postası, İleri, Gerçek, Trakya'nın sesi, Aile, Muallim Mecmuası, Peygamber Binası, İsbat, Batı Trakya, Aliş, Birlik (Öğretmen)* and *Yuvamız*.

From 1950 onwards, occasional textbooks for primary and secondary schools (the period of instruction is eight years) started to appear in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and, particularly, in Greece, in addition to numerous books on general subjects. Other books for the public by various Turkish authors were also published in those countries. These were books of poetry, stories, novels, plays, criticism, diaries, essays, texts of folk-literature, translations and interviews. The number of books of contemporary Turkish literature published up to today is about 600 in Bulgaria, 500 in Yugoslavia, fifty in Greece and twenty in Rumania. Based on all these publications, anthologies containing poems, stories, interviews and novels were published in Bulgaria. The following anthologies have been published about contemporary Turkish literature:

*Bulgaria:* Ibrahim Tatarlı (Tatarlıef), *Cumhuriyet'in bahariyet çocukları* (Happy Children of the Republic, 1952), *Antologya*, 1960; and *Bulgaristan Türklerinin edebiyatı 1944–1964* (Literature of the Turks in Bulgaria 1944–64, 1964), Nimetullah Hafız, *Bulgaristan'da çağdaş Türk edebiyatı Antolojisi* (Anthology of

Contemporary Turkish Literature in Bulgaria I, II (1987), III (1989); and Mehmet Çavuş, *Yuz yıl Bulgaristan Türkleri şiiri (Antoloji)* (Poems of the Bulgarian Turks in the Twentieth century – Anthology, 1988).

*Yugoslavia*: Necati Zekeriya, *Çiçek* (Flower, 1969), *Demet* (Bouquet, 1982), *Çiğdem* (Crocus, 1985) and *Sevgiyle* (With Love, 1988); Süreyya Yusuf, *Yugoslavya'da Türk şiiri* (Turkish Poetry in Yugoslavia, 1976); Bedri Selim, *Çağdaş Yugoslavya Türk hikâyeleri* (Turkish Stories in Contemporary Yugoslavia, 1978); Reyhan Isen and Mustafa Isen, *Yugoslavya Türk çocuk şiirlerinden seçmeler* (Selections from the Poems of Turkish Children in Yugoslavia, 1983); Fahri Kaya, *Gökkuşluğu* (Rainbow, 1985) and *Yugoslavya Türk hikâyesi antolojisi* (Anthology of Turkish Stories in Yugoslavia, 1990); and Nimetullah Hafız, *Yugoslavya'da çağdaş Türk edebiyatı antolojisi I, II, III* (Anthology of Contemporary Turkish Literature in Yugoslavia, 1989).

The majority of Turkish people in Greece emigrated to Turkey just as they started to produce their literary works. Some continued their output there, while others decided not to contribute to their literature. Some of these authors published poems, stories, criticisms, interviews, diaries and other works in newspapers and periodicals in Greece when they were still in that country. There were also a few books published privately. Examining all these newspapers, periodicals and books published up to 1989 in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece and Rumania, Feyyaz Sağlam prepared his studies entitled *Batı Trakya (Yunanistan)'da çağdaş Türk edebiyatı antolojisi* (Anthology of Contemporary Turkish Literature in Western Thrace (Greece)), 1990), *Batı Trakya Türkleri çocuk edebiyatı* (Children's Literature in Western Thrace, 1990) and *Yunanistan (Batı Trakya) Türk edebiyatı üzerine incelemeler* (Studies on Turkish Literature in Greece (Western Thrace), 1991). Thus, through the publication of these three works, he brought to light contemporary Turkish authors to the number of about one hundred in Bulgaria, eighty in Yugoslavia, fifty in Greece and twenty in Rumania.

On the evidence of literary works and anthologies which have been published in Europe and outside, we can identify the following Turkish writers in Europe:

*Bulgaria*: Aliosman Ayrantok (1877–1952), Mehmet Müzekka Con (b. 1885), Selim Bilâlof (b. 1915), Sabri Demirof (b. 1915), Rıza Mollof (1920–1985), Yusuf Kerimof (b. 1922), Salih Baklaciyet (b. 1924), Hasan Karahüseynof (b. 1925), Mefküre Mollova (b. 1927), Ahmet Şerifof (b. 1926), Ahmet Timişef (b. 1926), Sabri Tatof (b. 1925), Süleyman Gavazof (b. 1924), Niyazi Hüzeynof (b. 1927), Lutfi Demirof (b. 1929), Mehmet Bekirof (b. 1930), Nadiye Ahmetova (b. 1931), Mehmet Çavuşef (b. 1933), Halit Aliosmanof (b. 1932), Kâzım Memişef (b. 1933), Hüsmen İsmailof (b. 1933), Yusuf Ahmedof (b. 1933), Recep Küpçüef (b. 1934), Sabahattin Bayramof (b. 1931), Ömer Osmanof (b. 1934), Nevzat Mehmedof (b. 1934), Mustafa Mutkof (b. 1930),

Lâtif Aliyef (b.1935), Süleyman Yusuf (b.1936), Faik İsmailof (b.1936), Durhan Hasanof (b.1937), Osman Azizof (b.1937), Sabri İbrahimof (b.1937), Şahin Mustafof (b.1938), Ali Kadırof (1936–1962), Şaban Mahmudof (b.1938), Ahmet Eminof (b.1944) and Naci Ferhadof (b.1940).

*Yugoslavia:* Enver Tuzcu (1916–1958), Hüseyin Süleyman (1900–1963), Şürü Ramo (1918–1988), Mustafa Karahasan (b.1920), Süreyya Yusuf (1923–1977), Lütfü Seyfullah (b.1926), Necati Zekerıya (1928–1988), Mahmut Kıratlı (1929–1988), Fahri Kaya (b.1930), İlhami Emin (b.1931), Esat Bayram (b.1934), Recep Bulgariç (b.1934), Naim Şaban (b.1937), Nusret Dişo Ülkü (b.1938), Nimetullah Hafız (b.1939), Enver Baki (b.1943), Vefki Hasan (b.1943), Güler Selim (b.1944), Hasan Mercan (b.1944), Arif Bozacı (b.1944), Murteza Buşra (b.1946), Şecaettin Kola (b.1945), Ahmet S. İğciler (b.1945), Avni Engüllü (b.1948), Bayram İbrahim (b.1947), Mustafa Yaşar (b.1948), Altay Suroy (b.1949), Alâettin Tahir (b.1949), Erol Hayrettin (b.1949), Suat Engüllü (b.1950), Ağim Rifat Yeşeren (b.1951), Ethem Baymak (b.1952), Fahri Ali (b.1948), Enver İlyas (b.1955), Sabahattin Sezair (b.1948), Fikri Şişko (b.1949), Reşit Hanedan (b.1955), Nuhi Mazrek (b.1956), Sabit Yusuf (b.1957), İrfan Belür (b.1954), Fahri Mermer (b.1950), Zeynel Beksaç (b.1952), Osman Baymak (b.1954), Raif Kırkul (1964), Burhan Sait (b.1965).

*Greece:* Asım Haliloğlu (1923–1980), Hüseyin Alıbabaoğlu (b.1936), Alırıza Saracoğlu (b.1938), Hüseyin Mahmutoğlu (b.1939), Kadir Ali (b.1939), Rami Ali (b.1941), Salih Halil (b.1941), Mustafa Tahsin (b.1942), İmam Kasım (b.1943), Abdurahman Dede (b.1940), Mücahit Mümin (b.1944), Naim Kâzım (b.1945), Mehmet Çalak (b.1946), Refika Nazım Rıda (b.1947), Hüseyin Mazlum (b.1947) and İbrahim Onsunoğlu (b.1948).

*Rumania:* Ahmet İsmail Davut, İsmail Zıyaeddin, Esin Atıla, Ekrem Menlibay, Emel Esin, Enver Mahmut, Altay Kerim, Cevat Reşit, Deniz Kamer Baubek, Belkız Sena Bilâl, Fatma Sadık, Ayten Kerim, Nevzat M. Yusuf, Cenan Balat, Emin E. İsmail, Kerim Abdullah and Tahsin Cemal.

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P H I L O S O P H Y

I N

I S L A M

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Chapter 1

REVEALED TEXT AND THE  
MANIFESTATIONS OF REASON:  
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY  
IN ISLAM

*Fehmi Jadaane*

We can speak about the philosophy and wisdom of Islam only if we go directly to the 'scriptural texts'. This is because the historical religious heritage does not give us much scope to claim that Islam itself is a 'philosophy'; and within Islam there have always been those who were ready to lay the charge of deviation, error, unbelief, stupidity and weakness against anyone engaged in this field of human activity. The echoes of this opinion can still be heard today, its adherents denying that the teaching of 'the Book and the Wisdom' (Qur'an II.129, 157) could have any connection with the concepts and preoccupations of philosophy. However, this is a minority's view in Islam. What is presented by Islamic historical experience is that 'scripture' opens up wide horizons for unbiased speculation, scientific thought, philosophical reflection and spiritual conduct; and that these horizons are manifest in the studies of the speculative theologians, in the works of the philosophers and in the achievements of scholars of mathematics, astronomy, natural science, medicine and other disciplines and in the lives and teachings of the Sūfīs.

In fact, Islamic historical experience, despite being part of lived historical reality and despite its involvement in the conditions and demands of this reality, has always gone back to the scriptures to justify its movement, its actions, its manifestations, its interests. It is not difficult to produce testimonies which clearly show the desire of the speculative theologians, the philosophers, Sūfīs and scholars, in order to confirm that what they produced or thought agrees with the scriptures and is in perfect harmony with them. Although all this has come under the category of 'justification', the entire matter is in parentheses; and for us, the modern uninformed in the old obscurity about knowledge, only approaching the texts directly – i.e. the Qur'an and the material of the prophetic *Ḥadīth* – leads us to confirm and accept this 'justification'.

There is no doubt among Muslims that the scripture surpasses the material world and humanity, and that it is Revelation which descended from heaven upon a human being. So in this sense it surpasses nature and its content cannot be human 'philosophy' or 'science', which humankind creates or deduces or discovers by purely natural activity, that is by their reason, senses, technical means, or intuition. There is no doubt, too, that some aspects of this Revelation deal purely with matters of the invisible, and there is no way in which the human being, by nature, can grasp these, nor become acquainted with any of them by whatever means available to him.

But that is not the whole Revelation, whether with respect to contents or method. For if it is true, on the one hand, that a human being cannot say a single word about Paradise and Hell, the Throne, the angels or reward and punishment, it is true, on the other hand, that he can say a great deal about himself and other people, about nature and the universe, and even about God – in short, about anything which is connected directly or indirectly to the 'visible' world. For the human being is invited to study aspects of this world, to examine it, think carefully about it, comprehend and reflect thoughtfully upon it, to use all his ability and effort to get to know it and to master it for the benefit and good of mankind. All this is distant from Revelation, scripture and prophecy, and connected to man's natural activity and his simple human powers; i.e. embodying the presence of *Homo sapiens* and of *Homo faber* in accordance with the well-known anthropological classification.

In reality, the religious texts bring the human being directly before not only God and the unseen, but also created humankind and nature. For they require him to direct all the natural powers with which he has been endowed towards fulfilling the aim of creation – that is his status as vicegerent and dwelling on the earth – for the sake of mankind's good and God's approval. This good is not in the text-word only, but is also of this world; for existence in itself is not evil, as was believed by some ancient philosophers, but good and must be sought and fulfilled in some way and in accordance with a host of understandings, concepts, rules and aims.

Some modern thinkers in Islam, and some of its contemporary ideological movements, have looked at these concepts, understandings and rules, seeing them as a firm 'ideology' in a philosophical, confessional, organized way; but the ancients clearly saw in the texts only a body of creeds and rules, linked to ritual worship and ways of conduct, which effectively cover the basic aspects of life. For many of them these remained, in the field of conduct, in a special way subject to contemporary rules of *ijtihad*, varied and renewed. Islamic religious experience, in fact, eventually organized the creeds and rules of Islam in accordance with the philosophical classifications; these mainly relate to ancient epistemology which distinguishes between the theoretical and practical areas, putting the sum of opinions, thoughts, beliefs and sciences in



the former, and the sum of rules, values and organizations connected with moral, social, economic, political and industrial life in the latter.

Do these understandings, values, rules and organizations, which form the sum of what Islam embodies in a practical way in scriptures and in the reality of life, represent a philosophy in the true sense of the world? Or to put it another way: can we, in the light of these given facts, speak of 'Islamic philosophy' arising from Islam itself, that is from the scriptures, and not from what came down to the Arabs and to Islam from the ancient Greeks and which, after much debate, was given the name of Islamic philosophy? If it is possible to say something like this, then what does it mean and how can it be expressed?

In fact, a measure of precision and definition is necessary in order to answer such questions; and the whole matter is connected primarily to the meaning of philosophy and the conditions of its verification.

To begin with, Revelation itself, with respect to its origin and source and the manner of its manifestation, is not a 'philosophy'. This was decided by the thinkers, theologians, philosophers and scholars of Islam in the time when they first knew Greek philosophy and science, in the second century of the Hijra. For the Revelation is something transmitted and sent down from the divine presence, while philosophy is a human construction, a purely human science and a wisdom which man can acquire by his natural powers. So there is no possible meeting between Islam itself, which is a divine text revealed, and philosophy, which is human wisdom.

However, the question cannot that easily be resolved in Islam. The 'text' is not simply Revelation sent down and nothing more; it is also a book of wisdom - that is a scripture which directs, builds, lays a foundation and is a guide to the proper way, forming humanity, society and life. From another point of view, philosophy too is not merely a rational, sensory or intuitive activity, but it is also wisdom in existence and a path in life; it is its nature to lead towards happiness, regardless of the source from which it arises. Putting it another way, it is possible for the nature of philosophy to be defined by its structure, contents, subject-matter and aims, and not by the instruments used. It is in the nature of this way of definition that it forms from the products of speculation and practical work on scriptures a foundation which is in agreement with most of the traditional definitions of philosophy.

There is no doubt that the ancient definition of philosophy, that it investigates the principles and furthest causes of existence, represents one of the fundamental concerns to which the Qur'ānic text reverts when it continually raises questions about the creation of the heavens and earth, about the cause and the nature of this creation, and urges the believers to reflect on how the creation began, confirming that only God is this Uncaused Cause.

Certainly, the statement that philosophy is a definition of the most important and essential things in the spiritual life of mankind enters the very

heart of 'the message of Revelation'. It is also certain that our definition of philosophy as reflective thought agrees with the Qur'ān's encouragement to thought, reflection, observation and consideration of the human being's relationship with himself and with the external world.

To express philosophy as a directive for conduct, a basic structure for values, a foundation for spiritual and public life, does not contradict a single one of the chief directives of the religious system.

Even the saying that philosophy is, by its nature, critical thought is in accord with the Qur'ānic summons to 'criticize the tradition' and the ways of the ancestors, and to build faith on a basis of firmly rooted certainty, even if this summons does not go so far as to believe that the function of religion is 'criticism' and critical thought.

Finally, there is no doubt that the affirmation of philosophy as a comprehensive view of the world agrees completely with the position of religion, which also expresses a comprehensive view of the world, from which proceeds a clearly defined pattern for action and conduct.

So it is clear that the contents of the religious text respond to some of the definitions of philosophy given by philosophers. The value of the philosophical nature of the whole contents of the revelation is not diminished by the fact that some of the definitions of philosophy oppose the contents and aims of the 'scripture'. For there is no real agreement among philosophers themselves upon one meaning of philosophy, nor does complete agreement exist among the scholars and historians of philosophy.

Despite that, there is a kind of consensus about the statement that philosophy is truly philosophy only if it is 'natural', that is a result of natural tools of human activity, which means that it is based on practical observation and human experience, human reason and the senses, and the totality of what forms the basis of human and scientific thinking. How could what comes through Revelation, without human and natural activity, be part of philosophy? In conformity with this assessment, we must, where the religious text is concerned, in fact distinguish between the text and its origin on the one hand, and the content and demands of the text on the other. From this viewpoint, it is essential to say that the religious text as regards its principle and origin is not a philosophical creation, but as regards its content and demands it includes partial and comprehensive concepts, making it a philosophy of a certain kind.

Apart from that – and this is most important of all – the religious text confirms all the instruments which are used by philosophical reflection and scientific activity, and refers the interested human being to using those instruments which the philosophers and scholars use. This relates to all matters which are outside the domain of 'the invisible', or about which there is no 'legal judgement' or clear decision; these are the subject of human *ijtihād*, open across time and place. There is no connection here with reason's deducing rules for which there is no legal text, but it is connected, in particular, to

everything which is related to this world here below and to the realization of the human being's status as 'vicegerent' over the earth – not by way of comparing the visible with the invisible, but simply by way of speculation, thought, reflection, proof and consideration. The way to all that is reason, not Revelation. For reason, here in this sphere, is independent in its own powers and the judgements it reaches, complying with the conditions and principles of proof.

The Qur'ānic verses make continual mention and reference to reason and appeal to its decisions. This proceeds along four paths:

1. the path of faith, Revelation and scripture, where reason employs its ability, principles and rules to establish the supports of faith, to justify the propositions of Revelation, which need a natural or rational justification, to understand the scripture, which needs speculation and the actions of thought, and to learn from the texts in the directing of life;
2. the path of knowledge, which is concerned with humanity, life, existence, the relationship with the Creator, and the notion of destiny – something which is determined purely by the activity of reason and by complete freedom of the human being, his desires and aspirations, spiritual and philosophical, 'additional to faith';
3. the path of pure spiritual and meditative conduct, which leads to tranquillity of spirit, soul and intellect;
4. the path of knowing about the 'natural' details of existence, both in order to understand and analyse them, to become acquainted with them in themselves, and also in order to use and subject them in various useful and practical areas of human life.

Reason proceeds along all these paths in the religious texts and its viewpoint is defined. The basis here, in all these directions, is that 'this religion', which is 'Islam', in its essential nature – despite its pronouncements on the unseen region – does have a natural rational character – that is, its Revelation was in order to agree with the logic and rules of human reason. It is not in the nature of the unseen region to repress human nature or to limit any natural rational activity. Undoubtedly most of the *Ḥadīth* on reason are false or weak, but it is perfectly clear that there are numerous Qur'ānic texts which give a high regard to reason and treat its knowledge as authoritative; yet, citing them here would only be a repetition of matters very well known. What the texts are anxious to establish in the minds of the persons addressed, is that all the articles of faith and issues relating to God, creation, existence, action, the after-life, destiny, reward and punishment, and values, are matters which do not oppose reason, but are in complete agreement with it; and that when the reason thinks, meditates, reflects and comprehends in a sound way, then it ends in confirming them all, even if at the same time it may not understand everything.

There are some matters and issues which are 'in God's knowledge'; the human being cannot know these nor can reason grasp their essence. The

‘reason’ of which the scriptures speak so highly, is a guide for mankind only in their worldly affairs; for it is able to know the essence of the created world, its principles, origin and destiny. This is apart from acquiring comprehensive wisdom in life ‘wisdom’, which the scriptures estimate can only be in agreement with the wisdom and law of Islam; this is equally so whether the matter is connected with issues of theology and faith or with issues of action and virtue conducive to salvation. It is then philosophical reason in the full meaning of the word. It is this reason which applies itself to nature in order to acquire pure knowledge of it and to enable human beings, through this knowledge, to be in control of it, to rule over it and subject it, in accordance with the principles of observation, skill and experimentation and other means of ‘science’ proper.

If, finally, the Šūfī spiritual experience is an experience opposed to dry speculative reason, in reality it does not deny reflective intuitive reason, which deals with the interior of things and brings mankind back to their pure spiritual roots. For it embodies that which was formed by humanity longing for its divine origin. In addition, it is something suitable to separate itself from the temporal and attach itself to the eternal, without recourse to any external causes.

Examination of the scriptures, then, from the methodological and epistemological point of view, will explain sources of rational, scientific and reflective thought in their entirety. It can truly be said, for this reason, that the ‘scripture’ in this sense is appropriate as an incentive and motive for philosophical and scientific thought; and this has been confirmed by historical experience.

Although the religious text is a revealed one and sent down from heaven, believers decided in their practical life that, for the understanding and justification of many of the issues with which social and political life confronts them, this transmitted account was not sufficient. So, to solve problems which might suddenly occur, they had recourse to opinion (*raʿy*), supported here by the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, who decided for Muʿādh b. Jabal that he should use his opinion when he found no (Qurʾānic) text.

Seen from another angle, the Muslims were not able to defend their religion against opponents who were followers of other rival or contradictory religions or against the upholders of rational and materialist philosophies, by relying upon religious texts not accepted by these opponents. So they were obliged to use rational arguments and precise scientific and natural ideas to form the science of *kalām* as a foundation of religious beliefs and a support for faith, and to make Revelation a basis for a knowledge which strengthens and agrees with natural knowledge.

In this way Islam responded to the challenge of leaving its original limited cultural circle, accepted the cultural contest and the struggle of civilizations, opened its doors to the sciences and philosophies of other peoples and thus discovered their boundless advantages and benefits. So Islam drew copiously

on these sources, reshaping and re-creating some aspects of these civilizations and cultures. Its position regarding the culture of the Greeks was a unique human position since it opened its own treasure-houses to welcome the Greek philosophical and scientific heritage, acquired, through study, a thorough perception of it and exploited to the full all its beneficial aspects. This heritage, in short, was the product of Greek intellectualism, whether in connection with philosophical works or purely scientific writings. To accept all this, study, assimilate and re-create it, was an easy matter for the Arabs and Muslims, thanks to the strong scientific and intellectual preparation which Islam itself had created in the minds and lives of the Muslims. Were it not for the preparation, developed by the 'scriptures', it would not have been possible for this rational heritage to find a home in the realm of Islam, prior to its being conveyed onwards to Europe. Thus, we see an expansion and flourishing of philosophy and science, helping to make possible the appearance of such thinkers and scholars of great standing as Jābir b. Ḥayyān, al-Khwārizmī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, al-Bīrūnī, Ibn al-Nafīs, Ibn al-Haytham, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldūn. These were all eager to embody the intellectual and scientific ideal in their works and to be in contact with a fundamental thought, which was that the philosophical and scientific intellect, the source of their productivity, was but God's agent on the earth and His creation by which He gave humanity strength and honour and gave them so much knowledge, learning and skill.

The pure reflective, spiritual life, first in the form of the ascetic life, then in that of an intellectual or cognitive way, made use of reason in the search to know the Originator of existence, to see Him and to be united with Him. This, too, was not foreign to some of the spiritual tendencies expressed by the scriptures or which came to be embodied in some of the sons of the first generation of Companions and believers. Ṣūfīs, great and small, were anxious to base their sayings and experiences on the religious texts at all times – sometimes on the basis of rational interpretation, sometimes on that of spiritual interpretation – to explain, support and justify their experiences.

Nonetheless, we must continue to bear in mind that the earliest people of the *Sunna* at least, who strictly speaking are the people of *Ḥadīth*, never believed that Islam, or more precisely religion and Revelation, possessed these original rational and philosophical tendencies which gave legitimacy to the science of *kalām*, to philosophy, to rational Ṣūfism and to natural science. For they did not see these natural or human sciences as in any way necessary or beneficial for the life of Islam and Muslims. Their approach was that desirable knowledge is that which is useful in the religious context, and that expansion in the sphere of education, which the *Sharī'a* urged people to seek, does not permit one to go so far as to include what is called rational sciences.

There is no doubt that this attitude weakened the opportunities for the spread of scientific and philosophical intellectuality which were defended by

the rational theologians, the philosophers and scholars. But it never succeeded in forming a general supervisory current which would naturally give birth to the scientific and philosophical movement in Islam. This movement found its helpers in society, in the state and in public and private life, and successfully promoted considerable achievements in science and philosophy, thereby imposing itself on the cultural map of Islam, arousing admiration and forming a source of pride.

At the time when the modern Islamic world emerged from the darkness of the later centuries of decline, the call came to revive these achievements and to celebrate the Islamic philosophical and scientific share in all sectors of speculative and practical knowledge. This is one of the greatest means to justify Islam's important place in history and for encouraging awareness of its presence, of the Renaissance and the definite approach of a great period of floescence to form for Islam and Muslims all the conditions suitable for and needed by them in the civilization of humankind which will come in the future. Today the people of Islam, more than at any time in the past, are concerned with a very noble idea, a duty for all of them, which is that the Islamic Revelation came in conformity with reason and science, and that Islam is the religion of reason and science. Moreover, that is able to bring into being new religious paths, which are firmly rooted in these domains – just like the situation of the people in its classical heyday, which was realized only by virtue of the natural powers which sprang from the original sources of Revelation.

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Chapter 2

PHILOSOPHY IN ISLAM:  
THE ROYAL ROAD

*Febmi Jadaane*

I

Islam emerged at the end of the sixth century AD into a world mapped out by Arab mythology, by pagan and natural philosophy, by Judaism and Christianity, and at the crossroads of ancient nations such as Byzantium, Persia and India. While no-one would claim that this new religious phenomenon was unique or that it was created *ex nihilo*, everyone would agree that its path offered the means to assimilate and absorb, to cleanse and purify, to construct and transcend, to draw on its surroundings and to open up the ways for a new civilization. It would have to play a great rôle and would leave its impress on the course of human history.

The spirit of Islam entered history to build a world in which there would be no contradiction or conflict between the temporal and the eternal, between the real and the ideal, between the material and the spiritual, between heaven and earth. Islam would ensure that man could achieve happiness in this life and the next through his own efforts, provided that he was determined to do so and that he was guided by faith along the road to salvation.

Thus, it was to be expected that the Qur'an would direct man, on the one hand, to think and reason and, on the other, to act in accordance with morality, in order to fulfil the purposes for which he was created. Man, therefore, must know his place in the universe and his position in the kingdom of Heaven and Earth; he must confront the facts of history and reality with reason and feeling, with intellect and faith.

Yet, the Qur'an exhorted people not merely to stand by and reflect on the world around them but also to be its stewards, to build and cultivate it, to make it serve man and human happiness.

The religion of Islam, therefore, called for belief and action in accordance with the laws of nature and the facts of existence laid down by God for his creation. By these means, man could attain happiness, blessing

and salvation. And, if successful in attaining what he was called upon to achieve, man was promised what no eye had ever seen, what no ear had ever heard, what no mind had ever conceived. "Thus, from the very beginning, Muslims saw Islam as a picture of both religious and worldly existence. Equally, it brought to a close the course of divine Revelation; Muḥammad was the 'Seal of the Prophets' and God would send no other human messenger. Islam, therefore, stood for the final stage of religious knowledge and moral action, the two elements which man needs to respond to the divine call. The religion of Islam, then, is the goal or the ultimate aim towards which humanity strives by God's inspiration and direction: a goal and an aim, in that it is a final and irrevocable endorsement of pure monotheism, devoid of all anthropomorphic accretions; a goal and an aim, in that it is a final and definitive expression of the highest standards of morality and behaviour required of humanity in this world."<sup>1</sup>

When the time came for Islam to discharge its historic mission, it embarked boldly on one of the greatest adventures in the history of mankind, guided in this immense undertaking by hope and optimism. The first Muslims showed unalloyed confidence in the tremendous success achieved by Islam as it emerged from its first blaze of glory. There was never any doubt in their minds that boundless progress was to come and that the first era would be followed by others in which Allah's message would be universally heard. The innocent confidence of the early Muslims, however, would soon be shattered by the harsh reality of bloody strife and the disintegration of the community or nation, bringing a sense of impending doom and a yawning abyss between what should be and what was.

Thus, since the fourth decade of the Islamic era, Muslim minds have been preoccupied with the question of how to mend the breach, to close ranks again, to fight off division, to restore innocence for the faithful and their faith, to regain a 'paradise lost'. In those eventful times, faced with the ensuing turmoil, Islamic consciousness was focused on the establishment of doctrine and the religious sciences, on combating the enemies and opponents of the faith and on the search for the 'Royal Road' to salvation.

## II

In the real world there were many problems, foremost among them the urgent need to preserve, safeguard and defend the text of the Qur'ān in the face of an uncertain future. History records that, in the year 12/634, the battle of al-Yamāma saw the martyrdom of many who had committed the Qur'ān to memory. Thus, fearful lest 'the killing of reciters of the Qur'ān should spread

1. See F. Jadaane, *Uṣūl al-taqaddum 'inda mufakkiri al-Islām fi-l-'ālam al-'Arabī al-ḥadīth*, 3rd ed., Amman, Dār al-Shurūq, 1988a, p. 25.



through the land and result in the loss of much of the Book',<sup>2</sup> the second caliph set in train the vital process of gathering and preserving the full text. This task was completed during the lifetime of the third caliph 'Uthmān, when copies were made and the text to be circulated throughout the world was unanimously agreed.

This text became the authoritative and undisputed source, not just for the conscience of Muslims but also for the formulation of the laws regulating the daily life of the individual. The result was the emergence of the sciences of the Qur'ān: exegesis, the seven readings of the Qur'ān, the occasions of Revelation, abrogating and abrogated verses, ambiguous and unambiguous verses, Meccan and Medinan verses, the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān and the likes. To Muslims, this 'text' was the be-all and end-all, many going so far as to say that it contained everything to which an answer might be sought and that nothing existed which had not first been referred to in the Qur'ān.<sup>3</sup> To these people, the combination of the two texts - the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* - was so complete that no other source had meaning or value for the formulation of Muslim doctrine and the laws and institutions regulating personal and social life.

The text of the *Ḥadīth* or, more generally, that of the *Sunna* - namely all the words, deeds and decisions left to us by the Prophet - did not, in the beginning, attract the attention or enjoy the status accorded to the Qur'ānic text. The caliphs themselves applied strict criteria before accepting any *Ḥadīth*, firstly because it might be confused with the Qur'ān, and secondly because of the dangers of invention and discrepancy.

For the same reasons, the scholars of the second/eighth century were prompted to examine the material of the *Ḥadīth* in order to authenticate the chain of narration. On one level, this meant 'careful editing out of anything added to what had been said, done, decided or described by the Prophet and his companions and followers'. On another level, authentication was concerned with knowledge relating to 'the acceptance or rejection of the status of the narrator and the material narrated'.

To this end, there emerged the various sciences of *Ḥadīth*, such as invalidation and amendment of *ḥadīth*; the relators of *ḥadīth*; discrepancies in *ḥadīth*; occasions of *ḥadīth*; obscure terms of *ḥadīth*; abrogating and abrogated *ḥadīth*. Scholars produced 'compilations' (*muṣannaḥāt*), in which the different *ḥadīths* were classified into various types and identified as genuine, fair or weak.

2. Al-Qaṣṭallānī, *Irshād al-sārī li-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 10 vols., Cairo, Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1285/1869, VII, pp. 446-447; Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, ed. A. M. Shākir, 15 vols. in 8, Cairo, Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1949-1953, I, p. 185.
3. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, *Mabāḥith fi 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 13th ed., Beirut 1981; see also al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fi 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abd al-Fādl Ibrāhīm, 4 vols., Cairo, 1974.

Thus, the sciences of the Qurʾān and the *Ḥadīth* came to provide a general framework for the main sources of Islamic doctrine and jurisprudence. However, despite the growing corpus of principles of law and the appeal of the various schools of jurisprudence to notions such as consensus, analogy and public interest – all of which led to substantial growth in the foundations of legislation – the Qurʾān and the *Ḥadīth* remained the definitive sources, and ‘textualists’ would look outside them only if the texts themselves suggested other testimony or context. This, then, was the basis for the ‘viewpoint’ of the scholars of *Ḥadīth*, or traditionists, who claimed for themselves alone the title of ‘men of the *Sunna* and the community’ (*ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*). Their vision may be summarized as follows:

The *Ḥadīth* speaks of the principles of monotheism; God’s promises and admonitions; God’s words on the theses of the heretics; Heaven and Hell as God’s reward for the pious and His punishment for blasphemers; the miracles and wonders of God’s creation in Heaven and on Earth; the guardian angels; the righteous and those who praise God; the stories of the Prophets, the ascetics and the saints ... an interpretation [*tafsīr*] of the Qurʾān and its message and wisdom; the sayings of the Companions of the Prophet.<sup>4</sup>

More precisely, the scholar Yūnus b. Sulaymān al-Saqāṭī maintains that in the *Ḥadīth* we find mention of ‘God’s divinity, majesty and grandeur; God’s throne and the description of Heaven and Hell; the prophets and messengers; what is permitted or forbidden; the encouragement of family ties. It is the source of all that is good.’<sup>5</sup> This typifies the general movement explicitly associating itself with the earliest traditions. Its followers came to be known as *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* and their views continue to be represented by the Salafī movement.<sup>6</sup> In their view, the Royal Road is to be found in the text, which is pure and absolute; it is the frame of reference for and above all things; it is the ultimate authority, salvation and the sole explanation of reality and its various facets. Beyond the limits of the text, no other source has one iota of credibility; the text is fixed, eternal and absolute; everything else is transient, temporal and relative.

### III

The immediate problems of temporal reality led off into a number of other paths, the proliferation of which was epitomized in a saying attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, according to which: ‘The Jews were divided into seventy-one sects; the Christians were divided into seventy-two; and my own nation will be divided into seventy-three.’ Though the authenticity of this

4. Al-Baghdādī, *Sharaf ansāb al-ḥadīth*, Ankara, Ankara Printing Press, 1971, p. 8.

5. Al-Baghdādī, *op. cit.*

6. See F. Jadaane, ‘Maʿnā al-Salafiyya’, in *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyya*, Amman, 1988b.

*hadīth* cannot be verified, it served as the basis for classifying and categorizing the sects and distinguishing the path of salvation from the paths which lead astray. Whatever has been said or may be said about the nature and doctrines of these sects, we can confidently assert that the socio-political element is common to them all and that not one of them has succeeded in formulating a comprehensive religious or political system of belief. Invariably they focused on some particular dogma: at one time, this might relate to religious doctrine and questions of action, faith, unbelief, God's attributes or the like; at other times, it might be more a matter of politics, such as the caliphate, the imamate or positions in relation to authority; or, again, it might involve social questions and concentrate on attitudes towards others.

The sects became part of the dialectics between text and intellect on the one hand, and reality on the other. The Jabriyya never pretended that they could provide their followers with salvation, nor did the Qadariyya, the Šifātiyya or the other smaller factions.<sup>7</sup> Even the major sects, such as the Khawārij, the Ši'ā and the Murji'a, only came into being outside the general framework of Islamic belief because they unilaterally espoused, sympathized with and adopted some particular idea or stance, whether theoretical or practical. Regardless of size, the sects were limited and marginal.

For each, there was some specific issue: for the Jabriyya and the Qadariyya, this was divine and human action; for the Šifātiyya, the nature of God's attributes; for the Khawārij, the caliphate, authority and the community, faith and unbelief; for the Murji'a, faith and unbelief and the struggle within the Islamic community; and even for the Ši'ā, in the last analysis, the issue was no more than an imāmat deriving from the 'Text' versus a ruling power based on despotism and usurpation.

In short, if we ignore the partial positions which the sects adopted on the basis of contingent circumstances or particular historical situations, it may be said that they all turn to the 'Text', whether by conscious choice or rationalization, to support their positions and arguments. However, from a methodological point of view, the sects cannot be placed on a par with the textualists (*ashāb al-naṣṣ*), because their concerns were primarily practical rather than theoretical and systematic.

The spur for a new methodological approach in the political, social and cultural development of Islam was the confrontation between 'us' and 'them', i.e. those who held beliefs and principles other than those of Islam. In this conflict, the adversary was incarnate in the misguided followers of the other

7. Al-Nāshī' al-Akbar, *Masā'il al-imāma wa-muqatafa'āt min al-Kitāb al-awsaṭ fi-l-Maqālāt*, in J. van Ess (ed.), *Frühe mu'tazilitische Häresiographie*, (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 11), Beirut, Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft/Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner, 1971; see also al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. H. Ritter, 2 vols., Istanbul, Maṭba'at al-Dawla, 1930.

revealed monotheistic religions, particularly the Christians, and in the sects and cults which were hostile or contrary to Islam, such as the Manicheans, the Naturalists, the Philosophers, the Zoroastrians and the Atheists. It is thanks to, or because of them, that an Islamic intelligentsia arose at the beginning of the second/eighth century to spread the message of scholastic theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*), defending, explaining and justifying the faith. According to Ibn Khaldūn, this was ‘science which argued doctrinal beliefs by rational evidence and by countering the positions of innovators who strayed from the First Generations (*salaf*) and the people of the Sunna’.<sup>8</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn’s definition agrees with the approach of the Ash‘ariyya school, which follows the path of the *salaf* and the *ahl al-sunna* rather than the dialectics of the Mu‘tazila, who took upon themselves the task of defending their doctrinal belief through understanding and reasoning. Although the beginnings of scholastic theology may be traced back to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, the science itself was founded by the pioneers of *i‘tizāl* and the great Mu‘tazila of Baghdad and al-Baṣra. They realized well that the ‘traditional’ approach of comprehension, justification and defence was no longer possible in a civilization of divergent creeds, sects and cults. The founders of scholastic theology realized that conflicts between various ideas, religions and doctrines could be settled only by appeal to man’s intellect and to nature. In this context ‘Reason’ was no more than the collective wisdom, which was an old-established tradition in Islam. This tradition dated back to the earliest days of the religion when it developed in the absence of the ‘Text’, and its proponents clung to it just as strongly when the ‘Text’ appeared. The emergence of this trend can safely be traced back to a Companion of the Prophet, Mu‘adh b. Jabal, who declared that, in the absence of the ‘Text’, he would rely on his own personal opinion in making judgements. However, the rules governing this approach to religion would not be consolidated until much later by Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu‘mān (d. middle of second/eighth century). According to al-Baghdādī, it was he who was the first scholastic theologian and the founder of Islamic jurisprudence.

In this connection, mention can also be made of the early Qadariyya, such as Ma‘bad al-Juhanī (killed after 80/700) and Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, who adopted a scholastic approach to interpretation, and of the early ‘determinists’, the Mujabbira, such as al-Ja‘d b. Dirham and al-Jahm b. Ṣafwān (killed in 128/746), who called for the acquisition of knowledge through reasoning.<sup>9</sup> It might even be argued that the path of reason starts in the Qur’ān itself. This can be seen in its call for reason and thought, the philo-

8. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, 2nd ed., Tunis, Dār al-Nashr al-Tūnisiyya, 1989, II, p. 557.

9. ‘A. S. al-Nashshār, *Nash’at al-fikr al-falsafī fi-l-Islām*, 8th ed., 2 vols., Cairo, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1962–1964, I, pp. 314–371.

sophical and metaphysical issues which it poses and the reasoned arguments which it deploys against those who oppose or deny Islam.<sup>10</sup>

Whatever the case may be, there is no doubt that it was the Mu‘tazila who championed the supremacy of intellect and the power of reason. They went to such lengths that they were attacked on various grounds by opponents who questioned their faith. Objection was taken to their theory of personal or intellectual responsibility for good and evil, to their belief that judgement should be based on reason alone and to their insistence on the application of intellect in all matters, whether of belief or nature. Their approach inevitably involved them in complex and intractable issues.

The Mu‘tazila, however, never claimed that reason alone was sufficient or that Revelation was irrelevant. This is a long way indeed from a rationalism independent of any religious doctrine. On the contrary, they believed that reason and Revelation go hand-in-hand and are interdependent. It is true, however, that the Mu‘tazila held the view that, in the natural world, good and evil, right and wrong may be distinguished by reason alone. They rejected the view that good and evil are defined solely by reference to Revelation.

Because of this, and because they believed that God may be known through reason, they were described as rationalists. Their rationalism is evident in all of the tenets of their theory: monotheism, justice, the divine promise of Heaven and warning of Hell, the ‘middle way’ and, to a lesser extent, the injunction to do good and avoid evil.

The Mu‘tazila believed that God must be known rationally. Thus, their belief in the unity of God and His attributes reflected an explicit philosophical stance in contradistinction to the crowded Pantheon of pagan times; their principle of justice was based on the removal of the contradiction between the concept of ‘religious obligation’ (*taklīf*) and fair, divine action; and their theory of divine reward and punishment sought to eliminate any possibility that God might be seen as unjust.

There is no doubt that all the forms of explanation and interpretation proposed by the Mu‘tazila were tinged with rationalism. They were scornful and highly critical of traditionalists such as Muqātil b. Sulaymān, the Ḥanbalite school and the majority of scholars of jurisprudence, whom they dismissed as *abl al-ḥashw*. They were diametrically opposed to the followers of literal interpretation of text and tradition. Thus, the gulf between the two sides grew ever wider, the rationalists criticizing the textualists for their use of anthropomorphic terms, for their lack of regard for divine justice and fairness, virtually accusing them of polytheism. The traditionalists and men of the *Ḥadīth*, on the other hand, criticized the rationalists for denying God any attributes, for following the teachings of the *Jahmiyya*, for lacking depth of faith and even, on occasion, for lapsing into blasphemy. The struggle between the two sides

10. Ş. al-Şālih, *Mabāḥith fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, 1985, I, pp. 24–29.

raged throughout the third/ninth century and spluttered on into the fourth/tenth century as well.

Though the traditionalists were fighting an internal battle on just one level, it was waged on two fronts: against the rationalists and the *ahl al-ra'y* on the one hand, and against political authority on the other.<sup>11</sup> For their part, the rationalists or men of reason were conducting campaigns at two levels: one internal, against the traditionalists, and the other external, against those who upheld other doctrines or belonged to different religions and sects. It is impossible to underestimate the crucial rôle played by the rationalists and their successes in the external struggle. However, it has to be said that, in their fight with the traditionalists, the rationalists failed to win over the masses and the majority of those involved in matters of religion, scholastic theology and philosophy. By the end of the third/ninth century, out of the thesis of the traditionalists – i.e. the men of the *Ḥadīth* and the Ḥanbalīs – and the antithesis of the rationalists – i.e. the men of opinion, the Mu'tazila and the philosophers – there emerged the inevitable synthesis. This held out the promise of the 'Royal Road' so long awaited by the 'community' of Muslims and yearned for by those who were confused and at a loss in face of the wasteful indulgence of both the traditionalist and the rationalist camps.

#### IV

The school founded by Abu-l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (260–324/874–936) at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century was neither a radical reaction against the Mu'tazila nor blind devotion to the school of the Imam Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. We should not take at face value the furore that followed his defection from the Mu'tazila after forty years as a disciple of al-Jubā'ī, the leader of the Mu'tazila in Basra. Nor should we be misled by al-Ash'arī's plea that he was untouched by 'the scandals and disgraceful acts of the Mu'tazila', his ever-closer links with Imam Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his effusive praise of the latter and the *Salaf*. In fact, al-Ash'arī directed his most pointed criticism to the excesses in both camps: to the dismissal of reason by the traditionalists and to the over-emphasis of reason by the rationalists. The aim of al-Ash'arī was to reconcile 'Text' and 'Reason' and so to end the confrontation between the radical stances adopted by the two camps.

With penetrating insight, al-Ash'arī saw that the traditionalist (textualist) answer was inadequate and could not satisfy basic human requirements. Similarly, he realized that the rationalist answer was also lacking, given an arrogance which was difficult to justify or defend, particularly as the matters at issue were so subtle and far from being self-evident. How could man, a creature of limited capacities and wholly ignorant of the nature of the Divine,

11. F. Jadaane, *al-Miḥna: baḥṭh fī jadaliyyat al-dīn wa-l-siyāsa fī-l-Islām*, Amman, Dār al-Shurūq, 1989.

settle the issue of the relationship between God and the divine attributes? How can man tell for sure that his actions are his own, whether in one, some or all respects, particularly when the texts point at one time to determinism and at another to fatalism? How can man pronounce with certainty on whether God's words have existed since the beginning of time (with dire implications and consequences for the Muslim-Christian debate in particular) or state that they are recent (a view which leaves Muslims confused and perplexed).

For al-Ash'arī, everything seemed to argue for the need to reconcile the various conflicting positions, because their contradictory methodologies and ideologies were threatening the unity of the community itself. Thus, al-Ash'arī's way not only had ideological and scholastic theological implication, but had important socio-political ones as well. The synthesis with which al-Ash'arī sought to transcend the thesis of the traditionalists and the antithesis of the Mu'tazila consisted mainly in following the straight path, the path of unity, community and consensus, and in bridging the gap between the two sides.

Thus, it may be noted that al-Ash'arī held certain basic principles in common with the textualists or 'theorists among the people of the *Ḥadīth*'.<sup>12</sup> However, on other issues and principles he parted company with them. The same holds good of his stance vis-à-vis the rationalists, or people of opinion and reason. It is apparent that – on such issues as reason, oral transmission of the 'Text', the commandments of religion and knowledge of God, His attributes and actions – al-Ash'arī argues in favour of reasoned analogy and disagrees with the scholars of jurisprudence, the men of the *Ḥadīth*, and the Ḥanbalīs, who were content to stay with the 'Text' and shun reason. He considers rational argument to be essential and lays down the rules for debate and rebuttal in his work *Istih̄sān al-khawḍ fī 'ilm al-kalām*.<sup>13</sup>

On the question of the divine attributes, al-Ash'arī seeks to reconcile the opposing positions of the rationalists and the textualists in the debate over the anthropomorphization or de-anthropomorphization of God. He affirms that the divine attributes belong eternally to God Himself, but does not seek to ask the question 'why'. Similarly, in dealing with the word of God, al-Ash'arī tries to arrive at a synthesis which will combine the rationalist belief that the Qur'ān was created and the textualist belief that it is eternal. Al-Ash'arī's pupils consolidated this position by bringing in the distinction made by the Stoics between mental and spoken words; if the former are antecedent, he is in agreement with the textualists, particularly the Ḥanbalīs, and if the latter are subsequent, he is in agreement with those who argue that the Qur'ān was created.

12. Ibn al-Fūrak, *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Shaykh Abi-l-Hasan al-Ash'arī* (*Exposé de la doctrine d'al-Ash'arī*), ed. D. Gimaret, Beirut, Dār al-Mashriq, 1987.

13. Ibn al-Fūrak, *Mujarrad maqālāt...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 284–310.

The Ash'arīs hoped that a synthesis of the two contradictory positions in a single formula would succeed in reconciling the two factions, but in this they were disappointed and the opposite sides remained in entrenched positions. Similarly, al-Ash'arī attempted to resolve the difference over the issue of actions between the Mu'tazila and the Qadariyya on the one hand, and the Ḥanbalīs and the Jabriyya on the other. In his theory of *kasb*, he puts forward the thesis that God creates actions which accord with man's will and ability, and does not leave them to man's will and ability. Thus, on the one hand, the action is God's will, which agrees with the Ḥanbalīs and the Jabriyya, and, on the other hand, it is also man's own responsibility, for which he may earn a reward or deserve a punishment. This is a thesis calculated to appeal to both the Qadariyya and the Mu'tazila.

Nevertheless, al-Ash'arī did not develop this line of thought when he addressed the crucial political issue of the Imāmate. Here, he explicitly sided with the textualists, saying that 'the Imāmate is established by the laws of religion and must be accepted and obeyed'. He would not condone rebellion against a tyrannical imam, instead advising that inward disapproval should be cloaked by outward obedience for the sake of avoiding intrigue, chaos and corruption. He advocates the same approach to the issue of the injunction to do good and to prevent evil. This was contrary to the views of the Khawārij and the Mu'tazila, who held that it was a duty to rise against tyrants, using arms where possible.<sup>14</sup>

Upon reflection, it is tempting to think that al-Ash'arī might have viewed 'inward disapproval' as the middle way between inward and outward obedience and armed rebellion. If this were the case, then al-Ash'arī would still have remained on the course that he had set himself, upholding unity and repudiating division. This general line was followed by the disciples of al-Ash'arī in the form of the basic principle that Islamic law takes precedence over reason. Nevertheless, they expressly used reason and the premises of natural philosophy as a means of promoting matters of the law. For example, atomism was adopted as the basis to resolve questions of nature, divinity and creation. Thus, in the work of such early disciples of al-Ash'arī as al-Bāqillānī (d. 404/1013), al-Baghdādī (d. 428/1037) and al-Juwaynī (479/1086), the science of scholastic theology was permeated with the terms and issues of philosophy.

However, when al-Ghazālī died in 505/1111, the followers of the Ash'arī trend began to move in diametrically opposite directions: an anti-rationalist Ṣūfī trend, whose most prominent supporter was Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, and a rationalist trend expounded particularly in the *Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and in *al-Mawāqif* by 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī. The truth of the matter is that the old alliance between the rationalists and the textualists suffered a severe blow at the hands of the Ṣūfī Ash'ariyya, such as al-Ghazālī, whose quarrel with the philosophers culminated in his denial al-

14. Ibn al-Fūrak, *Mujarrad maqālāt...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 180–184.



together of causality and natural explanations. The result of this was the rejection of reason and the break-up of the golden alliance between reason and tradition in Islam. As Ibn Rushd would argue later, the removal of causality ultimately meant the removal of reason.<sup>15</sup>

There is no doubt that the provision made for Şūfi spirituality was a fundamental addition to the unique philosophical approach embodied in the teachings of al-Ash‘arī. It is equally clear that an approach which draws on the heart, the mind and the text can reach the very essence of human existence in all its wealth and universality. However, if the introduction of the spirit or the heart is designed to replace reason, the result can only be likened to an amputation which diminishes human existence. By the same token, if rational atomism and scholastic theology are pushed to extremes in both the theory and practice of Islam (as was the case in the extreme abstraction of later scholastic theology), this too can only represent a form of self-mutilation.

In his work, *Dar’ ta‘arud al-naql wa-l-‘aql*, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1324) might have thought to help put matters right and restore the balance and harmony between the various strands of authentic Islamic experience by upholding the text on the one hand while conceding the rôle of reason on the other. The concession to rationalism, however, was minimal. For him, the text was the be-all and end-all, and reason played the most peripheral of rôles, in much the same way as in the work of the Zāhirī philosopher Ibn Ḥazm (d. 457/1064). In addition, Ibn Taymiyya was hostile to the chorus of Şūfi voices calling on all sides for the adoption of their spirituality in face of the political, social and moral collapse around them. Of course, it was to be expected that Ibn Taymiyya would reject not only the doctrine of the unity of existence advocated by Ibn al-‘Arabī and others, but also any form of unity which might lead to a solution. Yet, some degree of spirituality to relieve the rigour of the text on the one hand and the severity of reason on the other (as evidenced in the works of al-Muḥāsibī, al-Qushayrī and al-Ghazālī himself) could have taken us some way towards the heights of human perfection sought by al-Ash‘arī.

It was not until the modern age, with Muḥammad ‘Abduh and his disciples, that all the elements of the Royal Road, which had been sketched by al-Ash‘arī, finally came together. Now, perhaps more clearly than ever before, a new, rich and dynamic scholasticism came into existence, solidly founded on the three pillars of text, reason and feeling.

## V

Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) fully understood the two contrasting ways by which people everywhere up to his time had acquired knowledge. The first of these, represented by the sciences of philosophy and law, pursued the natural

15. Ibn Rushd, *Tabāfut al-tabāfut*, ed. M. Bouyges, Beirut, Imprimerie Catholique, 1930, p. 523.

knowledge acquired by intellectual effort; the second way, more passive, accepts as its frame of reference the knowledge handed down from the law-givers, and here there is no place for the exercise of reason except in following up the ramifications of basic issues, i.e. the so-called *sharʿiyyāt*, which cannot be traced back to the Qurʾān and the *Sunna* by the text, by consensus or by adjunction.<sup>16</sup> Ibn Khaldūn praised Abu-l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, describing him as ‘the Imam of the scholastic theologians’ who had ‘found the middle way’, a happy medium between reason and tradition.

However, Ibn Khaldūn did not fail to point out that reason has its limitations, nor to note the contingent nature of the philosophical sciences and their detrimental effect on religion. Hence, they might be refuted and their champions condemned as corrupt.<sup>17</sup> He further concluded that scholastic theology,

which argues for doctrinal belief on the basis of reasoned evidence and rebuts innovators whose beliefs depart from the doctrines of the *salaf* and those who follow the traditions of the Prophet,<sup>18</sup>

was

an irrelevance for people seeking knowledge in this age. The atheists and the innovators are long gone and the scholars of the *Sunna* have already amply argued their case in their works. The support of reasoned evidence was needed when the case was still to be won but, now, it amounts to no more than mere words, against the snares of which God has given many warnings ... However, such a pursuit still has its merits and any Muslim, layman or scholar, should not be unaware of the theoretical arguments put forward in defence of their religion.<sup>19</sup>

It comes as no surprise that Ibn Khaldūn should dismiss these various approaches. He had established a new science which he expounded in a work that was wonderfully original in content, method and style, explaining the origins of civilization, the symptoms and maladies of human societies and the means by which they might be cured,<sup>20</sup> and exploring new avenues and paths not often frequented by scholars of old. However, the ways trodden by old scholars were deserted for a long time, and the questions of this world and the next and the debate between tradition and reason which occupied their minds were only revived long after the time of Ibn Khaldūn.

This phenomenon was apparent in the various religious movements which sprang up here and there – the Wahnābī movement in the Ḥijāz, and the

16. Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, *op. cit.*, II, p. 528.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 557

19. *Ibid.*, p. 567.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

Sanūsī and the Mahdī doctrines in Africa. These were simple, even naïve movements, with a limited outlook on life, following the byroads of religion and relying on the letter of the text or some immature spiritual or practical approach. What is certain is that the old Ash‘arī dialectic had little if any place in their thinking.

To find the old dialectic, albeit in a new guise, we have to return to early nineteenth-century Tunisia, Egypt and Syria; though it had undergone considerable changes, these related more to form than substance and the central issue remained essentially the same. Reason and text, and the synthesis of the two poles were the basic elements of the old dialectic. However, when the Islamic world, spearheaded by the Ottoman empire, entered a modern age dominated by Europe, the basic opposition changed so that, now, we have Islam as a whole on one side and the Western civilization on the other. However, initially at least, the two sides of the opposition were limited to Islam, represented by religion, Revelation and the past, and the West, represented by reason and modern science. The real new factor, however, was the astounding ‘progress’ achieved by the West in every sphere – scientific, intellectual, industrial, military. It was in the name of this ‘civilization’ that the West claimed supremacy over everything and everyone.

Islam and the West were now separated by a wide gulf. The power of the West had grown and developed since it had left behind the Greek model of knowledge for its own sake and had made a reality of Bacon’s famous dictum that ‘knowledge is power’. Thus, it had become a real threat to the Islamic world and its potential. In the words of Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī (1810–1889), a great thinker who perceived the true nature of the problem in the middle of the nineteenth century:

European civilization has overflowed its banks, and anything standing in its way is swept away by the force of the flood. The countries which border on Europe are in danger of being swamped unless they follow the West, and if they are not to sink, they must adopt Western ways in so far as secular life is concerned.<sup>21</sup>

Islam’s entry into the modern age dates from Ibn Khaldūn’s warning of the impending collapse of the old order, and of the new cycle materializing with the arrival of the Turks and the emergence of the Ottoman empire. Islam and Europe confronted each other once again with the expansion of the Ottomans into Europe and the inroads made by the West into the land of Islam, most notably Bonaparte’s campaign in Egypt. For centuries, the confrontation between the two camps was conducted as a fight to the death. This was a confrontation which was fought not only on the battlefield but also through a

21. Al-Tūnisī, *Aqwam al-masālik fī ma‘rifat ahwāl al-mamālik*, Tunis, Maṭba‘at al-Dawla, 1284/1868, p. 50.

merciless cultural and ideological onslaught. Within the world of Islam, this led to major changes, the most significant of these being the various ways adopted to bring about progress and revival. A pragmatic, personal (i.e. political) approach now emerged and took root, as efforts were made to slough off the past and enter an era of renaissance.

However, though the new ways tried were many and various, few were of great importance. Greatly simplifying matters, it may be said that, from the early eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, there were two main trends, with a third somewhere in between. The first of these might, with a great deal of reservation, be called the Salafi or, perhaps more accurately, the classical trend. Borrowing from the vocabulary of the West, the second might be termed the liberal trend, one aspect of it being known as secularism. Between these two opposite trends, there was what I propose to call the 'modernizing' trend.

The classical tendency in modern Islam has roots going far back in history to such men of *Ḥadīth* as Sufyān al-Thawrī, Sufyān b. 'Uyayna, Yazīd b. Hārūn, Aḥmad b. Naṣr al-Khuzā'ī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and his disciples all the way down to Ibn Taymiyya. It has continued into the modern age, subsuming in varying degrees the doctrines of the Wahhābiyya, the Sanūsiyya and the Mahdiyya and, to a lesser extent, the 'reformist' trend represented by Muḥammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā and the Muslim Brethren. Its influence is more evident in Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī and his Islamic Liberation Party, and even more in the contemporary movements referred to as Islamic Fundamentalists.

In fact, we are over-simplifying matters by lumping all these movements together as 'classical', i.e. insisting to the exclusion of all else on religion and the Islamic heritage as the bases for the life and destiny of society and of the individual. However, we may not be too far from the truth if we say that all of these trends adhere to the text and the classical heritage as the frame of reference for everything in their theory and practice. In most, though not all cases, these trends have cultivated hostility towards reason, science and modernism. Indeed, hatred of modernism could be said to constitute their common denominator, despite the laudable efforts of some of them to emancipate man from man and from the power of myth and illusion. To summarize, it might be concluded that the concern of modern classical Islam is a return to the text, which must be revived and made the focus of the life of the individual and the group.

In other words, the central element in classical dialectics is the concept of monotheism, while doctrine is theocentric, seeking to cleanse religious thought of any impurity. It also seeks to infuse new spiritual implications into this notion, insisting that what is required is not knowing God in the sense that He exists but rediscovering and renewing links with Him through an inner desire so great that the heart of the believer throbs with life, leaving no place

for stagnation, inertia or complacency (Muḥammad Iqbāl).<sup>22</sup> The believer feels that he is filled by divine inspiration and that his energies are released by God (Mālik b. Nabī).<sup>23</sup>

The classical view of the Islamic heritage is expressed in the following terms:

A civilization complete in every respect has been formed and has borne fruit: this is the Arab-Islamic civilization. The heritage of this civilization is not merely a collection of ordinary, contingent achievements – though some of its elements may be contingent – but is essentially an idea and a way of thinking, acting and living. Its worth is beyond dispute, the finest civilization in the history of man. Any attempt to replace it could only prove futile.

In support of this view, the classicists add that:

In other civilizations, even those more advanced, man has only been miserable, wretched and without direction. In Islam, however, man has attained a degree of happiness unrivalled in this world.<sup>24</sup>

However, with the advent of the modern age came the victory of the West and its values. The effects of this triumph were felt deep within the Islamic world in every Muslim home and this helped to promote Western values, alongside Western manufactured goods. As a result, there arose the liberal and secular element which was diametrically opposed to Islamic classicism or Salafiyya. Naturally, free thinkers in the Islamic world were attracted to this homocentric tendency, which glorifies knowledge, reason and the individual. They viewed the question of civilization in the following terms:

Man's creativity has been stifled by heritage and tradition and his potential should not be limited to what was achieved in the past. It is necessary and possible to release man's energies, leaving the past behind completely and creating a new man by striking off the shackles of tradition and setting free his creative potential. In this way, man will be able to reach a level of attainment far beyond anything which could have been imagined in the past.<sup>25</sup>

This opposition encompasses a number of other dichotomies: past versus future, heritage versus modernism, text versus reason, revelation versus science, religion versus civilization, God versus man, truth versus history. Could these radical oppositions be reconciled in some way comparable to al-Ash'arī's mediation between text and reason? The answer was no. Attempts were made by many writers and thinkers to replace the state of confrontation

22. M. Iqbāl, 1955.

23. Mālik b. Nabī, *W'ijbat al-'ālam al-Islāmī*, Cairo, 1959, p. 55.

24. F. Jadaane, *Nazarīyyāt al-turāth*, Amman, 1985, p. 23.

25. F. Jadaane, *Ibid.*

between Islam and civilization, between religion and science, between Revelation and reason, between heritage and modernism, by a constructive and understanding relationship rather than one of discord and dissent. Heading the long list of such thinkers, let us cite Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār and, among others, Mālīk b. Nabī. These men represent the ‘modernist’ trend which attempted to mediate once again between the classicists and the liberal-secularists.

## VI

Shaykh Ḥasan al-‘Aṭṭār (1180–1250/1766–1835), who witnessed the French campaign in Egypt, was perhaps the first to pursue the new line of thinking. He made contact with the scientists accompanying the army, read their books, saw their astronomical and engineering instruments and witnessed some of their experiments. He expressed his wonder and admiration in these perceptive words: ‘We must change the conditions in our country and acquire the new knowledge that we lack.’<sup>26</sup> The governor of Egypt, Muḥammad ‘Alī, responded positively to the spirit of these words and began to send young scholars to Europe, particularly to France, to study and return with the knowledge of the West. As a result, the new trend spread and took root throughout Egypt.

One of the early students to return from Europe had these illuminating words to say: Islamic countries ‘have excelled in the legal sciences and their application and in the various branches of philosophy, but they have ignored the practical sciences altogether, concentrating exclusively on *Sharī‘a* law and linguistics. They must turn their attention to the sciences, arts and useful crafts necessary for modernization.’<sup>27</sup> Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī ascribed the ‘progress of modernization’ to what he called ingenuity in matters of ‘industry’ or ‘general amenities’. According to al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, there are two dimensions to modernism:

One of these is spiritual, i.e. modernism as it affects morals, customs and manners. These fall within the purview of religion and the Islamic *Sharī‘a*. This dimension covers the values of a civilized community, which is distinguished from other nations by its religion and race. The other aspect of modernism is material, i.e. progress in general amenities based on work and manual skills.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī envisaged a renaissance and a future with a place for religion, on the one hand, and modernization, on the other. In response to those who would claim that such a structure is an heretical innovation and a deviation

26. Al-‘Alī Mubārak, *al-Khiṭaṭ al-tanfīqiyya al-jadīda li-Miṣr al-qābira*, 20 vols., Bulāq, 1306/1889, IV, p. 528.

27. Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz ilā talkhīṣ Barīz*, Cairo, 1323/1905, pp. 9ff.

28. Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

from the tradition of the Salaf, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī had this to say:

Present day knowledge is shifting inexorably towards scientific theories and industrial skills which are of practical value in everyday life. This does not mean, however, that we should neglect the legal sciences, literature and foreign languages. We should seek knowledge from every country or town in order to provide Egypt with both essentials and luxuries. This is a new mode of teaching and learning which usefully combines the old and the new. It is a wonderful system which, properly and wisely managed, deserves the highest esteem.

In response to those who would claim that we live in times which are devoid of the values handed down by our ancestors, that our age is beyond redemption and that the pursuit of new sciences and industry is an heretical innovation, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī goes on to say:

Not every innovation should be condemned. Indeed, most are desirable for one and all. It is God's way to shroud things in mystery, so that men must use their faculty of reason and intellect in order to discover the hidden secrets, to bring them into the light of day and to make them known to all. The inventions of this modern age, gratefully received by kings and commoners alike, are among the most honourable of the products of the mind and, as they pass from one hand to the next, they are continuously improved and perfected. They serve the welfare of the people and the building of the country. As that wise statesman, Khayr al-Dīn Pāshā, explained most admirably in his book (*Aqwam al-masālik fi ma'rifat ahwāl al-mamālik*), we must accept 'the useful sciences and general amenities', encouraging and embracing them for the sake of the 'glory of Islam', the prosperity of 'Muslim lands' and the progress of 'the Islamic countries'.<sup>29</sup>

The fact is that this position was also held by Shaykh Qabadū al-Tūnisī, who believed that the gap between the foreigners who enjoyed power and the Islamic countries which had sunk into weakness and ignorance, was due to the fatalistic attitude of the latter. While the foreigners were obsessed with the laws and workings of nature, these were ignored by Muslims. If Islam was to escape from this condition and bridge the gap, it had to use the same means by which the West had achieved progress, that is mathematics, natural sciences, industry and military know-how. In short, a synthesis had to be reached between Islam and recent European modernization.

Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī (1225–1308/1810–1889) shared the same aim as Qabadū and al-Ṭaḥṭāwī. He warned that the Islamic nation would be completely annihilated if it did not follow in the steps of European modernization. He pointed out that, in the Islamic *Shari'ah*, provision must be made for life both in this world and in the next; it is only possible to lead a good religious life if our needs in this life are adequately catered for.

29. Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Takhlīṣ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 441–444.

As Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī himself says, he followed a twin-pronged approach to achieve this aim:

Firstly, he sought to convince motivated and determined politicians and scientists to seek, by all means at their disposal, to improve the condition of the Islamic nation and to pave the way for progress by encouraging the study of science and the acquisition of knowledge, developing wealth-creating resources such as agriculture and commerce, promoting industries of all kinds and dealing with the root causes of unemployment. The basis of all this is sound government, which leads to a sense of security that gives people hope. This, in turn, will lead them to emulate the assiduity in the work of the Europeans.

Secondly, he warned Muslims against the systematic disregard of the good things in the ways of other creeds, simply because they have got it into their heads that anything done or said by non-Muslims must be abandoned and that their writings must be denounced or ignored. Indeed, the vehemence of their denunciation increases the more useful such writings are.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear that Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī was most concerned to show that there was a need for harmony between the basic premises of the Islamic *Shari'ah* and useful secular systems. This concern recalls the Muslim philosophers of the third/ninth century and the times of al-Kindī, when attempts were made to reconcile philosophy and *Shari'ah*, the secular and the religious. These were based on the golden principle that:

It is the duty of the perceptive critic to discover the truth by examining the evidence, whether words or deeds; if he believes that the matter before him is right, he should accept it and follow it up, regardless of whether it issued from one of the righteous or not. Truth makes the man rather than vice versa. The believer must seek wisdom wherever he can find it.<sup>31</sup>

According to Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī, the Islamic nation owed its past greatness to two fundamental factors: the influence of the rules of *Shari'ah* and socio-economic development, underpinned by justice and consultation. These same essential values, which are the foundation of European progress in the modern age, hold the key to the future of the Muslim nation. Thus, the duty of Islamic scholars and politicians alike is to extend their horizons beyond the limits of the teachings of the *Shari'ah* and to explore other avenues in order to find the material conditions which are needed if the Arab nation and Islamic *Shari'ah* are to flourish.

This golden principle was held by many modern Arab thinkers after Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī. These men included Shakīb Arslān, Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī, Ṭāhir al-Jazā'irī, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maghribī, Ḥusayn al-Jisr, al-Ṭantāwī, al-Jawharī, al-Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād, Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb,

30. Al-Tūnisī, *Aqwam al-masālik...*, *op. cit.*, p. 5f.

31. Al-Tūnisī, *Aqwam al-masālik...*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.



Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zahrāwī, Rafīq al-‘Azīm, ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Kawākibī, ‘Alī Yūsuf, Muḥammad Farīd Wajdī, ‘Allāl al-Fāsī, Mālik b. Nabī and others.

Needless to say, an equally long list of writers and thinkers could be cited from non-Arab Islamic countries. Whether Arab or non-Arab, they all call for the same thing, namely a synthesis between Islam and modernism, between the religious and the secular, between text and reason. They condemn any attempt to tilt the balance in one direction rather than the other. They reject any notion of Salafīyya which is restricted to absolute religious precepts, as understood by the textualists, or to an Islamic approach in which everything is confined within the strait-jacket of textualist doctrine and theology. At the same time, they refuse to go to the other extreme and adopt a purely worldly stance in which Islam is pushed to one side in favour of a unidimensional, secular and liberal world-view.

They reject the view which takes the text as the sole frame of reference in matters relating to this world, just as they reject any interpretation of man’s existence and life on this earth in the light of pure science alone. We have to abide by the rules and systems of modern civilization if we are to adapt to the laws and conditions of this temporal world. Equally, we must abide by the commandments of religion if we are to achieve salvation in the eternal world.

Many of these thinkers have taken the synthesis between reason and text one step further, adding a third dimension, ‘feeling’.

This represented a turning point in the traditional scholastic theology, transforming it into a liberated humanist science.

The first steps along this new path were taken by Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1266–1323/1849–1905) in his *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, which was written in a language hitherto unknown in works of scholastic theology. While it is true that the belief-system of the traditionalists was most clearly presented in this work, together with clear sympathies towards Mu‘tazilite rationalism, Muḥammad ‘Abduh refused to accept that knowledge and faith should be seen in terms of reason and the text alone. He argued that reason has limitations, as it cannot see beyond the contingent manifestations of creation and is unable to divine their essence. Despite the crucial importance of reason as a basis for faith, religious discourse cannot look to reason alone. By the same token, purely textual pronouncements which reach no further than the ear do not form a sound basis on which to build a living faith.

Thus, according to Muḥammad ‘Abduh, in the domain of belief and faith, one power is greater than all others, namely the power of feeling, which ‘gives insight into the forces surrounding us on all sides. It is the backbone of religious belief and it is through it alone that eyes can weep, sighs be released and hearts be made humble.’<sup>32</sup> Muḥammad ‘Abduh defines *tawḥīd* (unity of

32. M. ‘Abduh, *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*, 4th edn., Cairo, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1971, pp. 126ff.

God) as a liberating force of the highest order, uniting text, reason and feeling. Under this definition, the *shahāda* (profession of faith) or *tawhīd* acquires a number of meanings:

Firstly, the removal of the root causes of discord in all its shapes and forms, that is cleansing the mind of all corruption and superstition and elevating man to the heights of dignity. Secondly, man's freedom is regained and his will freed from its confining shackles. Thirdly, war is declared on any blind following of convention. Finally, diversity is turned into unity, and feuding, division and dissent into union, harmony and togetherness.<sup>33</sup>

The loss of all of these meanings, which must be redressed unwaveringly, should not be construed as due to any inertia in the nature of Islam itself, but rather to stagnation in the hearts and minds of Muslims. This state of affairs can be seen in the fact that Islam has been transformed from 'an Arab religion' to 'an Arab science', from a creed in which faith springs from reason to one in which tradition is paramount. Yet, for a religion to be whole, it must combine reason and feeling: they are the eyes of the soul, looking now on what is close at hand, now on more distant horizons. Thus, by means of reason, we perceive motives, causes and effects and distinguish the simple from the complex. Feeling, on the other hand, focuses on instinct and intuition, relating them to the immediate and day-to-day existence. The soul needs to perceive through both reason and feeling, and a complete religion is one which combines 'science and sensitivity, mind and heart, demonstration and submission, intellect and feeling.'<sup>34</sup>

Such a religion would be capable of shaking off stagnation and blind adherence to convention and would not stand in the way of modernization. On the contrary, 'it would help to tame modernization and purge it of harmful elements'. To achieve this end, there was a need for 'a religious movement', in the sense in which Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī used the word. In fact, 'movement' is synonymous with the 'religious reform' or 'Islamic reform' referred to by 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maghribī. For him, the aim of this would be to take religious teaching and reform it from top to bottom 'in science, religion and morals'. He asserts that 'our religion is congenial to modernization and compatible with human interests'; it is the source of praiseworthy moral acts stemming from 'a heartfelt desire to do good' and an inner drive that we call conscience or feeling.<sup>35</sup>

This emphasis on an 'inner' world, the self and a moral sense was further developed by a number of thinkers who came after Muḥammad 'Abduh, such as Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, Ḥasan al-Bannā' and, in particular, Shaykh 'Abd

33. F. Jadaane, *Uṣūl al-taqaddum...*, pp. 206–207.

34. M. 'Abduh, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

35. Al-Maghribī, *al-Akhlāq wa-l-wajībāt*, Cairo, al-Maṭba'at al-Salafiyya, 1334/1919, pp. 36f.

al-Ḥamīd b. Bādīs (d. 1359/1940). There were also ʿUthmān Amīn and Mālik b. Nabī, and many others active to this day. All of them believed in the trinity of text, reason and feeling as the basis for a sound Islamic path in both theory and practice.

Having said this, the old dichotomy of text and reason still has its advocates, who openly associate themselves with the Ashʿarī doctrine and have found in modern European philosophy material to support their traditional premises. A notable figure in this trend is the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām Muṣṭafā Ṣabrī (d. 1954), who, though he seems at first sight to oppose modernism and its protagonists, was in fact only against the secularists who, he felt, were undermining the foundations of Muslim faith, society and state. His sharpest criticism was aimed at modern intellectual writers who would have it that the prophets were men of genius rather than messengers of God.<sup>36</sup> So deeply are they steeped in materialism that they pay more heed to science than to the Qurʾān and the *Ṣunna*. They deny the existence of such supernatural phenomena as miracles and prophecy, as these are understood by ‘the religious community’,<sup>37</sup> saying that they are based on tradition rather than reason.

Ṣabrī concedes that Islam ‘does not oppose reason’,<sup>38</sup> that the proofs of the *Ṣharīʿa* support reasoned evidence<sup>39</sup> and that man is capable of demonstrating the existence of God by pure reason (contrary to the Kantian position, which left no room for this and had to prove the existence of God by practical reasoning or ethics).<sup>40</sup> However, the influence of Ashʿarī doctrine on Ṣabrī is evident when he says that the proofs of the *Ṣharīʿa* are stronger than those of reason, when he accepts predestination and determinism, among other premises of scholastic theology. All of Ṣabrī’s philosophical ideas are contained in his major work *Mawqif al-ʿaql wa-l-ʿilm wa-l-ʿālim min rabb al-ʿālamīn wa-ʿibādihī-l-mursalīn*. This book presents ‘all the scientific and philosophical issues which the student of Islam needs to be familiar with if his faith is to stand firm against the distortions of the modern age’.

In the social field, Ṣabrī was mostly concerned with the issue of women and was critical of Westernized Egyptian thinkers such as Qāsim Amīn and others, who called for the veil to be cast off and for European dress to be adopted.<sup>41</sup> His loudest criticism, however, was reserved for the unionists, the Young Turks and the modernists who had violated the Islamic tradition of the

36. M. Ṣabrī, *al-Qawl al-faṣl bayna-lladhīna yuʾminūna bi-l-ghayba wa-lā yuʾminūna*, Cairo, 1361/1942, p. 21.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

38. M. Ṣabrī, *Mawqif al-ʿaql wa-l-ʿilm wa-l-ʿālim*, 4 parts, Cairo, 1950, III, p. 44.

39. *Ibid.*, III, p. 45.

40. *Ibid.*, III, pp. 65ff.

41. M. Ṣabrī, *Qawli fi-l-marʿa...*, *op. cit.*, Cairo, 1353/1934.

Prophet by abolishing the caliphate. He declared that they were ungrateful for the blessings which God has bestowed on us in the form of religion, the caliphate and the imamate. He accused them of 'stabbing religion in the back' and of deserting the rule of God. Echoes of this cry of outrage reverberated throughout contemporary Islamic movements, which saw the Islamic state or caliphate as the ultimate road to salvation.

## VII

Thus, what had at first seemed to be a Royal Road was, by the last three decades of the twentieth century, strewn with obstacles and difficulties of all kinds. It was no longer safe to follow the path of 'modernization', for the 'accursed tree' which Muḥammad 'Abduh denounced as the root of all evil had started to grow again with renewed vigour. The majority of Muslim countries had lived under the yoke of foreign domination in every form and the political regimes which followed were oppressive and unjust and remained subservient to foreign powers. The pan-Arab, nationalist and collective movements were in turn failures. Faced with this reality and in an attempt to ward off social, moral and economic corruption, large sections of the Muslim population - intellectuals, politicians and ordinary people - began to look at existing problems afresh in terms of political action.

This is what led Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī and his Taḥrīr party, in the beginning of the second half of this century, to fall back on the 'subjective pious morality' advocated by the Muslim Brethren. At the same time, in the fifties, the Muslim Brethren themselves opted for open confrontation with the political establishment, first in Egypt and then in Syria. Political radicalism strengthened in the ranks of the various Muslim movements, with militant political thinkers such as Sayyid Quṭb mapping out the way to change the existing political and social structures throughout the Arab and Islamic world.

The 'Islamic solution' came to be seen as an alternative to all the other universal solutions, whether communism, socialism, capitalism or pan-Arabism. All the Islamic groupings, large or small, monolithic or scattered, opted for politics as the means by which to effect change, rather than the traditional approaches through religious, social and ethical reform. At the end of the seventies, the Islamic revolution erupted in Shi'ite Iran under the leadership of Imam Āyatullāh al-Khumaynī and succeeded in overthrowing the pro-Western secular nationalist regime. This success gave Islamic groupings in other parts of the Muslim world high hopes of a brilliant future for Islam under their leadership. The Islamic fundamentalism which now emerged chose to relinquish the paths of wisdom and counsel, directing all its might and energy into confrontation and struggle.

As these groups engaged in increasingly violent action, in open opposition to political regimes and to communities and individuals, a new face of

Islam began to emerge, both within Muslim societies themselves and around the world in general. The Royal Road followed by the first pioneers and by later generations of thinkers, scholars and reformers gradually disappeared from view so that Islam is now beset with misfortune and isolated. The Royal Road is no longer royal.

Today more than ever, Islam is in need of more wisdom, awareness, intelligence and effort if it is to be seen once again, at home and abroad, as it was first proclaimed in the Qur'ān and if it is to return to the path of kindness and compassion and to set a good example for people far and wide.

We are faced with two alternatives: either an Islam which is in step with human progress towards post-modernism, an Islam in which traditional orthodoxy is critically viewed in the light of modern concepts, an Islam which remains aloof from political obscurantism; or an Islam whose advocates have declared war on 'the other' and focus all their energies on 'the self' and political adventurism. Given this choice, it is best for Islam to follow the first alternative if it is to survive unscathed into the post-modernist age, thereby preserving its mission and maintaining links with 'the other' rather than withdrawing behind closed borders, under siege from all sides.

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### Chapter 3

# THE WAY OF THE HELLENIZERS: THE TRANSMISSION OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY TO ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

*Abdurrahman Badawi*

Ernest Renan exaggerated tremendously when he maintained that Arabic philosophy was only Greek philosophy in Arabic lettering; in fact, the most important Muslim-Arab philosophers not only assimilated Greek philosophy but also developed it by elucidating its more obscure or imperfectly-made points, by drawing the consequences and, especially, by systematizing it all, no easy task in itself. Moreover, and this was a key contribution, they wrought an original synthesis out of the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus. Hence, one cannot reduce the writings of al-Fārābī or (Ibn Sīnā) to any one particular system of the Greek philosophers. To be convinced, one need only compare the portion on metaphysics (*ilāhīyyāt*) in Ibn Sīnā's great philosophical encyclopedia entitled *al-Shifā'*, with the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle. Aristotle would no longer have recognized himself in Ibn Sīnā, as Plato would not have recognized himself in al-Fārābī. The case of Ibn Rushd is very different from that of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, because Ibn Rushd was, in fact, a very great commentator on Aristotle, not a philosopher in the strict sense of the word.

Nevertheless, one may equally argue that without Greek philosophy there would have been no Arabic philosophy (or Islamic philosophy – the two terms are interchangeable here). And it is thanks to the translations of several dialogues of Plato, all of Aristotle's works, of a few paraphrased chapters from the *Enneads* of Plotinus (IV–VI) and to the renditions of writings of the great Greek commentators (Alexander of Aphrodisias, Simplicius, Themistius, John the Grammarian, Ammonius, Olympiodorus, Syrianus and Iamblichus) that philosophy indeed made a start in the Islamic world. Without such translations, no Muslim would have developed an interest in philosophy. Equipped only with the Qur'ān, the *Hadīth* and the traditional maxim-literature of the time, no Muslim could have structured a philosophical system of any value whatsoever.

Now that such preliminary points have been made clear, we may proceed to the heart of the matter.

## The work of the translators

Let us first examine how the translators of Greek philosophy into Arabic set about their work.

### PROCURING MANUSCRIPTS

In order to be translated, manuscripts had first to be obtained. This was the task either of official missions sent by the caliphs, the most important of these missions being that dispatched by the Caliph al-Ma'mūn (r. 197–217/813–833), who appointed several scholars (al-Ḥajjāj b. Maṭar, Yaḥyā (or Yuḥannā) b. al-Biṭrīq, Ibn al-Samḥ and others) to travel throughout the Byzantine empire and bring back Greek manuscripts from there; or of private missions sponsored by rich scholars, such as that sent by the Shākīr brothers (members of this particular mission, one should point out, included the most famous of all the translators, Ḥunayn b. Ishāq (d. 259/873) [Fig. 1]); or, finally, of learned translators who dwelt in monasteries (such as the monastery of Qunnā), or who procured manuscripts on their own, or who enjoyed close ties with traditional centres of teaching such as the celebrated School of Jundishāpūr (in the south-west of present-day Iran). Manuscripts used by this third group of translators were mostly Syriac versions of only a handful of philosophical works, given the fact that the number of philosophical texts translated into Syriac before the rise of Islam was not very large.

### CRITICAL METHODS

Once the translators had their manuscripts before them, they obviously had to subject their material to some kind of textual criticism. They quickly realized that several of their manuscripts offered defective readings or had been tampered with, or indeed were corrupt beyond remedy. Here it would prove necessary to hunt for other manuscripts of the same work. This is why a painstaking translator like Ḥunayn b. Ishāq would begin translating a work only after having established a sound Greek text through careful collation of the different manuscripts available. If at any given time he could secure only one single manuscript, he would immediately revise his translation once other copies of it came into his possession.



III-3.1 Persian miniature showing Aristotle as a seated Mulla, from a manuscript of the *Aphorisms on Hygiene*, attributed to Aristotle.

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THE LANGUAGES FROM WHICH THE ORIGINALS WERE TRANSLATED

Concerning the languages in which works to be translated into Arabic were originally written, three periods may be distinguished. (a) In the eighth and early ninth centuries, works were translated either from a previous Syriac version or from a Persian (Pahlavī) rendition. This was the case with the translation of the first three books of Aristotle's *Organon*, carried out by Muḥammad, the son of the great writer and translator from Persian into Arabic, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Muqaffa'. It should be pointed out, however, that in this period few texts on philosophy were actually translated into Arabic, interest at the time centring more on works of pure science and medicine. (b) From the second third of the ninth century to its end, translation was generally made directly from Greek into Arabic. This was true especially of Ḥunayn b. Ishāq and of his son Ishāq, who translated far more works on philosophy than did his father, then mostly busy with his renditions of medical texts. (c) In the tenth and eleventh centuries, nearly all the translators were working from Syriac versions. This group of men included Mattā b. Yūnus, 'Īsā b. Zur'a, Abū 'Uthmān al-Dimashqī, Yaḥyā b. 'Adī and Abu-l-Faraj b. al-Ṭayyib. Although these translators were numerous, their renditions are rather mediocre and sometimes quite unreadable, as happened especially with Mattā b. Yūnus's versions of Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Posterior Analytics*.

ASSESSMENT OF THE TRANSLATIONS

This brings us to a discussion of the value of these renditions. From the very beginning of the age of translations, a number of scholars – who knew no foreign languages themselves – took issue with what these translators were doing. The most telling text in this regard is to be found in a passage from a book on animals, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* by al-Jāḥiẓ. We quote here a few paragraphs from this crucial text.<sup>1</sup>

The translator must be up to what he translates and command the same knowledge as the author he renders. He ought to be well versed both in the language of the work from which he translates and in the language into which he renders, in order to prove equal in both ... . Now, how could he have great skill in both languages at once, comparable to the skill he would have if he knew only one language? ... And this only concerns books on geometry, astronomy, arithmetic and music. What then should one say when dealing with writings on religion and theology! ... The translator will make mistakes in his interpretations of religious texts, and error in matters of religion is more grievous than error in

1. Translated in full in 'A. Badawi, *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1968.

mathematics, alchemy or philosophy ... If the translator does not prove perfect in this, he will blunder because he falls short of perfection.

Al-Jāhīz further censures the translators of his day according to this norm: 'In what way were an Ibn al-Biṭrīq, an Ibn Nā'ima, an Abū Qurrā, an Ibn Fīhr, an Ibn Wāhīlī, an Ibn al-Muqaffa', like unto Aristotle? How could a Khālid be like unto Plato?'

To summarize, al-Jāhīz's main ideas bearing on his critique of the very notion of translation are as follows:

1. the translator must be of the same intellectual level as the author he translates;
2. he must know both languages equally well or nearly so;
3. no perfect correspondence exists between different languages; each enjoys its own particular genius, manner of expression, peculiar idioms, structure and syntax, its own means of spinning out a statement or putting things in a nutshell;
4. given how hard it is to translate texts on geometry, astronomy or medicine, one may imagine the difficulties, not to say insurmountable obstacles, lying in wait for those dealing with religious and theological writings, to say nothing of pure literature and poetry;
5. al-Jāhīz also discusses textual criticism, the poor condition of the texts and a translator's duty to ensure the soundness of his manuscript's readings.

All these notions have a very contemporary ring and show quite penetrating critical sense. To my knowledge, no other ancient or medieval writer has expressed such pertinent ideas on this topic.

#### METHODS OF TRANSLATION

Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Safadī tells us of the methods the Arabic translators of the ninth century applied in their work. Here is an extract from what he has to say:

The translators had two methods of translating. The first was the one followed by Yūhannā b. al-Biṭrīq, Ibn Nā'ima al-Ḥimṣī and others. It consisted in the translator examining each individual Greek word and its meaning; then he would take an Arabic word of equivalent meaning and transcribe it; then he would examine the next word, and so on until he finished what he had to translate. But this method is a poor one for two reasons:

1. because the Arabic language does not offer equivalents for every Greek word; hence we see a number of [Greek] words simply left as they are in translations of this sort;
2. because the syntax and sentence-structure of one language do not always correspond to those in another. To this may be added misunderstandings on account of the use of metaphors, which are numerous in all languages.

The second method of translation was the one followed by Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq, al-Jawharī and others. It consisted in reading a sentence and understanding it; then the translator would render it by a corresponding [Arabic] sentence, regardless of whether the individual words were equivalent or not. This method is better.<sup>2</sup>

#### VARIOUS QUESTIONS

A few miscellaneous questions remain unsolved concerning the translators.

The first one is, why did Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, who knew Arabic thoroughly and always worked for Arab caliphs and Arab scholars, translate the great majority of the books he worked on into Syriac, even if this meant leaving his students and his son to translate these versions later from Syriac into Arabic?

This oddity cannot be explained by saying that it was easier for him to translate from Greek into Syriac than from Greek into Arabic, since all the bibliographical sources, notably Ibn al-Nadīm's *al-Fihrist* (Book Catalogue), Ibn al-Qiftī's *Ikkhbār al-ʿulamāʾ bi-akbbār al-ḥukamāʾ* (Information of the Learned Ones concerning the Reports of the Wise Ones), Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's *Ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ* (Classes of the Physicians), concur in stressing Ḥunayn b. Ishāq's mastery of literary Arabic.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, what use was it for him to translate texts into Syriac when he could not be paid for these Syriac versions – while he himself loved money to the point of demanding his own weight in gold for any book he translated into Arabic?!

The vocabulary and syntax of Syriac, a Semitic language, are also much closer to those of Arabic than to those of Greek, added to the fact that the Greek technical terms involved were then as new to Syriac as they were to Arabic.

Furthermore, such works – especially those of Galen – had not been translated into Syriac before Ḥunayn undertook to do so. If they had been, he would have had no need to translate them afresh from Greek into Syriac. In addition, he never tells us that he consulted any previous Syriac version of any of the books he translated.

Hence we are faced here with an insoluble problem, unless we consider that the traditions concerning his reported translations from Greek into Syriac are only a myth – a hypothesis as difficult to put forward as it is to prove.

The second problem lies in determining who amongst this very great number of translators actually knew Greek and could translate from it directly

2. Quoted by Bahāʾ al-Dīn al-ʿĀmilī, *al-Kashkūl*, Cairo, 1960, I, p. 388.

3. See Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, 2 vols., Leipzig, F. C. Vogel; ed. R. Tajaddud, Tehran, 1971, 1871-1872; Ibn al-Qiftī, *Ikkhbār al-ʿulamāʾ bi-akbbār al-ḥukamāʾ*, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat al-Saʿāda, 1903; Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, ed. N. Riḍā, Beirut, Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1965.

into Arabic. On this we can only be sure about the following: Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, his son Ishāq b. Ḥunayn and Qusṭā b. Lūqā of Baalbek. Certainly there were others, but we cannot identify them by means of the sources available to us.

A curious case in this regard is represented by Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī. According to Ibn al-Nadīm,<sup>4</sup> he 'knew Greek well'. In addition, he wrote a treatise, which has reached us through several extant manuscripts, entitled *The Difference between Arabic Grammar and Greek Grammar*, demanding considerable knowledge of Greek. But all the translations which have been attributed to him state that he carried them out on the basis of Syriac versions. For example, his rendering of Aristotle's *On Sophistical Refutations* derives from a Syriac translation of the Greek due to one Athanasius.<sup>5</sup>

## Authors translated

The writings translated may be classified as reference works and the works of the philosophers and their commentators.

### REFERENCE WORKS

These include biographies of the philosophers, collections of their sayings, maxims and saws and accounts of their philosophical systems.

#### *The biographies*

The *Lives of the Philosophers* of Diogenes Laertius was not translated but much of the information which it contains was transmitted indirectly through other authors to the Arab world.

However, the main Greek biographical source, which the Arabic sources often quote in turn, was the *History of the Philosophers* by Porphyry. Ibn al-Nadīm of Plotinus says this book: 'I saw its fourth *maqāla* (article) in a Syriac translation.<sup>6</sup> Ibn al-Nadīm himself uses information ultimately drawn from this work when he describes the beginnings of philosophy, as he learned of it from the mouth of Ibn al-Khammār.<sup>7</sup> What this proves is that the book had been translated into Syriac, but not necessarily into Arabic, in any event at the time when Ibn al-Nadīm wrote his own book, *al-Fihrist*. By means of this Syriac version, Arabic authors familiar with Syriac were able to draw upon a considerable amount of information concerning the Greek philosophers and reproduced this in their own accounts in Arabic.

4. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, *op. cit.*, p. 234, 1.19.

5. See our edition of the *Organon*, ʿA. Badawi, *Organon Aristotelis*, 1952, III.

6. Ibn al-Nadīm, *op. cit.*, p. 254, I, 18.

7. Ibn al-Nadīm, *op. cit.*, p. 253, II, 18 ff.

Ḥunayn b. Ishāq in his small treatise, *The Maxims of the Philosophers*,<sup>8</sup> gives information about the Greek philosophers, anecdotes, gems of wisdom and the like, but does not tell us from what sources he draws them.

*Collections of maxims*

In the same treatise, Ḥunayn b. Ishāq preserves a large number of maxims and saws attributed to the Greek philosophers.

After Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, Ibn Hindū (d. 420/1029) put together another such collection, entitled *al-Kalim al-rūḥāniyya fi-l-ḥikam al-yūnāniyya* (Spiritual Sayings in Greek Matters of Wisdom).<sup>9</sup> Since Ibn Hindū had a good command of Syriac, he drew on books written in that language.

But the compilers of other collections of philosophers' maxims knew neither Greek nor Syriac, and yet their books are much larger and filled with far more content. We are speaking here of Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī, *Siwān al-ḥikma* (The Treasure-Chest of Wisdom)<sup>10</sup> and al-Mubashshir b. Fātik, *Mukhtār al-ḥikam wa-maḥāsīn al-kalim* (Choice Matters of Wisdom and Beautiful Sayings).<sup>11</sup>

*Accounts of philosophical systems*

The most important and thorough of the accounts of the systems and ideas of the Greek philosophers was undoubtedly the *Placita Philosophorum* (Principles of the Philosophers), spuriously attributed to Plutarch even in antiquity, where it is ascribed to him by Eusebius, Cyrillus and Theodoretus. We also published this in Cairo in 1954 in a collection entitled *De Anima d'Aristote et autres texts* (Aristotle's *On the Soul* and other Texts).<sup>12</sup>

It was especially through this Pseudo-Plutarch that the Arabs were to come to know of the doctrines of the minor Greek philosophical schools: the Pre-Socratics, the Epicureans, the Stoics, the Pythagoreans, the Sceptics and so forth.

THE WORKS OF THE PHILOSOPHERS AND THEIR COMMENTATORS

Let us now go on to the works of the philosophers themselves.

8. See our edition of this work, 'A. Badawi (ed.), *Adab al-falsafa: Ḥunayn b. Ishāq: ikhtisārahū Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Anṣārī*, Kuwait, al-Munazzama-l-'Arabīyya li-l-Tarjama wa-l-Thaqāfa wa-l-'Ulūm, 1985.

9. Ibn Hindū, *al-Kalim al-rūḥāniyya min al-ḥikam al-Yūnāniyya*, Cairo, 1318/1900.

10. 'A. Badawi, *Aflātūn fi-l-Islām: Platon en pays d'Islam*, Tehran; 2nd ed., Beirut, 1980.

11. 'A. Badawi, 1958.

12. 'A. Badawi, *De anima d'Aristote et autres texts*, Cairo, 1954.

*Plato*

Works attributed to Plato in Arabic bibliographical sources fall under two headings: authentic works and apocryphal works. We mention here only the authentic works translated into Arabic;

- *The Republic*, translated by Ḥunayn b. Iṣḥāq. Ibn Rushd paraphrased this, and his paraphrase has reached us through a Hebrew version (edited by Erwin Rosenthal with an English translation);<sup>13</sup> the Arabic original of this paraphrase, however, has not yet been found.
- *The Laws*, translated by Ḥunayn b. Iṣḥāq and by Yahyā b. ʿAdī.
- *The Sophist*, translated by Iṣḥāq b. Ḥunayn with the commentaries of Olympiodorus.
- *Timaeus*, in three *maqālas* (articles or sections), translated by Ibn al-Biṭrīq, then also by Ḥunayn b. Iṣḥāq, unless Ḥunayn b. Iṣḥāq only corrected what Ibn al-Biṭrīq had translated.

Galen drew up a compendium of the *Timaeus* which is known to us through an Arabic version.<sup>14</sup>



III–3.2 Hippocrates’s and Galen’s portraits, in *Liber de herbis*  
by Manfredo de Monte Imperiali

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13. E. I. J. Rosenthal, *Averroes' Commentary on Plato's Republic*, (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications, No. 1), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960.

14. Published by P. Kraus, *Galenii compendium Timaei Platonis aliorumque dialogorum synopsis quae extant fragmenta*, (Corpus Platonium Medii Aevi. Plato Arabus 1), London, Warburg Institute, 1951.

A further compendium, of *The Laws*, is to be found in a manuscript (MCCCCXXX = Cod. 169 Golius) preserved in the Library of the University of Leiden, Netherlands.

We ourselves have published all that still exists of texts by Plato translated into Arabic, with a selection of the apocryphal epistles attributed to him. The collection is entitled *Aflātūn fi-l-Islām* (Plato in Islam), with a French title as well: *Platon en pays d'Islem* (Plato in the Lands of Islam).<sup>15</sup>

*Aristotle*

All of Aristotle's authentic works were translated into Arabic. The Stagirite was far more fortunate in this than Plato. This can easily be explained by the fact that the works of Plato did not seem serious enough in the eyes of Arab thinkers and philosophers because they had been written in a poetic style. They drew on myth. Plato's recourse to the form of dialogues left his Muslim readers perplexed, and his lack of rigorous reasoning inspired them with little – if any – confidence.

All of Aristotle's works translated into Arabic have come down to us except one, *On Generation and Corruption*, but a paraphrase by Ibn Rushd bears witness to the fact that an Arabic translation of this work was extant at least as late as the end of the sixth/twelfth century.

Below is a list of these works with the names of their Arabic translators.

(a) Works on logic

*The Categories*, translated by Ishāq b. Ḥunayn.

*Peri Hermēneias* [On Interpretation], translated by Ishāq b. Ḥunayn.

*Prior Analytics*, translated by Tudhārī (= Theodorus).

*Posterior Analytics*, translated by Mattā b. Yūnus.

*The Topics*, translated by Abū 'Uthmān al-Dimashqī (the first seven books) and Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd Allāh al-Kātib (the eighth book).

*On Sophistical Refutations*, translated three times over by Yahyā b. 'Adī, 'Īsā b. Zur'a and al-Nā'īmī.

*The Art of Rhetoric*, very poorly translated by someone who belonged to the first category of translators but whose name has not come down to us.

*The Poetics*, translated by Mattā b. Yūnus.

We have published the texts of all these translations – most of them for the first time – in three volumes entitled *Organon Aristotelis*.<sup>16</sup>

15. 'A. Badawi, *Aflātūn...*, *op. cit.*

16. 'A. Badawi, *Organon Aristotelis*. See also *idem*, *Fann al-shi'r wa-l-tarjama-l-'Arabiyya-l-qadīma wa-shurūḥ al-Fārābī wa-Ibn Sīnā wa-Ibn Rushd*, Cairo, Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1953, and *al-Khiṭāba: Aristūṭālīs: al-tarjama al-'Arabiyya al-qadīma*, Cairo, Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-'Arabiyya, 1959.

(b) Works on physics

*Physics*, translated by Ishāq b. Ḥunayn. We have published this in two volumes, with the commentaries of Ibn al-Samḥ, Yaḥyā b. ʿAdī, Mattā b. Yūnus and Ibn al-Ṭayyib.<sup>17</sup>

*On the Heavens*, translated by Yaḥyā b. al-Biṭrīq as corrected by Ḥunayn b. Ishāq. We have published this together with the *Meteorologica*.<sup>18</sup>

*Meteorologica*, translated by Yaḥyā b. al-Biṭrīq. We published this together with the work cited immediately above.

(c) Works on psychology

*On the Soul*, translated by Ishāq b. Ḥunayn. We have published this under the title *Aristotelis de Anima*.<sup>19</sup>

*On Sense and Sensible Objects (De Sensu et Sensato)*. We only know this through the paraphrase by Ibn Rushd, which we published in our book *Aristotelis de Anima*, cited in the previous entry. The *De Sensu et Sensato* here includes all nine treatises of Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia* (Minor Treatises on Natural Phenomena).

(d) Works on animals

Aristotle's writings on animals are classified as follows:

- *Historia Animalium* (History of Animals), in ten books;
- *Parts of Animals*, in four books;
- *The Generation of Animals*, in five books.

They were all translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Biṭrīq. We have published the first two of these works and the third was published by Brugman and Drossaart.<sup>20</sup> Vol. I of our edition was issued in Kuwait under the title *Ṭibāʿ al-ḥayawān* (The Nature of Animals),<sup>21</sup> which is the traditional standard title of the Arabic translation of the *Historia Animalium*; Vol. II appeared the same year under the title *Ajzāʾ al-ḥayawān = De partibus animalium* (Parts of Animals).<sup>22</sup>

17. ʿA. Badawi, al-Ṭabīʿa: *Aristū: tarjamāt Ishāq b. Ḥunayn maʿa shurūḥ Ibn al-Samḥ wa-Ibn Uday wa-Mattā b. Yūnus wa-Abī-l-Faraj b. al-Ṭayyib*, 2 vols., Cairo, Dār al-Qawmiyya li-l-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, 1964–1965.

18. ʿA. Badawi, *Aristotle, De caelo and Meteorologica*, Cairo, 1960.

19. ʿA. Badawi, *De anima d'Aristote et autres textes*, Cairo, 1954; 2nd ed., Kuwait, 1982.

20. J. Brugman and H. J. Drossaart-Lulofs, *Aristotle: Generation of animals*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1971.

21. ʿA. Badawi, *Ṭibāʿ al-ḥayawān: Aristūṭālīs: tarjamāt Yūḥannā b. al-Biṭrīq*, Kuwait, Wakālat al-Maṭbūʿāt, 1977.

22. ʿA. Badawi, *Ajzāʾ al-ḥayawān: Aristūṭālīs: tarjamāt Yūḥannā b. Biṭrīq*, Kuwait, Wakālat al-Maṭbūʿāt, 1978.



(e) Metaphysics

The Arabic version of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is incorporated in Ibn Rushd's great Commentary.<sup>23</sup> The translation was carried out by Ishāq b. Ḥunayn for Book α; by Nāẓif b. Aymān for Book A; by Eustathius for Books α, β and the following as far as Book λ. It seems that the last two books, were not translated. From Ibn Rushd's indications, it appears that other translations of the *Metaphysics* existed. We have published several of the books of the *Metaphysics* translated by Ishāq b. Ḥunayn and Yaḥyā b. 'Adī in our two collections *Aristote chez les Arabes*<sup>24</sup> and *Rasā'il falsafīyya* (Philosophical Epistles).<sup>25</sup>

(f) Nicomachean ethics

This was translated by Ishāq b. Ḥunayn. We have published this translation, based on the single manuscript preserved in Fez, under the title *Aristūṭālīs: al-Akhlāq* (Aristotle: The Ethics).<sup>26</sup> The said manuscript contains many gaps which we have filled by direct translation from the Greek original.

*Plotinus and the Neo-Platonists*

Plotinus

Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, was known to the Arab world under the appellation of *al-Shaykh al-Yūnānī*, 'the Greek Master' (or, literally, 'the Greek Elder'). But mention of his real name, Plotinus, is to be found in Muḥammad b. Zakariyā al-Rāzī<sup>27</sup> and in the list furnished by Ibn al-Nadīm.<sup>28</sup>

However, the texts drawn from his only work, the *Enneads*, are not attributed to him – either under his real name or under his Arabic appellation.

These texts include:

- The so-called *Theology of Aristotle* (Arabic *Uthūlūjīyā Aristūṭālīs*). This is drawn, not so much literally as under the form of a paraphrase, from *Enneads*, IV, V and VI.

23. Ibn Rushd, *Tafsīr mā ba'da al-ṭabī'a*, ed. M. Bouyges, 3 vols., (Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum, Série Arabe, 5–7), Beirut, Dār al-Machreq, 1938, 1942, 1948.

24. 'A. Badawi, *Aristū 'inda-l-'Arab: Aristote chez les Arabes*, (Dirāsāt Islāmiyya, 5), Cairo, Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1947, pp. 1–11.

25. 'A. Badawi, *Rasā'il falsafīyya li-l-Kindī*, Benghazi, al-Jāmi'a al-Libiyya; 2nd ed., Beirut, 1980, 1973, pp. 168–203.

26. 'A. Badawi, *al-Akhlāq*....

27. See al-Rāzī, 1939, p. 121.

28. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, *op. cit.*, p. 357, 1. 15.

There exist two versions of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, one which we might call a Vulgate, first published by F. Dieterici,<sup>29</sup> the other – in Hebrew lettering but in the Arabic language – in the Firkowitsch collection in the Museum of St. Petersburg (Number 1198, New Series), which has not yet been published. I. Borisov first mentioned it in 1930.<sup>30</sup>

A treatise entitled *Epistle on Divine Knowledge*, is attributed to al-Fārābī in the only manuscript that contains it, and, as Paul Kraus proved, consisted of extracts from four chapters of Plotinus' fifth *Ennead*. There is no overlap whatsoever between the text of the so-called 'Theology of Aristotle' and that of the *Epistle on Divine Knowledge*, proving that other extracts of Plotinus' *Enneads* were indeed translated into Arabic.

- Other fragments of the *Enneads* have been found in the manuscript No. 539 Or. in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in the *Simān al-ḥikma* (Treasure-Chest of Wisdom) of Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī and in the *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-niḥal* (The Book of Communities and Faiths) of al-Shahrastānī,<sup>31</sup> in the chapter which he devotes to *al-Shaykh al-Yūnānī*.

In 1955 we published all the texts of Plotinus which had been translated into Arabic and were known at that date, in a volume entitled *Plotinus apud Arabes: Theologia Aristotelis et fragmenta quae supersunt*.<sup>32</sup>

Through extracts drawn from the *Enneads* and especially through the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, Plotinus exerted considerable influence on the elaboration of the systems of thought of the Arab philosophers. The syntheses achieved by al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Suhrawardī are a blend of the philosophy of Aristotle and of that of Plotinus. What they found in Plotinus was the complementary material necessary for the building of a system which could take into account not only the demands of rationalism but also imperatives of a mystical and religious nature. In order to promote a form of philosophy acceptable to the Islamic world, the Muslim philosophers had to avail themselves of the resources of a Plotinus as well as of those of an Aristotle.

29. F. Dieterici, *Die sogenannte Theologie des Aristoteles*, repr. 1969 Hildesheim, G. Olms.

30. I. Borisov, 'Arabsky original latinskoi versii tak nazuivaemoi "Teologii Aristotleya"', *Zapiski Kollegii Vostokovedov*, 5, 1930, pp. 83–98.

31. Al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-niḥal*, ed. M. F. Badrān, 2 vols., Cairo, 1370–1375/1951–1955.

32. 'A. Badawi, *Plotinus apud Arabes: Theologia Aristotelis et Fragmenta quae Supersunt*, Cairo; 2nd ed., Cairo 966; 3rd ed., Kuwait, 1982, 1955a.

Proclus

Besides Plotinus, borrowings were made from other Neoplatonists: Porphyry, Proclus and Iamblichus. Proclus especially stands out amongst these three.

As was the case with the texts of Plotinus, extracts of Proclus also were translated into Arabic under the title *Kitāb al-Īdāh fī-l-khayr al-mahd* (Concerning the Pure Good), without being explicitly attributed to him. The extracts actually drawn from Proclus's *Elements of Theology* either went under the name of Aristotle again, or remained anonymous. This little treatise was translated from Arabic into Latin in the twelfth century, at first under the quite properly rendered title: *Liber de bonitate pura*, then under the quite erroneous one: *Liber de causis* (Book of Causes).

A second key work of Proclus is his treatise entitled *De mundi aeternitate* (Concerning the Eternity of the World). The Greek original had been lost, but then the text of it was found incorporated in the refutation directed against it by John Philoponus the Grammarian in his *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum* (Concerning the Eternity of the World against Proclus), with the exception of Proclus's first argument, since the first part is missing from the single surviving manuscript of John Philoponus's work.

Fortunately, I was able to locate an Arabic translation of Proclus's arguments, including the text of the first argument<sup>33</sup> not to be found in the unique manuscript of the Philoponus refutation. I have published this Arabic translation of Proclus's first nine arguments in my book *Le néoplatonisme chez les Arabes*.<sup>34</sup> I have also translated into French the Arabic text of the first argument. Finally, other fragments of Proclus's *Elements of Theology* have been recovered and published:

- a treatise entitled *Treatise of Alexander to Demonstrate the Existence of Spiritual Forms Devoid of Matter*. This is attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias but in fact it is an extract from Proclus's *Elements of Theology*. We have published it in our collection *Aristote chez les Arabes*.<sup>35</sup>
- a treatise also attributed – spuriously – to Alexander of Aphrodisias and entitled *What Alexander of Aphrodisias has drawn from the Book of Aristotle entitled the Theology*. Again, in fact, it is drawn from Proclus's *Elements of Theology*. This treatise was published by Gerhard Endress in his book *Proclus Arabus*.<sup>36</sup>

33. 'A. Badawi, *Plotinus apud Arabes...*, *op. cit.*

34. 'A. Badawi, *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1968, pp 133–134.

35. 'A. Badawi, *Aristū 'inda-l-'Arab...*, *op. cit.*, 1947.

36. G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus: zwanzig Abschnitte aus der Institutio Theologica in Arabischer Übersetzung*, (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 10), Beirut/Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1973.

*The Greek commentators*

The Greek commentators who glossed the works of Plato and, especially, Aristotle, and who were then translated into Arabic, are legion. The more outstanding ones include Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, John the Grammarian Philoponus, Porphyry, Ammonius son of Hermias, Nicolaus, Olympiodorus of Alexandria, Galen, Iamblichus, Syrianus and Simplicius.

Of all these, by far the most important was Alexander of Aphrodisias. Unfortunately, not one of the great commentaries he wrote on Aristotle and which were translated into Arabic, has come down to us; but the use made of Alexander's commentaries by Ibn Rushd does confirm that they still existed in Arabic versions in Ibn Rushd's own days, that is to say in the twelfth century.

What is still available to us, in Arabic renditions, is a group of treatises by Alexander of Aphrodisias, most of which we have published in our two collections, firstly *Aristote chez les Arabes*,<sup>37</sup> and subsequently *Commentaires sur Aristote perdus en grec*.<sup>38</sup>

The original Greek texts of a considerable number of these treatises have been lost, with their contents only surviving in the Arabic versions.

Concerning the other commentators mentioned above, we merely refer here to our book *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe*.<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

The above account proves that Muslim-Arab philosophers and thinkers had a wide and profound knowledge of Greek philosophy thanks to innumerable translations. No other civilization, either in the Middle Ages or even in modern times, could ever boast such familiarity with Greek philosophy. I say 'even in modern times' quite deliberately because a great number of Greek commentaries on the works of Aristotle were known to the Arabs in Arabic translations which have not survived to our own day, whether in their original Greek form or in medieval Arabic or other renditions.

Some might be tempted to say: If that was to the advantage of the Arabs, it was also their handicap, since the heavy burden of Greece's philosophical legacy so weighed down upon their thinkers and philosophers that they were suffocated by it and only produced commentaries and patchwork syntheses devoid of originality. There could be some truth in such an argument, indeed the history of modern philosophers might go some way to prove it, since

37. 'A. Badawi, *Aristū 'inda-l-'Arab*.

38. 'A. Badawi, *Shurūh 'alā Aristū mafqūda fi-l-Yūnāniyya wa-rasā'il ukbrā: Commentaires sur Aristote perdus en grec*, (Recherches. Université de Saint-Joseph, 1. Institut de Lettres Orientales), Beirut, Dār al-Mashriq, 1971.

39. 'A. Badawi, *La transmission...*, *op. cit.*, pp.115-130.

those most erudite in the history of philosophy, it is said, have also been the least original. But in our opinion, this last assertion is false. To begin with, Aristotle, for example, knew the doctrines of earlier Greek philosophers far better than did Plato. Does this mean that Aristotle proved any less original than his teacher, Plato? In modern times, could we say that Hegel and Heidegger, both of whom were steeped in the history of philosophy, showed less originality than Descartes, Leibniz or Bergson? Nothing could be less certain.

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Chapter 4

PHILOSOPHY IN ISLAM

*Muhsin S. Mahdi*

INTRODUCTION

It is perhaps useful to begin this account of philosophy in the Islamic world by indicating its relation to Islamic theology. Islamic theology (*kalām*) and philosophy (*falsafa*) are two traditions of learning developed by Muslim thinkers who took a position intermediate between the traditionalists, who abhorred refined reasoning and remained attached to the literal sense of the primary sources of Islamic doctrine (the Qurʾān and the *Ḥadīth*), on the one hand, and those whose reasoning led them to abandon the common beliefs of the Islamic community (the *umma*), on the other. Those who engaged in the rational clarification and defense of the principles of the Islamic religion were known as the *mutakallimūn*, while those who pursued the ancient Greek and Hellenistic sciences were called the *falāsifa*. Such a division of opinions was bound to have doctrinal and political consequences, including frequent charges of unbelief and heterodoxy. Yet, the status of the believer in Islam remained in practice a juridical question, not a matter for either theologians or philosophers to decide. Except with regard to the fundamental questions of the existence of God, Islamic Revelation and future rewards and punishments, the juridical conditions for declaring someone an unbeliever or beyond the pale of Islam are so demanding that it is almost impossible to make a valid declaration of this sort about a professing Muslim. In the course of Islamic history, representatives of certain theological movements, who happened also to be jurists, succeeded in converting rulers to their cause, made those rulers declare in favour of their movements and even encouraged them to persecute their opponents. Thus there arose in some places and periods a semblance of an official, or orthodox, doctrine.

The beginnings of theology in the Islamic tradition in the second half of the seventh century are not easily distinguishable from the beginnings of a

number of other disciplines among the Muslims – Arabic philology, Qurʾānic interpretation, the collection of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muḥammad (the *Ḥadīth*), jurisprudence and historiography. All were concerned with ascertaining the facts and contexts of the Islamic Revelation and with understanding its meaning and implications as to what Muslims should believe and do after the Revelation had ceased and the Islamic community had to chart its own way. During the first half of the eighth century, a number of questions – which centred on God’s unity, justice and other attributes and which were relevant to a human being’s freedom, actions and fate in the hereafter – formed the core of a more specialized discipline. This was called *kalām* (speech). This term was used to designate the more specialized discipline, probably because of the rhetorical and dialectical ‘speech’ used to formulate the principal doctrines of Islamic belief and to debate and defend them against Muslim and non-Muslim opponents. Eventually, *kalām* included all matters directly or indirectly relevant to the establishment and definition of religious beliefs. It developed its own systematic rational arguments about human knowledge and the nature of the world in as much as these were found necessary or useful to its primary purpose – the defense of the Muslim creed. Despite various efforts by later thinkers to fuse the concerns of theology with those of philosophy (and mysticism), theology preserved its relative independence from philosophy and other non-religious sciences. It remained true to its original traditional and religious point of view, confined itself within the limits of the Islamic Revelation and assumed these limits (as it understood them) to be identical with the limits of truth.

The origin and aspiration of philosophy in Islam are quite different. Philosophy developed out of and around the non-religious practical and theoretical sciences; it recognized no theoretical limits other than those of human reason itself; and it assumed that the truth found by unaided reason does not disagree with the truth of Islam when both are properly understood. Islamic philosophy was not the handmaid of theology. The two disciplines were related, because both philosophers and theologians followed the path of rational inquiry and distinguished themselves from the literalists and the mystics. Islamic theology was Islamic in the strict sense: it confined itself within the Islamic religious community, and it remained separated from the Christian and Jewish theologies, which developed in the same Islamic cultural context and used Arabic as a linguistic medium. No such separation is observable in the philosophy developed in the Islamic cultural context and written in Arabic: Muslims, Christians and Jews participated in it and separated themselves according to the philosophical, rather than the religious doctrines they held.

The present state of knowledge of the two disciplines is based on comparatively solid ground in respect to the classical period (from the third/tenth to the eighth/fourteenth centuries), but it suffers from the paucity of the sources and monographic studies of the earlier period and a general lack of

interest in the later period of decline. Its most glaring deficiency is the neglect of the vast body of quasi-philosophical, quasi-mystical literature (primarily in Arabic, but also in Persian, Turkish and Urdu) produced in the Ottoman empire, Iran and the Indian subcontinent. The understanding of the two disciplines is presently in a state of flux in which the earlier historical and philosophical orientation is gradually being supplemented by the analysis and interpretation of theological and philosophical content proper.

The pre-Islamic and non-Islamic legacy with which early Islamic theology came into contact included almost all the religious thought which had survived and was being defended or disputed in Egypt, Syria, Iran and India. It was transmitted by learned representatives of various Christian, Jewish, Manichean, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Hindu and Šābiʿan communities and by early converts to Islam conversant with the teachings, sacred writings and doctrinal history of the religions of these areas. Access to this legacy was primarily through conversations and disputes with such persons, rather than full and accurate translations of sacred texts or theological and philosophical writings, although some translations from Pahlavi, Syriac and Greek must have been available. The characteristic approach of early Islamic theology to non-Muslim literature was through oral disputations, whose starting-point was the statements presented or defended (orally) by the opponent. Oral disputation continued to be used in theology for centuries and most theological writings reproduce or imitate that form. It was from such oral and written disputations that writers on religions and sects collected much of their information about non-Muslim doctrines. A great deal of Hellenistic, Iranian and Indian religious thought was thus encountered in an informal and indirect manner. Beginning in the ninth century, Muslim theologians had access to an increasingly large body of translated texts, but by then they had already taken most of their basic positions. They made selective use of the translated literature, ignoring most of what was not useful to them, until al-Ghazālī (450–504/1059–1111) showed them the way to study it, to distinguish between the harmless and harmful doctrines contained in it and to refute the latter.

The situation of philosophy was different. Islamic philosophy did not come into being until the middle of the ninth century. It was the direct result of the translation movement of scientific works from Greek and Syriac in such fields as alchemy, astrology, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, logic and, finally, philosophy proper. It developed out of the study of, and commentary on, authors and texts of exclusively Greek or Hellenistic origin.

The translators who made the philosophical and scientific heritage of the Greeks available to the Muslims, worked for the most part in Baghdad and formed two successive schools. The first reached its apogee during the ninth century, when Christians (notably Ḥunayn b. Iṣḥāq (192–259/808–873) and his students) and Šābiʿans (notably Thābit b. Qurra (c. 218–288/834–901)) began to translate classical texts from ancient Greek rather than merely from



their Syriac versions. This involved a painstaking effort to learn ancient Greek, collect and collate Greek manuscripts and prepare polished Arabic versions that combined accuracy with a high degree of literary merit. By this time, Islamic theology had coined a vast number of technical terms, and theologians such as al-Jāhīz (c. 149–254/767–868) had forged Arabic into a versatile language of science; Arabic philosophy had matured; and the religious sciences (jurisprudence, the study of the Qurʾān, *Hadīth* criticism and history) had developed complex techniques of textual study and interpretation. The ninth-century translators availed themselves of these advances to meet the needs of demanding and generous patrons. Apart from the practical demands for medical and mathematical works, the translation of Greek learning was fostered also by the early ʿAbbāsīd caliphs and their viziers to be used against the threat of Manicheism and other subversive ideas that went under the name *ẓandaqa* (the primary weapon being theology). The second school reached its apogee in the tenth century, when a group of Christian philosophers, translators and commentators devoted themselves almost exclusively to philosophical texts translated from Syriac, writing extensive philosophical commentaries on them, using information drawn from later Greek (Athenian and Alexandrian) commentators. Together, the two schools of translation rendered into Arabic almost the totality of Greek philosophy from Plato to the Alexandrian commentators of the sixth century. Aristotle's writings (with the possible exception of the *Politics*) were available in full translations, as were the works of most of his commentators (Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, Ammonius, John Philoponus, Damascius, Simplicius etc.). Plato's writings were available for the most part in the form of paraphrases, although a number of dialogues, such as the *Timaeus*, the *Republic*, the *Laws*, were also available in full translations; so, too, were the philosophical works of Galen, Plutarch, Plotinus (under different names), Porphyry and Proclus. Stoic and Epicurean doctrines, too, were transmitted through the translation of biographies of philosophers and collections of their sayings. The works of Latin authors, on the other hand, were not translated as such and information about them trickled into Arabic almost exclusively through Greek sources. The Muslim communities of North Africa and Spain depended on the East for their knowledge of ancient thought, and their own contribution by way of translation from Latin remained slight and insignificant.

The translations of the ninth and tenth centuries provided the basis on which the tradition of Islamic philosophy was built. But from the beginning, Islamic philosophy set itself apart from the philological and historical learning which characterized the translators' achievement. The philosophers were concerned primarily with understanding and interpreting the teachings of the ancient authors, expounding and defending philosophy in the Islamic community, establishing a tradition of philosophical thought under the new conditions created by the new religion and culture and continuing the

investigation of philosophical and scientific issues they had inherited from their Greek and Hellenistic predecessors.

### The Eastern tradition

The background of philosophical interest in Islam is to be sought in the earlier phases of Islamic theology, but its origin is more specifically connected with the translation of Greek philosophical works. By the middle of the ninth century there were sufficient translations of scientific and philosophical works from Greek, Pahlavi and Sanskrit to show careful readers that scientific and philosophical inquiry was something more than a series of disputations based on what the theologians had called 'sound reason', and that there existed a tradition of observation, calculation and theoretical reflection that had been systematically pursued, refined and modified for more than a millennium. The scope of this tradition was broad. It included the study of logic, the sciences of nature (including psychology and biology), the mathematical sciences (including music and astronomy), metaphysics, ethics and politics. Each of these disciplines, in turn, had a body of literature wherein the classical authors had investigated its principles and problems. These investigations were subsequently discussed, criticized or developed by various commentators. Islamic philosophy emerged from its theological background when Muslim thinkers began to study this foreign tradition. In time, they became competent students of the ancients, criticized and developed their doctrines and showed what light they throw on the fundamental issues of Revelation, prophecy and the divine law.

The first Muslim philosopher, al-Kindī, who flourished in the first half of the ninth century, lived during the triumph of the Mu'tazila in Baghdad and was connected with the 'Abbasid caliphs, who championed the Mu'tazila and patronized the Hellenistic sciences. But there is no clear evidence that he belonged to a theological school. It is true, however, that his argument from the finitude of motion to prove the world's creation *ex nihilo* would have met with Mu'tazilite approval; as would his ingenious argument that unless there is a being (i.e. God) who is utterly one and totally transcendent, the existence of plurality in the world cannot be explained. But this does not necessarily mean that he was a Mu'tazilite.

Al-Kindī's writings show that he was a diligent student of Greek and Hellenistic philosophical authors and also familiar with Indian arithmetic. His unabashed acknowledgement of earlier contributions to scientific inquiry (which he recognizes, records and assimilates, and which he accepts with utmost gratitude even as he seeks to complete or modify it to accord with the usage of the new language, the circumstances of the new age and the demands of the new religion) is foreign to the spirit, methods and purpose of the theologians of the time. His acquaintance with the writings of Plato and

Aristotle was still incomplete and technically inadequate. He improved the Arabic translation of the *Theology of Aristotle*, but made only a selective and circumspect use of it. He devoted most of his writings to questions of natural philosophy and mathematics and was particularly concerned with the relation between corporeal things, which are changeable, in constant flux, infinite and, as such, unknowable, and the permanent world of forms (spiritual or secondary substances), which are not subject to flux, yet to which humans have no access except through things of the senses. He insisted that a purely human knowledge of all things is possible, even though it can only be realized by long search and great effort, including the use of various scientific devices, learning mathematics and logic and assimilating the contributions of earlier thinkers. It is true that he also acknowledged the existence of a supernatural way to this knowledge in which all these requirements can be dispensed with: God may choose to impart it to His prophets by cleansing and illuminating their souls and by giving them His aid, right guidance and aspiration; and they, in turn, communicate it to ordinary men in an admirably clear, concise and comprehensible style. This, the prophets' divine knowledge was characterized by a special mode of access to the truth and by a special style of exposition. In principle, however, this very knowledge is accessible to humans without divine aid, though such human knowledge may lack the completeness and consummate logic of the prophets' divine message. Reflection on the two kinds of knowledge – the human knowledge bequeathed by the ancients and the revealed knowledge expressed in the Qurʾān – led him to pose a number of themes that became central to Islamic philosophy: the rational-metaphorical exegesis of the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth, the identification of God as the First Being and the First Cause, creation as the giving of being and as a kind of causation distinct from natural causation and Neoplatonic emanation, and the immortality of the individual soul.

The philosopher whose principal concerns, methods and opposition to authority were inspired by the extreme Muʿtazila was the physician Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (c. 250–310/865–923). He adopted the Muʿtazila's atomism and intended to develop a rationally defensible theory of creation that would not require any change in God or attribute to Him responsibility for the imperfection and evil prevalent in the created world. To this end, he expounded the view that there are five eternal principles – God, Soul, prime matter, infinite or absolute space and unlimited or absolute time – and explained creation as the result of the unexpected and sudden turn of events (*falta*) when Soul, in her ignorance, desired matter, and the good God eased her misery by allowing her to satisfy her desire and to experience the suffering of the material world, and then gave her the faculty of reason to make her realize her mistake, finally delivering her from her union with matter, the cause of her suffering and of all evil. Al-Rāzī claimed that he was a Platonist, that he disagreed with Aristotle and that his views were those of the Ṣābiʾans of Ḥarrān

and of the Brahmins. Ismāʿīlī theologians became aware of the kinship between certain elements of his cosmology and their own. They disputed with him during his lifetime and continued afterwards to counter his doctrines in their writings. According to their account of his doctrine, he was totally opposed to authority in matters of knowledge and believed in the progress of the arts and sciences. He is said to have held that all reasonable men are equally able to look after their own affairs and that they are inspired and able to know the truth of what earlier men had taught and able to improve upon it. Ismāʿīlī theologians were especially incensed by his wholesale rejection of prophecy, particularly Revelation and divine laws, and by his criticism of religion in general as a device employed by evil men and a kind of tyranny over human beings which exploits their innocence and credulity, perpetuates ignorance and leads to conflicts and wars.

Although the fragmentary character of al-Kindī's and al-Rāzī's surviving philosophical writings does not permit a firm and independent judgement on their accomplishments, they tend to bear out the view of later Muslim students of philosophy that they both lacked competence in the logical foundations of philosophy. Both of them were knowledgeable in some of the natural sciences, though not in metaphysics. Neither of them was able to narrow the gap which separated philosophy from the new religion, which had created a new context, way of life, set of beliefs and community, and which philosophers had to come to terms with rather than merely accepting or rejecting it.

The first philosopher to meet this challenge was al-Fārābī (c. 256–338/870–950). He saw that theology and the juridical study of the law were derivative phenomena which must be understood within the framework set by the Prophet as lawgiver and founder of a human community and by the Revelation, which prescribes both the opinions and actions of the members of this community. Philosophy could not understand the framework of religion as long as it concerned itself almost exclusively with the defense of that religion's truth and confined the study of practical science to individualistic ethics and personal salvation. In contrast to al-Kindī and al-Rāzī, al-Fārābī recast philosophy in a new human and social framework meant to make the framework of the revealed religions more intelligible. The sciences are organized within this framework, so that logic, mathematics and physics and metaphysics culminate in a political science whose subject matter is the investigation of happiness and how it can be achieved in cities and nations. The central theme of this political science is the founder of a virtuous or excellent community and the supreme rulers who follow him in leading it, their qualifications and how the community must be ordered so that its members attain happiness as citizens rather than as isolated human beings. With this new framework, it became possible to conduct a philosophical investigation of all the elements that constituted the Islamic community: the prophet-lawgiver, the aims of the divine laws, the legislation of beliefs as well

as actions, the rôle of the successors to the founding legislator, the grounds of the interpretation or reform of the law, the classification of human communities according to their doctrines in addition to their size, and the critique of what he called ignorant (pagan), transgressing, falsifying and erring communities. Philosophical cosmology, psychology and politics were blended by al-Fārābī into a political theology whose aim was to clarify the foundations of the Islamic community and secure and defend its reform in a direction which would promote scientific inquiry and encourage philosophers to play an active rôle in practical affairs.

Behind this public or exoteric aspect of al-Fārābī's work stands a massive body of more properly philosophical or scientific inquiries which established his reputation as the greatest philosophical authority after Aristotle, the great interpreter of the thought of Plato and Aristotle and their commentators and the master to whom almost all major Muslim, as well as a number of Jewish and Christian philosophers turned for a fuller understanding of the controversial, troublesome and intricate questions of philosophy. Continuing the tradition of the Hellenistic masters of the Athenian and Alexandrian schools, he broadened the range of the philosophical syllabus and fixed its form. He paid special attention to the study of language and its relation to logic. In his numerous commentaries on Aristotle's logical works, he expounded for the first time in Arabic the entire range of the scientific and non-scientific forms of argument and established the place of logic as an indispensable prerequisite for philosophical inquiry. His writings on natural science exposed the foundations and assumptions of Aristotle's physics and dealt with the arguments of Aristotle's opponents, both philosophers and scientists, pagan, Christian and Muslim. In metaphysics, he distinguished between the inquiry into being and the examination of the foundations of logic and the theoretical sciences, on the one hand, and theology and cosmology, where religious and political considerations play an important if not decisive rôle, on the other. This distinction, which he owed as much to his understanding of Platonic politics as to Aristotle's metaphysics, made it possible for him to make a selective use of Neoplatonic theology and cosmology in his own political writings, and yet present an account of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophy which is singularly free not only from Neoplatonic doctrine, but also from such theological and cosmological views as are to be found in Plato's and Aristotle's writings, and which al-Fārābī considered exoteric and thus not belonging to their philosophy proper.

Al-Fārābī's theologico-political writings showed later Muslim philosophers the way to deal with the question of the relation between philosophy and religion and presented them with a complex set of problems which they continued to elaborate, modify and develop in different directions. Starting with the view that religion is analogous or similar to philosophy, al-Fārābī argued that the idea of the true prophet-lawgiver ought to be the same as that

of the true philosopher-king. Thus, he challenged both al-Kindī's view that prophets and philosophers have different and independent ways to the highest truth available to humans, and al-Rāzī's view that philosophy is the only way to that knowledge. That a human being could combine the functions of prophecy, lawgiving, philosophy and kingship did not necessarily mean that these functions were identical. It did mean that they are all legitimate subjects of philosophical inquiry – philosophy must account for the powers, knowledge and activities of the prophet, lawgiver and king, which it must distinguish from, and relate to those of the philosopher. The public or political function of philosophy was emphasized. Unlike Neoplatonism, which for long had limited itself to the Platonic teaching that the function of philosophy is to liberate the soul from the shadowy existence in the cave, al-Fārābī insisted with Plato that the philosopher must be forced to return to the cave, learn to talk to its inhabitants in a manner they can comprehend and engage them in actions which may improve their lot.

Although it is not always easy to know the immediate practical intentions of a philosopher, it must be remembered that in al-Fārābī's lifetime the fate of the Islamic world was in the balance. The Sunnī caliphate's power hardly extended beyond Baghdad, and it looked quite likely that the various Shī'ī sects, especially the Ismā'īlis, would finally overpower it and establish a new political order. Of all the movements in Islamic theology, Ismā'īli theology was the one which was most clearly and massively penetrated by philosophy. Yet its Neoplatonic cosmology, revolutionary background, antinomism and general expectation that divine laws were about to become superfluous with the appearance of the *qā'im*, militated against the development of a coherent political theory to meet the practical demands of political life and present a viable practical alternative to the Sunnī caliphate. Al-Fārābī's theologico-political writings helped point out this basic defect of Ismā'īli theology, and it is a fact that under the Fāṭimids in Egypt (358–566/969–1171), Ismā'īli theology modified its cosmology in the direction suggested by al-Fārābī, returning to the view that the community must continue to live under the divine law and postponing the prospect of the abolition of divine laws and the appearance of the *qā'im* to an indefinite point in the future.

Even more indicative of al-Fārābī's success is the fact that his writings helped produce a philosopher of the stature of Ibn Sīnā (369–428/980–1037), whose versatility, imagination, inventiveness and prudence shaped philosophy into a powerful force that gradually penetrated Islamic theology, mysticism and Persian poetry in eastern Islam and gave them universality and theoretical depth. His own personal philosophical views, he said, were those of the ancient sages of Greece (including the genuine views of Plato and Aristotle), which he had set forth in the 'Oriental Philosophy', a book of which only fragments may have survived and the rest probably was never written or meant to be written. Ibn Sīnā's views are not identical with the common

peripatetic doctrines and are to be distinguished from the learning of his contemporaries, the Christian Peripatetics of Baghdad, which he attacked as vulgar, distorted and falsified. His most voluminous writing, *The Healing (al-Shifāʾ)*, is meant to accommodate the doctrines of the Peripatetic philosophers as well as hint at his own personal views, which are elaborated elsewhere in more imaginative and allegorical forms.

Ibn Sīnā had learned from certain hints in al-Fārābī that the exoteric teachings of Plato regarding forms, creation and the immortality of individual souls were closer to revealed doctrines than the genuine views of Aristotle, that the doctrines of Plotinus and later Neoplatonic commentators were useful in harmonizing Aristotle's views with revealed doctrines, and that philosophy must accommodate itself to the divine law on the issue of creation and the issue of reward and punishment in the hereafter, which presupposes some form of individual immortality. Following al-Fārābī's lead, Ibn Sīnā initiated an elaborate inquiry into the question of being, in which he distinguished between essence and existence. He argued that the fact of existence cannot be inferred from, or accounted for, by the essence of existing things, and that form and matter by themselves cannot interact and originate the movement of the universe or the progressive actualization of existing things. Existence must therefore be due to an agent-cause that necessitates, imparts, gives, or adds existence to an essence. To do so, the cause must be an existing thing and co-exist with its effect. The universe consists of a chain of actual beings, each giving existence to the one below it and responsible for the existence of the rest of the chain below. Because an actual infinite is deemed impossible by Ibn Sīnā, this chain as a whole must terminate in a being that is wholly simple and one, whose essence is its very existence and that is therefore self-sufficient and not in need of something else to give it existence. Because its existence is not contingent on, or necessitated by, something else, but necessary and eternal in itself, it satisfied the condition of being the necessitating cause of the entire chain which constitutes the eternal world of contingent existing things. All creation is necessarily and eternally dependent upon God. It consists of the intelligences, souls and bodies of the heavenly spheres, each of which is eternal, and the sublunary sphere, which is also eternal, undergoing a perpetual process of generation and corruption and succession of form over matter, very much in the manner described by Aristotle.

To this eternal process of generation and corruption in the sublunary sphere, the human rational soul, however, does not totally conform. Now, Ibn Sīnā argues, a human being can affirm the existence of his soul from direct consciousness of his Self (what he means when he says 'I'), and he can imagine this happening even in the absence of external objects and bodily organs. This proves, according to Ibn Sīnā, that the soul is indivisible, immaterial and incorruptible substance, not imprinted in matter, but created with the body, which it uses as an instrument. Unlike the rest of immaterial substances (the

intelligences and souls of the spheres), it is not, as an individual entity, pre-eternal, but is generated or made to exist at the same time as the individual body which can receive it is formed. The composition, shape and disposition of its body and the soul's success or failure in managing and controlling it, the formation of moral habits, and the acquisition of knowledge – all contribute to a particular soul's individuality. While the body is not resurrected after its corruption, the soul survives and retains all the individual characteristics, perfections or imperfections, which it achieved in its earthly existence, and in this sense is rewarded or punished for its past deeds. Ibn Sīnā's claim that he has presented a philosophical proof for the immortality of generated (created!) individual souls without a doubt constitutes the high point of his effort to harmonize philosophy and religious beliefs.

Having accounted for the more difficult issues of creation and the immortality of individual souls, Ibn Sīnā proceeds to explain the faculty of prophetic knowledge (the sacred intellect), revelation (imaginative representation meant to convince the multitude and improve their earthly life), miracles and the legal and institutional arrangements (acts of worship and the regulation of personal and public life) through which the divine law achieves its end. Ibn Sīnā's explanation of almost every aspect of Islam is pursued on the basis of extensive exegesis of the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*. The primary function of religion is to assure the happiness of the many. This practical aim of religion (which Ibn Sīnā saw in the perspective of Aristotle's practical science) enabled him to appreciate the political and moral functions of divine Revelation and account for its form and content. But revealed religion has a subsidiary function as well, that of indicating to the few the need to pursue the kind of life and knowledge appropriate to rare individuals endowed with special gifts. These men must be dominated by the love of God to achieve the highest knowledge. In many places Ibn Sīnā appears to identify these men with the mystics (he paid special attention to the study of the mystics' way of life and experiences and made use of their sayings in interpreting religious texts). The identification of the philosopher as a kind of mystic conveyed a new image of the philosopher as a member of the religious community – one who is distinguished from his co-religionists by his otherworldliness, and who is dedicated to the inner truth of religion and consumed by the love of God.

Ibn Sīnā's allegorical and mystical writings are usually called esoteric in the sense that they contain his personal views cast in an imaginative, symbolic form. The esoteric works must, then, be interpreted. Their interpretation must move away from the explicit doctrines contained in so-called exoteric works such as the *The Healing* and recover 'the unmixed and uncorrupted truth' set forth in the 'Oriental Philosophy'. Yet the 'Oriental Philosophy' has never been fully available to anyone and it is doubtful whether it was completed. This dilemma has made interpretation both difficult and rewarding, for



Muslim philosophers and modern scholars, as can be seen from the extensive literature on the subject.

## The Western tradition

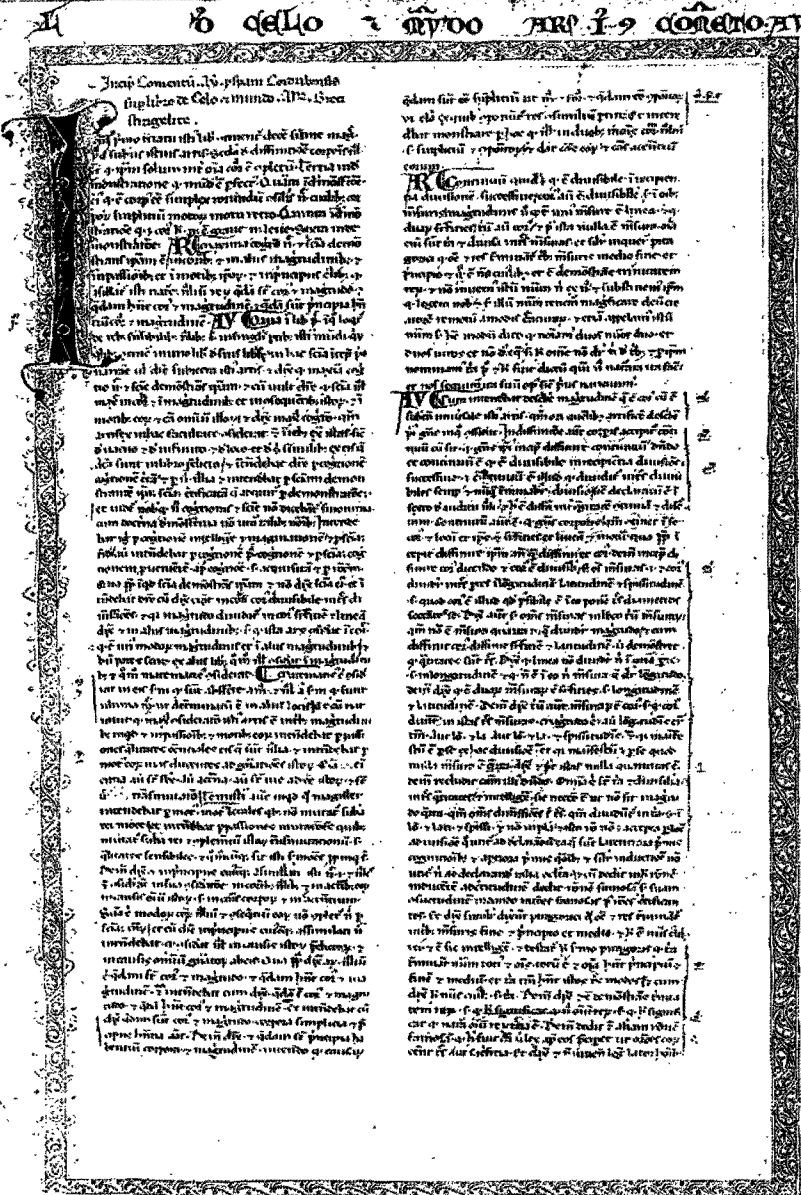
Andalusia and western North Africa contributed little of substance to Islamic theology and philosophy until the twelfth century. Legal strictures against the study of philosophy were more effective there than in the East. Scientific interest was channeled into medicine, pharmacology, mathematics, astronomy and logic. More general questions of physics and metaphysics were treated sparingly and in symbols, hints and allegories. By the twelfth century, however, the writings of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and al-Ghazālī had found their way to the West. A philosophical tradition emerged, based primarily on the study of al-Fārābī. It was critical of Ibn Sīnā's philosophical innovations, though not convinced that al-Ghazālī's critique of Ibn Sīnā had touched philosophy as such; and it refused to acknowledge the position assigned by both of these authors to mysticism. The pursuit, even the survival, of philosophy in the West required extreme prudence, emphasis on its scientific character, abstention from meddling in political or religious matters and abandoning the hope of effecting extensive doctrinal or institutional reform.

Ibn Bājjā (d. 532/1138) initiated this tradition with a radical interpretation of al-Fārābī's political philosophy which emphasized the virtues of the perfect but non-existent city and the vices prevalent in all existing cities. He concluded that the philosopher must order his own life as a solitary individual, shun the company of non-philosophers, reject their opinions and ways of life and concentrate on reaching his own final goal by pursuing the theoretical sciences and achieving intuitive knowledge through contact with the Active Intelligence. The multitude live in a dark cave and can see only dim shadows. Their ways of life and their imaginings and beliefs consist of layers of darkness which cannot be penetrated through reason alone. Therefore, the divine law has been revealed to enable humans to illumine this dark region. The philosopher's duty is to seek the light of the sun (the intellect). To do so, he must leave the cave, see all colours as they truly are, see light itself and finally become transformed into that light. The end, then, is contact with Intelligence, not with something that transcends Intelligence (as in Plotinus, Ismā'īlism and mysticism), a doctrine criticized by Ibn Bājjā as a way of imagination motivated by desire and aiming at pleasure. Philosophy is the only way to the truly blessed state, which can be achieved only by going through theoretical science, even though philosophy is superior to theoretical science.

Ibn Bājjā's cryptic style and the unfinished form in which he left most of his writings tend to highlight his departures from al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Unlike al-Fārābī, he is generally silent about the philosopher's duty to return to the cave and partake of the life in the city, even though he asserts that the

philosopher's presence in imperfect cities is the cause which may lead to the emergence of a perfect city. He appears to argue that the aim of philosophy is attainable outside of, and independent from the philosopher's concern with the best city, attainable in solitude or at most in comradeship with philosophical souls. Unlike Ibn Sīnā, who prepared the way for him by the clear distinction between theoretical and practical science, Ibn Bājjā's concern with practical science is confined to its relevance to the life of the philosopher. He is contemptuous of allegories and imaginative representations of philosophical knowledge, silent about theology and shows no concern with improving the multitude's opinion and way of life.

In his philosophical story *Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān* (Alive Son of Awake), Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 580/1185) completes what Ibn Bājjā had left unfinished. The story communicates the secrets of Ibn Sīnā's 'Oriental Philosophy' as experienced by the solitary hero who grows up on a deserted island, learns about the things around him, acquires knowledge of the natural universe (including the heavenly bodies) and achieves the state of annihilation (*fanā'*) of the self in the divine reality. This is the apparent and traditional secret of the 'Oriental Philosophy'. But the hero's wisdom is still incomplete, for he knows nothing about other human beings, their way of life, or their laws. When he chances to meet one of them – a member of a religious community inhabiting a neighbouring island, who is inclined to reflect on the divine law and seek its inner, spiritual meanings and who has abandoned the society of his fellow-men to devote himself to solitary meditation and worship, he does not at first sight recognize that this is a human being like himself, cannot communicate with him and frightens him by his wild aspect. When he learns about the doctrines and acts of worship of that religious community, he understands them as alluding to and agreeing with the truth he had learned by his own unaided effort and goes so far as to admit the validity of the religion and the truthfulness of the prophet who gave it. Yet he cannot understand why the prophet communicated the truth by way of allusions, examples and corporeal representations, or why religion permits men to devote much time and effort to practical, worldly things. His ignorance of the nature of most humans and his compassion for them make him insist on becoming their saviour. He convinces his companion to take him to his co-religionists and help him convert them to the naked truth by propagating among them 'the secrets of wisdom'. His education is completed when he fails in his endeavour. He learns the limits beyond which the multitude cannot ascend without becoming confused and unhappy, and comes to appreciate the wisdom of the divine lawgiver in addressing them in the way they can understand, enabling them to achieve limited ends through doctrines and actions suited to their abilities. The story ends with the hero taking leave of these people after apologizing to them for what he did and confessing that he is now fully convinced that they should not change their ways but remain attached to the literal sense of the divine law and



III-4.1 Medieval Latin manuscript of Ibn Rushd's (Averroes) commentary on the *Book of the Sky and the World* of Aristotle © Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France (4162 Latin 15453, fol. 121)

obey its demands. He returns to his own island to continue his former solitary existence. The hidden secret of Ibn Sinā's 'Oriental Philosophy' at least appears, then, to be that the philosopher must return to the cave, educate himself in the ways of non-philosophers and understand the incompatibility within the philosophical life of the multitude, which must be governed by religion and divine laws. Otherwise his ignorance will lead him to actions dangerous to the well-being of both the community and philosophy. Because Ibn Ṭufayl's hero had grown up as a solitary human being, he lacks the kind of wisdom that could have enabled him to pursue philosophy in a religious community and be useful to such a community. Neither the conversion of the community to philosophy nor the philosopher's solitary life is a viable alternative.

To his younger friend, Ibn Rushd (519–594/1126–1198), belongs the distinction of presenting a solution to the problem of the relation between philosophy and the Islamic community in the West – a solution meant to be legally valid, theologically sound and philosophically satisfactory. Here was a philosopher fully at home in what Ibn Bājjā had called the many layers of darkness. His legal training (he was a judge by profession) and extensive knowledge of the history of the religious sciences (including theology) enabled him to speak with authority about the principles of Islamic law and their application to theological and philosophical issues, and to question the authority of al-Ghazālī and the Ash'arīs so as to determine correct beliefs and right practices. He was able to examine in detail, from the point of view of the divine law, the respective claims of theology and philosophy to possess the best and surest way to human knowledge, to be competent to interpret the ambiguous expressions of the divine law and to have presented convincing arguments which are theoretically tenable and practically salutary. The intention of the divine law, he argued, is to assure the happiness of all members of the community. This requires that everyone profess belief in the basic principles of religion as enunciated in the Qur'an, the *Hadīth* and the consensus of the learned, and perform all obligatory acts of worship. Beyond this, the only just requirement is to demand that each one pursue knowledge as far as his natural capacity and make-up permit. The few who are endowed with the capacity for the highest, demonstrative knowledge are under a legal obligation to pursue the highest wisdom, which is philosophy; they need not constantly adjust its certain conclusions to whatever theologians claim to be correct interpretation of the divine law. Being dialecticians and rhetoricians, theologians are not in a position to determine what is and is not correct interpretation of the divine law as far as philosophers are concerned. The divine law directly authorizes philosophers to pursue its interpretation according to the best – that is, demonstrative or scientific – method, and theologians have no authority to interfere with the conduct of this activity or to judge over its conclusions. On the basis of this doctrine, Ibn Rushd judges al-Ghazālī's

refutation of the philosophers still-born because al-Ghazālī did not understand, and even misrepresented, their positions and used arguments that only demonstrate his incompetence in the art of demonstration. He also criticizes al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā for accommodating themselves to the theologians of their time and for departing from the path of the ancient philosophers merely to please the theologians. At the other extreme are the multitude for whom there are no more convincing arguments than those found in the divine law itself. Neither philosophers nor theologians are permitted to disclose to them interpretations of the ambiguous verses of the Qurʾān or to confuse them with their own doubts or arguments. Finally, there are those who belong to neither of these two groups, either because they are naturally superior to the multitude, though not endowed with the gift for philosophy, or else are students in the initial stages of philosophic training. For them, theology is necessary. It is an intermediate discipline between jurisprudence and philosophy. It lacks their certain principles and sure methods. Therefore, it must remain under the constant control of philosophy and the supervision of the divine law so as not to drift into taking positions that cannot be demonstrated philosophically, or are contrary to the intention of the divine law. Ibn Rushd himself composed a work on theology to show that these requirements can be met.

In Western Europe, Ibn Rushd was best known for his philosophical answer to al-Ghazālī, his *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (*Tahāfut al-tahāfut*) and for his extensive commentaries on Aristotle - works that left their impact on medieval and Renaissance European thought. [Fig. 1.]

## The new wisdom in the East

The Western tradition in Islamic philosophy formed part of the Arabic philosophical literature translated into Hebrew and Latin and played a significant role in the development of medieval philosophy in the Latin West and the emergence of modern European philosophy. Its impact on the development of philosophy in Eastern Islam was less dramatic but nevertheless important. Students of this tradition, such as the prominent Jewish philosopher Maimonides (529–600/1135–1204) and the historian Ibn Khaldūn (732–810/1332–1408), moved to Egypt where they taught and had numerous disciples. Most of the writings of Ibn Bājja, Ibn Ṭufayl and Ibn Rushd found their way to the East too, where they were studied alongside the writings of their Eastern predecessors. There continued to be thinkers in both regions for whom the idea of philosophy as formulated by the Muslim philosophers discussed so far remained normative. But they became isolated and overwhelmed by the resurgence of traditionalism and the emergence of a new kind of philosophy whose champions looked on the earlier masters as men who had made significant contributions to the progress of knowledge, but whose overall view was defective and had now become outdated.

Resurgent traditionalism found effectiveness in men like Ibn Taymiyya (810–728/1263–1328), who employed a massive battery of philosophical, theological and legal arguments against every shade of innovation and called for a return to the beliefs and practices of the pious ancestors. But these attacks did not deal a decisive blow to philosophy as such. They drove it underground for a period, only to re-emerge in a new garb. The most important reason for the decline of the earlier philosophical tradition was the renewed vitality and success of the program formulated by al-Ghazālī for the integration of theology, philosophy and mysticism into a new kind of philosophy called wisdom (*ḥikma*). It consisted of a critical review of the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, preserving its main external features (its logical, physical and, in part, metaphysical structure, and its terminology) and introducing principles of explanation for the universe and its relation to God based on personal experience and direct vision.

If one disregards the popular theology preached by the philosophers from al-Fārābī to Ibn Rushd and asks what philosophy proper had meant to them, one learns that it was what al-Fārābī had called a state of mind dedicated to the quest and love for the highest wisdom. None of them claimed that he had achieved this highest wisdom. In contrast, every leading exponent of the new wisdom states that he has achieved or received it through a private illumination, dream (at times inspired by the Prophet), or vision and on this basis proceeds to give an explanation of the inner structure of natural and divine things. In every case, this explanation incorporates Platonic or Aristotelian elements, but is more akin to some version of a later Hellenistic philosophy (Plotinian, Proclean, Neopythagorean, pseudo-Empedoclean, Stoic etc.), which had found its way earlier into one or another of the schools of Islamic theology but which, because of the earlier theologians' lack of an adequate philosophical education, had not been either elaborated or integrated into a comprehensive view. Like their late Hellenistic counterparts, exponents of the new wisdom proceed through an examination of the positions of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, pay special attention to the insights of the pre-Socratics and the myths and revelations of the ancient Near East and offer to resolve the fundamental questions that puzzled earlier philosophers. In its basic movement and general direction, therefore, Islamic philosophy between the ninth and the nineteenth centuries AD followed a course parallel to that of Greek philosophy from the fifth to the sixth century AD.

The critique of Aristotle which began in Muʿtazilī circles and found a prominent champion in Abū Bakr al-Rāzī was provided with a more solid foundation in the tenth and eleventh centuries by the Christian theologians and philosophers of Baghdad, who translated the writings of the Hellenistic critics of Aristotle (e.g. John Philoponus) and made use of their arguments in commenting on Aristotle as well as in independent theological and philosophical works. Ibn Sīnā's attack on these so-called Aristotelians and their

Hellenistic predecessors (an attack which had been initiated by al-Fārābī and was to be continued by Ibn Rushd) did not prevent the spread of their theologically based anti-Aristotelianism among Jewish and Muslim students of philosophy in the twelfth century, such as Abu-l-Barakāt al-Baghādī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. These theologians continued and intensified al-Ghazālī's attacks on Ibn Sīnā and Aristotle (especially their views on time, movement, matter and form, the nature of the heavenly bodies and the relation between the intelligible and sensible worlds) and suggested that a thorough examination of Aristotle had revealed to them, on philosophical grounds, that the fundamental disagreements between him and the theologies based on the revealed religions represented equally viable alternatives, and that Aristotle's view of the universe was in need of explanatory principles that could very well be supplied by theology. This provided the framework for the integration of philosophy into theology from the thirteenth century onward.

Although it made use of these theological criticisms of philosophy, the new wisdom took the position that theology did not offer a positive substitute for the Peripatetic tradition of philosophy and was incapable of solving its difficulties. It did not question the need to have recourse to the Qur'ān and the *Hadīth* to find the right answers. However, it insisted (on the authority of a long-standing mystical tradition) that theology concern itself only with the external expressions of this divine source of knowledge; the inner core was reserved for the adepts of the mystic path, whose journey leads to the experience of the highest reality in dreams and visions. Only these mystical initiates are in possession of the one true wisdom, the ground of both the external expressions of the divine law and the phenomenal world of human experience and thought.

The first master of the new wisdom, al-Suhrawardī (547–587/1153–1192), called it the 'Wisdom of Illumination'. He rejected Ibn Sīnā's distinction between essence and existence and Aristotle's distinctions between substance and accidents, possibility and actuality, and matter and form, on the ground that they are mere distinctions of reason. Instead, he concentrated on the notion of being and its negation, which he called light and darkness, and explained the gradation of beings as gradation of their mixture according to the degree of strength, or perfection, of their light. This gradation forms a single continuum that culminates in pure light, self-luminosity, self-awareness, self-manifestation, or self-knowledge, which is God, the light of lights, the true One. The source of the stability and eternity of this single continuum is due to the fact that every higher light overpowers and subdues the lower, and the source of movement and change is due to the fact that each of the lower lights desires and loves the higher.

Al-Suhrawardī's 'pan-lightism' is not especially close to traditional Islamic views concerning the creation of the world and God's knowledge of particulars. The structure of his universe remains largely that of the Platonists and

the Aristotelians. His account of the emanation process simply avoids the many difficulties that had puzzled Neoplatonists as they tried to understand how the second hypostasis proceeds from the One. He asserts that it proceeds without affecting the One in any way and that the One's self-sufficiency is enough to explain this procession, which is a giving-out that seems to be both spontaneous and necessary. His doctrine is presented in a way which suggests that it is the inner truth behind the exoteric teachings of Islam as well as Zoroastrianism, indeed the wisdom of all ancient sages, especially Iranians and Greeks, and of the revealed religions as well. This neutral yet positive attitude to the diversity of religions, which was not absent among Muslim philosophers and mystics, was to become one of the hallmarks of the new wisdom. Different religions were seen as different manifestations of the same truth, their essential agreement was emphasized and various attempts were made to combine them into a single harmonious religion meant for all of mankind.

Al-Suhrawardī takes an important step in this direction through his doctrine of imaginative-bodily resurrection. After their departure from the prison of the body, such souls as are fully purified ascend directly to the world of separate lights. The ones which are only partially purified or which are evil, however, escape to a world of images suspended below the higher lights and above our corporeal world. In this world of images or forms (not to be confused with the Platonic forms, which al-Suhrawardī identifies with higher and permanent intelligible lights), partially purified souls remain suspended and are able to create for themselves by their own power of imagination figures of pleasing and desirable objects in forms more excellent than their earthly counterparts; these they are able to enjoy forever. Evil souls become dark shadows, suffer (presumably because their corrupt and inefficient power of imagination can create only ugly and frightening forms) and wander about as ghosts, demons and devils. The creative power of imagination, which as a human psychological phenomenon had already been used by the philosophers to explain prophetic powers, was seized upon by the new wisdom as divine magic with which to construct an eschatology, explain miracles, dreams and other saintly theurgic practices and to facilitate the movement between various orders of being.

The account of the doctrines of Ibn al-ʿArabī (560–637/1165–1240) belongs properly to the history of Islamic mysticism. Yet his impact on the subsequent development of the new wisdom is in many ways far greater than that of al-Suhrawardī. This is true especially of his central doctrine of the unity of being and his sharp distinction between the absolute One, which is undefinable Truth (*Ḥaqq*), and His self-manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) or creation (*ḵalq*), which is ever-new (*jadīd*) and in perpetual movement which unites the whole of creation in a process of constant renewal. At the very core of this dynamic edifice stands nature, the dark cloud (*ʿamāʾ*) or mist (*bukhār*), as the ultimate principle of things and forms: of intelligence, the heavenly bodies and the



elements and their mixtures which culminate in the perfect human being. This primordial nature is called the breath of the Merciful God in His aspect as Lord. It flows throughout the universe and manifests Truth in all its parts. It is the First Mother through which Truth manifests Itself to Itself and generates the universe. And it is the universal natural body, which gives birth to the translucent bodies of the spheres, to the elements and to their mixtures, all of which are related to that primary source as daughters to a mother.

Ibn al-ʿArabī is attempting to explain how the first or universal Intelligence proceeds from the absolute One by inserting between them a primordial feminine principle, which is all things in potentiality, but which also possesses the capacity, readiness and desire to manifest or generate them – first, as archetypes in Intelligence, and then as actually existing things in the universe below. Ibn al-ʿArabī gives this principle numerous names, including prime matter (*ʿunṣur*), and characterizes it as the principle ‘whose existence makes manifest the essences of the potential worlds’. The doctrine that the first simple originated thing is not Intelligence but indefinite matter and that Intelligence originated through the mediation of this matter, is attributed to Empedocles in post-Plotinian doxographies translated into Arabic. It represents an attempt to bridge the gulf between the absolute One and the multiplicity of forms in Intelligence. The Andalusian mystic Ibn Masarra (269–318/883–931) is reported to have championed pseudo-Empedoclean doctrines, and Ibn al-ʿArabī (who studied under some of his followers) quotes Ibn Masarra on a number of occasions. This philosophical tradition is distinct from the one followed by the Ismāʿīlī theologians, who explain the origination of Intelligence by the mediation of God’s will.

After Ibn al-ʿArabī, the new wisdom developed rapidly in intellectual circles in Eastern Islam. Commentators on the works of Ibn Sīnā, al-Suhrawardī and Ibn al-ʿArabī began the process of harmonizing and integrating the views of the masters. Great poets made them part of every educated person’s literary culture. Mystical fraternities became their custodians, spreading them into Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent and transmitting them from one generation to another. Following Hūlāgū’s entry into Baghdad (655/1258), the Twelver Shīʿīs were encouraged by the Īlkhānid Tatārs and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī to abandon their hostility to mysticism. Muʿtazilī doctrines were retained in their theology. But theology was downgraded to formal learning, which must be supplemented by higher things, the latter including philosophy and mysticism, both of earlier Shīʿī (including Ismāʿīlī) origin and of later Sunnī provenance. al-Ghazālī, al-Suhrawardī, Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Sīnā were then eagerly studied and (except for their doctrine of the Imāmate) embraced with little or no reservation. This movement in Shīʿī thought gathered momentum when leaders of a mystical fraternity established themselves as the Ṣafawid dynasty (906–1200/1501–1786) in Iran, where they championed Twelver Shīʿism as the official doctrine of the new

monarchy. During the seventeenth century Iran experienced a cultural and scientific renaissance which included a revival of philosophic studies. Here, Islamic philosophy found its last creative exponents. The new wisdom, as expounded by the masters of the school of Iṣfahān, radiated throughout Eastern Islam and continued as a vital tradition until modern times.

The major figures of this school were Mīr Dāmād (Ibn al-Dāmād, d. 1039/1630) and his great disciple Mullā Ṣadrā (Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, c. 978–1049/1571–1640). Both were men of wide culture and prolific writers with a sharp sense for the history and development of philosophical ideas. Mīr Dāmād was the first to expound the notion of eternal origination (*hudūth dabrī*) as an explanation for the creation of the world. Muslim philosophers and their critics had recognized the crucial role played by the question of time in the discussion of the eternity of the world. The proposition that time is the measure of movement had been criticized in the twelfth century by Abu-l-Barakāt al-Baghādādī, who argued that time is prior to movement and rest, indeed to everything except being. It is the measure or concomitant of being, lasting and transient, enduring and in movement or rest. It characterizes or qualifies all being, including God. God works in time, incessantly willing and directly creating everything in the world. His persistent will creates the eternal beings of the world and His ever-renewed will creates the transient beings. The notion of a God who works in time was, of course, objectionable to theology and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī refused to accept this solution, despite its attractions. Al-Rāzī also saw that it leads to the notion (attributed to Plato) that time is a self-subsistent substance, whose relation to God would further compromise His unity. Finally, he explained that this self-subsistent substance would have to be related to different beings in different ways. It is called everlastingness (*sarmad*) when related to God and the Intelligences (angels), who are permanent and do not move or change in any way, eternity (*dabr*) when related to the totality of the world of movement and change, and time (*zamān*) when related to corporeal beings that make up the world of movement and change.

Mīr Dāmād returned to Ibn Sīnā and sought to harmonize his views with those of al-Suhrawardī on the assumption that what Ibn Sīnā meant by his oriental (*mashriqīyya*) philosophy, was identical with al-Suhrawardī's wisdom of illumination (*iṣbrāq*), which he interpreted as a Platonic doctrine asserting the priority of essence (form) over being (existence). Time for Mīr Dāmād is neither a mere being of reason nor an accident of existing things. It belongs to the essence of things and describes their mode and rank of being. It is a relation that beings have to each other due to their essential nature. There must therefore be three ranks of order of time corresponding to the three ranks of order of being. Considered as the relation of God to the divine names and attributes (Intelligences or archetypes), it is everlastingness. Considered as the relation between the Intelligences or archetypes and their reflections in the

mutable things of the world below, it is eternity. And considered as the relation between these mutable things, it is time, creation or origination, which is this very relation. Thus the origination of the immutable Intelligences or archetypes is called everlasting creation, the origination of the world of mutable beings as a whole is called eternal creation and the generation of mutable things within the world is called 'temporal creation'.

Mullā Ṣadrā superimposed Ibn al-ʿArabī's mystical thought (whose philosophical implications had already been exposed by a number of commentators) on the Peripatetic-Illuminationist synthesis developed by Mīr Dāmād. Against his master, he argued with the Aristotelians for the priority of being (existence) over essence (form) – for essence according to him is an abstraction – and with Ibn al-ʿArabī he argued for the unity of being, within which beings differ only according to priority and posteriority, perfection and imperfection, and strength and weakness. All being is a graded manifestation or determination of absolute or pure Being and on every level it possesses all the attributes of Being, but with varying degrees of intensity or perfection. He considered his unique contribution to Islamic philosophy, however, to be his doctrine of nature, which enabled him to assert that everything other than God and His knowledge – that is, the entire corporeal world, including the heavenly bodies – is originated eternally as well as temporally. This doctrine of nature is an elaboration of the last manifestation of Ibn al-ʿArabī's nature, or prime matter, articulated on philosophical grounds and within the general framework of Aristotelian natural science and defended against every possible philosophical and theological objection.

Nature for Mullā Ṣadrā is the substance and power of all corporeal beings and the direct cause of their movement. Movement (and time, which measures it) is therefore not an accident of substance or an accompaniment of some of its accidents. It signifies the very change, renewal and passing of being, itself in constant flow or flux. The entire corporeal world, both the celestial spheres and the world of the elements, constantly renews and enhances itself. The matter of corporeal things has the power to become a new form at every instant; and the resulting matter-form complex is at every instant a new matter ready for desiring and moving to another form. The fact that we do not observe this constant flux and movement in simple bodies is not due to the endurance of the same form in them, but to the close similarity between their ever-new forms. (To avoid the criticism leveled by Aristotelians against the atomism of the theologians, Mullā Ṣadrā describes perpetual renewal as a continuous rather than successive process.) What the philosophers call movement and time is not, as they believed, anchored in anything permanent, that is to say, in what they call nature, substance, or essence. For essence is permanent only in the mind, and nature and substance are permanent activity. Nature as permanent activity is the very being of natural things and identical with their substance. In so far as nature is permanent in this

sense, it is connected to a permanent principle which manifests activity in it permanently; and in so far as it constantly renews itself, all renewed and emerged things are connected to it. In this manner, nature is the link between what is eternal and what is originated, and in this sense the world of nature is originated both eternally and temporally.

Mullā Sadrā distinguished this primary movement-in-substance (*al-ḥaraka fi-l-jawhar*) from haphazard, compulsory and other accidental movements, which lack proper direction, impede the natural movement of substance, or reverse it. Movement-in-substance is not universal change or flux without direction, the product of conflict between two equally powerful principles, or a reflection of the non-being of the world of nature when measured against the world of permanent forms. It is the natural beings' innate desire to become more perfect: that is, what directs this ceaseless self-renewal, self-origination, or self-emergence into a perpetual and irreversible flow upward in the scale of being – from the simplest elements of the human body-soul complex and the heavenly body-soul complex, both of which participate in the general instability, the originating and passing, of being that characterizes the entire corporeal world. But this is by no means the end. For the indefinite matter (Ibn al-ʿArabī's 'cloud' and the mystics' created Truth) is the substratum of everything other than its Creator, the mysterious pure Truth. It extends beyond the body-soul complex to the Intelligences (divine names), which are Being's first, highest and purest actualization or activity; and this extension unites everything other than the Creator into a single continuum. The human body-soul complex and the heavenly body-soul are not moved externally by the Intelligences. Their movement is an extension of the process of self-perfection. Having reached the highest rank of order of substance in the corporeal world, they are now prepared, ready and still moved by their innate desire to flow upward and transform themselves into pure intelligence.

## Conclusion

The new wisdom lived on during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, conserving much of its vitality and strength but not cultivating new ground. It attracted able thinkers such as Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi (1113–1175/1702–62) and Hādī Sabzawāri (1212–1294/1798–1878). It became a regular part of the program of higher education in the cultural centres of the Ottoman empire, Iran and the Indian subcontinent, a status never achieved by the earlier tradition of Islamic philosophy. In collaboration with its close ally, Persian mystical poetry, it determined the intellectual outlook and spiritual mood of educated Muslims in the region where Persian had become the dominant literary language.

The wholesale rejection of the new wisdom in the name of simple, robust and more practical piety (which had been initiated by Ibn Taymiyya and which

continued to find exponents among jurists) made little impression on its devotees. To be taken seriously, reform had to come from their own ranks and be espoused by thinkers like Aḥmad Sirhindī (971–1033/1564–1624) – a reformer who spoke their language and attacked Ibn al-‘Arabī’s unity of being only to defend an older, presumably more orthodox form of mysticism. Despite some impact, however, attempts of this kind remained isolated and were either ignored or re-integrated into the mainstream, until the coming of the modern reformers. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–1897), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905) and Muḥammad Iqbāl (1873–1938) were initially educated in this tradition, but they rebelled against it and advocated radical reforms.

The modernists attacked the new wisdom at its weakest point, that is its lack of social and political norms, its individualistic ethics and its inability to speak intelligently about social, cultural and political problems generated by a long period of intellectual isolation and further complicated by the domination of the European powers. Unlike the earlier tradition of Islamic philosophy from al-Fārābī to Ibn Rushd, which had consciously cultivated political science and investigated the political dimension of philosophy and religion and the relation between philosophy and the community at large, the new wisdom from its inception lacked genuine interest in these questions and had no appreciation for political philosophy, and only benign toleration for the affairs of the world.

None of the reformers was a great political philosopher. They were concerned with reviving the Muslim nations’ latent energies, urging them to free themselves from foreign domination and impressing on them the need to reform their social and educational institutions. They also saw that all this required a total re-orientation, which could not take place as long as the new wisdom remained not only the highest aim of a few solitary individuals but a social and popular ideal as well. Yet as late as 1917 Iqbāl found that the ‘present-day Muslim prefers to roam about aimlessly in the valley of Hellenic-Persian mysticism, which teaches us to shut our eyes to the hard reality around, and to fix our gaze on what is described as “illumination”.’ His reaction was harsh: ‘To meet this self-mystification, this nihilism, that is to say, seeking reality where it does not exist, is a physiological symptom, giving me a clue to the decadence of the Muslim world.’

To arrest the decadence and infuse new vitality into a society in which, they were convinced, religion must remain the focal point, they advocated a return to the movements and masters of Islamic theology and philosophy antedating the new wisdom. They argued that these, rather than the ‘Persian encrustation of Islam’, represented Islam’s original and creative impulse. They were attracted, in particular, to the Mu‘tazila, their affirmation of God’s unity and denial of all similarity between Him and created things, and their reliance on human reason, emphasis on human freedom, faith in a human being’s

ability to distinguish between good and bad and insistence on a human being's responsibility to do good and fight against evil in private and public places. They were impressed by the traditionalists' devotion to the original, uncomplicated forms of Islam and by their fighting spirit, and by the Ash'aris' view of faith as an affair of the heart and their spirited defense of the Muslim community. They saw in the scientific and philosophical tradition of Eastern and Western Islam prior to the Tatār and Mongol invasions irrefutable proof that true Islam stands for the liberation of the human spirit, promotes critical thought and both provides the impetus to grapple with the temporal and shows how to set it in order. These ideas initiated what was to become a vast effort to recover, edit and translate into the national languages works of earlier theologians and philosophers, for long neglected or known only directly through later accounts.

Finally, they insisted that Muslims must understand the real meaning of what has happened in Europe, which in effect meant to understand modern science and philosophy, including modern social or political philosophy. Initially, this became the task of the new universities. In recent decades, however, the gap between the program of theological and philosophical studies in religious colleges and in modern universities has been narrowed considerably. Conditions appear to be ripe for thinkers who possess the gift for theological and philosophical inquiry and who understand that theology and philosophy are not national ideologies but genuine disciplines with unfinished tasks of their own.

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M U S L I M  
M Y S T I C I S M

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## Chapter 1

# THE EARLY PERIOD OF ŞŪFISM

*Annemarie Schimmel*

Şūfism is the inner dimension of Islam and, like Islam itself, it has many facets and developed into different forms, ranging from voluntaristic and personalistic mysticism to highly sophisticated theosophical systems. But, while in former times it was thought that Şūfism is 'a foreign plant in the sandy soil of Islam', research during the last decades has shown that it indeed grew out of Islamic thought and developed in the course of the centuries – the same way a large shady tree grows from a small root.

The word Şūfism is derived from *şif* (wool), pointing to the woollen garment of the early ascetics. The term was first used in the mid-eighth century. However, Şūfī authors such as al-Hujwīrī (d. c. 463/1071), while accepting this derivation, pointed out that one could also derive it from the word *şāf* (pure), thus balancing the external and internal aspects of Şūfism. 'The Şūfī is he who purified himself, the Şūfī is he who is purified by God,' as it was said. Other derivations of Şūfī relate the term to the word *şuffa*, 'the verandah', because the Şūfis seemed to follow the example of the *ahl al-şuffa*, the poor members of the first Muslim community in Medina at the time of the Prophet. Was the Prophet not a true Şūfī himself, espousing poverty and trust in God, and do the chains of initiation and transmission in all later Şūfī fraternities not go back to him? His companion Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, whom Louis Massignon called 'un socialiste avant la lettre', was often regarded as the first true 'poor' man among the Muslims.

Another derivation of the term Şūfism, which was popular among orientalist at a certain point, is that from Greek *sophos* (wise), which, although it makes good sense, is philologically unacceptable.

### The first ascetic movements

Among the first generations of Muslims one can observe a tendency towards asceticism, although the Qur'ān certainly does not encourage that kind of



‘monasticism’, which seemed to be a hallmark of Christianity. ‘There is no *rabbāniyya* (monasticism) in Islam’ is a saying of the Prophet. Yet it is natural that the pious Muslims should have been very conscientious of their spiritual duties – the numerous admonitions in the Qur’ān that emphasize man’s weakness and the necessity to act constantly according to God’s will, as well as the threats that spoke of the impending hour of Judgement made the true believers tremble with fear. When the Muslim empire began to expand rapidly in the days of the first caliphs and then under the enterprising Umayyad rulers, wordliness, love of luxury and interest in worldly goods increased in the Muslim community, a development that worried the pious. They therefore time and again reminded their co-religionists of the Qur’ānic injunctions concerning trust in God and ethical behaviour. The most famous representative of the early ascetic trend is al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 109/728), preacher and scholar, who seems to have been a pivotal figure in early Islam. Fear of God’s wrath seems to have overshadowed his life, and in his sermons and addresses he eloquently reminded the Muslims that each and every one of them will stand alone before the Divine Judge:

O son of Adam! You will die alone and you will be resurrected alone. O son of Adam, you are the one intended...!

Various trends in Islam claim al-Ḥasan as their example, and he apparently deeply impressed the pious of Iraq (who, in any case, were opposed to the ruling Umayyad dynasty in Damascus). The pious devoted themselves intensely to religious acts such as the recitation of the Qur’ān, to prayer, especially to nightly prayer (recommended in the Qur’ān but not a duty for the Muslim) and to extended periods of fasting. There were men and women known as *al-bakkā’ūn* (those who weep constantly), because they thought of their sins and wept in fear of Hell. Who could know whether he or she was not destined for hell-fire?

Ascetics who appeared in Basra and other parts of the Islamic world were in touch with ascetics in the Christian community. Early sources are eloquent in describing visits of Muslim ascetics to Christian hermits or monks in the mountains of Lebanon or the deserts of Egypt. Numerous stories were spun around such meetings – stories in which the Muslim ascetic generally admires the feats of asceticism shown by the Christian but pities him because he does not belong to the community of the believers. Typically, the image of Jesus loomed large among the early Ṣūfis: he is an ascetic, but he radiates kindness and happiness, and his face shines like gold thanks to his love of and trust in God, for he was convinced that God’s grace is infinite.

It may well be that Muslims living on the eastern fringe of the Islamic world, in Khurāsān, had encounters with Buddhist monks, for the area of Balkh – ancient Bactria – had been a centre of Buddhism and a famous

Buddhist story was taken over into early Muslim hagiography. This is the legend of a prince who, awakened by a strange incident, leaves home to wander into homelessness. This story is told about someone who hailed from the Arab settlers in the Balkh area but appears in legend as the indigenous ruler who, like Buddha, gave up everything for the sake of God. It is Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. c. 160/777), one of the most famous early ascetics. Wandering around, he enjoyed his poverty and destitution and thus became the rôle-model for those who strove to live in absolute poverty and trust in God. Slightly later, other ascetics from the eastern Islamic areas appear as models of trust in God; thus, Fuḍayl b. ʿIyāḍ (d. 187/803), a highway robber who was converted to the true faith after picking up a piece of paper on which a Qurʾānic verse was written, and Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 193/809), formerly a well-to-do merchant.

The feats of asceticism which the sources, or legends, tell about their early seekers sound almost incredible. They considered it sinful to sleep too much and might use a few bricks as pillows, or even spend night after night in a standing or sitting position; they not only avoided prohibited food and goods, as was natural, but also everything that was of doubtful purity. Anecdotes tell about the danger inherent in food sent by a well-intending but not-so-pious neighbour or, even worse, by government officials, for the government was usually thought to be in league with everything evil. The milk of a sheep that had grazed by mistake on the neighbour's lawn should no longer be used by the owner, nor was the wool spun in the light of the neighbour's candle considered ritually clean.

The early ascetics kept to the tripartite rule of asceticism: little food, little sleep, little talk, and thus extended their periods of fasting far beyond the month of Ramaḍān. The hagiographers speak of Ṣūfis who, claiming that hunger was the food that God sends to His friends, hoped to reach the state of angels by diminishing their intake of food. One can speculate that the great age which many of them reached may have been a result of their extremely moderate diet.

## The introduction of love

The picture of the early ascetics looks rather sombre and seems to have been overshadowed by constant fear – fear of legal transgressions, fear of the Judgement, fear of God's 'ruses'. For asceticism to become true mysticism, another ingredient was needed – love of God. This ingredient was introduced by a woman, Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiyya of Basra (d. 184/801), whose life spans the better part of the eighth century. Legend has combined her story with that of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, her compatriot, who allegedly proposed marriage to her, although at the time of his death she was at the most eleven years old. Rābiʿa, so it is told, was a slave-girl set free by her master for her excessive piety.

Although a stern ascetic in her daily life, she seems to have been the first to express her feeling toward God in short, touching Arabic verses in which she sings of her love. Miracle stories are ascribed to her. When she went on pilgrimage, the Ka'ba itself came to greet her (a fact that terribly disturbed her male colleagues!). She is remembered mainly for her symbolic actions. According to the best-known of these stories, which found its way into Europe in the early fourteenth century, she was seen in the streets of Basra carrying a torch in one hand and a bucket of water in the other. Asked the meaning of this act she answered: 'I will pour water into Hell and set fire to Paradise so that these two veils disappear and nobody worships God any more out of fear of Hell or hope for Paradise but only for the sake of His eternal beauty.' Her example as the first great representative of love of God has been cited by generations of admirers and her absolute love has coloured the Šūfī path through the centuries. The hagiographers pay highest respect to her, for 'when a woman walks in the path of God, she cannot be called a "woman" but is considered a true "man of God"'.

Rābī'a is also credited with the remark that she, on a beautiful spring day, refused to go out to the garden, for 'the gardens and the flowers are inside' – that is, the outward world is only a weak reflection of the infinitely more beautiful world of the heart.

This attitude is certainly in harmony with the general ascetic trend. The early Šūfīs hated the 'world', this dangerous place, which is like a dunghill, visited only in case of need, or like a stinking corpse, which was worth less than a gnat's wing. Reflections on this aversion to the ghastly 'Mistress World' are frequent in literature, for the world appeared to ascetically-minded people like an old hag, or like a whore who seduces men and then devours her own children – images that are well known from medieval Christianity, too.

Rābī'a was not the only woman saint in the late eighth century. Margaret Smith has shown in her classic study on Rābī'a that quite a number of women followed the path of asceticism and love. For slowly, the Šūfī movement spread out. From 183/800 onwards one finds an increasing number of names of Šūfīs – the first one called by this sobriquet was Abū Hāshim al-Šūfī. A colony of pious men was founded near Abadan on the Persian Gulf.

## The consolidation of the Path

The personalities mentioned more or less extensively by the hagiographers belonged to different parts of the Muslim world, from Egypt to Afghanistan; therefore, their attitude towards life also differed in some respects. In the ninth century, the Šūfīs began to develop theories about the path that was to lead them to God, and slowly the 'narrow path', *ṭarīqa*, which is based upon and branches out from the *Sharī'a*, the highway which it is incumbent upon every Muslim to follow, was mapped out. The Šūfīs speak of stations and

states on the path and, although the sequence of these long-lasting stations and stages changed in different schools, the path always begins with repentance, *tawba*, i.e. turning away from one's bad qualities in a serious attempt to take upon oneself the hard duties of a wayfarer, *sālik*, who travels slowly towards higher and higher levels until he may reach, after experiencing love and/or direct knowledge, *ma'rifa*, the last goal, that was defined as *fanā'* (annihilation) in God, the object of worship and love (the medieval German term *Entwerden*, 'de-becoming', expresses the goal better: 'to become as one was before one was', to use al-Junayd's definition).

The spiritual path is a constant *jihād*, a war against the qualities of the lower soul, *nafs*. The *nafs*, basically the human soul in general, is usually taken in such contexts as referring to the *nafs ammāra bi-l-sū'* (the soul that commands evil) (Qur'an XII.53), and the Šūfis never tired of describing this *nafs* in the most colourful images – it appears as a black dog, a restive horse or camel, a mouse, a disobedient woman, or the arrogant Pharaoh, and the like. The goal of fighting it and educating it, is its transformation into the *nafs lawwāma*, 'the blaming soul' (Qur'an LXXV.2), a term that corresponds roughly to 'conscience'; finally, it may reach the rank of *nafs mutma'inna* (the soul at peace, Qur'an XCIX.27) and then can return to its Lord. During this *jihād* against the *nafs*, the Šūfī experiences various stages which are fleeting and stations in which he may remain for some time. Basic experiences are *tawakkul* (trust in God), *faqr* (poverty), fear and hope, gratitude and patience, to mention only the very important ones.

*Tawakkul* (trust in God) was taken literally by the early Šūfis, who sometimes overstressed this trust so much that they did not take any medicine in case of illness, or would not even stretch out a hand to take some food, because they did not know whether or not it was meant for them; they might even travel in the desert '*alā tawakkul*, that is to say without company and without provisions. However, as such overstressed *tawakkul* could rarely be practised, it was slowly modified and interiorized. It is the trust that God, the All-Wise, knowing in every moment what is needed by His servants, will give or withhold according to His wisdom. This *tawakkul*, not as the stoic acceptance of whatever may come, but as the loving trust in the wisdom of a Lord who cares, has largely coloured Muslim piety through the ages. Then, understandably, gratitude is counted as one of the highest stations. While patience is recommended in the vicissitudes of fate, gratitude is higher, and one distinguishes gratitude for the gift, gratitude for not being given and gratitude for the capacity of being grateful. Such a tripartite approach to each and every station on the path is typical of the Šūfī way of discerning between the common folk, the élite and the 'élite of the élite'.

Another concept central to early Šūfism is *faqr* (poverty). Did the Prophet not say *faqrī fakhrī*, 'poverty is my pride'? The best-known terms for those who follow the path are indeed *faqīr*, the poor, and its Persian equivalent

*darwīsh*. Poverty was taken very literally in the beginning: to own only what is absolutely needed and, as a corollary, to give away anything that is not immediately needed (including money). This was the Ṣūfī attitude, which entailed the wish to share everything with one's brethren. But *faqr* could also be understood as the attitude of the human being who feels that he stands in the presence of the eternally rich God, possessing for himself nothing that should belong to Him, for, as the Qur'ān says, 'You are the poor, and He is the rich' (Qur'ān XXXV.16). Seen from this angle, even a rich person could be perfectly poor if he were willing to part with his wealth without any regret. It is one of the paradoxical developments in later Ṣūfism that many Ṣūfī leaders became wealthy landlords and, despite the early aversion to the government, played, and still play, a considerable rôle in politics.

On the path, fear and hope are necessary because they are the two wings with which the soul flies into the Divine Presence. Man is constantly between fear and hope (because he is, according to tradition, 'between two of God's fingers') – just like the villager who fears a sudden hail-storm that may devastate his fields but constantly hopes that Divine Grace will provide him with a rich harvest.

One of the highest stations on the path is *riḍā* (absolute contentment), which means the joyful acceptance of whatever God sends. A story tells of an early Ṣūfī who, proud of his spiritual rank, asked God: 'O Lord, are You satisfied with me because I am so content with You?' And the Lord answered, 'You liar! If you were really satisfied with Me, you would not ask!'

The upward path culminates in love of God, a love that contains different stages, such as longing, intimacy, friendship and proximity. The orthodox considered the problem of love very dangerous, for they held that man cannot love God, but only God's commands and His law. That is, love is nothing but absolute obedience. But one could argue that the absolute surrender to the Beloved is, in itself, perfect obedience, and, when at some early point the Ṣūfīs would say that 'love is to remain at the beloved's threshold even though driven away', in somewhat later times they would rather express their conviction that it is better to leave the friend's door if he so wished rather than to show any trace of self-will. The discussion about the possibility of love between man and God was very heated in the early days, and the Ṣūfīs would derive their answer – as Rābī'a al-'Adawiyya had done – from the Qur'ānic words (Qur'ān V.59): 'He loves them and they love Him.' Although these words are taken out of context, they served the Ṣūfīs to highlight their point: God's love of man precedes human love, which is only an answer to the Divine Love.

## The requirements of the Path

The mystical path required extremely careful introspection and a control of even the subtlest and seemingly most insignificant feelings or thoughts. Al-Muḥāsibī

(d. 242/857), a Baghdadian Šūfī, received his nickname from this *muḥāsaba* (soul-searching introspection), and this remained a duty of the Šūfis through the centuries, particularly in those trends which grew out of the so-called ‘sober’ Baghdadian school to which al-Muḥāsibī belonged. But it is impossible for a person to control himself completely. One needs a spiritual guide, the *shaykh*. The *murīd* (the one who has made up his will [to enter the path]) entrusted himself to someone in whom he had absolute trust, and even if the master whom he had chosen treated him harshly or sent him away, perseverance at the master’s door usually led to acceptance. Some seekers wandered from town to town until they found the spiritual guide they were in need of. The relation between master and disciples (usually very few individuals) was very intimate and the instruction usually took place in the master’s house or shop. For during the early period most of the spiritual leaders had their own professions, be it that of a craftsman, a petty merchant, or a scholar in one of the four legal school. The development of real Šūfī centres (*khānqāh*, *dargāh*, *ribāṭ* etc.) belongs to a later period when large fraternities developed which attracted not only seriously striving seekers but also lay members.

After accepting the *murīd* into the *silsila* - the chain of initiation which leads back to the Prophet, either through Abū Bakr or ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib - the *shaykh* has to supervise all his actions and thoughts. By clasping the master’s hand during the initiation ceremony, the *murīd* is bound into the uninterrupted spiritual flow that comes from the Prophet and continues through the ages. At some point the *murīd* was also invested with the *muraqqa*<sup>c</sup>, the patched frock, or *khirqā*, the Šūfī frock, and headgear. In later times the different shapes of the headgear enabled people to recognize to which spiritual path the person belonged. Part of the education was the dialogue between master and disciple, but one of the most important duties of the *shaykh* was to teach the *murīd* the formula of *dhikr*, the remembrance and thousandfold repetition of a Divine Name or a religious formula. This *dhikr* had to be carefully selected in accordance with the spiritual station of the disciple, for the repetition (about or in the heart) of a powerful formula many thousand times a day has not only spiritual but also physiological results. Hence the master’s wisdom shows itself best in the correct choice of the *dhikr*. It is not quite clear exactly when the custom of forty days’ seclusion (*arba‘ūn*, *chilla*) became an integral feature of Šūfī education. During these forty days of lonely confinement in a narrow, dark room with barely any nourishment but constant prayer and *dhikr*, the master had to check the *murīd*’s progress regularly and guide him further. His *firāsa*, the ‘thought-reading’ or cardiognosy, again proved his wisdom, and understandably the *murīd* had to subject himself completely to the master’s order, without a will of his own, just ‘like a corpse in the hand of the undertaker’, as an early formulation says.

The path is long and difficult, but the Šūfis knew also that some people are carried away by a sudden act of Divine Grace and experience a rapture that

takes them completely out of themselves. Such a rapture, *jadhbba*, is a perfectly legitimate experience; it results, however, often in a state of mental instability. A person who has experienced *jadhbba* is called *majdhūb*, which frequently denotes somewhat mentally deranged people. A *majdhūb* can never become a spiritual leader because he lacks the experience of the slow, painstaking progress on the path.

An important part of the Ṣūfī's education was his studying the Qur'ān, because, as an early master said, 'A Ṣūfī who does not know the Qur'ān by heart is like a lemon without scent.' In his ground-breaking book *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique*, Père Nwyia spoke of the fact that the constant meditation on and interpretation of the Qur'ān among the Ṣūfis contributed to the development of the Arabic language into a 'language of experience', and the Ṣūfī's total immersion in the Qur'ān resulted in what Nwyia calls 'the Qur'ānization of the memory'. That is, thought and feeling were totally permeated by the sacred words, which resounded in the Ṣūfī's mind at every moment and coloured his sayings and his complete outlook. Small wonder, then, that the Ṣūfis also strove to interpret the Qur'ān. Precious little has come down from the individual masters, but the different strands of exegesis were collected towards the end of the classical period in the comprehensive *Tafsīr*, (commentary of al-Sulamī) (d. 411/1021). It is certainly an exaggeration to claim that one Ṣūfī knew 70,000 explanations of a single verse of the Qur'ān, but such a remark shows that a trend to enter into deeper and deeper levels of the Revelation developed among the Ṣūfis, and it continued to remain the basis of all Ṣūfī thought and speech. Neither Ibn al-ʿArabī's (d. 637/1240) 'gnostic' approach to the mysteries of Ṣūfism nor the ecstatic poetry of Mawlānā Rūmī (d. 671/1273) are imaginable without a solid knowledge of the Qur'ān, which, as God's own word, had to be as infinite as God Himself.

The Ṣūfis always emphasized oral instruction and rightly stated that one cannot learn the secrets of the path by reading books. Yet they felt the necessity of noting down some of their thoughts and composed small treatises on central problems such as introspection, the secrets of the heart, and others, or else they sang little artless verses, following Rābīʿa al-ʿAdawiyya's example. Some of these verses were recited in the mystical concerts, *samāʿ*, which apparently became more prominent in the course of the ninth century, for it is known that a *samāʿkhāna*, a house for Ṣūfī music, existed in Baghdad in 255/869. The use of music and, inspired by this music, whirling dance, was looked at with great suspicion if not outright hatred by the traditional scholars, and the problem of whether such musical meetings were permissible at all triggered a controversy that lasted for almost a millennium. When judging the *samāʿ*, one should not forget that this was not part of official education; rather, listening to music was one of the rare occasions when the Ṣūfī left his extremely hard spiritual exercises and relaxed for a few hours, to return, strengthened, to his hard spiritual struggle. The great masters – such as al-



IV-1.1 *Makḥẓan al-asrār* by ʿAlī Riḍā (ʿAbbāsī),  
eleventh/seventeenth century

© Topkapi Palace Library (EH 1641, fol. 18b)



Hujwīrī – have therefore rightly emphasized that *samāʿ* is only one, and not a central, aspect of Ṣūfism, and not, as many people thought and still think, the essence of Sūfism. Indeed, it was institutionalized only among the Mevlevis [Fig. 1], the followers of Mawlānā Rūmī, in the late thirteenth century.

### Some leading figures of the early period

While the different stages and stations were elaborated, a number of outstanding Ṣūfī masters appeared on the scene, often connected with the definition of this or that aspect of Ṣūfī thought or practice. In Egypt, the most fascinating personality is the Nubian Dhu-l-Nūn (d. 244/859), who was often regarded as an alchemist (and what is Ṣūfism but ‘spiritual alchemy’, the transformation of base matter into spiritual gold?). His name is also connected with the definition of *maʿrifā*, ‘gnosis’ (in the classical sense), but his most interesting contribution to Ṣūfism seems to be that he did not cling to the world-hating attitude of earlier ascetics, but rediscovered the rôle of nature and was able to understand the silent praise of God uttered by everything created – a praise which is mentioned several times in the Qurʾān. His prayers of adoration translate into human words the laud of trees and fountains, of clouds and stars, and prefigure later Persian poetry in which everything is regarded as giving witness to God’s glory in its own silent speech – stones with their crystalline perfection, flowers with their loveliness and fragrance, birds with their twittering and stars with their radiance. Dhu-l-Nūn also seems to be the first to explain high mystical experiences in brief anecdotes, such as discussions with anonymous people: with a black slave, a girl, or an old woman.

He met an old woman and asked: ‘What is the end of love?’ She answered: ‘You simpleton, love has no end.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Because the Beloved has no end!’

In later time the historical Dhu-l-Nūn disappears under a cover of legends, but this is even more true for his younger contemporary in northern Iran, Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. c. 260/874). His exclamation *Subḥānī*, ‘Praise be to me!’, is among the most frequently quoted of *shathīyyāt*, ‘theopathic utterances’ or paradoxes. Bāyazīd was a strange, lonely person who tried to express his quest for the Divine in beautiful, though at times strange images. He seems to be the first to use for his own experiences the image of the heavenly journey, but, while in one moment he boasts of having been glorified by God and placed on the Divine Throne, he feels in the next that everything he had seen ‘was a cheat’. His words oscillate between the feeling of absolute annihilation in God, *fanāʿ*, and boundless distress, and the same man who claims to have ‘rolled together the seven heavens into a pillow to sleep on’, says to a visitor that ‘he himself is in search of Bāyazīd’. One has supposed that a certain Abū ʿAlī al-Sindī, with whom he associated himself, was a man from

Sind, perhaps a former Hindu who might have introduced him to *advaita* philosophy, but that seems rather unlikely. Bāyazīd did not hope for an extension of the *ātman*, the innermost kernel of the soul, to attain unification with the all-pervading *brahman*, but rather strove for a complete annihilation of the self.

Different was his contemporary from Iran, Yaḥyā b. Mu‘ādh al-Rāzī (d. c. 257/871), called ‘the preacher’, whose delicate sayings are preserved only in small fragments. He is famous for his short prayers and ‘spoke constantly about hope’, because he trusted fully in God, whose mercy is so infinitely greater than His wrath and who will accept even the miserable sinner who believes in His mercy. So he prays simply: ‘Forgive me, for I belong to You!’

The majority of Šūfis known from the ninth century lived in Iraq, especially in the capital, Baghdad. Leading figures were Ma‘rūf al-Karkhī (d. 199/815) and Sarī al-Saqāṭī (d. c. 252/867), along with al-Muḥāsibī. Working on the systematization of the path, they contributed in particular to the definitions of love. ‘Love is not right unless the one says to the other one, O Thou I’ (Sarī al-Saqāṭī). The attitude of complete unification of lover and beloved remained central in later centuries. But Sarī al-Saqāṭī’s saying also points to yet another aspect of Šūfism which may well be called its heart, that is, *tawḥīd*. Every Muslim acknowledges that there is no deity but God and that He is the Creator, Sustainer, the King on the Day of Judgement, and that there is no other bestower of material goods and spiritual graces but He. But for the Šūfis, God was more than that: He is the Only Existing and whatever is besides Him has no real existence. The person to find the shortest formulation of the mystery of Divine Unity was al-Kharrāz (d. 282/896), who claimed that ‘no one has the right to say “I” but God’. The acknowledgement of God’s unity in the profession of faith amounts, so to speak, to *shirk*, associating something with God, and is only valid when the human ‘I’ has annihilated himself in the Divine ‘I’, so that God testifies to His Unity through the human word. This mystical *tawḥīd* became the corner-stone of Šūfism and was later defined in a highly philosophical language by Ibn al-‘Arabī and his followers.

Other Baghdadian Šūfis stressed the practical aspects of Šūfism. The somewhat eccentric, passionate Abu-l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 294/907) gained fame by offering his life for that of the Šūfī brethren during the first trial against the allegedly heretic Šūfis in 263/877, for to prefer others to oneself is a basic attitude of Šūfis. Al-Nūrī sometimes clashed with the main representative of ‘sober’ Šūfism, al-Junayd, who is the pivotal figure in Šūfī history. Contrary to al-Nūrī, al-Junayd was well aware of the dangers inherent in emotional behaviour and thus he taught his disciples to use coded expressions difficult to understand for the non-initiated in order to avoid misinterpretation. The letters of this prudent teacher are filled with cryptic expressions and he never participated in the dance that enraptured al-Nūrī and

others during musical sessions. 'If intellect were a man it would have al-Junayd's shape', said one of his contemporaries. And his goal was 'to become as he was before he was'.

Other masters in Baghdad, like Ruwaym, appear more 'human' than al-Junayd. For Ruwaym did not advocate the hard ascetic way outwardly; rather, he cared for his family and 'concealed his sanctify under the garb of wealth'.

New and interesting developments are visible in Ṣūfism at the same time. Doctrines about a hierarchy of saints were formed by several Ṣūfī masters. Most famous among those who attempted mapping the grades and degrees in the hierarchy of sainthood was al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. c. 317/930), whose work shows traces of Hellenistic-gnostic thought (his surname *ḥakīm*, 'wise, philosopher', points to this peculiarity). From his time onwards one speaks about degrees and grades in the mystical hierarchy into which one can enter only through proper initiation. The world of saints, literally 'the friends of God', *awliyā' Allāh* (sing. *walī*), resembles, as it were, a great dome with the *quṭb*, the 'pole' or 'axis', in the centre. Around this saint the world revolves, and he is accompanied by three *nuqabā'* (representatives). In descending ranks one finds the Seven (usually called *abdāl* (substitutes)) and the Forty; both groups play an important rôle in Islamic folklore and were considered patron saints of several places (Marrakesh is under the protection of the Seven; Kırklareli in Turkey under the Forty, *kirk*). Then follows a group of 300. These basic theories were later elaborated in sophisticated speculations, and the saints, who are thought to be responsible for well-being on earth, could even be regarded as the eyes through which God looks at the world. In later times one often finds that the actual leader of a mystical fraternity considers himself, or is considered by his faithful disciples, to be the *quṭb* or, as he is also called, the *ghawth*, the 'Help'.

Yet, most of the issues in which the majority of the Ṣūfis around al-Junayd were interested, seem to have been of a somewhat different character. There were, for example, questions of proper etiquette, *adab*, for the Ṣūfī had to learn how to behave in each and every moment of life, in the house and while travelling, in eating and sleeping, in meeting with brethren and in solitary prayer. Many of these rules developed out of traditions about the Prophet's behaviour and were collected in handbooks of Ṣūfism which begin to appear towards the end of the tenth century, such as the *Kitāb al-Luma'* by al-Sarrāj, the *Kitāb al-Ta'arruf* by al-Kalābādhī and the *Qūt al-qulūb* of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī. This genre was later continued in the famous *Risāla* of al-Qushayrī (d. 464/1072), al-Hujwīrī's Persian *Kashf al-mahjūb* and, in particular, in the widely read works of Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168) and his nephew, Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 631/1234), whose '*Awārif al-ma'ārif*' spread moderate Ṣūfī ethics into every corner of the Islamic world.

## Al-Ḥallāj

Such books were deemed necessary because Şūfism, undergoing its first public trials in the late ninth century, was developing in a direction that seemed dangerous even to some Sūfis themselves, including the prudent al-Junayd. The trend against which he was warning is connected with the name of al-Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (244–309/859–922), a mystic from Persian Iraq, who spent some time with Sahl al-Tustarī in his exile near Basra. Sahl al-Tustarī was the first to meditate upon the role of the mystical Muḥammad and thus laid the foundations for the ever-growing veneration of the Prophet as a luminous primordial being who was created earlier than Adam and for whose sake God in fact created Heaven and Earth. Thus, the Prophet now appears not as the founder of the Muslim community but rather as the meaning and end of creation. Al-Ḥallāj took over some of these ideas, as one can see in his *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, a small book filled with high-soaring meditations in rhyming prose interspersed with verse (a literary genre that became very popular, especially in Iran). Legend tells that al-Ḥallāj knocked at al-Junayd's door and, being asked 'Who is there?', answered: '*ana-l-ḥaqq*, I am the creative Truth', i.e. 'I am God.' This expression was to become the hallmark of many trends in later Şūfism. However, the story never actually happened that way; rather, the *anā-l-ḥaqq* is contained in the *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn* in a discussion among al-Ḥallāj, Pharaoh and Iblīs (Satan), each of them claiming superiority. Pharaoh said, 'I am your highest lord!' (Qur'ān LXXIX.24); Iblīs, 'I am better than Adam' (Qur'ān VII.12); and al-Ḥallāj, 'I am the Truth.' Al-Ḥallāj was surrounded with legends, positive and negative, and appears as a somewhat disquieting member of the society. People were overawed by the extreme feats of asceticism which he performed, both in Baghdad and during his pilgrimages to Mecca. He travelled through the eastern lands of the caliphate and thus, shortly after 286/900, visited Gujarat and Sind, and reached Inner Asia, probably via the Silk Route. Upon his return he became even more than before a target of attention, in part due to the confused history of the caliphate after 286/900, when viziers and factions changed constantly. Al-Ḥallāj apparently tried to interfere with the social order by calling for just taxation and by admonishing people to an interiorization of the ritual duties (which he himself took extremely seriously). A point that was held against him was his contention that, instead of performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, one might as well collect a group of orphans, give them new dresses and celebrate the Feast of Offering with them. The government also suspected him of having contacts with the Carmathians near Multān, a sect which was, at that time, the most dangerous enemy of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate.

Al-Ḥallāj himself was often seen in extended nightly prayers, and these, as far as they were noted down by his friends, show his intense longing for the One God, who is invisible everywhere and yet hides Himself from the spiri-

tually blind. The longing is expressed in ever-new images, in which, however, he never uses the language of eroticism. That is also true for his small poems, in which he tried to sing of the mystery of union, when in moments of ecstasy and bliss the uncreated Divine Spirit takes over the created human spirit, although the veil that separates the Primordial God from that which is created in time cannot be lifted in this life. Al-Ḥallāj describes the moment of happiness when his spirit and that of the Divine Beloved are blended like water and wine, like musk and ambergris, and he feels that the Divine Friend is moving between his heart and the pericardium just like tears from his eyelids, or else he sings:

I saw my Lord with my heart's eye  
And asked, 'Who are you?' And He said: 'You!'

There are cries of despair, and again words in which the happiness of suffering is highlighted, for 'Suffering is He Himself.' This longing for suffering and death is expressed best in a poem that has been repeated time and again by the Ṣūfīs, and indeed points to the ideal to 'die before one dies':

*Uqtulūmī yā thiqātī inna fī qatlī ḥayātī*  
Kill me, o my trustworthy friends, for in my being killed there is my life!

It must have been embarrassing for the inhabitants of Baghdad to see al-Ḥallāj calling for death in the streets and mosques of Baghdad, because they knew how strictly he observed his religious duties. Yet, strange miracles were attributed to him and his method of interpreting the Qurʾān or his idiosyncratic way of appropriating the meaning of a *ḥadīth* must have been confusing for the pious circles in the capital. He did not quote the *ḥadīth* with the normal chain of initiation that leads back to the Prophet through several 'classes' of transmitters, but rather leads them back through cosmic forces, through angels and powers, to the original source, to God. (The *ḥadīth* he thus quoted was, however, in full harmony with the generally known ones.) The government observed the mystic with increasing suspicion, all the more as letters written in strange calligraphy on beautiful decorated paper and with high-sounding forms of address reached him from the eastern part of the Muslim world. Given all these unusual ways of behaviour, it was easy to see in al-Ḥallāj a magician, a sorcerer and pretender to spiritual ranks who posed in the garb of a Ṣūfī – that is, at least, the picture one gets from some of the later, inimical literature. In 299/912 he was apprehended and put into a pillory for some days and one year later he was imprisoned. The friendship of the chamberlain and the interest of the young caliph's mother in his cause made his imprisonment tolerable: it is likely that he wrote his *Kitāb al-Tawāsīm* during those years. Despite the general aversion of a considerable group of lawyers, and even Ṣūfīs, against him, it was difficult to find a judge to sign the death

sentence against him. The Persian Şūfi Ibn Khafif (d. 371/982), thanks to whom al-Ḥallāj's tradition was implanted in Shīrāz, visited him in prison just before his death and, impressed by his words and miracles, called him *‘ālim rabbānī*, a 'divinely inspired scholar'. His execution took place on 24 Dhu-l-Qa‘ida 309/26 March 922. Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār has beautifully summed up the secrets of his death in his *Tadhkirat al-awliyā*?

A *darwīsh* came to his prison and asked him: 'What is love?' He answered: 'You will see it today and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.' That day they cut off his hands and feet, the next day they hanged him at the gallows, and the third day they burned his body and cast the ashes into the wind.

Al-Ḥallāj's last prayers during the mutilation of his body speak of the intense happiness of finally being freed from the veil of the created body, and he prayed for those who killed him because they acted in good faith in order to save Islam. It is said that he went dancing to the gallows, which, as Sindhi poets sing to this day, 'was his bridal bed'.

Al-Ḥallāj's fate has moved generations of Şūfis. The legally minded Muslims usually dislike him because of his dangerous utterances, which sound like heretical statements. Certain groups among the Şūfis felt that he had betrayed the secret of loving union between the soul and God by claiming, 'I am the Truth', and that he therefore deserved capital punishment. Others regarded him as too narrow a vessel for the heavy flood of inspiration that came upon him; he could not keep it to himself and spilled it by uttering 'songs that one is not allowed to sing'. (The image of the shallow vessels contains, incidentally, a fine allusion to the term *shath*, the 'theopathic utterance' which comes from the mystic in a state of ecstasy; its literal meaning is 'spilling of water over the riverbank'.) But on the whole, al-Ḥallāj was regarded, especially in the eastern Islamic world, as the rôle-model of the lover who is willing to sacrifice everything, including his life, for his unconditional love and is therefore killed by the 'establishment'. In him, the tension between the 'religion of Love' and the 'religion of the Law' seemed to have become visible, and thus his name was taken over and applied even to those who suffered not for religious but for political purposes. Therefore, allusions to 'al-Manşūr', as he is usually called with his father's name, and to 'gallows and rope', or 'gallows and pulpit' (in the mosque) occur in poetry to this day.

One of the ideas found in al-Ḥallāj's *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn* was probably even more controversial, and dangerous, than his *ana-l-Ḥaqq*, but one does not know to what extent the scholars of Baghdad were aware of it. That is his rehabilitation of Iblīs (Satan) who, according to al-Ḥallāj, addresses God with the words *jubūdī laka taqdīs*, 'My rebellion means to declare Thee holy!' That is, by not bowing down before the newly created Adam, he acknowledged God's eternal will that nobody should prostrate before anyone but Him. He was, thus, caught between the Command and the Will, 'cast in the water and told

not to become wet', as it is said, and poor Iblīs chose to remain faithful to God's eternal will not to show obeisance to anyone. He is the absolute monotheism, the lover who rather takes the Beloved's curse upon himself than disobey Him. This interpretation of Iblīs was taken over by a number of Ṣūfis in Iran and India.

### Ṣūfism between al-Ḥallāj and al-Ghazālī

With al-Ḥallāj's execution in 309/922 the first period of Ṣūfism was, so it seems, over. There was, of course, no dearth of Ṣūfis in all corners of the Muslim world. One can mention, for example, al-Ḥallāj's friend al-Shiblī (d. 333/945), who popularized some of the martyr-mystic's ideas but was not apprehended because he tended to feign madness. In the generation after him, al-Niffarī (d. 353/965) has to be singled out, for his *Mawāqif* and *Mukhāṭabāt* reveal an extremely interesting dialogue between God and man. Al-Niffarī translated God's words, in which He often scolds the externalists who blindly follow the letters and who rely on letters and words instead of listening exclusively to Him. Al-Niffarī's works thus contain words that were considered as true Divine inspiration and it seems that his books were influential in the medieval world of Ṣūfism. Yet, a fully satisfactory interpretation or a comparison with similarly structured works is still missing.

In the latter part of the tenth century handbooks of Ṣūfism were composed, as mentioned earlier. Likewise, the first historical approaches to the lives of the Ṣūfis appear. Al-Sulamī (d. 411/1021) followed the *ṭabaqāt*, 'classes', system in his brief but useful work, while somewhat later Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 428/1037) composed a ten-volume work, *Ḥiḍyat al-awliyā'* (The Ornament of the Saints), which, however, devotes only parts to Ṣūfism in particular. As for al-Sulamī, he wrote some useful treatises about the *Malāmatiyya*, those who draw blame upon themselves (in order not to be accused of hypocrisy or pride in religious works) and about the *futuwwa*, men who tried to embody the youthful religious heroism of the Prophet and of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and whose trends were later to develop into a kind of sodality. Al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt* was soon translated into Persian by the Ḥanbalī mystic 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī of Herat (d. 481/1089), author of an important work on exegesis and of a small, beautiful prayerbook in Persian.

His *munājāt* (prayers), are among the first Persian Ṣūfī works, for the early Ṣūfis, though often hailing from Iran, used Arabic for their writing. Now, Persian developed into a pliable vehicle for mystical writing, especially in poetry. Although Abū Sa'īd b. Abi-l-Khayr (d. 440/1049) is no longer regarded as the first to compose Persian mystical quatrains, *rubā'īyyāt*, to be sung in the mystical concerts, he is important as one of the first to whom the institutionalization of a fraternity can be ascribed, even though such fraternities developed fully more than a century later. Ibn Khaffī's disciple Kāzarūnī

(d. 425/1034) is likewise credited with forming an active group of disciples whose activities stretched to India and China.

Iran was also the native country of the man who is usually regarded as the most important figure in moderate Šūfism, namely Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (449–504/1058–1111). Born in Tūs, he became professor at the leading *madrasa* of his time, the Nizāmiyya in Baghdad, the centre of Ash‘arite theology, and composed numerous philosophical, anti-philosophical and theological works. But he finally became aware of the lack of depth and inner experience in the works of many of his colleagues, as well as of the danger inherent in the very active Ismā‘īlī esoteric teaching, with its strong emphasis on authoritative instruction by the imām or his representative. Al-Ghazālī turned to Šūfism, although next to nothing is known about his chain of initiation or about the way he spent the years between his departure from Baghdad and his return to his home-town, where he died in 504/1111. His work clearly shows the tradition of the ‘sober’ Baghdadian school, and his main book, the *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (The Revivification of the Sciences of Religion, i.e. of theology in the broadest sense), follows, in a certain way, the classical *adab* works. Its first three parts deal with the duties of the Muslims and instructions about proper behaviour, for the believer knows that he stands immediately before God every moment of his life. Thus, the rites of prayer, behaviour in trade and marriage, sins to be avoided, are all dealt with on the basis of Qur’ānic injunctions, traditions from the Prophet and examples of the pious elders among the Šūfīs. Only the fourth part of the work deals with topics which would seem to be truly ‘religious’ in the modern sense, and the mystical stations such as poverty, trust in God, love and longing and the like, are discussed in a clear, logical language. The fortieth and last chapter deals with the moment when the human being encounters God in the event of death, a moment both dreaded and, at least in the case of the lover, longed for. One can say that the whole *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* is a preparation for this last event, since the goal of true Islamic *‘ilm* (knowledge) is to prepare the believer for a happy life in the Hereafter.

The number of chapters, forty, was not chosen by accident; it is the number of patience, expectation and maturing, as well as the number of days which the Šūfī should spend in purifying seclusion. With its unique combination of interiorized legalism and deep religious feeling, the *Ihyā’* was ideally suited to introduce moderate Šūfism into the lives of many people who would probably not have identified with theosophical mysticism or exuberant mystical poetry. It is, however, strange that al-Ghazālī composed a small book in which he discussed exactly those gnostic-theosophical trends in Islam, which he otherwise criticized so sternly. The place of this book, the *Mishkāt al-anwār* (The Niche for Lights), in his biography has not yet been fully ascertained.

Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī left an indelible mark on moderate mystically tinged Islam. More of a true mystic in the fast-growing tradition of love-



mysticism was his younger brother Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 416/1026), whose small Persian meditations, the *Sawāniḥ al-‘ushshāq* (Flighty Ideas), tried to express in the tenderest possible sentences and verses the mystery of love – a mutual love in which lover and beloved became mirrors of each other, united in overarching Love. His work inspired many others in the Persian world.

Thus, both brothers, representing two very different aspects of Ṣūfism at the turn of the sixth/twelfth century, point to the ways into which Ṣūfism was to develop in the centuries to come.

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## Chapter 2

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ṢŪFISM: ITS PLACE AND VALUE IN THE UNIVERSAL AND PERENNIAL PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL INQUIRY

*Enes Karic*

### I

'Time is an island in the ocean of eternity' is a saying of Islamic mystics. However, it is a significant island since it is a place where we make the preparations for eternity, an island through which and from which we reach the depths of eternity, the depths and expanses of the ocean which surrounds that island.<sup>1</sup>

It could be said, without fear of falling into error, that the *Shari'a* regulates the application and the realization of God's eternal will in time, 'at the bottom of the moon sphere', as Islamic mystics would say.<sup>2</sup> The *Shari'a*, understood in that way, is an eternal and external law and norm which standardizes the life and conduct of the Muslim from his conception in his mother's womb to his death, and in some cases after death, too.<sup>3</sup> In its main currents, Ṣūfism considers the *Shari'a* to be the external aspect of Islam, its esoteric side, which, by its tenets, standardizes on the exterior level the relations of the Muslim towards God, towards other people, towards nature, as well as towards history.

1. In his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that the Qur'ān, this last testament of Eternity addressed to mankind, is the sea without shores, *al-baḥr lā sāḥila labu*. See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Kitāb al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Cairo, 1329/1911, passim.
2. The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' employed this syntagma several times in their encyclopaedia. See Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa-khillān al-wafā'*, 12 vols. in 4, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1356/1957.
3. We refer to the regulations on inheritance, testaments and the like.

Islam, however, contains the *ḥaqīqa* too, i.e. its esoteric component, its internal essence, which is transtemporal and transhistorical. It was Ṣūfism that, together with Shīʿism, particularly attended to such an approach towards Islam, recognizing in it a unity through those two main aspects of the *Shariʿa* and the *ḥaqīqa*.

But, of course, the above-mentioned approach would not be possible without a special manner of reading the Qurʾān, without penetrating its message and plunging into its word according to the principle of the internal layers of the Text. To be precise, from the very beginning Ṣūfism insisted on the fact that in the reading and the hermeneutics of the Qurʾān (*taʾwīl*), two different meanings should be recognized: the external meaning (*ẓāhir*) and the internal one (*bāṭin*). Besides, Ṣūfism insisted on the symbolic reading of the Qurʾān, too. In order to explain, at least roughly, the meaning of symbolic reading in Ṣūfism (and in Shīʿism), the understanding and comprehension of the Text, we must start with another explication.

The world has issued from the pages of God's words. And though man himself is but a great word of God – more precisely a great sign on the horizons of the world – it is man alone who is in a position to interpret here 'at the bottom of the moon sphere' not only God's Book, the Qurʾān, but also another open book revealed by God – the world. Ibn al-ʿArabī says that 'the world is God's written book', which needs to be interpreted just as the Qurʾān does.<sup>4</sup>

Ṣūfism underlines the fact that both the Qurʾān and the world should be interpreted by means of the same hermeneutics (*taʾwīl*), the transhistorical hermeneutics. Ṣūfism does not deny or eradicate historical interpretations of the Qurʾān, but it considers them to be too short and insufficient concerning the reading of the eternal intentions pressed into the text of the Qurʾān and the 'text' (namely, the context) of the World! That is to say, the historical interpretations of the Qurʾān and the world are correct and justifiable, but only on their own level. Since Ṣūfism does not search for the temporal meaning of the Qurʾān and the world, or, more precisely, does not put the main stress on it, its teachings develop a special methodology of searching for the eternal meaning of the Qurʾān and for the traces of Eternity, which are hoping for us and which are coming to us from the very signs of the world on the horizons of observations.<sup>5</sup>

What, then, is that Ṣūfī 'methodology', woven in the Ṣūfī hermeneutics, and what does it demand from the reader of the Qurʾān and the world, respectively?

4. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt...*, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

5. This is discussed in S. H. Nasr, 'Ṣūfism and the Perennity of the Mystical Quest', in his *Living Sufism*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1980, pp. 16ff.

II

Şūfism says that the search for the eternal is good at its very start, provided the 'Qur'ān is listened to from the Being, and the Being is seen and observed in the text of the Qur'ān'.<sup>6</sup>

For the realization of this methodology it is necessary, however, to perform an action, to perform the act of 'transition' (*al-i'tibār*). Ibn al-ʿArabī considers action as a *conditio sine qua non* in starting the search for the eternal meaning of the Qur'ān, as well as the eternal meaning and the symbols of the world. The Qur'ānic verse: 'Learn the lesson, O ye that have insight into things',<sup>7</sup> is interpreted by Ibn al-ʿArabī in a way typical for him, inherent in the Şūfī methodology of the treatment of the text, and the world, of course. In his *Futūḥāt*, Ibn al-ʿArabī says: 'Pass from the forms seen by your eyes to the essence offered to you by those forms...'

The meaning of this sentence of Ibn al-ʿArabī is complex, but it could be rightly said that it contains the confirmation of the Islamic symbolic reading of the worlds of the Qur'ān as well as of the manifest World. It is such a symbolic reading that is promoted and pleaded for by Şūfism. The Qur'ānic worlds as well as the manifest world are abundant in symbols (*rumūz*) and allusions (*ishārāt*). In fact, it could be said that Şūfism 'came into existence'<sup>8</sup> as a teaching which requests the symbolic reading of the Qur'ān and the world, in the course of which man does not create the symbols of his own will<sup>9</sup> but only interprets those presented by the Qur'ān and the world. That is what is called *ʿubūr* or *i'tibār*, the transition from the more external to the symbols and from the symbols to the symbolized! The Symbolized is He, the Eternal, the Omnipotent God! Eternity Itself!

This principle, acceptable as such, is to be explained, of course, in a way conforming to Şūfism.

According to the main sources of Şūfism, the language itself is a series of symbols. The ordinary human language, each human language, is nothing

6. N. H. Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʿwīl: dirāsa fī taʿwīl al-Qurʿān ʿinda Muḥyi-l-Dīn b. al-ʿArabī*, Beirut, al-Tanwīr/Dār al-Waḥda, 1983, p. 266.

7. Marmaduke M. Pickthall, in his translation of the Qur'ān, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: an Explanatory Translation*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1956, p. 393, offers the following translation of the above verse: 'So learn the lesson, o ye who have eyes!' This translation does not correspond to the Şūfī intention of transition.

8. Şūfism appeared only historically. It is not a teaching with a precedent. *Al-ḥikma al-laduniyya* is the eternal wisdom, the existence of which is limitless and which is only presented in the first instance to the Şūfīs.

9. The reader may find more about the symbolic understanding of the Qur'ān in S. H. Nasr, *Ideal and Realities in Islam*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1966, in his chapter dealing with the Qur'ān.

other than an echo of the Divine language, i.e. the manifestation of the Divine language on the level of existence.<sup>10</sup>

Ordinary human language points to the Divine language, and the Divine language to the Reality, to the Absolute. The Divine language, the Qurʾān, for example, contains symbols which can be understood only by God's chosen admirers.<sup>11</sup>

Those chosen ones are, in the first place, the Ṣūfis themselves. In everything they see and hear, in everything they reach by thinking and contemplation, they recognize the symbols, and by their means, they perceive the Symbolized!

The hermeneutics of the Qurʾān in the Ṣūfī manner, which played and has been playing a brilliant part in the history of Islamic civilization, contain the principles of the internal (*bāṭin*) and the external (*ẓāhir*) interpretation of the text. The relation between the word itself and its meaning is the same as the relation between the external and the internal,<sup>12</sup> that is to say, the Ṣūfī discovers the very reality in the Qurʾān, such as it is. Ṣūfism has often referred to the examples given by the Qurʾān for adequate explanation. Just as it is explained in the Qurʾānic Light Verse (*āyat al-nūr*)<sup>13</sup> how glass and light are imbued with and open to one another, in the same way *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin* permeate one another, with a certain restriction, namely, that *bāṭin* can never be explained by *ẓāhir*, while *ẓāhir* must be explained by *bāṭin*.

### III

Such a Ṣūfī teaching watchfully guarded and preserved the hierarchy of knowledge and cognition and presented it to the Islamic civilization.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, it is Ṣūfism in Islam that has always held up the torch, by the light of which both the Qurʾān and the World have been read and interpreted, not only in width but in depth, too. The two previous parts of this chapter dealt, on principle only, with some main and fundamental assertions of Ṣūfism. Yet, it is necessary to point out here that Ṣūfism has also injected its principles, in a visible and an invisible way, into the rich content of Islamic civilization.

10. Cf. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futuḥāt...*, *op. cit.* II, pp. 86, 219–220 et seq.

11. N. Ḥ. Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʾwīl...*, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

12. N. Ḥ. Abū Zayd, *Falsafat al-taʾwīl...*, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

13. Qurʾān XXIV.35.

14. Through the Islamic civilization this hierarchy of knowledge was presented to all of mankind, which is to say that Ṣūfism has stood shoulder to shoulder with the traditional teachings of the world, with Taoism, for example. See T. Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: a Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, and also R. Guénon, *Aperçus sur l'ésotérisme islamique et le Taoïsme*, Paris, Gallimard, 1973.

In the first place, Şūfism has brought into Islamic civilization a great reminiscence, the reminiscence of Eternity, though Islam itself is a constant and continuous reminiscence of Eternity. That is to say, the basic principle of Islam: *lā ilāha illā 'llāh* (there is no divinity except God!) means that all the phenomena of this world, as well as the World itself, are only manifestations of the Absolute, the Reality, the Eternity. To describe these manifestations the Şūfis liked to use the Arabic word *tajalliyāt*. This Şūfi assumption is fully expressed in everything that has been and is being created by Islamic civilization, since that very civilization is only the reminiscence of Eternity.

Let us go back to the *āya* on light and glass, taking the liberty of reading the whole of Islamic civilization into the context of the message of that *āya*. Muslim houses throughout the Islamic world from Bosnia to Indonesia are built so that they can scoop light, as you scoop water in your palm. These dwellings usually face the sunny side, with protruding verandas and second-floor porches, and their rooms are full of light. In fact, such buildings are meant to be light and easy for dwelling in and to eliminate the impression of massiveness - that quality which could stir man's Promethean aspirations on the earth and cause the oblivion of Eternity.

For every human civilization, and especially in the Islamic one, to whose origin and shaping it has made a great contribution, Şūfism has read the sandy dunes, having in mind the Qur'anic verse of the same title.<sup>15</sup> Everything that has been built in the Islamic world, in conformity with the Islamic principles of building, reminds us of the *tajalliyāt* from the Şūfi teachings, of the manifestations of the *ḥaqīqa* in this world.

Islamic architecture offers numerous examples of that. The bridges built during the Ottoman empire in Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia and further to the east were usually built in white stone. When, the sun dissipates its beams over the water underneath such a bridge and on to the bridge itself, one gets the impression of looking at an embroidery, a lace-pattern: the strange combination of light, water and the whiteness of stone - of the real and the unreal. It is surprising what an unbelievable lightness the whole construction reveals to the observer's eyes on such an occasion.

When on a sunny day you cross the bridge built by Mehmed Pasha Sokolovic over the Drina river in Visegrad, you have the impression of going across that eschatological bridge, the so-called *Şirāt*-bridge, on the Day of Judgement. In fact, all the bridges that were built, mostly by the members of

15. One of the chapters of the Qur'an bears the title *al-Aḥqāf*, that is, the sandy dunes shaped by winds. In his translation of the Qur'an, M. M. Pickthall, *op. cit.*, translates this literally as 'the wind-curved sandhills'. That is to say, the *Şirāt al-Aḥqāf* conveys the message that human civilizations are unstable, that they are like sandy hills which, by winds, are shifted from one place to another. Therefore, edifices should be built with the remembrance of God, of Eternity.

the Šūfī traditional fraternities, by Mimar Sinan, for example, are at the same time the symbols of the eternal and the changeable aspects of reality. The dancing of light on water, the whiteness of stone and the reflection of the bridge in the river allow us to perceive easily the main contour of the Islamic view of the world and distinguish the movable from the static, immovable part of Eternity, the separation of the external from the internal, the illusion from the Truth!<sup>16</sup>

The principle of the internal and the external in architecture is noticeable even in ordinary dwelling-houses of the Mediterranean region that has embraced Islam, not to mention the Turkish, Arab and Iranian Islamic cultural zones.<sup>17</sup> Many Muslim houses in Sarajevo or, let us say, in Bursa can at the same time be used as *takeyyas* and *zāwīyas*. That is to say, the Muslim houses and other dwelling-places that are built in conformity with Islamic tradition – where the principle of the distinction of the internal and the external is strictly applied and especially supported by Šūfism represent sacral spaces of special significance. The house is the place where the members of its household experience and attain a sort of paradisiacal tranquility (*sakīna*); but at the same time, the house is a necessity of this world, a protection from the tempers of climate and natural phenomena. *Takeyyas* and *zāwīyas* are sacral buildings, but they are dwelling-places as well.<sup>18</sup>

#### IV

Thanks to Šūfism and the esoteric teachings of Islam, the world of Nature and the world of history have not remained separated from one another in Islamic civilization.<sup>19</sup> Nature is not man's enemy. Being the field of the reception of God's mercy, it is, moreover, a great inspiration for the spiritual search, with all its riches, wildernesses, mountains, rivers, trees and flowers. In addition, Nature is a powerful emanation of God's noble names. The greatest Šūfī works have titles dealing with nature,<sup>20</sup> or natural titles.

Such a status of Nature cannot be attributed to its eternity, of course. Nature is not eternal, but eternal is He Who manifests Himself through it, Who is symbolized by its innumerable signs. Compared to time and history,

16. Shadow and light are frequent motifs of the Qurʾān. To observe the way in which God spreads shadow, i.e., distinguished illusions from the reality, is a duty of each Muslim.

17. In architecture and the culture of dwelling all over the Islamic world, a uniform spiritual tonality is felt.

18. The words *sakīna* and *sakan* ultimately derive from the same root. The former means 'calmness' and the latter 'dwelling-place'.

19. For more on the status of nature in Islam, see S. H. Nasr, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: the Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1968.

20. E.g., *Gulistān* (Rose Garden) or *Gulshān-i rāz* are frequent titles of Šūfī books in which Nature is celebrated as a great sign of God.

which are non-static parts of Eternity, Nature is the visible and variable aspect of the Absolute, of the Eternal.

From the inexhaustible world of Islam, Şūfism has, by its insistence, procured the status of an angel (*malak*) for Nature. Sometimes one reads that Şūfis renounce this world. We must add here that they 'renounce' it by sojourning for years in places where Nature is at its most beautiful! In Bosnia, for example, *takiyyas* are built on magnificent hills, near rivers and springs – in short, in the most beautiful countryside.

Here it might be appropriate to point out the part Şūfism has played in Islamic culture, more precisely in 'translating' Nature into culture.

Let us remember, in this context, Rūmī's tale from the *Mathnawī*. Once there was a craftsman who had a cross-eyed apprentice. Although there was only one bottle on the shelf in the workshop, the apprentice, upon his master's request to fetch him the bottle, would ask: 'Which one, Master, the bottle on the right or the one on the left?' One day the master got annoyed by the question and answered: 'Well, my boy, break either of the two.' The apprentice broke the bottle on the right, but the one on the left also disappeared.

## V

This is a Şūfī parable which in a way explains and tells a great deal about the status of this world and the Hereafter in Islam and the relation between the external and the internal, or, if we prefer, about the general relation between Nature and culture in Şūfism. This states that the main spiritual courses in Islam do not know any radical split, any regionalization of Being into separate and strictly divided wholes. The world's level of existing has been included in a higher level of existence; in other words, numerous levels of existence are harmoniously included in the Unity (*tawḥīd*).<sup>21</sup>

Wherever the Islamic world has been powerfully influenced by Şūfism, a harmonious inclusion of Nature in Islamic culture is achieved. Here, Nature and culture were never seen with cross-eyes! Seeing how the mosques built in the Turkish style fit into the landscape without any apparent line separating them from their surroundings, is proof enough. It is difficult to say whether Nature turns into culture or culture into Nature! Şūfism has always supported the unity of those two factors, through which the Muslims discovered the ways of spiritual insight and spiritual search. Owing to their support of this conception of the cultural Nature and the natural Culture, Islam in general, and Şūfism in particular, have won over large areas of the world, both in the geographical and the spiritual sense.

21. Rūmī's *Mathnawī* is called 'the forge of Unity' by Islamic mystics. It is probably the best Şūfī commentary on the Qur'ān in poetic form.



Let us now briefly discuss the rôle that Şūfism plays in Islamic civilization concerning the courses of eternal wisdom, perennial thought and spirit.<sup>22</sup>

It was the Qur'ān and Islamic tradition in the first place in which Şūfism found the ground and the domicile of ancient teachings and ancient wisdom. God-inspired wisdom and thought have a perennial quality. Just as man has no physical evolution on the Earth, no matter what had happened before he appeared on it, so, according to the perennial philosophy, he has no radical continuity of the abrupt spiritual changes. In fact, man is predisposed to perennial wisdom, which has been stored in him as a seed, as a spark. That spark can be neglected by man, but it cannot be extinguished. Islam, and Şūfism within it, insist on *fiṭra* in man, pointing to the unchangeable aspect of the human nature.

In fact, Şūfism as such does not see a new faith in Islam, but a continuous flow of the belief in one God, the belief in pure monotheism, according to which only the Absolute is absolute. In other religions and traditions, too, provided they are truly traditional, perennial philosophy and thought (*sophia perennis*) were kept in the form of unextinguished sparks. Şūfism has always been able to recognize those sparks in Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and so on. In spite of that, Şūfism, of course, never accepted their exterior and institutional concepts, the trinities of various kinds, but it does accept and encourage the dialogue among various traditions. Such a dialogue is not to be a dialogue of cheap, ecumenical intentions, but it should be a dialogue of a metahistorical nature, so much needed by mankind nowadays.

Within Islam, the Şūfī perennial thought and spirituality urged in Şūfī fraternities in the first place, but in common Muslim believers, too, a sharp, ancient, perennial instinct for the Truth. Just as a master and an apprentice of a guild headed by a Şūfī *shaykh* know magnetism, in a similar way a common believer learns from his or her local imam that 'everything alive was made of water',<sup>23</sup> but that statues cannot be made from water.<sup>24</sup> The solid state of water, namely ice and its melting, shows the destiny of ignorance of the faith in the One, in the Absolute. Şūfism is just that warmth in Islam which provides Muslims with the power of melting the idols of thought as well as the idols of reality. It is that light which causes all things be seen on their true level and within the Unity.

Nowadays, in the age which is usually called modern times or, what is even more morbid, post-modern times, the perennial teachings of Şūfism and

22. Cf. F. Schuon, *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, trans. J. P. Hobson, London, World of Islam Festival Publishing Company, 1976.

23. Cf. Qur'ān, XXI.30.

24. Creation belongs only to God, not to His creatures. Idolaters cannot make their idols from water, from which Şūfism suggests learning a lesson!

the comprehension of things in the ancient manner of seeing Unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in Unity, can be of great help in reminding man of his primordial part of witnessing God.

When, at present, Islam and its civilization are in question, it is Şūfism which constantly gives them additional freshness, cleansing Islamic theological systems from outside and strengthening them with new, live saps from inside. Şūfism has given the heart and the intellect to the theological mind in Islam, saving it in that way from the torture of the theological God and the violence of the theology of heartlessness.

Besides, it was Şūfism again which in the course of centuries caused the principle truths of Islam and the Islamic perennial thought and philosophy to be discussed and talked about in beautiful gardens, such as are those of Bosnia or Anatolia. One of the merits of Şūfism is also the fact that it helped Muslim thinkers not to have to proclaim their ideas and conceptions at the stake, on the gallows or under guillotines, as was the case over centuries in Europe.

Accordingly, Şūfism is destined to help the rose-gardens of sapient thought spread and flourish in the future of Islamic civilization, too.

— V —

H U M A N  
S C I E N C E S

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Chapter 1

GEOGRAPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS  
UNDER  
THE GUIDANCE OF ISLAM

*Anton M. Heinen*

Definition of the field

An impressive number of works in Islamic literature have been classified under the generic term 'geography'.<sup>1</sup> However, what seems to be the most obvious descriptive classification soon dissolves into the misty light of uncertainty when the critical reviewer tries to draw reasoned border lines: which treatise truly belongs to geography, which one not, and why? Which one is truly representative of the scope of Islamic geography, of its methods, its results? For, unlike other disciplines, geography did not exist as a recognized science in the curricula of the schools and colleges in Muslim lands.<sup>2</sup> What seems unbelievable in view of the high esteem Muslim geography enjoyed in Orientalist scholarship, is true nevertheless: geographical writings were – with some noted exceptions – hardly more than 'side products' of Muslim astronomers, astrologers, mathematicians, pharmacists, historians, lexicographers, administrators and story-tellers, among a number of other specialists. In other words, they were not the distinctive creations of an independent, inherited science, but the products of cultured people with far-reaching interests. It surprises all the more what standards were reached in the scientific

1. The best illustration is A. Miquel's important work *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*. Systematically, and with good reasons, he traces geographical texts in practically all literary genres; more important than the wealth of source materials, however, is his perspicacious analysis of the changes of perspectives brought about in Islam and Islamic culture. An informative general survey of Muslim works on geography is found also in the article 'Djughrafiyā' by S. Maqbul Ahmad in the *EF*.<sup>2</sup> But for the manuscript sources, the serious reader should, of course, be referred to volume XII of Fuat Sezgin's *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums*.
2. As a matter of fact, it was only in the last century, after Alexander von Humboldt's (1769–1859) and C. Ritter's (1779–1859) time, that geography was methodically developed into an academic discipline with a clearly defined subject-matter and taught at the universities.

geography of the Muslims, or with what highly scholarly dedication a wealth of information was collected, chiefly about the regions under Muslim control or influence,<sup>3</sup> that went far beyond the well-studied heritage of the Hellenistic period.

The division of the sciences proposed by a number of authors at the height of Arabic scientific achievement in the early Middle Ages may give us the impression that these scientific disciplines were kept nicely separate. Nothing, however, could be more misleading, as the innumerable writings on geographical subject-matters, in particular, will demonstrate quite quickly to the impatient researcher. Even the apparently unambiguous terminology is deceptive. For the Greek derivative *jughbrāfiyā* was introduced into Arabic only at a fairly late stage, and precisely in such a scholastic context, to be precise, around the middle of the tenth century by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. They devoted the fourth *Risāla* of the first part of their encyclopaedia<sup>4</sup> (on mathematical subjects) to '*al-jughbrāfiyā*'. But not even at this time, when the Ptolemaic tradition had been adopted as the predominant methodological standard, did geography become one of the academic disciplines. The *Risāla fi-l-Jughbrāfiyā* of the otherwise quite scholarly Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' was surely not conceived as an academic programme, but is only a rather brief description of that Greek world-model, based on the seven climates,<sup>5</sup> and exploited as a unitarian device of meditation. Thus the foreign terminology is used like a mask for a scientific activity thoroughly permeated with a certain Islamic ideology.

Unlike what happened in the case of astronomy or medicine, neither the earlier geographical concerns nor the later interests were entirely eclipsed through the strong light of the Greek heritage. Rather, such older titles as *Kitāb al-Buldān*, *Ṣūrat al-arḍ* and *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik* continued to be used, as we can still see in Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī's (d. 626/1229) comprehensive *Mu'jam al-buldān*,<sup>6</sup> the harvest of centuries of Arabic geography. The inclination of historians of science to recognize as truly scientific only works produced after

3. That not only factual knowledge about the world in its physical aspects was the goal, but a geography inspired by Muslim culture, religion and civilization (in this sense also 'Human Geography') is clearly enunciated by such leading geographers as al-Iṣṭakhri (d. after 340/951) and Ibn Ḥawqal (fl. 367/977). The younger author almost repeats his older colleagues: 'I did not describe the land of the black people in Africa and of the other nations belonging to the torrid zones; for, since by nature I love wisdom, religion, justice and orderly government, how could I have taken notice of such people and heighten their importance by including a description of their lands?' See Ibn Ḥawqal, *Opus Geographicum: Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, ed. J. H. Kramers, 2 vols, (Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 2), Leiden/Beirut, E. J. Brill, I, p. 9f.
4. In the Beirut edition of Dār Ṣādir, the *Risāla fi-l-Jughbrāfiyā* covers only p. 158–182.
5. Cf. E. Honigmann, *Die sieben Klimate und die poleis episēmoi: eine Untersuchung der Geographie und Astrologie im Altertum und Mittelalter*, Heidelberg, C. Winter, 1929.
6. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, 5 vols., Beirut 1397/1977, p. 11.

and under the impact of the translation period – in the case of geography, at least – can be considered justified only after a number of significant reservations have been made.<sup>7</sup>

To be somewhat clearer about the subject-matter with which we are concerned here, it is obviously unavoidable to turn to modern geography (without drawing anachronistic conclusions). Thus, it has become customary to adopt the modern tripartite division of geography for the classification of medieval Arab works as well: mathematical, physical and human geography.<sup>8</sup> The first, however, receives the most attention, contrary to the modern practice, which reduces it to a mere propaedeutic rôle.<sup>9</sup> In general, it can be observed that today's geographers are just as vague about their field of studies as their medieval Arab predecessors. Thus, the very learned survey article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1959 advises us to include all phenomena found on the surface of the earth:

[geography is] the mother of sciences. Geography cannot be defined by its subject matter, for anything that it unevenly distributed over the surface of the earth can be examined profitably by geographical methods. Rather geography is a point of view, a system of procedures. ... Geography is that field of learning in which the characteristics of particular places on the earth's surface are examined. It is concerned with the arrangement of things and with the associations of things that distinguish one area from another. It is concerned with the connections and movements between areas. Geography seeks to interpret the significance of likenesses and differences among places in terms of causes and consequences.<sup>10</sup>

On this basis, then, we can approach Muslim geography only with a measure of despondency. For the topics included in the works of the Muslim geographers, and in turn in those of orientalists and historians, are almost as far-reaching as can be derived from the modern definition of geography: whatever can be found on earth, and even whatever is above and below it. To deal comprehensively with this vast geographical literature of the Muslims, one would have to write a new literary history almost as extensive as the general

7. Sometimes a brilliant formulation is preferred to inner consistency, as when A. Miquel categorically states at the outset of his grand study, which relies quite heavily on the early literary sources, that 'La géographie arabe est fille du califat de Bagdad', cf. A. Miquel, *La géographie*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 1.

8. A. Miquel, *La géographie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

9. 'Heute ist die Mathematische Geographie, die, soweit sie sich mit der Erde als Himmelskörper befaßt, auch Astronomische Geographie genannt wird, für die Erdkunde nur noch eine propädeutische Hilfsdisziplin', cf. G. Fochler-Hauke (ed.), *Allgemeine Geographie*, Frankfurt, Fischer Bücherei, 1959, pp. 274f.

10. P. E. James, art. 'Geography', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, X, pp. 139ff., London/Chicago/Toronto, Encyclopaedia Britannica Ltd. 1959, p. 139.

one.<sup>11</sup> In a short survey like the present one, we can therefore only follow the general lines and concentrate on new insights and discoveries that have been made over the past decades.

### Where to begin?

Closely related to the question of a reliable definition of the field of geography is that of the chronological limits. Are we to follow the well-trodden path of orientalist scholarship that takes its departure from that most productive 'translation period' early in the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, when tables and texts of Greek, Persian and Indian provenance became available to Arab scholars? Of course, this is the safest way of proceeding. But for a rather vaguely defined discipline like geography it can hardly be justified. Proof is provided by various sources, even texts of later centuries.

Thus, from the outset we should be aware that, parallel to the science of geography along the lines of Hellenistic scholarship, there existed another type of geography, perhaps 'sacred geography', if – in spite of all inaccuracies – we accept D. King's terminology in his article 'Malaka. 4. As the Centre of the World' in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.<sup>12</sup> This was a geography which by all possible means endeavoured to remain faithful to the old traditions of the religious authorities, and especially of the representatives of the *Shari'a*. The main concern of this 'sacred geography' was the determination of the *qibla* according to the traditional principles of the Companions of the Prophet.<sup>13</sup> And the *qibla* is just one example that reminds us of the great significance of space, movement, direction and the like for the Islamic religion that prefers to interpret 'divine Revelation' as 'guidance' and the divine Law as 'the Way'. Consider, for instance, the following classic verse from the *Sūrat al-Naml*:

11. Thus, A. Miquel, in his *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, has left aside mathematical and physical geography, and largely also the later centuries, but nevertheless filled four heavy volumes. It may be asked, however, whether a more methodical concentration on the systematic, scientific treatment of geographical topics is not possible and preferable. Even an author with such far-reaching interests as al-Ya'qūbī did concentrate on the proper geographical factors. As regards the sources, in recent years the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe University in Frankfurt a. M. under its director Fuat Sezgin has undertaken the very laudable task of collecting facsimile editions and reprints of the most representative texts and studies on Muslim geography. The interested reader thus has easy access to a whole library of original sources and interpretations in case he wishes to pursue his studies in more detail.

12. *EI*<sup>2</sup>, VI, pp. 180–87.

13. Especially interesting in this regard is the *Urjūza* entitled *Tuhfat al-quḍāt* by Shihāb al-Dīn, 'The Fourth of the Three', Aḥmad b. Mājid; it was made known already by G. Ferand, 1928, pp. 209f. The exact methods used for the determination of the *qibla*, naturally, belong to the history of Arabic mathematics and astronomy, not geometry.

God's it is to show the way;  
 And some do swerve from it.  
 If He willed, He would have  
 guided you all together.<sup>14</sup>

Gratitude towards the Creator, Who has given man his place in the universe, is, furthermore, one of the most significant factors in Islamic religiosity. The experience of His greatness and the response in His glorification (*ta'ẓīm Allāh*) are arguably even more profound. This is the main theme harped on in the genre of the *Kutub al-ʿaẓama*, further sources of geographical texts which have not yet been studied and interpreted with a view to a complete picture of Arabic human geography.<sup>15</sup> How much geographical discovery can benefit from this religious motivation is immediately evident: The further you go, the more you discover, the greater is the Lord. In Islam, of course, the vision of the Revealer has been somewhat played down. For the Prophet himself, however, it certainly was more fundamental and left its impact on his soul, it may be said, as the kernel of the Islamic religion. As such, it is confronted not with the imagery of a divine figure, but with the experience of greatness *par excellence*, a greatness that fills all space between heaven and earth: 'This is naught but a revelation revealed, taught him by one terrible in power, very strong; he stood poised, being on the higher horizon, then drew near and suspended hung, two bows'-lengths away, or nearer, then revealed to his servant that he revealed.'<sup>16</sup>

Somewhat summarily, the Qur'ānic message may be set off from that of the Bible by saying that the Bible emphasizes history, earthly time in which God's saving action is demonstrated; the Qur'ān, on the other hand, emphasizes space, hence orientation, divine guidance for man's existence on this earth (experience in time versus guidance on the way).

Orientation, guidance was apparently also the essential function of the Ka'ba and the pre-Islamic ritual around it. According to traditional fragments of an ancient cosmology, the Ka'ba's major axis pointed towards the rising of Canopus, the brightest star in the southern hemisphere,<sup>17</sup> while the minor axis points towards summer sunrise in one direction and winter sunset in the

14. Qur'ān XVI.9, see A. J. Arberry's translation, *The Koran Interpreted*, London, Allen and Unwin/New York, MacMillan, 1955.

15. See A. M. Heinen, *Islamic Cosmology: a Study of as-Suyūṭī's al-Hay'a as-Saniyya fi-l-hay'a as-sunniyya*, (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 27), Beirut, Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft/Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1982, esp. pp. 27ff.

16. Qur'ān LIII.5ff., see A. J. Arberry, *The Koran...*, *op. cit.*

17. That is the rational explanation for the preference given to this star. But there is an older, almost magical one, as we learn from al-Bīrūnī: 'It is said that the eye loses its sight when it glances at it'; cf. al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations: an English Translation of the Arabic Text of the Athār-ul-Bākīya of Al-Bīrūnī, or Vestiges of the Past Collated and Reduced to Writing by the Author in A.H. 390-1, A.D 1000*, trans. C. E. Sachau, London, W. H. Allen, 1879, p. 343.



other; or the idea seems to be that the Ka'ba points towards the physical 'Throne of God' located in the 'highest Heaven', which is indicated by Capricorn. In this scheme there also could be place for the 'Footstool' (*al-Kursī*) in front of the Throne of God.<sup>18</sup> [Fig. 1]

Like the other sciences, geography certainly has a history; its historical development is even more significant because geography is part and parcel of human culture.<sup>19</sup> The fact that the Muslims have developed it so splendidly, characterizes their culture probably more clearly than any other of their activities, including prayer and mysticism. The dispute about the beginnings of scientific enterprise in Islam, if applied also to geography, could turn around the direct evidence of literary works on geographical subjects and, secondly, the indirect evidence of results testifying to earlier scientific interests and tools. The first category is found among the extant pieces of Arabic literature; but the second requires much more attentive search. The traces left by Arab traders and soldiers in the inscriptions of Babylonian and other neighbouring cultures, lead into the darkness of Middle Eastern history in the first millennium. One case where they can be identified with greater precision is the work of Hippalos Kybernētēs (fl. c. BC 100), who with the monsoon winds discovered the most practical sea-route from the Red Sea to the Indian Subcontinent. This discovery was appreciated in its importance and Hippalos was honoured for it by having these winds called by his name.<sup>20</sup> But he no doubt had received his knowledge from the local Arab seamen, hence the first Arabs with valuable geographical information based on observation and experience.<sup>21</sup> It is a

18. In early Islamic times it became a heavily discussed theological question whether the Throne of God, together with the Kursī, was a physical reality or a mere figure of speech (as the Jahmiyya sect explained); cf. al-Dārimī's treatise *al-Radd 'alā-l-Jahmiyya*, ed. G. Vitestam, 1960, esp. pp. 25ff..

19. This is the central thesis of A. Miquel's comprehensive study, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, which harps so much on the importance of *adab* that the frontiers between genuine scientific interest in the description of the earth and its artistic presentation disappear in nebulousity. Thus, even an al-Birūnī, in this scheme, is declared 'une figure marginale', A. Miquel, *La géographie...*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 223. But then, not every poem on mountains, valleys, rivers, gardens etc. belongs to geography.

20. Cf. also the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, a Greek handbook of navigation of the second half of first century AD.

21. Cf. G. F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, (Princeton Oriental Studies, 13), Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1951, pp. 27f.; the reputation of the Greeks as great seafarers, in any case, does not seem to be founded on solid evidence; an expert like Krumbacher states categorically: 'Echt byzantinische Karten mit griechischer Legende scheinen nicht erhalten zu sein, und Seekarten haben sie wohl überhaupt nicht besessen' (quoted in H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, Abt. 12, T. 5), München, Beck, 1978, I, p. 524).



V-1.1 *Ṣuwar al-Kawākib* by Abu-l-Ḥusayn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān  
b. ‘Umar al-Ṣūfī, 525/1131

© Topkapı Palace Library (A-3493, fol. 52b)

curious coincidence of history that some 1,500 years later the Turkish admiral Sīdī ‘Alī still benefits in a similar way from the Arab pilots in the same parts of the world.<sup>22</sup> In any case, direct observation and personal experience, which requires much travelling on the part of the geographer, were highly appreciated even by an outstanding historian like al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 355/956–957), whose works also contain much geography.

But geography in Muslim culture has a history, too, in so far as it was a tradition. The individual authors sometimes knew each other, as in the case of al-Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Ḥawqal, even to the extent that one author literally inherited the work of the other and continued it (A. Miquel pointedly speaks of Ibn Ḥawqal as the ‘légataire d’Iṣṭakhrī’),<sup>23</sup> they read the books of their predecessors, used them as sources for their own compositions, travels and scientific enterprises, and they corrected them or commented on them. With varying degrees of seriousness, Muslim geographers also used ‘the instrument of *isnād*’, the obligatory unbroken chain of supporting authorities – even authors who otherwise stressed the usefulness of travel and personal experience. Thus, not even travel books were as a rule wholeheartedly presented with the claim of being the independent reports of some individuals who collected their own observations and experiences. The intention apparently was to emphasize the high standards of a systematic methodology, or to avoid the suspicion of only echoing the vagaries of a single individual (today, one would say that a truly scientific proof must be accessible to the whole scientific community). As a result, medieval Arabic geography only too often was too traditional, mere book-knowledge; critical judgement, independence, experiential individuality were lightly set aside. The formula ‘I myself saw’, in some cases, may not actually say as much as ‘I witnessed with any own eyes’ (it can be copied from an older text, together with the whole story, or simply be invented, or used as a literary device). An example are the tales of Sindbad. However, there are also contrary examples. Of particular value among them, to cite but one, is the work of the highly respected al-Muqaddasī (d. 390/1000), which characteristically starts with a rational methodology and a harshly

22. ‘Pendant un long séjour de cinq mois que j’ai fait à Basra [en 1554] et qui se prolongea jusqu’au commencement de la mousson; pendant mes trois mois de traversée de Basra dans l’Inde, depuis le commencement du mois de ša‘bān jusqu’à la fin du mois de šawwāl (= 2 juillet-27 septembre 1554), pendant ces huit mois, je ne laisserai passer aucun moment sans m’entretenir, jour et nuit, de choses nautiques avec les pilotes côtiers et les marins [du pays] qui se trouvaient à bord [de mon navire]. Ainsi ai-je appris comment les anciens pilotes de Hormuz et de l’Hindustan: Layth bin Kahlān, Muḥammad bin Šādān et Sahl bin Abān avaient autrefois manœuvré dans l’océan Indien’, cf. *al-Muḥīṭ*, preface, see trans. by G. Ferrand, *Essai de grammaire Malgache*, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1928, pp. 196f.

23. A. Miquel, *La géographie...*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 299.

critical evaluation of his predecessors, whom he blames for lacking personal experience.<sup>24</sup>

Modern geography, particularly in its speciality, the geography of religion (a branch of biogeography), is well aware of the mutual relationship between religious practice and geographical conditions: faith determines how man shapes the surrounding world, but is itself conditioned by the geographical conditions in which men live. Thus, Arabic geography has embraced the Qur'anic world view, especially through the numerous verses admonishing man to observe and reflect on God's signs in His creation, or to acknowledge such gifts of His as the gardens of Ma'rib, with gratitude.<sup>25</sup> The geographical conditions of Arabia are echoed in the religious practices of Islam.<sup>26</sup> The modern discipline of the geography of religion, no doubt, will consider such an example of 'Qur'anic geography' as more meaningful and effective than the isolated verses concerning a disc-shaped earth, or 'the sun setting in a muddy spring' (Qur'an XVIII.86 – which usually has been interpreted as a geographical statement).

As it is, the example of Ma'rib has acquired further significance. Recent research on such remnants of pre-Islamic culture as the Dam of Ma'rib has finally corrected the common view that Arabia, with respect to geography, has always been dependent on outside cultures. Thus, orientalist like J.H. Kramers, mainly impressed by the numerous borrowings from Greek geography in the Arabic geographical classics of the ninth century, tended to overemphasize their dependence on the Greek models. Much more than the trading routes of ancient caravans, which already presupposed a reliable knowledge of the distances and geographical conditions, irrigation schemes such as that of Ma'rib are evidence for a highly developed geographical science, predating the Greek school books, that could radically determine the material and cultural life of whole population groups.<sup>27</sup>

24. 'Know that a good number of scholars and viziers have written books on this subject, though rather bad ones. Most of them, if not all, are based on hearsay only', cf. al-Muqqaddasi, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, (Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 3), Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1906, p. 43.

25. The Qur'anic verse is quite dramatic: 'For Sheba also there was also a sign in their dwelling-place – two gardens, one on the right and one on the left : Eat of your Lord's provision, and give thanks to Him; a good land, and a lord All-forgiving. But they turned away ; so We loosed on them the Flood of Arim, and We gave them, in exchange for their two gardens, two gardens bearing bitter produce and tamarisk-bushes, and here and there a few lote-trees', cf. Qur'an, XXXIV.15f., cf. A. J. Arberry, *The Koran*, *op. cit.*

26. These few examples may suffice to show that generalizations such as 'Islam – the Religion of the Desert' can be avoided in the geography of religion. Cf. W. Gebel, *Der Islam: die Religion der Wüste*, Breslau, 1922, pp. 104–133.

27. Cf. J. Schmidt, 'Die sabäische Wasserwirtschaft von Ma'rib', in W. Daum (ed.), *Jemen: 3000 Jahre Kunst und Kultur des glücklichen Arabien*, Innsbruck/Frankfurt, Pinguin Verlag, 1988, pp. 57–73: 'Die ersten historischen Quellen berichten im 8./7. Jh. v. Chr.

The Dam of Ma'rib is definitely one of the best illustrations of what man's geographical understanding can achieve. With human ingenuity it was possible to produce, for a specific area, benefits similar to those which nature itself had provided for the people living in the valleys of the Nile or Euphrates and Tigris. The area thus gained for agricultural production, naturally, was much smaller, but with some 9,600 ha. of irrigated land, it was quite impressive on the western side of the great desert. As far as can be deduced from the numerous remains and the fragmentary history reports, it was the ingenuity of many generations, hence of a whole national culture, that gathered the necessary experience with the geographical conditions of that region, that is the morphology of mountains, valleys, plains, the water available from sources and rainfall, the winds and other such meteorological phenomena, the productivity of the earth, the plants that could be cultivated under prevailing conditions and the like. The achievement can be appreciated even more when we consider comparable irrigation systems of our time. One detail, for instance, is the prevention of salinity of the soil by exactly proportioned flooding. In modern projects like the Assuan Dam, irreparable damage has occurred even after a short span of time. When catastrophes struck the Dam and the lands depending on it, the accumulated geographical knowledge and social co-operation of later generations succeeded several times in repairing and modifying the magnificent work of centuries.<sup>28</sup> Only the last destruction of the Dam at the beginning of the seventh century found the community of

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über den Bau von Wasseranlagen. Der berühmte Damm von Ma'rib und die dazugehörigen, noch heute erhaltenen Auslaßbauwerke gehen auf das 6. Jh. v. Chr. zurück, sie haben mit einem immer verzweigter und komplexer werdenden Funktionssystem ein Jahrtausend hindurch in Betrieb gestanden. Aber die Anfänge der Wassertechnik in Ma'rib reichen viel weiter zurück. Die ältesten noch sichtbaren Zeugen eines fest eingerichteten und bereits technisch ausgereiften Bewässerungswerkes sind uns in Form von massiven Stau- und Ableitungsanlagen aus dem 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr. überliefert. Ausgangspunkt hierfür waren die naturräumlichen Gegebenheiten, die vorgefundene geomorphologische Situation' (pp. 59f.). See also W. W. Müller, 'Skizze der Geschichte Altsüdarabiens', in W. Daum (ed.), *Jemen...*, *op. cit.*, p. 50 : 'In der zweiten Hälfte des 6. Jh.s v. Chr. errichteten zwei aufeinanderfolgende Herrscher den großen Damm von Ma'rib mit seinen imposanten Schleusenanlagen... und zahlreichen Wasserverteilern.'

28. 'Die Bewohner Südarabiens hingegen waren seit altersher darauf angewiesen, sich die periodisch auftretenden Monsunregen zunutze zu machen, um die zur Lebenserhaltung erforderliche Wassermenge zu gewinnen. Die in der Regel zweimal jährlich niedergehende heftigen aber kurzzeitigen Regenfälle hatte man aufzufangen und in leistungsfähige Bewässerungssysteme umzuwandeln. Dies erforderte eine in höchstem Maße koordinierte Planung, ein präzisiertes Konzept und eine hochstehende Technologie. Unabdingbare Voraussetzung dafür war eine straffe Organisation des Gemeinwesens, sowohl des Staates als auch der Stadt, die in den meisten Fällen zum tragenden Fundament bei der Verwirklichung der Ideen wurde. Die Sabäermetropole Ma'rib, die zum religiösen und politischen Zentrum des Reiches heranwuchs, war Keimzelle und zugleich Kulminationsspunkt für jede Art geistiger und materieller Evolution. Hier entstand das umfassendste

Ma'rib in such a sad state of unpreparedness that the geographical experience of almost a millennium could not save the oasis any longer.

And the Dam of Ma'rib demonstrates yet another aspect of geographical knowledge. The pre-Islamic Arabs were not merely nomads, bedouins or traders and seafarers, who had a constant need of guidance through the hostile elements they were forced to traverse; they were also farmers who had a privileged, and even vital, relationship to special regions and, as a natural consequence, showed much understanding of the cause-and-effect relationship in nature, on the basis of which they formed a variety of landscapes according to their economic and general human interests. Oversimplifications of the Arabs as desert dwellers, unable to speak of the sea and use metaphors taken from it in their poems, are still *en vogue* among some bookish orientalists, but are certainly false.

The linguistic unity of the Muslim world is often one significant reason why people speak of 'Arabic science' rather than 'Muslim science'. Geography, although it apparently profited from the work of such lexicographers as al-Aṣma'ī (d. 213/828), who is reported to have authored several treatises in the field,<sup>29</sup> nevertheless is in a special position. The linguistic expression naturally plays a less significant rôle than in the formation of thought along the logical paths of the other sciences. Geography is in search of, and therefore guided by, the physical conditions of places and regions. Sometimes it even has led to theories of exaggerated determinism of human life by the milieu, the physical conditions of its earthly existence.<sup>30</sup> Man's language or logic do not impose themselves on this truly universal 'earth science', but on

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Werk antiker Bewässerungskultur, ein kompliziertes und technisch ausgereiftes System ingenieurmäßiger Konstruktionsweisen. Gewiß besaßen auch andere Städte des alten Südarabien derartige Einrichtungen zur Wasserversorgung, an Bedeutung und Umfang erreicht jedoch keine diejenigen von Ma'rib. Der Ruhm der sabäischen Wasserkultur von Ma'rib drang denn auch weit über die Grenze Südarabiens hinaus und lebte bis in die Neuzeit fort, nachdem die antiken Reiche längst zugrunde gegangen und in Vergessenheit geraten waren.' Cf. J. Schmidt 'Die sabäische Wasserwirtschaft...', *op. cit.*, pp. 57-73. As a quote by al-Birūnī shows (see al-Birūnī, *Kitāb Tahḍīb nihāyat al-amākin li-taṣḥīḥ masāfat al-masākin*, ed. P. G. Bulgakov, Cairo, Maṭba'at Lajnat al-Ta'lif wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Nashr, p. 44; trans. Jamil Ali, *The Determination of the Coordinates of Positions for the Correction of Distances between Cities: a Translation from the Arabic of al-Birūnī's Kitāb Tahḍīb nihāyat al-amākin li-taṣḥīḥ masāfat al-masākin*, Beirut, American University of Beirut, 1967, p. 18), the Dam of Ma'rib had become a legend; but the basic geographical knowledge on which its success depended had been lost.

29. Two titles should be noted as specially relevant: *Kitāb Afyāḥ al-ʿArab* and *Kitāb Jaẓīrat al-ʿArab*, the latter especially appreciated and used by Yāqūt al-Hamawī in his *Muʿjam al-buldān*.

30. Several authors could be mentioned here, for instance al-Jāḥiẓ and al-Masʿūdī, among many others. Especially interesting is al-Hamdānī's *Sifāt Jaẓīrat al-ʿArab*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Akwaʿ al-Hawālī, 3 vols., Cairo, Maṭba'at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1394/1974, pp. 32ff.).

the contrary the physical conditions on earth exert their mighty influence on human language and logic.

Since some ten geographical treatises of Hishām b. al-Kalbī (d. c. 204/820) are no longer available to us, al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Hamdānī (279–333/893–c. 945–946) is the most remarkable literary source for old Arabian geography, as represented in Arabic philology and predating the adoption of the Greek scientific tradition by Muslim writers.<sup>31</sup> Especially in his encyclopaedia entitled *al-Iklīl fī-l-ansāb*,<sup>32</sup> he widens our knowledge beyond the ancient irrigation schemes in the service of higher agricultural exploration and informs us in addition of such other important geographical fields as mining. In the case of the silver-mine of al-Raḍrāḍ, his reports were verified fifteen years ago.<sup>33</sup> Industrial geography, therefore, had a place in traditional Muslim literature as well, although it appears to have been somewhat marginal, less appreciated in the value-system of Arab writers. In the particular case of silver-mining we do not have to search long for a rational reason. The miners living close by in a special village – al-Hamdānī speaks of some 1,000 – were all foreigners, namely ‘Magi’ from Persia, who were even in possession of two Zoroastrian fire-temples. And al-Hamdānī adds that all the silver produced there in the Yemen, which must have been quite a lot because nowhere else in this region existed an equally rich mine, was carried away by Persian, Syrian and Egyptian dealers, who made handsome profits. It then comes as no surprise that eventually the mine of al-Raḍrāḍ was abandoned because the foreign miners were murdered by the local population. Even in early Islamic times, industrial geography obviously had its problems in society, and the parallels to modern times come to mind immediately.<sup>34</sup>

31. Nevertheless, as the names for localities outside Arabia indicate, al-Hamdānī knew the (translated) text of Ptolemy’s *Geography*. But for the Arabian Peninsula his work echoes the old local traditions, in particular with regard to the predominating philological interests of the Arabs.
32. Esp. *Kitāb al-Iklīl fī-l-ansāb*, ed. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Akwa’ al-Ḥawālī, Cairo, Maṭba‘at al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1979, Book 8; cf. al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifāt Jazīrat al-‘Arab*, ed. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Akwa’ al-Ḥawālī, Riyadh/San‘ā’, Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa-l-Buḥūth al-Yamanī, 1394/1974.
33. C. Robin, ‘Das Bergwerk von ar-Raḍrāḍ: al-Hamdānī und das Silber des Jemen’, in W. Daum (ed.), *Jemen...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 129–131. Cf. also C. Toll, *Kitāb al-Gaubaratain al-‘atīqatain al-mā’i‘atain as-safrā’ wal-baiḍā’*. *Die beiden Edelmetalle Gold und Silber von al-Hamdānī*, (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Studia Semitica Upsaliensia, 1), Uppsala, Almqvist and Wiksells, 1968. It should also be noted that it was not through military prowess but superior geographical knowledge that a conquering army of the Roman empire was overcome. In the years BC 25–24, Aelius Gallus tried in vain to conquer Ma’rib for Rome, because his army all too often lost its way.
34. Cf. E. Wirth, ‘Der heutige Irak als Beispiel orientalischen Wirtschaftsgeistes’, *Die Erde*, 8, 1956, pp. 30–50; repr. in *idem*, *Wirtschaftsgeographie*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969b, pp. 391–421.

A quite important field of modern geography is the geography of vegetation, or biogeography (the distribution of plants and animals in specific vegetation zones). Although hardly any research has been done on relevant contributions of the Muslims to similar studies, numerous texts in Arabic poetry and the *Hadīth* can be found that reveal a keen interest on the part of the Arabs in the correlation between vegetation and geographical location before they opened themselves to Hellenistic scholarship. The sudden appearance of small animals like frogs and certain plants right after rainfall often made them suspect that these forms of life had come down from heaven together with, or inside, the raindrops.<sup>35</sup> Even ideas of a spontaneous generation of such small animals from desert sand were discussed.<sup>36</sup> Especially fruitful for the field of biogeography were, of course, careful descriptions of the plants characteristic of specific regions, such as the treatise of Abū ‘Ubayd al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094) on the trees and other plants of Andalusia.<sup>37</sup>

The greatest achievement of biogeography belongs to the change of whole territories through new methods of cultivation. Thus, new plants, fruits such as rice, sugar-cane, cotton, grapes and the like, were cultivated and introduced into foreign territories.<sup>38</sup> In the spirit of Islam, man is the vicegerent of the Creator. He uses and modifies nature according to his needs and wishes. Especially in Persia, an elaborate system of irrigation was developed that changed the total character of whole provinces. When speaking of Arabic geography, one should never forget that they lived near the sea, in oases and valleys with a rich vegetation, just as much as in deserts and in trading-centres like Mecca. Not only was reliable orientation on trading journeys of vital importance to them, but also the thorough geographical knowledge of herdsmen, who could evaluate the quality and quantity of pastures and discover water supplies and even medical herbs.

Lexicography was another discipline that introduced the geographical observations of plants, as for instance the palm-tree, which, naturally, has always played a special rôle in the life of Near Eastern people, in many variegated regions and vegetation zones. Thus, we have a whole treatise on

35. This explanation is ascribed to Ibn ‘Abbās. See A. M. Heinen, *Islamic Cosmology: a Study of as-Suyūṭī’s al-Ḥay’ā as-Saniyya fi-l-bay’ā as-sunniyya*, (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 27), Beirut, Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft/Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1982, p. 113.

36. A. M. Heinen, *Islamic Cosmology...*, *op. cit.*, cf. E. Wiedemann, ‘Zur Lehre von der *generatio spontanea*’, *Naturwissenschaftliche Wochenschrift*, XIV, 1916, pp. 279ff.

37. He also wrote on other geographical topics, as the generic title of a *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik* clearly shows. But this work is useful only for local, and philological, interests. See also W. M. De Slane (ed.) *Description de L’Afrique septentrionale, par Abou-Obeid-El-Bekri*, Algiers, 1857.

38. Cf. M. Lombard, *L’Islam dans sa première grandeur (VIIIe–XIe siècle)*, (Champ Historique, 59), Paris, Flammarion, 1971.



the palm-tree by such an expert on the Arabic language as Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī (d. 255/869): *Kitāb al-Nakhl*.<sup>39</sup> After the translations from Greek had made their impact on Islamic culture, it was principally the work of Dioscorides that encouraged Arab scholars to continue his observations of the various kinds of plants and their occurrence in specific areas. Sometimes, naturally, the exact identification of rare plants growing only in restricted geographical locations was a problem; and we hear of some Arab botanists setting out on systematic expeditions in order to discover such locations in Arab lands. Obviously, the research work of Carsten Niebuhr's colleague P. Forskål (he died during the Yemen expedition in 1763) had a pre-history involving Arab scholars some eight centuries earlier. An echo of such botanical research can be traced in al-Qazwīnī's (d. 682/1283) *Āthār al-bilād*,<sup>40</sup> where he records that such fruits as dates, bananas and citrus fruits grow only in hot countries, the various kinds of nuts only in cold ones, sugar-cane near rivers, desert thorn on dry ground. More important for a better appreciation of the proper geographical methods that guided this Muslim geographer will be the careful enumeration of places where rare spices are exclusively produced. For that is the kind of knowledge in which modern biogeography, with its advanced methodology and instruments, is able to demonstrate its greatest achievements, too.

Al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048) already was fully aware of the dependence of vegetation on temperature and general climate. Thus, in his geographical monograph *Tahdīd nihāyāt al-amākin*<sup>41</sup> he cites an item of information from Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Īrānshahrī, that in the vicinity of Shīrjān in the province of Kirmān remnants of palm-trees can be found that perished due to a colder climate. Obviously, the ecological consequences of climatic changes were not discovered only by modern geographers.

## The Greek heritage and mathematical geography

Although there are numerous fragmentary pieces of information in the *Ḥadīth* which reveal geographical interests and practical schemes even among the followers of the Prophet (such as that of an order by ʿUmar to register the

39. B. Lagumina, 'Il libro della Palma di Abu Hatim as-Sigistani', *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei* (Rome), 8, 1890.

40. Āthār al-bilād, p. 6; trans. M. Ullmann, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaften im Islam*, Handbuch der Orientalistik, Abteilung I: Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten, Ergänzungsband 6/2, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1972, p. 93.

41. Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb Tahdīd...*, *op. cit.*, trans., p. 17: Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Īrānshahrī related that he had seen in a castle, known as the "White", at a distance of one *farsakh* from Shīrjān, a town in the district of Kirmān, the stems of date-palms which used to grow there, but the climate of the locality grew colder and the palms died and withered, and that at his time there were no palms within a radius of twenty *farsakhs* from the castle.'

amount of rainfall for particular regions), the turn to the scientific heritage of the pre-Islamic cultures and thus to systematic scholarship and writing, came about only with the 'Abbāsids. The most noteworthy example of applied geography for this period is beyond doubt the foundation of the new capital, Baghdad, by the Caliph al-Manṣūr (135–153/753–775). Its site between the Euphrates and the Tigris was carefully chosen on the basis of factors which show a remarkable understanding of favourable geographical conditions. In addition to the military aspects of facilitating defence, economic conditions also, such as food production over a longer period with varying climatic changes, are considered; further, transportation of food-stuffs and other materials is taken into account (the arguments sound so familiar that such an important principle of modern geographical theory as the 'circles' of J. H. von Thünen immediately come to mind).<sup>42</sup> City planning, it seems, has not just recently become one of the most influential branches of geography; today's urban geography would not consider the same factors as the planners of Baghdad did.<sup>43</sup>

Although some astronomical and astrological works of foreign origin appeared on the scene in the latter half of the eighth century, al-Ma'mūn (197–217/813–833) more than anyone started the Arabic tradition of scientific geographical study under Greek, Pahlavi and Indian influence: a new map was ordered and executed, which is commonly referred to as the *Ṣūra al-Ma'mūniyya*; according to al-Mas'ūdī (d. 356/956–957), it was superior even to the maps of Marinus and Ptolemy.

Marinus of Tyre (c. AD 70–130) compiled a *Geography* which may have been translated into Arabic early in 'Abbāsīd times, since it was highly appreciated by al-Mas'ūdī,<sup>44</sup> who compared it with other geographical

42. The most complete report on the foundation of Baghdad is probably that of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (574–626/1179–1226) in his great work *Mu'jam al-buldān* (1397/1977, I, pp. 457–460). His source probably was al-Muqaddasī's *Aḥṣān al-taqāsim fī ma'rifaṭ al-aqālim* (completed in 377/988); cf. al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥṣān al-taqāsim...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–121. On the general geographical questions cf. E. Wirth, 'Zum Problem einer allgemeinen Kulturgeographie', *Die Erde*, 100, 1969a, pp. 155–193; repr. in E. Winkler, 1975, pp. 338–492.

43. P. Schöller, (ed.) *Allgemeine Stadtgeographie*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969. For a modern study of the Islamic city in the Near East, see E. Wirth, 'Der heutige Irak...', *op. cit.*

44. Al-Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa-l-īshrāf*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, (Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 8), Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1894, p. 33: 'I found these climates depicted in more than one book, in different colours, the best of this kind being in the geographical book by Marinus..., and in the *Ṣūra al-Ma'mūniyya* made for al-Ma'mūn, for the making of which a number of sages of his time came together. They depicted in it the universe, with its orbs, stars, land, sea, inhabited (parts), non-inhabited (parts), dwelling places of the peoples, cities and so on. It is better than what was done before, such as the geographies of Ptolemy and Marinus.'

works and was impressed especially by the famous world-map of this author of whom we unfortunately know so little. But the bibliographical sources remain silent about such an Arabic translation, and not even Ptolemy – if we understand him correctly – had a complete copy of the work of his predecessor.<sup>45</sup>

Claudius Ptolemy's (c. AD 90–168) *Geography* was a synthesis of all the work done in that subject by Greek scholars up to that time and as such enjoyed the highest reputation as the most accomplished geography of antiquity. In fact, it eclipsed all other works in this field (with which, therefore, a short survey does not need to be burdened). It was translated into Arabic two or three times, namely by (or perhaps only for?) Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī (d. after 256/870), then by Thābit b. Qurra (d. 288/901) and by Ibn Khurradādhbih (d. after 272/885).<sup>46</sup> This is certainly one of the most influential books of all times and – for good or bad – it has guided geographers for some 1,500 years. Its main goal is to set down the principles of cartography and 'the representation, by a map, of the portion of the earth known to us, together with its general features' (I,1). Therefore, the greatest part of the book is taken up with cataloguing the latitudes and longitudes of some 8,000 different places, cities, islands, mountains, rivers and other features all over the then known world. The circumference of the earth is estimated to amount to 180,000 stadia and all the known regions and oceans of the world are more or less accurately fitted into this model. Although he had already reduced the excessive estimates of his predecessor Marinus with respect to the extent of the world (180 instead of 225 degrees), he himself greatly overestimated even the length of the Mediterranean Sea (some 62 instead of 42 degrees) and thus gave a strong incentive to all his readers to come up with more exact measurements. Without going into details, we can consider this constant encouragement his greatest contribution to the development of geography.

How much the correct measurements, not only of the earth but also of the heavenly bodies, were a concern of the scientists at the court of the caliph is obvious also from a short treatise on 'the Relative Magnitudes of the Sun, Earth and Moon' by Sanad b. 'Alī (d. before 273/886). He was a member of

45. Thus, Ptolemy writes in his own *Geography*: 'If I could have known that the book was in its final form, I would have contented myself with the description of the inhabited part of the earth, based upon his tables only, without the necessity of my doing the work' (I, 6.2).

46. Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, 2 vols., Leipzig, F. C. Vogel, 1871-1872, p. 268; Ibn Khurradādhbih, *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, (Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 6), Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1889, p. 3.

the team of scientists working for the Caliph al-Ma'mūn.<sup>47</sup> The treatise was probably written in order to clarify the background of the measurement of a degree along the meridian.

To take over the heritage of Greek antiquity in geography, it was of course essential to know the equivalents of the measurements, a problem we can hardly appreciate now that universal standards have been introduced. It bespeaks the seriousness of the new scientific endeavour that already the Caliph al-Ma'mūn had taken the measures necessary to solve this obvious problem. The project was of such eminent importance for Muslim geography that the historical reports deservedly have received the highest attention and cannot be omitted in any survey. Here we are guided by the great al-Bīrūnī.

As to the observations that were made by al-Ma'mūn, they were started after he had read in some Greek books that one degree of the meridian is equivalent to 500 stadia, where a stadium is the standard measure of length which was used by the Greeks for measuring distances. However, he found that its actual length was not satisfactorily known to the translators, to enable them to identify it with local standards of length. Then, according to Ḥabash, who obtained his information from Khālid al-Marwarūdhī, al-Ma'mūn ordered a group of learned astronomers and expert carpenters and workers in brass, to prepare the required instruments and to select a locality for a geodetic survey. They chose a spot in the plain of Sinjār, which is in the neighbourhood of Mosul, nineteen farsakhs from the town itself, and 43 *farsakhs* from Sāmarrā'. They liked its level ground and transported their instruments to it. They chose a site and observed with their instruments the sun's meridian altitude. They then departed in two parties... While proceeding on their paths, they measured the distances they had traversed and planted arrows at different stages of their paths. While on their way back, they verified, by a second survey, their former estimates of the lengths of the courses they had followed, until both parties met at the place whence they had departed. They found that one degree of a terrestrial meridian is equivalent to 56 miles... But it is said that al-Farghānī reported an extra two-thirds of a mile, in addition to the mentioned number of miles... That difference is a puzzle; it is an incentive for a fresh examination and observations. 'Who is prepared to help me in this?'<sup>48</sup>

47. We know little of him, but he probably died before Abū Ma'shar, hence before 272/886, since the latter has been accused of plagiarizing Sanad b. 'Alī's works. The treatise is probably the only work of Sanad b. 'Alī that has survived. See A. M. Heinen in D. A. King and G. Saliba, *From Deferent to Equant: a Volume of Studies in the History of Sciences in the Ancient and Medieval Near East in Honor of E. S. Kennedy*, New York, New York Academy of Sciences, 1987, pp. 167-174. Al-Bīrūnī still knew a calculation of the circumference of the earth which Sanad b. 'Alī executed for the Caliph al-Ma'mūn, cf. al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb Taḥdīd...*, *op. cit.*, p. 220; trans. pp. 185f.

48. Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb Taḥdīd...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 178ff. Cf. the careful study of C. A. Nallino, 'Il valore metrico del grado di meridiano secondo i geografi arabi', *Cosmos*, Serie 2, XI, pp. 20-27, 50-63, 105-121; reprinted in *idem*, *Raccolta di scritti editi ed inediti*, V, Rome, Istituto per l'Oriente, 1944, pp. 405-457.

However, as the perspicacious remarks of al-Bīrūnī show, differences about the exact values of the measurements persisted. And since the further problem of determining the geographical longitudes of places required much more research on the part of the astronomers and mathematicians, generations of scholars collaborated in mathematical geography in order eventually to establish the precise distance between the towns of the Muslim world.

Similarly, much attention is usually given to the form of the earth within the whole universe. Its significance for the progress of geographical knowledge is strongly emphasized, even to the extent that the discovery of America is said to have depended on it: since Ptolemy's work, the earth had been definitely established as being of spherical shape. Nevertheless, in the tenth century, at the height of Arabic scientific activity, al-Bīrūnī's teacher Abū Naṣr wrote a special treatise on the sphericity of the earth (*Fī kurriyyat al-samā'*); and in his own *Kitāb al-Qānūn al-Mas'ūdī*,<sup>49</sup> al-Bīrūnī devotes a long section to this question, after he has discussed the equally possible elliptical or oval form of the world in his correspondence with Ibn Sīnā.<sup>50</sup> Actually, there were also some rare writers, usually considered as somewhat excentric, who proposed or revived different models of the cosmos. The most notable figure in the time between Ptolemy and the Arab translators, no doubt, was Cosmas Indicopleustes (before AD 533).<sup>51</sup> No-one really appears to have adopted such models; their true importance comes from the light which they shed on the fragmentary pieces of older conceptions that were not completely superseded by the mathematical systems of such astronomers as Ptolemy. The latter - in spite of many undeniable inconsistencies - were put forward as absolutely valid, in the first place, of course, by pupils and admirers. Nevertheless, almost all writers on mathematical geography feel the need to emphasize the global form of the earth again and again, a bone of contention that had long since ceased to be one. In this context it is curious that Columbus (d. 1506) - supposedly the practical proof of the world's spherical shape since because of it he was encouraged to undertake his hazardous voyage west into the open sea - held a quite different view: the earth is pear-shaped with an irregular protrusion. He even takes up an archaic theory when he proposes that there has been an evolution on one side of the earth, apparently the place of Paradise. But where is it located - on the eastern extremity or the southern? Is it in any way connected with God's throne?

49. Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Qānūn al-Mas'ūdī fī l-hay'a wa-l-nujūm*, 3 vols., Haydarabad, Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya 1954, I, pp. 30ff.

50. S. H. Nasr and M. Mohaghegh (eds.), *al-Bīrūnī and Ibn Sīnā: al-as'ila wa-l-ajwiba (Questions and Answers)*, Tehran, 1352/1972.

51. Cf. W. Wolska-Conus, *La topographie chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes. Théologie et science au VIe siècle*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1962, pp. 63-111; B. Schleisheimer, *Kosmas Indikopleustes, ein altchristliches Weltbild*, Diss. University of Munich, Faculty of Philosophy, 1959, pp. 10-15 and 100-111.

In another text, al-Bīrūnī tells us how much this lengthy work had occupied him. Apparently, he not only made his trigonometric calculations but also collected information from all kinds of travellers and, in order to systematize and simplify the task, he constructed a large globe and marked all the places fixed by him. But he complains that the work was interrupted violently by his personal 'calamity' (his involuntary transfer to Ghazna?) and could only be completed when God decreed his return home.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, he must already have continued the work during his exile in Ghazna, as the exact co-ordinates of some 620 towns in his *Kitāb al-Qānūn al-Mas'ūdī* indicate. He could achieve these remarkable results because he not only relied on numerous reports of travellers (we may see it as a kind of statistical method favoured through the regularity and historical continuity of caravan travel),<sup>53</sup> but, as a student of Abu-l-Wafā' al-Būzjānī, al-Khujandī and Abū Naṣr b. 'Irāq, he could apply their new methods of spherical trigonometry. One of his personal projects, as he shows in the greater part of his geographical *Summa*, the *Tabḥḥid nihāyāt al-amākīn*, could thus be realized, namely the determination of the longitudinal distance between Alexandria and his location of Ghazna. Starting from Alexandria, he worked his way through the intermediary stages of Baghdad, Shirāz, Sijistān, Rayy, Nishāpūr, Jurjāniyya in Khwārizm, and Balkh.<sup>54</sup> Today, relying on the results of generations of scholars after al-Bīrūnī, who could work with improved methods of determining longitudinal distances, we realize with the highest admiration how good his results were. Our admiration for the person of this great scientist will be even higher if, in the objectivity and truthfulness of the critical historian of science, we further

52. Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-Qānūn...*, *op. cit.*, 1954, p. 14.

53. It is noteworthy that al-Bīrūnī was quite aware of the precarious nature of such reports by travellers, which introduced uncertainty even into the admired *Geography* of Ptolemy: 'I say : Most of the terrestrial longitudes and latitudes mentioned in (Ptolemy's) book (called) the *Geography* were derived on the basis of the reported distances between the various localities on the surface of the earth. Ptolemy himself certainly adopted the best methods, but others may or may not have followed him. However, determinations were based on hearsay evidence', cf. al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb Tabḥḥid...*, *op. cit.*, p. 225; trans., p. 190.

54. 'Now, let us evaluate the longitudes of some towns, or their latitudes, from the correct data known to us about one of them; or from data correctly derived for another town, so that we can derive the unknown data for the remaining town. We make Baghdad, the City of Peace, as the reference base for measuring longitudes, because astronomical observations are made there and it is the seat of the Caliphate and the source of royalty and princes. The difference (of longitude) between it and Alexandria is known, because Baghdad is in the vicinity of Babylon; and Babylon was an ancient city long before the Deluge, and it existed after it, down to the time of Alexander, in its present location' (al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb Tabḥḥid...*, *op. cit.*, p. 235; trans., 1967, pp. 200f.).

consider with open eyes the restrictions under which this 'genius in exile' had to work.<sup>55</sup>

Soon after the time of al-Bīrūnī, a number of other Muslim scholars continued the work of determining the co-ordinates of cities with the theorems of spherical trigonometry. Some fifty years later, an anonymous treatise, called the *Dustūr al-munajjimīn*, has new and better figures. And finally, two centuries later, we find one of the most complete and exact Arabic lists of place names in the *Kitāb Taqwīm al-buldān*,<sup>56</sup> the well-known geography of the Syrian Abu-l-Fidā (d. 732/1331). He could use the results of a greater number of predecessors, which unfortunately also implies many discrepancies. But the great Syrian geographer was prudent enough to put differing figures side by side – until the matter could be decided. Before this last synthesis of Arabic geography appeared, the most accomplished mathematical geographer, Abu-l-Ḥasan al-Marrākushī (d. c. 647/1250), had proposed the most modern method of determining geographical localities through spherical trigonometry. This approach was published in his comprehensive work on time-keeping called the *Jāmi' al-mabādī' wa-l-ghāyāt fi 'ilm al-mīqāt*.<sup>57</sup> Finally, at the Moghul court in India, Abu-l-Faḍl 'Allāmī (d. c. 988/1580) completed the rich tradition of place names and co-ordinates with his Persian treatise *Ām-i Akbarī*<sup>58</sup> which,

55. Consider, for instance, al-Bīrūnī's revealing and concealing words: '...my intention is the determination of the longitude of a specified city on the surface of the earth, whose position will be known, relative to the all other cities. That city is Ghazna, but so far I have been able to determine its latitude only. As to its longitude, by the methods discussed above, there were reasons which prevented its determination. If I excuse myself for those reasons, my soul would feel ungrateful to God for the apparent and inner blessings He has bestowed upon me, and to my patron for the gifts and favours extended to me by his generous hand. However, I do beseech the Almighty to grant me the facilities for making the researches which I have loved, for in their pursuit I have not flinched from imminent danger to both body and soul. Nay, in those critical hours, I was always anxious to complete those researches before I pass away, and I requested Him to grant me a virtuous life here on earth, and in the hereafter', al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb Tahdūd*..., *op. cit.*, p. 224; trans. pp. 189f.

56. Abu-l-Fidā, *Taqwīm al-buldān: texte arabe d'après les manuscrits de Paris et de Leyde*, ed. J. T. Reinaud and MacGuckin de Slane, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1840.

57. Two volumes are published in the Facsimile Editions of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science in Frankfurt: al-Marrākushī, *Jāmi' al-mabādī' wa-l-ghāyāt fi 'ilm al-mīqāt, Ṭubī'a bi-l-taḥwīr 'an makhtūṭāt Aḥmad III 3343, Maktabat Topkapı Sarayı*, Istanbul, (Publications of the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, Series C, Facsimile Editions; 1,2), Frankfurt am Main, 1984. But the work first became known in the last century through the French translation of father and son J.-J. and L.-Am. Sédillot, 1839. The mathematical theory of longitudinal measurements was studied by C. Schoy, 'Längenbestimmung und Zentralmeridian bei den älteren Völkern', *Mitteilungen der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Geographischen Gesellschaft*, 12, 1915, pp. 39ff.

58. 'Allāmī, *Ām-i Akbarī*, trans. and ed. H. Blochmann, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1867–1877.

according to E.S. Kennedy's great survey, contains the largest number of localities (656).<sup>59</sup>

Thus, all the principles needed for a satisfactory map – as Ptolemy had planned it and the Caliph al-Ma'mūn had ordered it – were finally at the disposal of the Muslim geographers. Actually, geographical maps were produced on the model of the Greek predecessors, Marinus of Tyre (c. AD 70–130) and Claudius Ptolemy (c. AD 100–170); as noted before, al-Mas'ūdī tells us that he still could compare all three of the maps and that the one ordered by al-Ma'mūn was superior to the older ones. There certainly was a tradition of pictorial representation of geographical knowledge; the survival of the mosaic map of Palestine in a church in Madaba in Jordan dating back to the early sixth century AD is physical proof for that, although, as a mosaic, it naturally cannot have been very exact (and in any case, it may not have become known to an Arab geographer).<sup>60</sup> We are on firmer ground, however, with the works of al-Iṣṭakhṛī and Ibn Ḥawqal. From the introduction of the *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik*, it is fairly obvious that a cartographic description of the world was guiding the authors in their geographical research, either as a plan to be followed and completed, or as the goal to be achieved at the end, or both. The images of the great 'world-bird' or the 'sleeve of a garment' do not need to be mystified in this context, they are hardly more than illustrations of the schoolmaster.<sup>61</sup>

The goal of this tradition of geography, without doubt, is reached with Muḥammad al-Sharīf al-Idrīsī. Some time before 548/1154 he wrote a remarkable description of a large silver map made for the Norman king of Sicily, Roger II, which includes seventy-one maps. An extract of this work was printed in Rome in 1592 in Arabic; a Latin translation of it was published in 1619 by two Maronite scholars under the misleading title *Geographia Nubiensis*.

59. E. S. Kennedy and M. H. Kennedy, *Geographical Coordinates of Localities from Islamic Sources*, (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften, Reihe A, Bd. 2), Frankfurt am Main, Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, 1987, esp. p. xvi.

60. Cf. V. R. Gold, 'The Mosaic Map of Madaba', *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 21, 1958, pp. 50–70.

61. Such pictorial representations already impressed al-Mas'ūdī in Ptolemy's *Geography*: 'Dans la Géographie, ces mers sont enluminées de couleurs variées et différent par leur étendue et leur aspect. Les unes ont la forme d'un manteau court (*tailasān*), d'autres celle d'un harnais (*chābourah*) ou celle d'un boyau, et d'autres sont triangulaires; mais leurs noms sont en grec dans cet ouvrage et par conséquent inintelligibles' (al-Mas'ūdī's *al-Tanbīh*, quoted in B. Carra de Vaux, *Le livre de l'avertissement et de la révision*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1896, p. 53).



## The growth of the tradition of Muslim geography

However, the translation of Ptolemy's *Geography* did not inspire only mathematicians to take up geodetic measurements and determine the exact co-ordinates of places; generations of Arab scholars in the following centuries pursued the other branches of Hellenistic geography as well. They apparently remained restricted to the work of the Alexandrian astronomer and had no access to the seventeen books of the *Geographica* (completed in AD 23) of Strabo of Amasea (Pontus). But there can be no doubt that the Arabs made much better use of the heritage of antiquity than their Byzantine contemporaries, who had easy access to more, and better, sources.<sup>62</sup>

Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī (d. 260/874) apparently was one of the first scholars, in geography as well as in other branches of learning, who took the initial steps towards an appropriation of what had been translated from pre-Islamic cultures. Nevertheless, he remained in the scientific tradition of Ptolemy. Of his important treatise *Rasm al-ma'mūr min al-arḍ*, we can only have the title and the echo in the later writer al-Mas'ūdī, while of his *Risāla fī-l-biḥār wa-l-madd wa-l-jazr* only a Latin translation is known. The case is similar with his younger colleague Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Sarakhsī (d. 286/899), who is reported to have written such relevant treatises as *al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik* and a *Risāla fī -l-biḥār wa-l-miyāh wa-l-jibāl*. In the historical development of Arabic geography these two authoritative writers, nevertheless, seem to have been quite influential in so far as they encouraged further research beyond the Ptolemaic tradition.

Around the same time (272/885), Ibn Khurradādhbih, the Director of the Postal Service, completed his influential book *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*. As can be gathered from the title, and of course his official function, the Ptolemaic (and perhaps also old Persian) tradition of a geography with exact measurements of distances was adopted to be put to the service of his government department. The postal routes, after all, could be fixed much more conveniently on the basis of extensive geographical information. Similar practical interests guided the work of two younger officials of the government: al-Jayhānī was vizier at the Sāmānid court and in this function, around the year 286/900, he wrote another *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, obviously by enlarging the earlier work of Ibn Khurradādhbih. If we accept al-Muqaddasī's harsh judgement, the vizier just collected information to

62. 'Es scheint so, als ob die Byzantiner nicht nur im theoretischen Bereich der Geographie, d.h. in bezug auf deren mathematisch-astronomische Grundlagen, sondern auch in der praktischen Länderkunde keine eigenen Initiativen entwickelt hätten', see H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, Abt. 12, 5), München, Beck, 1978, I, pp. 518f.).

prepare the military conquest of other countries.<sup>63</sup> The second official was Qudāma b. Jaʿfar from Baghdad (d. 337/948); he used geography in the interest of a more efficient administration of government taxes and instructed his colleagues in his book *Kitāb al-Kharāj wa-ṣināʿat al-Kitāba*. Today, these writers would be practitioners of political geography, for the focus of their works is already the same. Usually Aḥmad b. Abū Yaʿqūb b. Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 284/897), with his *Kitāb al-Buldān*, is also taken to be a geographer of political administration, but A. Miquel is probably right when he interprets al-Yaʿqūbī's research programme, with its special stress on travelling and personal verification, as going beyond the mere practical interests of political geography.<sup>64</sup>

The Muslim geographers who continued the tradition of geographical writing nevertheless adopted a surprisingly different approach only one or two generations later. No longer was the government administration of the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate the prime focus of interest, but, apparently on the basis of greater independence and the personal impressions gathered on extensive travels, they became aware of the greater 'world of Islam'. Thus it was no longer the administrative division of the seven Iranian *kishwars*, imposed on the new political order, with Baghdad as its centre, that determined the frame of geography; now it was as if the conquest of the world, going out from Mecca and Medina, had been fully realized by the geographers as well. For the

63. 'Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Jayhānī, vizir de l'émir du Khurāsān, philosophe, astrologue et astronome, réunit les gens qui connaissent les pays étrangers pour les interroger sur les Etats, leurs ressources, leurs voies d'accès, la hauteur sous laquelle y gravitent les astres et la position qu'y prend l'ombre. C'était pour lui le moyen d'arriver à conquérir ces pays, à connaître leurs ressources et à perfectionner sa science des astres et de la sphère céleste.' al-

64. A. Miquel, *La géographie...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 102 ff. Consider, for example, al-Yaʿqūbī's autobiographical notice: 'Dès le début de mon adolescence, dit-il, à cette époque où l'esprit est plus éveillé et plus pénétrant, j'avais le plus grand désir de connaître l'histoire des pays et leur situation géographique ; car dès mon enfance, j'avais fait de longs voyages. Aussi, toutes les fois que je rencontrais quelqu'un de ces régions éloignées, je ne pouvais me tenir de lui demander quel était son pays ; après quoi je l'interrogeais sur les habitants, désirant savoir s'ils étaient arabes ou barbares, quel était leur genre de cultures, d'où ils tiraient leur boisson, comment ils s'habillaient, à quelle secte ils appartenaient et qui les gouvernait. Puis je les questionnais sur l'étendue de son pays, sur les pays qui l'avoisinaient et sur les routes. Si l'homme me semblait digne de foi, j'écrivais ses réponses outre les noms des villes et des pays, de leurs habitants et de leurs souverains, les distances des villes entre elles, les noms des généraux qui les ont conquises à l'Islam, la date de cette conquête, l'impôt foncier qu'elles payent, la description physique des régions, à savoir si elles sont de plaine ou de montagne, continentales ou maritimes, la nature du climat, humide ou sec, l'indication des cours d'eau et des sources et des points d'où les habitants tirent leur boisson', cf. M. J. de Goeje, *Descriptio al-Magribi, Sumpta ex Libro Regionum al-Jaubii*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1860, p. 32; quoted in B. Carra de Vaux, *Les penseurs de l'Islam*, 2nd ed., 5 vols., Paris, 1984, II, pp. 4f.

Hijāz is clearly the centre of their world description. The main author who brought about this change of view was Abū Zayd Aḥmad b. Sahl al-Balkhī (d. 322/934); and the scholars following him, therefore, were classified as belonging to the 'Balkhī School of Geography'. How exactly this school tradition is to be conceived of, whether it was more a school of methodological work or a literary tradition of shared reports - this evaluation still remains a matter of dispute, because the main work of al-Balkhī, entitled *Ṣuwar al-aqālim*, is probably lost forever.

But from the works of the early exponents it is obvious that the human factor, and thus also religion and culture, played a significant rôle in the geography of the Balkhī School. Thus, al-Iṣṭakhri (d. after 340/951), at the beginning of his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, explains as his central methodological principle that the Muslim countries, and to a lesser extent also the lands of the People of the Book, were of primary interest to him. He even gives reasons why he decided to leave aside the lands of uncivilized people in Africa.<sup>65</sup> And his disciple Ibn Ḥawqal (d. after 378/988), to whom al-Iṣṭakhri entrusted his work, was even more emphatic in this choice, as his *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ* shows on many occasions. Hence, not merely is the physical description of the earth of interest to the geographer of the Balkhī School, but also the culture, religion and political order of the inhabitants give geography its human, and hence scientific, touch. For it is only man as an intellectual being, and then the Muslim as living his life on earth under the guidance of the One God, who can give orientation in and direction to the physical world. Since Ibn Ḥawqal does not hide his partiality to the Fāṭimids,<sup>66</sup> we may even surmise that the divine direction, imposed on creation, was seen in the light of the Shī'ite Bāṭiniyya. The same was probably the case with the *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik* by al-Muhallabī (d. 380/990), which was even dedicated to the Fāṭimid Caliph al-ʿAzīz and of which, understandably, only citations survived.

The human and religious factor is also emphasized in the work of Ibn Rustah from Iṣfahān (fl. beginning of tenth century), the *Aʿlāq al-naḥṣa* (*Atours précieux*), of which only the seventh part on geography is extant. This geography, as can easily be seen, is only one part of a whole encyclopaedia, hence not intended as a specialized book, but rather an entertaining collection of materials meant to benefit the *kuttāb*. It is permeated with a strong universalist Islamic spirit, emphasizing the unity of the Islamic world around its centre in Mecca. This ideological goal evidently could supersede the curiosity of the geographical discoverer – which also characterizes medieval geography.

65. Al-Iṣṭakhri, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, (Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, 1), Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1870, pp. 4f.; *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-mamālik*, ed. M. J. ʿAbd al-ʿĀl al-Sinī and M. Shafiq Ghurbāl, Cairo, 1381/1961, pp. 15–19.

66. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Opus geographicum...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 70ff.

From about the same time is another book by a *kātib*, Ibn Faqīh al-Hamadhānī (fl. first half of tenth century), who used geographical materials and traditions for his literary concerns. The title is also quite traditional: *Kitāb al-Buldān* (written c. 290/903). Thus, it can be expected that the professional geographer will not be impressed by the numerous anecdotes and traditions from various regions of the Islamic world, squarely centred around Mecca, and the historian will often doubt their authenticity.

Both the geographer and the historian will feel much more at ease when they open the geography of Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī (d. 390/1000), entitled *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*. This book was finally completed in 375/985, after its author had undertaken numerous travels and had collected reports and personal experiences since his early childhood.<sup>67</sup> What at first may look like a literary device to entice the reader, actually reveals the methodological programme of appealing to personal observation and critically assessing reports. Concepts and classifications are not simply taken over from authoritative sources, but rationally considered. Thus, the fact that he introduces a new division of the world, fourteen *iqlīm*s instead of the twenty-odd schematically retained by the Balkhī School of Geography, may appear as rather formalistic at first glance. But, as the various examples show, the driving force here is the patient and truly scientific spirit of the geographer who lets the laws of nature, the mutual dependency of spacial units on our earth, determine the variegated administration of distinct lands, provinces and regions. This spirit motivates al-Muqaddasī to start the work of observation and systematization with each new territory, each new city, but also each new sect and grouping, religion or linguistic family. In other words, he probably could have joined a research team of modern geographers.

67. See his charming introduction: ‘J’ai étudié le droit et les lettres, pratiqué l’ascétisme et la dévotion, enseigné le droit et les lettres, fait le prône en chaire, appelé à la prière sur les minarets, tenu le rôle d’imam dans les mosquées, prononcé les sermons dans les mosquées-cathédrales, fréquenté les écoles, invoqué Dieu dans les réunions, pris la parole à des séances, partagé le pâté des mystiques, le potage des moines et la bouillie des matelots, déguerpi des mosquées la nuit, voyagé dans les solitudes, erré dans les déserts, pratiqué souvent et sincèrement l’abstinence, et puis mangé ouvertement des aliments interdits, acquis l’amitié des dévots de la montagne du Liban et fréquenté quelquefois les gouvernants, possédé des esclaves et puis laissé charger des paniers sur ma tête, manqué de peu et à plusieurs reprises la noyade, vu la route de mes caravanes coupées, servi les cadis et les grands, adressé la parole aux puissants et aux vizirs, lié amitié, chemin faisant, avec les libertins, vendu des produits au marché, connu les prisons ou les accusations d’espionnage’, al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*..., *op. cit.*, p. 44; trans. A. Miquel, § 83–87.

## Travel, trade and discovery

After the field of geography had been well established by such great scholars as al-Muqaddasī, it never was really lost thereafter but remained available and was developed by a galaxy of authors, navigators, military leaders and merchants in various directions. Properly within the field remained those scholars who made this store of information better available in the form of alphabetical dictionaries, the most impressive being the above-mentioned *Muʿjam al-buldān* by the great Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229), or by improved cartography, as for instance the seventy regional maps of the Sicilian geographer al-Idrīsī (d. c. 1165) [Fig. 2]. At the transition to the modern world, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, it was left to an Ottoman scholar, Pīrī Muḥyi-l-Dīn Raʿīs (d. 962/1554), to produce the best cartographical work, the peak to be reached on this long ascent of Muslim geography through the centuries. This was a map of the world in two parts, one for the West and one for the East. The western world, for the first time, included also the discoveries of the Portuguese and especially also those of Colombus on his third voyage to the Americas, which had become known through a Spanish sailor made captive by Turkish agents in Valencia.<sup>68</sup> Obviously, the frontiers between the Muslim East and the Christian West also had been bridged in an almost curious co-operation; for the pilot, who is reported to have guided Vasco da Gama from the East African harbour Malindi to Calicut in India, was the famous Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Mājid.<sup>69</sup>

Other authors turned rather to the unusual, exotic or even miraculous features of the universe. The result was a whole library of cosmographical works, full of all kinds of fantastic phenomena, but occasionally also scientific observations. Usually, these works carry the title *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt* (The Wonders of Creation), hence a kind of science-fiction literature. As still quite serious and useful may be mentioned the *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt* of al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283), or those of Ibrāhīm b. Waṣīf Shāh (d. 605/1209), *Mukhtaṣar al-ʿajāʾib* (= *L'Abrégé des Merveilles*).<sup>70</sup> Many of these works were later translated into Turkish and through their magnificent illustrations they often proved quite effective as an inspiration for the artists.

68. See P. E. Kahle, *Die verschollene Columbus-Karte vom Jahre 1498 in einer türkischen Weltkarte von 1513*, Berlin/Leipzig, W. de Greuther, 1933.

69. This is, however, contested by the editor of the complete works of Ibn Mājid, see Ibrāhīm Khūrī, *Aḥmad b. Mājid: munaṣṣir al-milāḥa al-falakiyya fi-l-Muḥīṭ al-Ḥindī wa-biḥārīhi al-shāḥīʿiyya fi-l-qarn al-tāsiʿ al-Ḥijrī/al-khāmis ʿashar al-Milādī*, (Silsilat al-Milāḥiyya al-ʿArabiyya al-Falakiyya, 4), 4 vols., Raʿs al-Khayma, Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa-l-Wathāʾiq fi-l-Dīwān al-Amīrī bi-Raʿs al-Khayma, 1980.

70. Trans. by B. Carra de Vaux, *Les Penseurs...*, *op. cit.*; cf. A. Miquel, *La géographie...*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 254 ff.



V-1.2 Map of England, from the treatise on geography  
*(Nuṣḥat al-musbtāq fī dhikr al-amṣār wa-l-aqtār)*  
 written by al-Idrīsī towards the middle of the twelfth century  
 at the court of Roger II, King of Sicily  
 © Cliché Bibliothèque nationale de France (MS ar 2221)

As far as the art of literature is concerned, the reports of the numerous travellers (*riḥla*-literature) became even more influential. Some of them, however, also contain valuable geographical information, as for instance the *Riḥla* of Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217), or even more, in view of the unbelievable distances covered, that of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 779/1377). The latter can best be compared with Marco Polo, because he also spent years in the countries of South East Asia, which he eventually described. However, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa shares with the Italian traveller the fate, too, that his reports often do not find full credence. The most valuable contribution to the *riḥla*-literature again has been made by an Ottoman scholar: Awliyā Chelebī (1022–1092/1614–1682), whose *Sīyāhat-nāme* (Travel Book) in ten volumes is a mine of information for historians and geographers alike.

For European scholarship, the interest in Muslim works on geographical subjects was not only an historical one; it followed in the wake of the discoverers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and was part of their search. In that sense it started with Vasco da Gama's employment of the Arab pilot

Ibn Mājid, who was to guide him on his journey from the East African coast to that of India. As the European discoverers, adventurers and colonialists penetrated ever deeper into unknown regions, they eagerly directed their curiosity to the geographical works of the Arabs because they hoped to profit from their earlier experiences in those alien lands and from their accumulated geographical knowledge. Picturing them in accordance with their own image, they naturally – though mostly falsely – assumed that their Arab neighbours to the east had preceded them in adventurous expeditions into the ‘wild territories’ of Africa and Asia. Thus, the earliest prints of Arabic geographical works appeared as early as the sixteenth century on European book-markets.<sup>71</sup> However, in spite of numerous travel journals, the guides of seafarers or ancient legendary traditions of expeditions to the sources of the Nile or the great wall of Gog and Magog,<sup>72</sup> it remains doubtful whether any expeditions comparable to those of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries (or Carsten Niebuhr’s to Arabia) were ever undertaken from the Islamic regions. Since such expeditions required careful preparation and considerable financial expenditure, our questions regarding why the rich geographical heritage of the Muslim scholars was not invested into a greater advancement of knowledge concern more the political organization of the Islamic lands than the ingenuity of their scientists. As the example of al-Bīrūnī (among many others) shows,<sup>73</sup> the ingenuity and interest of the scholars was not lacking; rather the responsibility and sagacity of the political rulers was in a deplorable state. Thus, Turkish sailors could not participate in such journeys of discovery as their West European contemporaries undertook; but there are several treatises extant in Turkish manuscript libraries that betray a vivid interest in the discoveries made far beyond the frontiers of Europe. The most important one is the Turkish translation of the *Tārīkh-i Hind-i Gharbī*, i.e. the history of the discovery of the ‘West Indies’, by an anonymous author writing in the year

71. Thus the Italian nobleman, Comte de Marsigli, after having spent the years 1679–1680 and 1692 in Istanbul, directed the attention of his countrymen to the rich harvest of Muslim geography: ‘We can never have perfect maps of the Ottoman, Persian, Tartar and Arab Empires if we do not make use of the translation of these authors’ works on geography’, cf. L. F. Marsigli, *Stato militare dell’Imperio Ottomano: incremento e decremento del medesimo* / *l’Etat militaire de l’Empire Ottoman: ses progrès et sa décadence*, The Hague, D. Gosse et J. Neaulme, reprint Graz, 1972, I, p. 39. This work is extensively quoted by E. İhsanoğlu, ‘Ottoman Science in the Classical Period and Early Contacts with European Science and Technology’, in his *Transfer of Modern Science and Technology to the Muslim World*, Istanbul, Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1992b, pp. 1–48, esp. pp. 8ff.

72. Thus, according to Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, the Caliph al-Wāthiq sent the interpreter Sallām to inquire about the great wall of Gog and Magog.

73. Because he was puzzled by the differing measurements of a degree along the meridian, al-Bīrūnī wished to undertake a new project of verification. But he states quite clearly (and that at the court of the conqueror Maḥmūd of Ghazna!) that the co-operation of a powerful ruler is necessary, cf. al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb Taḥḍīd...*, *op. cit.*, p. 214f.; trans. p. 180.

1583.<sup>74</sup> He obviously made good use of the contemporary Spanish publications and made their new geographical information available to his Turkish readers. I came upon another instance in an Arabic manuscript written by the mathematician Ghars al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Halabī (d. 971/1564), a copy of which is kept in Istanbul's Yeni Cami library.<sup>75</sup> On fol. 154r, the author quotes a report of some sailors who had discovered that 'the inhabited area in the regions of the North extends to seventy-two degrees'. Unfortunately, he does not give us any clue where this place might be; but in any case, it would be well beyond the northernmost tip of Scandinavia.

When the central political authority, which controlled all resources of the state, promoted scientific work, vigorous cultural and scientific activities could be carried out even in the later centuries. Thus, under the patronage of Mehmed the Conqueror (835–885/1432–1481), who himself was devoted to classical literature, a number of geographical treatises were written. He even had Ptolemy's influential *Geography* newly translated into Arabic and enriched with a world map, a work for which he could rely on the Greek scholar Georgios Amirutzes from Trabzon.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, we hear of a goodly number of scientists who worked for the later Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (926–967/1520–1566). Since this was the time of the greatest extension of the Ottoman empire, it is no surprise to find geography also in a position of highest appreciation. Naturally, the sub-discipline of cartography, already mentioned above in connection with the famous sailor Pīrī Ra'īs, flourished, especially after the Turkish navy had become a powerful weapon. But the campaigns on land also yielded a rich harvest of geographical knowledge, as is impressively illustrated by such beautiful works as the *Beyān-i menāzil-i Sefer-i 'Irakein* by Naṣūḥ al-Silāḥī al-Matraqī. Not quite as artistic, but probably more important from the scientific point of view of the geographer, are the recently-published registers of the Ottoman tax administration in the Balkans.<sup>77</sup> They confirm nicely an observation which the above-mentioned Comte de Marsigli had already made in the capital Istanbul, namely that '...no other government in the world has more accurate registries' (than the Ottoman one). At a later time, corrupt officials were often accused of having exploited the country

74. The book has been published in Istanbul under the title *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi veya Hadis-i Nev (A History of the Discovery of America)*, 1987. It has been studied by T. C. Goodrich, *The Ottoman Turks and the New World: a Study of Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi and Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Americana*, (Near and Middle East Monographs. New Series, 3), Wiesbaden, O. Harrasowitz, 1990.

75. The title is *Tanbih al-naqqād 'alā mā fi-l-hay'a al-mashhūra min al-fasād*, MS. Istanbul, Yeni Cami, 1181, 16, fols. 147–154.

76. Cf. E. Ihsanoğlu, 'Ottoman Science...', *op. cit.*, p.18.

77. J. Matuz, *Die Steuerkonskription des Sandschaks Stuhlweissenburg aus den Jahren 1563 bis 1565*, collab. I. Hunyadi, Bamberg, Aku, 1986; see also J. Matuz, *Das Kanzleiwesen Sultan Süleymans des Prächtigen*, (Freiburger Islamstudien, 5), Wiesbaden, F. Steiner, 1974.



mercilessly for their own benefit; but when the Turkish administration was still functioning according to the laws of an orderly government, it did so by keeping records of the geographical and climatic conditions of the country. These registers, therefore, testify to the application of geographical knowledge by government officials and serve the historian of Turkish geography as highly reliable source material, although they may appear to provide only secondary evidence.

To sum up this survey, it is good to take note of the difference of approach (*sine ira et studio!*) when we today, as historians of science and culture, study Muslim geography in an academic and historical context (ideological preconceptions are as harmful as prejudices!). 'Self-glorification' because of the high achievements of Muslim geographers should not be the main motivation either. Only a critical evaluation of the actual work done in geography can serve a fruitful purpose, namely, the further development of Muslim geography. After all, geography largely determines economic progress; only think of the tremendous importance of the oil industry, which depends squarely on geographical and geological surveys, or the study of the routes of communication in global dimensions. Thus, the questions of why classical Muslim geography has not yielded the results that could be expected – for instance, the openness and vigour of the so-called Age of Discovery – and why to this day not only archaeological but also geographical projects are hindered in some countries unless they promise immediate financial benefits to the political figures in authority – these questions should also be thoroughly investigated by the historians of Muslim geography.

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## Chapter 2

# ARABIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

*Abdul-Aziz Duri*

### I

*Ta'rikh* means 'date' and 'history'. It has come to cover annals, chronicles, *Sira* works, biographies and genealogies.

Historical studies form part of general cultural developments in Islam. Initially, history was related to the *Hadith* and to literary interests (stories, anecdotes). Historical works that have reached us come from the third/ninth century and hardly from the second/eighth (except for Ibn Ishāq), yet they often refer to earlier works, even as far back as the first/seventh century.

The first three centuries of the Hijra were the formative period of Arab historiography, when the basic lines and ideas were set and the bulk of the data on that period was gathered. This, however, did not preclude further developments later. The Arabs had settled in bedouin communities before Islam, but they had no idea of history. In Southern Arabia they had cultured societies that left inscriptions dating from the eighth century BC to the seventh century AD, some of which record laws, treaties, expeditions and other achievements, but they do not compare to historical records.

Al-Hamdānī (d. 334/945) refers to royal records and archives and to registers of genealogies of tribes that he had seen. The Yemenis introduced a calendar about 115 BC which could indicate some notion of history. Yet all we receive are semi-mythical accounts and some vague stories and confused memories, even for as late as the sixth century AD. These were expanded in the first/seventh century into popular stories extolling the achievements of the Yemenis, which may be found in works attributed to 'Ubayd b. Sharya and Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 114/732). Thus, we get no historical method or idea from the Yemen. But it is likely that their idea of a calendar had its impact on the introduction of a Muslim calendar.

The Arabs of Northern and Central Arabia had their anecdotes (*akbbār*) and stories, especially on their tribal wars (*ayyām*) and genealogies. Poetry

documented or enriched these stories. In time, poetry ensured continuity and became the register, *ḍiwān*, of the Arabs, both for their genealogies (*ansāb*) and for their exploits. The *ayyām* stories were one-sided and were undated.

Tribal interest in the exploits of the Arabs continued in Islam. The way of relating these had its influence, but in a new (Islamic) and much broader context, that of conquests.

Tribal interest in genealogies was intensified with the establishment of the *ḍiwān* by ʿUmar and the organization of the *muqātila* (fighting forces) in the *amṣār* (cities, regions). In the first/seventh century the tribes had their own registers (*kutub*) containing their genealogy, poetry and *akhbār*. The Arabs in al-Ḥīra had books containing their *akhbār*, genealogies and some accounts of their rulers, which they deposited in their churches. These were seen and utilized by Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204/819). The concern with tribal activities in the *ayyām* and *ansāb* only indicates a line of interest and a simple way of relating *akhbār*, but there was no idea of history.

## II

Islam introduced new ideas and notions. The past with its experiences was looked at seriously. The idea of some universal history was introduced, based on the succession of messages – albeit basically one message – propagated by many prophets, with Muḥammad as the last messenger. The concept of the *umma* was introduced and this *umma* had a mission to perform and a historical rôle to play, hence its progress had to be indicated. The conquests stressed its rôle. The sayings of the Prophet were ‘revealed’ and his *sīra* was the model for all Muslims.

The introduction of a calendar was important. The trend towards urbanism and the emphasis on reading and writing were positive factors. Though oral tradition continued, writing played an early and growing rôle in historical studies. It was widely resorted to, starting from the second half of first/seventh century, in studies of the *maghāzī* (campaigns) and traditions.

A survey of the early period of historical writing indicates that there were two centres: 1) Medina, the first centre of the Islamic *umma*, represents the Islamic trend; and 2) Iraq, represented by Kufa and Basra, two centres of the tribal *muqātila* (*dūr hijra*), where tribal interests and trends in the cultural field persisted in the culture, but in an Islamic context. The Islamic line in Medina is represented by the writers on *maghāzī*, while the tribal line of the *muqātila* is represented by the *akhbārīs* and others associated with them (linguists and genealogists).

In each centre a school developed through the system of studies employed; each scholar studied with a *shaykh* (or more than one), took knowledge from him and added his own research. This approach was repeated and

led to the accumulation of knowledge, and thus a school was formed; hence the *maghāzī* school and the school of the *akhbārīs*.

There was interest in historical studies in al-Fuṣṭāṭ and Damascus, both related to Medina, but their activities came later.

The Companions and Followers (*Ṣaḥāba* and *Ṭabi‘ūn*) were keen on studying the sayings of the Prophet and his activities, looking for guidance in legislation and behaviour and for norms in life. Some broadened their activities to study the life of the Prophet and the early Muslims. Then there was a social need to know who participated in the early campaigns and activities of Islam and a growing interest in the early Islamic community. All this shows up in studies of the *maghāzī*, extended to the beginnings of the *umma*.

Interest in the *maghāzī* (or *Sīra*) follows in two lines. First we have the approach of the traditionists. Among these were the first *maghāzī*-writers. Here these developed a serious approach to historical writing in Medina, with a critical attitude to reporters and texts. Accounts were initially given in short traditions, and only later were longer reports made. Thus, scholars judge *maghāzī*-writers by the criteria of *Ḥadīth* criticism with regard to the *isnād* (line of transmission) and texts. But gradually the idea emerged that historical traditions (reports), which entail no judgement or verdict, do not require the strict rules for traditions (*Ḥadīth*).

The second approach was to utilize stories about the *maghāzī*, a continuation of old interests. People, motivated by pride, piety or enthusiasm for the new religion, related stories and reports about the *maghāzī*, including much poetry. It is probable that someone produced a compilation of the *maghāzī* stories, as was done for the Conquests. The existing part of the *maghāzī* of Wahb b. Munabbih could well illustrate such a compilation. There appeared the *quṣṣās* (preachers, story-tellers), who related anecdotes to arouse enthusiasm for Islam or to entertain; and some made of this an exciting popular literature and consequently invited others to forge poetry to make their tales effective.

This line was reflected by historians of *maghāzī*, where some stories or forged poetry found its way into *maghāzī* literature. Yet the serious approach to the *maghāzī*, or the line of traditionists, remained basic.

Now, it cannot any longer be maintained that the *maghāzī*, or *Sīra*, were first written down by Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/761) and that they had been reported orally until then. Writing was used to record traditions and reports in the first/seventh century. Abbān b. ‘Uthmān (d. c. 100/718) showed Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik (a prince then) a written copy of his *maghāzī* in 82/701. ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/712) probably did the same. ‘Urwa and Abbān represent the first generation of *maghāzī* historians.

The works of the first two generations of *maghāzī*-writers are known only through quotations by later historians. Of the first two generations of scholars of *maghāzī*, two stand out as the founders of *maghāzī* studies: ‘Urwa b. al-

Zubayr and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī. Both resorted to writing down their traditions and reports and encouraged others to do the same.

ʿUrwa established the main lines of the *maghāzī*, or *Sīra*. Starting with Muḥammad’s forefathers, he touched on his early life, his marriage, the beginnings of Revelation, the *daʿwa* (call) in the Meccan period, the *Hijra*, the first activities in Medina, most of the *maghāzī* and the conquest of Mecca, Ḥunayn and al-Ṭāʿif. The letters of the Prophet to different communities and the Farewell Pilgrimage are referred to. Then he talks of the Prophet’s death, his character and other personal affairs. ʿUrwa gives the dates of many events.

ʿUrwa used the *isnād*, the line of transmission, though freely. His studies extended to the *umma* under the four Orthodox caliphs, an indication of the trend of the *maghāzī* scholars.

Al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), a student of ʿUrwa, followed similar lines. His extensive research completed the frame of the *Sīra* and enriched its material. Thus, he gave a more balanced and fairly detailed account of the Prophet’s life. His basic sources, like ʿUrwa’s, were the Qur’an, traditions, reports of the Companions and other reports and documents. A solid foundation was established for the *Sīra*. He used the *isnād* more regularly, as befitted his time, but he introduced the collective *isnād* by combining more than one *isnād* to give a more detailed report, a step important for historical narratives and writing generally.

Al-Zuhrī resorted regularly to writing, wrote his *maghāzī*, or *Sīra*, and allowed others to report from his sheets. His studies also covered the affairs of the *umma* under the Orthodox Caliphs.

With al-Zuhrī (and his generation) the lines of the *maghāzī* and *Sīra* were set, the basic data collected and the traditionist method – with more freedom – established. The style was direct and simple.

It was Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 114/732), a Yemeni, not of the *maghāzī* school, who introduced popular and other stories. He wrote the *Mubtadaʿ* (Beginning), dealing with the creation and the history of the prophets, relying on stories of the People of the Book (*Isrāʿīliyyāt*) and Arab popular stories and referring to the Scriptures and some old books. He introduced the idea of a universal history around the series of prophecies and had an impact on later historians. His work on the *maghāzī* follows the approach to popular stories.

Two of al-Zuhrī’s students wrote on the *maghāzī* and *Sīra*: Mūsā b. ʿUqba (d. 141/758) and Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/761). The first followed the method of the school of Medina. He examined reports, emphasized the *isnāds* and re-examined the names of participants in the *maghāzī* and dates. He relied heavily on the work of al-Zuhrī and added to his research.

Ibn Ishāq wrote on the *Mubtadaʿ* and on the *Sīra* (*Mabʿath* [mission] and *maghāzī*). In the former, he was influenced by Wahb b. Munabbih and dealt with the creation and the history of the prophets. He also wrote a general history dealing with the caliphate (or the *umma*) up to his days. Thus, he wrote

a universal history, followed by the *sīra* and the history of the *umma*. The *Sīra* was written in Medina while the history of the caliphate was written in Iraq and relies mainly on Iraqi sources.

His pre-Islamic studies were the weakest part of his work, since he used popular stories, Yemeni tales, *Isrāʾīliyyāt* and other reports, with few *isnāds*. For the *Mabʿath* he had reports and traditions, used the *isnād* more, but added stories and weak anecdotes. *Isnāds* become more frequent and regular with the *maghāzī*, leaning more on the traditions of the *maghāzī* school.

Ibn Ishāq combined the method of the *maghāzī* with the popular story. Thus he did not abide totally by the methodology of the *maghāzī*. He was censured for not being critical of his sources or strict about his *isnāds*, for mistakes in his *ansāb* and for quoting forged poetry. However, the different versions of his *Sīra* that we have – of Salama b. al-Faḍl (d. 191/806) in al-Ṭabarī, of al-Bakkāʾī (d. 183/799), edited by Ibn Hishām, and of Yūnus b. Bukayr (d. 199/814) – are in addition to its perception by later historians (such as Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr) and show its impact and importance.

Al-Wāqidi (130–207/748–823) elaborated the method of the *maghāzī* school and broadened its interests. He went far in using the collective *isnād* and by giving his main sources at the beginning, to be supplemented later by variant reports with single *isnāds*. He is more critical with his reports, dates and *isnāds*. Though he lectured on the *Sīra*, he wrote on the *maghāzī* proper.

Al-Wāqidi's studies met the requirements of the Islamic ideal. He wrote a book on the classes (*ṭabaqāt*) of the *Ṣaḥāba* and the *Ṭabiʿūn* for the benefit of *Ḥadīth* studies. This was carried further by his student Ibn Saʿd in his *Ṭabaqāt*. He wrote about the *umma* in his *al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr*, presumably dealing with the history of the caliphs (until 179/795). In addition, he wrote on major topics like the *riḍḍa* (Apostasy), *yawm al-Dār* (the murder of ʿUthmān), the battles of Ṣiffīn and the Camel, and the conquests of Iraq and Syria. Here, he stood on common ground with the Iraqi school of history.

Ibn Saʿd (168–230/784–845) is known for his *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*. He dealt with the *Sīra*, then the Companions and the Followers. He organized his *Sīra* by topics and added the *dalāʾil* (signs of prophecy) and *shamāʾil* (characteristics of the Prophet). His data were taken from the two schools. However, the end of these schools was near.

### III

Tribal interests and activities were pronounced in the new centres of Kufa and Basra. Concern with their exploits and genealogies (*ansāb*) continued, but in a new context. The conquests, the question of the caliphate, the rise of political parties and the idea of the *umma* – all had their impact.

Tribal centres became lively focal points of culture, where *akhbārīs*, linguists and genealogists were active. The *akhbārīs* (*khabar* means 'report' or

‘anecdote’) pursued historical studies, others did it as a side-line. Tribal anecdotes and reports were of common interest to a family or tribe and passed down from generation to generation. Their traditions accumulated, like those of the Azd, collected together with other reports by Abū Mikhnaf (d. 157/774), the traditions of the Kalb, gathered by ‘Awāna b. al-Ḥakam (d. 147/764), and those of the Tamīm gathered by Sayf b. ‘Umar (d. ca. 180/796). There were lesser tribal traditions as well.

*Akhhbār* were transmitted by single reporters. Before the end of the first/seventh century, some of these gathered a large number of reports on one event (or more). These were the grand *rāwīs* (reporters), who represented another step towards writing history. In the second/eighth century some of these *rāwīs* of *akhhbār* began to collect whatever reports they could relating to an event or movement, and then to present them, organized in coherent narratives, with some dates, and in book form. These were the *akhhbārīs*, the first historians in the tribal line.

As pioneers, the *akhhbārīs* worked extensively to gather *akhhbār*. Thus, they acquired individual, family and tribal reports in their places of origin. They went outside Iraq to Medina, and possibly Syria, for supplementary reports. They probably acquired documents in Kufa or Damascus, or even in Medina, from the *dīwāns* (bureaux) as well as the tribal registers. The *akhhbārīs* could not neglect the *isnād* (as is usual for tribal tales), yet used it with some laxity. Growing use reflected the influence of *Ḥadīth* and *maghāzī* studies.

The early works of the *akhhbārīs* date back to the same time as the first collections of *ḥadīth*. This indicates that historical studies went in line with general cultural developments. General trends in Kufa, such as tribal lines, party politics, opposition to the Umayyads and their idea of determinism, and the emphasis on human responsibility, can be detected in the works of *akhhbārīs*. The Umayyad concept of the state is rejected and sympathy with rebellions, or some justification for the rebels, is expressed. These activities, as well as those of the *maghāzī*, show that they were natural developments with no trace of external influence as to ideas or method.

The early *akhhbārīs* were Kūfīs of different tribes. Abū Mikhnaf, with ‘Alid leanings, dealt with the *ridḍa*, the conquest of Iraq and Syria, the *shūrā* (consultation), Ṣiffīn and other events – especially revolts – during the Umayyad period, and also the Khawārij. He took material from older and contemporary *rāwīs*, such as al-Sha‘bī (d. 110/728), al-Kalbī (d. 164/763) and Mujālid b. Sa‘īd; and some of his *rāwīs* had even participated in the events.

He benefited from family reports (especially on Ṣiffīn), traditions of his tribe, the Azd, and from *rāwīs* of other tribes like Tamīm, Hamdān, Ṭayy and Kinda. He added reports from Medina and his extensive research is shown by the large number of *isnāds* he uses. He usually gives the Iraqi (especially Kūfī) reports on events, since tribal pride could be seen in them. His family relations with the ‘Alids draw him closer to them and he links the cause of Kufa with

that of 'Alī. Still, he is moderate in his views. He gives a lively account of events, with speeches, dialogue and some poetry, reminiscent of the *ayyām* stories and indicative of tribal assemblies.

'Awāna b. al-Ḥakam (d. 147/764) combines interest in *ansāb* with that in *akhbār*. He wrote on the Orthodox Caliphs and the Umayyad period, thus dealing with the *ridda*, the conquests, the *fitna* (trial, sedition), the abdication of al-Ḥasan and the affairs of Iraq and Syria to the end of 'Abd al-Malik's reign. He is credited with two books: a *sīra* of Mu'awiya and the Umayyads (possibly the family's history), and the *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh*, probably history in annalistic form. He may have been 'Uthmānī. He reports Umayyad traditions, knows much about internal Umayyad affairs and expresses the Umayyad concept of political destiny. He reports mainly traditions of the pro-Umayyad Kalb (his own tribe). Yet he gives other Iraqi and Medinan reports, some of which are anti-Umayyad or pro-Zubayrid or 'Alid. He presents mostly the Umayyad version of events as opposed to the Iraqi. 'Awāna is lax with his *isnāds*.

Sayf b. 'Umar (d. 180/796) wrote two works: *Kitāb al-futūḥ al-kabīr wa -l-ridda* (Great Book of the Conquests and the Apostasy) and *Kitāb al-Jamal* (Book on the Camel) on the *fitna*. The first links the *ridda* to the conquests, probably to show the one line of expansion. He relied much on the traditions of the Tamīm and returned to Medina especially for data on the *ridda*. On the conquests, he is Kūfī in his traditions, Tamīmī in his inclination, while his style reminds us of that of the *ayyām*, with much poetry. On the *fitna*, he is closer to the line of the *ashraf* (descendants of the Prophet) and gives a coherent general view. Sayf dealt with major events which concerned the Iraqi tribes and is well-versed in their affairs.

With al-Madā'inī (135–225/752–839), a Baṣran, the studies of the *akhbār* reach their climax. He researched extensively the whole field of Arab-Islamic history until the 'Abbāsids and made use of the reports and works of *akhbār*, of the *maghāzī* and of *rāwīs* in Medina, Kufa and Basra, and he dealt with topics of the *akhbār*, the *Sīra* and the *ansāb*. He wrote monographs on each of the following: the *akhbār* of the Arabs, the *Sīra*, the conquests, the 'Abbāsids, the *ansāb* and other topics. He represents the merging of the different schools and trends of historical writing. His contributions and accuracy made him an important source for later historians.

We should also refer to genealogists who contributed to historical studies in their work, such as Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. 204/818), who expanded his father's work on Arab genealogy, *Jamharat al-nasab* (Collection of Genealogies), wrote works on Arab history before and after Islam and used different types of sources Persian histories, Yemeni popular stories, records of the kings of al-Ḥīra and *Isrā'īliyyāt*.

His contemporary, al-Haytham b. 'Adī (d. 206/891) was an *akhbār* and a genealogist. He wrote a history of the *ashraf*, *Ta'rikh al-ashraf al-kabīr*, probably in a genealogical frame. He also wrote a book on the classes, not only of tra-



ditionists but also of jurists, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahāʾ wa-l-muḥaddithīn*. He wrote on Kufa and on Basra, probably a topographical introduction with biographies of their traditionists. Finally, his *Taʾrīkh ʿala-l-simʾ* (History, Year by Year) seems to be a history in annalistic form. His book points to some future development.

The genealogy (with historical notes) of the Quraysh received special attention, starting with al-Zuhri's book, then Muṣʿab al-Zubayri's (233–236/847–850) work *Nasab Quraysh*, which gives important notes or details on personalities in the Jāhiliyya and Islam, with interesting information about women. From Zubayr b. Bakkār (172–235/788–850) we have a history of the Quraysh elaborated in a genealogical frame.

#### IV

Historical and quasi-historical studies produced a vast material of varying value. There was need for criticism and selection, and some common evaluation of works had already emerged. With the advent of the ʿAbbāsids, the idea of the *umma* gained a new emphasis, the general *ijmāʿ* (consensus) replaced local *ijmāʿ* and tribal ideas receded in public life. The new class of the secretaries emerged in public affairs and began to participate in historical studies.

The two schools soon shared common grounds and interests and, in line with cultural trends, a new development began with the rise of a number of great historians in the third/ninth century, who wrote general histories enthused by the idea of the *umma*, or universal history. The traditionist-jurist, the literary and the *kuttāb* lines are represented.

Al-Balādhuri (d. 279/891), a literary figure of *kuttāb* background, had a broad horizon. He travelled to many cities in Syria, al-Jazīra and Iraq and gathered local traditions. He wrote two works: *Futūḥ al-buldān* (Conquests of the Lands), or simply *al-Buldān*, and *Ansāb al-asbrāf*. The former is a comprehensive study of the conquests and later developments in the conquered territories up to his time.

Al-Balādhuri followed the geographical lines of the conquests, the western one, starting from Syria, and the eastern one, spreading from Iraq. The historical sequence is observed in each. In addition, he dealt with relevant cultural, administrative and financial questions, such as the Arabization of the *dīwāns*, currency and taxation. Here, al-Balādhuri explains the message of the Arabs and their rôle through Islam. His sources are extensive, including earlier works on the conquests, studies on history and *fiqh*, and he seems to have used official documents from the *dīwāns*. He was critical and selective in dealing with his sources. The core of his data is based on collective traditions (groups of sources), supplemented by single reports.

The *Ansāb al-asbrāf* is a general history of the Arabs in a genealogical frame. It unveils the continuity of history as played out by the *asbrāf*, people noted for their lineage (*nasab*) or rôle in public life and culture. Some Arabized

individuals (such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and ʿAdī al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib) are included. In plan, the *Ansāb* made use of the *ṭabaqāt* and *akhbār* approaches within the genealogical frame. Thus, he starts with the *Sīra* (and relevant pre-Islamic genealogy), the ʿAlids, ʿAbbāsids and Umayyads, the rest of Quraysh and the rest of Muḍar. However, Rabīʿa and Yemen are not included. al-Balādhurī did not live to finish this work.

The plan of genealogical works was set early, for it followed the lines of the *dīwān* (register of the *muqātila*).

In the *Ansāb*, his method is clearer in the extensive use of sources, in using collective traditions and in evaluating single reports. He relied heavily on the traditions and reports of Medina and paid special attention to relevant local reports and traditions. He frequently gives the *isnād* in single reports, but basically he used collective traditions (taken from a group of historians) to form the core of his data. He tried to be objective with the ʿAbbāsids, neutral with the ʿAlids and moderate with the Umayyads (to whom he devoted over one-third of the *Ansāb*). Al-Balādhurī paid much attention to administrative and economic affairs.

Al-Dīnawarī (d. 282/891), basically a linguist and botanist, wrote a universal history with emphasis on the rôle of the Arabs and Persians before and after Islam. He is brief and concentrated on specific events and topics. As sources he used the Iranian traditions and, mostly, works of the Iraqi school.

Al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 292/905) was a *kātib*, acquainted with some of the new sciences, and a traveller with an inquisitive mind. This influenced his writing. His *Taʾrīkh* is a universal history. The first part, on the pre-Islamic period, is topical and deals with old nations, with the emphasis on culture. The second part covers Islamic history (until 259/872), caliph by caliph, gives dates regularly and makes use of mathematical and astronomical calculations. His sources are wide. They include the Scriptures, translations from Greek and Persian, studies of *ḥisāb* (computation) and astronomy, and earlier works on history and genealogy, some of which he mentions by name. He could be critical about his sources, especially those on Iranian history. As to Islamic history, he was selective and he chose, so he says, the most comprehensive and trustworthy narratives and reports.

Al-Yaʿqūbī was pro-ʿAbbāsīd, but had Imāmī loyalties. This is seen in his glossing over some episodes embarrassing to the ʿAbbāsīds and in his pro-ʿAlid attitudes in anything concerning ʿAlī and the Imams.

He probably wrote for the benefit of the *kuttāb* and is usually precise and balanced. He wrote a small work, *Mushākalat al-nās li-zamānihim* (Resemblance of People to their Epoch) to show that people alter with the change of times. He seems to be a forerunner of historians of the next period, such as al-Masʿūdī.

The general line of traditionist historians is well represented. Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ's (d. 240/854) *Taʾrīkh* is the earliest annalistic history received, and probably the first general Islamic history. He starts with the *Sīra* and ends in

the year 232/846. He is highly selective of his reports and uses the *isnād*, especially for controversial events like the *fitna*. Yet he employs the *isnād* less regularly or strictly in history than in *ḥadīths*, which became the line of traditionist historiography. His sources are varied – works on *maghāzī*, *akhbār* and genealogy from Medina and Iraq. He seems to have used official documents and gives lists of administrative officers and judges for each caliph. His attitude to the ‘Abbāsids is detached and his history reflects the areas of interest of the traditionists.

Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) wrote *al-Ma‘ārif* (Knowledge), an encyclopaedia of historical information, to meet the needs of the cultured in every-day life. He combines what constitutes universal history, *ansāb*, sects and biographies of groups important in culture, and was the first to include the *ayyām*. He referred to the Old Testament, used weak and solid sources, but could be critical. His work shows the relevance of history to general culture.

Al-Fasawī (280/894), a traditionist, wrote *al-Ma‘rifā wa-l-ta’rīkh*, a general (universal) history, followed by biographies. It is brief and annalistic, and deals with history up to the year 242/856–857. Then he gives biographies of Companions and Followers and traditionists after them.

There were other indicative developments. There was the *ṭabaqāt* approach, the first we find here being the *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr* (Great Book of Classes) of Ibn Sa‘d. Its purpose was to help traditionists to evaluate the *isnād* of a *ḥadīth*. The author started with the *Sīra* and wrote also on the *ṣahāba*, without passing judgement on them, as he did with the *tābi‘ūn* and their followers. He set some measures to define the *ṭabaqa*, first of which was to meet the *shaykh* and to report directly from him. In the biography, he usually gives the *nasab* and recounts the personal affairs, traits, character, employments, scholarly attainments and participation in public life of each personality. He looked into history through the activities of the élite scholars of different backgrounds.

Local histories were written, such as the *Futūḥ al-Shām* (Conquest of Syria) of al-Azdi (early third/ninth century) and the *Futūḥ Miṣr* (Conquest of Egypt) of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 257/871). The latter, a traditionist, wrote the first history of Egypt, which is especially valuable for the conquests of that country, North Africa and Spain, the Arab settlements and the judges of Egypt. He gathered local reports and traditions mainly from traditionists and from Medina, with hardly any criticism, and became a source for later historians.

Al-Azdi’s account of the conquest of Syria, the first, contains Kufan, Basran and Syrian reports and seems to reflect Syrian traditions and interests. His sources include works of great *maghāzī* scholars and traditionists from various cultural centres.

Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), a jurist and traditionist, represents the climax of this formative period of historiography with his *Tarīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (History of the Messengers and Kings). He moved between the great centres of culture and made an extensive survey of available sources. *Isnād* research,

the careful choice of sources and the selection of reports are his means of criticism. Occasionally, he criticizes a report or rejects it. He tries to give more than one account of events, but usually – especially for the first/seventh century – he takes one historian, either an *akhbārī* or a *maghāzī* scholar, as the basis and supplements him from other reports (from Ibn Ishāq for the *Sīra*, Sayf b. ʿUmar for the *riḍḍa* and Abū Mikhnaf for the revolt of al-Ḥusayn). He made extensive use of archives and official reports. For his own period, he got information from participants in, and eye-witnesses of, events and sometimes recorded what he himself had witnessed.

Al-Ṭabarī described the Islamic period annalistically, up to 302/924. He gives more attention to Iraq and the East than to Egypt and Syria and neglects North Africa. He brings this period to an end, and many works were written after him as continuations of his *Taʾrīkh* (ʿArīb, al-Hamdānī) or were based on the period covered by him in his *Taʾrīkh* (like Miskawayh and Ibn al-Athīr).

The main lines of historical writing among the Arabs were set in the formative period (first-third/seventh-ninth centuries). Yet there were further developments. Historical studies were initiated in centres of political opposition, so that human responsibility was stressed. History was to deal mainly with the activities of men, especially in biographical works. It was written to show divine will, to express the idea of the *umma*, to indicate the rôle of the *ashraf* in history, or to stress values of good and evil.

## V

The fourth and fifth/tenth and sixth/eleventh centuries were a period of maturity for Islamic civilization and of decline for the ʿAbbāsīd caliphate. More people with knowledge of the new sciences, as well as secretaries, participated in writing.

Al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956), a historian and geographer, comes first. A dedicated traveller, interested in the sciences of his age, both philosophical and natural, he wrote universal histories, in successive and narrowing circles, *Akbbār al-ẓamān* (Reports on the Times), *al-Awsaṭ* (The Middle Book), *Murūj al-dhahab* (The Meadows of Gold) and finally, *al-Tanbīh wal-isbrāf* (The Notification and Revision), with a cultural bent. But not each work is a summary of the previous one, as is the case of the *Murūj* and *Tanbīh*, but may constitute a fresh writing with some new data. Al-Masʿūdī had a comprehensive view of history and noted the impact of geography on the cultures and traits of nations. His interests are broad, covering history, ethnography, religious beliefs and culture. His sources are wide: previous works, information he gathered on his travels and his personal experiences. He tried to be critical with his written sources, but probably could not be so with information he got from people he met from various walks of life, yet he considered the people of a province the best source of information about it. He gives a fairly compre-

hensive list of historical works and commented on some, but he mentioned only those by famous or well-known authors. He particularly praises historians or sources who are direct observers or are original.

Al-Mas'ūdī was influenced by the Mu'tazila, hence his emphasis on research (*baḥṭh*) and observation (*naẓar*), rather than imitation, as the proper way to knowledge (*'ilm*). And that is felt in his history.

The main type of history was now annalistic and contemporary, preceded by a summary of universal history. It was led by high-ranking officials and courtiers. Thus, their sources were mainly official documents, contact with high official and court circles, oral and personal knowledge. Historians like Miskawayh and Hilāl al-Ṣābī (d. 488/1056) show much objectivity. Miskawayh (325–421/936–1030), a historian, philosopher and secretary, wrote the *Tajārib al-umam* (Experiences of the Peoples). He served Buwayhid ministers (especially al-Muhallabī and Ibn al-'Amīd) and had contacts with the great minds of his time. He studied al-Ṭabarī with one of his students.

He wrote a universal history to record the experiences of nations for the benefit of people, especially rulers, ministers, generals and other administrators. This he did because he found that history gives lessons and enriches experience. Therefore, it deals with human behaviour unconnected with the miraculous. He seems interested in the reasons for the rise and fall of dynasties and in the historical process. Miskawayh based his *Tajārib* on al-Ṭabarī for the period covered by the latter, but presented it condensed and without *isnāds*. These were available in the sources, and historians who were not traditionists were not much concerned about them. For the period from 295/907 on, he relied on Thābit b. Sinān.

It is from 340/951 that the history of Miskawayh changes in method, tone and significance. He states that from that date he related what he saw and observed, or what amounts to that in accuracy, that is information from Ibn al-'Amīd, al-Muhallabī and some *mashāyikh*. His position under the Buwayhids enabled him to widen his sources, to have access to documents and to observe developments closely. He dealt with events and paid attention to economic and social conditions. He concentrates on human affairs, evaluates his sources and is critical of Buwayhid *amīrs* and the army. His approach is regional and his views are influenced by his philosophical interests, which centre on ethics and political ideas.

Al-Bīrūnī (362–440/973–1041), a scientist concerned mainly with astronomy, mathematics and natural science, but almost as much with religion and philosophy, wrote on cultural history. His work on India, *Kitāb fi taḥqīq mā li-l-Hind* (Book of Investigation of what is in India) is a profound study of a foreign culture – Hindu religion, philosophy, traditions, morals and scientific achievements – and a comparison with the parallel aspects of other cultures. His other work, *al-Āthār al-bāqīya* (Surviving Remnants) [Fig. 1], shows much interest in chronologies and concern about cultures outside Islam.

الطير من الجلي وشو سيريٓت فبين لي حيي الخلع لسي وان كان غير كاهله ويترك  
 واهل الدنيا ذلك وجد عليهم بالطير فترتك عن الكاون وتخرج من القبة وتجلس  
 على اللبكا هو المتخذ من ذهب شبيه الشير اصغر منه وكان الرسم ان يكون  
 في بيت نار جليل وتبكا هو من ذهب حتى اذا دخل الملك اليه جلس عليه فدنا منه  
 السنة والفريضة وسلموا عليه كما يسلك على الملوك فقال لهم ما اظنظرة لكم

اللبكا



واخفاكم وانهميكم لو تسلموا علي في ذلك الوقت فقالوا لا تسكتا وقرنا على راسك اللبكا  
 منك وللمعجنا ان تسلك عليك وعن وقف على راسه تصدقتم ووصلتم ثم خرج  
 عن مدينة اذربايجان نحو مدينة دار فلما انتهى الي الموضع الذي فيه في هذا الوقت  
 المعروف بكامغيرود من فارس وكان حينئذ حكامه لا يمارونه فيما زعمت سجانه واقبلت  
 بانظاره لمعه يد سلكها غزارة حتى تروى المياه في السردق والحيام واقفن فيروز بان دعوة فلما حبت  
 فخر بالله راى ان ضرب مضاربه في ذلك الموضع وتصدق وجاز بالاعمال واتخذ الخالص وفرح ولو  
 يترج منه حتى انشاء هذا الرستاو الجليل وسماه كسامغيرود وفيروز اسمه وكام هو

مدينة اذربايجان

رستاو كامغيرود

V-2.1 *Al-Āthār al-bāqīya ‘an al-qurūn al-ḥālīya*  
 of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Birūnī

Anonymous copy from tenth/sixteenth century  
 Fīrūz, the Sāsānid King of Persia, in the temple of the  
 Holy Fire, p. 1042

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Al-Bīrūnī had a critical mind bent on observation and research. ‘Hearing (news) is not like observation,’ runs a proverb. In the past, reliance was upon written sources, but many wrote with a bias, or with ulterior motives and lies, so they must be carefully scrutinized. He criticized what was written on Hindu religion. Al-Bīrūnī’s objective was the search for the truth and he rejects what contradicts logic or the laws of the physical sciences. He did not write on Hindu religion for refutation, but said, ‘My book is nothing but a simple historical record of facts.’ He dealt with sources in the original language (for example, Sanskrit), which represents a step beyond al-Mas‘ūdī, who relied on secondary works. Being a linguist, he was sensitive to the exact translation of idioms. He devoted much effort to finding Sanskrit sources. Yet he valued observations and discussions with scholars and specialists. Here he is as discerning and critical as he is with written sources. But the search for truth requires honesty and objectivity, beyond prejudice or ambition or greed.

These historians made man the centre of attention, valued observation and ignored the *isnād*. They tried to be critical and dealt with social, cultural and economic aspects.

There appeared some great historians who wrote biographies in an urban context. It was a period of intense cultural activity in the great cities. They did not write the history of the city in the context of general history, like Ṭayfūr’s (d. 280/896) history of Baghdad, nor a history of a city containing details of its topography with reference to traditionists who lived or stayed there, only to quote some traditions they reported, as Baḥshal (d. 292/905) did in his history of al-Wāsiṭ. They would write the history of the city with details on its topography, followed by biographies, as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī did in his *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, Ibn ‘Asākir in his *Ta’rīkh Dimashq* (629/1230) and Ibn al-‘Adīm (d. 660/1262) in his history of Aleppo, *Bughyat al-ṭalab* (The Object of Desire). Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (392–463/1002–1071) travelled widely in search of *ḥadīth* (Iraq, Iran, Syria and the Ḥijāz). In his *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, he gave a fairly detailed topography of the city, followed by biographies of caliphs, ministers, commanders, judges and other dignitaries, but gave more attention and space to traditionists, including some women. He tried to give fairly full biographies (personal data, education, activities, careers, ideas and beliefs). He used the *isnād* strictly and was critical in dealing with his sources in order to detect unusual reports or to compare reports and to check data, or simply to express his doubts. He relied on previous masters in assessing reporters and traditionists, *al-jarḥ wa-l-ta’dīl* (impugning and confirming), and expressed his personal views. For contemporaries he used his judgement, as he was a master in evaluating traditionists.

Another approach was to weave history around biographies of some public figures: ministers like al-Jahshiyārī (d. 331/942), Hilāl al-Ṣābī and al-Ṣayrafī (d. 524/1147), judges like al-Kindī (d. 350/961), and public figures with poetic talents such as al-Ṣūlī (d. 335/946).

## VI

Starting from the mid-fifth/eleventh century, the Saljūqs moved westwards, the sultanate emerged, the army took control of the administration and military *iqṭāʿ* (feudal estates) expanded. The *madrassa* was institutionalized, spread to Syria and Egypt and took the rôle of the preserver of knowledge. Gradually, the military and the *ʿulamāʾ* became the two pillars of authority. Yet, the common people had at times some rôle to play and could not be ignored. The centre of cultural and political activities moved to Syria and Egypt.

Earlier approaches to historical writing continued with some new developments. During the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, universal histories were written, as were annals with biographies. This expresses an emphasis on the concept of the one *umma* above political entities. Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), a traditionist, initiated the method of arranging biographies alphabetically, following each year of the annals. For his *al-Muntaẓam* (The Well-Organized) sources are vast, so he is selective and, occasionally, critical. He omitted most of the *isnāds* for 'brevity'. In addition to economic data, he gave many details about the activities of the *ʿayyārūn* and *shuṭṭār* (vagabonds and villains, i.e. the masses). In the last part, he concentrated on Iraq.

Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) wanted his *Kāmil fi-l-taʾrīkh* (Complete History) to be a solid and balanced history, covering the Mashriq and the Maghrib. Though annalistic, in his method he maintained the unity of his topics and tried to give a coherent account of some dynasties. He is fairly comprehensive as he is a product of the Islamic idea of the *umma*. This is emphasized in his references to external dangers threatening it from east and west. He had a comprehensive view of the events in his time and shows an independent mind in his comments and criticism. His sources are varied, including oral sources for his own time.

Local histories were written concerning the Zangids and Ayyūbids. They were produced mostly by officials and secretaries in contact with events. Oral reports were an important source for these. Ibn al-Qalānīsī (d. 555/1160), a secretary and twice *raʾīs* of Damascus, wrote the Damascus chronicle, combining annals with biographies. He gave a solid account of the first fifty years of the Crusades, deriving his data mainly from trustworthy contemporaries and participants, from personal observation and partly from documents. Ibn al-Athīr in his history of the Atābaks of Mosul relied mainly on his father and resorted to some contemporaries. Ibn Shaddād stated that in his biography of Salāḥ al-Dīn, he relied in the first part (until 584/1188) on reports of trustworthy people who witnessed events. But for the next part, he wrote of what he saw and what people whom he trusted had seen.

Al-ʿImād al-İṣfahānī (d. 597/1210), a secretary who served Nūr al-Dīn and Salāḥ al-Dīn, wrote *al-Barq al-Shāmī* (Syrian Lightning) on both sultans. His sources are direct: his own observations, reports from participants and ar-



chives. Thus, it comes closer to being an official document. His *al-Fatḥ al-quḍṣī* (The Holy History) on the *jihād* of Salāḥ al-Dīn, centring on the conquest of Jerusalem, depended on his own observations and information.

Biographical dictionaries were written. Ibn Khallikān clearly developed this genre. His *Wafayāt al-aʿyān* (Death Notices of Eminent Persons), is a comprehensive biographical dictionary, not limited to a group, but dealing with all those who 'gained fame'. He did not write on caliphs, Companions and Followers, except for a few, because much was already written on them. He read all relevant material, important or not, and took already from great contemporary scholars, condensed his data and tried to be accurate, honest and fair. He kept on returning to his first draft to check and add. He thus stressed the importance of historical knowledge for the benefit of all.

## VII

After the Mongol invasion of Iraq (656/1258) historical writing declined there, except for two authors who continued the tradition: Ibn al-Sāʿī (d. 674/1275), who wrote a detailed annalistic history, *al-Jāmiʿ al-mukhtaṣar* (The Concise General History), lost except for the years 595–606/1198–1209, and Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (723/1323), to whom the first centennial history, *al-Ḥawādiṭh al-jāmiʿa* [Comprehensive Events] covering the seventh/thirteenth century (the years 626–700/1228–1301), is attributed. He also wrote a biographical dictionary arranged according to nicknames and titles (*Muʿjam al-alqāb*).

The general lines of historical writing continued during Mamlūk times. It was a period of expansion for the *madrassa* and of accumulation of knowledge, leading to voluminous or encyclopaedic works, such as al-Nuwayrī's (d. 732/1332) *Nihāyat al-Arab* (The Ultimate Goal), al-ʿUmari's (d. 749/1348) *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār* (Paths of Vision, on the Kingdoms of the Regions) and al-Qalqashandī's (d. 821/1418) *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* (Dawn of the Dim-sighted). Historians were either religious scholars or related to the military caste. They usually held high posts in the judiciary or administration, which enabled them to be well informed. There were several general or universal histories, but Egyptian historians, especially of the ninth/fifteenth century, concentrated on their own region. For earlier periods, they are brief, but they become detailed for their contemporary period, recording daily events and activities, including matters of daily life, such as prices, crops, the building of a mosque and the like.

This interest in contemporary history explains why some historians wrote continuations (*takmila* OR *dhayl*) of histories written earlier. Thus, Ibn Taghribirdī's *Ḥawādiṭh al-dubūr* (Events of the Ages) is a continuation of the *Sulūk* of al-Maqrīzī, while al-Sakhāwī's *al-Tibr al-masbūk* (Smelted Gold) is yet another continuation of the *Sulūk* and Ibn Ḥajar's *Inbāʾ al-ghumr* (Advising the Ignorant) brings Ibn Kathīr's *Bidāya* up to date.

For past periods, historians take material from earlier sources without criticism and occasionally mention who they are. For contemporary periods, they express opinions, or criticize or make other comments. Their contribution here depends on their ability to obtain news and data from public figures, credible sources and official documents.

General histories usually combine history and biography, a trend established by Ibn al-Jawzī. Al-Dhahabī's (673–748/1274–1348) history, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām*, deals with events and biographies from 1–700/622–1300. He divided it into units of ten years each, called *ṭabaqāt* (classes). With events, he adopted an annalistic approach; with biographies, he mixed them with events for the first forty years, while from 41/661 to 300/921 they are grouped in periods of ten years each and arranged alphabetically. Thereafter, he gives the biographies (obituaries) annually. His main interest lay in these biographies, so they became the core for the later periods. He had to be selective with regard to the mass of sources. They covered all groups of people, whether rulers, administrators, judges, religious scholars, philosophers or linguists, from East and West. He turned to all types of historical literature, oral sources (by hearing or correspondence), personal knowledge and documents, and was critical in his biographies, and occasionally of his sources.

Al-Nuwayrī (677–732/1279–1332), a secretary, wrote the *Nihāyat al-ʿArab*, an encyclopaedia of all the knowledge a good secretary (*kātib*) needed. It is divided into five parts (*funūn*). The fifth is a universal history and makes up about two-thirds of the whole. It deals with Islamic history, Eastern and Western, in regional or dynastic sections, and ends with the history of Egypt in annalistic form up to his own time (731/1331). His importance lies in his basic plan and in his sources and he is of great value for the contemporary period, for in his position he could get access to official documents and direct information through his contacts with highly placed officials.

Ibn Kathīr (700–774/1300–1373), a Syrian traditionist, wrote his *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya* (The Beginning and the End), a universal history 'from the creation to 767/1365–1366', but he adds a chapter on the end of the world. His is a fine example of annalistic history. He refers to his sources, which are rich and most important for the respective periods. In addition to classical historians, he used Iraqi and Syrian sources of the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries. His contribution is obvious, at times even for the early periods when he used such materials as the *Sīra*, as he appealed to the earliest sources. The contemporary part is mainly a history of Syria, which Ibn Kathīr knew or drew from contemporaries. It touches on all aspects of life: administrative, financial, social and cultural.

Al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1442) adopted another approach. His historical works dealt mainly with Egypt. He wrote *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-ʾIʿtibār* (Exhortations and Contemplation), which covers the history of Egypt and the affairs of the people through the history of its cities, especially al-Fuṣṭāṭ (Cairo),

including its topography, quarters and monuments. He dealt with social, economic and cultural history. His experience, through the various posts he had held, enabled him to see and appreciate the life of the people. Thus, he expected his work to be useful for the élite and for ordinary folks. His sources, he said, were three: (i) previous works, and he mentioned those who wrote on the *kḥiṭāṭ* before him; (ii) reports from *shaykhs* and dignitaries he had met; (iii) observations on what he had seen and inspected. He does refer to his sources, but not always. However, his *Mawāʿiẓ* tends to be a cultural history. His other works were an expansion of the following three periods: the early Islamic (al-Fuṣṭāṭ) period; the *Ittiʿāẓ* (Admonition), about the Fāṭimid period; and the *Sulūk li-maʿrifat al-mulūk* (Acquiring Knowledge of the Kings), about the Ayyūbids and Mamlūks (not to mention biographical works). The *Sulūk* is an annalistic history, getting more detailed as the author approaches his own time. It has a wealth of data, administrative, economic and social, in addition to obituaries.

Ibn Ḥajar (773–852/1361–1418), a great traditionist holding high posts in the judiciary, wrote a contemporary history, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, starting with 773/1371, the year of his birth and continuing to 850/1446. It is an annalistic chronicle combined with biographies. He recorded what he saw or heard from other scholars and public figures. Besides, he used sources written by his *shaykhs* and colleagues. He dealt with Egypt but also referred to other Muslim lands.

Ibn Taghribirdī (812–874/1406–1469) belonged to the military establishment (*awlād al-nās*). He wrote *al-Nujūm al-ẓāhira* (Shining Stars), a general history covering the years 20–872/641–1468, but centred on Egypt. The contemporary period is detailed and important, owing to his contacts with sultans and dignitaries. He also wrote a biographical dictionary, *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi* (The Limpid Pool), of scholars, dignitaries, emirs and sultans during the Mamlūk period. History for him (even in biographies) set examples to be followed or avoided. He tried to be fair and to give his sources.

Ibn Iyās (852–930/1448–1524), also of the *awlād al-nās*, roughly followed the method of Ibn Taghribirdī in his *Badāʾiʿ al-ẓubūr* (Wonders of the Blossoms), which is a general history of Egypt until 928/1522. It is of special importance for the decline and fall of the Mamlūks as the author was an eyewitness of the Ottoman conquest – an honest and critical one. For earlier periods, he mentions his sources; for contemporary history, he uses oral sources and personal observations.

Biographical literature flourished, as can be seen in obituaries and especially in biographical dictionaries, which became comprehensive. This approach continued even when the writing of history declined (as happened in Syria during the Ottoman period).

Biographies are now considered history. Al-Safadī finds examples and experience therein. Al-Subkī considered his *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya* a book of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, history and *adab*. Al-Kutubī finds in it ‘the mirror of time’. Al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505) begins his biographies in his *Naẓm al-ʿiqān* (String of

Gold) with an introduction on the merits of history and his method. Al-Subkī (d. 771/1369), in his critical attitude, stated the conditions of a good historian and set regulations for the proper writing of a biography.

The basis for writing a biography is the subject's achievement or contribution. There were biographies of special groups: men-of-letters, secretaries, physicians and the like. In this period Ibn Ḥajar initiated the writing of biographies for one century in his *al-Durar al-kāmina* (The Hidden Pearls) (for the eighth/fourteenth century). He was followed in the succeeding centuries by al-Sakhāwī (for the ninth/fifteenth), al-Ghazzī (for the tenth/sixteenth), al-Muḥibbī (for the eleventh/seventeenth) and al-Murādī (for the twelfth/eighteenth).

Al-Ṣafādī, quoted by al-Suyūṭī, indicates that the elements a biography should contain are: who the subject is, his origins, *madhhab*, distinction in *ʿilm*, position and masters (*shuyūkh*). Dates of birth and death were added and an evaluation was made. Sources for biographies were previous works and oral sources were always there. Personal knowledge, correspondence and information provided by others were important sources for contemporaries.

In the ninth/fifteenth century works were written on the science of history. Al-Kāfiyājī (d. 874/1474) wrote *al-Mukhtaṣar fī ʿilm al-taʾrikh* (Compendium on the Science of History) and al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) produced his *al-ʿIlān bi-l-tawbīkh* (Declaration of Reproach). Both dealt with the origins, definition and objectives of history. The qualifications of historians, their history and their methodology are treated with an enumeration of historical works. They defended history against those who considered it unnecessary or useless.

Ibn Khaldūn (808/1406) wrote a universal history in three books. The first Part is called the *Muqaddima* (Introduction), the second is concerned with the Arabs and their contemporaries and the third covers the Berbers. In the *Muqaddima*, he deals with the historian's craft – the excellence of history, the verification of historical methods and the faults of historians. He distinguishes between critical inquiry (*naẓar*) and mere copying (*naql*). He classifies earlier historians and criticizes their methods. He tries to relate the reasons for mistakes made in history to the inability of historians and their ignorance of the conditions of culture. He tried to establish and develop the science of culture, a new science which constitutes a rational inquiry into the nature of man and culture. If history ordinarily ascertains external events, this new science explains the nature and the reasons for those events.

Ibn Khaldūn evolved a comprehensive dialectical view of the development of societies and tried to define the stages in the rise, development and decline of nations. Though he did not apply his critical method in his own history, his ideas about the nature of culture can be detected in it (especially for early Islam).

## VIII

The first Ottoman period (tenth-twelfth/sixteenth-eighteenth centuries) was one of cultural decline. The writing of history suffered a decline in method, a neglect of sources and an absence of any historical idea.

In Egypt there were two approaches. The first was that of the 'ulamā', who tried to follow traditional lines of writing by annals or dynasties, like al-Ishāqī (d. 1060/1650) in his *Laṭā'if akhbār al-duwal* (Niceties of the Reports of Dynasties), which dealt briefly with the successive states that ruled Egypt up to the Ottoman conquest and the subsequent governors until 1031/1622. Muḥammad b. Abi-l-Surūr al-Bakrī (d. 1087/1676) wrote *al-Nuzḥa al-ḡābiya* (The Splendid Diversion), a brief survey of the rulers of Egypt until 1042/1632. He also dealt with the judges of the country. The last chapter is on the cities and wonders of Egypt. The second approach was the school of the *ajmād* (the military), who wrote on the history of Egypt out of interest and in a modest and almost popular style. There was hardly any plan, but they offered interesting data. First came Aḥmad b. Sunbul al-Rammāl (d. after 961/1552), who wrote the *Ta'rīkh Miṣr min al-Jarākisa* (History of Egypt from the Circassians), and then Aḥmad al-Damurdāshī (d. 1169/1755), who wrote *al-Durar al-muṣāna fī akhbār al-Kināna* (Pearls, on the History of the Kināna).

In Iraq, the earlier writers came from the second half of the seventeenth century, such as al-Ka'bi (d. c. 1095/1683) with his *Zād al-musāfir* (Provisions of the Traveller) on the first dynasty in Basra (Āl Afrāsiyāb), and al-Ghurābī (end of the seventeenth century), who wrote a general annalistic history of Islam until the Ottomans, with special reference to Iraq. His sources for the contemporary period were oral history, inscriptions, archives and, from 1140/1776 onwards, his own observations and notes.

In Syria, writing wavered between narrow local accounts and general histories. Ibn Ṭulūn al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 953/1545) wrote works on Damascus and its governors, judges and 'ulamā' (such as his *I'lām al-warā* (Information for Mankind), in which he wrote its history, governor by governor, from 658/1260 until his own time. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī (d. after 971/1563) wrote the *Durr al-Ḥalab* (Pearls of Aleppo) on the history of the notables of Aleppo.

In Syria, the approach to historiography was generally biographical, covering scholars from Egypt, Iraq and the Ḥijāz, in addition to Syria. Al-Ghazzī's (d. 1061/1651) *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira* (The Wandering Stars) on the notables of the tenth/sixteenth century, al-Muḥibbī's (d. 1111/1699) *Kbulāṣat al-āthār* (Essence of Traditions) on the people of the eleventh/seventeenth century, as well as al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī's (d. 1098/1697) *Shadharāt al-dhabab* (Particles of Gold), were all annals with biographies.

The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw some developments that affected historical writing: the rise of local rulers, the beginnings of a merchant class in the cities and the stirrings of a cultural awakening.

Al-Jabartī (d. 1241/1825) wrote his *‘Ajā’ib al-āthār* (Marvels of Relics), dealing briefly with the history of Egypt from early times until the Ottoman period, when it becomes detailed, then the French occupation, and finally the period of Muḥammad ‘Alī. It is a great work, combining the traditions of the annals with obituaries and the broad, popular interest of the *ajnād*-school. He shows objectivity and a critical mind. With his wide interests he gives prices, refers to social and economic life and extends his obituaries to Ṣūfīs, craftsmen and merchants. His sources include oral reports, inscriptions and, from 1190/1776 on, his own observations and notes, as well as documents.

In Iraq, under the Mamlūks (1163–1247/1750–1831), the *‘ulamā’* wrote contemporary histories of *walīs* (governors) or of Baghdad, such as the work of ‘Uthmān b. Sanad al-Baṣrī (d. 1242/1827), *Maṭālib al-su‘ūd* (The Onset of Good Fortune), on Dāwūd Pāshā; al-Suwaydī’s *Ḥadīqat al-ḡawrā’* (The Garden of Baghdad) on the viziers Ḥasan Pāshā and his son Aḥmad Pāshā; and al-Karkūklī’s (d. 1240/1824) *Dawḥat al-wuḡarā’* (Family Tree of the Viziers). The approach is usually annalistic and official contacts enabled writers to get first-hand information, private papers and archives.

## IX

The nineteenth century saw important changes: the growing impact of the West, the reforms of Muḥammad ‘Alī, the *Tanzīmāt* in the Ottoman empire and the Awakening (*nahḍa*), both Arab and Islamic. Excavations and the deciphering of ancient languages aroused interest in past civilizations.

The missions to Europe sent by Muḥammad ‘Alī and his successors had their impact. Rifā‘a Bey al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (d. 1290/1873) played a leading rôle. Works on European and ancient history were translated under his supervision. Later, he planned to write a history of Egypt. The first volume covered the ancient period to the Arab conquest. He was the first to make use of excavation reports and of modern European studies. His tone was patriotic (*watānī*) and his method fairly critical. His second volume, on the life of the Prophet, is interesting for the section it had on institutions.

Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s circle had basically undergone an Islamic education, while ‘Alī Mubārak (d. 1311/1893), an engineer, and his circle had enjoyed a modern (scientific or other) education, but both were exposed to French culture. Mubārak wrote on the *ḵbiṭat* (following al-Maqrīzī). It is a topographical study of cities, with biographies of prominent people who lived there: dignitaries, *‘ulamā’* and men-of-letters. He made use of written sources, archaeological excavations, personal knowledge, documents and inscriptions.

In this circle, there were archaeologists and historians who wrote on ancient history, especially that of Egypt, such as Aḥmad Kamāl Pāshā (1850–1923), and on the Islamic period, ‘Alī Bahjat Beg (1859–1928), who wrote on the excavation of al-Fuṣṭāṭ.

The national movements (*waṭaniyya*), represented first by the Urabi revolt and later by Muṣṭafā Kāmil and his party, had a great impact. Most of the writers of the latter part of the nineteenth century were members of these movements. Some wrote their memoirs of the Urabi revolt to justify or explain themselves (Urabi himself, ‘Abd Allāh al-Nadīm). Others wrote on Egypt and the Eastern Question (for example, Muṣṭafā Kāmil, Sālīm Naqqāsh and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Rāfi‘ī).

Some methodology began to develop. Writing on specific topics began to replace annals, criticism and analysis were applied and the style became simple. Then, history was introduced into the curriculum of the Dār al-‘ulūm and the Teachers High School, and finally into the Egyptian University (1928).

Syria and Iraq lagged behind and historical writing there was traditional, mainly biographical. Still, there were some pointers. A general history of Syria was written by al-Dibs (d. 1907). Kāmil al-Ghazzī (d. 1932) wrote a work on Aleppo, covering its monuments, quarters, crafts, *waqfs* and history. Al-Qāsimī (d. 1900) wrote on the industries and crafts of Syria. In Iraq, the rôle of tribes is seen in al-Suwaydī’s study of the *ansāb* of Arab tribes, *Sabā’ik al-dhabab*. Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Ālūsī wrote a fine work on the Arabs before Islam, a cultural history indicative of new times.

## X

In the twentieth century historical writing gradually took its present shape, as is reflected in its method, documentation, choice of subjects and attitudes to history. In general there are two lines of writing. The first follows traditional approaches, rather modestly, and the second is more influenced by modern methods and ideas.

Initially, historical writing was done by people with no training in history – lawyers, military people, men-of-letters, ‘*ulamā*’ and the like. And some still make such contributions. The others were mainly trained in universities. Writing in accordance with modern methods and approaches became clearer after the first decades of this century.

The motives for writing history are varied. History is necessary to establish an identity, to meet external cultural threats and to foster unity (local or Arab). Questions of progress and of Western expansion (political and cultural) were basic factors for the return to historical research. Excavations in Arabia and the deciphering of ancient scripts led to studies on the ancient history and civilizations of Arabia, not just of the *Jābiliyya* (the two centuries before Islam).

New developments took place in writing. There are histories of the *umma* of Islam. General works were written on the history of the Arabs before Islam or after, or both, by dynasties or periods. Studies were written on major dynasties in Arab history (for example the Umayyads, the ‘Abbāsids), or on smaller dynasties for their local importance (the Ṭūlūnids and the

Aghlabids). Biographies of great figures in politics, war, Islamic studies, administration and the like were written. This could be in line with traditional writing, but in most cases a new trend can be seen in studying the milieu or period in which the person lived, too. In fact, a historical period could be studied by writing on a caliph or another great figure.

The Crusades are considered a topic in their own right, a new trend. General studies and investigations of individual Crusades or of outstanding Muslim leaders were carried out. This line was fostered by European works, European expansion and finally the conflict with Israel. Some considered the encounter as a war of liberation, while some saw it as a phase of the conflict between East and West or between Christianity and Islam.

Local histories were written. After the World War I, the trend arose to write a modern history of individual Arab countries. The creation of new states explains increasing attempts to give the country or state an identity and a rôle in history. Past periods of such a country received more attention, too.

However, general works on modern Arab history have been written. Increasingly, studies are undertaken on the history of Arab-Islamic cities - a few along traditional lines, but generally along new ones. Thus, studies on topography, urban life, socio-economic and cultural factors and historical developments were carried out. Sources included historical and geographical literature as well as archaeological data.

Writings were mostly on political history, usually the history of one period or more, or of a dynasty or a ruler. Gradually, more studies were carried out on different aspects of civilization - institutions, administration and culture. In the last few decades, socio-economic history has received much attention. Thus, we have works on the economic history of a country or period, or on aspects of economic life and finance, such as agriculture, markets, crafts, *hisba*, taxation, land tenure or coinage.

The Arabs have also written on other countries and peoples, involving topics such as Greek, Roman and Byzantine history, the history of Europe and of the United States, and that of the Asian and African countries. This is a modern trend. Yet what has been written here is rather limited.

Methodology requires an evaluation of sources. This led to studies on historiography (especially Arab), as well as to translations. Works appeared on Arab historiography in general, on historians of a specific country and on individual scholars. This is a new trend.

Political and social currents had their impact on historical writings. Islamic ideas - Arabism, nationalism and other concepts - are represented. In the Islamic field, history entails that of the Islamic *umma* and Islamic history becomes the centre of all history. Here it is the expression of the will of God, and the process of history is the creative meeting between God, man, nature and time. History is linked to creed, and the method of *Hadith* criticism is applied to historical study.



In the view of Arabism, the *umma* is the Arab nation and emphasis is placed on its rôle and achievements in history. History here is the common memory of the *umma* and a basis for its common spirit and for its identity. It arouses national feelings and drives towards unity. It was a major factor in movements of liberation and in building the nation. The aim of historical studies is to understand the present and to build a better future.

Nationalism (*waṭaniyya*) and localism (*iqḷmiyya*) affected writing. The fragmentation of the Arabs since World War I led to attempts to write history in such a way that each political entity would be given a special identity and rôle and be provided with legitimism. Marxism, in one form or another, influenced some studies – though few – on social movements and economic and cultural history.

The attitude to sources is another problem. Usually writers limit their sources to annals, chronicles and biographies. But attempts have been made to broaden this base so that it includes all sorts of literature. Lately attention has been paid to documents as a major source. Ottoman documents, *waqf* and religious courts' registers and other official papers (Arab and Western) are being referred to. But their use is still limited. The same applies to the use of the results of archaeological studies and excavations.

Writing Arab history is now carried out by people of three different disciplines. In addition to historians of all kinds, some scholars study history in the field of religious studies and others the realm of *adab*-literature. Each circle within has its own approach and, probably, method, a situation which could enrich these studies, or indeed weaken them. Much depends on evolving a common methodology.

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Chapter 3

PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY  
FROM THE ĪLKHĀNID  
PERIOD TO THE VIGILANCE AND  
RENAISSANCE ERAS

*Iraj Afshar*

Persian historiography during the seven centuries which elapsed from the Īlkhānid period until the end of the nineteenth century is based on the same axis as that of past centuries and is a continuation of earlier historians' customary rules. While Firdawsī has included the histories of the Sāsānid dynasty in his *Shāh-nāma*, from the Īlkhānid period onwards there have been poets and historians who have followed the example of his epic-writing and composed epic and historical poetry on later events, and such histories were composed in poetical form for Genghis Khān, Tīmūr, Shāh Ismā'īl, Fath 'Alī Shāh Qājār and Riḍā Shāh Pahlawī.

Official and courtly historiography was in vogue during all the periods of these seven centuries. Most of the important and famous historical accounts, which became increasingly common, were written by historiographers or men-of-letters upon the request or order of kings, princes and ministers. If any historian wrote a book of his own, he generally dedicated it to some king or minister in order to get a reward. The number of works written about Iranian history during these seven centuries is quite high and if we wish to have statistics, taking into consideration the published bibliographies (C. A. Storey, Kh. Mushār and A. Munzawī), about 1,500 titles on history can be mentioned. These may be divided into the following branches:

### General histories<sup>1</sup>

Historical works in this group generally start by mentioning events and stories from the era of Adam and end at the time of the writer. These books are

1. Works which have been published are marked in this chapter with an asterisk. Further details may be found in the General Bibliography.

sometimes divided into dynastic or periodic chapters, as in the copies of the *Jabān āra*\* by Ghāzī Aḥmad Ghaffārī (written in 972/1564), and are sometimes written in chronological order, as, for example, the *Muḥmal-i Faṣīḥī* (The Compendium of Faṣīḥ)\* by Faṣīḥ al-Dīn Aḥmad Khwāfī (written in 845/1441).

As regards the content of such books in the contemporary sections, a certain similarity is rather obvious in that each new writer generally had at hand the common and known sources of earlier historians. But whenever he tried to include information and events that were nearer the time and place he lived in, his book would gain preference and distinction over similar works, and obviously such parts of general histories would have more importance and academic value than, say, the events concerning the first half of the eighth/fourteenth century in the *Tāriḫ-i guz̄ida* (The Choice of History) by Ḥamd Allāh Muṣṭawfī Qazwīnī (written in 730/1329) or the section on Tīmūr's successors in the *Jāmi<sup>c</sup> al-tawārīḫ-i Ḥasanī* (The Universal History of Ḥasan) by Ḥasan b. Shihāb Yazdī (written in 855/1451).

Of course, the approach of writers to analysing past events, and even the style of writing and the mention of sources, are effective in the validity and survival of such general histories, and this is why two such histories, namely *Rawḍat al-ṣafā fi sirat al-anbiyā<sup>2</sup> wa-l-mulūk wa-l-khulafā<sup>2</sup>* (The Garden of Purity: on the Lives of the Prophets and Kings and Caliphs)\* by Mīr Khwand (d. 903/1497) and *Ḥabīb al-siyar fi akhbār-i afrād al-bashar* (The Travel Companion on the Reports of Mankind) by Khwāndamīr (in 930/1524), have attracted more fame and more general acceptance and attained the status of general reference books.

There can be no doubt that the general histories produced in India, such as the *Tāriḫ-i alfī* (The History of the Millennium), which was written upon the order of Akbar in 993/1585 and contained the history of Islam until the year 1000/1591, inevitably possess much information about India and the ruling dynasties of that region. The same quality is found in the histories written in Anatolia, including the *Bahjat al-tawārīḫ* (The Splendour of History) by Shukr Allāh Rūmī, which was written in 851/1447.

Sometimes, in general histories, the annals of a region, due to the information available and attachment of the writer to that area, are treated more extensively. Owing to this fact they have special importance, as is the case with the events relating to Fārs in the Ṣafawid period in the *Riḡad al-firdaws* (The Gardens of Paradise) by Muḥammad Mīrak b. Mas<sup>u</sup>d al-Ḥusaynī (written in 1082/1671). It contains information about southern Iran which is not found in other books.

Among the general histories in Persian, the *Jāmi<sup>c</sup> al-tawārīḫ* of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh Ṭabīb Hamadānī (645–718/1247–1318) [Fig. 1] has a higher value and validity than all other texts on general history because the writer,



V-3.1 Miniature from the manuscript *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh* by Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh Ṭabīb Hamadānī. Actors and dancers at the court of Hūlāgū, ruler of Mongolia (seventh/thirteenth century)  
 © Tehran National Library

who for a long period was a minister of the Īlkhānid dynasty under Ghāzān, Uljaytū and Abū Saʿīd, for the first time wrote the history and events of the world in a universal context.

This brought about the view that those who were interested in history should know, along with the history of Iran, the circumstances and events affecting other nations and societies, the events related to Mongol kings in Islamic countries and the circumstances of Jews, Chinese, Indians and Europeans. It was Rashid al-Dīn who, for the first time, wrote a general world history in Persian.<sup>2</sup>

Other reliable historical works of the period include:

*Zubdat al-tawārikh* (The Quintessence of History), by Abu-l-Qāsim ʿAbd Allāh Kāshānī (703/1303), which has been published in part;

*Rawḍat-i ūlī l-albāb fī tawārikh al-akābīr wa-l-ansāb* (The Garden of the Intelligent: on the History of the Leaders and of the Ancestors)\* by Fakhr al-Dīn Dāwūd Banākātī (after 717/1317);

*Tārikh-i guz̄ida*\* by Ḥamīd Allāh al-Mustawfī al-Qazwīnī (730/1329);

*Majmaʿ al-ansāb*, or *Jāmiʿ al-ansāb*\*, by Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Shabānkārī (written 733–743/1332–1342).

General historiography in the Timūrid era and under their successors, until the beginning of the Ṣafawid period, became more extensive and many books were written, of which the most important ones are:

*Firdaws al-tawārikh* by Khusraw Abarqūhī (808/1405);

*Muntakhab al-tawārikh-i Muʿīnī*\* which was presented to Shāh Rukh in 817/1414;

*Majmaʿ al-tawārikh*, or *Zubdat al-tawārikh*, by Shihāb al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh, known as Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū (830/1426) (this book has been partly published);

*Mujmal-i Faṣīḥī*\* by Faṣīḥ al-Dīn Aḥmad Khwāfī (up to 845/1441);

*Jāmiʿ al-tawārikh-i Ḥasanī*, by Ḥasan b. Shihāb Yazdī (855/1451), part of which is published;

*Rawḍat al-ṣafā fī sīrat al-anbiyāʾ wa-l-mulūk wa-l-khulafāʾ*\* by Muḥammad b. Khwānd Shāh, known as Mīr Khwānd (d. 903/1497);

*Ḥabīb al-siyar fī akhbār-i afrād al-bashar* by Ghiyāth al-Dīn b. Humām al-Dīn, known as Khwāndmīr (d. 930/1524).

This process continued until the Ṣafawid period and many historiographers produced histories. *Lubb al-tawārikh* (The Essence of History), one of the works of this period, was written in 948/1541 by Mīr Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Sayfī Qazwīnī. It was a concise historical study, as its name implies. A Latin translation was published in Paris in the year 1101/1690.

The most important general historical works of this era are the following:

*Nagaristān*\* by Qāḍī Aḥmad Ghaffārī (written in 959/1552);

2. See J. A. Boyle, 'Rashīd al-Dīn: the First World Historian', *Iran*, 9, 1971, pp. 19–26.

*Tārīkh-i Īlchī-i Nizām Shāh*, known as *Tārīkh-i Qutbī*, by Khūr-Shāh b. Qubād Ḥusaynī (written in 970/1563), part of which has been published;

*Nūsakh-i Jabān Ārā\** by Qāḍī Aḥmad Ghaffārī (written in 972/1565);

*Mirʿāt al-adwār wa-mirqāt al-akbbār* by Musliḥ al-Dīn Lārī (written after 974/1567);

*Jawābir al-akbbār* by Munshī Budaq Qazwīnī (written in 984/1576);

*Tārīkh-i alfī*, written during Akbar's time by several scholars from the year 993/1585 onwards;

*Tārīkh-i Ḥaydarī* by Ḥaydar b. ʿAlī Ḥusaynī Rāzī (1028/1619);

*Khuld-i barīn* by Muḥammad Yūsuf Wālih (1078/1668); part of this book has been published.

The writing of general history was also of concern to the historians during the Qājār period and some of the more famous books which can be included in this series are:

*Nāsikh al-tawārīkh* (The Transcriber of History)\* by Muḥammad Taqī Sipīhr Kāshānī (1273/1857);

*Tārīkh-i muntaẓam-i Nāṣirī* (The History of the Rule of Nāṣir)\* by Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān Iʿtimād al-Salṭana (Ṣāniʿ al-Dawla) (1300/1883).

A kind of tabular history, which is usually called *Tārīkh-i pādshāhān-i ʿAjām* (History of the Kings of Iran) and sometimes also *Tārīkh-i siyāqī*, or *Siyāq al-tawārīkh*, should be included in the category of general histories of Iran. This type, which is arranged in the style of the *siyāq* (indictional account books), apparently came into existence during the Safawid period.

## Dynastic and periodic histories

Persian historiographers carried out valuable experiments in writing the histories of dynasties and historical periods from the times of the Īlkhānids until Pahlavi times. In the Īlkhānid period, until the arrival of the Tīmūrīds, we have histories in prose and poetry written about the dynasties or kings who had ruled in Iran. Some of them are very important texts, such as the *Tārīkh-i Jabāngushā*, by ʿAṭāʾ Malik Juwaynī, the *Tārīkh-i Uljaytū* by Abu-l-Qāsim Kāshānī and the *Tajziyat al-amṣār wa-tazjiyat al-aʿṣār\** (The Reward of the Regions and the Passing of the Ages) by Shihāb al-Dīn ʿAbd Allāh Shīrāzī, known as Waṣṣāf (or Waṣṣāf al-Ḥaḍara). As a whole, the historical information on the Īlkhānid period was compiled in a scholarly way in the *Masʾal ʿaṣr-i Īlkhānān* (Questions of the Era of the Īlkhāns) by Manūchihr Murtaḍawī (Tabriz, 1980).

Here we list the most important historical works, introduced in chronological order:

*Tārīkh-i Jabāngushā\** by ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭāʾ Malik Juwaynī (658/1260),

covering the time from Genghis's invasion up to the struggle between Hülāgū and the Ismā'īlīs;<sup>3</sup>

*Tārīkh-i Uljaytū* by Jamal al-Dīn Abu-l-Qāsim Kāshānī (703/1304);

*Tāzīyat al-amṣār wa-tazīyat al-a'ṣār (Tārīkh-i Waṣṣāf)\** by Shihāb al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh Shīrāzī (728/1328);

*Ghāzān-nāma*, a poem by Nūr al-Dīn b. Shams al-Dīn (763/1362).

Regarding the history of the Mongols, and especially those who ruled in Mongolia and Kāshghar from the time of Tuḡluq Tīmūr (748/1347), the basic and most reliable source is the *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī* by Muḥammad Ḥaydar Dughlat, which was written in 948/1542.

For the period of the Āl-i Muẓaffar (Muẓaffarids), there are two exclusive historical studies. One of them is *Mawāhib-i ilāhī* (The Divine Gifts)\*, apparently written in 767/1366 by Mu'īn al-Dīn Mu'allim Yazdī, and the other *Risāla-i Maḥmūd Kutubī*, which concludes with the events relating to the downfall of that dynasty at the hands of Tīmūr in 795/1393.

The most important contemporary works of this period are:

*Rūz-nāma-i Ghāzawāt-i Hindūstān* (Diary of the Campaigns of Hindustan)\* by Ghiyath al-Dīn 'Alī b. Jamāl al-Islām Yazdī, which was the most important source for the two *ẓafar-nāmas* by Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī and Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī; Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū also utilized this in his book;

*Zafar-nāma* (Account of Victories)\* by Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī (ascribed to Shanb-i Ghāzān of Tabrīz), which was written in 804/1402 upon the order of Tīmūr;

*Shams al-ḥusn* (The Sun of Beauty)\* by Tāj al-Salmānī on the order of Shāh Rukh to complete the *Zafar-nāma* of Niẓām al-Dīn Shāmī;

*Maṭla'ī Sa'dayn wa-majma'ī Baḥrayn* (The Rising of Venus and Mercury and the Meeting of the Two Oceans) by 'Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī, relating events from 703/1304 to 830/1427;

*Diyār-i Bakriyya\** by Abū Bakr al-Tīhrānī al-Iṣfahānī in the name of Uzun Ḥasan (written in 875/1471);

*Tārīkh-i 'ālam ārā-i Amīnī* (The History of the Realms of Amīn)\* by Faḍl Allāh Ruzbihān Khunjī for the Aq Qoyunlū dynasty (written in 897/1429);

*Taymūr-nāma\**, a poem by 'Abd Allāh Hātifi (927/1521);

*Shāh Rukh-nāma*, a poem by Muḥammad Qāsim Qāsimī Gunabādī (composed in 950/1543).

3. Trans. J. A. Boyle, *The History of the World Conqueror by 'Ala al-Din 'Ata-Malik Juvaini, Translated from the Text of Mirza Muhammad Qazvini* by John Andrew Boyle, (UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Persian Heritage Series), 2 vols., Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1958.



V-3.2 *Futūḥāt-i Humāyūn*, history of the conquest of Khurāsān conducted by Shāh ʿAbbās the Great, written by Siyāqī Nizām in 1023/1615. King Shāh ʿAbbās hunting

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In the Şafawid period, the interest of historiography was focused on three areas:

1. official histories and biographies of the Şafawid kings that were mostly written by court historians and secretaries (*majlis nawisān*).
2. Shi'ism being the official religion, books about the history of Islam and the biographies of imams and their sons received priority. These books were written in a style and language that could be read and appreciated by common people and were narrated from the pulpit by the preachers and *manāqib khānān* (readers or chanters of virtues).
3. another category of works about history written in this period comprises histories that employed a narrative and mimicking style, describing the battles and services of the conquering kings of the Şafawid dynasty. These are the real and main sources of social history. The texts are generally introduced by the name of 'Ālam Ārā.

Undoubtedly the most important history of the Şafawid period is the 'Ālam-ārā-i 'Abbāsī by Iskandar Turkamān, secretary of Shāh 'Abbās Şafawī. Though this book was written by a court secretary and historian, it is free of common exaggerations and absurd phrases and for this reason it has been favoured by historians and scholars.<sup>4</sup>

The other historical works of this period which should be mentioned in this context are:

*Shāh-nāma-i Ismā'īl*, a poem by Muḥammad Qāsim Qāsimī Gunabādi (940);

*Tārīkh-i Shāh Ismā'īl wa-Shāh Tahmāsp\** or *Dhayl-i Ḥabīb al-siyar*, by Amīr Maḥmūd b. Khwāndamīr (957/1550);

*Aḥsan al-tawārīkh*, by Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū Qummī, who planned to write his history in twelve volumes. This existing portion comprises the eleventh and twelfth volumes, from the time of Shāh Rukh to the year 958/1551 (completed in that year);<sup>5</sup>

*Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh\**, by Qādī Aḥmad Qummī. Apparently only the Şafawid section was written (999/1591);

*Futūḥāt-i Humāyūn*, by Siyāqī Nizām [Fig. 2], concerning the first twelve years of the rule of Shāh 'Abbās (written in 1007/1599);

*Tārīkh-i 'Abbāsī\** by Jalāl, the astronomer at the court of Shāh 'Abbās, covering the period from the birth of this king to the rule of Sultan Muḥammad Khudābanda;

'Ālam-ārā-i 'Abbāsī, by Iskandar Turkamān Munshī (between 1025/1616 and 1038/1629);

4. R. Savory, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great (Tārīkh-i 'ālamārā-ye 'Abbāsī by Eskander Beg Monshī)*, 3 vols., (Persian Heritage Series, 28), Boulder, Westview Press, 1978–1986.

5. The twelfth volume has been translated by C. N. Seddon, *A Chronicle of the Early Safawīs, being the Aḥsanu't-tawārīkh of Hasan-i-Rumlu*, 2 vols., Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1934.

*Rawdat al-Safawiyya*, by Mīrzā Beg b. Ḥasan Gunabādī (between 1023/1614 and 1038/1629);

*Kbulāṣat al-siyar*\* by Muḥammad Maṣūm b. Khwājagī Iṣfahānī, on the biography of Shāh Ṣafī (probably in 1052/1642);<sup>6</sup>

*‘Abbās-nāma*\* by Muḥammad Ṭāhir Wāḥid Qazwīnī, on the history of Shāh ‘Abbās II (probably in 1066/1656);

*Qīṣaṣ al-Khāqānī* by Walī Qulī Shāmlū, concerning the history of Shāh ‘Abbās II (probably in 1077/1667), partly published;

*Silsilat al-nasab-i Safawiyya*\* by Shaykh Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Zāhidī (probably in 1105/1694);

*Dastūr-i Shahrīyārān* by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣr, on the history of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn (probably in 1135/1723);

*Majma‘ al-tawārīkh*\* by Muḥammad Khalīl Mar‘ashī Ṣafawī (1207/1793);

*Tadhkirā-i āl-i Dāwūd* by Muḥammad Hāshim, son of Shāh Sulaymān (1218/1803).

There are two official histories of Nādir Shāh’s reign, both written by Mīrzā Mahdī Khān Astarābādī. One of these is *Jabāngushā-i Nādir*\* (1171/1758) and the other is *Durra-i Nādīra* (The Rare Pearl) \*.

Another important work of this period is the *‘Ālamārā-i Nādir*\*, by Muḥammad Kāzīm Marwī, who personally witnessed many wars and events in the region. There is also the *Bayān-i wāqī‘* (The Explanation of the Event)\*, by Khwājā ‘Abd al-Karīm Kashmīrī, who was one of the companions of Nādir on his journey from India to Iran (after 1156/1743).

Among the historical works of the Zand period, four important ones must be mentioned: the *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*\* (after Nādir’s period) by Abu-l-Ḥasan Gulistāna (1196/1782); the *Tārīkh-i Gīṭī Gushā*\* by Muḥammad Ṣādiq Nāmī Mūsawī (probably in 1209/1795); the *Gulshān-i murād* (The Rose-Garden of Desire) by ‘Abd al-Ḥasan Ghaffārī Kāshānī (1210/1796); and the *Tārīkh-i Zandīyya*\* by ‘Alī Riḍā Shīrāzī (probably in 1210/1796).

Another book which relates to circumstances of this period and has social importance, while also bearing a critical aspect, is the *Rustam al-tawārīkh*\* by Muḥammad Hāshim Rustam al-Ḥukamā’.<sup>7</sup>

Histories of the Qājār dynasty may be divided into four periods:

1. From the establishment of the dynasty to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh’s reign (1193–1264/1779–1848);
2. The period covering Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh’s rule, thus spanning fifty years (1264–1313/1848–1896);

6. Trans. G. Rettelbach, *Hulasat-as-siyar: der Iran unter Shah Safi (1629-1642) nach der Chronik des Muhammad Masum b. Huagagi Isfahani*, München, R. Trofenik, 1978, (Beiträge zur Kenntnis Südosteuropas und des Nahen Orients, 29).

7. Trans. B. Hoffmann, *Persische Geschichte 1614-1835 erlebt, erinnert und erfunden: das Rustam at-tawarikh in deutscher Bearbeitung*, 2 vols., Bamberg, Aku, 1986.

3. The period from Muẓaffar al-Dīn's reign to the proclamation of a constitutional government;
4. The period from the proclamation of the Constitutional Government to Riḍā Shāh Pahlawī's reign.

The historical works written up to the beginning of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's reign are based on the same earlier pattern and show no difference from the point of view of style. The following are the most important of these books:

*Tārīkh-i Muḥammadī*\* by Muḥammad b. Taqī Sarawī (1212/1798);

*Ma'āthir al-sultāniyya* (The Exploits of the Sultan)\* by 'Abd al-Razzāq Beg Dunbulī, whose pen-name was *Maftūn* (probably in 1229/1814);

*Tārīkh-i Jahān ārā* by Muḥammad Ṣādiq Marzawī, whose pen-name was *Humā*; he was the historian of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh during the first twelve years of his rule (1212–1233/1798–1818);

*Tārīkh-i Sāhib-qirānī*, by Muḥammad Mīrzā Qājār, son of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh (probably in 1248/1833);

*Iksīr al-tawārikh* (The Elixir of History)\* by 'Alī Qulī Mīrzā I'timād al-Salṭana, son of 'Abbās Mīrzā (1259/1843);

*Tārīkh-i Dhu-l-Qarnayn* by Faḍl Allāh Khawāri Shirāzī (1263/1847);

*Tārīkh-i nam*\* by Jahāngīr Mīrzā, son of 'Abbās Mīrzā (covering the years between 1240/1825 and 1265/1849);

*Tārīkh-i 'Aḍud*\* by Sulṭān Aḥmad Mīrzā 'Aḍud al-Dawla, son of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh (1304/1887);

*Dhayl-i Rawḍat al-ṣafā* [*Nāṣiri*]\* by Riḍā Qulī Khān Lālā Bāshī Māzandarāni (Hidāyat);

the Qājār section of the *Nāsikh al-tawārikh*\* by Muḥammad Taqī Sipīhr Kāshāni.

Some minor changes occurred in historiography during the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. A publishing house was established and managed by 'Alī Qulī Mīrzā I'timād al-Salṭana and Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān (who was at first known as Ṣāni' al-Dawla), successively.

I'timād al-Salṭana also wrote *al-Ma'āthir wa-l-āthār* (Activities and Deeds)\* on the fortieth anniversary of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's coronation. The importance of this book lies in the fact that, in addition to historical events, it notes the cultural and social changes that took place as a result of acquaintance with European culture and science and imports of flowers and other vegetation.

During the time of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh another development that took place in the field of history was the writing of diaries. This became the vogue during this period. The king and many other distinguished men maintained diaries. Among them, the memoirs of I'timād al-Salṭana (Muḥammad Ḥasan Khān) and 'Ayn al-Salṭana Salur (Qahramān Mīrzā) have special importance.

The most important history of the Muẓaffarid period is the *Afḍal al-tawārikh* (The Finest History) by Afḍal al-Mulk Kirmāni, where the history of the first four years of Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh's reign is recorded.

Historiography during the Constitutional Period was affected by political changes and shifts of thought in Iran. The *Tārīkh-i bīdārī-i Īrānīyān* (The History of the Awakening of the Iranians)\*, written by Nāzīm al-Islām Kirmānī, specifically describes the circumstances and conditions in Iran during the years preceding the establishment of the Constitutional Government and the succeeding four years.

## Local, urban and tribal histories

The historiography of events and incidents involving cities and local areas is a tradition which is encountered in all centuries and many books are available on the subject. Most of the remaining texts are about the Gilān and Māzandarān areas (known in history as Ṭabaristān and Rūyān), followed by those about Yazd and Fārs (including Shīrāz) and Harāt. Accounts of Iṣfahān, Kirmān, Sīstān, Khūzistān and Khurāsān (including Mashhad) were also written.

One type of local history has ethnological aspects; this covers the histories of tribes and clans, such as the accounts written about the Turks. These include the *Shajarat al-Atrāk* (The Pedigree of the Turks)\*, which has been considered an abridged form of the work written by Ulugh Beg, or the *Mu'izz al-ansāb fī shajarat al-ansāb* (Honouring the Families: on the Family Tree), a product of Shāh Rukh's period.

The *Sharaf-nāma*, compiled by Sharaf Khān Bidlīsī in 1005/1597, is the most important work on the history of the Kurds and their ruling dynasties. On the rulers of Ardalān, two books were written during the Qājār period.

The effect of historiography relating to regions and cities may be felt all over the area of the Persian language, and particularly in India, which itself had an unparalleled expansion. There, Ḥasan Nizāmī Nīshābūrī wrote the *Tāj al-ma'āsir*\* (in the seventh century) and Amīr Khusraw Dihlawī produced the *Qiran al-sa'dayn*\* (The Conjunction of Venus and Mercury) (in 688/1289), *Miftāh al-futūḥ*\* (The Key to the Conquests, 690/1291) and *Khazā'in al-futūḥ*\* (The Treasure-houses of the Conquests, 711/1311), while Usāmī composed his *Futūḥ al-salātīn*\* in poetical form on the general history of India (in 950/1543). Historiography in Persian was then one of the main branches of writing. According to the catalogue published by D. N. Marshall, more than 2,000 authors wrote historical works about the Mughal kings of India. Some of these wrote more than one book on the subject. C. A. Storey, in an analysis of historical writing relating to India, identified about 500 authors.

The number of writers of histories concerning Central Asia, including general and dynastic histories and histories of individual cities, in addition to whatever is written about Asia Minor and the Ottoman domain and books on the regions of Arrān and the Caucasus, totals more than one hundred.

## Lateral sources

To get to the roots of historiography, some other branches of writing must be mentioned.

1. Writings about the deeds of the Prophet and the biographies of the imams are found in greater number from the period of the Īlkhānids. Among them are *Nuzḥat al-kirām wa-bustān al-‘awāmm* (The Recreation of the Nobles and Garden of the People)\* by Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rāzī (seventh/thirteenth century), *Aḥsan al-kibār fī ma‘rifat al-a‘immat al-aṭḥbār* (The most Distinguished among the Leaders in Knowledge of the Pure Imams)\* by Muḥammad b. Abī Zayd b. ‘Arab Shāh Warāmīnī (eighth/fourteenth century) and *Rawḍat al-shuhadā’*\* (The Garden of the Martyrs) by Mullā Ḥusayn Wā’iẓ Kāshifī (from the ninth/fifteenth century).
2. Autobiographies or travelogues, such as *Mūbmān-i-Bukhārā-nāma* (The Guest-book of Bukhārā) by Faḍl Allāh Rūzbihān Khunjī (tenth century), *Badā’i‘ al-waqā’i‘* (The Wonders of the Events)\* by Maḥmūd Wāṣifī (from the tenth/fifteenth century), *Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn* (The Conquests of the Two Holy Places)\* by Muḥyī Larī and *Tadhkira-i Ḥazīn* (The Biography of Ḥazīn)\* (from the twelfth/seventeenth century) by ‘Alī Ḥazīn Lāhijī.
3. *Tadhkiras* (biographies) of poets (among them the *Lubāb al-albāb* (The Quintessence of the Hearts), *Tadhkira-i Dawlat Shāh Samarqandī* and *Tadhkira-i Naṣrābādī*), saints, mystics and ‘ulamā’ (such as *Nafahāt al-uns* (The Fragrances of Friendship), *Majālis al-mu‘minīn* (The Assemblies of Believers), *Qiṣaṣ al-‘ulamā’* (Tales of Scholars) and *Ṭarā’iq al-ḥaqā’iq* (The Rules of Realities), ministers (such as *Dastūr al-wuẓarā’* (The Laws of Ministers) and *Āthār al-wuẓarā’* (The Deeds of the Ministers)) and finally philosophers, physicians, calligraphers and the like.

## On pre-Islamic times

Writers of history in Iran in all ages were interested in learning about pre-Islamic Iran and, as an example, during the Īlkhānid period Sharaf al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh Ḥusaynī Qazwīnī wrote his *al-Mu‘jam fī āthār-i mulūk al-‘Ajām* (Dictionary concerning the Deeds of the Kings of the Persians)\* in the name of Atābak Nuṣrat al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Yūsuf Shāh Lūr (695–733/1296–1333). As this book was written in a literary and artistic style, it was used as a text-book from the time of its writing until about a hundred years ago and was taught in classical schools just as the *Gulistān* of Shaykh Sa‘dī was.

In the Ṣafawid period, this interest is seen more in India; in addition to books such as the *Dabistān-i madhāhib* (The School of Religions) (in the field of the religious thought of the Iranians) and the *Dasātūr* (Statutes) (on early Persian words), a book such as the *Shāristān-i chahār chaman* by Bahrām b.

Farhād Yazdānī, containing the biographies of the Pishdādids, Qiyānids, Ashkānids and Sāsānids, was written during the reign of Akbar (963–1014/1556–1606).

This interest was revived during the nineteenth century by the writing of the *Durar al-tijān fī tārikh-i Banī Ashkān* (The Pearls of the Crown: on the History of the Banū Ashkān) by Muḥammad Ḥasan I‘timād al-Salṭana, and thereafter such books as the *Farāzistān* by Muḥammad Ismā‘īl Khān Zand Turkistānī\*, the *Ā‘īn-i Iskandarī*\* by Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī, the *Tārikh-i salāṭīn-i Sāsānī* (The History of the Sāsānid Sultans)\* by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Dhakā’ al-Mulk Furūghī, the *Nāma-i Khusravān* (Account of the Khusravs) by Jalāl al-Dīn Mīrzā Qājār and the *Salār-nāma* (The Story of the Commander)\* by Aḥmad Adīb Kirmānī were gradually printed and published; the *Īrān-i bāstānī*\* and *Tārikh-i Īrān-i bāstānī* (The History of Ancient Iran)\* by Ḥasan Pirniyā treated the subject more academically and seriously.

## Historiography during the last sixty years

Scholars and students who were sent to Europe became acquainted with the academic methods of Western historians, with the result that there was a basic change in the Iranian method of historical writing.

At the time, ‘Abbās Iqbāl, Ghulām Riḍā Rashīd Yasamī, Sa‘īd Nafīsī, Aḥmad Kasrawī and Naṣr Allāh Falsafī were among the scholars who promoted historical writing in Iran and adopted the academic method instead of the traditional approach.

Of the later generation, the names should be mentioned of Dr. Abdul-Husayn Zarrinkub, Dr. Abbas Zaryab, Dr. Abdul-Husayn Nawai and F. Adamiyat, the bounty of whose works continues until the present day. During the last forty years, special attention has been given to the writing and publication of memorials and it has become a custom. Many works in this field, including those written in the Qājār period and this present age, have been published and are now available.

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## Chapter 4

# OTTOMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

*Mehmet İpşirli*

Although Ottoman historiography is fundamentally a continuation of, and constitutes the last link in Islamic historical writing, it has at the same time, because of its long tradition (six centuries), formed a new type of historiography termed the 'Ottoman Style'. Considered from the viewpoint of its historical development and its characteristics, Ottoman historiography can best be examined by dividing the topic into four separate categories: the Developmental Period (eight/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries), the Mature Period (tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries), the Change and Renewal Period (twelfth/eighteenth and thirteenth/nineteenth centuries) and Various principles and problems.

### The Developmental Period

The Ottoman principality, which had emerged with a passion for conquest and a spirit for *ghazw*, flourished and was strengthened by means of the activities of the frontier beys and warrior dervishes. Relative to that fact, the first historical chronicles to appear were *menākib-nāmes* and *ghazavat-nāmes*. Thus, Yahşî Faqîh's *Menākib-nāme* (Account of the Victorious Actions) (which is no longer available to us but which was the initial source for 'Āshiq-pāshā-zāde's history and many other accounts), certain anonymous *menākib-nāmes*, and Aḥmadî's (815/1412–1413) *Dāsītān-i tevārih-i mulūk-i āl-i Osman* (The Epic of the House of Osman) are among the first examples. In fact, Aḥmadî's *Dāsītān* is the oldest text on Ottoman history written by an Ottoman writer to have survived to our day.

After the disaster of Tīmūr in 804/1402, as the Ottoman Empire was reunited during the time of Chelebî Meḥmed and the sultanate was strengthened under Murād II, historiography came once again into prominence. During this period there appeared an abundance of writings, both in terms of types and in terms of choice of subject-matter and message. An example of

the writings of this period can be seen in Yāziji-zāde Meḥmed's *Muḥammediye*, which is a forceful description of the Islamic beliefs of the Ottoman regime; another is Yāziji-zāde 'Alī's *Tevārih-i āl-i Selcuk* (The History of the House of Saljūq) which describes, in an almost epic fashion, the experiences of the Ottoman Oghuz, who was of pure Turkish lineage, at the hands of the Mongolian descendant, Tīmūr. In addition, through the encouragement of Murād II, certain important Islamic texts were translated.

Among the other works of this period are the historical calendars, which are known to have been used as sources for the early Ottoman historians because of the valid information they contained and in spite of the brevity of the texts.

Following Meḥmed II's successful struggle, which created the basis of a world empire, a need for the preservation in writing of this great régime's history and victories was felt. Actually, these historical writings started during the first days of the sultanate of Meḥmed II: Shukr Allāh's (d. 893/1488) Persian *Bahjat al-tawārīkh* (The Splendour of Histories), Enver's (Anwarī) Turkish *Düstur-nāme* (The Register) and Karamānī Meḥmed Pāshā's (d. 885/1481) Arabic *Tārīkh* were all written during this time. These works were written by using parts of various pre-Ottoman sources, by availing themselves of fairly condensed historical calendars of the Ottoman period and by using the *menākib-nāmes*. They do not, however, within the scope of historical writing, constitute an important stage.

The sultanate of Fātiḥ's son, Bāyezīd II, ushered in a new period of apt historical compilations. This period is considered the beginning of the golden age of historical writing and formed a secure historical foundation because of the efforts accomplished both in subject matter and in variety. The transition to systematic historical writing also occurred during this period. The first successful example to be cited is 'Āshiq-pāshā-zāde's (d. after 894/1489) Ottoman work entitled *Tevārih-i āl-i Osman*. This work, written in the last years of the writer's almost century-long life, comprises the events of the first sultans (taken from Yaḥshī Faqīh's *Menākib-nāme*) through to the Yıldırım Bāyezīd and parts of the Interregnum (804–815/1402–1413), as reported by first-hand participants, and also the career of Murād II and Meḥmed the Conqueror, as based on the writer's personal observations and the reports of those who had participated in the campaigns. This work was written in an exceptionally clear, fluent and natural linguistic style and was published in a booklet, in question-and-answer format. Just as the author added his own appraisals in parts of the text, he also did not hesitate to criticize certain government administrative officials. 'Āshiq-pāshā-zāde was known to have utilized very systematically both the historical calendars and another, today unknown work, and to have written his compilation in a masterly fashion. He appraised the important sources of his time in a careful and critical manner. Another important work compiled during this period was Neshrī's *Kitāb-i*



*Cibannümā*. This *madrassa*-educated writer claimed that he had prepared his universal history in six parts; he presented the sixth chapter, which was entirely devoted to the ancestry of Oghuz Khān, to Bāyezīd II. The work is important because of its influence on later historians, including Idrīs-i Bidlīsī, Kemāl-pāshā-zāde and Khoja Sa‘d al-Dīn Efendī.

Tursun Bey, who participated in the conquest and who was privy to all of the events during the conquest period, wrote his history *Tarih-i Abu-l-Fath*, based on his own personal observations and on the reports of that period’s high government officials, and he later added materials for events which happened during the Bāyezīd period. This work, which investigates the foundation, the ruling ethics and the legal characteristics of the Sultanate, became the first example of a sultanate history.

## The Mature Period

The sixteenth century was entered with an accumulation of 150 years of historiographical experience. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Ottoman historiography reached its pinnacle in terms of the numbers of works written and of characteristics of type, language, manner and content. It entered a new phase when Bāyezīd II, strongly encouraged by Mu‘ayyad-zāde, ordered the writing of two Ottoman histories, one in Persian by Idrīs-i Bidlīsī and the other a Turkish version written by Kemāl-pāshā-zāde.

Bāyezīd II, who believed that the existing compilations were not adequate for the illustrious, victorious Ottoman history, ordered Idrīs-i Bidlīsī to write a complete history. Idrīs, then, using well-known Iranian historians such as Juwaynī, Waṣṣāf and Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī as his models, wrote the *Hasbt bibisht* (The Eight Paradises), a history beginning with the rise of the Ottomans and continuing up to the year 908/1503 (comprising the reigns of eight sultans) in a rather heavy and laborious Persian, with a text reaching 8,000 lines of verse. This work, both in its own and in later times, enjoyed considerable appreciation (perhaps more than it deserved) and was highly influential. Its effect upon Khoja Sa‘d al-Dīn and Muṣṭafā ‘Alī can especially be mentioned. On the other hand, it did receive some criticism based on its difficulty to read, due to its obscure and bombastic style.

Inspired by Idrīs-i Bidlīsī’s work, Kemāl-pāshā-zāde, in accordance with the wishes of Bāyezīd II, endeavoured to write a history in clear Turkish which would be easily understood by everyone. Thus, his monumental work *Tevārih-i āl-i Osman* – organized by allocating one volume to each sultan and later adding the *Selīm-nāme* and the *Süleymān-nāme* (a total of ten volumes) – proved that Turkish was not inferior to Persian. In historiographical terms, this text was by far the finest achievement to that date. However, it did not receive its well-deserved appreciation for a long time and its great value was only realized at a much later date. In this way, both Idrīs and Kemāl-pāshā-zāde in particular not



V- 4.1 *Nuşru-name* by Muşţafā b. ʿAbd al-Jalīl, 992/1584

© Topkapi Palace Library (H-1365, fol. 54a)

only wrote standard Ottoman histories, but also were used as models for historians following them.

In this manner, the tradition of *Tevārih-i āl-i Osman*, which began with Fātiḥ Sultān Meḥmed, continued to the middle of the sixteenth century. Besides historians like Oruj b. ‘Adil, Rūḥī Chelebī, Ḥadīdī and Luṭfī Pāshā, who wrote both in prose and verse, many other, anonymous authors also wrote a *Tevārih-i āl-i Osman*. These *tevārih-i Āli-i Osmans* were usually written in the chronological order of the sultans, and largely used the *menākib-nāmes* and historical calendars, as well as first-hand observers, as their sources; because the compilers generally used the same source material, their descriptions closely resemble each other.

The times of Salīm I and Sulaymān the Magnificent were both quite rich from the viewpoint of sultanate history. The sultanate of Yavuz Sultān Salīm, unlike those of many other sultans, encouraged both the investigation and the writing of a large number of *Selīm-nāmes* which were characterized by their historical and literary qualities. These chronicles, which usually begin with Salīm’s 914/1509 Trabzon governorship, then proceed with his struggles with his father and brothers and finally describe his wars with the Şafawids and the Mamlūks during his sultanate years, are considered, if one disregards the sections flattering Salīm, to be first-hand sources for this period. These works, which were written at the behest of Sulaymān the Magnificent, number approximately twenty, and although all are investigations of the same time-period, each shows remarkable differences in language and style. An even smaller number of *Sūleymān-nāme* texts was written in honour of the sultanate, travels and public building activities of Sulaymān’s reign.

#### SHEH-NĀMECILIK

The appearance of the *sheb-nāme* during Sulaymān’s reign infused Ottoman historiography with a new flavour. The poet Shehdī was initially ordered by Meḥmed II to write a *sheb-nāme*; furthermore, both Idrīs and Kemāl-pāshā-zāde were commissioned by Bāyezīd II to write Ottoman histories. However, these efforts cannot really be regarded as the beginnings of formal historiography. The emergence of this institution in a real sense occurred during the era of the Kanuni Sultān Sulaymān. The original Iranian literary and historical tradition of the *sheb-nāme* developed alongside the Ottoman tradition of formal writing and contained narratives of palace affairs and of the rulers and their circle’s activities in the framework of a somewhat exaggerated and comparatively literary style. From the late sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century ‘Ārifī Chelebī (d. 969/1561), Aflāṭūn (d. 972/1564), Sayyid Luqmān (d. after 1010/1601), Ta‘liqī-zāde (d. 1008/1599), Ḥukmī Ḥasan Efendī (d. after 1048/1638), Ghanī-zāde Nādirī (d. 1626/1036) and Mülhemī İbrāhīm (d. 1650/1060) were all given this assignment, and all wrote

*sheb-nāmes* in prose and verse, some of which are not available to us any longer. Sayyid Luqmān holds an extraordinary place among all the writers of *sheb-nāmes*. He wrote the *Sheb-nāme*, *Hüner-nāme*, *Kifāya al-insāniyya fi shamā'il al-'Uthmāniyya* (Human Sufficiency: on the Character of the Ottomans), *Zubdat al-tawārikh* (The Quintessence of History) and *Mujmal al-tūmār* (The Compendious Register). The events described in the *sheb-nāme* are usually accompanied by quite striking miniatures, and these works achieve an even greater importance because of their illustrations. These particularly illustrate portraits of the sultans, battle-scenes and important events, all within the general framework of traditional miniature depiction.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARIES

In the middle of the sixteenth century new types of biographical attempts, written with widely varying capabilities, began to appear. This type of writing had held an important place and tradition in Islamic literature. The tradition was continued in all the Islamic and Turkish states and was fostered by Turkish historians. As a result of the demand for these kinds of biographical dictionaries of various professional masters and other groups which arose in society, these kinds of writings, with appendices attached, continued to be written even up to very recent times. Although sultanate history and the *sheb-nāme* originated from Persian tradition, the art of biographical writing is seen to have an Islamic-Arabic influence. In fact, as a direct result of this, the first attempts of this kind were actually written in Arabic.

Besides one or two inconsequential exceptions, the first precursor of this kind of writing was the work of Tāshköprüzāde Aḥmad Efendī (d. 968/1561). In his *al-Shaqā'iq al-Nu'māniyya fi 'ulamā' al-dawla al-'Uthmāniyya* (The Anemones of Nu'mān: on the Scholars of the Ottoman Dynasty), he wrote, in a fairly clear Arabic, the biographies of over 500 'ulamā' and *mashāyikh* from 'Osmān Ghāzī through to the Kanuni period. This work, which was highly respected, has been translated into Turkish many times. With the supplements written by 'Aṭā'ī (d. 1045/1635), 'Ushāqī-zāde (d. 1136/1723), Shaykhī (d. 1145/1732) and Işmet Efendī (d. 1321/1904), it was extended to include all of the Ottoman period. Because of the high esteem in which this text was held, other biographies were written for sultans, grand viziers and masters of other professions such as *shaykh al-Islāms*, *naqīb al-ashrāfs*, and *kaptanpaşas*, and the addition of these supplements ensured each work an on-going continuity.

In addition to the above, from the tenth/sixteenth century onwards in the standard Ottoman histories, after a detailing of each sultanate, a short biography was given of the viziers, 'ulamā', *mashāyikh* and *shu'arā'* living during that period. In these works, which were written in chronological order according to Hijrī years, it became a tradition to list the deaths of any particular government officials which had occurred during year. In the tenth/sixteenth

century, Khoja Sa‘d al-Dīn and Muṣṭafā ‘Alī, among many other historians, took this biographical information from the *Shaqā’iq al-Nu‘māniyya* and from the *tadhkiras* of poets. On the other hand, histories which comprised of lists of grand viziers, *shaykh al-Islāms*, *qādī ‘askars*, the judges of Istanbul and *naqīb al-ashrāfs* were also written. Examples of such works are the *Takevimü t-tevārib* (The Rectification of Histories) and *Esmārii t-tevārib* (Stories from History).

Two twentieth-century examples of this biographical style are the *Sicill-i Osmani* (The Register of the Ottomans) written by Mehmed Sürreyya (d. 1321/1904) and published in four volumes in Istanbul, 1308–1311/1890–1893, being an alphabetical list of all Ottoman administrators and of the Ottoman dynasty, and secondly, the *Osmanlı müellifleri* (Ottoman Writers) written by Bursalı Mehmed Tāhir (d. 1344/1926) and published in three volumes in Istanbul, 1333–1342/1914–1923. Both are clear and concise encyclopaedic works.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced the most perfect examples of Ottoman historiography, with special characteristics both in terms of quantity and subject-matter. During this period, Jalāl-zāde Muṣṭafā Chelebī (d. 974/1567), Khoja Sa‘d al-Dīn Efendī (d. 1007/1599), ‘Alī Muṣṭafā Efendī (d. 1008/1600), Selaniki Muṣṭafā Efendī (d. c. 1008/1600), Ḥasan Bey Zāde Pechewī (d. 1059/1650) and Topchular Kātibi (d. c. 1054/1645) wrote wonderful texts, each with its own particular characteristics. Except for Khoja Sa‘d al-Dīn Efendī, all of these historians were engaged in the scribal profession. In terms of content, language, style, expression and interpretation, their works are both original and standard examples of Ottoman historiography. Some of these writers also wrote in more than one kind of style, yet each sought opportunities to criticize the newly felt administrative and professional defects by speaking with a quite open and courageous voice.

After these developments in historiography, Kātib Chelebī’s (d. 1067/1657) writings in the eleventh/seventeenth century indicated a turning-point both in terms of subject-matter and approach. His works embody the trustworthiness and reliability of the historical works produced during that time. He utilized earlier historical studies in a most complete manner by systematically analysing and criticizing those sources, and thus became a precursor of a new kind of historical composition. This trained writer also was interested in Western sources, and he became the first Ottoman historian to use them in an effective manner. Even though there were some Ottoman historians before him who had used Western sources, their work was not of real consequence.

The *Jāmi‘ al-dinwal* (Comprehensive Dynasties), written by Munajjim Bāshī Aḥmad Dede (d. 1113/1703), was an exhaustive universal history which utilized Arabic, historical Islamic and Ottoman sources, along with Western, primarily Byzantine, texts. During the same period, an important historian, Hezārfen Ḥusayn Efendī (d. 1103/1691), wrote using both Western sources and the observations of foreigners who had come to Istanbul. His *Tanqīb*

*tawārīkh al-mulūk* (The Revision of the Histories of the Kings) is a nine-part universal history which gives information regarding Asia and America taken completely from European sources. Thus, the number of Ottoman historians who used Western, Byzantine and Roman sources, along with the observations of travellers and foreign diplomats, began to increase.

#### HISTORIES OF THE ADMINISTRATION

With the emergence of political corruption in the mid-sixteenth century, certain intellectuals and historians of the period began to record their observations, using a relatively straightforward language. Some examples of this kind of writing are Luṭfī Pāshā's *Āṣaf-nāme* and 'Alī's *Nushatū's-selātin* (Advice for Sultans) and *Mevāidū'n-nefāis* (The Meeting-places of Precious Things). Later writers, like Ḥasan Kāfī, Kochī Beg and Kātib Chelebī, wrote articles concerning the administration and, again, some texts whose writers are unknown (such as *Kıtab-i müstetab* (The Book of the Repentant), *Kıtabu mesālibü l-müslimin* (The Book of Benefits of the Muslims) and *Hırzū l-müluk* (The Safe Refuge of Kings)), urged a return to an older system (*kanun-i kadim*) as a solution for the corruption. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries these kinds of works, which addressed the same sorts of problems, often proposed, in a European fashion, '*Layihā*' (Reports) in place of '*Risale*' and '*Nizām-ı cedid*' instead of '*Kanun-ı kadim*'.

#### RŪZ-NĀMES AND GHAZAVĀT-NĀMES

During the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries certain kinds of composition, such as *rūz-nāmes*, *ghazavāt-nāmes*, *fetih-nāmes* and *zāfer-nāmes*, were especially prevalent. It was quite natural for these types of text to be in the majority during a time when 'conquest' and '*ghazw*' were proclaimed to be the mottoes of the period. During these two centuries it was not unusual for more than one account to be written about any one campaign. In these writings, strategic areas, camp-sites, the unique task of the army and its commanders, battle-scenes, victories and celebratory ceremonies were described in lively and heroic styles. Sometimes copies of the letters and *fetih-nāmes*, which were written both for home and abroad, were added to the text. Because of the richness of language, style and subject-matter with which these were written, they became important sources for military history and strategy and for the description of the Ottoman army's successes and failures. At a later date, the term *rūz-nāme* was also used to describe the daily lives of the sultans and some government officials. The best example of this kind of *rūz-nāme* is the one written by Selīm III's private secretary, Aḥmad Efendī.

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY AND BOOKS OF TRAVEL

As the Ottomans began their course of victories on both land and sea and to emerge as a world power, numerous accounts describing the countries, lands, seas and courts they encountered began to appear. The most important works of this type are Piri Ra'is's *Kitāb-i bahriye* (The Book of the Navy), Seydī 'Alī Ra'is's *Kitābū l-muhīṭ* (The Book of the Encircling Ocean) and *Mir'ātū l-memalik* (The Mirror of Kingdoms), 'Ashiq Mehmed's *Menāẓirū l-avālim* (Views of the Worlds), Kātib Chelebī's *Cihannüma* and Evliyā Chelebī's *Seyāhat-name* (The Book of Travel).

CITY HISTORIES

The writing of city histories, especially the compilation of the biographies of the leaders who emerged from those cities, was a traditional form of writing in the Islamic world. This continued in the Ottoman era, though to a lesser extent. The histories of a number of Arab, Anatolian and Balkan cities, especially Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, were written. Most of the information detailed in these histories was taken from earlier literary sources and, in places, from information culled during the Ottoman period. This tradition of city histories continued through to the Tanzimat period.

Period of Renewal and Change

The eighteenth century marked the beginning of a new period in terms of changes in both the sciences and cultural life. These same changes and developments also affected the writing of history. The vanguard of this development was the *Divan-i Humāyūn* organization, the *vekayī'nüvis*, which began its activities at the start of the eighteenth century and continued until the end of the Ottoman empire. The *vekayī'nüvis* compiled both information from the periods prior to their own, and information about the events of their own time and presented this as a continuous historical source. Among these writers can be found historians such as Na'imā, Rashīd, Shānizāde and Ahmad Jewdet Pāshā. Thus, events such as promotions and dismissals were recorded on a daily basis for the later use of historians. In addition the *vekayī'nüvis* usually were satisfied simply to record the event without detailing reasons or describing behind-the-scenes manipulations. Some of the *vekayī'nüvis* complained about the insufficient amount of opportunity to write. These complaints are understood to be, at least partially, well founded. However, the greatest blow to the office of *vekayī'nüvis* occurred upon the publication of the first official newspaper, the *Takvīm-i Vekayi* (Calendar of Events).

Another very important development which occurred during the first quarter of that century was the establishment, through the efforts of Ibrāhīm

Müteferriqa, of the first publishing-house and the printing of many historical texts. Also during those same years a translation committee, instituted through the encouragement of Dāmād Ibrāhīm Pāshā, caused some standard historical works to be translated from Persian and Arabic into Turkish.

Towards the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century, the institution of permanent envoys prepared the way for a new source of historical information. Although European countries had, for centuries, permanent envoys assigned to Istanbul, the Ottoman regime ignored the principle of reciprocity and engaged in unidirectional diplomatic endeavours. However, the institution of permanent envoys was established near the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century and those envoys assigned to European and Eastern countries were expected to record their observations of European history, institutions, society and government life. Because of this application an abundant body of travel literature appeared. Although this genre forms an important historical source, not all can be said to contain worthwhile or reliable information.

The thirteenth/nineteenth century witnessed the beginning of a new period in Ottoman historiography. While, on the one hand, classical and traditional Ottoman works continued to be produced, on the other, new genres and experimental pieces appeared. Shānizāde's history was an important work which appeared among the *vakayi'ni'vis* histories. Jewdet Pāshā described Shānizāde (who knew Latin, Greek, Italian and French, besides Arabic and Persian) as that century's unique physician and philosopher.

Just as Kemāl-pāshā-zāde signaled the turning-point in historiography for the sixteenth century and Kātib Chelebī for the mid-eleventh/seventeenth, so was Jewdet Pāshā the precursor of change for the thirteenth/nineteenth. Jewdet Pāshā, who was a historian, a lawyer, a statesman and a writer, wrote in many fields, his chief historical work being the 12-volume *Tarih-i Cevdet*, which covered the years 1187–1241/1774–1826. To prepare himself as a historian, he spent many long years studying the *vakayi'ni'vis* writings, official documents, the Ottoman ambassadors' reports and notes and appendices on various subjects. He was much more successful in citing Western sources than any of his predecessors in the *vakayi'ni'vis* had been. He approached events as a whole and appended numerous documents to each volume regarding what had been covered in that part. His *Tezākir* (Memoirs) and *Ma'ruzat* (Reports) were the first important examples of memoirs and are apt reflections of the period in which he lived.

The publication of the *Takevīm-i Vekayi*, which first appeared just before the Tanzimat period in 1247/1832, and which was followed by the publication of many privately owned newspapers, had profound effects upon historiography. During this period, historians who knew Western affairs and thus could make comparisons between the West and the Ottoman régime began to appear. There were, therefore, many new developments in historiography at this time,



even while there was still, in many areas, a continuation of the traditional methods.

### Various principles and problems

The richness of types in Ottoman historiography is immediately apparent. During this period, in accordance with the political and institutional developments, many new types of writing, such as *menākib-nāmes*, *ghaḥḥavāt-nāmes*, general histories, sultanate histories encompassing the periods of one or more sultans, city histories, campaign histories, institutional histories, diaries (*rūz-nāmes*), biographies, memoirs, travel accounts, *sefaret-nāmes*, the chronicle of a single event, or the description of an individual occurrence and so forth, were initiated by the Ottoman historians.

Another of the special characteristics of Ottoman historiography is the way in which historians made use of the sources available to them. They sometimes mentioned their historical sources in the contents of their work. Archival documents were used by some historians from the tenth/sixteenth century onwards, although the method of utilization was far from systematic and usually occurred when the writer had access to particular documents as part of his professional duties. Some examples of this latter type can be found in Jalāl-zāde Muṣṭafā Chelebī, Selaniki Muṣṭafā Efendī, Kātib Chelebī and especially the nineteenth-century Jewdet Pāshā. Some writers also complained about their inability to get hold of the formal documents. When they used historical sources written before their own time, they either referenced the names or they quoted the source. However, among this group, Kātib Chelebī and Jewdet Pāshā can be seen to have analysed and critically sifted their sources as they combined the information in a masterly way for their own histories.

Historical science and philosophy, the benefits of history, critiques of an event and the qualities of historiography were all subjects of concern to, and written about by historians during the tenth/sixteenth century when Turkish historiography began to develop fundamentally. Even though historians like ʿAlī, Kātib Chelebī, Munajjim Bāshī, Naʿīmā and Jewdet Pāshā were among those to mention these subjects in their introductory sections, it must be admitted that the majority of historians did not give special consideration or place to those kinds of concerns and only dealt with them in a most haphazard fashion.

It is well known that in the eleventh/seventeenth century Ibn Khaldūn's views and understanding of historiography – especially his concept of *etvār-i hamse* – were well received by Ottoman historians, particularly by Kātib Chelebī, Naʿīmā and Jewdet Pāshā.

One of the special characteristics of Ottoman historiography was the readiness to criticize individuals and events. While criticism was expressed in a

very careful but moderate way in commissioned works such as the *sheb-nāmes* and the *vakayī<sup>c</sup>-nāmes*, independent historians were quite courageous when criticizing. One can see how different means of criticism were utilized. Sometimes individuals were criticized with a very clear and open intent. Usually, however, a more polite method was used, such as quoting an appropriate verse from the Qurʾān or a tradition from the life of the Prophet, or a proverb or an apophthegm.

Ottoman historians, especially those who wrote standard works, are known to have sketched several drafts and only after having prepared these versions did their final work appear. For instance, Idrīs-i Bidlīsī's text had two versions; parts of Selaniki's also had two; Ḥasan Bey-zāde's had six; Pechevī's three; and Kātib Chelebī is known to have written his *cihannüma* a second time after having discovered new information from a European source. Some copies of these versions written by various authors can be found today in Istanbul libraries.

One of the most important problems for the modern researcher is that the autographs of most of the Ottoman chronicles are not available and that the existing copies, on the other hand, differ substantially from one another. Some of the differences in expression, vocabulary and sentences cause great difficulties. It is also true that very few of the Ottoman historical sources are edited. A considerable number of standard Ottoman chronicles were published in the second half of the nineteenth century by the Matbaa-i Amire; in fact, some had second or even third editions printed in Istanbul and Bülāq. However, quite incorrect criteria were often used when choosing which copies should be printed. Usually the contents were not appraised, but those copies with attractive and easily understood contents were selected. Also, sometimes in multi-volume histories, the early and insignificant part of the chronicle was published, but the historian's eye-witnessed account was omitted. For instance, in 'Alī's *Kunhü l-abbar* (The Essence of the Reports) the material up to the time of the conquest of Istanbul was printed while that from his own time was deleted. Likewise, the beginning of Selaniki's history was printed while the very detailed and valuable section for the years after 1000/1592 was not, on the grounds that this same period was also found in Na'īmā's history.

From the tenth/sixteenth century on, certain Ottoman chronicles were translated by Europeans into Western languages. A number of Western historians, travellers and diplomats, who were curious about and wanted to understand the Ottoman Empire, translated, either wholly or in part, works of the greatest of the historians, such as Jalāl-zāde, Khoja Sa'd al-Dīn, Kātib Chelebī and Na'īmā into Latin, Italian, French, Greek and English, and these translations have been published.

In fact, Ottoman historians can be categorized into two separate groups: the learned profession (*ilmīye*) and the scribal profession (*kalemīye*). The first were known as '*ulamā'*' and the second as *kātib*s. However, it would not be

wrong to say that the majority of those who belonged to the first group had had the standard *madrassa*-education while the second were trained within the auspices of the office-apprenticeship programme. A common feature of both groups was their knowledge of both Arabic and Persian. However, it can be seen that, whether writing a history on an individual basis or for a public entity, such as the *sheh-nāme* or the *vakayi<sup>c</sup>-nāme*, the majority of the writers were of *madrassa*-provenance.

## Conclusion and appraisal

Ottoman historical literature occupies the foremost place amongst all literatures of compilation. Although the notion that there was a paucity of religious and scientific writing during the Ottoman period has been advanced, it can be seen that works of a historical nature were at the same time plentiful and successful. This literature serves as a mirror of the entire Ottoman period. To illustrate this point, we may cite the ability to trace, through an examination of historical writing, the spirit of *ghazw* and conquest which formed the basis for the foundation of the empire, the reasons for its lull and decline, the corruption of its institutions and search for solutions and proposals which had been suggested by its administrators, the thirteenth/nineteenth-century identification with Western models and, during this same time, the mistakes made and the vicious circles which were created, and, finally, the unique manner in which the Ottoman empire was purged. Ottoman historiography utilized all the special characteristics of content and subject-matter of the Islamic historical tradition which preceded it and developed this form of writing to new heights. The greatest deficiency in this area is that the majority of these texts have still not been evaluated in a scientific manner.

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Chapter 5  
THE INDIAN SCHOOL

*Khalid Ahmad Nizami*

Historical writing in India was influenced by the Iranian tradition of historiography: arrangement of data according to dynasties in preference to year-by-year presentation of details, concentration on political and military events, keeping out references to the social and cultural life of the people, and dedication to the reigning monarch. This was in sharp contrast to the Arab tradition of historiography, which dealt with an age rather than a dynasty, covered details of cultural activities and did not approve of the dedication of historical works to rulers. The *Sbāb-nāma* was the first historical work written in India about the Arab conquest of Sind. Originally composed in Arabic, its Persian translation, made by 'Alī b. Ḥāmid Kūfī during the time of Qubācha, has survived.<sup>1</sup> It follows the Iranian rather than the Arab method of historical writing. With the establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi, historical studies received an impetus due to the influx of a large number of scholars from Central Asia and Persian territories. Three major works, the *Tāj al-ma'āthir*<sup>2</sup> (The crown of the Exploits), *Shajara-i ansāb*<sup>3</sup> (The Family Tree) and *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣiri*,<sup>4</sup> appeared during the early period of Turkish rule. The *Tāj al-ma'āthir fi-l-tārikh* of Ḥasan Nizāmī Nishāpūri, which deals with the Turkish conquest of northern India, breathes the spirit of Persian *fatḥ-nāmas* (communiqués extolling the victories of rulers). Fakhr-i Mudabbir, the author of the *Shajara-i ansāb*, was interested in preserving the genealogies of royal dynasties, a subject on which he could consult 1,000 books in Lahore.<sup>5</sup> Fakhr-i Mudabbir's

1. Ed. 'Umar b. Muḥammad Daudpota, Delhi, 1939.
2. The earliest MS., in the *Daftar-i Kutub Khāna-i Fayḍ Allāb Efendā*, was transcribed in 698/1295.
3. Only a fragment has been edited and published by Sir E. D. Ross as *Tārikh-i Fakhru 'd-Dīn Mubārak Sbāb*, London, 1927.
4. Ed. 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī, Kabul, 1963–1964.
5. See E. D. Ross, *Tārikhī...*, *op. cit.* in n. 3.

other work, *Adab al-ḥarb wa-l-shajāʿa*<sup>6</sup> (The Art of War and Bravery) supplies interesting details about the art of warfare and is the first study of its kind compiled in those days of hectic military activity. Mīnhāj al-Sirāj wrote the *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣiri*, a continuous history of the world with the focus on the ruling Muslim dynasties up to the reigning monarch, Sulṭān Nāṣir al-Dīn Maḥmūd (643–664/1246–1266). Following the Iranian tradition, he concentrated on the court and the camp. His total exclusion of the literary and religious trends of the period was deprecated by his contemporaries.<sup>7</sup> History, as Ḥasan, Fakhr-i Mudabbir and Mīnhāj understood it, was determined by the political and military activities of the rulers. With the *Tārīkh-i Firūz Shāhi*<sup>8</sup> of Dīyāʿ al-Dīn Baranī, completed in 758/1357, the historical perspective began to change. Though arranged according to dynasties and dedicated to the reigning monarch, it treats history in a somewhat broader framework and refers to the rôle of saints, religious scholars and philosophers. Baranī had his own views about the scope and a perspective of history and also the ideals which the rulers were expected to follow. He believed that kingship was not possible without following Iranian traditions of governance and royalty. The theoretical exposition of his approach towards history is found in his *Fatāwā-i Jahāndārī* (The Opinions of Jahāndār).<sup>9</sup> It is not known whether Baranī deduced his political philosophy from his *Tārīkh* or prepared his *Tārīkh* in the light of his *Fatāwā*. It remains to be decided whether he was a historian who turned into a philosopher, or a philosopher who turned to history. Nevertheless, Baranī's impact on historical writing in India was so significant that literary and cultural events began to find their place in historical works. The *Tārīkh-i Firūz Shāhi* of ʿAffī,<sup>10</sup> the *Sirat-i Firūz Shāhi*<sup>11</sup> of an anonymous author and the *Tārīkh-i Mubārak Shāhi*<sup>12</sup> of Yahyā Sirhindī do not go much beyond referring to new incidents of literary or cultural significance. Though Amīr Khusraw (d. 725/1325), the famous Persian poet who wrote his *Khamsa* as a rejoinder to Nizāmī Ganjāwī, was not a historian as such, he left works of great historical significance. His two prose works – *Khazāʿin al-futūḥ* (The Treasure-Houses of the Conquests),<sup>13</sup> which deals with ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Khaljī's campaigns in the south, and a collection of documents, *Iʿjāz-i Khusrawī* (The Wonder of Khusraw),<sup>14</sup> contain valuable information about political and cultural life in medieval India. The former follows the tradition of the *Tāj al-maʿāthir* in its

6. Ed. Aḥmad Suhaylī Khwānsārī, Tehran, 1345/1927.

7. E.g. Ghawthī Shattārī, *Gulzar-i abrār* (MS).

8. Ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, Calcutta, 1860–1891.

9. Ed. Afshār Salīm Khān, Lahore, 1972.

10. Ed. Ullayat Ḥusayn, Calcutta, 1888–1891.

11. MS. in Bankipur Library, Patna.

12. Ed. Hidāyat Ḥusayn, Calcutta, 1931.

13. Ed. M. W. Mīrzā, Calcutta, 1953.

14. Published by Nawal Kishore, Lucknow, 1876.

ornate style and hyperbolic statements. Khusraw's poetical works, *Qiran al-Sa'dayn* (The Conjunction of Venus and Mercury), *Miftāḥ al-futūḥ* (The Key of the Conquests), *Dumal Rānī Khidr Khān* (The Empire of Rānī Khidr Khān), *Nūḥ Sīpibr* and *Tughluq-nāma*, contain valuable details of social and political significance. Among later poets, Badr-i Shāh, Muṭahhar, 'Urfī, Nāṣirī and Fayḍī have supplied details of historical importance in their panegyrics and versified accounts. The *fath-nāmas* drafted by Kabīr al-Dīn during the reign of 'Alā' al-Dīn Khaljī have not survived. A sample *fath-nāma* dealing with Balban's conquest of Lakhnawtī, as prepared by Amīr Khusraw, is found in the *I'jāz-i Khusrawī*.

With the advent of Akbar, a new phase began in Indian historiography. New principles were propounded about the collection and co-ordination of data and the historical landscape was surveyed from such varied angles as the imperial, sectarian and feminine. While Abu-l-Faḍl gave the imperial point of view in his *Akbar-nāma*,<sup>15</sup> Badā'ūnī, in his *Muntakhab al-tawārīkh* (Selections from Histories),<sup>16</sup> looked at the milieu from the point of view of an Orthodox Muslim and Gulbadan Bēgam referred in her *Humāyūn-nāmah*<sup>17</sup> to the rôle of women in political developments of the period. This variety of approaches added to the fascination of historical literature. Language and style also changed and works were produced in simple and colloquial as well as elaborate and ornate prose. Akbar suggested a new experiment in chronology by adopting the death of the Prophet (*riḥla*) as the beginning of the Islamic calendar. The *Tārīkh-i alfi* (The History of the Millennium)<sup>18</sup> was planned accordingly. Akbar's two other directives had far-reaching effects: (a) he sought the collection of data on the basis of a large-scale co-operation of people of different backgrounds – princes and plebeians – and asked those who had participated in different activities to supply data based on their personal observations. The *Tadhkirat al-wāqī'āt* (Memorial of the Events)<sup>19</sup> of Jawhar and the *Tadhkira-i Humāyūn wa-Akbar*<sup>20</sup> of Bāyazīd Bayāt were written in colloquial language by persons without any academic background. They referred in their works to many trivial but interesting incidents which would not have attracted the attention of professional historians. Rizq Allāh Mushtaḳī in his *Wāqī'āt*<sup>21</sup> and Muḥammad Kabīr in his *Afsāna-i Shāhān* (The story of the Shahs)<sup>22</sup> collected a large number of anecdotes of historical significance and in a way

15. Ed. Aghā Aḥmad 'Alī and 'Abd al-Raḥīm, Calcutta, 1873-1887.

16. Ed. Aḥmad 'Alī *et al.*, Calcutta, 1864-1869.

17. Ed. A.S. Beveridge, London, 1902.

18. For MSS. see C. H. Storey, *Persian Literature: a Bio-bibliographical Survey*, Vols. I-III, V, London, Royal Asiatic Society, 1927-1939, I, p. 120-121.

19. See C. H. Storey, *Persian Literature...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 536-537.

20. Ed. by Hidāyat Ḥussayn, Calcutta, 1941.

21. For MSS. see C. H. Storey, *Persian Literature...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 512-513.

22. MS. in British Library, Additional 24409.



V-5.1 *Humāy-i Humāyūn*

© Topkapi Palace Library (R-1045, fol. 23a)

picked up the tradition of Muḥammad Nizām al-Dīn ‘Awfī’s *Jawāmi‘ al-ḥikāyāt* (Collections of Narratives),<sup>23</sup> (b) Akbar appointed a board of historians to prepare the history of Islam and introduced the principle of collective responsibility in the preparation of historical works. A posse of historians appointed by Akbar worked on the *Tārīkh-i alfi*. Moreover, for the first time in Asian history statistical data about geographical and economic matters were presented in the *Āʾim-i Akbarī* (The Story of Akbar). It thus extended the historical perspective by taking into account the rôle and contribution of artisans, craftsmen, mystics, literati, poets and others. ‘Abd al-Qādir Badāʾunī and Nizām al-Dīn Bakhshī added in their works separate sections on literary and religious figures. Several general histories like the *Dhikr al-mulūk* (The Commemoration of Kings)<sup>24</sup> of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq, the *Tārīkh-i Firishṭā*<sup>25</sup> of Muḥammad Qāsim Hindū Shāh and the *Muntakhab al-lubāb* (The Quintessential Selection)<sup>26</sup> of Khwāfī Khān appeared during the Mughal period.

This extended perspective of history, which emerged as a result of Akbar’s innovative zeal and Abu-l-Faḍl’s broad historical vision, covering every aspect of social life (though from the imperial angle), paved the way for independent works on nobles (e.g. *Dhakhīrat al-khwānīn* (The Stores of the Khāns),<sup>27</sup> *Ma’āthir al-umārā’* (The Exploits of the Princes)<sup>28</sup> etc.), on poets (e.g. *Nafā’is al-ma’āthir* (The Gems of the Exploits)<sup>29</sup>) and on religious scholars and saints (e.g. *Akhhār al-akhyār* (Reports of the Best People),<sup>30</sup> *Gulzar-i abrār* (The Rose-garden of the Pious)).<sup>31</sup> This literature added new dimensions to the historical perspective. However, the tradition of compiling histories of monarchs with a concentration on political events continued throughout and political chronicles named after rulers became the general pattern of historical writing. The *Iqbāl-nāma-i Jahāngīrī* (The Coming of Jahāngīr),<sup>32</sup> the *Ma’āthir-i Jahāngīrī*,<sup>33</sup> the *Pādishāh-nāma* (The Account of the Sovereign),<sup>34</sup> the *‘Ālamgīr-nāma*<sup>35</sup> and others adhere to the same tradition.

23. Ed. Bano Musaffa, Tehran.

24. For MSS. see C. H. Storey, pp. 440f.

25. Nawal Kishore Press, Cawnpur, 1884.

26. Two volumes edited by Aḥmad and Ghulām Qādir, Calcutta, 1860–1874, the third by T.W. Haig, Calcutta, 1925.

27. Ed. by S. Noin ul-Han, Karachi, 1961–1974.

28. Ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm *et al.*, Calcutta, 1888–1891.

29. For MSS. see C. H. Storey, *Persian Literature...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 801–802.

30. Mujtabāʾī Press, Delhi, 1914.

31. For MSS. see C. H. Storey, *Persian Literature...*, *op. cit.*, p. 984.

32. Ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥayy and Aḥmad ‘Alī, Calcutta, 1865.

33. Ed. Azra Alavi, Bombay, 1978.

34. Ed. Kabīr al-Dīn, Calcutta, 1862–1872.

35. Ed. Khādīm Ḥusayn and ‘Abd al-Ḥayy, Calcutta, 1865–1873.



Regional and provincial histories were also produced during the Mughal period, such as Mir Muḥammad Ma‘ṣūm’s *Tārikh-i Sind*, Ḥaydar Malik’s *Tārikh-i Kashmīr*, Sālim Allāh’s *Tārikh-i Bangāla*, Abū Turāb Walī’s *Tārikh-i Gujārāt* and the like. These histories, named after regions, throw light on many aspects of regional culture otherwise not dealt with in general histories.

The tradition of autobiographical accounts in India is generally traced to Muḥammad b. Tughluq, but the autobiography ascribed to him is apocryphal. The *Futūḥāt-i Fīrūz Shāhī* (The Conquests of Fīrūz Shāhī) attributed to Fīrūz Tughluq is an inscription, not an autobiography. The autobiography of Bābur (originally written in Turkish but translated into Persian by ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Khān-i Khānān) and Jahāngīr’s *Tuzuk* (The Statues) provide a valuable insight into the process of historical development and supply details otherwise not available. The letters of Awrangzīb have taken the place of an autobiography since very interesting details of a personal nature are available in them.

Two other sources, though not technically histories, refurbished the autobiographical approach in India and extended the perspective of history: *malfūzāt* (table-talks of saints) and *maktūbāt* (epistolary collections of Ṣūfis, scholars and others). The tradition of *malfūz*-writing was introduced by Ḥasan Sijzī, who collected the conversations of his spiritual mentor Shaykh Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā<sup>3</sup> in his *Fawā’id al-fu’ād* (The Benefits of the Hearts),<sup>36</sup> almost at the same time as the *malfūzāt* of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī were compiled in *Fīhi mā fīhi* (It Contains what it Contains). The tradition set by Ḥasan Sijzī led to the birth of an enormous *malfūz* literature in India. The conversations of eminent Ṣūfī saints like Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn Chirāgh (*Khayr al-majālis* (The Best of Assemblies)),<sup>37</sup> Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn Gharīb (*Aḥsan al-aqwāl* (The Finest of Sayings)),<sup>38</sup> Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī (*Ma‘dīn al-ma‘ānī* (The Mine of Meanings)),<sup>39</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Gīsū Darāz (*Jawāmi‘ al-kalim* (Comprehensive Sayings)),<sup>40</sup> Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Bukhārī (*Sirāj al-hidāya* (The Light of Guidance)),<sup>41</sup> Shaykh Aḥmad Maghribī (*Tuḥfat al-majālis* (The Gift of the Assemblies))<sup>42</sup> and a host of others, are of great historical significance. Written in almost every part of the sub-continent, these *malfūzāt* throw light on the social and cultural trends of the period and provide woof and warp for a comprehensive social and intellectual history of India. The epistolary collections, which are of varied nature – political (like the *Inshā-i Mābrū*)<sup>43</sup>

36. Ed. Latīf Malik, Lahore, 1966.

37. Ed. K. A. Nizami, 1981, Aligarh, 1959.

38. See K. A. Nizami, 1981, (*Supplement* to H. M. Elliot and J. Dowson, 1887, III), pp.95–96.

39. Sharaf al-Akhbār Press, Bihar, 1301/1883.

40. Ed. M. H. Siddīqī, Zānpur, 1937.

41. Ed. Qāḍī Sajjād Ḥusayn, Delhi, 1983.

42. MS., India Office Library, Persian Collection D.R. 979.

43. Ed. by S. A. Rashīd, Lahore, 1965.

(The Epistolography of Māhrī) and *Inshā-i Abu-l-Faḍl*),<sup>44</sup> religious (like the *maktūbāt* (Collections) of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Quddūs of Gangōh<sup>45</sup> and Shaykh Aḥmad of Sirhind<sup>46</sup>) – throw invaluable light on social and religious trends which cannot be neglected in any comprehensive historical study.

Thus, the historiographical tradition in India introduced by Ḥasan Niẓāmī, Fakhr-i Mudabbir and Minhāj concentrated on kings exclusively. ‘Iṣāmī wrote the *Futūḥ al-salāṭīn* (The Conquests of the Sultans)<sup>47</sup> as an epic poem on the rulers of India from the Ghaznawids to the Bahmānids on the pattern of Firdawsī’s *Shāh-nāma*. The Mughal official historians from Akbar to Farrūkh Siyar followed this tradition. The extended perspective of history as presented by Baranī influenced the Mughal historiographical tradition in certain ways but could not change the Iranian perspective of history. Recently, attention has been drawn to the need to apply psycho-historical methods to medieval Indian historiography.<sup>48</sup>

44. Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1280/1863.

45. Published by Maṭba‘-i Aḥmadī, Amritsar, 1332/1913.

46. Published by Nūr Aḥmad, Amritsar, 1332/1913.

47. Ed. A.S. Usha, Madras, 1948.

48. See K. A. Nizami, ‘Psychohistory and Medieval Indian Historiography’, *Islamic Culture*, 61/2, 1987, pp. 1–22.

– VI –

A R T I S T I C  
C R E A T I O N S

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## Introduction

# ART AND AESTHETIC CREATIVITY

*Afif Babnassi*

### Islamic art: definition and criteria

Islamic art emerged with the advent of Islam and took shape with unprecedented speed. While it then evolved and developed varied forms throughout history, it still retained its own distinctive identity. Indeed, so unique is the nature of Islamic art that it cannot be compared with other forms of art or studied in terms of the theoretical principles applying to them.

Islamic art sprang from a land which had embraced the religion of Islam. Just as the first Muslims preserved their linguistic and ethical heritage, so too did they maintain their creative tradition, which formed the basis of the new Islamic art, now manifest in architecture, decorative art and calligraphy.

The people who produced this art came from Syria, Iran, Egypt and Morocco, countries where art had existed before the coming of the new religion but which were now imbued with the tenets of Islam. Thus, if the arts at the dawn of Islam displayed a continuity in form and style, this may be attributed to the artists who lived during the period of transition from paganism and who retained their original inspiration. Art, however, continued to develop with the evolution of Islam in the hearts and minds of Muslims, so that, before long, Islamic art had begun to assume its own form and to free itself from the intellectual and philosophical attitudes surviving from pre-Islamic times. In this development, art was tied to the principles of Islam, which were no longer simply religious precepts, but a new concept based primarily on the Islamic *Shari'ah*, continuously drawing inspiration from Islamic philosophy.

The study of Islamic art, therefore, is not subject to the aesthetic criteria used in the study of Graeco-Roman or post-Renaissance art. On the contrary, it is necessary to seek other aesthetic criteria, since Islamic art has found expression in forms which are wholly different from those of other cultures. For example, the art of the Greeks and Romans was based on the principle of respect for the anatomical perfection of the human body; the art of India and

China sought to express moral ideals in ritualistic portrayals and sculptures; the pre-Columbian art of the Aztecs expressed the image of man through that of their gods.

Islamic art, on the other hand, did not give expression to any form depicting God, the universe, the ideal, or man. Its goal was to express the ardent passion and quest for the world of the Absolute and the Secret which lies behind these lofty concepts.

The aesthetic criteria of Islam are:

1. freedom and creativity
2. the quest for the ideal
3. the search for the Sublime and the Absolute

### Freedom and creativity

From the Stone Age to the beginnings of history in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and from classical times up to the last century and the emergence of abstract art in the West, no artists have enjoyed the creative freedom from which Muslim artists benefited. Throughout history, they have been chained to the realism depicted in the cave paintings of Lascaux and Altamira and their attempts to break free from its shackles have been confined to mythical imaginings. The reason for this is the fact that the artistic ideal in all of the examples cited was clear and concrete. The task of the artist was to communicate with and to imitate the ideal, or to turn about it within the limits of experience and the artist's subjective view of objects and the external world in general. This meant that the student of aesthetics, whether adopting a psychological or a sociological approach, faced no particular difficulty in the search for the roots of genius or the bases of creativity and aesthetic appreciation: man in both his psychological and social dimensions stood at the centre of Western art and was the focus of its philosophy.

Thus, the artist was not free and Western art was not based on freedom. The tyranny of the law and other obstacles continued to cramp the potential of Western art up to the modern period. The crucial difference between Islamic and other forms of art arises because of the yawning gap between the Concrete and the Absolute. Islamic art is the art of the Absolute and, within the broad confines of this universe, the artist enjoyed the highest degree of freedom in choosing the medium and form of his work and creation.

When the abstract movement finally arrived, Western art was still unable to achieve this freedom. Having shaken off the fetters of realism, it lost its way in the labyrinths of nothingness. Abstract art was tied to nihilism rather than to the Absolute and its road, instead of leading to freedom, proved to be no more than a blind alley, leading nowhere.

The freedom of Muslim artists came about as a result of the connection of their art with the Absolute, in accordance with the monotheist perspective

which forms the foundation of the Muslim faith. Though monotheism was a well-established concept, it took on a new meaning with Islam as the basis of Muslim civilization.

Some scholars have erroneously taken the view that Islamic art is based on prohibition<sup>1</sup> and that it is heavily constrained rather than free, for the simple reason that it is not allowed to represent the human form. Muslims could not represent objects and faces lest they should defy God and be in danger of creating images and idols.

The Qur'ān condemns the worship of idols as *shirk* and *kufir*:

God forgiveth not  
That partners should be set up  
With Him; but he forgiveth  
Anything else, to whom  
He pleaseth.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is the intention rather than the action which counts. If the purpose of portrayal is to instruct or edify, no law prohibits it. The Prophet, for example, tolerated the image of the Messiah on the walls of the Ka'ba and allowed his wife 'Ā'isha to keep a hanging which had representations on it and which he used as a cushion or stool. For their part, the caliphs permitted many representations in palaces, on walls and tents, on coins and weapons. Moreover, though the mosaics on the walls of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus represent nature as God created it, they have never, to this day, been the subject of any objection or criticism. It is beyond the capacity of man to vie with God in what he creates.

This point leads us to reassert the freedom enjoyed by Muslim artists. If they pursued the interpretation of plants and symbols, it was because the Muslim faith, which centres around an infinite and incomparable God, led them to establish an art based on the representation of the Absolute and the creation of works of pure art, springing from a special perception of nature and God's creatures.

Here, Muslim art is at one with the schools of modern art which, spurning the views prevailing hitherto, believe that independence from realism is no constraint but, on the contrary, a means to attain the highest degree of creative freedom.

Throughout history, people in their devotions worshipped the forces which would ensure their prosperity and survival. Worship progressed from the mother goddess and the calf to the stars, the moon and the sun (Amon). Religions then evolved to include a god of the sky (An) and a god of the earth

1. Cf. A. Papadopoulo, *L'Islam et l'art musulman*, Paris, Mazenod, 1976, *Islam and Muslim Art*, trans. R. E. Wolf, London/New York, Thames and Hudson, 1979, pp.22-48.

2. IV. 48

(Enlil). Eventually, there emerged the concept of a god of both the heavens and the earth (El) and it is likely that this was the god worshipped in the times of Abraham.

If Islam believed in the god of Abraham, it was because Allah was not just an object of worship. He was the absolute power, the supreme ideal and the fundamental cause of our existence. According to the Qurʾān:

He is the First  
And the Last,  
The Evident  
And the Immanent;  
And He has full knowledge  
Of all things.<sup>3</sup>

Allah is not restricted in any way: He is everything and He is above everything:

..there is nothing  
Whatever like unto Him,  
And He is the One  
That hears and sees (all things).<sup>4</sup>

The first article of the Muslim creed is the Testimony: 'There is no god but God', that is to say, there is no power, no ideal and no absolute value except in the concept of God, who is above all things.

The religion of Islam lays down the rules and principles by which to achieve piety and faith. Taken as a whole, they provide the means to come closer to God and discover the secret of the universe. The Prophet came as a guide and preacher to show people how to put their faith in God and piety into practice. The believers testify that Muḥammad is a servant and messenger of God and the teacher and guide of the Muslim nation or *umma*.

The mission of Islam, carried out by the Prophet and by the believers after him, is a humane and civilizing one. The Qurʾān says:

We did indeed offer  
The Trust to the Heavens  
And the Earth  
And the Mountains;  
But they refused  
To undertake it,  
Being afraid thereof;  
But man undertook it;  
He was indeed unjust  
And foolish.<sup>5</sup>

3. LVII. 3.

4. XLII. 11.

5. XXXIII. 72.

## Materialism and idealism in art

Outside Islam the basis of the arts was materialistic and utilitarian, artistic expression being no more than the fulfilment of a need or a wish. The mammoths and extinct animals depicted on the walls of Lascaux were painted to allay fears and to reassure man that these creatures were under his control; the representation of Christ is similarly reassuring because Christ is the redeemer who will forgive all sins; Goya's canvases of the Maja, clothed and unclothed, satisfy instincts both open and concealed; pictures depicting the life of the bourgeoisie were intended to satisfy feelings of superiority and class distinction.

Islamic art, on the other hand, was based on an idealistic model, one in which the artist strives towards the hidden meanings of things, especially the divine. Hence, the aim of the artist was not to satisfy some material need but to plumb the hidden depths of life through his creative powers. The work of exploration is an act of creativity and piety, an attempt to come closer to God. The art forms are an indirect expression of the piety of the Muslim artist and these pictures satisfy a spiritual rather than a material need. The representation of the symbols of Paradise is not a material demand, even though it encourages repentance. The artist often depicts Paradise as the haven of the righteous, using images which symbolize piety and proximity to God. Plants referred to in the Qur'an as marks of Heaven (dates, pomegranates, figs and grapes, olives, grains and flowers) serve the artist as metaphors. Many verses of the Qur'an contain such references. For example:

And the shades (of the Garden)  
Will come low over them,  
And the bunches (of fruit),  
There, will hang low  
In humility.<sup>6</sup>

The artist, however, does not always depict such things in a realistic manner but through a 'similitude' (Qur'an II. 25). This serves to underline the absolute rather than the relative nature of things: it is Heaven and its various aspects which are depicted rather than the fruit itself.

When the Muslim artist depicts living creatures or the human face, they are represented in the nebular condition, which is the first of the three stages of creation. The Qur'an says:

Such is he, the Knower  
Of all things, hidden  
And open, the Exalted  
(In power), the Merciful;

6. LXXXVI. 14.



He Who has made  
 Everything which He has created  
 Most Good; He began  
 The creation of man  
 With (nothing more than) clay,

And made his progeny  
 From a quintessence  
 Of the nature of  
 A fluid despised;

But He fashioned him  
 In due proportion, and breathed  
 Into him something of  
 His spirit.<sup>7</sup>

## The Transcendental and the Absolute

The artist can depict the face, but must leave out the features in a process known as subtraction (*tarb*). This confirms his inability to create man from a quintessence of the nature of a fluid despised, or to breathe into the representation something of 'His spirit'. Thus, the aim of the Muslim artist was not creation but creativity.

The aim of the Western artist, on the other hand, was to imitate the Creator in his ability to create. Moreover, he might represent the deity as he pleased, as Michelangelo, for example, painted God in the guise of Jupiter to depict the creation of Adam on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome.

This form of representation is at odds with the fundamental principle of Islamic art, whereby the One God is shown through His Kingdom, which consists of the Universe and Heaven. However, there is no reason why the Muslim artist should not represent the face, provided that his aim is not to depict God or to vie with Him in his creation. One of the sayings of the Prophet is this: 'Those to suffer the direst of punishments on the Day of Judgement will be the makers of images who defile God's creativity.'

While plant motifs represent Paradise and the reward of faith, more abstract geometrical designs serve as a direct expression of the universe. These are patterns of star-shaped centrifugal designs in the form of glittering rays, with straight lines separating geometrical and symmetrical surfaces. These designs consist mainly of triangles, squares and combinations of the two to form stars or more complex figures. This design, known as *khayf*, expresses the ground-plan of natural phenomena, geographical space and the fundamental elements.

7. XXXII. 6-9.

The analysis of these designs is certainly not a science obeying the logic of mathematics. On the contrary, it is mathematics which must bend to the analytical will. Hence, the study of these forms and the analysis of their meaning are based on 'symbolization', for just as letters combine to form words, so too do geometric forms combine into creative sentences with a spiritual or mythical meaning. The arabesque is the most effective way of expressing meaning which is not, or cannot be, personified and concretized.

## Forms of Islamic art

### REPRESENTATION

By failing to insist, in discussion of the arabesque, on the concept of monotheism and the framework of absolutism within which the Muslim artist works, we have often left Islamic art open to criticism. However, the logic of this position is based primarily on the Western concept of art and on a relativism which has been rejected by modern art in the West itself.

Justification for the arabesque may, however, be found in the views on the impermanence of matter held by the Ash'ariyya school<sup>8</sup> (according to which the only attribute of God is His eternal nature).

Massignon believes that the decorative artist seeks to affirm this eternal nature of God by atomizing or abstracting objects.<sup>9</sup> The idea that pictures distract us from the contemplation of God helps to explain the attempts to eliminate and conceal matter. This is a further interpretation of the principle of atomism developed by the Ash'ariyya.

The traditional explanation is that decorative art and abstract representation arose from the prohibition referred to in the *Hadīth*.<sup>10</sup> Two positions are taken in this respect:

1. the prohibition relates to the interdiction imitating God's creation. According to Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī, this means that it is forbidden to depict God in bodily form.<sup>11</sup> While it is agreed that representation of God is a heresy contrary to monotheism, the prohibition does not include the representation of other objects.

8. Atomism rejects Aristotle's view of the precedence and permanence of matter because it is contrary to monotheism. Instead, it holds that matter is divisible into atoms. This philosophy was adopted by the Mu'tazilites and then by the Ash'ariyya. The French orientalist L. Massignon sought to explain the arabesque on the basis of this philosophy.

9. L. Massignon, 'Les méthodes de réalisations artistiques des peuples de l'Islam', *Syria*, 2, pp. 47-53, 149-160, 1921.

10. Cf. Muslim b. Al-Ḥajjāj Al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ bi-Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, 18 vols. in Beirut, 6, n. d., XIV, p. 81.

11. See Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan al-Fārisī, *Makḥṣūṣāt bujjat al-qirā'āt*, Alexandria, Alexandria Bookshop, n.d.

2. physical representation is neither prohibited nor a mortal sin. Proof of this can be seen in the fact that it has been practised in almost every phase of Islamic history. It flourished both in Shi'ite Persia and in Sunni Turkey without it being considered heretical or forbidden. Awliyā' Chelebī (traveller and historian, 1611–1684) wrote of two artists in Constantinople who excelled in representational art. However, this has not prevented some religious schools, such as the Mālikī, from taking an extreme stand against figurative art.

Although figurative portroyal is clearly evidenced in the early days of Islam, it was not without some degree of distortion or even deliberate violation of the rules of anatomy, linear perspective and light and shade which have been perfected in Western art. Does this mean, therefore, that the Muslim artist was incapable of perfecting figurative representation, as claimed by Max Van Berchem?<sup>12</sup> Not unless we are prepared to believe the same of painters such as Van Gogh or Picasso! To see that every artist has his own way of looking at reality, we need only take the example of the Muslim artists who left us the masterpieces in the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, the *Shāhnāma*, or *Kalīla wa-Dimma*. Nevertheless, in our attempt to provide a comprehensive view of Islamic aesthetics, we have to ask why Muslim artists shunned all the conventions of figurative art.

We can turn for an answer to Roland Barthes<sup>13</sup> and semiotics. Plastic art is a form of visual communication, similar to written language, which, in turn, is similar to spoken language. The relationship between language and form is a significant semiotic one. The manifestation of the divine is but a clarification through the combination of language and writing. The language of the Qur'ān required an appropriately elevated form of penmanship, that is one subject to the rules of calligraphy. Thus, the task of the calligrapher was to elevate the level of the graphic form of the Qur'ān so that it might approach the eloquence of the language of the Book. The same is true of the level of abstraction in the arabesque, which is linked to Truth and Existence in their absolute meaning. The importance of abstraction lies in the superior aesthetic significance it assumes.

In keeping with the springs of literary creativity, which found a peerless model in the style of the Qur'ān, the artist leaves to the beholder of his work the widest scope to perceive its meaning in accordance with the circumstances of the time and situation. The Holy Qur'ān insisted on respect for the point of view of the reader in understanding and comprehending what he reads.<sup>14</sup> This

12. Swiss scholar (1863-1921), initiator of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, planned to assemble all known Arabic inscriptions.

13. French thinker and critic (1915-1980), founder of the semiotic approach to criticism.

14. The Qur'ān refers to the mind and discernment in forty-nine places, usually with the words 'Do you not realize?'

was a respect and freedom not vouchsafed to the readers of any other sacred books and classical works until the advent of modern art and literature.

The Muslim artist had many reasons to depart from the laws of mathematical perspective. For a start, perspective did not form part of his ancient tradition and was absent from the pre-Islamic art of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, Persia and Byzantium. It did not become widespread until the Renaissance<sup>15</sup> and even then continued to be alien to the tradition of Islamic art.

Vitruvius had discussed the science of perspective in Roman times but this was in the line of classical tradition, which venerated the laws and rules of mathematics and the imitation of reality. As such, the ideas were finite and contrary to the concept of creativity.

A second reason is that the perspective shared by the Qurʾān, Islamic literature and art was spiritual rather than material. In Chinese art, the perspective puts the reader or the beholder in the centre of the painting: the point of view emanates from the subject so that far-away objects appear bigger than those in the foreground. In Indian perspective, the point of view is taken from behind the reader. The spiritual perspective, however, is based on an entirely different principle.<sup>16</sup>

The painter's view of his subject is based on the fact that all things exist by the will of God. Perception, therefore, is not confined to one particular angle but takes in the universe as a whole. In the science of optics, rays of light have a conical shape with the origin at the point of view. These rays, therefore, are relative and differ according to the nature and position of the viewer. However, the rays of light emanating from the universe as a whole are parallel and thus absolute rather than relative. To clarify this point, let us consider the sun's rays. These appear as parallel straight lines, with the shadows of objects corresponding to their own dimensions. On the other hand, rays from any terrestrial light source are conical in shape and the shadows thrown become wider the further they are from the objects causing them.

Western painters opted for the relative rays which originate from the eye of the beholder. Muslim painters, on the other hand, chose the rays of the universe, with the result that their work was two-dimensional. As these rays were thus straight universal lines, they filled the working-surface completely and sometimes lay one across the other in tightly woven arabesques, their geometry of stars and planes pregnant with cosmic meaning.

15. From the ninth/fifteenth century to the tenth/sixteenth.

16. See ʿA. Bahnasī, 1979, *Jamaliyyāt al-fann al-ʿArabī*. (ʿĀlam al-Maʿrifa, Series 14), Kuwait, p. 4.

THE ARABESQUE

The six-pointed star, consisting of two interconnected triangles, represents a cosmos made up of the earth and the sky, the earth represented by the triangle with its base at the bottom and the sky by the triangle with its base at the top. The eight-pointed star, consisting of two interconnected squares, again represents the universe, one symbolizing the four directions of north, south, east and west, and the second square symbolizing the four elements of water, air, fire and earth.<sup>17</sup>

God is the Universe and Truth, Time and Existence. The artist experiences the divine cosmos, not through prayer and reverence, but because he has a vision of God through the unity of Existence and the Universe:

There is not a thing  
But celebrates His praise;  
And yet ye understand not  
How they declare His glory!  
Verily He is Oft-Forbearing,  
Most forgiving!<sup>18</sup>

There is a clear attempt at creating a link between the world of reality as such and the intuitive reality which lives and develops within the artist. The difference is readily apparent in modern art and students of aesthetics nowadays accept that there is a distinction between true and artistic reality.

From the time of the Greeks to the Christian era, the West was based on materialism. The Greeks, the Romans and the early Christians all held that God himself descended to earth from the heavens to become a person similar to a human being and, to this day, Christ is seen in the West as a heavenly power on earth. The Muslim East, however, was founded on a different principle; here, man turns towards Heaven, represented by the sky, or to the universe, represented by the circle and the star. The Prophet himself, though carrying a divine message, is a human being and continuously prays to God:

God is the Light  
of the Heavens and the Earth.<sup>19</sup>

To God belong the East  
And the West: whithersoever

17. See 'A. Bahnasī, *Ma'ānī al-nujūm fī-l-raḡḡ al-ʿArabī*, 1983 International Symposium in Istanbul, p. 53, Istanbul, Centre for Research in Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1983, p. 53.

18. XVII.44.

19. XXIV.35.

Ye turn, there is the Presence  
Of God.<sup>20</sup>

The upward-striving towards the divine is the counterpart in religion of what modern philosophy calls 'the search for the Absolute'. No matter how far we go in Islamic jurisprudence, philosophy sees in this religion one basic and vital principle, namely, a monotheism of a consistency unparalleled in any other creed. The philosophy of Islamic art must be seen more as an aspect of Muslim civilization than as a branch of Islamic jurisprudence. It is the same with philosophy and thought, science and industry. Though they may touch on or overlap with jurisprudence, each has its own independent sphere and together they serve to shape the identity of Islamic civilization.

The search for the Absolute is circumstantial in nature and cannot be defined. Things in themselves have fixed and finite values, whereas the things that lie behind and beyond them in any direction have values which are in constant flux and evolution. They generate other values, which cannot be obtained or comprehended through reason alone but which require the action of the mind and the senses together, that is to say, intuition. It is these values which the Muslim artist seeks.

Thus, the Olympian art - mathematical realism - which arose in Greece and re-emerged during the Renaissance was the art of objects as such in their ideal state, an ideal of beauty, power, majesty and perfection. To depict them demanded a skill to which the history of art bears witness. Modern art does not, however, regard this skill as creative, true creativity being held to reside in the search for what lies hidden behind objects. Thus, new movements appeared - impressionism, surrealism, expressionism - to reinforce this concept of creativity.

As far as Islamic art is concerned, there is nothing new in all this. When Western philosophers now talk about intuition as a means of creativity and appreciation, they are only repeating what al-Tawhīdī had to say a thousand years ago: 'Intellect is the key to the works of man ... and inspiration is the key to matters divine.'

## LIGHT

Outside the Muslim world, the imitation of reality appears to be both the method and the goal of the arts. Islamic art, however, seeks not the material which best reflects reality but rather the forms which best express the Absolute. Here, the boundaries of relativism melt away, the recollections of perception fade and relative values recoil before the strength of light emanating from the heart of the universe.

20. II.115.

Islam saw light as the essence of things. God, for example, is the Light of 'the Heavens and the earth' (Qur'ān XXIV.35); the Prophet is 'a lamp spreading Light' (Qur'ān XXXIII.46); and 'We have made (the Qur'ān) a Light, wherewith we guide' (Qur'ān XLII.52).

By means of geometric decoration, the artist sought to express light through the sparkling movement of six- and eight-pointed stars and multiples of them.

As in decorative art, so too in architecture, light is an essential aesthetic element: the light which pervades the courtyard of a house or the courtyard of a mosque; the gleaming white which covers the walls; the massive lighthouse shape of the minaret, topped with a copper chandelier (*jamour*). The stress which the artist gives to light and the prominence with which it is expressed are fundamental to Islamic aesthetics.

It is argued by some that distortion (*taḥwīr*) in Islamic art arises because perfection in art must be shunned, in accordance with the Ash'arī school or because of the 'impossibility' of conveying reality. These views, however, stem from the idea that Islamic aesthetics has failed to follow the Greek model. They ignore the fact that Islamic aesthetics is different both in terms of origin and result, being linked to the causes of things rather than things themselves, to substance rather than appearance, to the absolute rather than the relative.

The striving after the light (that is the essence) is one of the reasons for the unity of Islamic art. *Taḥwīr*, distortion, and the arabesque confirm that this art belongs to the core of the universe and to the oneness which prevails in Islamic thought. Thus, art remains as a unifying factor throughout time and across continents.

Western artists believed in the beauty of the human body, whether the female body of Aphrodite or the male body of Hercules. While Islamic artists, on the other hand, appreciated the skill and beauty of these works, they reserved to themselves the judgement that the artistic works of the Alhambra Palace, the Great Mosque of Cordoba, the *minbar* of Kairouan, the *muqarnas* of the Saljūqs and the carvings of the Fāṭimids were masterpieces of creativity, all shimmering in their blends of light and shade, as if cut from the diamond which is the light of existence.

## Form and content

Islamic art derives its eloquence from the Holy Qur'ān. Just as the content and form of the Holy Book combine to produce the beauty of Qur'ānic style, so too do form and content combine creatively to produce Islamic art, whether from the meanings of the geometrical and plant forms in the arabesque or from the meanings of the Qur'ānic verse in calligraphy.

The pellucid style and all-embracing content of the Qur'ān provided the theoretical and the artistic foundation for the creativity of Arabic calligraphy

and the arabesque (*raqsh*), which is the representational form. This strove for a symbolic transition from word to picture, influenced by the content of the Qurʾān. The arabesque combines both a spiritual content and a hieroglyphic image. Upon close examination of the arabesque and the changes in the art and forms of calligraphy, whether in the soft script or in the Kufic script, we can discern how the embellishments accompanying it have separated to form the arabesque. This was the art form par excellence of the Muslim artist and it spread, developed and evolved until it was to be found on objects of every kind, from architecture to clothing.

Given the clear ties between Islamic thought, the script and the arabesque, it is evident that our search for an aesthetic theory must always turn to the principles of Islamic doctrine and philosophy.

However, Islamic art was not Manichean,<sup>21</sup> which is to say that it was not based on a specific religious function or obligation. There is nothing in the Islamic *Shariʿa* to show that art is a religious form. Yet, though certain historians wrongly consider this art to be the art of Islamic religion, it remains, nonetheless, the art of Islamic thought.

## Art and Islamic thought

The legacy of Islam is a complete body of thought with a distinct personality in all fields of jurisprudence, science and art. Believers from all corners of the Muslim world have contributed in equal measure to propagate this thought and to deepen our understanding of it.

Islamic art came to be practised outside the land of Islam by non-Muslim craftsmen and communities, particularly of the Christian faith. They helped to build and beautify such early architectural wonders as the Dome of the Rock, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and the Great Mosque in Cordoba. Although non-Islamic artistic traditions were reflected in these early contributions, the religion of the craftsmen did not affect their work. Then, they gradually conformed to the aesthetic and artistic traditions which evolved with the development of Islamic thought and its own separate identity.

It remains apparent that Islamic art was an application of Islamic thought. The inter-relationship between thought and artistic form demonstrates that the aesthetic foundations of art had themselves been explored by such scholars as al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, al-Jāhīz and Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī. When we return to these sources, we find before us the first threads which would be woven into the philosophical structure of Islamic art.<sup>22</sup>

21. Manichaeism derives from the teaching of Mānī of Bābil (216–c. 274), who preached an ascetic doctrine during the Sāsānid period. He was a gifted artist and considered painting to be an important means of propagating his beliefs.

22. See ʿA. Bahnasī, *Falsafat al-fann ʿinda-l-Tawḥīdī*, Damascus, Dār al-Fikr, 1987.



More than a thousand years ago, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī succeeded in establishing the first comprehensive science of aesthetics. In his writings, he was scrupulous in attributing ideas and views quoted from his contemporaries, such as al-Sijistānī and al-Sayrafi. His book, *al-Imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa* (Pleasure and Conviviality)<sup>23</sup> is a basic source of his ideas, which can be followed up in his other works.

Arabic calligraphy was and remains the field in which the creative genius of Muslims has flourished. Prominent among Muslim calligraphers are Quṭba al-Muḥarrir, Ibn Muqla, Ibn al-Bawwāb (a contemporary of al-Tawḥīdī), Yāqūt al-Musta'şimī, Mīr 'Alī, al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Uthmān and many others. Arabic calligraphy was the subject of writers such as Ibn al-Nadīm in his *Fihrist*. See also al-Qalqashandī and al-Tawḥīdī for the discussion of Islamic aesthetics.<sup>24</sup>

Ideas proposed on the philosophy of art related not only to creation in the script but concerned creativity in general. Muslims understood that there were correspondences uniting all forms of art – poetry, architecture, the arabesque and calligraphy. In architecture, for example, we find poetry, sculpture and music; in the arabesque, rhythm and dance; in calligraphy, architecture, song and image; while in poetry, movement, sound and form combine to represent all the arts, as in the famous lines of Imru' al-Qays, where he described his steed as charging, retreating, advancing and turning – 'like a boulder swept by a torrent from on high'.

Arabic calligraphy is the art of drawing and of architecture, the art of meanings given melodic expression. However, if we take calligraphy to exemplify creativity, the example is not confined to calligraphy alone but relates to all the other forms of art.

## The quest for a philosophy of Islamic art

The contributions of the earliest thinkers were insufficient to provide a comprehensive theory for the philosophy of Islamic art and, following them, the discussion of artistic creativity was abandoned for centuries. When aesthetic thoughts subsequently appeared in the West, Muslims had to learn the rules of creativity and appreciation from this source. However, they failed to take account of the fact that Western aesthetics based the idea of artistic beauty on the nude. Thus, when the new science was taught in their universities and they tried to apply it to the understanding of Islamic art, they mistakenly accused the latter of inadequacy.

23. See for example, Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtā' wa-l-mu'ānasa*, ed. A. Amīn and A. al-Zayn, 3 vols., Cairo, 1939–1944, II, p. 53.

24. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, 1871–1872, *passim*; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fi şinā'at al-īnshā'*, ed. M. 'A. Ibrāhīm, 14 vols., Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Khadawiyya, 1913–1919; al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Imtā'*..., *op. cit.*

Muslims then found that modern art in the West had advanced beyond the rules of aesthetics inherited from Plato, transcending the human form to penetrate the world of its spirit, meaning, dreams and ideas. The contradiction between Platonic aesthetics and modern art became manifest with the advent of surrealism and abstract art. It was now necessary to find a new aesthetics, based on philosophical conceptions different from those prevailing in the age of Kant and Hegel.

With the old aesthetics toppled from its position as the science of all the arts, the quest began for a philosophy of aesthetics specific to Islamic art. This was the first step on the road to a re-appraisal of Islamic art, which orientalists had often considered mere decoration or abstraction because it shunned the representation forbidden by religion.

Certain specialists in the field,<sup>25</sup> depending on their religious or theoretical background, wished to draw a distinction between the aesthetics of the former and other forms of aesthetics and to consider the originality of Islamic art and its philosophy. However, they were unable to overcome their pre-conceived notions that Islamic art was begotten of prohibition, that it was a religious art form and that its origins lay in the Byzantine or Sāsānid art which preceded it.

Although one of these scholars<sup>26</sup> proudly proclaimed his discovery of the spiral perspective in the art of miniatures, he was unable to explain its ascending aspect, which was a common factor in architecture, dance, music, Qurʾānic recitation and even the circumambulation of the Kaʿba. When Muslim scholars<sup>27</sup> then set out to look for the principles underlying a theory of Islamic or Arab art, his was no doubt a positive step in efforts to explain the philosophical background of Islamic art.

It goes without saying that defining the identity of Islamic art is of the greatest importance in determining the distinctive features of a cultural heritage which nations and regional and international cultural organizations are trying to explain and support. Islamic art is one form of Islamic identity and by studying it, we can hope to achieve a more profound understanding of this identity and to define its characteristics. Such an historic study will help to lay the foundations for the authentic art of the future.

The discovery of cultural identity is not just academic research but rather a long-term project, which will serve to define the characteristics of a new art and to save it from impropriety, triviality and fragmentation.

25. Cf. O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1973, pp. 19–24.

26. A. Papadopoulo, *L'Islam...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–32.

27. Among them we might mention Bishr Fāris, Ḥasan Fathī, Ḥasan Shākīr Āl Saʿīd, Sayyid Husayn Naṣr, ʿAlī al-Lawāṭī and ʿAbd al-Kabīr Khaṭībī.

## Modernism and Islamic art

Modern artists have been following the currents of Western art. Some among them have been using elements of the Islamic form in applying the new trends and methods, arguing that their aim is to modernize Islamic art. What these people do not realize is that modernizing one art does not mean incorporating it within an older one, but rather renewing the old, that is, developing it and pursuing the task of creation within it. Authenticity does not reside in passing on and repeating the old but in preserving its rules and principles. Hence, an aesthetics of Islamic art will serve to ensure that authenticity is achieved in modern works of art.

Efforts to establish a genuine modern art are growing increasingly important. Art critics in the Arab world, Persia and Turkey are presently in search of a modern art rooted in Islam. However, failure to identify the theoretical criteria of Islamic art will result not in authenticity but in sterile imitation and repetition. This would be in contradiction to the whole concept of art, which is based on innovation.

Understanding the innovative elements in Islamic art will allow us to establish the basis for modern arts.

## The shape of the Islamic city

The visual shape of the Islamic *madīna*, or city, is defined by authentic architectural features relating to the spiritual values associated with every part. The original heart of this city comprises the mosque and markets, residential areas and walls.

The mosque is the focal point, where people from the same neighbourhood meet for group worship, where all Muslims of the city gather for Friday prayer, where seekers after knowledge, young and old, come to receive instruction, where scholars of religion and religious law carry on their activities and where the Qurʾān and the *Ḥadīth* are recounted and read. The mosque is the centre from which culture radiates, so that it is surrounded by religious establishments, houses for the study of the Qurʾān and the *Ḥadīth*, baths, hospitals, *ḡāwiyas*,<sup>28</sup> libraries, schools and apothecaries.

On one side of the city wall, there is the citadel, erected to protect the ruling power and the soldiery. It is surrounded by the markets, in which horses, saddles and fodder are traded.

The Muslim city thus constituted is the urban model most closely associated with Islamic values. This can be seen in the form of the alleyways and side streets, which are the arteries of the city: here narrow and winding, there

28. A small mosque with cupola, usually belonging to a religious order, erected over the tomb of a Muslim saint. Teaching facilities and a hospice are attached.

wider and straighter, they provide shelter from sun, wind and rain and satisfy all the aesthetic and social needs of those who pass through them. The American architect Frank Lloyd Wright referred to the aesthetic quality of winding streets, which offer the pedestrian some new sight around each bend, which entertain and distract. Thus, the link between the home, the market place and the mosque is achieved effortlessly and without need for any means of transport. The fabric of the old city is a direct function of residential needs and is, therefore, quite different from the mathematical logic of zoning which determines the modern architectural fabric in the West.

These alleys and streets define the parts of the city and its various quarters. A large city will consist of a number of districts, created one after the other. These districts may be populated by various clans or by those engaged in a particular profession, craft or trade. This means that the city is composed of ethnic groups forming social units based, on the one hand, on mutual solidarity and on the close ties between religious and cultural life, and on economic and political life, on the other.<sup>29</sup>

Some Muslim cities were created after the advent of Islam while existing cities were swiftly transformed to become Muslim both in spirit and appearance. In this way, Islam, now covering an enormous geographical area, sustained a prospering urban culture, its cities uniquely lively, forever burgeoning and blooming.

Though the Muslim lands cover a vast expanse, the fundamental reality remains an urban unit nurtured by Islamic monotheism. That this is the case can be seen from the practice that the city always faces Mecca and in the fact that dwelling-houses never rise higher than the mosque. The houses themselves are on two floors and one does not overlook another, so that the privacy of neighbours is not invaded. The outside of the house, unlike the interior, is modest in appearance. In Muslim cities, public parks may exist only in the suburbs. The city breathes through the courtyards and open halls of the buildings, which provide light and air. These open spaces reflect the aspirations of believers to the Heaven promised by God to his righteous servants. The courtyard, with its trees, aromatic plants and fountains, is a corner of Paradise unparalleled in non-Muslim architecture.

Man, as a physical and spiritual being, is the scale of the Muslim city, which is planned and built around his needs. It must satisfy various criteria: environmental - climate and pollution; living - leisure and security; religious - culture and ethics. Thus, the Muslim city was a humane and civilized place, its precincts defining the features of Islamic identity predominant in all urban architecture.

29. See N. Elisséeff, 'Physical Layout', in R. B. Serjeant, *The Islamic City: Selected Papers from the Colloquium Held at the Middle East Centre, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge, United Kingdom, from 19 to 23 July 1976*, Paris, UNESCO, 1980, pp. 90-103.

Unfortunately, however, the human scale has been lost in modern architecture, due to new factors, such as the penetration of Western architectural ideas, the dissolution of the ties between man and city and the interference of secular with Islamic culture. Thus, mathematics rather than humanity has become the norm. The modern city, incompatible with the spirituality and ethics of Islam, is driving back the old, if not to say destroying it, by making it a dumping-ground for the refuse-matter of the modern city and a slum for the urban poor.

## House of God, house of Paradise

Creative genius first manifested itself in the construction of buildings which, though serving various functions, were all concerned in some way with worship: the mosque, the school, the hospice, the *Ḥadīth* academies, the burial shrine and the hospital. Almost every other building would have a room for prayer recognized by the presence of a *mibrāb* (prayer-niche). While it would have non-religious functions as well, it would always be involved in the search for the secrets of the universe through coming closer to God.

The most important building to incorporate the marvels of arabesque, calligraphy and architecture was the mosque, though these arts were not necessary for worship, nor were they commanded by religion. On the contrary, religion discouraged them and the first mosque built by the Prophet consisted of no more than a roof raised on the trunks of palm-trees. For the Muslims, the mosque had but one basic function and that was to come close to God, to pray and glorify him, while facing towards the Ka'ba within the compass of the *mibrāb*, an enclosure symbolizing the house of God. The cry of the muezzin was a call to pray and exalt the greatness of God.

It is to later architecture that we owe the now familiar elements of the mosque. Architects understood the mosque to be an expression of the universe in miniature and built a house of prayer, topped by a dome to represent the sky, a *mibrāb* as the symbolic entrance and corridor linking this microcosm to the Ka'ba in Mecca and pointed minarets striving upwards towards the heavens. A copper lustre, in the form of a chandelier made up of three full moons and a crescent, hung in the sacred hall as a symbol to strengthen the bonds linking the faithful with the heavenly throne.

Although these symbols underlining the function of the mosque could have remained quite unadorned, artists found them to be an appropriate medium for the expression of pure beauty and majesty through the arabesque and calligraphy. In doing so, however, the utmost caution was needed to avoid becoming ensnared in the subjects and aims of this world. When, as in Iṣfahān, the building of mosques was bound up with political glorification, the artist strayed from the path of the spirit and began to serve purposes that were more or less material and political.

The edifice of the mosque, meanwhile, did not remain frozen in time and its architecture was adapted to provide the optimum conditions for the practice of religion. The first need was to suit the structure of the mosque to the climate and this the architect did by providing a sanctuary, consisting of a covered house of prayer and a courtyard which was open to the sky and surrounded by colonnades. The inspiration for this design was the Prophet's mosque in Medina. It persisted until the introduction of air-conditioning in modern times, when architects were able to build the mosque without a courtyard.

The earliest mosques, stressing the aspect of majesty, confined themselves to successions of columns supporting the roof, whether directly on the capitals or by means of vaults and arches. The delightful form of this construction can be seen in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, the Great Mosque of Cordoba and the Sīdī 'Uqba Mosque in Kairouan. The mosques at Cordoba and Kairouan would soon acquire artistic embellishments, but the Dome of the Rock and the Umayyad Mosque would certainly have been filled from the very beginning with the decorative carvings and mosaics that we see in them today.

During the 'Abbāsīd period there emerged a religious architecture drawn from the Mesopotamian tradition which preceded Islam. This can be seen in the Sāmarrā' and Abū Dulaf mosques. In Fāṭimid and Maghribī times (under the Almoravids and Almohads), mosque architecture grew in perfection and variety, its unity preserved despite the acquisition of elements from Turkish and Persian religious buildings. This architectural development reached its high point in the cities of Iṣfahān, Cairo and Istanbul, where the finest examples of Ṣafawīd, Mamlūk and Ottoman mosques are still to be found.

The mosque was the focus of an Islamic city filled with *sūqs* and shops, caravanserais and hospitals, schools and citadels. Most important of all, however, was the private dwelling-house, which represented a distinctive architectural model, perfectly adapted to the climate and to man's spiritual needs.

One characteristic feature of the Islamic house is that it is built to face inwards on to an open courtyard. While the outside appears modest and austere, the walls looking on to the courtyard are decorated and painted panneling adorns the ceilings and walls of the rooms, the floors of which are bright with variegated marble. The inside temperature is controlled in such a way that, in the summer, fresh cool water, gushing from fountains, counteracts the dryness and heat, while in winter, the raised floors of the rooms provide protection against cold draughts and the high ceilings and thick walls of stone or baked brick with wooden cladding serve to retain heat. The outer courtyard acts as a barrier between the atmosphere outside and within. It is an established fact that the outside air, whether hot or cold, circulates above the courtyard and is kept out due to the absence of openings to draw its currents.

Thus, the open courtyard enfolds the household, protecting it against the pollution and tumult of the outside world. The house is a paradise, in which the householder and his family dwell in harmony, surrounded by objects of beauty, by the very grapes, figs and flowers which the just will find in Heaven and by springs flowing into larger pools. Paradise is indeed in every house, however small.<sup>30</sup>

The interiors display all the elements of Islamic art - decorative features of wood, stone, plaster and ceramic – rather than the statues and paintings which would have adorned baroque buildings in Europe. In addition to these, we find clothing, furniture, carpets, utensils and weapons, all of which, though articles of everyday use, were equally masterpieces of creative art.

### Arts and crafts

There was a time in the Western world, when the term 'art' was confined to statues and paintings, while the making of useful things was considered a minor or applied art. However, with the advent of machines and industry, handmade works of every kind were considered to fall within the scope of the fine arts.

The handicrafts that we have inherited from the Islamic tradition were all fine art. Craftsmen did not distinguish between the importance of one object and another because of make or function, but rather because of their creative values. Thus, works in ceramic, wood and metal are original objects of fine art, forming part of the tradition of Islamic creativity. The museums of the world are filled with them: ceramic pots and porcelain tiles from Turkey, swords from Damascus, leather from Morocco, silk from Mosul, calligraphy in floral Kufic, *thuluth* and *naskh* (from the Ottoman Empire), manuscripts and miniatures from Persia.

An unmistakable artistic unity means that Islamic *objets d'art* can be immediately identified by style and period, despite a rich variety and diversity springing from boundless creative freedom. Thus, Islamic art remains an important manifestation of cultural unity and identity.

30. See 'A. Bahnasī, *al-Imāra al-ʿArabiyya: al-jamālīyya, al-wahda, al-tanawwuʿ*, Rabat, al-Majlis al-Qawmī li-l-Thaqāfa al-ʿArabiyya, 1992

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Chapter 1(a)

THE ART OF CALLIGRAPHY  
IN ISLAM

*Mustafa Uğur Derman*

There can be no doubt that the importance of some professions which bear the characteristics of 'art' increases even more if they aim essentially to fulfil the important purpose of serving humanity. As a case in point, calligraphy, whose primary purpose was to meet the needs of Muslims to read and write, turned into an independent art form owing to the efforts encouraged by Islam.

After the emergence of Islam, the first purpose was to record the divine text without error in the form of *muşhafs* which contained the Holy Qur'ān in writing. Efforts were directed to record the characteristics of Arabic correctly and completely in written form to ensure the spread of religious and scientific matters which were to change the world view of the Arabs completely. The greatest spiritual support of such efforts stemmed from the fact that the first Qur'ānic verse that was revealed to the Prophet began with the injunction 'Read!', and later the importance of the pen in the teaching of the divine text was stressed (Qur'ān XCVI.1-5). The reason for this interest may lie in this Qur'ānic verse and others that were revealed later (Qur'ān II.282; XXXI.27; LXVIII.1), as well as in the traditions of the Prophet which mention the script. The fact that writing was the most permanent factor which made it possible for the quickly expanding Islam to spread into different regions perfectly and without any shortcomings, was another important reason for this interest.

The origin of the Arabic script and its spread  
after the emergence of Islam

There are a number of opinions concerning this issue. According to the most reliable view, before the advent of Islam an early form of the Arabic script, which was originally derived from Phoenician, was used by the Nabataean



people outside the Hijāz. In its original form, called Nabataean, letters of the Arabic script consisted of very simple forms and bore no sign of the great aesthetic value which they acquired later. With the emergence of Islam, especially after the Hijra (the emigration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in 622), the Arabic script was glorified as it became the means of writing for this new religion. Naturally, owing to the spread of Islam, it did not remain confined to Arabia and the Arabs.

Almost all peoples who embraced Islam adopted the Arabic script, above all because of religious perseverance. For this reason, a few centuries after the Hijra, it became the common asset not only of a nation, but of the of entire Islamic *umma*; 'Arabic script', which was correctly used to denote the essence and origin of this form, was later expanded in meaning to be defined more correctly as 'Islamic calligraphy'. The reader should not be surprised at the fact that this art emerged with a religious character and continued this way for a long time. It should be remembered that the arts which emerged in Europe during the Renaissance dealt with religious themes and were subject to this influence for centuries, too.

Those who are familiar with Arabic or the various languages which used the Arabic script throughout history will know that in this writing system most of the letters undergo structural changes according to their position at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a word. This script, after it had developed into an art form, was open to endless changes and innovations characteristic of art itself, because the letters were connected with each other in a very vivacious way to captivate the eye, while it was also possible to write the same word or sentence in different compositions. Individual letters by themselves could be written in several ways; moreover, there was a surprisingly abundant number of forms that could be achieved by using the types of script that will be introduced below.

Considering all these facts, one cannot but agree with the following concise definition of the art of calligraphy in Islamic sources: 'Calligraphy is spiritual geometry constructed with material instruments.' And this art continued to develop throughout the centuries with an aesthetic understanding in line with this definition.

## The development of Islamic calligraphy

Although in the beginning only a small number of people knew the Arabic script, the means to learn and teach it developed quickly and in time it was equipped to record the Qur'ān without any errors and, hence, the language generally without any imperfection. There were no letters or signs to represent the vowels in the Arabic alphabet. According to the requirements of Arabic, at first coloured dots and, about one century later, special diacritical marks for the letters (*haraka*) were invented to denote the short vowels carried by the

consonants. Likewise, a method called *raqsh* was developed which entailed the use of dots (in the beginning, slanted lines) in different positions (above, below) and numbers (1, 2, 3,) to denote structurally similar letters which would otherwise read by conjecture. In time, to prevent possible confusion, special signs (*mubmal*) were used in order to distinguish undotted letters from dotted letters of the same shape. Although there are different views as to the dates when these movements to improve the script began, they developed within the first two centuries after the Hijra and mostly concern Arabic philology. But, the ornamental shapes of the dots, diacritical marks and undotted marks all played a great rôle in the development of calligraphy into an art. The definite article (*alif-lām*), which was frequently used in the Arabic script, was an element of balance adding to the beauty of the script.

Northern Arabic script was known under different names, depending on the places where it developed in different periods, namely as *Anbārī* or *Ḥīrī* (from al-Anbār and al-Ḥīra), *Makkī* (Meccan) when it reached the Ḥijāz and *madanī* (Medinan) after the Hijra (these last two scripts developed together under the name of *Ḥijāzī*). The Holy Qurʾān was the first Islamic text to be arranged in the form of a book and was originally parchment on Meccan-Medinan script with black ink, without dots and diacritical marks. These first attempts lacked the artistic touch of the later examples.

At this point, let us leave aside the historical development of the art of calligraphy and briefly introduce the instruments and materials used in executing this art to help the reader follow the text more easily.

## Instruments and materials used in Islamic calligraphy

### PAPER AND EARLY MATERIALS

In the pre-Islamic period and the preliminary stages of Islam, the various materials used for writing were the following: peeled branches and twigs of date-palm, shoulder-blades and ribs of cattle, such as camels and the like, soft white stones called *libāf*, tanned animal-skins and, finally, the most precious one, silk or cotton cloths known as *mukbraq*, whose surface had been glossed after being soaked in gum.

The need for other new materials arose with the spread of Islam when the importance of writing began to increase. The following materials became available upon the conquest of Egypt: leaves of the papyrus plant called *bardī* – later known as *qirṭās* – and *qubāṭī*, which was similar to *mukbraq*. In the second half of the eighth century, leather and papyrus were widely used, first in Samarqand and later in Baghdad, until the manufacture of paper was introduced in the eighth century. They were then gradually replaced by this new and beautiful material. But *bardī* remained prevalent as it was found abundantly in Egypt. In later periods paper, which was also manufactured in Syria

and Palestine, passed on to Sicily and Andalusia by way of North Africa. Europe became acquainted with paper after its production started in these areas as well.

As the artistic features of calligraphy were emphasized, the production of paper and the variety of its types increased. During the eras of the Mamlūks, Timūrids, Şafawids and Ottomans, a widespread method was often used whereby paper was first dyed in a faded colour, then its surface was glossed (*şayqal, ākbār*) by applying rice powder, starch or flour which had been boiled in water, or by rubbing it with egg-white, whose viscosity was eliminated by adding alum.

#### THE KINDS OF INK

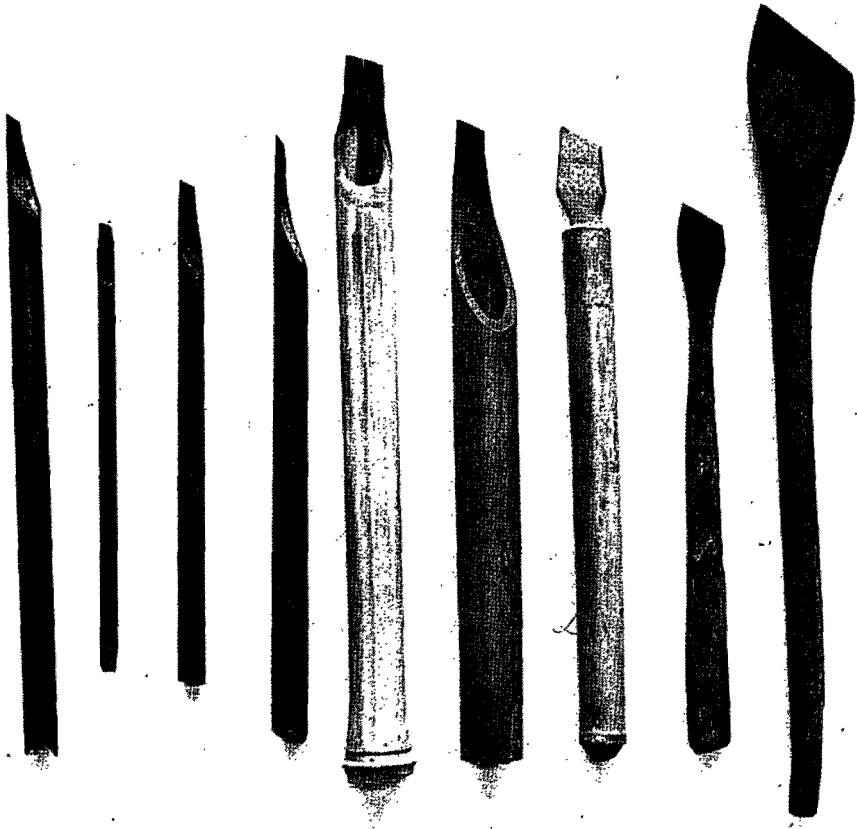
Although the formula for the ink used in Islamic calligraphy includes many additive materials, it consists essentially of a suspension which is obtained by pounding for a long time soot, extracted by burning oily substances such as beeswax, naphtha and linseed oil, together with a solution of gum Arabic. At first, the inkpot was made of carved wood, later of ceramic, glass or metal. A piece of raw silk (*līqa*) was placed in the inkpot so that it would absorb the ink and prevent it from flowing too much. Practical writing-sets (*diwīt, qubūr*) were developed in the earlier centuries by attaching a cylindrical or prismatic reed-holder to the inkpot. The most widely used ink was made from black soot; red, blue, yellow and green inks, made from natural materials, were also used. Splendid works were produced by using gold ink obtained by mixing pounded gold-leaf, which was then reduced to minute particles, with a gelatinous solution.

#### THE PEN

The rims of the reeds which grew in hot countries were opened by cutting with a *qalamtirash* (penknife). The width of the nib of the pen would be determined according to whether the script was to be thin or thick. The nib of the pen was sharpened on a long, thin, but small ivory plate (it could also be made of bone or tortoise-shell) called *miqaṭṭa* (or, wrongly, *maqṭa* °). A vertical incision would be made in the middle of the nib to allow the ink to flow. Special wooden pens were prepared for writing thicker scripts. [Fig. 1.]

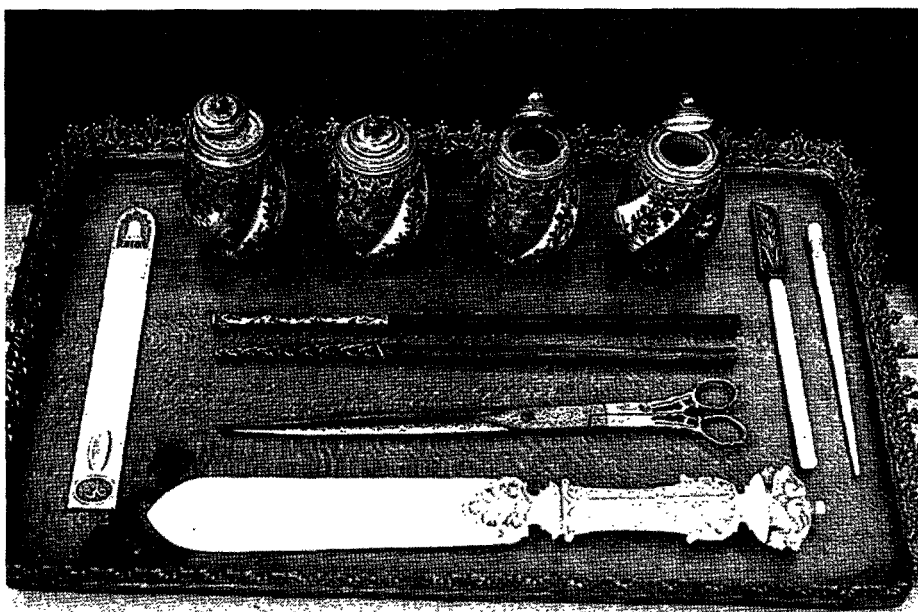
#### OTHER INSTRUMENTS

As the calligrapher is seated with his knee in a perpendicular position when he performs his art, he needs a small portfolio on which to place a sheet of paper. In addition, a frame of cardboard (*mistar*), with parallel threads stretched on it according to the arrangement of the lines, serves as a ruler.



VI-1(a).1 Various reed pens used in writing thin and *jali* (thick) scripts  
© M. Uğur Derman Collection, Istanbul

In the centuries when calligraphy was held in favour, great importance was attached to the instruments and materials employed in order to perfect this art. A subsidiary industry of fine craftsmanship emerged, particularly for the manufacture of auxiliary instruments. In the modern times, one can see the most ingenious examples of such instruments – especially those dating from the Ottoman period – in museums and collections. [Fig. 2]



VI-1(a).2 The writing-set of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed V (Reshād) (1844–1918). Four inkpots, two reed pens with their nibs in a case, paper scissors, *miqatta* (*maqta*<sup>6</sup>), a pen-knife with its cap in a case, ivory stirring-stick, paper-knife

© Museum of Turkish-Islamic Works

## The development of calligraphy into different styles

Now let us continue from where we had stopped. The following two varieties of the Northern Arabic script, which were in evidence from earliest times, continued after the advent of Islam. A script consisting of characters with sharply pointed angles was devoted to the copying of *muṣḥafs* and permanent correspondence, and engraving on stone. It was used in Damascus and, mostly, in Kufa. Hence, it came to be known as the Kufic script. The other kind, characterized by a cursive hand instead of sharp angles, could be written swiftly and was used in daily and official correspondence, but it was more suitable for executing art forms, owing to its cursive and soft characters. In the Umayyad period, this script developed more quickly and was used more frequently in Damascus. In the eighth century, pens with nibs of a particular width were developed on the basis of this script and, gradually, a number of

new kinds of calligraphy began to emerge according to the type of pen. The first known examples of such scripts are the *jalīl* (splendid), reserved for grand script, and the official standard large script called *ṭūmār*. This latter word means 'roll (of paper)' in Arabic. Since official state correspondence was also written on leather (and later, on paper) of certain sizes, being then rolled and sent to the authority concerned in a sealed cover, naturally, the script devoted to this activity was given the same name. It was probably Quṭba al-Muḥarrir (d. 154/771) who invented the *ṭūmār* script. The masters Ḍaḥḥāk b. 'Ajlān and Ishāq b. Ḥammād, who lived in this period, contributed greatly to the evolution of calligraphy into an art. Ibrāhīm al-Sijzī, a student of Ishāq, invented two types of pen and, hence, two forms of script corresponding to the *thuluthān* (two-thirds) and *thuluth* (one-third) of the *ṭūmār* pen. Ibrāhīm al-Sijzī's brother Yūsuf Laqwa invented the *riyāsī* script (later known as *tanqī'āt*), while al-Sijzī's student Aḥmad Aḥwal (third/ninth century) invented the *qalam al-nisf* (half pen) based on the 'grand' pen reserved for the *ṭūmār*. He also developed the *khafīf al-nisf* (light half) and the *khafīf al-thuluth* (light third), which were reserved for the thinner lines of the 'third' and the 'half'. The scripts called *musalsal* (unbroken), *mu'āmarāt* and *qiṣaṣ* are also attributed to Aḥmad Aḥwal.

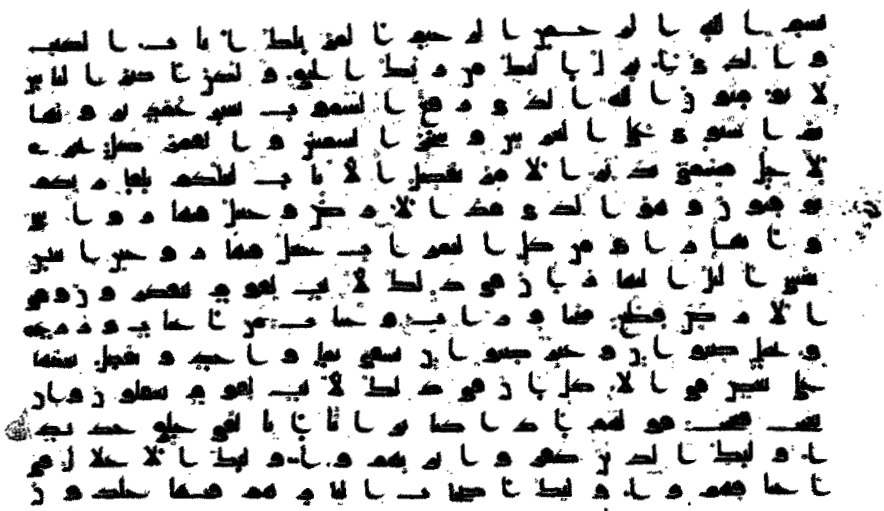
As is clear from their names, these new types of script, based on the *ṭūmār*, were written with a pen whose nib was reduced in width to a certain proportion (half, one-third, two-thirds). While the resulting scripts gained new characteristics as a result of this reduction, the term *qalam* (pen), which basically referred to the writing-instrument, was also used more generally to denote calligraphy. However, the term *khafīf* was used rather than *qalam* to denote scripts (*qiṣaṣ*, *mu'āmarāt*.) which had been devised for certain fields of application without being based on the proportional reduction of the nib of the pen.

In the 'Abbāsīd period, thanks to the developing scholarly and artistic movements, a growing interest in books emerged and the number of *warrāqs* (copyists) who produced them increased in the major cities, especially in Baghdad. The script which they used for copying books was called *warrāqī*, *muḥaqqaq* or *'Irāqī*. Approximately from the end of the third/ninth century onwards, thanks to the efforts of calligraphers in search of beauty, the script grew into a proportionate form and was called *al-khafīf al-aṣlī wa-l-mawzūn* (original and balanced script). The Ibn Muqla brothers, who were the students of Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Barbarī, hold a special place among those who developed these scripts to an advanced level. At present, there are no samples of calligraphy which are definitely known to have been produced by Abū 'Alī b. Muqla (d. 328/940). Abū 'Abd Allāh (d. 338/949) and Abū 'Alī (the better known of the brothers, who was also a *wazīr* (minister)), set the rules for the order and harmony of calligraphy; such scripts were called *al-khafīf al-manṣūb* (proportioned script). This type, which emerged first as 'measured' and later

as ‘proportioned’, is based on the *aqlām al-sitta* (the six pens), which will be discussed below. Although some sources state that Ibn Muqla derived this style from the Kufic script and introduced some changes, this view is not held in favour.

Along with these developments, the Kufic script [Fig. 3] enjoyed a period of brilliance, particularly when used for copying *muṣḥafs*. It showed differences in the areas where it spread. It was characterized by a cursive hand in North African countries. It reached its most perfect form in Andalusia and the Maghrib under the name of Maghribi in the fourth / tenth century and remained the dominant script for a long time. Again, from the fourth/tenth century onward it was known as Eastern Kufic in Iran and to the east of that region, where it was used until the spread of the *aqlām al-sitta*. A style of Kufic script which is differentiated by a few letters in the form of a weaver’s shuttle is called Qarmathian Kufic by some.

The variety of script known as Qayrawān Kufic reflects a different style which bears the characteristic of Eastern Kufic, during the transition period to the Maghribi script.



VI-1(a).3 Classical Kufic script written on parchment dating from the third/ninth century.

Structurally similar letters are not differentiated with dots.

The *parakas* (special diacritical marks for the letters)

are represented with dots

© Istanbul University Library, Yildiz Section, Istanbul

Particularly in the sixth/twelfth century, a larger Kufic script as found mostly on monuments acquired a decorative and sometimes geometric character with the addition of some ornamental elements. As well as plaited, floriated and foliated forms, squared and rectangular geometric shapes were used, which are also called *ma<sup>ʿ</sup>qūl*, *bannā<sup>ʿ</sup>ī* and *shaṭranjī* in late sources.

A form of the proportioned script known as *warrāqī* around the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century was generally devoted to book-copying and thus was also known as *naskhī*. The *muḥaqqaq* (tightly woven) and *rayḥānī* (fragrant) scripts were derived from this form.

Ibn al-Bawwāb (d. 413/1022), who was a brilliant man of this period, developed the style of Ibn Muqla, which thus continued to be used until the mid-seventh/thirteenth century. Ibn Khāzin (d. 518/1124), who employed the same style, influenced the *tawqī<sup>ʿ</sup>* and *riqā<sup>ʿ</sup>* scripts. With their emergence of these scripts, the types known all together as *aqlām al-sitta*, ‘the six styles’, were completed with the addition of *thuluth*. However, when the *thuluth* script was added to this group, it must have lost its original meaning implying proportion.

Although the *naskhī* script has a thin structure, for some unknown reason, in some studies the grand script used in the inscriptions of this period, which must be called *jalīl*, has been termed *naskhī* and even divided into branches such as Ayyūbid (569–658/1173–1260), Atabeg (521–658/1127–1260) and Saljūq (430–590/1040–1194). However, the *jalīl* script continued until the *aqlām al-sitta* were fully developed and was then replaced by *jalī thuluth* (clear *thuluth*).

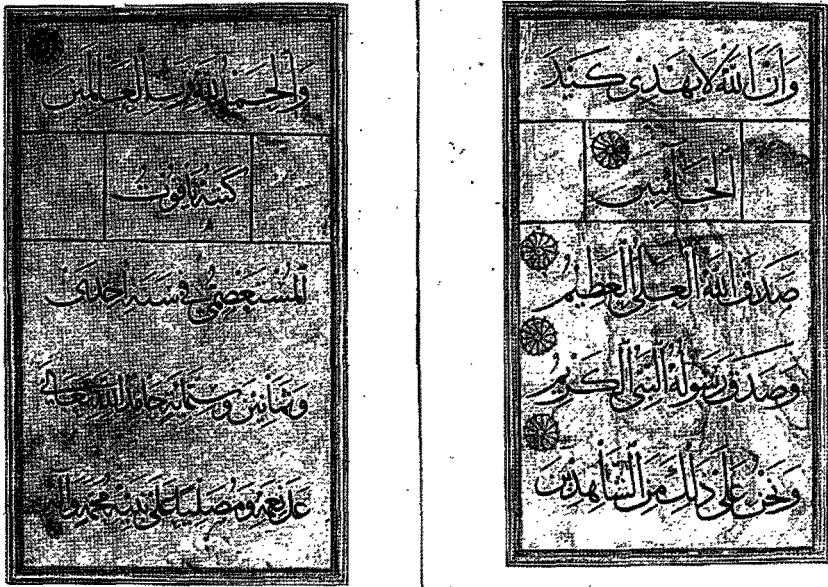
## The *aqlām al-sitta* during the period of Yāqūt

The *aqlām al-sitta* group of scripts (*thuluth*, *naskhī*, *muḥaqqaq*, *rayḥānī*, *tawqī<sup>ʿ</sup>* and *riqā<sup>ʿ</sup>*), whose artistic features were gradually emphasized, was characterized by the term ‘pen’ rather than ‘calligraphy’ since its members emerged from the same basic form as a result of differentiation. It was during the period of Yāqūt al-Mustaʿsimī (d. 698/1298) [Fig. 4], who lived in Baghdad in the seventh/thirteenth century, that all the rules of this script were determined and it was written accordingly.

Until Yāqūt’s time, the nib of the reed pen was trimmed flat. He introduced an innovation and cut the nib with a slant towards the calligrapher, which added an attractive aspect to the art of calligraphy. As the *aqlām al-sitta* were now established with all their rules as a part of Islamic calligraphy, apart from the scripts introduced above, the following types, some of which only exist in name at present, were abandoned: *mu<sup>ʿ</sup>annaq*, *dībāj*, *ṣanbūr*, *mufattaḥ*, *lu<sup>ʿ</sup>lu<sup>ʿ</sup>*, *mu<sup>ʿ</sup>allaq*, *mursal ḥawāshī*.

Baghdad was occupied by the Īlkhānids during Yāqūt’s lifetime (656/1258). Mamlūk rule was newly established (648/1250) in Egypt (Cairo) and,





VI-1(a).4 A page in *muhaqqaq* script by Yāqūt al-Mustaʿsimī.  
(His signature on the left-hand page is in *taʿwiq* script).

It is dated 681/1281

© Topkapi Palace Museum Library, Istanbul

hence, also in Syria (Damascus, Aleppo), where the rest of the Caliphate was recognized. The Mamlūk calligraphers persistently followed Ibn al-Bawwāb's style. However, they did not totally overlook Yāqūt's. But Ibn al-Bawwāb's style was finally to be abandoned in Egypt. On the other hand, during the period of the Īlkhānids (654–754/1256–1353), who fully embraced Islam, Yāqūt's style spread in the areas where they ruled and the state supported the art of calligraphy, as was the case in the Mamlūk territories.

Yāqūt had died by this time, but his students in the first and the second generations spread his style of calligraphy as far as Anatolia, Iran and Transoxiana. However, only individual examples of Yāqūt's style reached North African countries beyond Egypt and the Maghrib. Local scripts originating from the Kufic style were preferred in those regions and this favour is still prevalent.

The ninth/fifteenth century was an extraordinary period for Samarqand and Harāt, not only in calligraphy but in all the arts of book-making (illumination, miniatures, binding). Timūr (d. 807/1405), who brought an end

to the rule of the Jalā'irids (736–835/1336–1431) in Baghdad in 795/1393, sent all the artists of this city to Samarqand. His grandson Bāysonghor Mīrzā (d. 837/1433) opened a glorious period for these arts with his efforts in calligraphy and the other branches of art.

The same dynasty continued with this attitude until the end of the reign of Ḥusayn Bayqara (873-911/1469-1506). Naturally, the most beautiful examples of Yāqūt's style in the *aqlām al-sitta* date from this period. Likewise, the Aq Qoyunlū (780–908/1378–1502) and the Ṣafawid dynasty (907–1145/1501–1732) which followed them, greatly valued the arts of the book and calligraphy. In the Bāburid state (932–1275/1526–1858), of Turkish origin founded by Bābur in India, the craftsmen from Persia influenced the art of calligraphy.

Before we introduce scripts such as *ta<sup>ʿ</sup>līq* (suspension) and *nasta<sup>ʿ</sup>līq*, which had just emerged in these periods, let us examine the activities related to the art of calligraphy in Anatolia.

During the period of the Anatolian Saljūqs (471–708/1078–1308), the Kufic script was no longer used in books. In the era of the Principalities (472–864/1080–1460) and from the establishment of the Ottomans (698/1299) onwards, the styles of Ibn al-Bawwāb and later of Yāqūt were prevalent in those regions. After the conquest of Istanbul (837/1453), this city became the cultural and artistic centre of the Islamic world. Before examining the art of calligraphy in the Ottoman period, let us briefly review the *aqlām al-sitta* in their state of maturity. These six types of script can be examined in groups of two which depend on one another: *thuluth-naskhī*, *muḥaqqaq-rayḥānī*, *tawqī<sup>ʿ</sup>-riqā<sup>ʿ</sup>*. [Fig. 5].

While the first elements of these three groups (*thuluth*, *muḥaqqaq*, *tawqī<sup>ʿ</sup>*) are written with a reed pen with a wider nib (about two mm.), the second group (*naskhī*, *rayḥānī*, *riqā<sup>ʿ</sup>*) is written with a reed pen with a nib of about one mm. width. In regard to the character of the script, *muḥaqqaq* and *rayḥānī*, on the one hand, and *tawqī<sup>ʿ</sup>* and *riqā<sup>ʿ</sup>*, on the other, are very much alike, the first elements of these pairs being in larger format. This is not the case for *thuluth* and *naskhī*, however. There are clear differences between them in regard to form, apart from the size. The extremely thin form of *naskhī*, which is as fine as dust (*ghubār*), is called the *ghubārī* script. *Thuluth*, which is called *umm al-ḵaḥḥ* (mother of calligraphy) in old sources, is the most prone to lend itself to artistic forms among the *aqlām al-sitta*. Owing to the cursive and stretched character of its letters, it invited very rich forms and new compositions. This is more evident in the *jalī thuluth* script on monuments, which is written with a pen with a very wide nib so that it can be read from a distance (*jalī* means 'large, evident'). *Musalsal* (continuous) is the form of *thuluth* or *jalī thuluth* which is written without breaking the groups of words or letters; the form in which the same two passages were written facing one another and intersecting in the middle was called *muthannā* (mirror-image). These two were often used and added various forms to the existing ones.



VI-1(a).5 *A qit'ā* in *thuluth-nashkī* by Ḥāfiẓ 'Othmān  
 © Collection of Kubbealti Foundation for Culture and Art, Istanbul

The various types of *nashkī* script, which had been written with a fine pen despite the cursive character of their letters, always depended on the arrangement of the lines and were not suitable for use in compositions; they were used in copying long texts, mainly the Holy Qur'ān (*muṣḥafs*).

*Muḥaqqaq* and *rayḥānī*, which closely resembled each other, were suitable for writing in lines because flat letters were dominant in them. Until the sixteenth century, *muḥaqqaq* and *rayḥānī* were used for copying large- and small-sized *muṣḥafs*, respectively. In some cases, all of the above three scripts were used, following an order of arrangement, in copying *muṣḥafs* (eighth/fourteenth-tenth/sixteenth centuries).

*Tawqī'* and *riqā'*, which are very close in regard to the character of the scripts, were largely confined to official correspondence and rarely used for multiple copying of books. As a requirement of Arabic, *ḥarakāt* (diacritical marks) and other signs which are necessary for correct reading were employed in all of these six types of script. The *nashkī*, *tawqī'* and *riqā'* scripts may also be written without diacritical marks. However, after the emergence of the *diwānī* (administrative) and *jālī diwānī* styles in the Ottoman period, *tawqī'* was

used in more restricted areas, while *riqā'* developed into a form known as *ijāza* (licence), which was preferred in writing all kinds of certificates (in the fields of calligraphy, learning and religious orders).

### The *aqlām al-sitta* in the Ottoman period

The calligrapher Shaykh Ḥamd Allāh (d. 926/1520) [Fig. 6], who came to Istanbul from Amasya, aesthetically evaluated Yāqūt's calligraphic works with the encouragement of the Ottoman ruler Bāyazīd II (851–918/1448–1512), who was his student at the same time. He thus developed a new style, which was different in appearance but in essence not contrary to Yāqūt's principles. Among the *aqlām al-sitta*, this process of refinement introduced by the Shaykh is best seen and felt in the *naskhī* script. In the tenth/sixteenth century, when the Ottoman lands reached their widest extent, the style of the Shaykh was established in favour while Yāqūt's began to be forgotten. Another calligrapher by the name of Aḥmad Qarā Ḥiṣārī (d. 963/1556) tried to revive Yāqūt's style in Istanbul, but this attempt did not last for more than a generation of calligraphers. Since the Ottomans found *naskhī* more congenial for *muṣḥaf* copying, gradually the *muḥaqqaq* and the *rayḥānī*, where flat letters were dominant, were used less and less. *Tawqī'* was replaced by its thinner form, namely *riqā'*, under the name of *icāzet hattī*. Shaykh Ḥamd Allāh's style, which lasted for more than 150 years, was replaced by Ḥāfiẓ 'Othmān's (1052–1110/1642–1698) at the end of the seventeenth century. This great man of calligraphy found his own style through the aesthetic evaluation of Shaykh's calligraphic works and thus the latter's style was forgotten. Ḥāfiẓ 'Othmān's still prevails today.

In the nineteenth century, however, two Ottoman calligraphers by the names of Kazasker Muṣṭafā 'Izzet (1216–1293/1801–1876) and Meḥmed Shawqī (1245–1304/1829–1887) interpreted Ḥāfiẓ 'Othmān's works in different ways and perfected those types of the *aqlām al-sitta* which are used today.

*Jalī thuluth*, which could be read from far off and was used on monuments, reached its final stage thanks to the efforts of Muṣṭafā Rāqīm (1171–1241/1757–1826). He was knowledgeable in drawing and perspective and combined Ḥāfiẓ 'Othmān's style of *thuluth* with the *jalī* style in a hitherto unprecedented way. Sāmī Efendi (1253–1330/1838–1912) perfected the *jalī thuluth* script which is in use today.

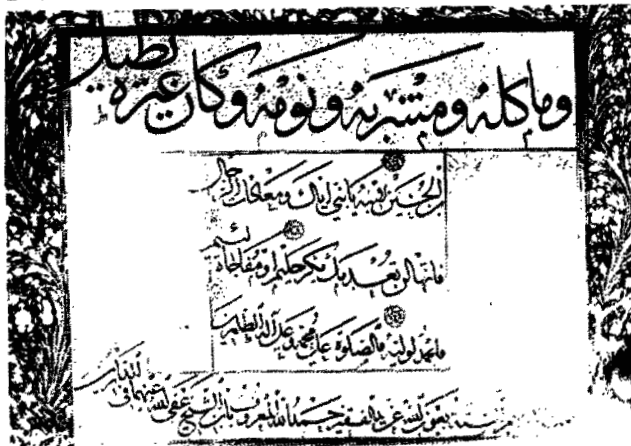
### Other styles of script

The *nasta'liq* script has the broadest field of application after the *aqlām al-sitta*. It emerged from the development of the *ta'liq* script which originated from *tawqī'*, with the addition of some changes in Iran from the seventh/thirteenth



## قال سقراط ليس الفرصة سريعة

أما بعد فإنه من كاست نفسه ريح ومغفل  
 عنها حسنة ومن نظر في العرافات حيا ومطلوع  
 هواه ظل ومن حلو غير ومن خاف ابن من  
 أصبر ومن أصر ومن فسر فاذا زلت فانس



VI-1(a).6 *Aqlām al-sitta* (the six pens) by Shaykh Ḥamd Allāh. From top to bottom:

*thuluth*, *naskhī*, *muḥaqqaq*, *rayḥānī*, *tawqīʿ* and *riqʿa*

© Collection of Kubbealti Foundation for Culture and Art, Istanbul

century onwards. *Ta'liq* was used by the *munshīs* (secretaries) in official correspondence.

Because *nasta'liq* replaced the *ta'liq*, it was called *naskh-i ta'liq* to reflect this. However, since the pronunciation of the phrase was difficult, the letter following the sound *kh* was elided and the orthography was changed into *nasta'liq*. The characteristics of this script began to emerge in the eighth/fourteenth century and in the ninth/fifteenth century it reached its golden age through the efforts of Mīr 'Alī Tabrīzī (d. 850/1446). During the times of the Qarā Qoyunlū (782–873/1380–1468) and Aq Qoyunlū (780–914/1378–1508) dynasties, this script was introduced into Anatolia for the purpose of copying books, but it came to be known under the name of *ta'liq* in Istanbul. Again, in Iran in the ninth/fifteenth century it was interpreted differently by the calligraphers 'Abd al-Rahmān Khwārizmī and Ja'far-i Tabrizī and was divided into two styles.

The first style, which was not favoured in its birthplace, spread in India. Great calligraphers flourished in the second style during the Ṣafawid period (907–1145/1501–1732) and 'Imād al-Ḥasanī (d. 1024/1615) developed *nasta'liq* to the highest level of perfection. At this point, let us note that from the seventeenth century onwards, the six styles in Iran, which were influenced by the *nasta'liq* script, no longer carried the characteristics of Yāqūt's style.

The *nasta'liq* script was already used in Istanbul under the name of *ta'liq*. Through the works of Darwish 'Abdī of Bukhārā (d. 1057/1647), who was 'Imād's student, it was used more extensively in Istanbul and the calligraphers who imitated 'Imād were called *'Imād-i Rūm* ('Imād of Anatolia). Among those who followed this style, one may name Meḥmed As'ad (d. 1213/1798), who was known by the nickname Yasārī (because he was left-handed). Just as the Shaykh applied his aesthetic evaluation of Yāqūt's calligraphy in the previous periods, he chose the more appealing aspects of 'Imād's work and produced the Turkish style in *ta'liq* script. His son Yasār-zāde Muṣṭafā 'Izzet (d. 1265/1849) set the rules of the *jālī ta'liq* script, which is still used in modern Turkey.

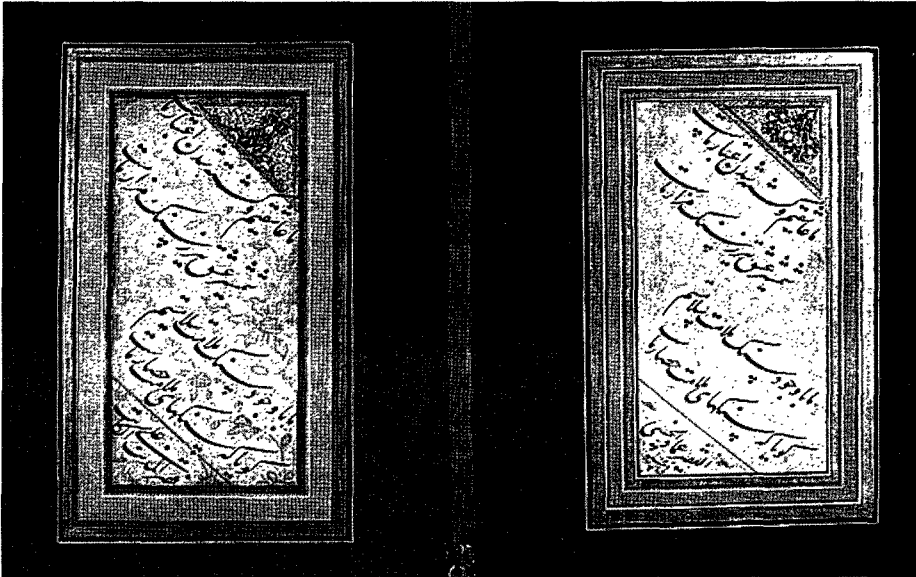
In Iran, the *nasta'liq* script, which is written quickly and without strict observance of rules, is called *shikasta*. It was mostly used in official correspondence. The script which emerged in Iran under the name of *ta'liq* was introduced by *munshīs* who went to Istanbul from the Aq Qoyunlū Palace after 877/1473. Calligraphers worked on this script and harmonized it with *tawqī'*, thus producing the Ottoman *dīvānī* scripts, without diacritical marks, and the more intricate and glorious *jālī dīvānī*, with diacritical marks. These preserved their particular script characteristics for over 400 years.

In the Ottoman period, the Sultan's official monogram (*tughbrā*), which was written in the name of the ruler, represented the state until the end of his reign. Muṣṭafā Rāqīm (1171–1241/1757–1826) [Fig. 7] finally gave this special emblem, which contained the names of the Sultan and his father and the prayer for victory, an aesthetic and mathematical unity.



VI-1(a).7 A prayer to keep away the evil eye calligraphed by Muṣṭafā Rāqīm for Sulṭān Maḥmūd II (1785–1839) and dated 1227/1812

© Private collection, Istanbul



VI-1(a).8 A *Muraqqa'* consisting of two slanted *qit'as* in *nasta'liq* by Mir 'Ali al-Katib on the left and by 'Imad al-Hasani on the right, this latter being dated 1015/1607

© Istanbul University Library, Yildiz Section, Istanbul

*Riq'a* emerged among the Ottomans as a script that carried the characteristic of a cursive hand. It was used in official correspondence under the name *riq'a* of Bāb-i 'Alī (*Riq'a* of the Sublime Porte). A variety of this script, whose rules were set more clearly, was known as the *riq'a* of 'Izzet Efendi (1257–1320/1841–1903). The script, which was also called *siyāqat* (accountancy) and was devoid of artistic refinements, was used in financial documents and registers as a cipher.

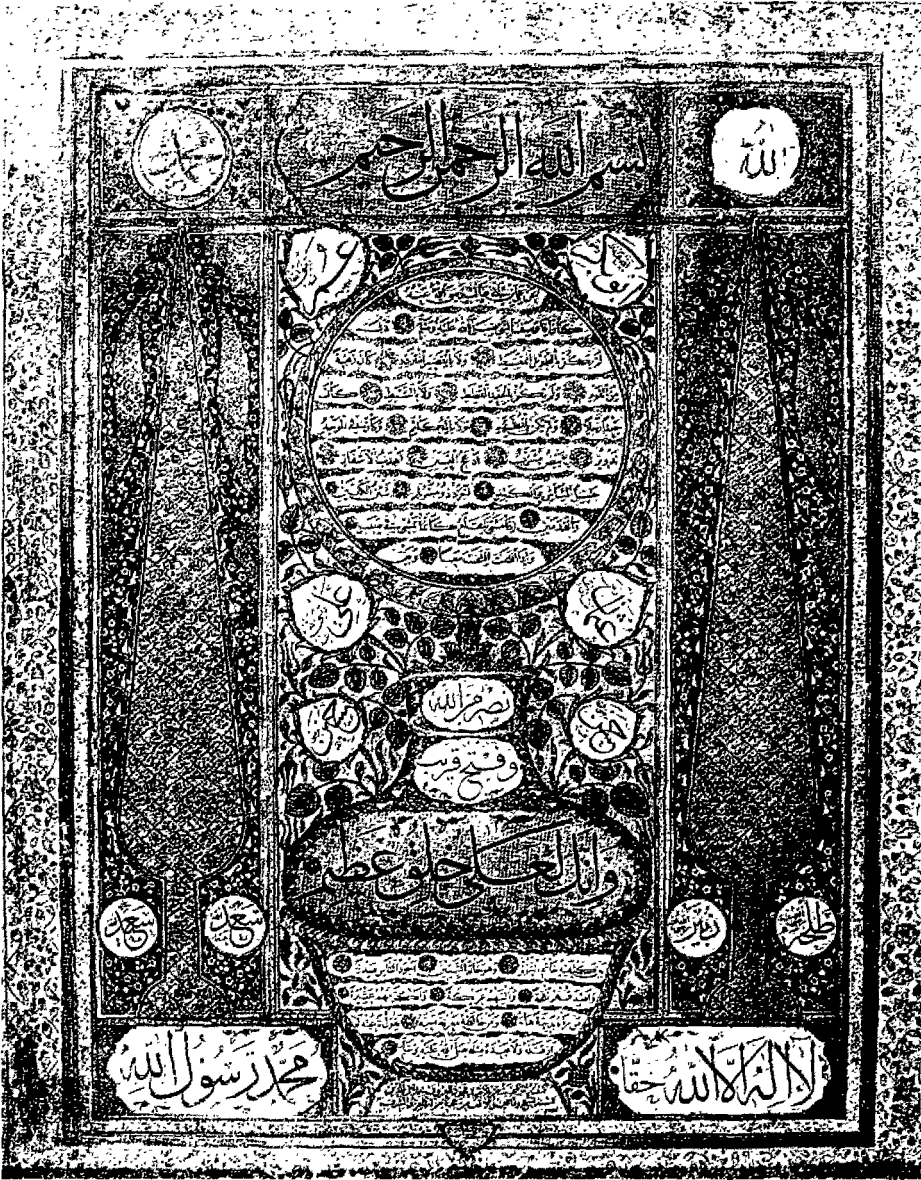
The historical progress of the art of calligraphy shows that it developed during the high periods of the leading states in the Islamic world. The Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd regimes were followed by the Muslim dynasties in Andalusia, the Mamlūks of Egypt, the Tīmūrīds, the Şafawīds and, finally, the Ottomans. To name all the artists who devoted great efforts to this field of art would fill this chapter with a long list of names. Here, we have mentioned only the names of the epoch-making calligraphers. Such scripts as were known by the names of persons or places (Bābur, Bihār, Qandūsī) have not been included in the narrow framework of this chapter as long as they remained on the local level. As a matter of fact, not all works of calligraphy reflect high artistic achievements.



## Fields of application of calligraphy

Let us glance briefly at the vast range of applications of calligraphy.

1. Books. Before the development of the printing-press, manuscript books were widespread. Among them, the Holy Qur'an occupies the leading place. Likewise, sections of *mushafs*, collections of prayers and prayers of religious orders were all assembled in books. Alongside these come collections of traditions and other scholarly works  
Of course, it would be ridiculous to think that all manuscripts represent works of calligraphy. However, statesmen and well-to-do personalities encouraged this art in order to possess beautiful works and to support the artists. In the later centuries, *naskhī* and fine *nasta'liq* were used mostly for copying books.
2. Copied passages (*qit'a*). These are works produced in a special form, consisting of passages copied in one kind of script (for example, *nasta'liq*), or two (for example, *thuluth-naskhī muḥaqqaq-rayḥānī*.) on one side of the paper only, and as large as a medium-sized book. They are pasted on wide cardboard sheets, leaving an equal space on all sides. The surrounding area is illuminated. Albums which contain collections of such passages are called *muraqqā*. [Fig. 8.]
3. *Calligraphic plates*. During the last two centuries, calligraphic plates in *jālī* script were in demand, particularly among the Ottomans. Thus, the art of calligraphy could be displayed on the interior walls of houses in the form of a picture, representing a beauty that appealed to the beholder, who could both read it and look at it. The *Ḥiyyat al-nabī* (Embellishment of the Prophet), which contains the description of the Prophet, has an exceptional place among calligraphic plates. [Fig. 9.]  
The art of illumination emerged from and developed as a result of efforts to make the three above-mentioned forms more attractive through ornamentation, with designs of an oriental flavour in gold and various other colours.
4. *Jālī* scripts, which are large enough to be seen from a distance, are embossed on stone, executed on glazed tile and baked, in countries with a climate with favourable external conditions, or applied to walls with paint. Examples of calligraphy in mosques and inscriptions on monuments fall into this category. Although less frequently, the *jālī* script is also used in wood-carving and metal engraving.
5. In addition to the above, there are several other special applications, such as the decoration of ceramics (oil lamps, vases and the like), which are then baked, engraving on precious stones and work in gold relief on metal. However, the calligraphy often lost its original grace as a result of such applications.



VI-1(a).9 A *hilya lavha* dated 1209/1794, calligraphed in *muhaqqaq-thuluth-naskh* by a woman calligrapher, 'Işma 'Ibrât. Illumination by Mehmed Shawqî

© Topkapı Palace Museum Library

## The learning and teaching of calligraphy

Throughout history calligraphy has been taught privately in schools and privately. The calligraphers took great care not to perform this art on a purely material business basis. Talented students who took lessons in this art at a young age developed an interest in it in the future and even the less capable ones trained their eyes for orderliness and beauty through learning calligraphy. The aesthetic measure of calligraphy is the rhomboid dot which is produced by the reed pen. The dot determines the length, curved lines and slant of the letters. In other words, learning calligraphy was the first step towards living a well-balanced life. Instruction in calligraphy is completed by first teaching the letters one by one, then as components of words and sentences. Afterwards, when the student has reached the point of imitating a piece of calligraphy exactly, he is given a diploma and the right to put his signature under his works.

There are several reasons which account for the continuing development of the art into the twentieth century: a) the transmission of the skill from master to student on the basis of a firm method of teaching, founded on patience, and through presentation of an *ijāzet-nāme* (certificate), which was a requirement (the fact that calligraphy was not taught in return for money had a positive effect on its progress); b) the adaptability of its structure to change and innovation, rather than remaining in a state of stagnation; c) of all the branches of Islamic art, there is none in Europe comparable to calligraphy, hence perhaps it is the only art that escaped Western influence. Thus, it was not spoiled.

The power of present-day technology leads the interest of man away from handicrafts which require patience. However, this situation does not prevent man from learning the beauties of earlier times and applying them to the facilities of the modern day (such as printing).

Throughout the centuries, Muslim calligraphers dedicated their efforts to developing the most graceful writing system, which was the mirror that reflected the first divine injunction revealed to the Muslims in the word 'Read!' Thus, the calligraphers who produced the distinguished works of the Islamic cultural heritage deserve to be remembered with prayers for God's mercy and grace upon them and with gratitude.

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Chapter 1(b)

ISLAMIC MINIATURES

*Nurban Atasoy*

Islamic miniature art is a style of painting which originated in the countries which saw the birth and advent of Islam. A product of the synthesis achieved through a blending of the new religion and the traditions of the countries which came under its dominance, this style of painting developed and continued as one of the arts of the book. Although portrayals had not been explicitly forbidden in the Qur'ān, the maxims of the Prophet Muḥammad and the interpretations of the Holy Book were apparently aimed at preventing a propensity for worshipping representations or idols and, in order to accustom people to this ban, the masters of painting in the Islamic world were directed into a path distinct from that of Western painting and prevented from any possible inclination towards working on light and shade, perspective and a three-dimensional style. The production of portraits, reliefs or sculptures of people, which survived from pre-Islamic times, could only continue until the second/eighth century in the Islamic countries, but it finally came to an end, other than in painting. The artist adopted a two-dimensional and ornamental style which was already known to the old Middle Eastern art tradition.

Islamic painters found a way to escape an attitude that could be interpreted as an imitation of God's creativity by using human figures only on pages of books. When Western scholars first began to research and examine the Islamic art of painting, they called this practice miniature-painting, simply because these pictures were executed in small dimensions in books. Later on, scholars in Islamic countries replaced the terms 'ornamentation' and 'representation' with the Western concept of miniature.

Arab culture and art merged with those of late antiquity through the influence of Islam during the Umayyad (39–101/660–720) and 'Abbāsīd (132–655/750–1258) periods. To the east of the Euphrates they met with the Parthian-Sāsānid and Mesopotamian cultures and to the west they encountered the Hellenistic and Roman culture and art, which had been adopted

by the Byzantine world. The victories won by the Islamic armies over the Sāsānids at Talas in 20/641 and over the Chinese at the same place in 132/750 first introduced Central Asian and especially Uighur influence and later on brought the influence of the Far East and China into Islamic art.

During the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsīd periods wall-paintings using the fresco and mosaic technique, which preserved the Byzantine, Hellenistic and late Roman traditions, were used in secular and religious buildings. Examples of this art movement are the Great Mosque of Damascus, Qaṣr al-Quṣayr ʿAmrā, Khirbat al-Mafjar and Qaṣr al-Khayr.

When the caliphs started choosing their guards from amongst the Turks, there appeared an Uighur influence from the East. This style, which was derived from the palaces of Jawsaq and Bālkuwārā in Sāmarrāʾ, in time dominated the palace wall-paintings of the Ghaznawids and reached Sicily through the Fāṭimids.

The existence of miniature fragments from the Uighurs dated between the second/ninth and third/tenth centuries and illustrated manuscripts and paintings on parchment from the Roman period found in al-Fayyūm and al-Fuṣṭāṭ in Egypt is known to us. After the beginning of the Islamic period, the Caliph Maʾmūn (197–217/813–833) had some of these early manuscripts translated into Arabic and the paintings copied. Although they were copies, they influenced the art of book-painting practised during the Islamic period. But no examples have survived to our day. The earliest specimens to come to us date from the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries.

The Saljūq Turks began to migrate from Central Asia towards the West, entered Iran in 441/1050 under the leadership of Ṭughril Beg and were recognized by the caliph. They did not stop there and, after capturing Mesopotamia and Syria, finally entered Anatolia in 463/1071 after the battle of Malāzgird. Then, besides the Saljūq state in Iran, various Turkish dynasties were established in Syria, Mesopotamia and Anatolia. The scientific texts produced at various periods and in different regions under the influence of the Saljūqs had been exact copies of early works. The characteristics of the miniatures in the various copies of the *Kitāb al-Ḥashāʾish* (Book of Herbs; M.A. 2127 Topkapı Saray, 2147; Istanbul, Aya Sofya 3707, 3702, 3703; Leiden University Library, Cod. or. 289, etc.), which was copied from Dioscorides' *Materia medica*, written in the second century AD, reflect the stages of development of the peculiar style of Islamic miniature art. These scientific works are sometimes exact copies of ancient originals and sometimes copies of their Byzantine interpretations. Some provide a new synthesis which is dominated by the influence of the traditions of the Near East or those of Uighur painting of Central Asia. The miniatures in the following works are examples of these characteristic traits: the *Kitāb Ṣuwar al-kāwakib al-thābita* (The Book of Pictures of the Fixed Stars, Oxford, Bodleian Library Marsh 144; Topkapı Saray A. 3493; Aya Sofiya 2595; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale arabe 2489; Vatican,

Bibliotheca Apostolica, Ross. 1033). This had been reinterpreted by al-Sūfī in the third/ninth century, relying on Ptolemy's original work, the *Almagest*, written in the second century AD; the translations and copies of pseudo-Galen's *Kitāb al-Tiryāq* (Book of Antidotes, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale arabe 2964; Vienna National Bibliothek A.F. 10) from the late antique period; al-Jazarī's *Kitāb Fī ma'rifat al-ḥiyāl al-ḥandasīyya* (Book of the Knowledge of Mechanical Devices, New York, Metropolitan Museum 57.51.23), the origin of which was an ancient work; Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Aḥnaf's *Kitāb al-Bayṭara* (Book of Veterinary Sciences; Topkapı Saray, A. 21115); and the collection of ancient texts *Mukhtār al-ḥikam* (Choice Maxims) and *Maḥāsīn al-kalīm* (Beauties of Words; Topkapı Saray A. 3206) by Abu-l-Wafā al-Musāhir.

For the miniatures in literary works, the following may be examined: the seventh/thirteenth-century copies of the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale arabe 6094), who lived between 445/1054 and 515/1122 in Basra; the Arabic and Persian translations of the *Katīla wa-Dimna* (Washington, Freer Gallery of Art 54.2), which was written in the fourth century AD in India by Bidpay to show the right way of conduct to mankind, and especially to monarchs; the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Istanbul, Millet Library, Feyzullah Efendi 1566), which was written by Abu-l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī and could only have survived through copies miniated in the seventh/thirteenth century; and *Waraqā wa-Gulshāh*, a Persian translation of a seventh-century Arabic love poem of which a single miniated copy, apparently made in Konya, is preserved in the Istanbul Topkapı Saray Library (H. 841) today [Fig. 1-3]. Byzantine influences are visible in the miniatures of the *Book of Astrology and Magic* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale pers 174) prepared by Naṣr al-Dīn al-Sīwāsī in 669/1271 in Aksaray and dedicated to the Saljūq sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw, but this influence was gradually replaced by a completely new painting style.

The invasion of Iran by the Mongols in 616/1220, the capture of Baghdad in 655/1258 and the abolition of the caliphate created an immense stir leading to change in the Near East. Some Iranians and Turks, with artists among them, who escaped the Mongol invasion sought refuge in Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia. Many works of art were destroyed during the Mongol invasion. The following period saw a new stage of Saljūq style. The figures in the miniatures of the 671/1273 copy of the fifth/eleventh-century *risāla*, *Da'wat al-aṭibbā'* (Invitation to Physicians), written by Ibn Buṭlān of Baghdad (Ambrosiana, Arab 125 i fr.), and the copy of a third/tenth-century work produced in Baghdad, the *Rasā'il Ikbwān al-ṣafā'* (Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi 3638), still preserve traces of the Saljūq style, but their setting in architectural perspective, the folds of their clothing and the colours that were used are precursors of a new stylistic period. The Mongols, who continued to conquer lands on the one hand, and brought many a state under their suzerainty, on the other, seized China in the east and enlarged their empire

<p>مهی کرد نوحه بیانک بلند                  مهی کرد رختارش از خاک پاک                  دودینه زخم که بد نسک باز                  رخ از عجز و زرد دل گره ریش                  جفا ز را پس از ناله زار کرد                  از آنده یکی شعر اعجاز کرد</p>	<p>سگوشار خود را بر بستر فلند                  گرفت او سر با یک از خون و خاک                  نهان ز مهر دلش سر کمان                  ممالذ بتر روی او روی خویش                  زمین را ز خون آبه کاز از کرد                  بدل در در درد و غم باز کرد</p>
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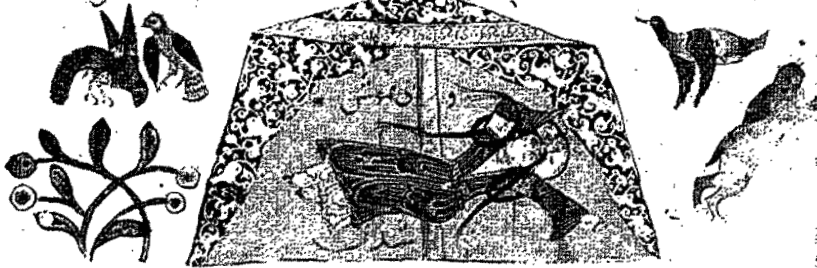
<p>کی رفتی ز دنیا پیر از داغ و درد                  چنین بود خواهد جهان شود کرد                  که او را نه زن خواند شاید نه مرد                  کی کردی بر تو کیند لا ز و زد                  بر آرم ز فرقت بشمشیر کرد                  ز خون کرد روی زمین لاله زار                  بگفتا کین بیانک روزاری چه شود</p>	<p>دریغ ای پردیده شیر مرد                  چنین است کار سب ای سینه                  شندی گشته ناکه بدست سگ                  از و کین تو باز خواهم چنانک                  چنان کوب بر آورد کرد از سرت                  بگفت این روز درد بگرفت زار                  جو سار بگرفت زاری نمود</p>
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VI-1(b).1 *Waraqa wa-Gulshāh*, Persian translation of a seventh/thirteenth century Arabic love poem with a single miniature, copy apparently made in Konya

هلال خردمند کوینده گشت  
 جوان گشت کز رای تو نکندم  
 زمزم سرج خوانی بیانی همه  
 کنیزان شیرین لب و جعد موی  
 بنزد من آید ستانند من  
 کم من رسیدن کلم سیاه  
 خستین بسو کند خود را بند  
 بداری تو این را زار در زلفت  
 شود راست با مردان کن  
 بخوردند سو کند هاء گران  
 نگویم جای یا بودم و بس  
 بدان خسرو و صریبوسته را

چو مردم ز مجلس برانگند گشت  
 بزوگفت چه دمی حق دادم  
 از رسم اسب و شتر با رنه  
 غلامان خدمت کر و خوب روی  
 اگر ورقه ای دل خسته تن  
 دم من و راد کنیزک جوانه  
 هلاکش بگفت ای شه هوشمند  
 که چون دختر من ترا بود جفت  
 که کور ورقه افتد شود زین سخن  
 جوان وانگت بود از شمار جوان  
 که تا زنده ام این سخن پیش کس  
 بدرد آید گلشاه دل خستند را

خبر یافت گلشاه کان مستحل خدا کردش از ورقه و بیره دل



VI-1(b).2 *Waraqa wa-Gulshāh*

© Topkapi Palace Museum Library (p 16b)





VI-1(b).3 *Waraqa wa-Gulshāh* (p 43b) – detail of Fig. VI-1(b)2 above

© Library of Topkapı Museum, Istanbul

as far as they could. This development resulted in political as well as cultural changes. A new culture emerged in these vast territories.

The death of Chinghiz Khān was followed by political turmoil. Ghāzān Khān, son of Chinghiz, accepted Islam as the official religion, established the Īlkhānid dynasty, invigorated trade and brought the East and the West closer. He employed artists of various origins and developed an atmosphere in which a great many artistic works were created. The *Manāfi' al-ḥayawān* (Benefits of Animals; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M. 500), a work written at the end of the thirteenth century in Marāgha, near Tabrīz, by Ibn Bukhtīshū<sup>c</sup>, includes ninety-four miniatures in the Saljūq and Far Eastern style, some of which were copied at a later date and were not influenced by each other; al-Bīrūnī's *al-Aṭhār al-bāqīya*, one copy of which is to be found today in the Edinburgh University Library (no.161), the other at the Bibliothèque Nationale (Arab 1489) in Paris, included miniatures that were strongly under Saljūq influence, as well as some of Far Eastern inspiration; and the *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*, which is a universal history illuminated with miniatures by Uighur artists, influenced as they were by the Far East, as well as by artists from various nationalities, all emerged from this new style which amalgamated the



سندباد و فرست ابجد و طغرل و مسزاد خدای تیر و شرمین حواد کرم رعیت دوست ساه دار بود و کباب  
 نکالست و لاله و کاهت و جارا و کوهانه شت مادی نکودارسته و ناموس مکان در همه وقت نکا، و عاشق و بالچه در پیچ

VI-1(b).4 *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh* by Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh b. Imān al-Dawla  
 Abu-l-Khayr, 829/1425

© Topkapi Palace Library (H-1653-fol. 313a)

East and the West in these monumental works of Islamic art. In 697/1298, Ghāzān Khān founded a cultural centre near Tabrīz, which he called Rab-i Rashīdī and which was to assemble under its roof many scientists and artists. The management of the centre was given to Rashīd al-Dīn, a court physician, scientist and vizier of the Ābāza period. Rashīd al-Dīn began to compile an illustrated world history, the *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*, during the reign of Ghāzān Khān, using a multinational team of scholars. Only a few copies of the work, the miniatures of which were likewise in international styles, have come down to us, though a number of copies had been made. These date from 705/1306 to 717/1318 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale arab 2324; Edinburgh University Library no. 20; the one kept for years as Morley no.1 at the Royal Asiatic Society in London until it was included in the Khalili collection, also in London; Topkapi Palace Museum H. 1653 and 1654; London, India Office Library no. 912).

Miniature art went through a fruitful period in the eight/fourteenth century during Mamlūk rule as well. The Mamlūks had founded a new dynasty in Egypt after vanquishing the Ayyūbids and governed Syria at the same time. A Moghul influence is clearly seen in the fourteenth-century copies of the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī (Vienna National Bibliothek, A.F. 9, dated 1334; Oxford, Bodleian Library Marsh 458; London, British Library add. 21.114 and Or. 9718) that were produced in Syria, and especially in the Central Asian Moghul types, in the Chinese-style flower motifs and in the dark-light colour tones of draperies. The scenic depiction in the miniatures of al-Jāhīz's *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (Book of Animals, Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana Ar. 140 Inf.) are also typical of the Mamlūk style of the period.

The most important of the works produced towards the end of this period in Iran are the miniatures of the *Mi'raj-nāma* of Aḥmad Mūsā, the leaves of which were found dispersed through Album H. 2154 in the Topkapı Saray Museum Library. It reflects the spirit of tolerance of this century as far as the art of painting was concerned, as its style originated from Uighur art and Central Asia.

A group of albums, *muraqqās*, in which fragments of paintings, drawings, calligraphic essays, illuminations, poems, paper scrap-books, even the Demotte *Shāhnāma*, represent further important works dating from the same period. The Far Eastern style had by now blended even more successfully with the Saljūq miniature style in the illuminations found in this *Shāhnāma*, the pages of which were dispersed and had found their way to various collections, changing hands frequently during these last years.

The same characteristics can be seen in the Jalā'irid miniatures from the *Katīla wa-Dimna* produced in Tabrīz, as was the Demotte *Shāhnāma*. These are to be found in the Istanbul University Library, with their fragments pasted on pages of album no. F. 1022. The nine miniatures (Add. 11813), produced in Baghdad to embellish Khoja Kirmānī's *Khamsa* of 1396, one of which is signed 'Junayd, *naqqāsh* of the Sultān', include an imaginary scene from nature with trees and flowers, which are unbelievably graceful and beautiful. Its scenery reflects the diminishing Chinese influence.

The most frequently depicted subject matter of miniature art is certainly the epic of the *Shāhnāma*, the Book of Kings, of Firdawsī, which [Fig. 4] was completed in 399/1009–1010 for presentation to Maḥmūd of Ghazna. This colossal work, which covered all the Persian kings, had its roots in the old written and oral traditions. The earliest surviving miniaturized version of the *Shāhnāma* was produced in Shīrāz in 730/1330–1331 and is to be found in the Topkapı Saray Museum Library (H. 1479). The characteristics of the miniatures suggest that some of the painters who contributed to their making had cognizance of the Central Asian tradition of painting. They also reflect an Īlkhānid influence. A group of miniatures of the *Katīla wa-Dimna*, an example of which is in the Topkapı Saray Museum Library (H. 363), would generally be



VI-1(b).5 Throne scene, *Shāhnāma* of Firdawsī, 772/1371  
© Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul

painted on a background of red or some other lively colour, in small format, with Saljūq and Mongol figures and presented as simple narrative compositions. The impact of the Far East had been replaced by a new taste. This *Shāhnāma* has a visible affinity with the group of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* manuscripts.

After the reign of Tīmūr, in the ninth/fifteenth century, Harāt replaced the most important centres of miniature painting in Iran, Tabrīz and Shīrāz. Among works produced during the Bāysonghor period, which has bequeathed us many exquisite examples of miniature art, one should mention a version of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, to be found in the Topkapı Saray Library (R. 1022), and Sa'dī's *Gulistān*, now in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin (no. 119). Harāt regained attention in the second half of the present century through the works of Bihzād (c. 853–942/1450–1536), who is considered the greatest master of miniature art, not only of his own time, but also of later centuries. The most important characteristics of his compositions are the richness of his colours, their relation to the subject-matter and balance. His most significant works are the miniatures he executed for the eleven *Bustāns* of Shaykh Aḥmad (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library), his miniature of a portrait of Sultan Ḥusayn Mīrzā Bāyqarā covering two pages, dated 889/1485, to be found at the Gulistan Museum in Tehran, and the miniatures of the *Bustān* prepared for the same sultan, presently in the National Library in Cairo.

Various schools of the art of miniature-painting were established at centres in a number of regions of Iran during the tenth/sixteenth century. The Turkoman school, which originated in Shīrāz, was one of them. Two examples of this style are the *Shāhnāma* of Dunmarle and the *Anthology of Shirwān*, both to be found in the British Museum, which are crowded with large-headed, stout figures on a scenery decorated with leaves and clouds. This style spread over a wider area through the Aq Qoyunlū and the Qarā Qoyunlū.

Following the establishment of Shāh Ismā'īl's rule throughout Iran in the second half of the ninth/fifteenth century, Tabrīz became a major centre. Shāh Ṭahmāsp, who also had a keen interest in the art of the book, made the city a Mecca of art during and after his reign. Renowned miniature artists like Bihzād, Dūst Muḥammad, Āghā Mīrak and Sulṭān Muḥammad placed exquisite examples of this art in the palace atelier. Besides Tabrīz, many other centres of art, such as Iṣfahān, Qazwīn, Mashhad and Shīrāz, also thrived during the Ṣafawid period.

The Houghton *Shāhnāma*, known by the name of its owner, is a magnificent sample of the Tabrīz school and is presently in New York. It was produced in 933/1527 by the joint effort of many artists. The 258 miniatures of this work, which maintain the style of the old Harāt school to some extent, display an unbelievable elegance, both as a whole and in detail, with their supremely poetic colours and fairy-tale atmosphere. Since the narrative has been enriched with details that reflect daily life, it is also a source of reference for the social history of the period.

One of the representatives of the Harāt school of the Ṣafawid period is Nizāmī's *Khamsa*, now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. Other (Fig. 5) examples of the style are the *Shāhnāma* in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no. 14624); Jāmī's *Haft awrang* in the Freer Gallery (46.12); and the *Yūsuf wa-Zulaykhā*, illuminated around 977/1570, in the British Museum (Orient 4222). The much-favoured depiction of daily life, which we come across in Indian miniatures, and an extremely realistic representation have become the main characteristics of this style.

A continuation of the Turkoman style, although it had undergone some changes, was prevalent at Shirāz during this period. Examples are the *Kullīyyat* of 1514, presently in the British Museum (Frazer 73, Ethé 687) and versions of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* (H. 1504, H. 1494), dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the *Khamsa* of Nizāmī, both to be found in the Topkapı Saray Museum Library (H. 791, H. 783, H. 766).

When, at end of the tenth/sixteenth century, Shāh 'Abbās made Iṣfahān the centre of the Ṣafawid state, a new period was initiated in the arts. The city was adorned with monumental buildings. The Shah's interest in architecture rather than painting, and the newly developing relations with Europe introduced an immense change and novelty into the art of painting. People who were not courtiers began to commission paintings. Miniatures made on single pages increased in number during this period. These were now depicting people from various ages and strata in an extremely realistic manner and were mostly like actual portraits, but in general they were exaggerated and sometimes extremely detailed. The greatest master of this style was Riḏā-i 'Abbāsī. Numerous examples, some of which were signed, have been attributed to him, but the actual number of his works is smaller than imagined. The miniatures of this period, which can be found in the albums H. 1492, 1503 and 1512 at the Topkapı Saray Museum Library and in other museums of the world demonstrate that they are not miniatures *par excellence*, but paintings that reflect a Western influence.

In India, on the other hand, the art of miniature painting, which was entirely a product of Islamic-Indian culture, did not until the end of the tenth/sixteenth century. The techniques employed in the miniatures produced at the atelier established by two artists invited to Kābul from Tabrīz by Humāyūn and gradually expanded, were linked to the native painting traditions as well as to those of the Iranian miniatures, and thus the Indian style proved to be different from the Iranian one. Indian miniatures were at their peak during the reign of Akbar (971–1013/1564–1605). The most popular subjects were court life and scenes of games and war, which were represented in minute detail to reflect reality as it was. The roots of portrait-painting, which had an important place in Indian miniatures, can be traced back to the old Indian traditions.

The art of miniature-painting acquired some special characteristics in the Ottoman world and developed a different style. The miniatures of the



VI-1(b).6 Majnūn offering his clothes to the gazelle hunter,  
*Khamsa-i Nizāmī*, 849/1446–1447

© Topkapi Palace Museum, Library (H. 786, fol. 118a)

*Iskandar-nāma* of Aḥmadī (815/1413) (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale ms. turc. 309), which were painted during the early years of the Ottoman state and have survived up to our time, reveal that the Saljūq miniature style had been maintained until the beginning of the fifteenth century. Sultan Meḥmed II the Conqueror, who was a great lover of the arts, invited many foreign artists to Istanbul. But the influence of Western artists like Gentile Bellini and Constanza da Ferrara on the art of the miniature was limited. The most notable work of this period was the portrait of Sultan Meḥmed II produced by Sinān Beg (Topkapı Saray Museum, H. 2153, 10). The *Dilsuz-nāme*, dated 860/1455-1456 (Bodleian Library Ouseley 133), which was prepared in Edirne, and the *Kulliyat* of Kātībī (Topkapı Saray Museum R. 989) are two further manuscripts which represent the Ottoman miniature-painting style of the time of Sultan Meḥmed II.

Many Eastern miniature-artists were brought to the palace atelier during the reigns of Bāyazīd II and Selīm I. Miniatures of this period, which were characterized by the influence of Eastern miniature art and by the style of literary works, reflect an eclectic tendency. During the reign of the Qānūnī Sultan Sulaymān, a special miniature style had already been born, despite the continuing influences of the Eastern and Western schools. The most important characteristics that formed the basis of the Turkish style could be found in the miniatures among the pages of works on Ottoman history. The illustration of historical and actual events led the Turkish miniature art towards a realistic style. Miniatures in a version of the *Salīm-nāma* (Topkapı Saray Museum, H. 1597/1598), which was written by Shukrū during the reign of the Qānūnī Sultan Sulaymān, depict some events which occurred during the reign of Yavuz Sulṭān Salīm. The *Manāẓil-i safar-i Irāqayn*, which was written and illustrated by Nasūḥ al-Silāḥī al-Matrakī in 943/1537-1538, is a history of Sulaymān's campaign into Iraq and has illustrations which show the cities and stations on the route from Istanbul to Baghdad, Tabrīz, Diyārbakr and Aleppo through topographical depiction without human figures. One of the last great works of this period, the miniatures of the *Sulaymān-nāma* (Topkapı Saray Museum, H. 1517), were about the Qānūnī period and brought together various stylistic characteristics of the age, treated some new subjects and developed fresh ways of expression. Turkish miniature style reached its peak during the reigns of Selīm II and Murād III. Some versions of the historical works of this period, such as the *Nuzḥat al-asrār wa-l-akḥbār der safar-i Zigetwar* (The delights of the Mysteries and Reports of Zigetwar Campaign, Topkapı Saray Museum, H. 1339), which was written in 975/1568-1569 and was about Qānūnī's experiences on that campaign, his death and the coronation of Selīm II; *The History of Qānūnī Sultan Sulaymān*, written in 986/1579 (Dublin, Chester Beatty, no. 413); a history of the period of Sulṭān Selīm, *Salīm-nāma* (Topkapı Saray Museum, Aḥmad III no. 595), completed in 988/1581; a history of the reign of Sultan Murād III, *Shāhinshāh-nāma* (University Library, no.



FY 1404), written in 988/1581; a history of the Ottoman Empire beginning with the reign of ʿUthmān Ghāzī and ending with the reign of Yavuz Sultān Selīm; the *Hunar-nāma I* (Topkapı Saray Museum, H. 1523), written in 996/1584; and the history of the reign of the Qānūnī *Hunar-nāma II*, written in 996/1588, reveal a great interest in portrait-making. Ḥaydar Raʿīs, who is known as Nigari, made portraits of Barbaros Khayr al-Dīn Pāshā, Qānūnī and Selīm II. One of the most important examples of portraiture during the reign of Murād III was the *Kiryāfāt al-insāniyya fī shamaʿil al-ʿUthmāniyya*, written by Sayyid Luqmān and illustrated with portraits of sultans by Naqqāsh ʿUthmān.

The story of the circumcision ceremony of Sultan Murād's son Meḥmed, which took place in 989/1582, the *Şūr-nāma* (Topkapı Saray Museum, H. 1344), was illustrated by a group of artists under the direction of Naqqāsh ʿUthmān. The whole ceremony, which was attended by the tradesmen of Istanbul, who had been invited to the entertainment, was important in various respects, as is depicted in the miniatures. A history of the world beginning with Adam and Eve, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh* (The Essence of History, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, no.1973), which was prepared for Sultan Murād III in 990/1583, is concerned with religious topics and the lives of the prophets. The miniatures of the *Siyar-i nabī*, a work of six volumes about the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, which was translated from the Arabic by Darīrī and prepared upon the order of Murād III, are monuments of the religious painting of the period. The illustrations of the works produced during the period following the short but productive reign of Meḥmed III reveal a change in subject-matter and style. The best works of the eleventh/seventeenth century were produced during the reign of ʿUthmān II. The use of perspective in the miniatures of the *Shāqaʿiq al-nuʿmāniyya* (Topkapı Saray Museum, H. 1263), which was written by Tāshköprüzāde and illustrated by Aḥmad Naqshī, the famous *naqqāsh* of the period, reveals the influence of Western painting. The last *shāhnāma* of Ottoman history told the story of the reign of ʿUthmān II and was called the *Fāth-nāma* of Hotin or *Shāh-nāma-i Nādirī* (Topkapı Saray Museum, H. 1124). The last example of an illustrated historical chronicle of the events of the Ottoman empire, the *Pāshā-nāma* (British Museum, Slane, no. 3584), relating the victories of Kenʿān Pāshā, was probably produced in the 1630s.

Turkish miniature art experienced a new and final epoch of productivity with the works of Levnī during the eighteenth century. The most notable examples of the works of this period were his miniatures illustrating the *Şūr-nāma* (The Story of Tyre, Topkapı Saray Museum, Aḥmad III no. 3593), a history of the circumcision ceremony of the sons of Aḥmad III. The single figures of Levnī, who was also a master of portrait-painting, were very successful. The influence of Western painting which found its way into Levnī's works gradually increased and the art of the miniature was replaced in time by a style of painting which had links with Western art.

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## Chapter 1(c)

# DECORATION AND ILLUMINATION

*David James*

The sacred text of the Holy Qurʾān is the *raison d'être* of Islam. That the being so, it is hardly surprising that from earliest times so much care and attention have been paid to the act of copying out the text. Indeed, the entire writing-system of Arabic was developed largely to ensure the accurate transmission of the Qurʾānic text. Furthermore, copying the sacred word was to become the main vehicle of aesthetic endeavour in the Islamic world. This, in turn gave rise to the art of calligraphy, which was not confined to the act of copying out the Holy Qurʾān nor limited to inscribing on parchment or paper. [Fig. 1]

We do not know when the idea of decorating the pages of the Holy Qurʾān arose, but this seems to have occurred within the first century after the Prophet's death. In both the Mediterranean area and Iran, Islam inherited well-established traditions of manuscript production. Although nothing survives from Iran, we know enough about the book art of the Byzantine Empire to know that finely copied, illuminated and illustrated copies of the Gospels and literary and technical works were in existence in the lands incorporated into the nascent Islamic state. It was on the basis of provincial Byzantine and Iranian manuscript decoration that Islamic manuscript illumination arose, gradually transforming these inherited traditions into something new and distinctive.

### The beginning of manuscript illumination

The earliest 'decorative' additions to the text of the Holy Qurʾān were of a purely practical nature. They consisted of marks to indicate the division of the text into verses, symbols to show the number of verses after each group of five and marks to indicate the end of the *sūra*. From these simple marks arose the art of Qurʾānic illumination. By the eighth/fourteenth century Muslim painters were producing Qurʾān illuminations which rank among the finest examples of religious art created by any civilization.

أَلْحَوْفُ أَلْتَهْمُ سَطْرُ فَوْزِ	وَأَلْحَوْفُ
إِلَيْكَ تَدْرُؤُ أَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِي	فِي مَنِكَ
يُغْتَنَى عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْبُوتِ	بِهَلْ
فَإِذَا هَبَّ الْوُجُوهُ سَأَلُوكَ	لِأَقْلِيلًا
بِالْبَيْتِ نَجِيلًا لِنَجْوَةٍ	وَأَلْحَوْفُ

VI-1(c).1 Folio from a Qurʾān, Baghdad, 707/1307  
© Topkapi Palace Museum Library

Secular writing was also undoubtedly illuminated under the Umayyads and early 'Abbasids, but we know nothing of this as only Qur'anic fragments have survived from the first centuries of Islamic rule. But in general, Qur'anic illuminators used a similar artistic vocabulary to that of their secular colleagues, though they were much slower to adopt the decorative innovation which occurred in the latter's work. Often, the appearance of new styles of secular manuscript illumination, which themselves reflected developments in Islamic secular decoration generally, pass entirely unnoticed in Qur'anic illumination, though the artists who worked on the sacred text were obviously aware of them. It is known for certain that the same artists often illuminated both literary and Qur'anic manuscripts.<sup>1</sup>

### Technique and practice

Those parts of a manuscript, whether secular or Qur'anic, which required the attention of a painter, were essentially the same: the beginning and the end, together with any sub-divisions. Copies of both the Holy Qur'an and secular manuscripts often commenced with double pages of illumination, which may have incorporated the name of the person commissioning the work. But more often than not, the name of the commissioner – if given at all – would be included separately on the opening or closing leaf.

Scribes often gave their names at the end of the text, together with the date of completion. It is much rarer to find the names of illuminators. Even when they are given, it is frequently in the form of minute inscriptions concealed in the illumination. Quite often a scribe who was working as an illuminator may have signed his name as scribe at the end of the text, but would not necessarily record the fact that he was also responsible for the illumination. Scribes sometimes worked as binders, and occasionally illustrators, but likewise, such information is only rarely recorded.

A considerable amount of detail has been amassed by earlier writers in Arabic, Persian and Turkish on the lives and work of calligraphers. These same writers occasionally give information on painters and this information has been significantly expanded upon, thanks to the researches of Western and Muslim scholars this century. But there is almost no historical information on the work of manuscript illuminators, due to the lack of documentation and the difficulty of identifying individual artists. Paradoxically, where detailed research has been undertaken on small but specific groups of the illuminated manuscripts, it has been possible to trace the work of individual illuminators over many years.<sup>2</sup>

1. Cf. D. James, 'Ruzbihan Muhammad of Shiraz: a Master Calligrapher and Illuminator', in D. James, *After Timur: Qur'ans of the 15th and 16th Century*, 1992b, pp. 144–149
2. See D. L. James, *Qur'ans of the Mamlûks*, London, Alexandria Press in association with Thames and Hudson, 1988.

Occasionally, several generations of artists have been identified, because the professions of scribe/illuminator/painter (Arabic *kaṭīb/mudhabbīb/muṣawwir*) were usually passed on from father to son.

The use of paper in the Islamic world from the second/eighth century onwards meant that manuscripts could be produced relatively cheaply. All kinds of knowledge – religious, technical and literary – were transmitted in this way among the various classes who made up Islamic society, literacy being much more common than in the medieval, and even post-medieval, West. Manuscripts were quite often copied out by individuals for their own private use. Such works would only rarely have been decorated. Decorated and illustrated manuscripts were the work of a special class of professional illuminator. Most of them would have also been scribes and occasionally illustrators. They would have worked to order in conjunction with scribes on fine manuscripts, which would usually have been commissioned by the wealthy and ruling classes.

### Centres of production

The majority of illuminators and scribes would have worked in their own workshops in a special district of the town or city where they lived. Such ateliers could well have been part of their own homes, particularly when several members of the same family were engaged in different aspects of book production.

Sometimes scribes and artists were recruited to staff the library of a monarch or prince who was interested in producing fine manuscripts for his own use. There are several instances of this happening, the best known being the establishment of palace workshops by the Mughal emperor Akbar and the Timūrid prince Bāysoḡhor, where large numbers of scribes and artists were employed. Manuscripts could also have been produced by the scribes who worked in the chancery attached to every royal palace.

But it is by no means certain that every prince or monarch kept a fully equipped scriptorium (Persian *kārkhāna*) for the production of manuscripts. It is much more likely that in many cases they were commissioned from outside the palace. During the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries, workshops in the city of Shīrāz appear to have supplied Qurʾānic and secular manuscripts throughout Iran, and even for export. We know from contemporary written evidence that many families in the city were engaged in manuscript production.<sup>3</sup> We also know that royal commissions were executed

3. Cf. M. Rogers and R. M. Ward, *Süleyman the Magnificent*, London, British Museum Publications, 1988, p. 88, n. 14, quoting Budaq Qazwini on the painters of Shīrāz.

there for the Turkoman rulers of western Iran, and even for the Ottomans.<sup>4</sup> The production of illuminated and illustrated manuscripts attained the status of a major industry in tenth/sixteenth-century Shīrāz. In this respect, the city was probably exceptional. Nevertheless, even in contemporary Istanbul there was a thriving manuscript 'industry' outside that of the Imperial Palace and the same would have been true of other cities in the Islamic world at different stages of its history.

On occasion, groups of scribes and artists appear to have been brought together for a specific project. At the beginning of the fourth/tenth century an important Mamlūk emir of Cairo, Baybars al-Jāshenkīr, commissioned a large seven-part Qurʾān. The scribe was Muḥammad b. al-Waḥīd, a Syrian who worked in the emir's chancery. Three artists are known to have worked on the illumination of the seven volumes, as each one signed his work. Of the two who produced the designs for the frontispieces of the contrasting styles, one, Abū Bakr, called 'Ṣandal', worked in what was presumably the current Cairo style of illumination, which was to endure for a decade or more. But the other painter, Muḥammad b. Mubādīr, employed an entirely different fashion and almost certainly had been trained in Baghdad. No attempt was made to blend the two styles. That of Muḥammad b. Mubādīr disappeared without trace from Cairo soon afterwards, presumably because he went to work elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

This lack of co-ordination contrasts with manuscript illumination in Baghdad in the same period. There, a massive programme of Qurʾānic illumination had been launched at the behest of the Īlkhānids. Two superb copies of the Holy Qurʾān, each in thirty parts, produced on sheets of the largest sizes of paper then in use, were illuminated by Muḥammad b. Aybak in projects which lasted for more than a decade. The hands of several illuminators can be detected in the workmanship, but it is clear that Muḥammad b. Aybak was in overall control and kept a very tight rein on the project. Unlike the multipart Qurʾān made for Baybars in Cairo, those produced in contemporary Baghdad show no changes in style, only in quality of execution. Even that, however, is almost uniformly excellent. Grandiose manuscript projects were much more common in the Īlkhānid imperial capital than in Mamlūk Cairo and their production was more systematically organized.<sup>6</sup> The Baybars Qurʾān was an isolated phenomenon. No other comparable Mamlūk example exists.

4. There is a copy of the Khamsa of Nizāmū in the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, copied by Nāʿim al-Dīn Shīrāzī, a well-known scribe of Shīrāz, for a young Turkoman prince of Tabrīz. According to information kindly supplied by Dr. Julian Raby, the same scribe produced a manuscript for the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II.

5. Cf. D. L. James, *Qurʾāns...*, *op. cit.*

6. See D. L. James, *Qurʾāns...*, *op. cit.*

## Methods of production

Manuscripts were copied out by the scribe, *in toto* or in parts, before the unbound sheets were handed over to the illuminator for decoration. Some aspects of the latter's task were so mechanical and laborious that stencils and templates were often employed. The technique of 'pouncing' – rubbing charcoal over a sheet on which a design had been pricked with a needle – was quite commonly used. Knot- or strap-work of infinite complexity could be produced by joining up systems of dots, probably marked out by the use of a special template. Nevertheless, a lot of manuscript decoration was produced simply by copying. Each artist and workshop would have collections of designs copied on paper, which could be copied directly or traced. Several museums have examples of these 'pattern-books', some of the most interesting being in Berlin and Istanbul. These originated in fifteenth-century Iran and were used by artists and illuminators in Tabrīz and Shīrāz.

From the study of select groups of illuminated manuscripts in certain periods it is possible to trace the transmission of the same designs among groups of illuminators who stood in the relationship of master and pupil. Furthermore, the same designs were used on numerous occasions by artists, making a slight change each time the pattern was employed. Another method was to alter the colour scheme of a design when repeating it. We can see this in the work of manuscript illuminators from sixteenth-century Shīrāz, where we have some examples of work being signed by artists. By and large, however, the volume of work was so great in Shīrāz in this period, and the number of signed and attributed works so few, that much more detailed study will be required before a full picture emerges of the mechanics of manuscript illumination in this important period. In the eight/fourteenth century, it was common practice among both Mamlūk and Īlkhānid artists to change the colour schemes of the opening double pages of illumination in copies of the Holy Qur'ān. Although the design of the right- and left-hand pages is identical, the elements making up the geometric patterns have been coloured differently.

## A brief history of illumination

Islamic manuscript illumination is made up of three constituent elements: the vegetal, the geometric and the naturalistic. At certain periods one or two elements predominated in the work of manuscript illuminators and only rarely were all three used together at the same time.

The vegetal element, that is, stylized plant forms, was taken over by Muslim artists from the decorative repertoire of late Roman art. Initially this particular element consisted of various embryonic leaf forms, undulating scrolls, petalled borders etc. However, even those staple ingredients of Islamic decorative art, the arabesque and the palmette, originated in pre-Islamic art.

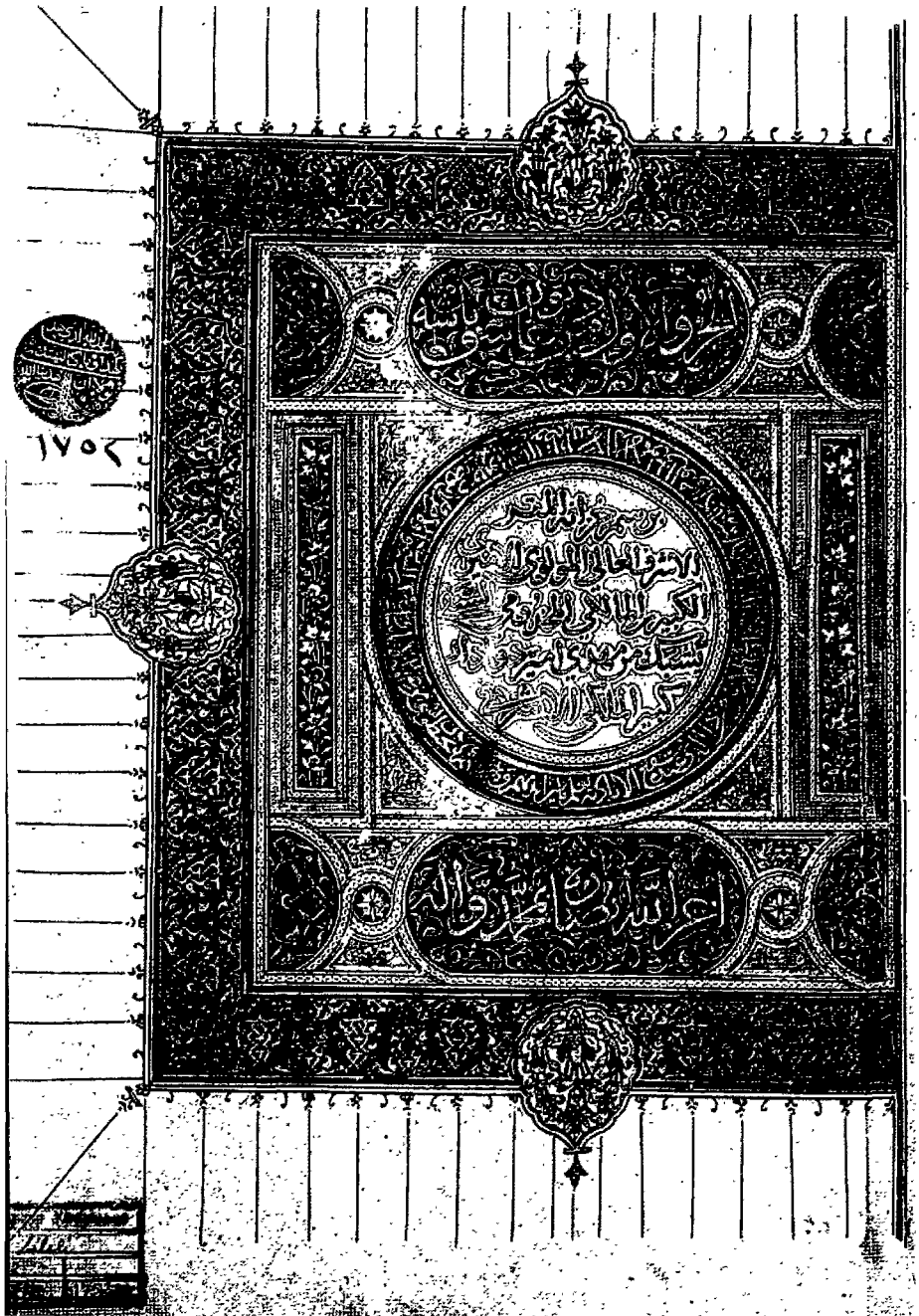
Other early elements were introduced from Sāsānid art, such as vases, ribbons and wings. Of all these elements, the palmette was undoubtedly the most important, lasting right down to the thirteenth/nineteenth century. It became an essential feature of Qurʾānic illumination. It was made up of a heart-shaped device with radiating symmetrical lobes. Palmettes in combination were regularly used in Islamic book decoration to adorn borders, which frequently incorporated other motifs. But while the secondary motifs tended to change with fashion, the palmette endured, virtually unaltered.

The vegetal element is a constant feature of all Islamic book decoration, whether Qurʾānic or secular. The geometric element, on the other hand, was sometimes totally dominating, at other times non-existent. It too had its origins in late Roman art and consisted primarily of repeat-patterns, centrifugal compositions and interlace or strapwork. One of the most important uses of geometric decoration occurs in Qurʾānic manuscripts, where in the eastern Islamic world it was used in frontispieces from earliest times down to the fourteenth century. In the western Islamic world, geometric frontispieces continued in use down to the thirteenth/nineteenth century. Interlace was used in book decoration all over the Islamic world in all periods.

In the fifth/eleventh century, when a vertical format was adopted for Qurʾān manuscripts as well as for secular works, geometric frontispieces from the earlier Kufic Qurʾāns in horizontal format were easily adapted to the vertical format. The geometric frontispiece was further developed under the Saljūqs in Iran and Iraq in the course of the sixth/twelfth century. However, it was under the Mamlūks and Īlhānids that the geometric frontispiece reached its greatest and finest development. During the reign of the Mamlūk Sultan Shaʿbān (764–777/1363–1376), a series of Qurʾāns was commissioned by the sultan, his mother and several emirs. A number of these manuscripts contain frontispieces which took the centrifugal star-polygon design to its final development. But other manuscripts in the group, illuminated by an artist called Ibrāhīm al-Āmidī, were illustrated in an entirely different geometric style, which introduced a much greater range of colours, as well as rather more naturalistic flora. During the period of the Baḥrī Mamlūks (653–801/1256–1399), both Qurʾānic and secular manuscript illumination saw the appearance of Chinese-inspired motifs such as the lotus and tree-peony blossom. These motifs came into Islamic decoration due to the introduction of Chinese luxury objects on a much greater scale than hitherto, thanks to the Mongol occupation of China, Central Asia and Iran and the consequent development of closer trading links among those regions. Other Chinese elements which occurred in both Mamlūk and Īlhānid decoration were cold-scrolls, Buddhist knots and cicada symbols, the last two being signs of longevity. [Fig. 2]

The geometric element in Iranian book art came to an end with the collapse of the Īlhānids in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century and occurs only as an ancillary feature from then on. Under the ninth/fifteenth-century Burjī





VI-1(c).2 *Gharib-nāma*, *mathnawī* of approximately 12,000 couplets,  
written by ʿĀshiq Pāsha in 730/1330

© Süleymaniye Library (Lâleli 1752)

Mamlūk rulers, the geometric frontispieces survived for a time, but in a debased and simplified form, increasingly influenced by Tīmūrid and Turkoman illumination. In the second half of the ninth/fifteenth century, a number of Turkoman artists, both figurative painters and illuminators, made their way to Syria and Cairo, where they found employment producing work of good quality for their Mamlūk patrons.

Tīmūr's invasion of Iran and the Near East at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century was followed by the establishment of Tīmūrid dynasties in both Iran and Central Asia. The arrival of the new dynasties marked a watershed in Islamic manuscript illumination. Tīmūrid book art, both figurative and non-figurative, became the model for artists working in all neighbouring Islamic countries, long after the demise of the Tīmūrids as a political power.

Under the Tīmūrids a new style of illumination made its appearance, occurring first in manuscripts produced in Shīrāz. In the early manifestations of the new style, great emphasis was laid on long gold floral sprays, sometimes coiling and weaving to fill up irregular spaces. These sprays often have coloured blossoms and are always painted on a blue ground.<sup>7</sup> Although cicadas, knots and other Chinese elements disappeared from the new style, other Chinese motifs took their place. Most notable was the cartouche with cusped ends, which was to have a long history in Islamic book decoration.

Later, a more polished style arose, which is often called the Tūmūrid 'international' style. Foliate arabesque scrolls combined with palmettes, beautifully detailed and multicoloured, were assembled within interlocking cartouches. Manuscripts illuminated in this manner were produced at both Tabrīz and Harāt. There was a derivation of this style which appears in manuscripts made in Shīrāz and Tabrīz under the Aq Qoyunlū Turkomans in the second half of the ninth/fifteenth century. In the Turkoman version, the Tīmūrid elements are frequently combined in geometric configurations, the arabesque scrolls are thin and wiry, while the colours have a much harder and brighter enamel-like quality. It was illumination of this Turkoman type that was to influence Ottoman court illumination for a time in the late ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries, perhaps more than the pure Tīmūrid 'international' style. Prior to that date, Ottoman manuscripts were often illuminated in a hybrid style, which, although frequently of the very highest quality, leaves its Mamlūk, Tīmūrid and other elements unco-ordinated.<sup>8</sup>

7. For a full survey of illumination in early Tīmūrid manuscripts, see the unpublished M. Phil. thesis of E. Wright University of Oxford, 1991.

8. For a particularly fine example, see D. L. James, 1992a, *The Master Scribes: Qur'āns of the 10th to 14th Centuries*, II, (The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, II), London, Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, pp. 88–93.

In 906/1501 the Şafawid dynasty came to power in Iran. The establishment of the new dynasty saw a change in manuscript illumination. Şafawid illuminators usually made no distinction between Qur'ānic and secular manuscripts, decorating all in the same manner. We see employment of multiple levels of pattern, in which several 'layers' of decoration are painted one on top of the other, giving a richly embellished appearance, which is at the same time carefully controlled. The page was often divided into cartouche shape, with the patterns sometimes confined to these shapes, at other times flowing from one to another. The basis of the Şafawid painter's decorative repertoire consisted of multi-coloured cold-bands, ultimately of Chinese origin, and fine, curling arabesque scrolls with polychrome blossoms and large fleshy leaves. Borders were filled with delicately painted blue finials. This feature appears in manuscripts as early as the thirteenth century, but it reached its greatest development in the hands of Şafawid painters.

The tenth/sixteenth century was the great age of Ottoman manuscript illumination. Although some new elements, such as the undulating cold-band, were adopted from the Şafawids, Ottoman illuminators incorporated features of purely local derivation, such as a combination of rosettes and large, serrated saz-leaves. The most interesting developments are attributed to the artist Qarā Memī. His contribution was the introduction of naturalistically drawn plant- and flower-forms: tulips, carnations, prunus blossom and the like. Although Qarā Memī worked on several Qur'āns, his more imaginative work is found in secular manuscripts, such as copies of the *Dīwān* of *Muḥibbī*, the poetical name of Sultan Sulāymān (926–968/1520–1561).<sup>9</sup>

The tendency towards naturalism in book illumination was not confined to the Ottomans. There are numerous examples in the work of eleventh/seventeenth-century illuminators at the Mughal court in India. Mughal manuscript illumination was based on that of Iran. Quite a few Iranian scribes and artists emigrated to India in the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries. However, the introduction of plant and flower decorations was a Mughal contribution which owed nothing to Iran. Many of the borders of albums made for Jahāngīr (1013–1036/1605–1627) and Shāh Jahān (1036–1068/1627–1658) are covered with floral designs in which the plans are often recognizable botanical specimens. In Qur'ānic illumination, however, Mughal artists were rigidly traditional, employing adaptations of the old Tīmūrid 'international' style and incorporating newer Şafawid features.

During the eleventh/seventeenth and twelfth/eighteenth centuries, both Iranian and Ottoman illuminators tended to repeat the time-honoured artistic traditions of earlier centuries. But in the second half of the twelfth/eighteenth century, Ottoman illumination began to show the influence of Western

9. See E. Atıl, *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent*, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1987, pp. 68f.

European art in the form of a so-called 'Turkish Rococco'. Manuscript illuminators used motifs taken over from Ottoman architectural decoration, which incorporated the fashion for the European Rococco style. This style had little or no influence on the painters of Iran in the twelfth/eighteenth century, nor in the Qājār period during the thirteenth/nineteenth century.

Qājār manuscripts were usually elaborately illuminated, and illumination now became the major form of book-painting. Figurative painting, in the form of miniatures, still continued, but was mostly painting executed on the lacquered covers of the manuscript, rather than on the page. Although several distinct hands can be traced in Qājār illumination, few pieces of work are signed. Several examples, however, were signed by the painter Rāzī, who worked at the court of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in the late thirteenth/nineteenth century.

Unlike book-cover art, illumination made no break with the past. Virtually every motif which had appeared in Iranian manuscript illumination from the ninth/fifteenth century was used by Qājār illuminators. We even find entire tenth/sixteenth-century compositions reused. The outstanding characteristic of illumination at this time is the merging of traditional patterns and compositions with minute floral detail, which spreads, almost like a rash, over the surface. The illuminated page is covered with a mesh of ornament in which form and content blur into a multicoloured haze.

Although many different colours were used, red and several varieties of blue dominated the palate of the Qājār illuminator. By now commercial paints were being imported from the West for use in book decoration.

Ottoman illumination during the thirteenth/nineteenth century also continued the traditional forms of the previous two centuries. Qur'āns were still often decorated with the monotonous pattern of small blossoms on an underlying gold arabesque mesh, so typical of Ottoman manuscripts produced in the twelfth/eighteenth century. However, we see the introduction of sprays and bunches of flowers, often quite naturalistically painted, and fluttering ribbons, the latter probably due to Western influence. The end-papers of manuscripts often have been decorated, using the Turkish technique of marbling (*ebru*), but in the thirteenth/nineteenth century they were frequently painted with simple repeat-patterns, ribbons or floral sprays.

In the thirteenth/nineteenth century leather bindings and slip-cases were often painted, giving the illuminator the chance to display his skills there as well as on the manuscript page. Although this century was not one of great innovation in the area of illumination, when illuminators were able to extend their skills to other areas of the book, the result is sometimes of the highest quality, with all totally decorated. Some of the manuscripts so produced rank as true masterpieces of Islamic book art.

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Chapter 1(d)

BOOKBINDING

*Hasip Oktay Aslanapa*

Bookbinding is the means of keeping a manuscript together and in sequence and, by putting covers on the front and back, to prevent the pages falling apart, and also to preserve them from the effects of deleterious influences. This must have been the original motive to develop this profession and practice.

Though South Arabia was one of the oldest centres of leather manufacturing, the art of Islamic bookbinding started with the Egyptian Christian Copts, who first worked for the Muslims, then taught them their techniques. Copts also used decorations on the doublures.

The first linings for bookbinding were made of papyrus or parchment. Later, classical geometric designs used on Coptic gravestones and fabrics were copied in ink on the linings. When papyrus was replaced by paper, they were also made of paper. The Coptic influence, carried through al-Qayrawān, reached as far as England.

The twelve covers found in the Sīdī ‘Uqba mosque at al-Qayrawān are the first Islamic bookbindings known. These provide various examples of the horizontal format, a characteristic of early Islamic bookbindings. Another example, one of the most elegant of Qayrawān bookbindings, belongs to the eleventh century. In its raised design, a horizontally placed palmetto and four arabesque leaves were fashioned over a series of cords glued to poplar-wood boards. As the works of famous bookbinders of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma’mūn were burned during the Mongol raids, only the names mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm are known to us.

The style of bookbindings produced by the Uighur Turks in Eastern Turkestan, who accepted the religion of Mānī, resemble those of the Copts. Two fragments of Uighur bookbindings found by A. von Le Coq in the Qarā Hocho (Black Hocho) excavations go back to the eighth and ninth centuries. These consist of filigree work and polychrome, with engraved geometric designs over a gilded leather background. The close relationship between these two pieces of Manichaean Uighur manuscripts from Hocho and the fact that

their covers consisted of geometric filigree work over a gilded background, while the filigree technique was used in both regions, demonstrate that the Islamic art of bookbinding developed from the same source.

Among the oldest Islamic bookbindings are those from the Ṭūlūnid period in Egypt (second and third/eighth and ninth centuries). These resemble the Coptic bindings with geometric designs, the only difference being that the covers were made of cedar-wood covered with leather instead of papyrus-covered cardboard. For oversized Qurʾāns, the durable cedar-wood was preferred to papyrus cardboard. Furthermore, bookbindings with stamped and punched decorations were also produced, examples of which were carried back by the Crusaders to their respective countries.

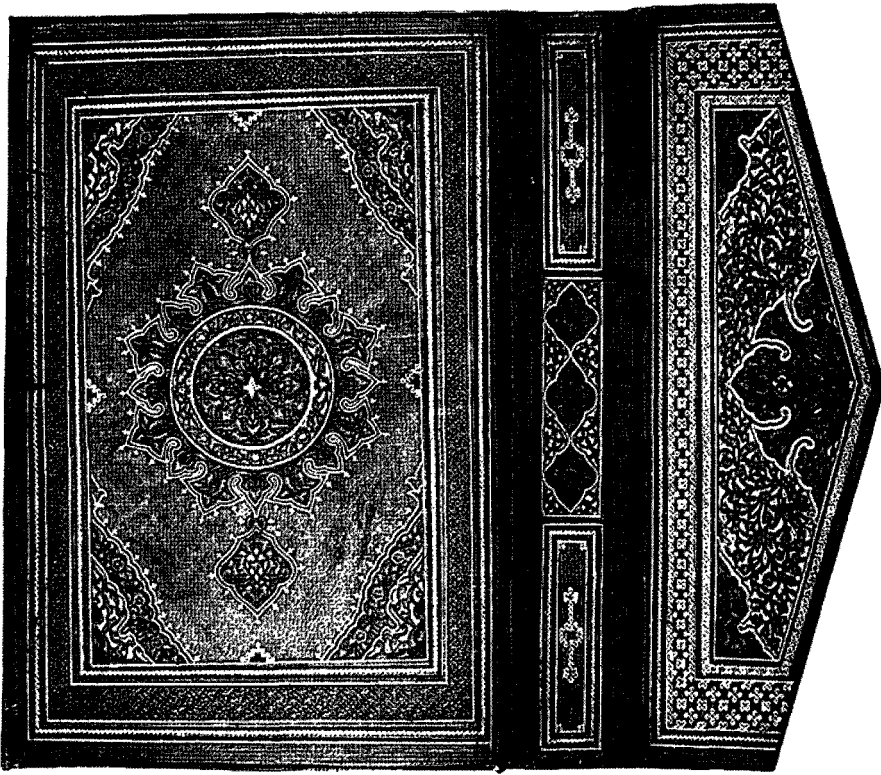
Mamlūk bookbindings are looked upon as the products of an outstanding period in the Egyptian art of bookbinding. In the beginning, influenced by the Copts, parallel squares around the edges and various decorations on the front and back covers and flaps were used. A large variety of geometric designs of the eighth and ninth/fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was widely used in bookbinding decoration. From the eight/fourteenth century onwards, background colours changed and a central medallion and Rūmī designs (a type of arabesque motif in which the touching tips of the strokes end in semi-palm-ettes) became more widespread. Flowers, plants and Rūmī designs over a coloured leather background, or gilded geometric designs are characteristic of Egyptian bookbindings from the second/eighth to the tenth/sixteenth centuries. These designs were made with heated blind tools. Cold-stamped or gilded, polygonal and epigraphic designs from North Africa and the Maghrib show slight differences.

After Iran embraced Islam, it was dominated by Coptic bookbindings through the Arabic manuscripts that came into the country. The rich libraries and books in Iran mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm disappeared during the Mongol occupation.

Arthur U. Pope found an example of bookbinding in the Masjid-i Jumʿa mosque in Iṣfahān which he assigned to the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth or eight/fourteenth century. The centre was decorated with small crosses and the unadorned corner-pieces were made with cold dies.

In 655/1258 the Mongols conquered and burnt down Baghdad, but brought the technique of lacquering to Iran from the East, thus helping the development of the art of bookbinding. The ninth/fifteenth century, which coincides with the Timūrid era, is the most outstanding period in the Iranian art of bookbinding. Stylized plant patterns were used in Shīrāz and Tabrīz, while gilding and polychrome were seen there before they reached Harāt. Some covers were filled with vine-leaves instead of the classic central medallion. [Fig. 1]

The presence of animal figures and writing on some bookbindings heralds the tenth/sixteenth century. With the lacquering technique introduced from China, magnificent works were produced. The tenth/sixteenth century



VI-1(d).1 Inside of lower cover, with flap, *Dīwān* of Sultan Aḥmad Jalayr, 808/1406–1407

© Museum of Turkish Islamic Arts, Istanbul (Baghdad 2046)

during the rule of the Ṣafawids was the most brilliant period for Iranian bookbinding, which thrived in cultural centres such as Tabrīz, Shīrāz and Iṣfahān. During the reign of Shāh Ṭahmāsp (932–983/1526–1576), lacquered bowls became popular for the first time. These bowls were decorated with miniatures of scenes from hunting, nature and gardens, and with posies. In Shāh ‘Abbās’s time these designs were applied to other arts as well. At the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century, though the number of lacquered works increased in number, they lost their quality, technique and taste.

When the art of bookbinding in Asia is mentioned, Harāt specimens and the Tīmūrīd period come to mind. Shāh Rukh, whose father was appointed governor of Harāt and Khurāsān by Tīmūr in 799/1397, was one of the greatest Islamic bibliophiles and lived in the city for fifty-one years until his

death in 850/1447. The art was introduced by masters from Syria and Egypt who were invited there by Tīmūr and, with Shāh Rukh's patronage, book-binding reached its highest peak in Harāt. Shāh Rukh's successor Bāysonghor (799–836/1397–1433) established an art centre at the private Harāt Library and also founded a library and an academy in the city where, around 822/1420, forty artists were gathered and trained under its roof; among them were calligraphers, bookbinders, engravers and gilders. Ḥusayn Bayqara and 'Alī Shīr Nawā'ī followed in his footsteps, and Qawām al-Dīn, a master of book-binding from Tabrīz, was another noted member of the academy.

Very little has survived from the brilliant examples of Anatolian book-bindings from the period of the Saljūqīd 'Alā' al-Dīn Ayqubād. These leather bookbindings were dark brown or reddish brown in colour and some of them were gilded. Geometric designs were never used in their decoration. They were composed of Rūmīs that did not have geometric designs, or of interlaced Saljūqīd designs which either filled the centre medallion or the whole cover, or stylized scenes from nature. They did not have corner-pieces, the doublure was bare of decoration and the flap was not always visible. The eighth/fourteenth-century bookbindings were mostly in relief and gilded.

The ninth/fifteenth century saw the rise of the Turkish style of book-binding. Books that were prepared in the name of the Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror were representative of the quality and taste of the period. The stylized and landscaped designs of the Iranians, real or mythical animals, Rūmīs as used by the Mamlūks and points and geometric designs were not to be found in Turkish bookbinding. In the ninth/fifteenth century, the Turks used three-leaved clovers, pelargonium-leaves, clouds, roses, ornamental knobs, cinquefoils (*penç*), Hatayī, centre-knots and needle designs in their decorations. Their main decorative feature was a central medallion with corner-pieces.

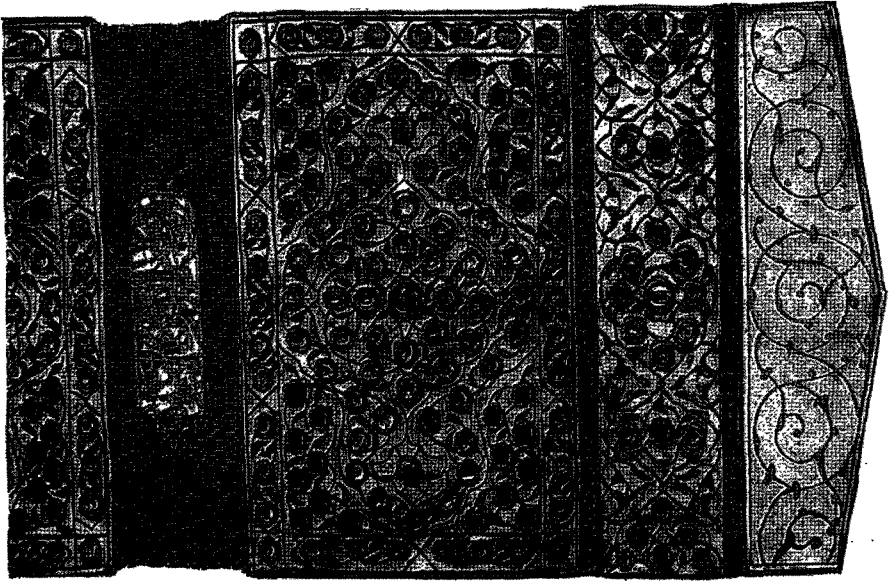
From the tenth/sixteenth century onwards, the medallions became oval in shape and were serrated. The compositions, consisting of a medallion, two decorative additions (*salbek*) and corner-pieces, were framed in a border which sometimes was decorated with cartouches. In some instances the whole surface is gilded (*mülenna*), the decorations consisting of two different shades of gold (yellow and greenish), one for the background, the other for the relief decorations. In some cases, only the background was gilded. Cartouche decorations were used by the Ottomans before the Iranians. Stylized pomegranate flowers, six-leaved flowers, tiger stripes, leopard spots and specially serrated leaves are very important in Turkish decorations. In some bookbindings the inside and outside covers were both embossed, while in others the medallions, with two decorative additions above and below the central medallion (*salbek*) and triangular corner-pieces, were embossed, the rest of the surface being gilded. Gilt motifs of circles and stars and points were brushed on the leather, then impressed upon it with a *yekşah*, a blind tool.



During the reign of Sultan Aḥmad and his son-in-law Ibrāhīm Pāshā in the twelfth/eighteenth century, the quality of the work produced could be compared with that of the tenth/sixteenth century. The compositions and motifs are classical, Rūmīs and cinquefoils were often used. A new technique for lacquered bookbindings and gold-embroidered leather book-covers was devised. The Ottoman lacquered bookbindings began in the time of Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror in the ninth/fifteenth century. The difference between Iranian and Ottoman bookbindings in the twelfth/eighteenth century is the stylized and natural flower designs that are used. Though the number of motifs is less, the work is much finer. Soft-toned colours and the harmony between motifs and the overall elegance are noteworthy. Lacquered works, called ‘patent leather’, were known as *Edirnekāri* after the twelfth/eighteenth century. ‘Alī Üsküdarī was the best-known master of this style, being also a famous calligrapher and a gilding artist. He brought freshness to the old style and started adding the date and his name on his works. While following the traditional medallion forms and corner-pieces, he made way for the style of the period, using shadowed colourings and posies in the decorations. The latter were widely used by the lacquering artists, who also signed their names in the doublures. Among them is one, ‘Abd Allāh Bukhārī, who added Western-style landscape scenes to his decorations. The Turkish art of bookbinding carried on the imitation of simple works from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. In 1936, a Turkish Decorative Arts Department was established within the State Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul and formal education in classical bookbinding began.

In bookbinding, the first step is to place all the leaves on top of each other and sew them together, the spine being flat. The leaves are then bonded and stitched together at the top and bottom of the spine to prevent them from scattering. The material of the covers is cardboard and their edges are always cut even with the pages. While the bookbinder ornaments the binding with various types of decoration, such as medallion designs, the thick cardboard immediately under the decorations is cut out and fitted with a much thinner cardboard lining to preserve the decorations. This process is also followed for the envelope-flap of the cover (*miqlāb*) of the binding, which is a continuation of the back cover. The leather to be used for binding is pared, thinned, then soaked in water and stretched over the cardboard. To ensure that decorations are embossed in detail, a paste made of asphodel-root powder is generously brushed on to the cardboard. As this layer of paste is soft, it cushions the embossed decorations.

In the old style of Islamic bookbinding, the front cover opens to the right while the back cover opens to the left together with the fore-edge flap (*sertab*) and the envelope-flap. The *sertab* is the continuation of the back cover and fits over the outside edge of the pages, thus protecting them and keeping them free from dust. The envelope-flap, which comes to a triangular point, fits between the book and the front cover. It may also be used as a book-mark.



VI-1(d).2 A tenth/sixteenth century book cover  
 ornamented with precious stones  
 © Topkapi Palace Museum Library (Treasury Section)

Portfolios and book-cases may also be considered within the art of bookbinding. Portfolios also have two covers like leather bookbindings and have pockets on the inside of the covers to preserve papers and other valuable documents. Book-cases are covered with leather or *ebrii* paper and are used to preserve manuscripts. A ribbon attached to the interior of the case enables the manuscript to be withdrawn easily.

In this art form, the protective cover was made of leather as it was found to be the best material for this purpose. In most cases sheep-, goat- and deer-skins, and in some rare cases cattle hide, were used for bookbinding. Originally they would preserve their natural colour or be dyed brown and were then pared to make the material thinner. Finally, this was pasted on to cardboard which had been cut to the dimensions of the manuscript. Later a variety of colours was used in Tīmūrid bookbindings, while the Anatolian Saljūqs and the Mamlūks used all shades of brown. After the ninth/fifteenth century, in the Ottoman period, red bordeaux, green and black were used in addition to browns. Beginning with the ninth/fifteenth century, blue dye as well as gold can be found in Ottoman and Mamlūk specimens.

Bookbindings differ according to the material, decorations and technique that are used and the styles that are created, taking the name of the relevant cultural area. Within its historical development, the Islamic art of bookbinding consisted of the following major styles: Arab, Maghribī, Mamlūk, Hatayī, Turkish (Ottoman) and *Bukhārā-i jadīd* (new Bukhārā).

There are many types of leather and cloth bindings, which are adorned with a variety of decorations, among them the *shamsa* design, consisting of sunburst-medallions or circular designs that spread out from the middle to the four corners of the book (the word *shamsa* comes from Arabic *shams*, meaning 'sun'). These are embossed on the leather and named according to the application of the design. Either the embossed figures are in natural leather while the background is gilded, or the background is in natural leather while the figures are gilded, or both the figures and the background are gilded, in which case two different colours of gold may be used.

Leather filigree work is mostly found on the doublure. Delicate figures cut in leather are stuck on the doublure, which will be of a different-coloured leather or cloth.

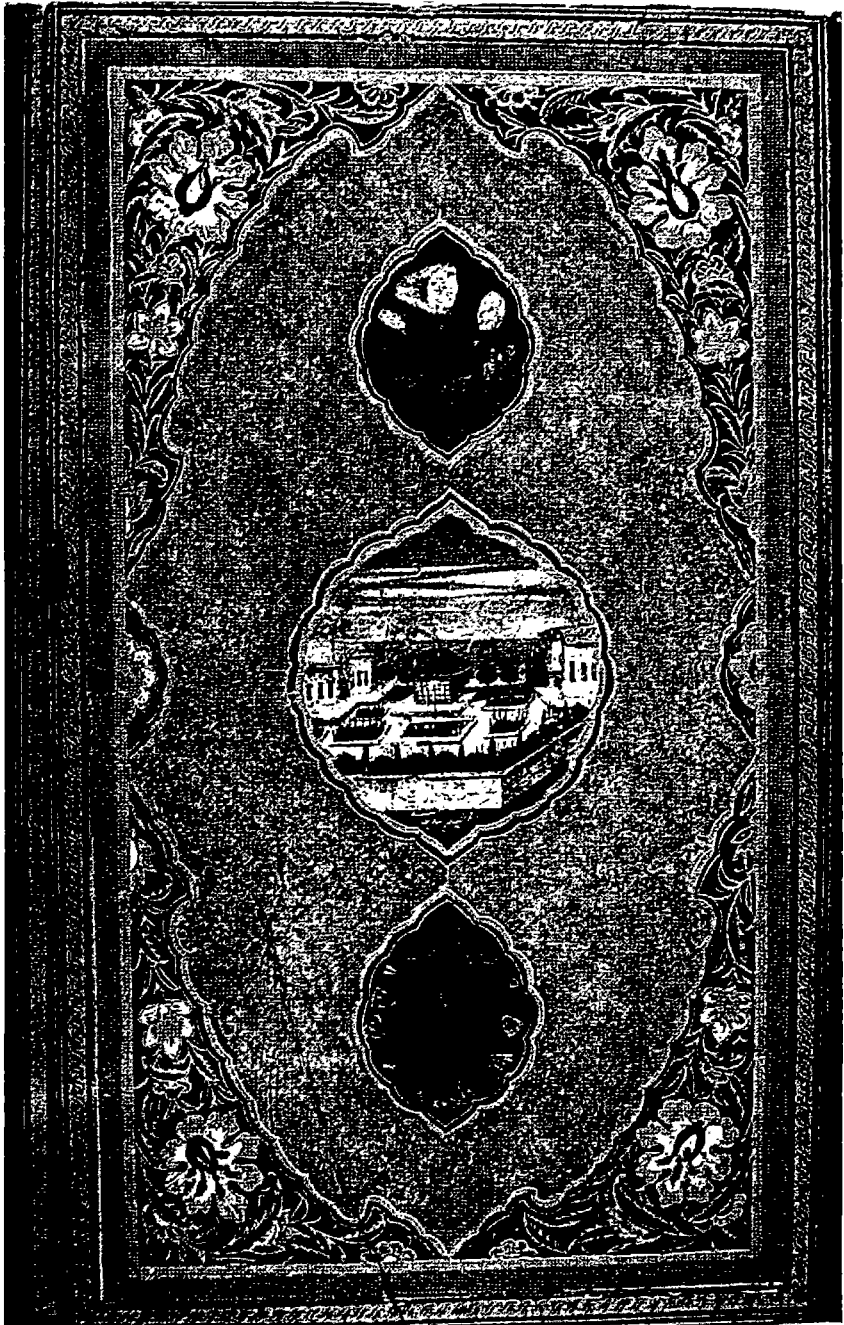
Some bookbindings take their name from decorations commonly called 'latticed-medallion' decoration. Four-petal leaf- and lattice-designs are painted on the cover with paint made from crushed gold-leaf. This adornment can either be in the middle or cover the whole background. It is encountered at the end of twelfth/eighteenth and thirteenth/nineteenth centuries.

Another type of binding presents a motif of circles, stars and points which are impressed on the leather with a fine-pointed embossing tool, known as a blind tool. There are bindings made of leather decorated with different coloured threads and golden embroidery. A four-cornered binding is covered with velvet or a patterned or embroidered cloth, the sides and corners of which are reinforced with leather, while in some cases the binding is made of cardboard, which is then covered with linen, silk or velvet.

*Ebrī*, or marbling, has a long history and an important place in bookbinding. Such bindings are reinforced, using the four-cornered technique. *Ebrī* is used on the cover as well as on the doublures. It is a material that is very popular in bookbinding and on book covers. Jewel-encrusted bookbindings are decorated with rubies, emeralds, turquoises and diamonds and are very precious, but rather rare [Fig. 2]. Though their artistic value is high, they are more related to the art of the goldsmith than the bookbinder. Lacquered bindings take their name from the lacquer or varnish used, the cardboard or leather binding receiving a thorough finish before being varnished. [Fig. 3,4].

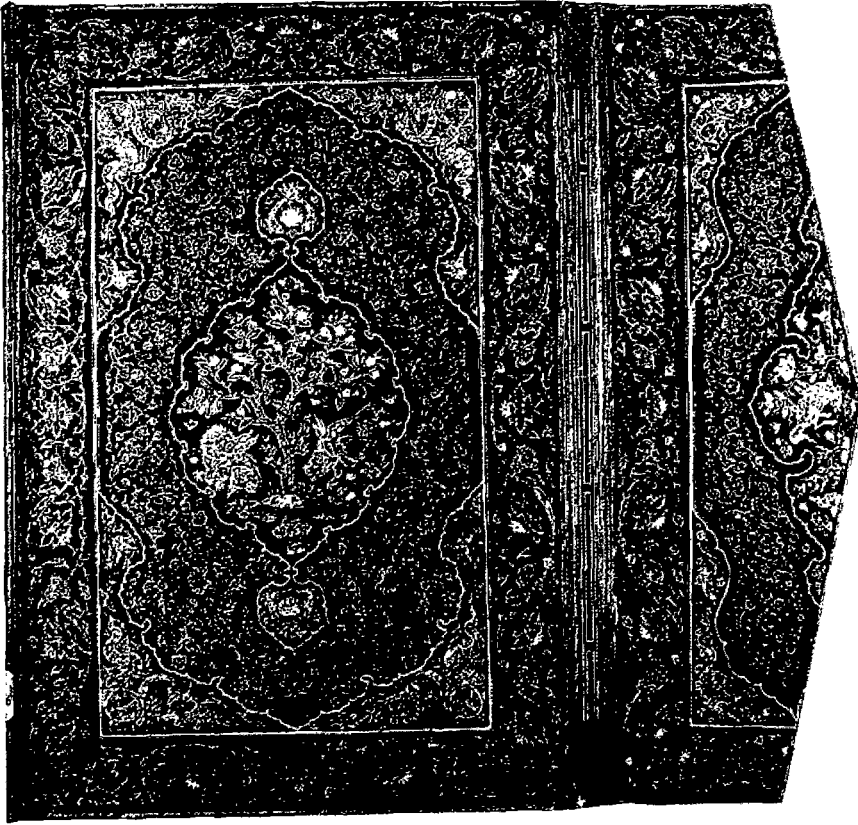
The following are the materials used in bookbinding.

Cardboard was employed before the usage of paper and in the early phase of Islamic bookbinding. It is made from thin wooden plates and covered with thin leather. Later, specially prepared cardboard replaced wood. Thin yellow silk thread, matching the colour of the polished leaves, is used to



VI-1(d).3 Lacquered cover signed 'Abdullāh Bukhārī  
and dated 1209/1795

© Topkapı Palace Museum Library (Treasury 1380)



VI-1(d).4 Outside of upper cover, lacquer with mother-of-pearl inlay,  
*Hasbt bibisht* of Amīr Khusraw Dihlawī, 901/1496–1497, Harāt  
 © Topkapı Palace Library (H-676)

sew them together. Coloured silk thread is used to strengthen the stitches that hold the pages at the top and bottom of the spine.

Gold relief, gold leaf and brushed gold are used in the preparation of the decorations that are frequently found on bindings and they have a prescribed thickness. One of the most important decorations used in Islamic bindings of the Middle Ages is gold relief. Brushed gold decorations are also found on border-lines and pages, or around letters. In later periods, we find that gold is brushed across the entire surface, or figures are embossed on gilded covers.

Tools used in bookbinding include the dies made of metal, wood and leather which produce the embossed figures on the cover. These are named according to their placement there, such as the 'medallion' die or 'corner' die.

Smaller practical dies are used to produce corner-pieces, chain-patterns and fillings for the medallions and the overlapping sections of the books. The tool that produces the chain-pattern can be included in this category. Additional tools called 'blind tools', among them the fine-pointed *yekşah* and the *teber* (hatchet), are heated and pressed on the leather, thus producing the designs and colour changes.

Relief-work, stamping and painting techniques are used in bookbinding. The stamping technique has two methods of application: firstly, by using dies, and secondly, by employing small hand-tools. In the first instance, the designs are cut into the die (female) and, after the stamping, they come out in relief (male). Other small designs are produced by hammering.

The relief technique entails applying gold-leaf or gold-plate to the leather and hammering it in by means of a round tool with a hollow centre and sharp edges. In painting, crushed gold-leaf is liquefied and applied with a delicate brush on to the leather. After it dries, it is polished to a shine with a burnishing stone.

At present, the art of Islamic bookbinding is practised only in restoring old and valuable bindings or, in very special cases, put to use in preserving rare manuscripts.

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Chapter 1(e)

EBRŪ (MARBLING)  
THE ART OF PAPER MARBLING  
APPLIED IN AN EMULSION

*Mustafa Uğur Derman*

Among the Islamic decorative arts, *ebrū*, or marbling, is a most attractive technique and yields immediate results. Though we are not certain about its origin, it is known that some work was carried out in the field using emulsions in China and Japan between the eighth and the twelfth centuries and subsequently, under the names of *liu sha shien* and *suminagashi*, respectively. Such examples give at least a vague idea about the historical development of this art, which appeared in Turkestan at a later date under the Chaghatay Turkish name of *ebre* (dress). At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the art spread from Turkestan into Iran via the Silk Road. There, it was called *ebrū*, a Persian word that relates to 'cloud'. Indeed, the patterns in marbling, which resemble masses of clouds, justify this word, which was also used in the Ottoman lands. During the nineteenth century, however, it was changed to *ebrū*, meaning 'eyebrow' in Persian, due to the difficulty of the pronunciation. This name is erroneous but not unsuitable since marbled paper contains patterns resembling an eyebrow.

It is reported that *ebrū*, produced in India by Mīr Muḥammad Zāhir around the mid-16th century, spread to Iran and then to Istanbul. Towards the end of the same century, *ebrū* paper was brought from Istanbul by European travellers returning to their homelands, where it became known as 'marbled paper' or 'Turkish marbled paper'. It was first used and produced in Germany, then in France and Italy. Gradually marbled paper was introduced into England and the United States and the production in each country reflected different tastes. Various materials used in its production also account for the minor differences in marbled paper.

It is made by floating finely ground dyes on an emulsion, and its success depends on certain conditions. What follows is an account of the application of marbling to paper in Istanbul during the Ottoman period and the materials and tools used.

The dyes employed are natural ones called *toprak boya*, obtained from coloured minerals and soil which are insoluble and contain no oil. These are pounded and finely ground on a stone slab, in a watery medium, by a small convex pestle (*destesenke*). Some other dyes, like Lahore indigo and gumlac in their natural form, are also used in marbling.

The *ebrū* trough is rectangular in shape and six cm. deep, preferably made of zinc or galvanized metal. Its dimensions should be the same as the sheet of paper that will be used. In the old days wooden troughs were used and any cracks were filled with pitch to prevent water seepage.

Gum tragacanth is exuded from the gum tragacanth plant (*Astragalus tragacantha*) and comes in cream-coloured irregular plaques or strips. These are dissolved in water, then strained through a cloth bag. The liquid is then added to the water in the trough so that the viscosity reaches the desired level and the dyes do not sink to the bottom. Approximately 600 marbled papers can be obtained from a trough filled with the emulsion of water and gum tragacanth. In the West, artists use badderlock (*Alaria esculenta*) instead of gum tragacanth.

Bile from cattle, which contains active surface bile acids, is added to each dye so that they will spread over the surface of the liquid without mixing with each other. Different amounts of bile are used to control the colours' interactions. In the production it is necessary to add more bile to the dyes which are added later, so that they migrate on the surface of the liquid to the spaces between the lighter areas, pushing aside the other colours as they move.

A special brush is prepared by winding horsehair loosely and cylindrically around a thin and smooth stick. Modern brushes are not suitable for spreading the dyes properly.

The comb is a strip of wood which is pierced with nails at regular intervals and is used in making *tarakli ebrū* (combed *ebrū*).

Thin wire spikes or needles are used to make patterns and thick wire spikes are used to drop dyes on the liquid. In olden days, only horsehair could be used for this purpose.

## Preparation of marbled paper

The horsehair brush is used to sprinkle dyes containing the bile evenly over the surface of the liquid in the trough which has been prepared by the above-mentioned method; the colours are thus spread over the liquid like masses of clouds.

To apply marbling to paper the artist slowly slides the paper from the right or left side of the trough and lays it over the surface of the liquid, where it remains for fifteen seconds. Thus the designs transfer to the paper with all their beauty. Then the craftsman holds up the two corners of the paper and draws it towards himself over the lip of the trough. The *ebrū* is then spread over long wooden laths and dried in the shade.



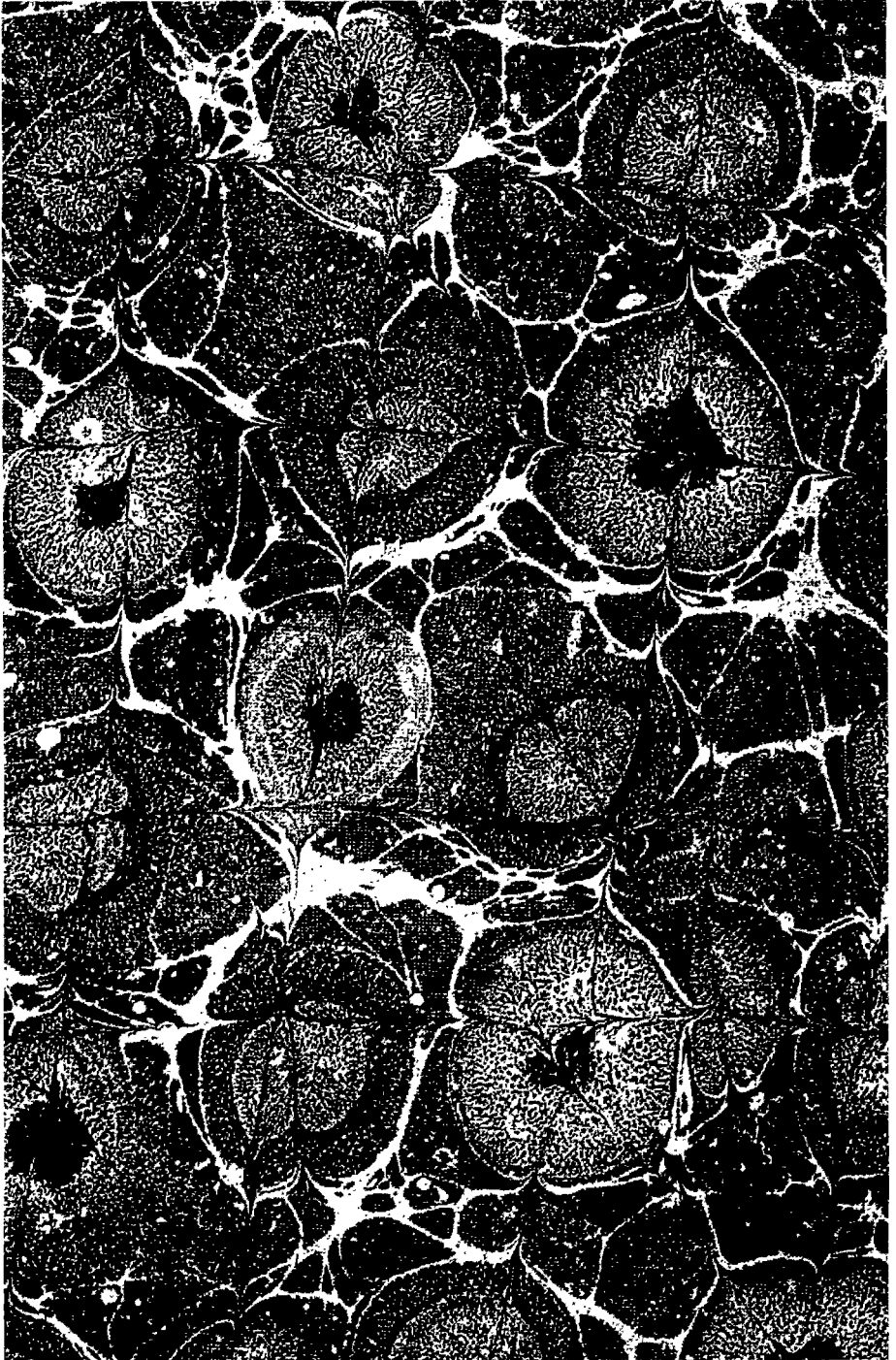
Each newly added colour spreads over the surface by pushing its way over the others, depending on the amount of bile it contains. This type is called *battal ebrū* (a pattern of large blobs). A finer version of *battal*, whose colour resembles porphyry, is known as *somaki ebrū* (porphyry marbling).

In producing the *battal ebrū*, the artist has no way of interfering with the patterns that are formed except by sprinkling dyes on the liquid in the trough. For this reason, wise men considered the art of marbling as a vivid example that explains the manifestation of God's absolute will and man's individual will. The sprinkling of dyes was likened to the individual will, whereas the pattern of unpredictable shapes which were formed over the surface of the trough were likened to the divine will.

*Tarama (gelgit) ebrū* (hatching) is produced by spreading the dyes over the surface of the liquid first, as in the application of *battal ebrū*. The wire spike is then moved over the liquid in sharp and straight lines, leaving horizontal and vertical zigzags. If the movements of the spike are irregular and circular (*şal örneği*, or Paisley pattern), *ebrū* is obtained, while spiral movements of the spike from the periphery to the centre result in *bülbül yuvası* (nightingale's nest). The craftsman produces *taraklı ebrū* (combed marbling) by sprinkling the colours, as in the case of *battal ebrū*, and drawing the wooden comb across the length of the trough. More attractive patterns can be produced by the application of comb-marbling on a surface where hatching has been applied. Finally, *serpmeli* (sprinkled) *ebrū* is produced when the craftsman sprinkles insoluble dyes of dark colours on the surface of one of the above types of marbling. If the same procedure is followed with the use of naphtha, small spaces will open up on the surface of the marbling. This type of marbling is known as *neftli* (naphtha) *ebrū*. As the liquid in the trough gets dirty after many uses, the dyes that are spread on the surface appear as dots that resemble particles of sand. This is called *kumlu ebrū* (sandy marbling).

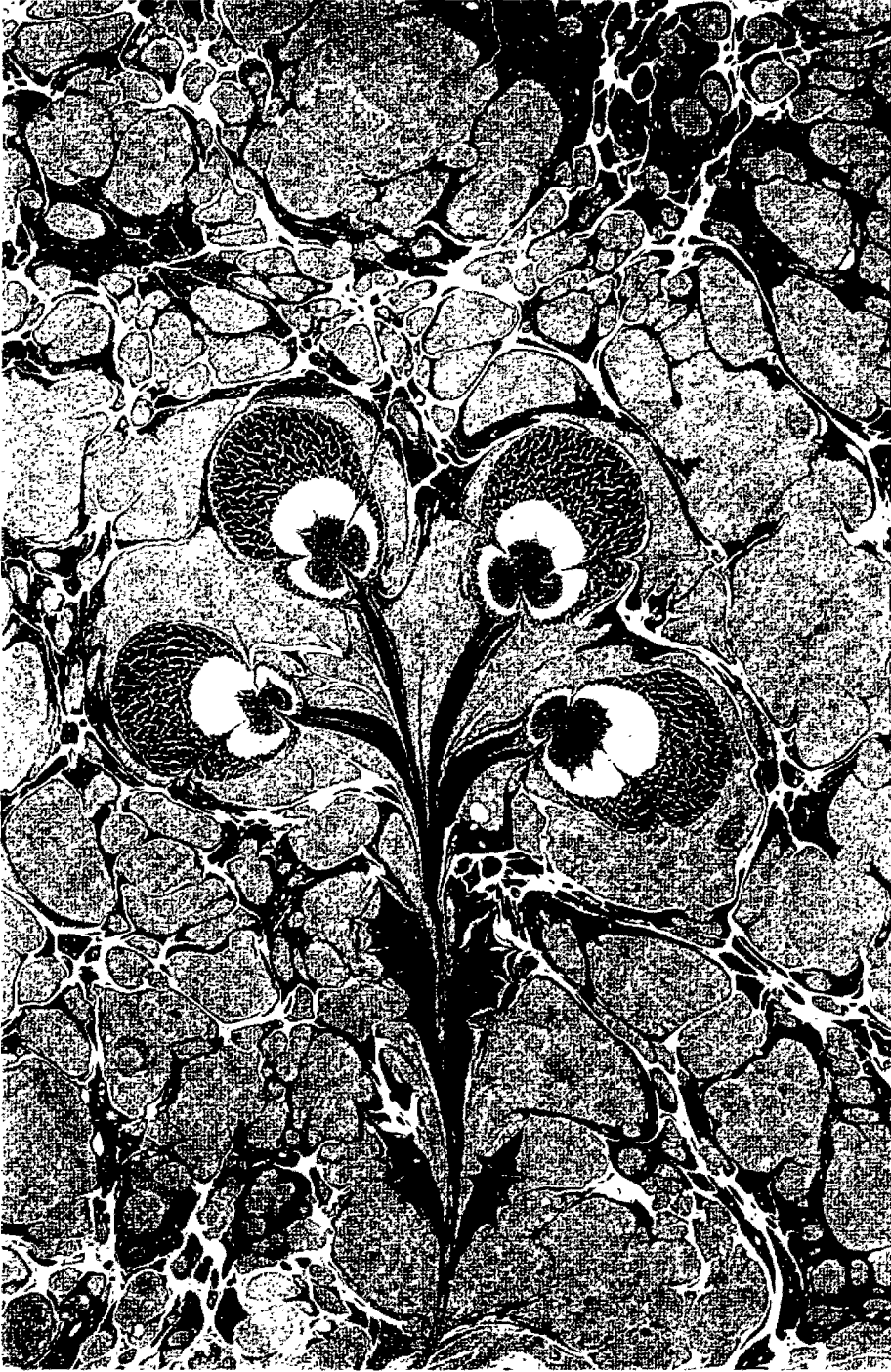
*Hafif ebrū* (light marbling) is produced if the above-mentioned types of marbling are made in lighter colours, and is used especially as a background for works of calligraphy. In this case the paper is glossed.

Mehmed Efendi (d. 1186/1773), a preacher at the Aya Sofia mosque, was a well-known artist working in marbling and invented another type called *batıp ebrüsü* (preacher's *ebrū*) [Fig. 1]. This is produced by placing a few drops of strong colours over a light background with the wire spike, adding different drops of colour if desired, to form concentric circles. Then, passion-flower, heart and star patterns are produced with the vertical and horizontal movements of the spike within these concentric circles. Likewise, craftsmen attempted to produce floral patterns on marbled paper. It was Necmeddin Okay (1883–1976) who first produced the *çiçekli ebrū* (flowered *ebrū*) with tulip, carnation, pansy, poppy, rosebud, chrysanthemum and hyacinth designs, which looked very natural. His student Mustafa Düzgünman (1920–1990)



VI-1(e).1 A specimen of marbling, known as *Hatib ebru*,  
by Hatib Mehmed Efendi

© Collection of M. Uğur Derman, Istanbul



VI-1(e).2 Mustafa Düzgünman, a specimen of *ebru*  
shaped like the petals of a pansy  
© Collection of M. Uğur Derman, Istanbul

added *papatyali ebrū* (marbling with daisies) to the above types. Flowered marbled paper is known in the history of Turkish art as *Necmeddin ebrūsu* [Fig. 2].

The designs which are produced on the surface of the liquid can be applied only to one sheet of paper, they cannot be used twice. No two marbled papers are exactly the same, there can only be similar designs. In this respect, each marbled paper is a unique work of art.

Necmeddin Okyay [Fig. 3] also invented the *yazılı ebrū* (marbling with calligraphy), which has its place in the Islamic art of calligraphy. To produce this work, calligraphy is first applied with a solution of gum arabic and left to dry. Then it is spread on the liquid in the trough. The marbling patterns do not affect the gummed parts and the calligraphy corresponds to the original colour of the paper.

In old manuscripts, the backgrounds for the text and the margins were in different colours. This was known as *akkāse*, where the calligraphy was centred on a white field bordered with *ebrū* colour, and the papers were called *akkāseli kağıd*. This practice was also applied to marbling. Marbled paintings are known to have been produced by the above technique in the city of Bijāpūr in India in the seventeenth century. Though Necmeddin Okyay did not see such works, he applied *akkāseli ebrū* to marbled paper with calligraphy. He performed this technique in two stages: first by rubbing the solution of



VI-1(e).3 Calligraphed *ebrū* by Necmeddin Okyay: «Allāh»

© Collection of M. Uğur Derman, Istanbul

gum arabic on the middle of light marbled paper; then by laying the paper for a second time over the liquid in the trough, which had an application of strong colours.

Throughout the history of marbling, there has been little information about the artists who practised this art. The names that follow are from the old generation of artists who operated in Istanbul: Shebek Meḥmed Efendī (sixteenth century) Shaykh Şādiq Efendī (d.1846), his brother Sālīḥ (nineteenth century), and his son Hezarfen Edhem Efendī (1829–1904), Hattat Sāmī Efendī (1838–1912), Bekir Efendī (nineteenth century), Hattat Azīz Efendī (1871–1934), Sāmī Necmeddin (1919–1933). Today, there is an increasing number of artists who are engaged in the technique. They apply marbling to fabrics, glass and faience. In addition to abstract designs, they also create figurative paintings. Since it is difficult to find the old dyes, synthetic dyes are now used.

In the past centuries, marbled paper was used for binding manuscripts, as *çar-kūşe kap* (in bookbinding) and *yan kağıdı* (fly-leaf), for decorating the inside and outside borders of *kit‘a* (couplets) and *levha* (framed inscriptions), as well as for ornamenting the two sides of couplets known as *koltuk* in certain works of calligraphy called *biḥye*. Many exquisite examples of marbling are found in museums and libraries.

From the seventeenth century onwards, the Western world developed an interest in this art. The first publication that cites marbled paper with the name ‘Turkish paper’ was printed in Rome in 1646. Since then, many works have been written about this art.

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## Chapter 2

# ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

*S. Gulzar Haider*

### Culture, civilization and architectures

It is often stated that architecture is a concrete expression of culture and that a city is manifest civilization. Such statements imply that culture and civilization somehow pre-exist as causes, while architecture and the city are their logical effects. This simplistic view masks the mutually essential, two-way, causal relationship between building and culturing within the larger scope of civilizing. It is our position, instead, that architecture is an act that precipitates culture, which, in turn, authenticates architecture as a civilizational sign.

Culture is an all-encompassing description of such forces and patterns as cultivate the individual in the skills of participation towards a collective fulfilment. To be cultured is to become worthy of membership of a group and a civilized community. Formative forces, or 'culturing' energies, as we would call them, are the internal driving forces that maintain the group and thus make it worthy of a unique identity. It is our position that locked up in the nature of Muslim architecture and cities, culturing dynamos *par excellence*, is the uniqueness of the Islamic community.

Most powerful formative energies of a culture come from an underlying stratum of faith. Culture is crystallized by what people believe and how they formally and behaviourally express it in their lives. It is what they uphold as essential, valuable, desirable, and thus the basis of their choices, transactions and human relations. Islam, an all-encompassing system that so elegantly brings together every aspect of human thought and action, has been the formative energy for many diverse cultural expressions which resonate with, without being duplicates of, one another. Beyond the belief-system and a shared view of how the world works, culture encompasses a society's view of knowledge and what it believes to be its authentic sources. Culture is also sustained by myths, legends, folklore, traditions, collective memory and experience.

Culture is a compounding enterprise and its artistic production, accreting on itself, evolves into an identifying expression. Literary, visual, plastic and performing arts, as well as crafted objects and devices of daily life, commercial conduct and religious rituals, all weave through one another and nourish and sustain the cultural landscape. A house is made to assert existence, not just to create a shelter. Tools are created and not merely used. Form is given, not just executed. Earth becomes a garden and water is disciplined into a bounded pool. Emptiness becomes an inspiring space and matter an eloquent form. It is then that shapes merge together as a geometric field and writing becomes calligraphy worthy of the divine word. Wood is split into a seat for the Book (*rihla*), stone is shaped into a mausoleum confronting the annihilation of death.

In the drama of culture and the story of civilization, the city is the stage and architecture the choreographer. To build towards a settlement is 'to dwell', with intelligence and will, to fulfil our destiny *vis-à-vis* nature and God. Dwelling is thus the supreme act of transition from being a pure creation, in the sense of nature, to becoming a wilful participant in the scheme of things. Man the dweller makes a place and man the wanderer keeps returning to it. Christian Norberg-Schulz captures this idea, quoting Heidegger: 'This dialectic of departure and return, of path and goal, is the essence of that existential "spatiality" which is set into work by architecture.' It is in this sense that the city becomes the collective act of 'dwelling', going from nomadic wanderings to sedentary settlement, from tribal simplicity to cultured existence, from a transitory encampment to a civilizational landscape.

The 'venture of Islam', borrowing the term from Hodgson, spawned numerous and diverse cultures around a centralist spiritual and legalist core that over a millennium came to be widely accepted as Islamic civilization. While Islam spread from the Iberian peninsula to the Indonesian archipelago and from China and Siberia to sub-Saharan Africa, encompassing numerous languages, local customs and traditions, its religious fountain-head remained anchored to the Arabic Qur'ān, revealed over twenty-three years in Mecca and Medina, and to the Prophet Muḥammad's tradition as organized in the *Sīra* and *Ḥadīth* literature. It is this tension between the geographic and ethnic indigenoussness of cultures in the Islamic mosaic and the global and trans-historical characteristics of Islam and the civilization that has become associated with it, that is of special interest to our topic. What is it in the phenomena of Islam that has lent that 'distinctive quality' to its material civilization? Why, in spite of great diversity in formal expression, are the buildings and cities of a millennium recognizable as 'Islamic', though there is no formal cannon nor a universal style? How to establish 'Islamicity' for any architecture, or for that matter any cultural production like a city?

Various approaches have been taken in the search for answers to the above questions. There is the approach characterized by historians like Creswell, Pope, Ettinghausen, Sourdel, Papadopoulo, Grabar, Hoag, Blair and

Bloom, and Hillenbrand. By the very discipline of their field, 'facts' have to be systematically dug out, either from the ground or from authentic texts, collected and organized like the pieces of an ancient pottery, documented, drawn and double-checked, their mutual contingency established beyond reasonable doubt and, after critical review by peer historians, published and deposited in libraries. These are the 'writers from without' and their work has resulted in historical, geographical, functional, stylistic, formal, and even technical and decorative taxonomies.

There is another group whose approach is rooted in comprehensive frameworks based on their selected exegesis of the Qur'ān, their choice of Prophetic sayings, their understanding of Islamic ethics, law and history, and select texts from the vast treasure of literature. Within that framework they propose descriptive and even prescriptive models of architecture on which they can neatly affix their observations. Since these models are of their own making, it happens very often that their observations quite neatly confirm their models. These writers 'write from within' the chambers of belief. They are gazing at a reality that they have chosen to be immersed in. They are like the reflective sphere in the hand of the artist drawing his own face that stares back at him.

## Islamic architecture

### ARCHITECTURE AND THE QUESTION OF ITS ISLAMICITY

Architecture and culture, as discussed earlier, are each other's formative energies and their accreted expression and extracted essence is civilizational. Islam is both a state of mind and a citadel of communal culture. To this citadel there are many paths, many gates to enter it and numerous windows to look into it. The Qur'ānic text constitutes one such 'dual-carriage' path because, on the one hand, it is the ever-relevant guidance for Muslims and therefore leads us to the believers' inner ethics and aesthetics. On the other hand, it is intimately woven into the twenty-three years of the historical unfolding of the Prophet's mission which, consolidated as the *Sīra* and *Ḥadīth* literature, has become the founding stratum of all Muslim cultural motivations, including architecture. Consequently, we start with this path to seek understanding of those philosophical and normative underpinnings of architecture which lend it its Islamicity. Later, we seek its spatio-formal aspects with examples spanning the vast time and space of Muslim history.

### GOD'S HOUSE

Qur'ānic allegories are employed to 'locate' God in the sphere of human imagination and experience, to accommodate a man to God's protocol and,



finally, a man to man's ethics. The revealed text is replete with 'architectural' images of creating, constructing, inhabiting, laying foundations, raising walls, spanning without supports, sheltering canopies, houses, palaces and walled domains. A careful reading reveals that the Qur'ān has dwelt upon spatial concepts of location and has aimed at journeying, as opposed to dislocation and wandering, invitation across a threshold and hospitality within a sanctum rather than expulsion from a domain and exile into an undifferentiated, unsettled vastness. These allegorical images have had a major effect on the shaping of 'Islamic space'.

The Ka'ba, built by man, the created, is God the Creator's house. Fifteen times throughout the Qur'ān it is referred to as God's House, and yet there is never the slightest hint of Him being the dweller. Associated with this house is the sacred precinct, an area with clear boundaries. Within that is the sacred mosque, on which all are invited to converge (Qur'ān V.2; VIII.34–35). The Ka'ba thus is the ontological centre of Islamic space. Just as a pebble dropped on the calm, undifferentiated surface of a lake creates emanating, active and converging, reactive, concentric waves, making manifest the original impulse that sets the process in motion, the act of locating the Ka'ba's foundation by the Archangel Gabriel remains manifest through the outgoing guidance and the incoming devotion. The Ka'ba is the *qibla*, both the mosque for the living and the tomb for the dead. The Ka'ba and its global bearings have rendered the whole earth into the believer's mosque.

#### THE PROPHET'S HOUSE

If the Ka'ba was the architectural marker as the House of God, then the mosque-house of Medina was the House of the Slave of God. If the Master's house, in its emptiness, spoke of His transcendence, then the slave's house, in its fullness, expressed its earthly mission of establishing the *dīn* of Islam. Here, the Qur'ān was received; here, *dīn* was formulated; here, the *Shari'ah* was refined; here, Islam was lived out with sincerity; and here, God's help was sought with devotion. Its boundaries were well established. A wall defined the precinct. Here, there was a generosity towards the communal space and an economy of the private chambers of the Prophet. The construction was minimal and elegant, using existent skills. All functions were close to the humble earth, which was swept clean. It was a place of learning, of wise counsel, of settling disputes, of communal affairs, of preparation for campaigns and for much remembrance of God. Here, the curtain was lowered between the domestic and public domain, resulting in the passion for privacy of Islamic architecture and city. It was sitting among the pillars, in the four-cornered compound, that the Prophet analogized the testimony of faith (*shahāda*), ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), obligatory charity (*ṣakāt*), fasting in a prescribed month of prayer (*ṣawm*) and pilgrimage to the House of God (*ḥajj*), with the

'pillars' upholding, or the 'corners' (*arkān*) stabilizing *dīn*, the edifice of Islamic life. The Prophet's house-mosque became the context as well as the core of his communal tradition. In spite of its successive physical transformations well beyond its original simplicity, it acquired an archetypal stature as a mental model of social behaviour and architectural imagination.

#### ARCHITECTURE IN THE REVEALED HISTORY

The Qur'ānic uses of history to clarify theological and moral principles cannot be taken lightly as a force in a society of believers. Architecture in the 'revealed' history acquires an essential moral dimension and cannot be treated free of the intentions underlying it.

The architectural achievements of David and Solomon as well as those of Pharaoh and the nations of 'Ād and Thamūd are recognized but placed on the opposite sides of the moral divide. While the former are in submission (*islām, taslīm*) towards God, the later are in denial (*kufr*) and thus in rebellion against God. On the one hand, the architectural magnificence of the Prophet-Kings is a 'sign' of God and their rule a domain of justice. On the other, the arrogant disbelief of Pharaonic Egypt, 'Ād and Thamūd pollutes their achievements and earns them heavenly wrath and destruction.

The Hereafter is presented both as a space and as a state of being. Concepts are put forth in natural metaphors and geometrical images so that the believers can 'construct this space' and prepare for it. Paradise is simultaneously physical and metaphysical. Just as the Ka'ba is God's 'My House' (Qur'ān, XXII.26) on earth, Paradise is 'My Garden' (LXXXIX.30) in the Hereafter. And while the believer is commanded to make a pilgrimage to the 'House' on earth, he is invited to enter the 'Garden' in the Hereafter. It is the excellent place of return, it is the 'assembly of Truth, in the presence of a Sovereign Omnipotent!' (LIV.55), it is a state of being beyond anxiety and mortality (XLII.68–73; XLIV.51–57), it is eternity in nearness to God (III.51.198), the highest achievement (LVII.12). The longing for the original 'garden' of Adam and Eve, whose primordial memory lingers with the souls of their children, makes these images of Paradise relatable at both spiritual and sensual levels. Much has been drawn from the Qur'ānic Paradise to nurture the architectural enterprises of Muslims, and one can sense the fragrance of the Hereafter in the architecture of the Here.

Hell is opposed to Paradise in several respects. If Paradise is a dwelling-space of peace and fulfilled imaginations, Hell is a space of banishment for the arrogant (XXXIX.71–72), with no escape and totally imposed suffering (XXXII.20). If Paradise is free from anxieties of decay and death that we know in this world, then Hell is the perpetuation of that anxiety, as the suffering of death becomes a continuous experience where life is being made to die perpetually (IV.56; XIV.17; XX.74; LXXIV.26–29; LXXXVII.13). As the

dwellers of the paradisiacal abode are under cool shade, experiencing the nearness to God, those of Hell are under the shade of black smoke (LVI.42–44) and shut out from the Light of God (LXXXIII.14–16). If Paradise is a terraced garden and its dwellers are dressed in brocade and reclining on couches of comfort, Hell is a bottomless inferno, the condemned are clothed in fire (XXII.19) and their beds have lid-covers on them (VII.40–41). Hell is thus anti-dwelling, anti-garden, anti-life, devoid of freedom, exile from mercy and, ultimately, even veiled from the light of God. The Muslim builder, perhaps subconsciously, saw Hell as his nemesis and took comfort in imagining Paradise.

#### PATRONAGE AND POWER

The Caliphal patronage of architecture during the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd periods spawned the process of competitive patronage that carried on in regional caliphates, like the Fāṭimids, Saljūqs and Khānīd sultanates of Central Asia, the Mamlūks of Egypt, the Naṣrīds of Spain, and later Mughal India, Ṣafawīd Persia and Ottoman Turkey. The size and grandeur of architecture, as Ibn Khaldūn theorized in the eighth/fourteenth century, required strong royal authority and dynastic continuity. And the rulers and dynasties asserted their presence through architecturally upstaging those who preceded them or those whose reputation from neighbouring lands had challenged their royal ego. Islamic ethics, however, had a disciplining impact on the royal desires. The entombing and, thus, self-enshrining impulse of the kings got ethically expanded into buildings of communal good, such as mosques, *madrasas*, kitchens, hospitals, gardens, *sabīls* and the like. The royalty or the nobility were commissioning facilities of continuing public welfare (*istiṣlāḥ*, *iḥsān*, *ṣadaqa*, *jāriya*) in this world, with the faith that the reward (*thawāb*), cashable in the Hereafter, will accrue as long as the building lasted. Inscribed on such facilities is often a request to the beneficiary to pray for the salvation (*maḡfirā*) of the patron, whose grave is not too far away. Despite strong legalist views against the architectural enshrining of humans, patrons also competed with one another in building befitting tombs over the saints. Often the saints, who, like Salīm Chishtī, shunned kings such as Akbar in their life and abstained from gifts of ‘royal robes and a seat in the court’, were appropriated by ‘clothing’ their remains in most beautiful buildings. Chishtī’s mausoleum sits like a jewel in the courtyard of Sīkrī’s Grand Mosque, that sits next to Akbar’s Hadrianic homage to himself as the ‘the King of Kings’. Islamic architecture flourished because of religiously motivated impulses and, at worst, religiously rationalized aggrandizement by powerful patrons.

CONCEPTUAL AND SPATIO-FORMAL ASPECTS OF ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

After discussing the revelational, ethical, political and some philosophical phenomena which underlie the 'Islamicity' of our architecture, we now turn to those aspects that concern the realms of conception, construction, experience and interpretation of this architecture. Buildings that stand the test of time and earn the stature of historical significance are wilfully conceived and commissioned. The architectural desires underlying these wilful commissions are sometimes quite directly manifest, as in the case of the Quṭb Minār in Delhi, and at other times veiled but quite forcefully felt, as in the case of the Shaykh Luṭf Allāh mosque in Iṣfahān. Their construction is carefully anticipated within the technology of their time, whether indigenous or attracted from neighbouring lands or conscripted from a vast empire, as in the case of Tīmūr Lang's Samarqand. Often, the buildings of significance push the available materials and techniques, achieving a new plateau of technological skills that, with time, are copied and become conventions. It is the phenomenal experience of architecture, however, that constitutes its more significant reality. Though this experience is normative in a functional sense, like going to the mosque, it is relativistic in its sensual, emotional and phenomenological dimensions, like arriving upon the threshold of Sultan Ḥasan's courtyard in Cairo or stepping into the Hall of the Two Sisters in the Alhambra. Finally, one may analogize our knowledge of buildings, as they acquire the stature of architecture in our minds, with the reading of literature. Just as clinical or journalistic texts can be distinguished from literature, building as mere accommodation and stable enclosure can be distinguished from architecture. Like literature, the latter is expected to carry ideas of permanent or universal interest, accessible to a keen 'eye', a seeking 'mind' and a receiving 'heart'. It is with the intention of understanding the commissioning will, the constructional orders, the experiential choreography and the potentiality to bear meaning that we scan Islamic architecture and propose those attributes that may be considered common across the vast span of time and space.

HIERARCHY

Architecture is a formal construct requiring structure, for which hierarchy is an essential condition. Hierarchy, however, is more basic to Islam in that it provides the structural underpinning for its moral progression at both the individual and the collective level. Islamic thought and life are structured around the moral axes, either ascending, aiming at the heavenly 'architecture' of Paradise, or descending towards the abysmal 'non-architecture' of Hell. Nothing ever happens suddenly, no station is achieved in one step, no journey

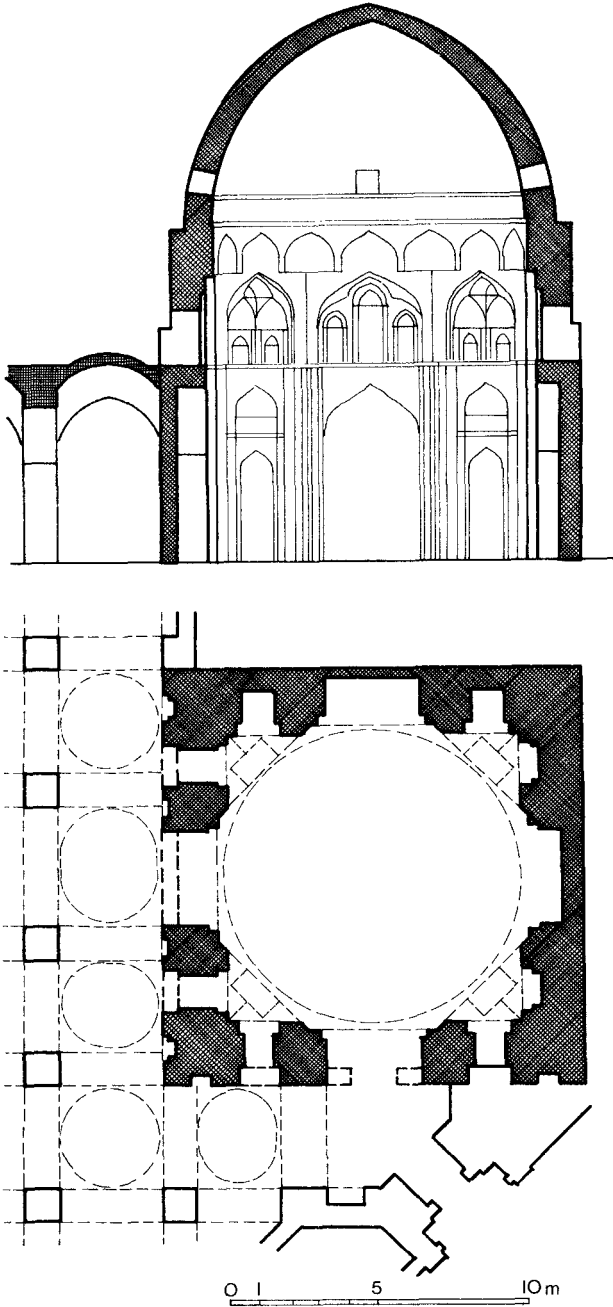
is finished in a single leap. The bodily progression in ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), from standing oriented to the *qibla* (*qiyām*) to leaning on the knees (*rukūʿ*), to prostrating the whole body and touching the forehead to the ground (*sujūd*), or the emotional progression during the stations of pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), is a hierarchical concept. Even God, the Undifferentiated 'One', asserts His creative will through the allegorical hierarchy of 'seven heavens, one above the other, in harmony, ... faultless' (XLI.12). Islamic psyche is thus hierarchically organized and is both expressed and sustained by an architecture of corresponding qualities.

The hierarchy in Islamic architecture can be quite directly of a spatio-formal kind in the sense of a structural progression from the footprint of the building to the apex of the enclosed space and expressed form. Such is most succinctly exemplified by the North Dome of the Masjid-i Jāmiʿ in Iṣfahān (480/1088–1089), commissioned in the reign of the great Saljūq Malik Shāh I (464–484/1072–1092) by Tāj al-Mulk, perhaps in competition with the South Dome, built for the legendary vizier Nizām al-Mulk [Fig. 1]. This simple chamber rises from a square of 10 metres. Each corner has four narrow arched recesses that are framed by slender brick columns forming an integral part of the wall. The geometry established at this eye-level never lets go its continuity and hierarchical blossoming into the transition zone of the dome, made of four tri-lobed corner *muqarnas*-squinsches framed by four arches and four flat arches of the same geometry. These eight arches then a branch into further sixteen identical arches, eight of which are spatial, the others flat. On this 'crown', like a ring, sits the dome, whose ribs, contained in the surface yet visible because of the shift of brick pattern, depart from the square-octagonal ground-related order and borrow a totally different pentagonal system, probably from an astronomical vision.

Regarding this dome, Hoag states that 'the (architect) achieved a structural consonance and a hierarchy of ordered parts not again approached until the High Gothic of thirteenth-century France'.

Hierarchy in Islamic architecture is also the result of behavioural norms rooted in religious codes. The ideas of the inner, hidden, private and absolutely restricted as opposed to the outer, manifest, public and accessible, even to strangers, are simultaneously operative in daily life and architecture makes these oppositions possible. Numerous examples of this kind of experiential hierarchy can be found in the architecture of Mamlūk Cairo and Ṣafawid Iran. Worth special attention is Shaykh al-Muʿayyad's complex and the hierarchy of threshold experiences from the very public city gate, Bāb al-Zuwayla, through the bazaar, the stepped platform to the entrance, the portal, mausoleum, mosque, *madrassa* and the garden.

Finally, citadels and palaces like the Alhambra, the Topkapı and other physical settings of power, such as the throne-room of Fathpūr Sīkrī or the gateway pavilion-palace known as 'Alī Qapu in Iṣfahān, even gardens like



VI-2.1 North Dome, Masjid-i Jami<sup>c</sup>, Isfahān (draft)

© G. Haider

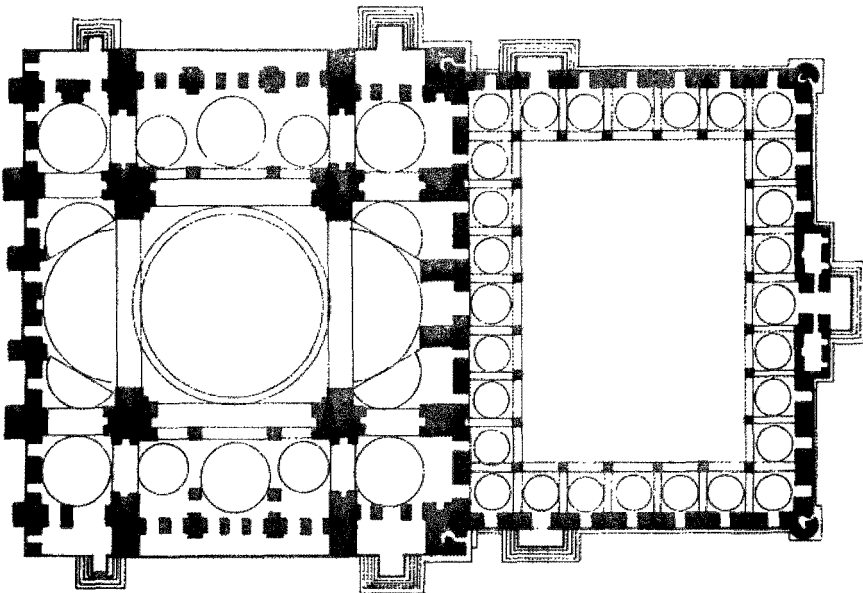
Shālīmār in Lahore or Chahel Satun in Işfahān, call for progressively converging domains leading one to the very 'seat' of power and are thus direct embodiments of hierarchy as architecture. The act of giving a deserving place power through the conscious manipulation of the paths that lead to it, physical thresholds as well as emotional gateways of existed anticipation, and even fear, increasing preciousness of materials that matches the rarity of the encounter, are all tell-tale signs of an architecture not merely serving but even creating power.

#### ORIENTATIONS AND MOVEMENT

Orientation is fundamental to both the mosque and the mausoleum. From the earliest hypostyle mosques modelled after the Prophet's mosque-house in Medina to the Ottoman mosques inspired by Byzantine precedents, the non-processional orientation is marked through the play between the 'centre' and the *mīhrāb*. The centre can be either a courtyard, as in the Mu'ayyad Mosque in Cairo, or a domed space, as in the Shaykh Luţf Allāh mosque in Işfahān, or both lined in a sequence, as in numerous Ottoman *jāmi's*, such as the Süleymaniyye in Istanbul.

The essential orthogonal relationship between the *qibla*, as indicated by the mosque *mīhrāb*, and the orientation of the coffin in the tomb, with its body's face turned right towards the *qibla*, has resulted in a typical square-to-octagon relationship between the mosque and the mausoleum. While the mosque is a square or a rectangular horizontal plane spread across the *qibla* orientation, the mausoleum is a square or octagon-based space rising heavenwards into a dome. The mutual relationship between mosque and mausoleum is very instructive in the context of orientations. Of special interest are the complexes of Qā'itbāy, the Tāj Maḥall and the Süleymaniyye, whose subtle manipulation of orientation would now be discussed in some detail. [Fig. 2].

The Süleymaniyye establishes a Grand *Qibla* axis by setting the linear sequence of the courtyard, the domed prayer-hall and the funerary garden. Not only is the orientation established in the magnificent silhouette of the complex as it sits on one of the 'hills' of Istanbul, but it is also felt at the experiential level. The main entrance to the arcaded courtyard is unmistakable as it initiates the orientation. One arrives at the arcaded courtyard and the eye is forced to experience the sky in a frame and the rising volumes of the mosque that lies just ahead. The centre is occupied by the ablution reservoir, the container of the purifying liquid. The orientation is clear by the shift in scale of the *qibla* side, as is the articulation of the entrance wall to the prayer-hall, the grilled windows and the calligraphic tablets. Crossing of the threshold into the main mosque is quite literally an awe-inspiring experience. But as the initial sensation calms down, one can see the sophistication of the architecture in establishing the orientation without literal axiality. The central dome, 'lightened' by



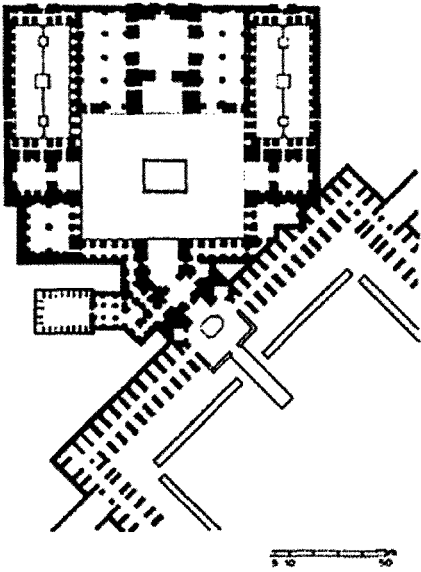
VI-2.2 Süleymaniyye Mosque Complex, Istanbul  
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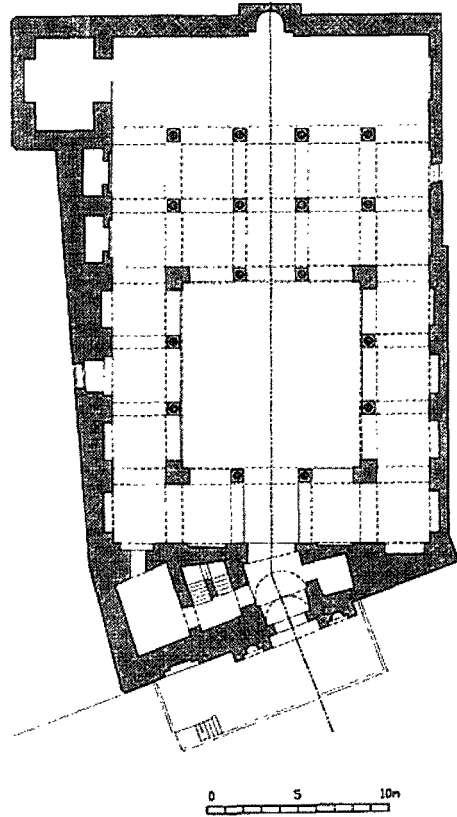
the thirty-two windows defining its equator, sits gently on the apexes of four identical grand arches that come right down as surfaces of the four giant pilasters. The *qibla* being southward, two of these arches (that is, the eastern and western) are lateral to the sacred orientation. These have been filled with what in modern terms would be labelled as the glass infill wall. Both the flatness and the lightness of these two are set against the half-domes bulging out of the northern and southern arches, which, in turn, are supported by the smaller half-domes in the corners. The four pilasters, which define a square at the ground level, thus blossom as they rise into this mutually enhancing system of two flat filled arches and six half-domes that orient the 'head'-space both literally and figuratively. An even more subtle device is the contrasting expression of the heavy buttresses on the northern and southern outer walls of the prayer-hall. On the southern, that is, the Mecca side, the defining wall is flush with the nearer faces, that is, the inside of the buttresses, thus absorbing them in the *qibla* plane and hiding them. On the northern wall, however, they are fully incorporated into the space and are further subdivided to make sitting alcoves. While the *qibla* wall is an ornate yet disciplined 'surface' worthy of the *mihrab*, the 'back' wall is an inhabited 'volume'. The architecture on the eastern and western sides is symmetrical, each a reflection of the other. What is essentially a square plan has thus been imparted a perceptual and experiential orientation.

Orientation as an internally determining formative force is also evident at the architectural junctures between the buildings and the street. Whether it is the streets of old Cairo, Damascus or Işfahān, or for that matter any medieval Muslim city, there exist eloquent examples of the internal orientation cleverly meeting the natural order of the street. One of the earliest surviving examples of this is the Fāṭimid mosque of al-Aqmar in Cairo (518/1125) [Fig. 3]. A wedge-like mass that has been hollowed out is employed to turn the entrance from the street to the arcaded courtyard by almost 20°. The composed formality of the street façade and the directly experienced geometric discipline of the courtyard are both so absorbing in their own respective qualities that the turn through the comparatively constrained vaults of the entrance has little impact of its own. While the experience of the façade is still lingering as an after-image, the powerfully orienting influence of the inner square courtyard, with its four corner pilasters, twelve arches and eight columns, takes over. The Şafawid Masjid-i Shāh (1020/1612) and the mosque of Shaykh Luṭf Allāh (1025/1617) in Işfahān, almost five centuries later, deliberately set the condition of orientational switch between the *maydān* and the mosques. [Fig. 4].

Finally, there are orientations at work that are symbolic, iconographic, and even political. The minaret, whose origin and development have received ample scholarly treatment by historians, is first and foremost an expression of Islamic presence. From the earlier minarets of the Great Mosque in Sāmarrā' (232/847) to the Mamlūk minarets of Cairo, the Ottoman minarets of Istanbul



VI-2.3 Al-Aqmar Mosque,  
Cairo (518/1125) (draft)  
© G. Haider

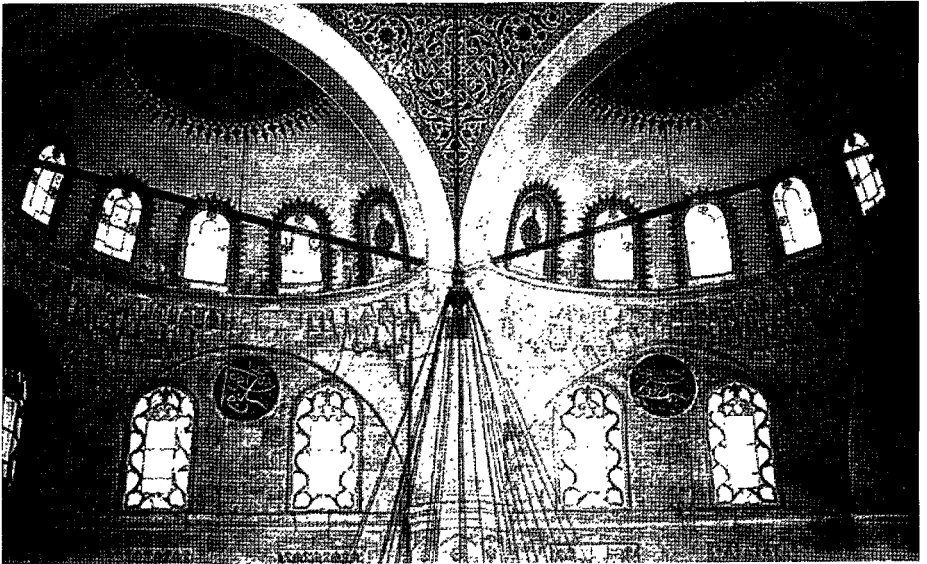


VI-2.4 Masjid-i Shāh,  
Isfahān (1020/1612) (draft)  
© G. Haider

and the Ṣafawid and Mughal ones of Isfahān and of Delhi, Agra and Lahore – though quite distinct in their respective profiles – collectively illustrate an orientation towards Heaven. In the context of Eliade’s view of the universals in religious expression, the minaret does deserve recognition as the *axis mundi* of Islamic architecture. The tomb-towers like the Gunbadh-i Qābūs (397/1007) at Jurjān, south-east of the Caspian Sea, and the *muqarnas*-domed tombs like that of Imām al-Dūr at Sāmarrā’ (477/1085) and later examples of fourteenth-fifteenth century Tīmūrid tombs, all show a rather dramatic vertical orientation whose primary motivation is symbolic as well as visual.

VOID, LIGHT AND REFLECTION

God's omnipresence makes His absence unimaginable. Since there is no vantage 'away from Him' from where one can 'observe' Him, He remains Unseen. And yet the striving to 'see the Unseeable', to 'imagine the Unimaginable' and to 'be closer to the One Who has no Location' has been Islam's aesthetic *angst*. This journey, the *via negativa*, is in fact Islam in pursuit of its own countenance. All gods have to be denied before His 'godness' can be sensed, if He is to be 'present' all else will have to be 'absent'. It is thus that Islamic architecture, quite unconsciously, has arrived in the course of history at the celebration of the void, the absence of matter, through the splitting of monolithic mass as one of its characteristic ways of making space. The archetypal house of the classical Muslim lands results from the splitting of the 'earth'-mass on cardinal axes to form a courtyard into which is welcomed the 'heaven', which is the divinely split and other than of the earth (Qur'ān XXII.30). The sense of the spiritually pregnant void is pervasive in mausoleums and mosques, for example, in the tomb of Nūr al-Dīn al-Zangī in Damascus, Qā'itbāy's complex in Cairo, the Soqollu Mehmed Jāmi' in Istanbul [Fig. 5], and even non-religious buildings like the Caravanserai of Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī in Cairo and the Court of the Lions in the Alhambra.



VI-2.5 Şoqullu Mehmed Mosque, Istanbul

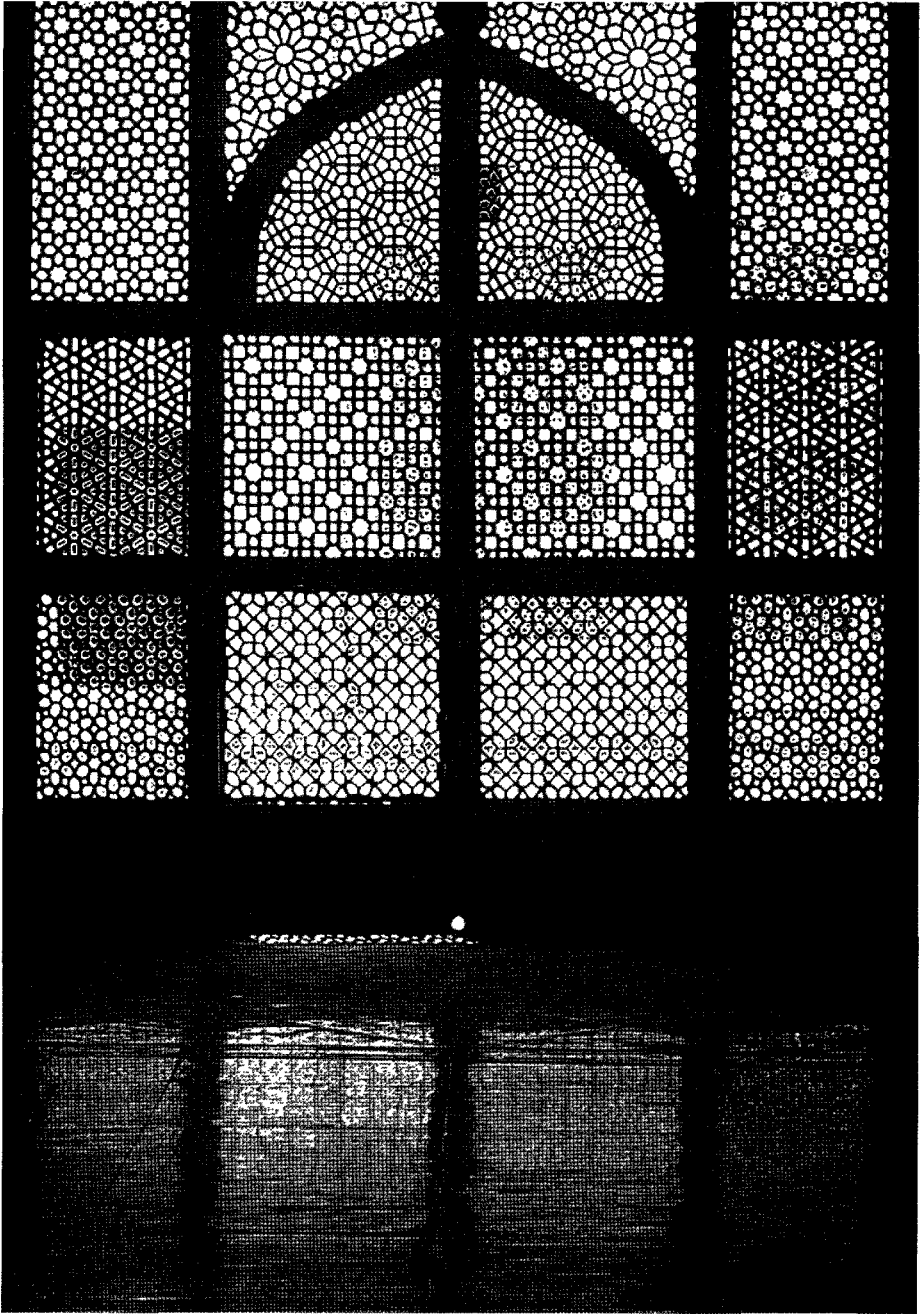
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The Qurʾānic allegory of the light, the niche, the lamp, the glass and the flame (XXIV.35–36) has captured the imagination of philosophers and artists alike. The physical light is taken as the reflection of the ‘true light’ of the verse and attempt is made to transcend the physics of light towards an ephemeral luminescence. The light aims to inhabit the void rather than spotlight the materiality of an architectural element. Harsh shadows are avoided and often light is passed through parallel screens to soften its edges. The ceramic lustre or the stone’s soft reflectivity scatters the light and even the deep corners get lit as if from the floor. In the final analysis, it is quintessential light that fills everything and even the opaque matter seems to dissolve. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the *mīhrāb* in the Cordova mosque, inside the *muqarnas* dome of Imām al-Dūr in Sāmarrāʾ or the Māristān al-Nūrī in Damascus, the Yeşil Jāmīʿ in Bursa, the Soqollu Meḥmed in Istanbul and the Selīmiyye in Edirne, the Luṭf Allāh mosque in Işfahān and the Tomb of Salīm Chishtī in Faṭḥpūr Sikrī [Fig. 6], all illustrate this intimacy of the void and the light and their aim of suggesting the Divine grace independent of figural representation.

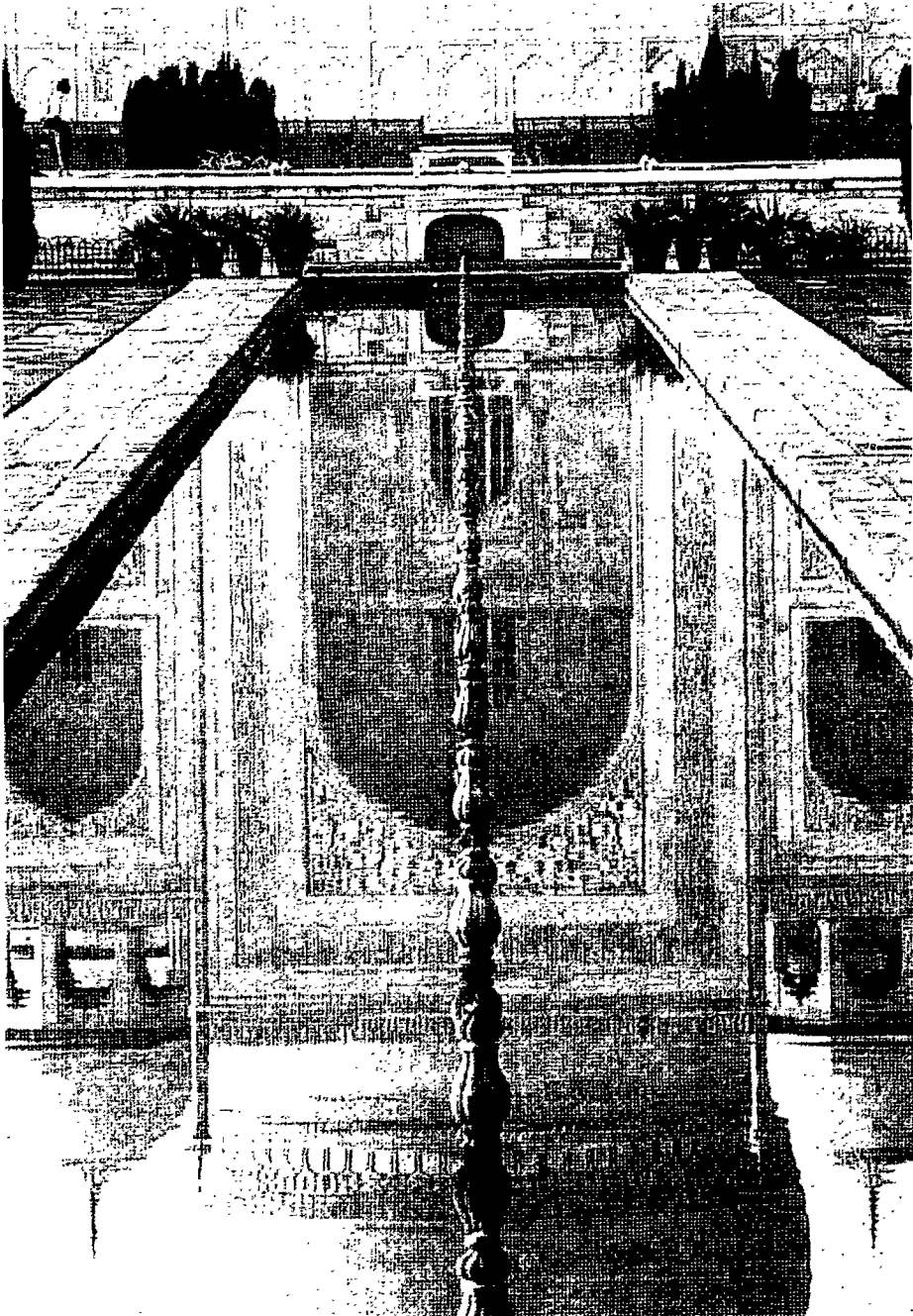
Finally, water, with its other-worldly paradisiacal qualities, its stature as ‘God’s mercy’, as the resurrecting life-force for the parched earth, its crops and the gardens and also as the agent of ritual purity for ablution, is widely employed in the service of Islamic architecture. It serves, beyond the environmental purposes of cooling in the generally hot and arid Muslim lands, as a point-fountain, a connecting channel and a reflecting pool. It is as the reflector placed symmetrically at the centre of the void that it reverses gravity and brings ‘cosmos into the courtyard’. The Cuarto Dorado, the Court of Myrtles, the Court of the Lions and, especially, the Hall of Abencerrajes in the Alhambra, the Ben Yūsuf *madrassa* in Marrakesh, the Maşjid-i Jāmīʿs foliated pool on the north side of the courtyard in Işfahān, Chihil Satūn in Işfahān, the Lotus of the Rang Mahal in the Red Fort of Delhi and, of course, the central pool of the Tāj Maḥall are all examples of this phenomenon. [Fig. 7]

#### CALLIGRAPHY

The calligraphed Qurʾān connects the cultural and artistic production of Muslim history across time and space. Whether it is the book or the building, the seal of a sultan or a shroud to wrap his body, a box to hold the pens of, or the casket for the king, a talisman to guard against evil, the glass lamps for the mosque or the astrolabe for a mariner, the Qurʾān is there. Islamic architecture from the Dome of the Rock onwards has employed the calligraphic inscription with increased levels of richness and sophistication. The reasons underlying this profuse and varied application of calligraphy in architecture are complex and have been treated in a scholarly manner by Dodd and Khairallah. It is possible to point out four reasons in the order of their importance. Firstly, the sacredness assigned to the Qurʾānic text made it an instrument for the



VI-2.6 Tomb of Salīm Chishtī, Fathpūr Sīkri  
© G. Haider



VI-2.7 Tāj Maḥal, Agra  
© G. Haider

invocation of Divine grace and protection against the forces of destruction and decay. Just as the talisman or the amulet with its special ‘power’ can protect the person who wears it on his body, so can the Qur’ānic text, or God’s Beautiful Names (*al-asmā’ al-ḥusnā*), or the names of the prophets and saints be placed in architecture and thus lend it a special value as well as protect it. Secondly, calligraphy was used to authenticate through the Qur’ān the function of the building or its parts. The detailed analysis of calligraphic inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock, the Nilometer of Cairo and the Māristān al-Nūrī in Damascus tells us how the chosen verses corresponded with the purpose and message of those buildings. In the Dome, the verses are mostly about the continuity of God’s message from Abraham and Jesus to Muḥammad, and the thrust is that of correctives as well as invitations to the ‘People of the Book’, that is, the Jews and Christians. In the Nilometer, the verses focus on God’s creation and His power over the forces of nature and the phenomena of water and crops. And in the Māristān, the hospital, both the verses and the *ḥadīths* deal with charity, endowments in God’s way, sickness and health. It is with the recognition of such a conceptual correspondence between the purpose of architecture and the choice of verses that Wayne Begley decoded the Tāj Maḥall and proposed that the king intended to construct the scene of the Day of Judgement. Thirdly, calligraphic inscriptions appear as a historical record of the date and in recognition and praise of the patron. Often there are prayers for prolonging of the patron’s life and rule. Sometimes the architect, the calligrapher and the artisan are also mentioned. Fourthly, calligraphy can be seen as religiously legitimized decoration. On the one hand, there are exquisite examples in the Alhambra or the *miḥrāb* of Uljaytū that derive from an intimate play of the botanical arabesque scrolls with floriated Arabic calligraphy [Fig. 8]. On the other hand, we have Tīmūrid examples in Samarqand and Saljūqid and later Ṣafawid ones in Iṣfahān that are primarily geometric subdivisions of the planer and even curved surfaces. These include the names of Muḥammad, ‘Alī, other Companions of the Prophet or imams, sometimes *asmā’ ḥusnā* or even simple invocations like *Allāh akbar* that are reflected and interwoven through symmetry-operations resulting in polygonal medallions, square or rhomboid panels and even infinite surface tessellations. Calligraphy in such cases becomes the constructed surface itself as even the mortar joints are exaggerated and made into decorative and calligraphic stamps.

#### THE GEOMETRICIZING OF ARCHITECTURE

While in the Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsīd period the geometric orders underlying architecture were primarily a continuation of pre-Islamic traditions (as in the Dome of the Rock, Mshattā, the Ṭāriq Khāna Mosque of Dāmghān, the minaret of the Great Mosque in Sāmarrā’, Qaṣr al-Jass in Sāmarrā’), by the



VI-2.8 Mihrāb of Uljaytū in Masjid-i Jāmi', Isfahān  
© G. Haider

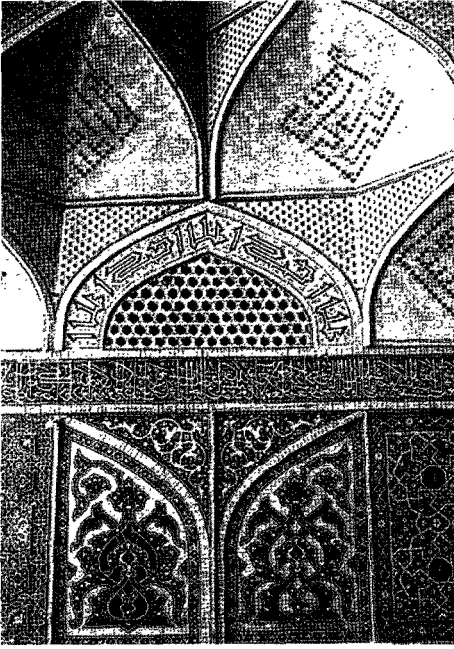


tenth century geometry seemed to have captured the Muslim imagination. Al-Kindī (184–272/801–837) and others at the Bayt al-Ḥikma in Baghdad had undertaken the translation, exegesis and extension of Greek and Indian knowledge, including geometry, arithmetic, musical structures and astronomy. The Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' claimed that geometry 'has as its aim the training of the soul, by which it realizes the promotion in knowledge from perception to conception, from the physical to the spiritual and from the concrete to the abstract. Geometry is of two kinds: *ḥisṣiyya*, tangible, sensible, or common plane and solid geometry, which helps man to acquire skill in crafts; and *ʿaqliyya*, intellectual or rational, namely, analytical and descriptive, which enables man to be versed in the theoretical sciences.' Part of such geometric knowledge was also numerology and magic squares, the smallest of which was a close packing of nine squares.

Though it is hard, if not impossible, to establish a direct textual link between such geometric attitudes of the time and the architecture, it can be conjectured that amongst the guilds of builders and artisans such 'magic' of shapes and numbers linked to divine attributes would be a prized skill. In small mosques as far apart as Bibī al-Mardūn in Toledo, Bū Fatātā in Susa, Nūḥ Gunbadh (nine domes) in Balkh (all built within the same period of history), we find the use of a nine-square order, which was later refined in much bigger and more complex plans. The nine individually unique rib-vaulting geometries over each of the squares of Bibī al-Mardūn hark back to the *mīhrāb* in the Cordova mosque and foretell such geometric masterpieces as the Qubbat al-Bārūdiyyīn in Marrakesh and the Tlemcen dome over the *mīhrāb*.

By the sixth/twelfth century, geometry became an intimate part of Islamic architecture. A systematic study of the building-plans shows us the ongoing struggle between the contingencies of the site and topography, on one hand, and the desire to lay out a perfect, usually square-based, geometric order, on the other. Nothing illustrates this better than the Alhambra (ninth/fifteenth-century Spain) and Fathpūr Sikrī (eleventh-/seventeenth-century India). Geometric systems like square grids, compass-generated proportions, subdivisions of circles and symmetry operations were used as conventions in laying out the plans, and even sections. One also notices the simultaneous desire of the plan to emanate from the centre and to converge towards it. Of special interest are analyses of buildings like the Tomb of Ismāʿīl the Sāmānid in Bukhārā, the Madrasa al-Firdaws in Aleppo and the Ashrafiyya in Jerusalem. The genre of plans and sections of Timūrid and later Ṣafawid and Mughal buildings confirms the primary role of geometry in shaping this architecture.

Geometry is also operative in a very manifest manner when one 'raises one's eyes towards the Heavens'. While the orders of the floor can best be understood via the reductive process of plan drawings, the 'orders above' are directly experienced by the occupant of space. The geometric impact of the



VI-2.9 East *Īwān* of  
Masjid-i Jāmi'<sup>c</sup>, Isfahān

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VI-2.10 Detail of South *Īwān* of  
Masjid-i Jāmi'<sup>c</sup>, Isfahān

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enclosing architecture (from the Cordova mosque to the Tlemcen cupola, to the Gunbadh-i Kharqa in Isfahān, the 'Ishrat-Khāna in Samarqand, to Soqollu Meḥmed of Istanbul, the Selimiyye of Edirne, the Luṭf Allāh of Isfahān, Gol Gunbadh of Bijāpur and I'timād al-Dawla's tomb in Agra) cannot be underestimated as a mere structural necessity or a decorative urge.

Perhaps the most challenging domain for the geometer-architects was the transition between the orthogonal discipline of the walls and pilasters and the circular seat of the dome. Islamic architecture co-opted and greatly developed the pre-existing solutions of the Sāsānids by going from the square to the octagon and then the circle through corner squinches. Bridging across the corner of the square or higher polygons with vaults of successively refined frequency is used with impressive simplicity in the Tomb of Ismā'il the Sāmānid (294/907) and reaches the pinnacle of its refinement in the Gunbadh-i Kharqa (480/1088) of the Masjid-i Jāmi'<sup>c</sup> of Isfahān and later in the Masjid-i Jāmi'<sup>c</sup> of Warāmīn (721/1322). The Saljūq portions of the mosque of Isfahān are in fact a library of variations on this theme [Figs. 9 and 10]. There

is another general solution to this problem of transition where one arch jumps across the two adjacent sides of the square and, having done so once, then repeats the process as it rotates around the common vertical axis of the square and the circle. This creates discrete life-like curved surfaces that interweave and result in a stellated polygon whose apexes define the circle from which the dome can lift up. Though this idea can be seen much earlier in the ribbed geometry of lantern cupolas over the *mibrābs* of the Cordova mosque, its best illustration is the Shaykh Luṭf Allāh mosque in Iṣfahān and Gol Gunbadh, ʿĀdil Shāh's tomb in Bījāpūr.

The most original geometric contribution in the context of the transition of square to circle is what has commonly come to be known as the *muqarnas*, or the stalactite-like modular elements that combine to create the spatial transition between the concave square corner below and the quarter circle above. *Muqarnas* are generalized geometric orders in space and, as such, are independent of scale. One can see their application under domes, between the round shaft of the column and the square support for the arch, the rounded corner of a pilaster and the square corner above, between two parallel surfaces of a wall. While the scale, the material and local traditions can sometimes make certain types of *muqarnas* more common than others, their characteristic visual impact is universal. Building complexes like the Alhambra, Nūr al-Dīn's *māristān* and tomb in Damascus, the Soqollu Meḥmed Jāmi' in Istanbul and the Ṣafawid mosques of Iṣfahān, as well as the Mamlūk minarets of Cairo, are replete with *muqarnas*-typologies and await a comprehensive study. Finally, though historians are not quite certain about the conceptual origins or the technical pedigree of the *muqarnas*, they agree upon its exclusive association with Islamic architecture.

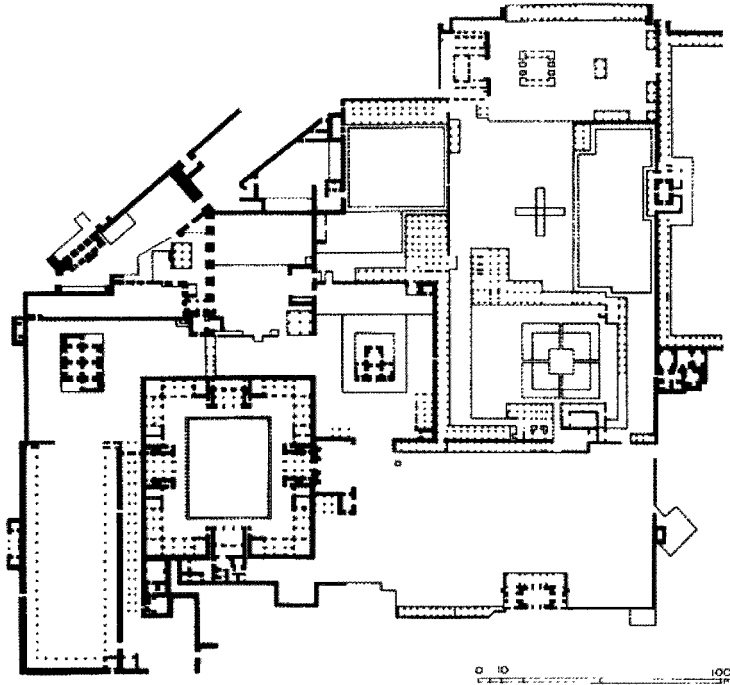
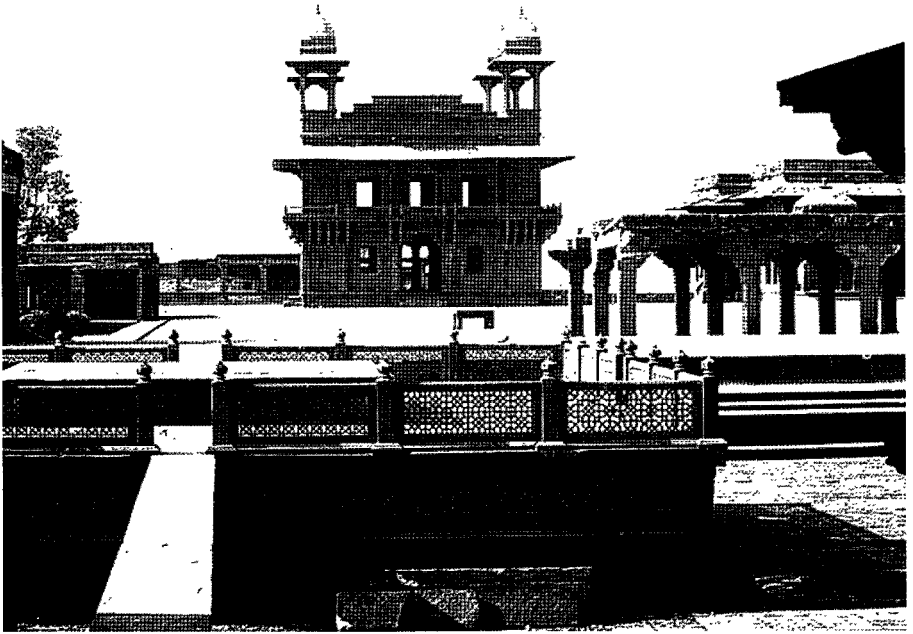
Perhaps the most readily identified geometric features of Islamic buildings are the surface patterns that cover the dados of the interior walls, as in the Alhambra and the *madrasas* of Morocco and Tunisia, and which sometimes cover the entire plane surfaces in the Tīmūrid mosques and shrines of Central Asia, or the curved surfaces of domes, as in the Barsbāy and Qā'itbāy complexes in Egypt. Such patterns have also been carried through the wooden screens of North Africa and Egypt and the terracotta and marble screens of Islamic India. In their most elaborate versions, they combine with the arabesque patterns and calligraphy. Essam El-Said has very systematically traced the construction of the square- (root-2), hexagon- (root-3) and pentagon- (golden-ratio) based patterns and found corresponding examples in historical buildings. Much has been written about the reason for the flowering of these surface-filling geometries. The ideas range from patterns as an aniconistic fallback to patterns as carriers of hidden messages via numerology and magic squares.

## MULTIPLICITY OF VANTAGE

Islamic buildings and complexes project a collage-like, multi-dimensional character. Except for the most singular of shrines, such as the Ka'ba or some tomb-towers of Central Asia and North Africa, or the pristine settings of such monuments as the Tāj Maḥall, Islamic buildings rarely project themselves as single experiences. An obvious explanation can be the progressive, circumstantial and organic growth of buildings, as illustrated by the Bazaar of Iṣfahān, and the huddling of buildings, like animals on a watering-stream, along and across it. In this sense the bazaar in itself becomes a complex architectural whole with proverbially diverse experiences waiting to be discovered at every nook and corner. The Alhambra and Faṭḥpūr Sīkrī, however, both representative examples of this multiplicity of experience, cannot be explained by the accretion process. The Alhambra is a rich collage of courtyard-palaces on top of the hill, while Faṭḥpūr Sīkrī [Fig. 11], though built in red sandstone and marble, is the royal encampment of the great Moghul Emperor Akbar along the river.

Behind this apparent multiplicity there are complex reasons and desires at work. While the geometric orders, visual symmetries and hierarchies do exist at various levels, their expression is often that of overlays and interpenetrations. Spaces are not neatly bounded into chambers with designated single functions, nor are the vistas framed as idealized façades. Unless denied by issues of privacy, such as for the baths or security, or for the royal chambers or treasury, or jurisprudential avoidance of graves during the ritual prayer, spaces overlap both functionally and perceptually. Whether it is the courtyard of the mosque or that of a house, it serves as the integrating device for numerous functions. Depending on the size of the congregation, the climate and the desire for sun or shade, the prayer keeps moving to various parts of the courtyard, and so do the gatherings of students around their teachers. While the Cairene houses of the ninth/fifteenth and sixteenth centuries show certain typical spatio-formal features such as the *qā'a*, *maq'ad*, *takhtabūsh*, *malkaf* and *mashrabīyya*, their richness lies in the complex interweaving of spaces and sight-lines and the multiplicity of experiences under various conditions. The phenomena that inhabit the building become important aspects of the architectural experience beyond the mere physicality of architecture.

In Islamic architecture, religio-social protocol and political ritual take precedence over the pure diagram of the plan or section. It can also be suggested that there is a characteristic tendency to avoid revelation of totality in a single vision. Space is rarely fathomed in a single glance. Experiences unfold like the pages of a book and keep laying themselves over previous memories. Though the culture that produced this architecture is geometrically sophisticated in solving both planar and spatial problems, its architecture is not driven by the perspectival space. While the view from the throne-room is com-



VI-2.11 Fathpūr Sikrī Complex, India

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manding and elevated in no uncertain way, it does not command the infinite space and the horizon. In the Alhambra, Topkapı and Fatḥpūr Sikrī the halls of royal audience are different in their spatial character from their renaissance or baroque counterparts. The spatial experience in the lexes like the mosque of ʿAbd al-Samad (698–711/1299–1312) in Naṭanz, that of Qāʾitbāy in Cairo (876–878/1472–1474) and Gūhar Shud in Mashhad (ninth/fifteenth century), illustrate the broken, asymmetric, yet deliberately composed view of surface and space. That this attitude towards architectural experiences parallels the manner in which architecture is composed on miniature paintings, especially of the Tīmūrīd and Ṣafawīd book arts, has been of some academic interest.

### ARCHITECTURAL MILESTONES

Our intention here is to scan Islam's architectural history in order to illustrate the fulfilment of formative and spatial ideas as discussed above. Competent historians have published the dynastic, stylistic and even typological presentation of Islamic architecture, and their work may be used as a resource-context for what follows.

The seventh and eighth centuries saw the expansion of an Islamic empire and resulting encounters with pre-existing architectural traditions. Both Creswell and Grabar have done scholarly coverage of this period. Ziyād's mosque in Kufa (49/670), the Dome of the Rock (68-72/688-692), the Umayyad mosque in Damascus (95/714–15), numerous secular and palatial constructions such as Khirbat al-Maḥjar (121–126/739–44) and Mshattā (126–132/744–750), Circular Baghdad (144-149/762–767) and Ukḥayḍir (146–161/764–778) mark these times. The Golden Dome of Jerusalem and the Great Mosque of Damascus are the longest-surviving examples of Islam's architecture of these early centuries.

The ninth century is marked by the ʿAbbāsīd architecture maturing at the centre and evolving at the boundaries of the empire. The new capital Sāmarrā's architecture, represented by the palaces of Jawshaq al-Khāqānī (221/836), Qaṣr al-Jass (256–278/870–892) and the Great Mosque of al-Mutawakkil (233–237/848–852) with its 53-metre high spiral minaret showed self-assured formalism. Ziyād al-Allāh, the third Aghlabīd emir of the ʿAbbāsīd Caliphate, added to the Ribāṭ at Susa (205/821) and built the Great Mosque at al-Qayrawān (221/836), replacing the earlier and smaller first/seventh-century one. Abū Ibrāhīm Aḥmad (241–248/856–863), the fifth emir, is credited with the famous *mīhrāb* and the *minbar* of this mosque. In spite of later neglect and some reconstruction in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, the original layout, form and character have endured. The Ribāṭ of Sūsa, in its plan and manner of construction, clearly displays its ʿAbbāsīd origins at Ukḥayḍir and Sāmarrā. But perhaps the most important ninth-century building is the Mosque of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn (262–265/876–879), in present-day Cairo but originally the

foundling-mark of al-Qattā'ī<sup>c</sup>, the new settlement north of al-Fuṣṭāṭ. It represents the synthesis of architectural developments in the first two-and-a-half centuries of Islam. In its plan it recalls the mosques of Kufa and al-Wāsiṭ. In the vastness of its *ṣaḥn*, its arcade on piers with attached columns, the spiral minaret and the overflow-areas known as *ẓiyādal*, it harks back to Sāmarrā' precedents, especially of al-Mutawakkil and Abū Dulaf. The geometric window-grilles and the carved plaster decoration resonate with Damascus and Khirbat al-Mafjar of Umayyad times. In the manner of its use of calligraphy in architecture it is comparable to the Dome of the Rock. It is not a 'duplicate' of an earlier type, but an 'original' because of its synthetic genius.

By the early tenth century the independent Umayyad Caliphate was confidently at home in Spain. In 339/951 'Abd al-Raḥmān III further extended the *ṣaḥn* and built the 111-foot-tall minaret for the Great Mosque of Cordova. He also started the palace-city known as Madīnat al-Zahra (324–365/936–976) which, though wrecked during eleventh century, has come down to us as an architectural site of great value. A few decades later (349/961–962), the Caliph al-Ḥakam II added twelve bays and a double *qibla* wall, perhaps inspired by the mosque at Madīnat al-Zahra. It is the extraordinary stone vaultings in al-Ḥakam II's extension, three over the *maqṣūra* north of the *mīhrāb* and one over the lantern marking the threshold of the *mīhrāb* aisle, along with the original triple-tiered arches introduced by 'Abd al-Raḥmān I, two centuries earlier, that combine to make this building a universally recognized hallmark of Islamic architecture. Bībī al-Mardūn's devotional 'mosque' in Toledo (389/999), though minuscule in size compared to the Cordova one, is an outstanding example of the interiority of Islamic space as well as its geometric passion. The eight tiny ribbed vaults, each distinct from the other, are arranged as the outer ring of the nine-square grid and are lit by the ninth in the centre, which rises above the others as a clerestory. Between the third/ninth and fourth/eleventh centuries, there have been recorded at least seven mosques with nine-domed plans across the world: from Bībī al-Mardūn in Toledo to Masjid-i Ṭāriq at Balkh in present-day Afghanistan. Like the early blushes of youth, Islamic architecture started to emanate in its geometric beauty in the tenth century, and one of the finest examples is the Tomb of Ismā'īl the Sāmānid (d. 331/943) at Bukhārā. While it acknowledges its roots in the Chahār Tāq of the Zoroastrian fire temples, it heralds the plan-section type, the intimacy between the material and the construction detail and the geometric refinement in proportions, as well as transformations that were to become characteristic of Islamic tombs for centuries to come. Historically, this century must also be recognized by the founding of the mosque-university of al-Azhar in Cairo (378/989), that has seen many expansions and accretions of architectural styles.

The eleventh century is the time of Sa'ljūq emergence in Central Asia, Iraq and Anatolia, Ghaznawid adventures in India, Fāṭimid consolidation in

Egypt and much philosophical religious and sectarian activity. It was the time of Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), al-Bīrūnī (d. 441/1050), al-Ghazālī (429–504/1038–1111), the great Saljūq vizier Nizām al-Mulk (d. 484/1092) and the Fāṭimid vizier Badr al-Jamālī (d. 485/1093). The Masjid al-Ḥākim in Cairo was completed (403/1013) and the Great Mosque of Iṣfahān got its south (467/1075) and north domes (481/1089) that remain unparalleled till today. This century also saw tomb-towers and minarets mature as significant types. The 51-metre-high tomb-tower Gunbadh-i Qābūs (397/1007), Gunbadh-i ‘Alī at Abarqūh (447/1056) and the Kharraqān tomb (459/1067) are exemplary for their precise geometry, brick patterns, *muqarnas*-transformations and Kufic inscriptions. Though one finds the much earlier tomb of Qubbat al-Sulaybiyya at Sāmarrā’ (278/892), the Imām al-Dur (477/1085), two centuries later in the same city, is one of the earliest examples of *muqarnas* dome-towers, whose influence one can see in many later towers. Geometrically refined and decorated minaret-towers like the ones at Sāwa (400/1010) and Dāmghān (419/1029) herald the masterpiece Saljūq towers of the twelfth century. Finally, one of the finest monuments of Islamic architecture of this century is the small *mashhad* mosque of al-Juyūshī in Cairo (477/1085). In its compact symmetrical plan enhanced by the asymmetry of the tomb-chamber, in its proportionally composed section that celebrates light and its precious small courtyard, one can see seeds of the future city of Sultan Ḥasan and Qā’itbāy. The mosque of al-Juyūshī also has the earliest extant example of the use of *muqarnas* in Egypt.

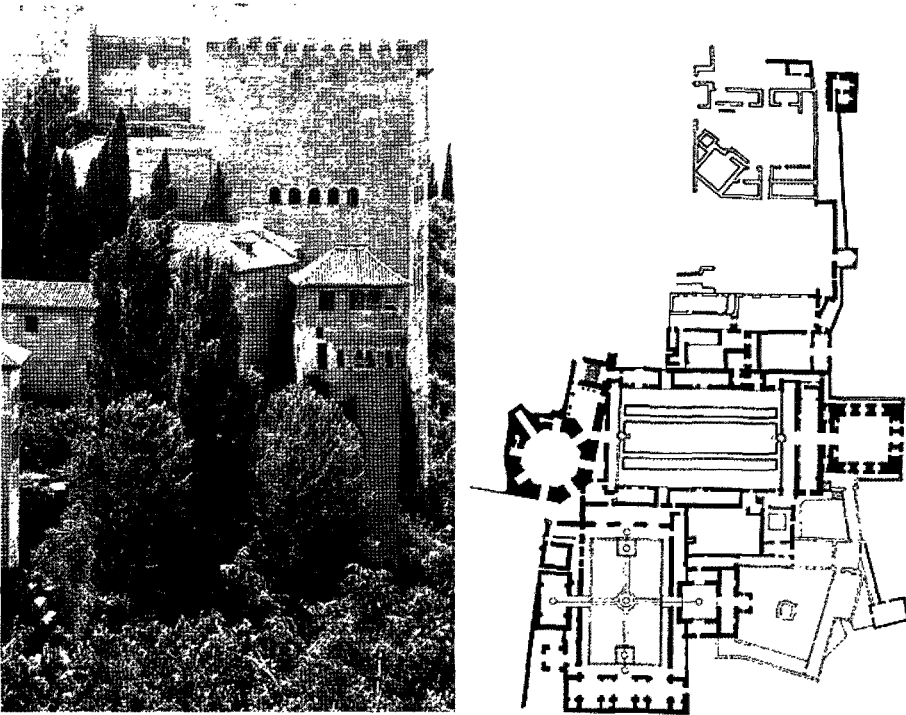
The Great Mosque in Iṣfahān got the *īwāns* and twin-minaret portal in the early twelfth century and, along with Zawāra (530/1136), became the earliest example of the Persian four-*īwān* type. The architecture of brick minarets climaxed in the 46-metre Qalyān tower in Bukhārā (520/1127) and the 65-metre minaret of Jām (594/1198). In the West, the art of geometric and structural ribbing became more ornate, as in Qubbat al-Bārūdiyyīn (513/1120) and the lantern dome of the Great Mosque of Tlemcen (530/1136). In Damascus, Nūr al-Dīn al-Zangī commissioned the *māristān* (548/1154) and, later, the *madrasa* (567/1172) that carry his name. These complexes represent the mid-twelfth-century architecture of the central Islamic lands, employ the four-*īwān* idea in their plans and carry the *muqarnas*-application to its earliest pinnacle. The Madrasa al-Nūriyya al-Kubrā has the attached tomb of its patron, which is a 72-foot-square chamber covered by an eleven-tiered *muqarnas*-dome topped by a ten-lobed domelet. What was an impressionistic attempt in the tomb-tower of Imām al-Dur in Sāmarrā’ has now received the necessary geometric discipline. Contemporaneously, the tomb of the Saljūq Sultan Sanjar at Marw (551/1157) was built as a massive square base that meets the 56-foot-diameter dome through an impressive transition zone employing geometry, masonry mass and light. The expressed masonry ribs on the inner surface of the dome are worthy of comparison with the Tlemcen geometry. The al-Aqmar mosque of Fāṭimid Cairo (518/1125) must be mentioned, not only as an example of a



geometrically pristine plan and of calligraphic and *muqarnas* quality, but also as the first example where the orientational necessity of the mosque space and the urban necessity of the street façade are tackled as an architectural challenge and resolved in a precedent-setting manner. By the end of this century, Muslim slave dynasties had a foothold in northern India and the monumental Quṭb Mīnār and Quwwat al-Islām mosques were started at Delhi (595/1199). Their construction carried on into the early eighth/fourteenth century.

The seventh/thirteenth century is a period of major dynastic upheavals, except for the Saljūqs of Anatolia, the Marīnids and Ḥafṣids of North Africa and the Slaves of India. Egypt and Syria passed from the Fāṭimids to the Ayyūbids and later to the Mamlūks, with interruptions by seventeen Crusaders. Iraq, Iran and most of Central Asia came under the influence of Khānids and Spain saw the establishment of the Naṣrids. The *madrasa* as a type matured after Zangid initiation and later the powerful patronage of the Ayyūbids. Of special interest are those of Firdaws at Aleppo (632/1235–1236) and of Sultan Ṣalāḥ at Cairo (638–641/1241–1244). While the former is distinguished for its geometric precision, its calligraphic and symbolic sophistication and its bold use of marble with ashlar masonry, the latter is known as the first *madrasa* in Egypt to recognize architecturally the four schools of Sunnī law, the type which later blossomed under the Mamlūks. In Spain, the citadel of Granada, known as the Alhambra, ‘the Red’, was begun in 635/1238 by the founder of the Naṣrid house, Muḥammad I al-Ghālīb [Fig. 12]. At Divirgi in Turkey, a mosque-hospital was built (626/1229) that represents its region and remains an architectural treasure of its age. Its plan is innovative in its placement of the hospital. Light oculi define interior courtyards in the cold climate, stone vaulting is didactic in its variety, the dome in front of the *mīhrāb* is hidden under the conical roof and the three doors are framed with exuberant stone carvings. The Eshrefoğlu mosque at Beyshehir (696/1297) with its forty-eight wooden columns with *muqarnas* carved capitals, its finely detailed *minbar* and its light-well on the *mīhrāb* aisle, is the best of the Anatolian wooden mosques. Finally, the Qalāwūn complex of Cairo (681–683/1283–1285) may be considered both as the architectural finale of the thirteenth century and the progenitor of Mamlūk excellence over the next two centuries. The mosque, *madrasa*, *māristān* and tomb are innovative in their mutual arrangement and intense, though eclectic, in their architectural vocabulary and detail.

The eighth/fourteenth could be called the architectural century of Muslim history. In 1306 Uljaytū, the Īlkhānid sultan, commissioned the construction of Sultāniyya near Qazwīn, which was to replace Tabrīz as the capital. Of that grand scheme only the Great Tomb survives as a magnificent ruin. While the motivations of this building are controversial, there is not much question about its structural bravado and its spatio-formal grandeur. Much more elegant is the Funerary Complex of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ṣamad (703–716/1304–1317) at Naṭanz. Its cruciform-shaped tomb-chamber is covered



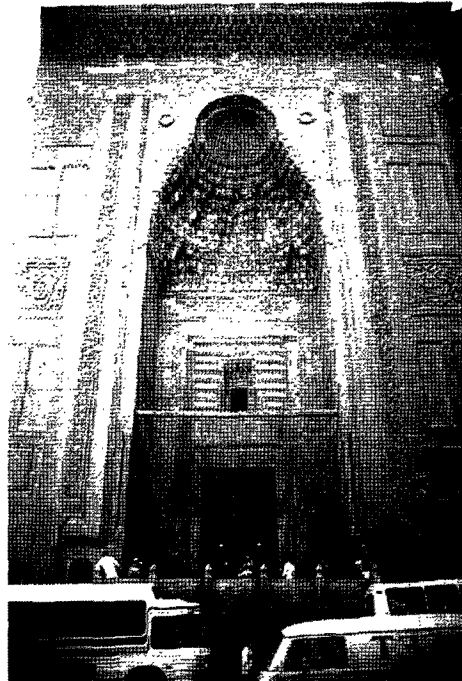
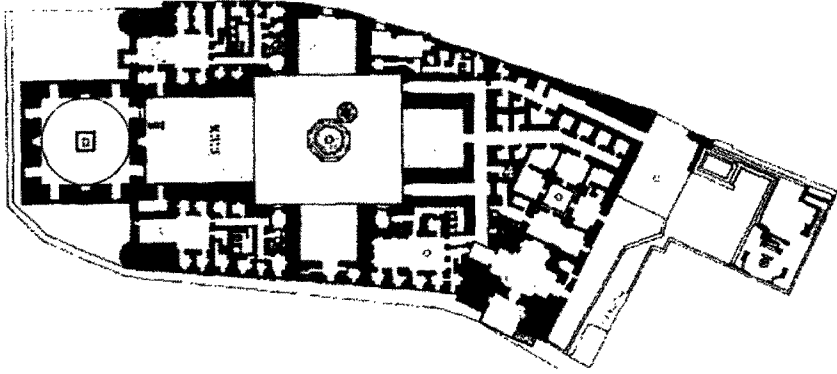
VI-2.12 Alhambra Complex, Granada

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by one of the most exquisite *muqarnas* domes in the world. It sits on the light that filters through eight grilled windows, four of which pierce through the corner squinches as in the monuments of Ismāʿīl the Sāmānid at Bukhārā and Sulṭān Sanjar at Marw. In India, the Tughluq sultanate of Delhi created a number of very fine buildings, which started with Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq's tomb (725/1325) and culminated in Fīrūz Shāh's (751789/1351–1388) *baradari* at Kotla and the Ḥawz-i Khāṣṣ complex at Turbabad, both new developments outside Delhi. This work is known for its sober beauty, its climatic sensitivity and its respect for the indigenous Hindu architectural traditions. In the West, the citadel-palace of Alhambra reached its completion through the successive reigns of three Naṣrid kings, Muḥammad II, Yūsuf I and Muḥammad V (d. 793/1391), who spanned almost the entire century. This unparalleled complex of buildings and gardens illustrates all the spatio-formal concepts of Islamic architecture. Of all the North African religious foundations, the *madrasas* of the eighth/fourteenth century achieved the highest levels of refinement under state patronage. The most beautiful of these are the

‘Attārīn (722–726/1323–1326) and Bū ‘Ināniyya (750–755/1350–1355) *madrasas* of Fez. Their quality resides in the handling of courtyard light through the ablution basin, the cloistered orderliness of the plan, the wooden *mashrabīyya* on the second level and the refinement of the ceramic and the carved-plaster decorations and calligraphy. The Sultan Ḥasan complex in Cairo [Fig. 13], one of the most important works of Islamic architecture, was commissioned in 756/1356 and, after four years of intense construction, to which builders and craftsmen from across the Empire were attracted, was stopped at the death of the Sultan. This is a unique building in that while, on the one hand, it aggregates the mausoleum, the *madrasa* and the infirmary on the *qibla* axis, it also subdivides the volume internally to create corner-cells for student habitation; it takes the main *iwān* and occupies it as the ‘mosque’, thus eliminating the necessity of a separate mosque enclosure; it takes the *qibla*-shift, first employed in al-Aqmar in Cairo (518/1125), and makes one of the most subtle and thus successful experiences of re-orientation as one goes from the portal to the threshold of the inner courtyard, an almost 30-metre cube without a roof. Through the intensity with which the solid mass, an urban block of medieval Cairo, has been ‘carved out’, a grand gesture to the finest *muqarnas* and calligraphy, to create magnificent surfaces and spaces, from the entrance to the four *iwāns* gathering around a cubic courtyard, with *madrasas* looking inward, the hanging lamps lending the human scale, the sun marking the time through internally cast shadows of the minaret and the courtyard rim, this building captures the architectural spirit of Islam’s civilization. In Baghdad, the Khān al-Mirjān (760/1359) took the tradition of simplicity of plan and sectional articulation, rhythm of the brick vaulting with light-seeking apertures, and the corbelled *muqarnas* to yet another level of excellence. The Jāmi‘ of Gulbargā (768/1367), under the Deccan Sultanate of India, achieved a new Indo-Persian synthesis in structure, especially in its use of light through a screened cloister that wraps the three non-*qibla* sides of the prayer-hall. The Ulu Jāmi‘ (798–802/1396–1400) at Bursa marked the maturation of the early Ottoman pillared mosque through its field of twelve massive limestone piers, and twenty domes of about 30 feet diameter, with the *miḥrāb* aisle domes raised and one punctured as an oculus of light above the ablution fountain. At Yasi, Kazakhstan, presently Turkestan City, the shrine-complex of Aḥmad Yasawī (796–799/1394–1397) is the earliest and most impressive example of Tīmūrid formalism of plan, raised up through daring geometric and structural choreography into a spiritually charged space. If Uljaytū’s ‘tomb’ marked the beginning of this architecturally celebrated century, then this shrine is its fitting climax.

The ninth/fifteenth century is marked by the consolidation of the House of Ottoman and its expansion across the Bosphorus, the fall of Istanbul and the shifting of the capital from Bursa to Edirne, and then to Istanbul. Yeshil, the Green Mosque of Bursa (814–827/1412–1424), is exquisite in its plan and



VI-2.13 Sultan Ḥasan Complex, Cairo  
G. Haider

section as well as its geometric transformations (Turkish triangles and *muqarnas*) and its use of ceramics and calligraphy, especially at the *mibrāb*. While it sits at the juncture of Saljūq, Tīmūrid and even Mamlūk influences, it is the representative climax of the 'Bursa School'. The Uch Serefeli Jāmi' (841–850/1438–1447) at Edirne marks the beginning of the imperial Ottoman mosques, known for their scale and grandeur. The 79-foot dome sitting on a hexagon straddling two huge piers and two walls and the 220-foot minaret with triple balconies were daring in their own time. The sense of space is overpowering, though the prayer-hall area is smaller than that of the Ulu Jāmi' of Bursa. The conquest of Istanbul (856/1453), of course, led to massive imperial complexes like Fātiḥ Jāmi' (867–874/1463–1470) and the initiation of the royal palace, Chinili Kiosk (876/1472), which seeded the Topkapı Saray. In Central Asia, the architectural momentum of the fourteenth century continued and flourished greatly under Tīmūrid patronage. Samarqand alone is enough to represent the epoch through monuments like Bibī Khānūm (begun 801/1399), Guri Mīr (804–837/1402–1434), Ulugh Beg's Madrasa and Observatory (819–822/1417–1420), Shāh-i Zindā's later additions and 'Ishrat-Khāna (868/1464), the tomb of the women of the Tīmūrid dynasty. Apart from 'Ishrat-Khāna's geometrically ritualized plan and section, it is of special value in that it attempts to employ architecture to extend the desired female privacy even at the threshold of death. In Egypt and Syria, Mamlūk architecture climaxed in monuments like Qā'itbāy's Funerary Complex in Cairo (876–878/1472–1474) and his Ashrafiyya Madrasa in Jerusalem. In India, the Lodhi and Sayyid sultanates refined the Tughluq experiments in tomb architecture. An important monument of this period is the Jāmi' Mosque of Jaunpur (874/1470), whose *ṣaḥn* is defined by three heavy gateways of Tughla style, thus setting up the clear cross-axes. On the *qibla* side there is a 23-metre-high arched pylon with sloping sides that charges the *ṣaḥn* as the main prayer-space in comparison with the modest covered cross-aisle beyond. The towering pylon screens the main dome behind it. The ninth/ fifteenth century is also marked by the maturation of those mud mosques of Timbuktu and Kano that have become the index of West African Islamic architecture.

The tenth/sixteenth century is the era of the Ottomans, Mughals and Ṣafawids. The Mamlūks of Egypt, before they were defeated by the Ottomans in 922/1517, left some refined buildings, especially Qānṣawh al-Ghawri's mosque-*madrasa* and tomb and the Caravanserai (908–910/1503–1505). The latter still remains as one of the finest examples of non-religious architecture in Islamic Cairo. In Central Asia, Bukhārā became the capital again and some major buildings like the Qalyān Mosque (919/1514) and 'Abd al-'Azīz Khān's *madrasa* (1054–1090/1645–1680) were built, but architecturally they could not surpass earlier Tīmūrid achievements. In India, the octagonal tomb tradition, which had started in the mid-fourteenth century, reached its most developed state in the mausoleums of Shīr Shāh Sūrī at Sasaram (946/1540) and

Īsā Khān Niyāzī in Delhi (951–953/1545–1547). This is the last and perhaps the best example of pre-Mughal tomb architecture before Humāyūn's tomb (968/1560–1561), which so impressively implanted the Persian concepts of *chabār bāgh*, *chabār ṭāq* and *Hasbt bibisht* in India. In the larger context, however, this century belongs to the great architecture under the royal patronage of three Ottoman sultans: Sulaymān (926–973/1520–1566), Selīm II (973–981/1566–1574) and Murād III (981–1003/1574–1595). There are a total of 477 extant buildings that bear Murād III's name, out of which 336 are in and around Istanbul. It is audacious to rank his buildings, but perhaps the most representative and influential are the royal complex of Süleymāniyye (956–964/1550–1557), the baths of Haseki Hurrem (963/1556), the vizier's complex of Soqollu Meḥmed (979/1572) in Istanbul and the royal complex of Selīmiyye (976–981/1569–1574) in Edirne. The Süleymāniyye complex has been discussed earlier as a paramount example of the subtleties of orientation, but its unique significance lies in its imperial silhouette and the technical fineness of its dome and minaret structure. The Haseki baths, though diminutive in scale, are masterpieces of geometric plan and section, articulation among large and small elements of form, brick and stone detailing, use of glass in the dome and the mechanical systems of steam and water. The Soqollu Meḥmed complex, like that of Sulṭān Ḥasan of Cairo two centuries earlier, illustrates all the spatio-formal concepts of Islamic architecture and remains a masterpiece of the architect Sinān. Rarely have such a difficult site and an equally complex programme been brought together with such mastery of form and spatial experiences, refinement of detail and choice of both content and style of calligraphy. The Selīmiyye is an architectural wonder of the world in the way it lifts the stone against gravity, aiming at the sky with its 230-foot minarets and achieving the magnificence of space and light below its 102-foot-diameter dome. It is indeed the culmination of Sinān's desire to perfect the Ottoman royal mosque and surpass its Byzantine precedents. The second half of the tenth/sixteenth century also sees Akbar, the great Mughal emperor (963–1011/1556–1605), in control of the vast subcontinent of India. While he built many palaces and forts, his architectural legacy is enshrined in the palace-city of Fathpūr Sikrī (976–981/1569–1574) about 26 miles west of Agra. In this complex, one finds numerous contending motivations brought together under the architectural will of an emperor who had started to see himself as the infallible, divinely protected ruler of the Four Quarters. His initial decision was to honour the Ṣūfī saint Salīm Chishtī, whose exquisite tomb he built (988/1581) in the *ṣaḥn* of the huge Jāmi' Mosque. The westward *qibla* orientation, set diagonally against the north-east-south-west sandstone outcrop on which the palace is built, has guided the entire layout. While the mosque is simple and self-contained, the palace is a stage to choreograph Akbar's self-image. The adjacency and composition of buildings, axes and open courtyards are disciplined by the courtly routine, royal ceremony and the privacy and

individuality of his queens. The materials, techniques and styles reflect Akbar's desire to recognize and coalesce the traditions of his diverse subjects and his own Transoxanian heritage. The last decade of the sixteenth century saw the historic move of 'Abbās I (996–1038/1588–1629) to Işfahān as the Şafawid capital and his decision to turn it into the envy of the world.

The momentum of Sinān's genius carried on through the earlier decades of the seventeenth century, resulting in some important monuments in and around Istanbul, like the Sulţān Aĥmad Jāmi' (1017/1609), the tiled mosque at Ūskūdar and the great *madrassa* of Bayram Pāsha. By the middle of the century, however, classical Islamic architecture across the Ottoman empire, including Syria, Iraq, Egypt and North Africa, had lost its energy and the decline had begun. In Persia and India, the Şafawids and the Mughals, respectively, attained the peak of their political power and cultural expression during this century. Işfahān, initiated at the end of sixteenth century, fulfilled its vision of being *nişf-i jahān* (Half of the World) through its urban extension as the royal capital and the resulting religious, palatial and civic projects. Around the grand setting of the Maydān-i Shāh (500 × 150 metres) arose the masterpiece of the Shaykh Luţf Allāh mosque (1025/1617), the Masjid-i Shāh (1020–1046/1612–1637), the 'Alī Qapu Palace pavilion and the new gateway entrance to the Bazaar. A serious comparative study of the Luţf Allāh and the Shāh mosques, the former a small devotional memorial and the latter a grand congregational state monument, both built at the same time, will reveal the matured spatio-formal, decorative and symbolic characteristics of Persian Islamic architecture that transcended the variation of scale. 'Alī Qapu (High Gate), the Chihil Sutun (40 Columns) and, later, the Hasht bihisht (Eight Paradises), the complex of Şafawid palaces west of Maydān, represent the refined interplay of landscape, climate, *chahār bāgh* (quadripartite) gardens, water canals, fountains, pools and architecture that integrates all these experiences through structure, geometry, surface decoration and even illusion created by water, mirrors and acoustic effects. The Khwajū Bridge, built by 'Abbās II (1050–1076/1641–1666), is perhaps the most interesting example of multivalent Şafawid architecture. Apart from being a bridge, it is a market, a haunt of poets and storytellers, a place of seasonal recreation, indeed a celebration of the *Ziyanda Rūd* (River of Life) through its interweaving with architecture. In India, the Mughals sustained a very high level of architectural achievement till about the eighth decade. Akbar was succeeded by his son Jahāngīr (1013–1036/1605–1627) and grandson Shāh Jahān (1036–1068/1627–1658), both of whom were impassioned builders. Jahāngīr left us monuments like the I'timād al-Dawla tomb (1037/1628) in Agra with its nine-square plan and stone-on-stone inlay work of exemplary quality. It was Shāh Jahān, however, who brought Islamic architecture in India to its climax. While there are projects like the Shālīmār Gardens (1042–1051/1633–1642) and the Wazīr Khān mosque (1043–1045/1634–1636) of Lahore that speak for his elegant taste and serious commit-

ment, it is the Tāj Maḥall that remains unparalleled as an earthly achievement of ‘heavenly’ aspirations. This complex of gardens, the tomb, the mosque and charitable facilities, laid out on the Mecca-oriented cosmogram, replete with Qur’ānic calligraphy alluding to the Day of Judgement and the Throne of God, executed in the finest of materials, crafted to perfection, is indeed the best representative of Islamic architecture of the later centuries. It is ironic that it also proved to be the last, most brilliant flash of this civilization’s architectural genius. Shāh Jahān’s successor Awrangzib (1068–1118/1658–1707), a puritanical ruler, restricted his work primarily to mosques, among which the Bādshāhī of Lahore (1083/1673–1674) and the Moti of Delhi’s Red Fort (1072/1662) are noteworthy.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the internal decay as well as the external temptations of European cultures reduced the architecture of Muslims to either bad copies of their own past or superficial mimicking of imported styles.

## The Islamic city

In order to grasp the unique aspects of Islamic urbanism, we may look at the phenomena of transformation from the scattered network of pagan Arab tribes to the community that was concentrated in Medina at the Prophet’s death. The total duration of the Prophet’s mission was about twenty-three years, which are well recorded and studied. There is agreement, or at least shared wonder, at both the magnitude and the significance of the shift that happened in the theological, sociological, legal, political, and even anthropological outlook of the people of peninsular Arabia, the border regions of Byzantium and Persia. *Jābiliyya*, the ‘Time of Ignorance’ as it is normally translated, refers to the suspiciousness and anxiety of the desert Arabs, reflecting weak faith (Qur’ān III.154), the desire to return to the ways of tribal justice rather than the justice prescribed by God (V.50), the desire for ostentatious display of riches and beauty (XXXIII.33) and blustering, excited and affectatious display of pride (XLVIII.26). The Qur’ān sets *Jābiliyya* against the alternative patterns that it was offering. Von Grunebaum explains the societal transformation by identifying the following three value shifts: 1) Islam sets for life an otherworldly goal. Life in this world is no longer an end in itself but rather a means to secure eternal felicity. Accordingly, the aims of heathen ambition, such as wealth, power, fame, remain acceptable aspirations only in as much as they are integrated in the organizational structure of the new life. 2) By making the individual responsible for his fate in the next world, the new faith completed, or at least advanced significantly, the process of legal and moral individuation. Besides, it made every moment of the believer’s life supremely relevant; for the effort to gain salvation must never be relaxed. 3) By accentuating the indispensability of the community to the fulfilment of



some of the basic obligations of the individual Muslim, Islam stressed the necessity of political organization. Where the pagan Arab had thought in terms of clans and tribes, the Muslim was led to think in terms of the political community co-extensive with the area of the faith – and therefore ultimately destined to dominate the world. Mankind no longer divided into members of different tribes – it split into believers and unbelievers, and this cleavage was to continue beyond the grave.’

The spatial spread of Islam was characteristically centrifugal, but the unifying scheme of a common faith under One God is what provided the centripetal balance. Perhaps the most succinct manifestation of this phenomenon was the Prophet’s final pilgrimage to Mecca (10/631), where he addressed a multitude of about 140,000, including both the nomads and the city élite, slaves and masters, men and women, Companions of long standing and those who had just joined the fold, all believers of different races, colours and origin. He declared their lives and properties to be inviolate like the sacred month. He emphasized the returning of trusts to their rightful owners, he waived the obligations imposed through usury and declared an amnesty for the vendettas of the pre-Islamic past. What had been evolving in Medina through daily and weekly rhythms of life, through settlements of conflicts among various interest groups, through religious encounters with visiting delegations, through preparations for campaigns and the distribution of bounties among the survivors, through marriages of widows and freeing of slaves, was consolidated, summarized and disseminated through this gathering in the Prophet’s life. This final major act of the Prophet became the reference point for socio-political structures that were to encompass growing populations of believers with diverse backgrounds. Through the physical fact of ‘his’ Medina, the Prophet laid the foundation, and through the phenomenological memory of his final pilgrimage, he set the co-ordinates of Islam’s urbanity. It is against this backdrop, be it phenomenological or physical, religious or political, folkloric or historical, that the evolution of Islam’s cities can be critically understood. And it is this outward-expansive energy of Islam (with its political and economic rewards) and the inward-consolidating disciplines of *dīn* and *Shari‘a* that resulted in the characteristically organized settlements and the geographical networks of power and communication from the centre to the frontiers.

It is now possible for us to discuss the formative forces that underlie the development of this phenomenon, as well as the physical reality that has come to be known as the Islamic City.

#### THE NEW ‘AŞABIYYA

Ibn Khaldūn, the eighth-/fourteenth-century Tunisian-Arab historian, in his *‘ilm al-‘umrān*, ‘science of human civilization’, proposed the typology of social organizations as *badāwa* (nomadism-ruralism) and *ḥaḍāra* (sedentary urbanism).

In his *Muqaddima* (Introduction) and in Book 1 of his World History (*Kitāb al-ʿIbār*), he presented the distinguishing characteristics of *badāwa* and *ḥaḍāra* in great detail and proposed the cyclical pattern in history through the growth and decay of what he called *ʿaṣabiyya*, which can be roughly translated as ‘social solidarity’. Among many oppositional differences between the two social conditions, the key difference is that of *ʿaṣabiyya*, which in the Khaldūnian view is fundamentally abundant in *badāwa* and is characteristically lacking in *ḥaḍāra*. It is a complex theory that makes sense when tested over the grand spans of historical rise and fall. However, when applied to the early socio-political and cultural evolution of Islamic urbanism, it might lead to some paradoxical observations. While the Medinese city-state (*ḥaḍāra*) emerged in the first decade after the Hijra, at the expense of the nomadic ruralism of Ḥijāzian Arabs (*badāwa*), the social solidarity, if that is what *ʿaṣabiyya* is, reached its exemplary high levels rather than declining through this change. The term *ʿaṣabiyya*, which Ibn Khaldūn never precisely defined, has been translated beyond its tribal connotations as ‘esprit de corps’, ‘vitality’, ‘feeling of unity’, ‘group adhesion’, ‘groupdom’, ‘sense of solidarity’, ‘group mind’, ‘collective consciousness’. In this sense we can say that Islam transformed the tribal, mostly blood-based *ʿaṣabiyya* to a new kind of moral, God-directed, collective consciousness that consolidated the fighting clans of Yathrib into the Madīna of Islam around the nucleus of the Prophet’s mosque-house. It was thus that the *utums* (strongholds) of belligerent clans scattered between the mountains of Uḥud and ‘Ayr got cemented into the first of the Muslim cities. The Prophet’s policy of constructing contractual accommodation among old enemies, bringing peace and ultimately faith-based solidarity in place of ongoing civil wars, transformed the internal *ʿaṣabiyya* of old enemies like Aws and Khazraj into Islamic solidarity, which the Qur’ān refers to as ‘leaded wall’ and ‘severe on the enemies of God, but gentle among themselves’.

This transformative process of Islam was analogous to a re-orientation of mutually cancelling vectors into a bundle of unidirectional ones, a unified order, a collective consciousness with a formative energy in search of fields to act upon. The mutual belligerence of the pagan tribes and the internal weakness of the Byzantine and Sāsānian empires ripened the fields. It was this ‘new *ʿaṣabiyya*’ that characterized the phenomenal expansion of the Islamic Caliphate within the first twenty-five years or so after the Prophet’s death. It was during this period that the formal, organizational and phenomenological example of Medina as a city got tested as the prototype for new settlements at the circumference of the Caliphate.

#### FROM THE CENTRE TO THE CIRCUMFERENCE

Islam, insisting on its communal fulfilment beyond its dogma, led to the necessity of stable order both at the centre and at the boundaries. It was

prudent to establish some sense of permanent presence in order to manage the fruits of conquest and to stage further expansion. This led to the earliest Muslim attempts at *ex nihilo* settlements that have come to be known as garrison towns in the literature. Al-Sayyad, in his very important work on the genesis of Arab Muslim urbanism, presents an evolutionary typology of garrison towns. First there are *fustāṭs*, or mass encampments, of makeshift tent settlements that later grew into permanent cities as frontier opportunities, and a proselytizing zeal led to migration towards them. Basra (13/634) and Kufa (17/638) in Iraq, al-Jābiya (14/635) in Syria, al-Fustāṭ (20/641) in Egypt and al-Qayrawān in Tunisia were the earliest *fustāṭs*. Then there are *ribāṭs*, fortress-like border garrisons as permanent defensive outposts and staging-bases for further campaigns. Rabat in Morocco and Monastir in Tunisia are the earliest examples. As confidence in the future of Islam's expanded geography increased, the temporariness of encampments was replaced by a desire for rootedness and permanence. The Caliph 'Umar thus designated Basra a *miṣr*, which meant that it had become 'a centre to manage the conquered territories and a base from which further campaigns could be launched'. The Muslim victory over the Sāsānids and their occupation of the capital city of al-Madā'in (Ctesiphon) after the battle of al-Qādisiyya (16/637) led to yet a few more pronouncements by the Caliph 'Umar that had a profound effect on the nature and shape of the emergent Islamic city. He instructed Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, his commander and governor on the eastern front, to establish a *dār hijra*, a *manzil jībād* and a *qayrawān*, meaning 'a place towards which migration is encouraged', 'a centre for carrying out further campaigns' and 'a place of meeting, rest and rejuvenation', respectively. This became the act of encouraging Muslims to migrate out of their ancestral homes in the Ḥijāz and other areas of Arabia and establish permanent settlements in the lands they had conquered in the name of Islam. In comparison to the *hijra* of the Meccan Muslims to Medina after their life had been made unbearable in their own home town, this was a migration to assert a physical expansion of Islam through the settlement and eventual urbanization of conquered lands.

From the development of Basra, Kufa and Syria one can also conclude that the Islamic puritanical spirit, embodied in the Prophet's simple model, was being progressively challenged by the emergent Arab desires following encounters with the sophistication and comfort of Sāsānian and Byzantine cities. 'Umar was jealously protective of Islam's purity and afraid that the Arabs would get corrupted by the luxurious styles of the conquered empires. On the one hand, he did not like their settling down in the conquered cities, and on the other, while instructing them to create the new settlements, he only grudgingly allowed them the 'urban materials and comforts'. In a letter to Sa'd he stated a principle: 'Abide by the Prophet's traditions and the state will be obliged to respect your practices.' It is this negotiated balance between the developing demands of the people and the reverential memory of the

Prophet's traditions that gave the earliest of the Islamic cities its unique formal and social character. It set a precedent for the formative tension between juristic judgements (*fatāwā*) and the citizen's desire to build, even encroach.

Basra and Kufa on the eastern front and al-Fuṣṭāṭ in the West thus become the earliest examples of Islamic urbanization in the spirit, if not precisely in the form, of caliphal Medina. This spirit remained rather puritanical and modest until the authority of the centre relaxed during the caliphate of ʿUthmān and later started to be openly challenged.

Kufa represents the earliest and most authentic of Islamic urban attempts. From the chronicles of al-Balādhurī, al-Ṭabarī and al-Yaʿqūbī we can construct Kufa's development as a city, as has been discussed in some detail by Al-Sayyad. Much care was taken in the choice of the site and it is reported that Salmān al-Fārisī and Hudhayfa b. al-Yamān were involved. After the trial of a few places over a period of two years, the choice finally converged on a plain lying on the west bank of the Euphrates about four miles from the old Persian city of al-Ḥīra. Under the general principles promulgated by ʿUmar to Saʿd, Abu-l-Hayyāj started to lay out the plan of Kufa. The first demarcation was that of the mosque through the shooting of four arrows, one towards the *qibla* and three others in cardinal directions with reference to it. It resulted in a 200-cubit-square enclosure that would never need any enlargement. Secondly, he marked an open square area around the mosque. This came to be known as *Ṣaḥn* or *Ṣaḥan* and was used as a *sūq*, or temporary market. Third in sequence was the *dār al-saʿd*, the army chief's residence, which later became the *dār al-imāra*, the seat of the government, as Kufa became the regional capital. The need arose to secure the *bayt al-māl*, the public treasury, that was located in the *dār al-imāra*. In response to, and at the Caliph ʿUmar's instructions, the mosque was brought next to the *dār* with the idea that the mosque's inhabitants would act as a deterrent against theft. These contingencies led to the development of mosque and *dār al-imāra* as a mutually adjacent complex across the *qibla* wall and became a prototype representing the centre of authority in early Islamic cities for over two centuries. Abu-l-Hayyāj then laid out five main streets (*manābij*) north of the *ṣaḥn*, four to the south and three each to the west and east. The main streets were 40 cubits wide (18 metres or 60 feet) and were served by secondary streets only 20 cubits in width and a labyrinth of narrow streets (*zuqqāq*) at least seven cubits in width, which is enough to let two loaded camels pass by each other. The zones (*kbuṭaṭ*) bounded by the main streets were intended to be land allocations among seven genealogically determined tribal groups (*ʿaṣba*), which were also the fighting elements (*muqātila*). It is likely that larger groups were awarded more than one such zone. Each group was awarded its own *jabbāna*, open places for cattle-grazing and burial which later became absorbed in the expanding city. Beyond their obvious functions, the streets also acted as a transparent containment for the unbounded nomadic consciousness, encouraging it towards an urban reality

with a sense of groundedness and a fixed address, a sense of ownership and respect for neighbourly rights. Slowly, through the discipline of regulations by the Caliph and the governor, arbitrations among contending interests and varying pressures on densities through the arrival of new members (*rawādif*), the *khutaṭ* started to develop their own prototypical character. Each *khutt* had its own open square called *rabba*, with a prayer-area and a burial-place. During the shifts from purity to power in its first three decades, Kufa was subjected to many population reorganizations that did not bring about any major shift in urban form. What started out as a conscious land-plan transformed into a dense urban organism with layered formal and informal orders.

The Caliph ‘Umar had described Kufa as ‘the tower of Islam’ (*qubbat al-Islām*) and ‘the head of the people of Islam’ (*ra’s abl al-Islām*). For those who settled there he had phrases like ‘the lance of God, the treasure of Faith, the cranium of the Arabs’ and the like. At one time, there were more than 300 of the Prophet’s earliest Companions living in Kufa and it was considered the best centre of religious knowledge and learning after Medina. Increasing heterogeneity of the population, especially the interaction of Arabs and Persians, lent richness to this city. However, it also attracted conscientious questioners as well as soldiers of fortune who wanted to capitalize on the increasing dissatisfaction with the Caliph ‘Uthmān in Medina. ‘Alī’s setting his capital in Kufa gave the city a certain stature for a few years, but after his assassination it became a haven for opposition to the Umayyads, who had shifted the capital of the empire to Damascus. Governing Kufa was a political and military challenge for the new dynasty.

History has a way of producing personalities who seem to be a customized response to unique situations. Ziyād b. Abīhi was such a man of the moment and became governor over both Basra and Kufa. Beyond his ruthless political intelligence and oratorical skills, Ziyād can be identified as the first Muslim consciously to have employed architecture as a medium for dynastic projection and individual power. Afraid of the tribal *masjids* in the *khutaṭ* as seats of anti-State activity and wise enough to know that demolishing them would be an unpopular act, he decided instead to transform the existing Kufan mosque into an awe-inspiring building that ‘would be without equal’. Architects of the vanquished Sāsānids used the stones from Jabal Ahwāz, drums of which were hollowed out and fitted together by lead and iron dowels. They achieved a hall of 148 columns, each soaring to a height of 51 feet, with a flat teak roof and a large courtyard. The outer walls were of baked brick buttressed by semi-cylindrical towers. Creswell has established that the mosque plan size remained the same (200 cubits square) as that of the original mosque Sa’d had laid out 32 years earlier. Ziyād’s programme, thus, was grandiosity rather than expansion. Five centuries later Ibn Jubayr stated: ‘Nowhere have I seen a mosque of which the columns are so long or the ceiling so elevated.’ For the *dār al-imāra*, Ziyād’s plans were much more am-

bitious. As Creswell, Grabar and Al-Sayyad have suggested in their individual analyses, this 'palace cum seat of government' was inspired by Sāsānid palaces, especially that of al-Ḥira, which also became the source of materials. While the mosque was about 104 metres square, the palace compound measured approximately 169 metres square, which is more than two-and-a-half times larger in area. Twentieth-century excavations revealed strong indications of Ziyād's foundations of the Kufan palace, over which later Umayyad and early 'Abbāsīd elaborations were done. It is important to note that, in the evolution of the Islamic city, this is the first time that the mosque is so wilfully aggrandized and has attained a stature analogous to a Roman *forum* or an *apadāna*, the 'Hall of Columns' of the Persian kings. The mosque, predominant in its profile, legitimized the Umayyad rule, but it is the increasing size and inaccessibility of the *dār al-imāra*, where the real power resided and within whose walls important decisions were made, which is striking. Yet Kufa had started out as a modest garrison town. Through the urbanizing forces of power, population and commerce and the governing necessities arising from ethnic diversities, tribal rebellions and religious schisms, Kufa matured into a complex provincial capital, setting precedents for both planning and architectural hierarchies and a symbolic rôle for state buildings that characterized the Muslim cities for centuries to come.

#### TRANSFORMED CITIES

Syria fell to Islam during the same period as Iraq (13–17/634–638), and yet the Syrian garrison town al-Jābiya could not evolve into either a Basra or a Kufa of Iraq. For many reasons, Muslims found it easier or politically and commercially wiser to settle down in the existing cities like Damascus, Jerusalem and Aleppo. The credit for the trends that culminated in Damascus becoming the earliest capital of the Muslim empire must go to Mu'āwiya (d. 60/680). An aristocrat at heart, he was a master-politician, a statesman and a far-sighted strategist. Riding Islam's expansive tide, he saw in his future a dynasty for his Umayyad clan. He intelligently survived the puritanical scrutiny of 'Umar and governed Syria with increasing autonomy under the Caliph 'Uthmān (23–35/644–656). He challenged the fourth Caliph 'Alī's legitimacy and engaged him in a prolonged civil war, while maintaining his independence and hold on Syria. In 40/661, after 'Alī's assassination in Kufa, he assumed the *de-facto* caliphate of all Muslims. Over the 'Alid loyalists in Iraq he appointed Ziyād b. Abihi, of whose architectural achievements we have spoken earlier, as the governor. Symbolically, Mu'āwiya crowned Damascus as the capital of the vast Islamic empire, which he further expanded and consolidated until his death in 60/680. Thus, for forty-one long years, seventeen of legitimate governorship, five of defiant independence and then nineteen of 'royal' caliphate, Mu'āwiya and Damascus shaped one another. On

the mature foundations of Damascus as a capital of earlier kingdoms, the Muslim urban imagination started to take shape. The pre-Islamic aristocratic tendencies of the Meccan Qurayshites, especially those of the Umayyad line, found a new legitimacy as they became the inheritors of Byzantine Romans, Nabataeans, Greeks, Achaemenids, Babylonians, Assyrians and Aramaeans who, as far back as the eleventh century BC, had ruled from Damascus.

The city, as the Muslims found it, basically had a Graeco-Roman character, with Byzantine Christian transformations. The Greek Damascus had a Temple of Jupiter, an agora and a regular grid defining small blocks of uniform houses. In Hadrian's time, the city had two east-west colonnaded streets: one was the *decumanus* of the Roman cities, with commemorative arches, and the other was like a forum, joining the agora with the temples. A fortified palace, *castrum*, was also built on the north-west corner of the city. The city had a defensive wall with seven gates. The *decumanus*, the long colonnaded and straight street, connected the west (Jābiya) gate with the eastern gate. By the end of the fourth century (AD 395), Damascus had become part of Christian Byzantium and the Temple of Jupiter was transformed into the Church of St. John the Baptist. Two Byzantine palaces and many churches were added. Conquering Muslims, the majority being desert Arabs, were impressed with the city that had fallen to them. Of special impact were the orderly grid, the vast Temple of Jupiter-Church of St. John enclave (*temenos*) and the long *decumanus* that they called *al-Mustaḡīm*, 'the Straight'.

Muslims were cautious 'colonizers' as far as the city of Damascus was concerned. There was no destruction of property, religious or otherwise. They did not change the language of governance and commerce for almost fifty years. Collection of taxes from the non-Muslim population and settlement of the evacuated properties were perhaps the immediate changes in the city life. The culture slowly transformed from Graeco-Roman – Byzantine Christian to Arab-Islamic, with a healthy mix of ethnically non-Arab Muslims. For the first two decades, there were no major physical changes other than the creation of a prayer-place and the taking over the Byzantine properties of power by the Muslim governor and his lieutenants. The extent of occupation and transformation of the Church of St. John during this period remains a debated issue. According to Creswell, Muslims took over the east side of the *temenos* without encroaching upon the actual building of the church. Instead of a formal mosque, they were content with a *muṣallā*, a large place of gathering for prayer.

In the year 40/661 Mu'āwiya declared Damascus the seat of caliphate. In the words of Hitti: 'This started the city (Damascus) on its way to becoming for eighty-nine years mistress of the Muslim realm and key city in medieval world affairs.' He started to build for himself a grand palace that came to be known in the chronicles as *al-Khaḍrā'*, 'the Green Palace', because it was crowned by a green dome. He also built a *dār al-khayl* to receive ambassadors and foreign notables. He was the first ruler in Islam's history to hold court in

his palace rather than the mosque, and while the houses of ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān in Medina were known simply by their names as individuals, this ‘palace’ was called *Dār al-khilāfa*. Al-Sayyad talks of Mu‘āwiya’s administrative and political changes as ‘secularizing the caliphate, changing it into monarchy, and erecting a throne in the palace for himself’ that ‘forever changed the face of the city under his successors’. Even in the mosque the Caliph became removed from his people through the introduction of the *maqṣūra*, a screened and elevated enclosure next to the *mīhrāb* that he could enter through a secure door directly from his palace.

Two Umayyad Caliphs, ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and his son al-Walid, ruled from Damascus successively for a total of 30 years (65–96/685–715). This was the period when the vast Muslim Empire, stretching from Transoxiana in the north, Sind in the east and Spain in the west (including North Africa), was consolidated. Muslims were in the majority and the Byzantine character of Damascus was definitely in decline. ‘Abd al-Malik replaced Christian officials at the court with Arabic-speaking ones and struck the first Muslim gold coins. His most important urban and architectural acts were to build the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the wall around Damascus. It was al-Walid b. ‘Abd al-Malik, however, who is credited with the ultimate acquisition of the entire *temenos* and the construction of the great Umayyad Mosque of Damascus (85–96/705–715). Ibn ‘Asākir, in his history of the city, presents various versions of the story of the final take-over of the Church of St. John. Archaeological evidence confirms that the church footprint was enclosed by the larger mosque and the cenotaph of John the Baptist (Prophet Yaḥyā to the Muslims) was maintained. It is not difficult to understand that, beyond satisfying the pragmatic demands of an increasing Muslim population, al-Walid wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps and add a monument to the imperial capital of Islam by which he would be remembered. The Caliph was also aware of Ziyād’s great mosque of Kufa (rebuilt 49/670) and perhaps did not want it to be the only one with the most impressive hall of columns. When some people objected to the Caliph’s extravagance, he replied: ‘You, the people of Damascus, take pride in your city because of four things: its air, its water, its fruits and its baths. I wanted to add a fifth item to the things you take pride in.’ It was also al-Walid who commissioned major expansions and the architectural aggrandizement of the sacred mosques of Mecca and Medina, possibly of al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem, and also of the Great Mosque in Ṣan‘ā’. Thus, while Ziyād b. Abihi in Kufa was the first to employ architectural monumentality of the mosque as the urban *locus*, the credit must go to ‘Abd al-Malik and his son al-Walid for establishing it as the principal signifier for a city’s Islamicity.



## NEW CITIES OF POWER

In 74/694, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714) was appointed governor of the eastern regions after having proved his loyalty and efficiency as chief of ‘Abd al-Malik’s personal guard in Damascus. He is credited with crushing the Meccan revolt with exemplary resolve, even bombarding the Ka‘ba to achieve his goals. Hodgson uses phrases like ‘ruthless efficiency’, ‘administrative vigour’ and ‘frank terror’ to describe his achievements in the governance of the factious Iraqī population. As both Kufa and Basra were centres of opposition to the Umayyad power, al-Ḥajjāj founded, in 83/702, a new city, al-Wāsiṭ, between the two. This was not a garrison town like the early Basra or Kufa of the Caliph ‘Umar’s time. Instead, it was a city built expressly to project and exercise power. It lacked the heterogeneity of earlier garrisons and was inhabited only by ‘loyal Syrian Muslims, who were kept jealously separate from the Iraqī Muslims’. Al-Wāsiṭ had double defensive walls and a moat. From the chronicles of al-Ṭabarī and al-Baghdādī we learn about the legend that the wondrous ‘iron gates’ of al-Wāsiṭ were actually the gates of the Prophet-King Solomon’s ruined city named Zandaward, not too far from the new site. Yāqūt and al-Balādhurī, however, reject the legend and suggest that the gates were plundered from various defeated cities. al-Ḥajjāj built a great mosque 200 cubits square, now the oldest in Islam of which remains have come down to us, and attached to it his palatial *dār al-imāra*, 400 cubits square, which he crowned with a green dome, like the one in Damascus. From the four palace gates emanated four 80-cubit-wide roads that led to the city walls. Bahshal, the historian of al-Wāsiṭ, identifies markets of grocers, second-hand goods and fruits, clothiers, day-labourers, artisans and druggists along the streets (*darb*). The tradesmen of the different markets were kept separate from one another and each market had its own money-changers.

The city-building activities of the Umayyad Caliphs and their governors – whether in Medina, Damascus, Basra, Kufa, al-Fuṣṭāṭ or Aleppo – were primarily transformative or developmental. Though Basra, Kufa and al-Fuṣṭāṭ were created from scratch, the intentions behind them were communal and collective in an Islamic sense. Al-Wāsiṭ was the first city in Islamic history founded and built as a manifest will of a powerful individual. Had al-Ḥajjāj not lived in a time when the Syrian centre of the empire was so firmly established, he would have been a caliph or a king with his own dynasty. It is in this sense that his city al-Wāsiṭ becomes prototypical for future cities like Baghdad and Cairo.

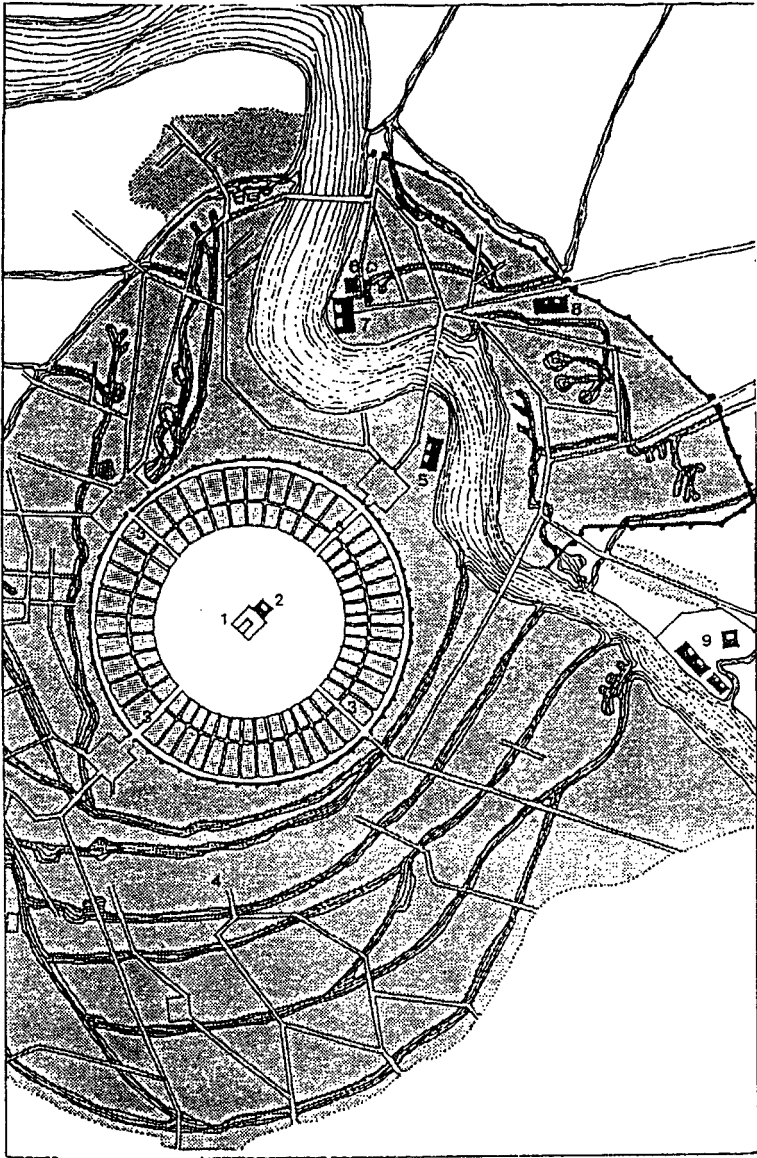
It is ironic that al-Ḥajjāj’s ‘success’ as the Umayyad governor of Iraq, while resulting in disciplined calm, imperial consolidation and an increase in revenues for Damascus, actually accelerated the anti-Syrian movements. The ‘Abbāsīd revolt finally succeeded in overthrowing the Umayyads in 132/750 and Muḥammad b. Abi-l-‘Abbās al-Saffāḥ (the Bloodshedder) proclaimed

himself Caliph. Damascus was abandoned as the capital and the seat of government moved to al-Hāshimiyya at the edge of Kufa. Al-Saffāh ruled on for four years and the caliphate passed to his brother Abū Ja‘far, known as al-Manṣūr, the Victorious. The general insecurity of Kufa, an assassination attempt around 140/758 and perhaps the precedent of al-Wāsiṭ, led to the desire for a new capital from where he could command the Empire in peace and without personal fear. It was also important for al-Manṣūr to assert his clan’s dynastic take-over as a divinely ordained destiny against not only the Umayyads but also the ‘Alid purists. Founding a new city expressing cosmological perfection was an ancient tradition in the eastern systems by which the earthly ‘king’ could sanctify his own approval under the seal of divine approval. A new beginning was immanent and it happened through the foundation of Baghdad.

Al-Manṣūr was a fastidious person and sent his emissaries as far north as Mosul to explore possible sites, especially their climatic suitability, commercial routes, transportation and the availability of fertile hinterlands. The site selection was complex and extended over a period of four years. On 27 Rabī‘ I 108/1 August 726 his choice finally fell on the village of Baghdad at the junction of the Nahr al-Sarāt canal and the Tigris river.

Much has been written about the sources and precedents of Baghdad’s round plan. K.A.C. Creswell claims that ‘circular cities had been known for fifteen centuries before the foundation of Baghdad, and concentric circular cities for several centuries before, in the region between Eastern Asia Minor and South-Western Persia, and it is possible that Darabjerd directly inspired the ‘Round City’ of al-Manṣūr’. Jacob Lassner has done a thorough review of the various attitudes towards the question of the round shape and Ibrahim Allawi, in a recent dissertation, has presented a detailed astronomical and astrological analysis of Baghdad’s plan that greatly enriches our earlier understanding. The fact remains that al-Manṣūr had gathered the best builders and scientists of his empire and to them he had added scholars and great theologians like the Imām Abū Ḥanīfa. It is hard to imagine that this group would either simply copy an earlier city or be subservient to a single opinion. That the Caliph also decided to name the city Madīnat al-Salām, literally ‘the City of Peace’, and uttered his famous prayer replete with the image of God’s vicegerency, shows that he was initiating much more than an efficiency-driven, past-replicating walled city just for his own protection.

From the chronicles al-Ṭabarī, al-Baghādī and al-Ya‘qūbī, a number of historians, including Le Strange, Creswell, Herzfeld, Hitti, Lassner and Al-Sayyad, have re-constructed the plans of the original Baghdad [Fig. 14]. They agree that the city had three concentric zones around the central circular *rahba*, the open space at the centre of which was the Palace of the Golden Gate, and attached to it was the congregational mosque. Compared with the founding of Kufa, it is important to note that the locus from which the city emanates is



1. Caliphal Palace
2. Mosque
3. Old Markets
4. New Market at Al-Karakh
5. Al-Khuld Palace
6. New Friday Mosque
7. Mahdi's Ruṣāfah Palace
8. The Palace of Al-Mu'taṣim
9. Al-Firdaws Palace

VI-2.14 Round City of Baghdad. The Developments Outside the Round City, Showing the Relocation of the Markets in al-Karakh and the New Mosques and Palaces Built by al-Manṣūr and his Immediate Successors, Based on LeStrange

now the 80-cubit-high green dome marking the heart of the 400-cubit-square palace, rather than the centre of the courtyard from which the arrows were sent out to enclose the 200-cubit-square mosque of Sa'd b. Abi Waqqāṣ. The second zone was formed by a ring of smaller palaces for al-Manṣūr's sons and his most trusted army chiefs. The third zone was the flat ring mass of the city, containing residential quarters and markets, and acted as one big and deep defensive mass protecting the *Dār al-ḵhilāfa* at the centre. The circular outer wall of the city had four gates, each marking the beginning of an arcaded street connecting it to the *raḥba* and dividing the city into four sectors. The population within the city was tightly managed by the Caliph in order to minimize chaos and conspiracy. Each of the four gates of Baghdad was protected by a commander, with 1,000 soldiers whose families lived in the Round City. al-Baghdādī says that the roads of the city were called after the names of the clients (*al-mawālī*) of al-Manṣūr, and al-Ya'qūbī lists the names of twenty-nine such streets. Six other roads were named, four after the occupation of their residents: the guards, the police, water-carriers and prayer-callers; one was called 'the Narrow' and another named after a group of people, the Marw al-Rūdhī, who were the staunchest 'Abbāsīd supporters in various military actions and in the quelling of revolts.

Before the Round City was even completed, some of its basic assumptions started to change. The informal city of workers outside the walls started to grow fast and soon became larger in both area and population. The news of the 'new caliphal capital' attracted populations much larger than anticipated. The demand for services by the power-élite resulted in the convergence of labourers and artisans on the city. These groups lacked the discipline of al-Manṣūr's army and had no particular allegiance to the 'Abbāsīd house. Because of both the lack of space and the political threat of the untrustworthy 'men of the Bazaar' (*ahl al-sūq*), the Caliph banished the markets to al-Karkh, an area outside and south of the Round City. This move proved to be a crucial blow to the 'pure' idea of the Round City and its conceptual diagram, promising peace, harmony and security. al-Manṣūr decided to isolate himself even more and gave orders that the inner-ring portals, originally opening on to the *raḥba*, be closed except at four main axes. The mosque and the *raḥba* thus became 'disconnected' from the population and lost their value to the city. The entire inner circle was reduced to being the restricted domain of the Caliph, and it is very likely that he felt trapped in his own diagram.

Al-Manṣūr, a formidable strategist, started to break out of the Round City by building a palace for his son al-Mahdī and moving some of his troops to al-Ruṣāfa on the other side of the river Tigris. For both the 'suburbs' of Karkh and al-Ruṣāfa, he also built two Friday mosques, which challenged the essentiality of the single caliphal mosque next to the palace. The *dār al-imāra* of earlier times, where the seat of the ruler and the mosque were adjacent, was now split and the term *Dār al-ḵhilāfa* became appropriate for the whole city of

the Caliph. Karkh grew very fast and was subdivided into many bazaars, each of which was confined to its own kind of trade. The Caliph moved his own seat by building a new palace called al-Khuld (Paradise), close to the north-east gate of the Round City. As a consequence, a new density of government buildings started to grow around this palace, while the centrality of the Palace of the Golden Gate was split and then rejected forever. In this process of shift from a centralized and radial form to a laterally spread-out, interwoven, conglomerate form, one can see exemplified the emergent tensions and accreted compromises that became the hallmark of Islamic urban morphology.

#### MATURATION AND METAMORPHOSIS

In the maturation of Baghdad there are clues to the genesis of what we have come to know as the 'classical' Islamic city. The cosmological purity of the Round 'City of Islam' was challenged by the contingencies of an increasingly heterogeneous population and its diverse interests. Islamic universalism made the emergence of an idealized, fortified, island-like city state almost impossible. Islam's acceptance of ethnic diversity and cultural continuity among new Muslims, on the one hand, and the caliphate's 'guardianship' of communal Islamicity, on the other, led to complex institutional roles. The caliphate had to maintain its own power while dealing with the demands of its loyalists, the plots of its detractors, the challenges of the religious purists and, above all, the balance among the soldiers, shopkeepers, merchants, scholars, craftsmen and Islam's interpreters. The political-administrative and the juridical-religious affairs started to separate.

The 'Abbāsid ruler retained the status of imam-caliph and supreme decision maker, but other offices were instituted, including the *walī* or *'āmilī*, the provincial governor assisted by the *ṣāhib al-shurṭa* (the chief of police and his garrison), the *ṣāhib al-maẓālim* (receiver of the petitions), the *wizāra* (the secretariat of the caliph) the *qāḍī-l-quḍāt* (the chief justice above other *qāḍīs*, each assisted by a panel of approved witnesses or notaries (*shuhūd* or *'udūl*)) and the *muḥtasib* or *sāhib al-sūq* (the watchman of moral and commercial transactions). More than any other, the office of *muḥtasib* reflects the phenomena that constitute the Islamic city. The idea of a public moral monitor goes as far back as the time of the Caliph 'Umar, who would personally perform this duty in Medina. *Ḥisba* as a concept is rooted in the Qur'ānic dictum, *amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar*, to promote good and to prevent whatever is Islamically illicit. The *muḥtasib* was to look after public morals, to ensure conformity of religion in public and to suppress seditious acts. He ensured weights and measures, watched against fraud and cheating in manufacturing, sales and even labour relations, prevented monopoly and hoarding, looked after sanitary conditions in the city, ensured that the streets were kept clean and kept a strict eye on property encroachments. He could check the qualifications of such professionals as

physicians, pharmacists and teachers and censure them in cases where he saw unfair practices. He watched the treatment of school children and prevented cruelty to animals. He could order dangerous constructions to be pulled down. He ensured the cleanliness of the water supply, sweeping of the mosques and their lighting at night. He was to be simultaneously well versed in the *Shari'ca*, the practices of the craftsmen and manufacturers, the customs of visitors to the city, the ethnic traditions and religious practices of non-Muslims and was expected to be a man of discretion and good taste. Under him was a network of appointed assistants and he could access the inner affairs of any craft (*sinf*) through its leaders (*'urafa'*) and representatives (*shuyukh*). He was thus somewhat like a modern municipality, acting through the will of one single man. His rôle lasted over a thousand years and we can see him as the principal choreographer of the phenomenon we call the Islamic city.

Whether the physical form was willed by the Muslim ruler – as, for example, in Kufa, al-Wāsit, Baghdad and Sāmarrā<sup>3</sup> – or inherited – as in the case of Damascus, Aleppo and Cordova – it had to contend with the oppositional paradigm of *halāl* (permissible) and *ḥarām* (forbidden), *ma'rūf* (good) and *munkar* (illicit), individual harm and communal interest, believers' responsibilities and non-believers' (*dhimmi*) obligations, and the caliph's prerogative and the individual's right to justice. The transformations in the intended or inherited form, for example, the street patterns of Damascus and Baghdad, were more a consequence of negotiated transactions, subdivisions, conglomerations and complex rulings of the *muhtasib*, the *qādī*, the *walī* or the caliph himself. Increasing autonomy within the quarters (religious, ethnic or commercial) caused the streets to have relational characteristics, for example, arterial roads and cul-de-sac streets of a *maballa*, rather than geometric ones, such as right-angle grids. The ideal urban morphologies metamorphosed into the classical urban labyrinth, a living organism with its own systems of tensions, interfaces, compromises, checks and balances.

#### THE CLASSICAL ISLAMIC CITY

It is now possible for us to imagine the classical Islamic city by collaging oppositions like power and piety, commerce and intellect, communality and privacy. The tension between these oppositions provides the energy for the phenomena that characterize the city. Design resolutions and accreted compromises at the junctures of these oppositions constitute the places, paths, networks, nodes, surfaces, messages, symbols and signs of Islamic urbanity.

Power is expressed by the citadel (*qal'ca*), the palace (*dār al-imāra*, *al-qasr*), the government centre (*dīmān*), the courthouse (*dār al-'adl*) and the garrison of the caliphal guards. Islamic legitimacy and power, however, are expressed by the *jāmi'*, the caliphal/royal mosque and often the mausoleum associated with the ruling dynasty. While the citadel is prominent because of its elevated site,

opaque ramparts and gateway towers, it is the mystique of royal inhabitants, its workings as a walled mini-city, that lend it power. The royal mosque has its power, not only because of its customary architectural predominance, but also because the religious sermon is given in the name of the imam-caliph and executive edicts are pronounced from there. Piety, on the other hand, is associated with the *masjid*, the small mosque of the *mahalla*, the *turba*, *mashhad*, or *ziyāra* (shrine) of a great Imām or a Šūfī saint. There is an intimacy between the surrounding population and the *masjid* that is based on the ebb and flow of the five regular prayers. After every call to prayer, people converge hurriedly on the *masjid* and return, talking to one another, to resume their affairs. The caretakers of the shrine, often the descendants of the saint, live around the *mashhad* and a system of charitable kitchens, pilgrims' hostels and shops with flowers, perfumes, *tasbīhs*, prayer-rugs and other souvenirs form an urban node of piety that is complementary to the nodes of power.

Trade and commerce is a hallmark of the Islamic city, providing craft guilds, manufacturing houses, storage facilities, *khāns*, *funduqs* and caravanserais for merchants, with facilities for their animals. The disposal of waste and the minimizing of noise and odours determine the location of such activities. Characteristically opposite to trades are the intellectual enterprises for which the classical Islamic city is so well known. On the tradition of the *dār al-ḥikma* and the *dār al-‘ilm*, there are libraries with associated scholar-teachers. Formally, there are *madrasas* supported by the state or powerful patrons which are linked to the mosque complexes. Various schools of jurisprudence are often organized around the courtyard of a large mosque. Facilities for resident students, kitchens and an infirmary are invariably provided. *Zāwiyas*, literally, 'corners', are in fact corners of the mosque where teachers hold their classes. There are also specialized houses of learning, such as the *dār al-ḥadīth*, the centre for the study of the Prophet's traditions, or the *māristān*, which is simultaneously a charitable hospital and a medical college.

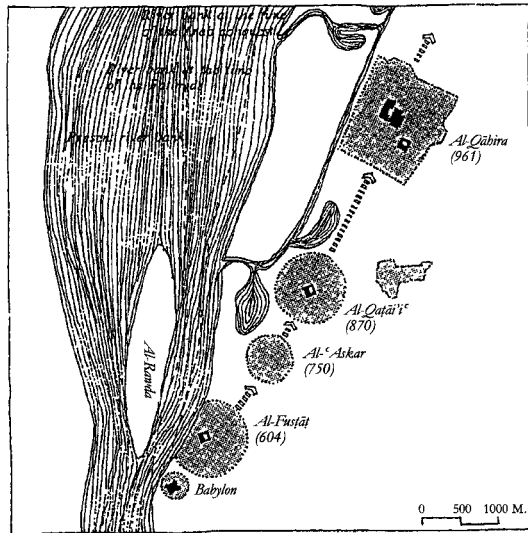
Perhaps the most formative opposition underlying the Islamic city is that between communality and privacy. If the grand mosque is expressive of the community of believers, the humble courtyard of the house stands for the sanctity and privacy of the family. While the markets (*sūqs*, *qayṣariyyas* and bazaars) create linear, planar or random transactional fields between the shopkeepers and the customers, the hearth and the table spread in the house reinforces the convergent nature of the clan. While the bath-houses (*ḥammāms*) are public places where individuals of the same sex can wash within decency codes, the *ḥaram* of the house is the *sanctum sanctorum* and inviolable except for those permitted by the *Shari‘a*. The population of the city can gather in the *muṣallā* or the *maydān* for the prayers and other special occasions, but it is the immediate neighbourhoods, the *rabaḍ*, the *māhalla* and the quarter, by which the individual locates himself in the city. It is thus that the feeling of publicly expressed community co-exists with sacredly guarded privacy and intimacy.

The encounters among the above oppositions have led to the unique architectural and urban features of Islamic civilization. The gateway between opposites, be it a house and the street, a *ḥammām* and the *sūq*, a *madrasa* and bazaar, a mosque and the *maydān*, or a citadel and the city beyond its walls, have produced exemplary solutions. The hierarchy of pathways from major connectors associated with *sūqs*, among dwelling places called *darb*, and even more private cul-de-sacs called *zuqāq*, which can even be closed at night, creating the temporary 'citadel' of the commoners, is a progressively evolved response to the oppositions of communal imperatives and the demands of privacy. The *mashrabiyya*, or oriel window, the uniquely evolved fixture of the classical Islamic city, encapsulates the essence of our entire argument. It cools the precious water by putting the pitcher out and taking the wind in, it guards the *ḥarīm* without imprisoning it, it suggests the interiority gently, it announces its wooden lightness against stone, it projects into the street without snatching any ground from it, it borrows the street space but pays back by shadowing it under a high sun, it burdens only its own wall and it celebrates light by letting only some of it come through. Like the Islamic city, it sits in artful, dynamic equilibrium between the opposites that it creates itself.

#### CAIRO: THE KEEPER OF ISLAM'S URBAN HISTORY

Islamic civilization has been represented as well as nourished by many great cities, such as Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Kufa, Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad, Cordova, Ṣan'ā', Marrakesh, Tunis, Fez, Tlemcen, Timbuktu, Samarqand, Bukhārā, Balkh, Harāt, Mosul, Bursa, Istanbul, Iṣfahān, Kāshān, Yazd, Shīrāz, Kābul, Lahore, Delhi and Acra. Cities were either founded or appropriated, as discussed earlier, and the motivations varied. Centres like Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, through the authority of the Islamic text and tradition, were nodes for pilgrimage and their 'holiness' stood in the way of their evolution as representative Islamic cities. Others, like Damascus, Aleppo, Cordova and, much later, Istanbul, had firm pre-Islamic footprints whose memory lingered through many Muslim transformations. Many cities, such as Samarqand, rose to high civilizational glory, but lost their civic energy with the fall of their founding dynasties and became mere sites of historic architecture. Cairo, however, has the distinction of being founded by Muslims in 641 and remaining a seat of governance, a centre of culture and an influential node of its civilization continuously over fourteen centuries till today. Unlike Baghdad, which was effectively obliterated by the Mongols and has no trace of its original glory other than a few minor monuments, Cairo still has the founding mosque of 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ and enough structure and mass of 'Abbāsīd, Ṭūlūnid, Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid, Mamlūk and Ottoman times, for us to study it as a text of the history of Islamic urbanism [Fig. 15].





VI-2.15 The Site of Cairo at the Time of the Fatimid Invasion and the Relationship of the New Capital al-Qāhira to the Older Cities that Superseded It

On the instruction of the Caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, his general ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ founded the garrison town of Fustāṭ al-Miṣr, literally, ‘the Encampment of Egypt’. Its location at the juncture of upper and lower Egypt was preferred over Alexandria on the Mediterranean in order to avoid the Nile Delta and thus facilitate access to the Madīna. It is also possible that, like the avoidance of Ctesiphon in Iraq, the Caliph did not want the desert Muslims to become victims of the luxuries that weakened the Sāsānids and the Romans. Al-Fustāṭ was located on the east bank of the river because, as we have already noted in the case of Basra and Kufa in Iraq, the Caliph did not want avoidable bodies of water separating his garrisons from him. ‘Amr also restored the ancient canal (*khatīj*) connecting the Nile with the Red Sea, further helping communications between Egypt and the Ḥijāz on the west coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Eventually all that was left of this canal was a large pond south-east of the Delta that came to be known as *Birkat al-Ḥajj*, as it was the first station on the pilgrim road to Mecca.

Al-Fustāṭ’s urban organization was typical of early Muslim towns and its initiation was achieved through the act of founding the mosque and the Amīr’s residence next to it. At that time, the mosque was close to the river and an open ground called *ṣaḥn* surrounded both the mosque and the house. The settlements, divided into *kbuṭaṭ*, based on tribal allegiance quarters, sur-

rounded the mosque and spread along the river bank. In about half a century, al-Fuṣṭāṭ developed into a major provincial capital and a commercial hub of the westward-expanding Muslim empire and Babylon, the old Roman fortress and town, had been absorbed by it.

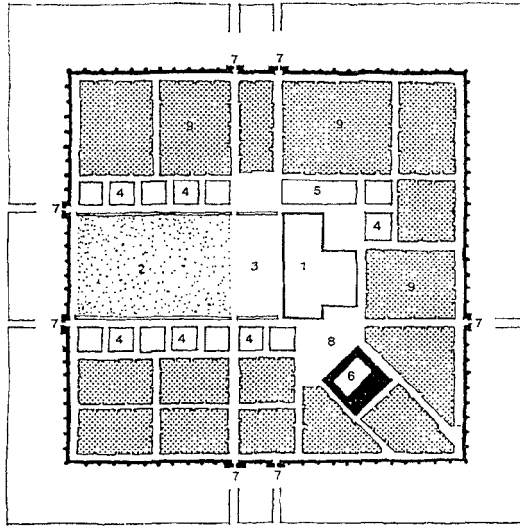
When the ʿAbbāsids replaced the Umayyads in 132/750, consolidation of their power over the provinces was an obvious top priority. They dispatched an army to Egypt which established a new town al-ʿAskar just north-east of and adjacent to al-Fuṣṭāṭ. The name literally meant ‘the gathering of soldiers’. On the one hand, the act of founding a new seat for the governor of the incoming dynasty is understandable in its symbolic value. On the other, one may propose that the indigenous population could not be trusted and the new governor found it safer to establish his mosque, his residence and the settlement for his soldiers outside the existing city. It is also possible that the separation made the ʿAbbāsīd governor’s control of a population, hitherto loyal to the Umayyads, much easier. Whatever the motivation, in the founding of al-ʿAskar one sees the initiation of a pattern that kept repeating itself, not only in the history of Cairo but in that of many other Muslim cities. Every new dynasty felt it necessary to build a new seat for itself not too far from the previous capital.

Al-ʿAskar grew as the governor’s capital, while al-Fuṣṭāṭ flourished as the commercial centre and the port on the Nile. With time the new power settled in and there was less reason for a clear separation. Al-Fuṣṭāṭ ultimately ‘absorbed’ al-ʿAskar and it became a single large city, with the latter surrendering its identity to the former. The grand mosque of al-ʿAskar, one can imagine, could never quite attain the importance of ʿAmr’s mosque in al-Fuṣṭāṭ, founded by this important Companion of the Prophet.

In 254/868, Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, the young and celebrated ʿAbbāsīd functionary from Sāmarrāʾ, was appointed governor of both Egypt and Syria, but through his political skill became effectively independent from the centre, thus founding the Ṭūlūnīd dynasty that survived until 292/905. In 256/870 he founded the new satellite city of al-Qaṭāʾīʿ to the north-east of the existing al-Fuṣṭāṭ–al-ʿAskar conglomerate. He chose the higher ground known as Jabal Yashkur, the area bounded by today’s Citadel and Sayyida Zaynab quarters. Neither the mosque of ʿAmr nor the one in al-ʿAskar was big enough for his large garrison and the growing population. On the south side of al-Qaṭāʾīʿ, in 262/876, he commissioned a very large mosque which till this day carries his name. It is the largest, earliest and, indeed, most impressive surviving mosque in the entirety of Egypt that has retained its original architectural form. Ibn Ṭūlūn, perhaps recalling the luxuries of Baghdad and Sāmarrāʾ and anticipating the future of his dynasty, built a grand palace and a hippodrome at the foot of the citadel hills on the east. The palace was known for its luxurious gardens and the hippodrome was a stage for impressive riding displays, parades and games like polo. The ruler had a special viewing-box on top of a ceremonial

entrance known as the Gate of Lions. Obviously, Muslim rulers were settling into a pattern of internal luxury and a display of external power somehow fully legitimized by the interpretative genius of the legalist court scholars. Ibn Ṭūlūn's son Khumārawayh far exceeded his father in his passion for luxury and novelty through building and collecting. His palace gardens had rare trees and flowers, exotic animals and birds brought from far places. The trees were decorated with gilded sheathings and clever watering-devices entertained the ruler. A pool of mercury supported his air-filled bedding, so that he could rock himself to sleep. In contrast with earlier times, the life of the ruler was becoming less rugged and the palaces were turning inwards and becoming make-believe worlds of desire. Around the ruler there were expanding spheres of imitated luxury of the notables of the court. One can only imagine the growing gap between the perceptions of the ruling and the ruled classes. Such decay feeds unrest and attracts adventurers. The 'Abbāsīd centre dispatched a military campaign in 292/905, aimed at cleansing the Ṭūlūnid house. Instead, it resulted in its demise. The entire area of al-Qaṭā'i' was destroyed, with the exception of Ibn Ṭūlūn's mosque and his civil works like the aqueduct. The city of al-Fuṣṭāṭ-al-'Askar survived and, in spite of the destruction of the al-Qaṭā'i' palaces, the inherited infrastructure helped in the expansion of the population. After a few decades, in 322/934 to be exact, yet another autonomous principedom called the Ikhshīdids was established in Egypt with its seat in al-Qaṭā'i'. Following the Ṭūlūnids and pre-empting the Fāṭimids, the Ikhshīdids left nothing of significance for the history of Cairo.

The Fāṭimids were well established in Tunisia by the second decade of the tenth century and had founded cities like al-Mahdiyya and al-Manṣūriyya. They were keen to move eastwards with the ultimate aim of challenging the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate in Baghdad. Egypt's weakness spurred al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh, the fourth Fāṭimid caliph, to send a campaign under his general Jawhar al-Ṣiqillī, who easily overthrew the Ikhshīdids in 358/969. The historian al-Maqrīzī described in detail the founding of the new Egyptian capital by the conquering general. With unprecedented haste he started to lay out the city walls as an intended square with sides equalling 1,200 yards each and a total of seven gates, and to build both a palace and a mosque [Fig. 16]. Of the total 340 acres enclosed, he assigned 70 to the *dār al-imāra*, another 70 were covered by an existing garden known as al-Kāfūrī, while the rest of the area was divided into 20 sectors assigned to different groups of an army that included Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, Berbers, Sudanese and Turks, in addition to Arabs. A main south-north thoroughfare cut the city and at its centre it had the *maydān* on its west and the palace on its east. The actual historical footprint of the city wall is not square and there are different explanations offered for this. Jawhar immediately started to build the palace and the mosque. The new city was named al-Manṣūriyya, honouring the memory of al-Mu'izz's father, who built a city of this name in Tunisia. Its gates were also named after the original city. The Caliph



1. Caliphal Palace 2. Garden 3. Mайдan 4. Royal Palaces 5. Guest House 6. Mosque  
7. Gates 8. Raḥbah 9. Residential Quarters

VI-2.16 The Original Plan of Cairo Initially Envisioned by  
Jawhar as al-Manṣūriyyah (A Reconstruction Based on al-Maqrīzī's  
Description of the Plan)

al-Mu'izz obviously was more interested in the symbolic relocation of the dynastic seat from Tunisia to Egypt and less in building a new city in competition with his ancestors. However, in 363/974, as he made his triumphal entry into the new city prepared for him by Jawhar, he declared it as the capital of the Fāṭimid caliphate and renamed it al-Qāhira, the city of al-Qāhir, the Victorious, the one who subdues. The name is also related to the astrological sign of Mars, which was in ascendance at the time of the city's founding. Much later, al-Qāhira got poorly transliterated into French Le Caire and English Cairo.

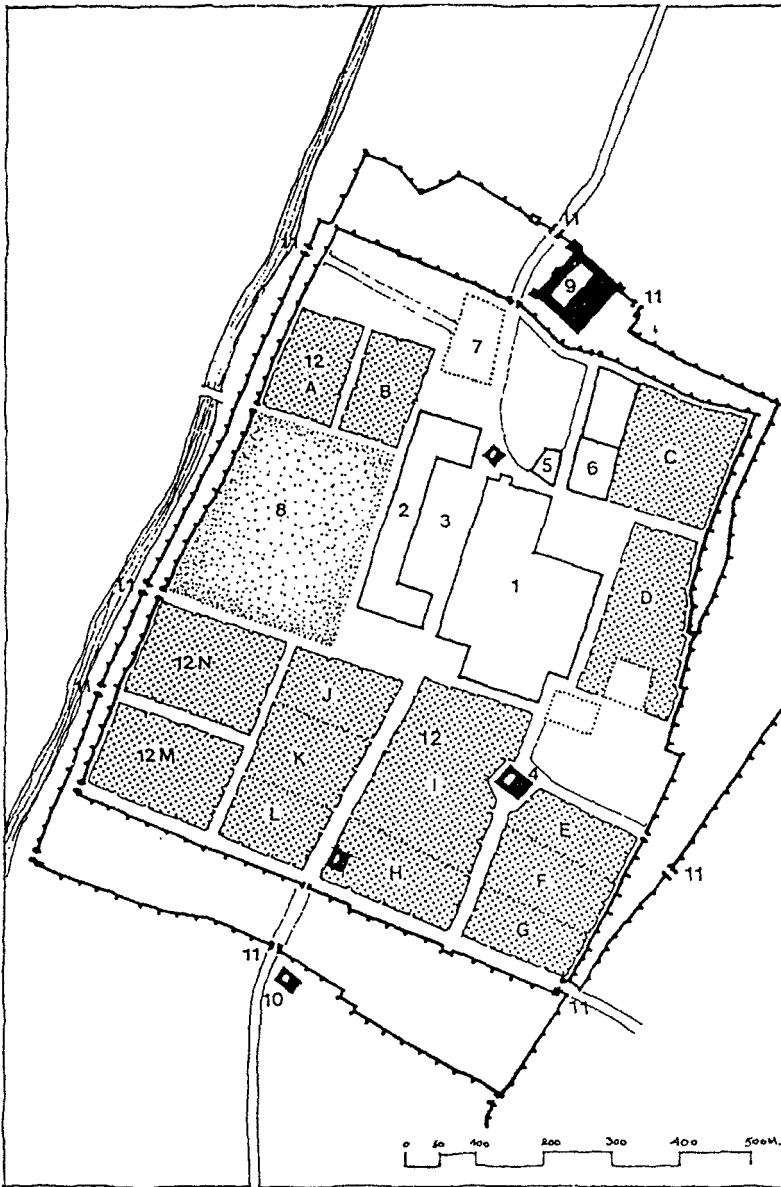
On the basis of al-Maqrīzī accounts, one can say that the original morphology of Jawhar's Cairo was quite deliberate and formal. Not unlike the 'Abbāsīd al-Manṣūr's attitude towards the founding of Baghdad, the Fāṭimid al-Mu'izz, who according to some historians actually gave Jawhar the entire 'plan' of the city, saw this as the fulfilment of their legitimate right to the caliphate of the Muslim *Umma*. Though it did not have the geometric formality of the 'Abbāsīd Round City, it did follow a hierarchical logic that placed the Caliphal palace at the centre of the scheme, axially facing a great *maydān* and then the garden on its western side. It had many great halls opening to the city through nine gates. The *maydān* was for the Caliph to review his troops, which could be as many as 10,000 during special ceremonies. The al-Kāfūrī

gardens on the west of the *maydān*, inherited from the Ikhshīdids, were walled, connected by an underground passage across the *maydān* to the palace and reserved solely for the Caliph, his family and guests. Later, a smaller palace was built on the west, visually cutting off the gardens and enclosing the ceremonial *maydān* in a royal square state guest-house. The vizier's palace and the al-Azhar mosque were both separated from the palace by open areas [Fig. 17]. Breaking the precedents of Kufa, Baghdad, and even Damascus, the mosque was quite deliberately separate from the residence of the ruler. The Fāṭimid Caliph was both spiritual and political leader. However, he considered it to his advantage to create this physical distance between the al-Azhar mosque, which he wholeheartedly patronized as the centre of prayer and learning, and his palace, which was the domain of his royal luxury and the display of his power. To various degrees, this simultaneous separation and collusion of the palace and the mosque had become a pattern across the Muslim capitals of the fourth/eleventh century and onwards.

The Caliph al-Muʿizz was followed by his son al-ʿAzīz and then a grandson al-Ḥākīm. They completed al-Muʿizz's vision of al-Qāhira and made their own additions, the most important being the Masjid al-Ḥākīm and the *Dār al-ḥikma*. The former was a large congregational mosque built outside the northernmost gate of the city. The location of a huge mosque away from the centre is important at the least for its novelty. The Friday *khutba* (sermon) was now being given from three mosques: ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ in al-Fuṣṭāṭ, and al-Azhar and al-Ḥākīm in al-Qāhira. The *Dār al-ḥikma*, literally the house of wisdom, built to the north of the western palace, attracted scholars from all parts of the Muslim world and symbolized the Caliph's love and patronage of knowledge.

Many travellers, especially al-Muqaddasī in the tenth century, Nāṣir-i Khusraw from Persia, who lived in Egypt from 438/1047 to 441/1050, and the French ambassador a century later (562/1167), have left detailed eyewitness descriptions of both al-Qāhira and al-Fuṣṭāṭ. From these, one can construct the phenomena and the physical descriptions of the 'twin-city' Fāṭimid capital. Al-Qāhira was primarily a hierarchical, ceremonial and defensive city where life revolved around the caliph and his power in both a symbolic and a real sense. Al-Fuṣṭāṭ was the real city of the people, craftsmen, production and commerce. If the former was the world of the ruling Fāṭimids, created and embellished over the previous century, the latter was the city that had grown naturally over five centuries. It had a wondrous infrastructure, including a water supply and sewage system that has attracted much attention in modern archaeology. It reportedly had buildings that rose up to fourteen storeys with roof gardens and its markets had wares from as far off as China.

While al-Manṣūr had to move the markets out of Baghdad to Karkh in order to avoid sedition by the merchant class, in al-Qāhira the caliphs to start with did not allow any permanent footings for the markets within its walls. The city had a booming commerce during the day and the merchants from



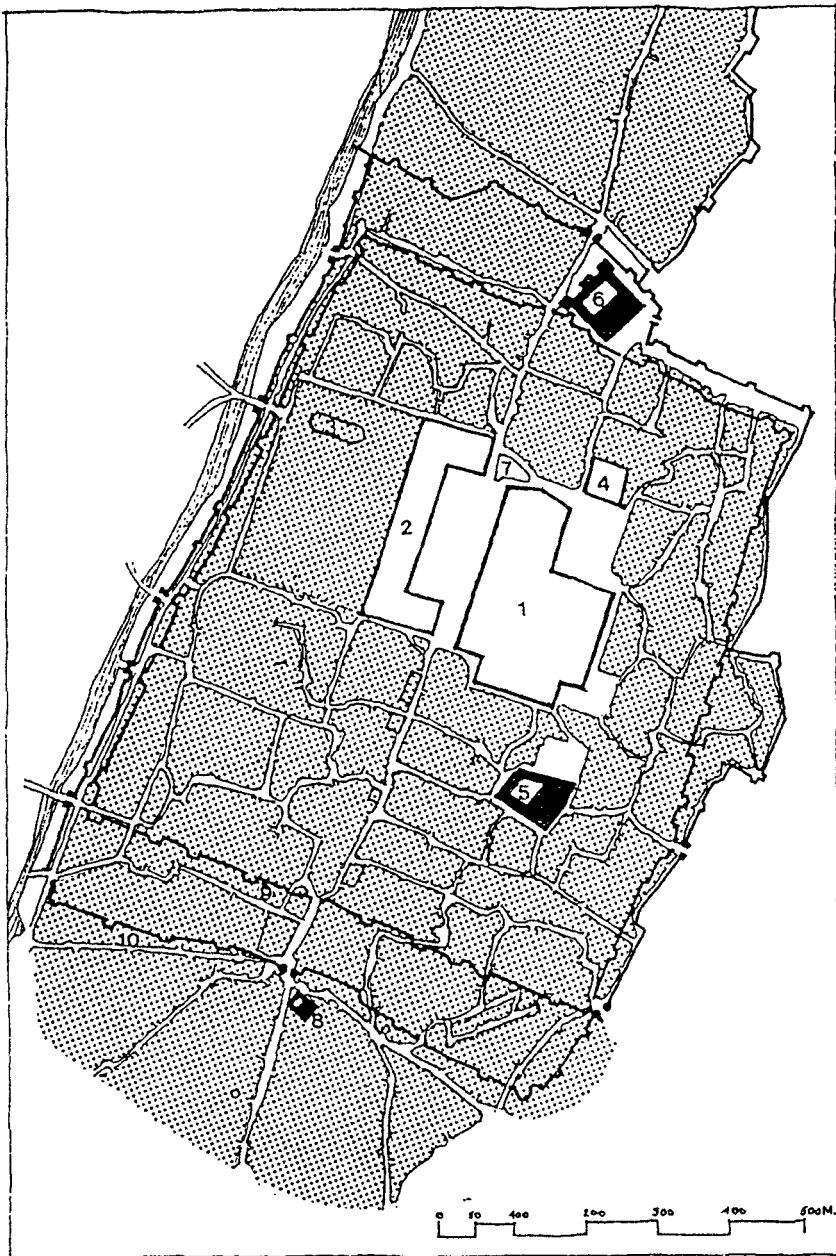
1. Big Eastern Palace 2. Small Western Palace 3. Palace Square 4. Al-Azhar Mosque  
 5. Guest House 6. Minister's House 7. Stables 8. Kāfūrī Garden 9. Al-Hākim Mosque  
 10. Mosque 11. Gates 12. Residential Quarters: A. Farahiyah B. Bergoan C. Outoufiyah  
 D. Barqiyyah E. Koutamah F. Ṭawāriq G. Sharabiyyah H. Greek I. Daiylam J. 'Umarah  
 K. Judariyyah L. Zuaylah M. Maḥmūdiyyah N. 'Uzriyyah

VI-2.17 A Reconstruction of the Plan of Cairo as Implemented on Site,  
 Based on the Egyptian Geographic Society Map of 1922

Greater al-Fuṣṭāṭ were allowed to come and set up their shops, which, according to Nāṣir-i Khusraw, were as many as 20,000! But this was primarily a day-time activity. No one owned any shops or commercial property in al-Qāhira except the caliph, and even residences were built only with the permission of the court. The merchants kept their permanent residences and the production in al-Fuṣṭāṭ. The two cities were different as organisms but mutually dependent. With marked sectarian differences between the people in al-Fuṣṭāṭ and the rulers in al-Qāhira, one can only imagine the underlying currents of mutual suspicion. Such oppositions between the sects of the ruler and the ruled had also existed in Kufa, Baghdad and Iṣfahān, causing the formative tensions so crucial to the transformation of ethnic boundaries into the boundaries among religious orders in the classical Islamic city.

The Egyptian capital, especially the older parts of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, suffered numerous natural catastrophes in 460/1068 that resulted in much physical and economic chaos. The Caliph al-Mustaṣṣir called upon his Syrian governor Badr al-Jamālī to restore order. Like Niẓām al-Mulk of Baghdad, Badr was a man of vision who understood the subtleties of population and power and the rôle of civic projects. His most important act was to open up al-Qāhira by transferring some markets from al-Fuṣṭāṭ and permitting the limited construction of private residences by the wealthy. This broke the exclusivity of al-Qāhira as the royal enclave and reduced the alienation of the citizens of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, by now known as Old Miṣr (*al-qadīma*). He consolidated the city by building a larger defensive wall against the threat of a Saljūq invasion, which encompassed the Fāṭimid constructions outside its original walls of Jawhar. It is from this time that Cairo acquired the famous gates of Futūḥ, Naṣr and Zuwayla. By his powerful personality and as *de-facto* controller of the affairs of the state, Badr made the *Dār al-wiẓāra*, the office-residence of the vizier, almost on a par with the caliphal seat. This building became an important node of power and remained as the residence of the viziers until the final 'vizier' Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī occupied it in 566/1171 and overthrew the last Fāṭimid caliph.

The second century of the Fāṭimids (479–566/1087–1171) was plagued by indirect and, later, by the direct consequences of the Crusades. The First Crusade began in 489/1096 and Jerusalem fell to the Franks in 492/1099. The Saljūqs and Zangids of Syria kept up their campaigns against the Crusaders and in 559/1164, when the French king Amaury came from Jerusalem to take Egypt, Nūr al-Dīn al-Zangī sent Shīrkūh and his nephew Salāḥ al-Dīn to the rescue of the Fāṭimids. The caliphate was weak and the government was in the hands of the viziers. Over the five years of turmoil for the control of Egypt, the old distinctions and symbiotic interdependence between al-Fuṣṭāṭ and al-Qāhira were erased for ever. In 563/1168 al-Fuṣṭāṭ was ordered to be burnt to the ground by a vizier named Shāwar in order to prevent it from becoming a garrison for the Crusaders. The population, ravaged by such disasters, moved towards al-Qāhira and for ever broke down its princely exclusivity [Fig. 18].



1. Caliphal Eastern Palace 2. Western Palace 3. Stables 4. Wazir's Palace  
5. Al-Azhar Mosque 6. Al-Ḥākim Mosque 7. Al-Aqmar Mosque 8. Al-Şāleh Mosque  
9. Old Walls Ş Gates 10. New Walls Ş Gates

VI-2.18 Cairo at the End of the Fatimid Rule, After Ravaisse



Salāh al-Dīn founded the Ayyūbid dynasty (566–647/1171–1250) and his grand consolidating gestures set Cairo on the path to become the most magnificent city of the Islamic Middle Ages. He gave the Fāṭimid palaces to lesser nobles and established himself in the *dār al-wiṣāra*. Some palaces were torn down and replaced by schools and mosques. He encouraged the construction of houses and markets. The slowly evolved organic morphology of al-Fuṣṭāṭ laid itself over the formal and palatial set-up of Fāṭimid al-Qāhira. He set out to enclose the entire region of the capital in one large system of defensive walls. He wanted to cross the Khalīj, (canal) that had for so long acted as the western boundary of the city, and even to enclose the Nile port of al-Maḡs. South-eastward, beyond the Bāb al-Zuwayla, he cleared out the pro-Fāṭimid Sudanese garrison and restored the region to parks and gardens. At the al-Muqaṭṭam hills he started to construct the Citadel in the manner of his Syrian tradition of hilltop fortifications and this ultimately was to be his residence. It is a remarkable coincidence of nature and history that the Nile started to shift westwards, freeing generous amounts of fertile land, about the same time as Cairo was breaking out of its seams with population and building-energy. A great deal of what Salāh al-Dīn had started was completed by his successors before his dynasty fell apart by 646/1249.

After manoeuvring through a decade of internal chaos and then checking the Mongol advance in Syria, the noted general Baybars founded what came to be known as the Bahārī Mamlūk dynasty (658–783/1260–1382). He also opened the doors of Egypt to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate, which had no seat after the sack of Baghdad two years earlier (655/1258). This gave him much-needed legitimacy without sharing any power with guest caliphs. The Mamlūks were a peculiar development in the history of Islamic power structures. They were mercenary soldiers of Kurdish and Turkish origins and were given special powers by Sultan Malik al-Sāliḥ, the last major Ayyūbid sultan. They neither had any religious pretensions like the Fāṭimids, or historical claims like the ‘Abbāsīds, nor had they any reforming zeal like the early Ayyūbids. Being from an élite corpse of fighters imported to protect the earlier caliphs, they had little feeling for the indigenous populations. They worked through local intermediaries and were primarily interested in the flow of taxes. They became formidable ‘merchants’ of power and understood the rôle of the market, the mosque and money. These ‘ex-slaves’ made intelligent masters and exacting patrons.

While Baybars focused primarily on defensive improvements in Cairo, his second successor Sultan Qalāwūn built the famous hospital in the heart of the city. More remarkable, however, was his son Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who ruled between 692/1293 and 741/1341. Succeeding at the age of eight under the protection of Mamlūk emirs, he was removed twice but returned each time with an increased sense of power. Though two centuries earlier than him, his life and times could be compared to that of Akbar the Great in India. His

third reign, that lasted for thirty-one years (709–741/1310–1341), was the most nourishing period for Cairo. The city knew peace and security after a long interval; the importance of Cairo as the essential node on the east-west spice trade was at a peak; the coffers were full and the Nile had settled in its new position, releasing land awaiting construction and gardens. Cairo was transformed in four ways. Firstly, the north-south axis of the Fāṭimid Cairo that connected the Bāb al-Futūḥ and the Bab al-Zuwayla was greatly intensified and became the legendary Qaşba, the business district with numerous new *sūqs* boasting a total of as many as 12,000 permanent shops and uncountable itinerant vendors. This Qaşba in fact had spilled out towards the south of Bāb al-Zuwayla. Secondly, Cairo expanded both north and south beyond the walls. The term *Zābir al-Qāhira*, literally meaning the ‘visible Cairo’, was used for the Cairo emerging outside the walled city, which of course was the Madīnat al-Qāhira. Towards the north there developed the suburb of al-Ḥusayniyya, while in the south the process started by Salāḥ al-Dīn blossomed as a luxurious residential development along the Birkat (the Pond) al-Fil. The phenomenon of the city expanding beyond the defensive walls was in fact happening in other parts of the Muslim world too, primarily because the relative peace and the removal of the Mongol threat had made it attractive for people to build outside the walls. The third phenomenon in the time of al-Nāṣir was the long, narrow and contiguous development that connected the Great Qarāfa, including the tomb of Imam al-Shāfi‘ī in the south of the Bāb al-Naṣr cemetery, to the tomb of Badr al-Jamālī to the north. This later became the intense north-south residential city, sprinkled with magnificent Mamlūk tombs like those of Barqūq, Īnāl and Qā’itbāy, and deserved the evocative title of the City of the Dead. Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, al-Nāṣir commissioned the Western Canal, known both as *Khalīj al-Nāṣiri* and *Khalīj al-Maghribī*, that ran parallel to the existing canal, *al-Khalīj al-Miṣri al-kabīr*. This masterful act of urban vision consolidated the safest parts of the land, including the former al-Maqṣ harbour, that had been surrendered by the Nile. Four ponds that brought much fertility and beauty were attractive features of the new development. Off the old canal he developed another pond known as Birkat al-Qārūn that revived the area, which had been deserted since the destruction of the Ṭūlūnid al-‘Askar.

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn’s Cairo, in the mid-fourteenth century, not only was the largest and most magnificent city of the Islamic world of its time, but there was nothing to match it in either size, quality of life or wealth in Europe and Asia. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, who between 725/1325 and 754/1354 travelled much of the known world of his day, waxed eloquently on the

Mother of the cities,... mistress of broad regions and fruitful lands,... peerless in beauty and splendour,... she surges as the sea with her throngs of folk and can scarcely contain them for all the capacity of her situation and sustaining

power,... the *madrasas* of Cairo cannot be counted for multitude,... as for the Māristān, near the mausoleum of Sultan Qalāwūn, no description is adequate to its beauties... the noble vie with one another in building (religious establishments, (*khānqāhs*)...

Egypt suffered much from plagues, external threats and internal dissension among the Mamlūks over the next 150 years. But the tradition and the momentum of patronage of religious, educational and charitable foundations, of tombs, of palatial residences and of luxurious life sustained the nature, if not the size and intensity, of Cairo. Even in the worst of political times, rulers such as Qā'itbāy (872–901/1468–1496) and Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī (906–911/1501–1516) kept refining the legacy of Cairo that was the envy of the world. The Ottoman conquest of Egypt provided much-needed political stability, but not for long. Cairo was reduced to being a provincial capital of the vast Ottoman Empire, whose main capital Istanbul received the prime attention. Many urban and architectural contributions of that period are impressionistically alien to Cairo as they are reproductive extensions of Istanbul's architecture.

The severest blow to the city came from the reduction of Cairo's essential status on the east-west trade routes through the development of alternative routes by the European sea-faring and colonizing powers. Like a great city, with progressively refined structures and ecology, Cairo did not surrender its inherent Islamic identity and quality, but the monotonic descent continued and accelerated after Napoleon marched in from the west of the Nile in 1212/1798. Even today Cairo retains enough Islamicity for someone, not even knowing its history in detail, to be able, walking from the Masjid al-Ḥākīm to the Madrasa of Sultan Ḥasan, to ignore the tell-tale impositions of modernity and phenomenologically savour the nature of Islamic urbanism.

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Chapter 3

MUSIC, SONG AND THE  
PERFORMING ARTS. TRADITION:  
PAST AND  
PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS

*Metin And*

### Introduction

Islam is the second largest faith after Christianity. As a religion, it has created a way of life which has deeply influenced the arts and literature of the varied peoples who share this faith. However, in spite of the uniform character of Islamic civilization, there is, and has always been, a tremendous variety of expression arising from the ethnic and cultural diversity of all these constituent peoples.

Throughout the ages, musical and theatrical culture and practices have spread and intermingled as the result of migrations, war, education and a host of other causes. The Islamic musical and theatrical culture was the fruit of an encounter between different cultures. Each race had its influence on the other. With the Arab culture acting as a catalyst, cross-fertilization among Persians, Turcomans and Turks led to a particular style, texture and colouring. In their music, many Islamic lands were indebted to Persia, Syria, Turkey and, perhaps, to Byzantium in the East and Spain in the West. The 'Abbāsids won the accession to the caliphate with the help of Persian and Khurāsānian levies and Arab arts became infected with Iranian and Turcoman ideas. Persian theory, especially in nomenclature, found expression everywhere in Arab, Turkish, Indian and Turcoman music. The conquests of the Islamic armies spread as far afield as the Oxus in the east and Spain and Morocco in the west. They touched the Caspian in the north and India in the south. Arab trading and raiding expeditions into South East Asia established contact between the peoples there and the Arab world, stretching from the Middle East to North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula. The Arabs embraced Islam between the seventh and tenth centuries AD and carried the Islamic religion to Java and other places in the region through the medium of small trading colonies that

they had established in the coastal cities. This led to the introduction of stories of Arab, Persian, Mesopotamian and Egyptian origin into the folklore of Muslim India and South East Asia. Consequently, Islam made an important contribution to the popular theatre in this region. Troupes avidly dramatized stories, as they were Islamic in context and exciting tales. The heroes of the *Shāhnāma* the *Iskandar-nāma* (the Alexander cycle) and, most importantly, the *Ḥamza-nāma* were adopted into their folklore. On the other hand, the Arabs brought many things from the Far East, among them the shadow-theatre from Indonesia. There is little doubt that this is the source of the Turkish *Qaragöz*, which was introduced into Turkey from Egypt in the tenth/sixteenth century. The Egyptian Mamlūks had enjoyed shadow-theatre since the Middle Ages. Some curious resemblances between the Turkish and the Javanese traditional forms are noteworthy.

During the heyday of Moorish music in Spain, Hispano-Moorish culture had spread throughout the Maghrib, which constituted Mediterranean Africa from the Atlantic to the border of Egypt, this is to say Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.

With the coming of the Ayyūbids and Saljūqs, who were of Turcoman or Circassian ancestry, a fresh cultural infringement began to show itself in Persia, Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt. The music of other cultures was grafted upon Arab roots with a character of its own.

The cultural influences of the Crusades were far reaching, but the beneficiary was the Christian world, not the domain of Islam. The Crusaders respected the culture of their Muslim foes and took home knowledge and objects which were unknown to the West.

The various Turkish peoples in Central Asia and Siberia had a reciprocal influence with other Asiatic nations, particularly the Chinese. The movement of Asiatic peoples to America has been conjectured. There are certain cultural similarities, such as the practice of shamanism, a number of games, musical structures and handicraft motifs. Moreover, the old civilization of Mexico bears unmistakable traces of Asiatic influence, which must predate the Spanish conquest. At some time in the distant past, Asiatic cultural traits were carried to the North American continent. It has even been suggested that they were brought from Asia in the dawn of time before the Bering straits separated the regions.

For centuries, the entire traffic between Iran, the Roman Orient and China on one side, and India and China on the other, passed through Eastern Turkistan. Along the two Silk Roads, the great lines of communication in the North and the South, passed not only material goods but many of cultural and intellectual value. Buddhism and Manichaeism advanced from the West to the East. A wealth of plastic and pictorial discoveries from archaeological expeditions have brought to light valuable manuscripts, thousands of terracottas, plastics, frescoes and miniatures on which numerous musical instruments, musicians and dancers are portrayed, belonging to different periods from the

third to the ninth centuries AD. For instance, early in this century, two funerary caskets with twenty-one interesting figures depicting dancers and musicians dating from the sixth or seventh century were found at Kucha. The dancers, wearing masks and distinctive costumes, are performing the Japanese *gigaku* dance. Such surface decorations with scenes of dance and music are also found on terracotta pieces from Khotan. The most respected musician-slaves sent to China as a tribute were instructors as well as performers. The Chinese musicians of the first-second/eighth century did not disdain to acknowledge that they had studied under a Kuchean master of musical instruments. Not all foreign musicians were court-slaves. There was a large number of free musicians from Kucha, Samarqand and Kabudhān, situated below the Pamirs. All these wandering musicians made their contribution to the popular music of China.

Young boy and girl dancers from Central Asia were also admired. Their dances were classified into two groups: pliant dances, which were graceful and refined, and vigorous dances.

Among the important Arabic theorists of music are al-Fārābī, who was a Turcoman, and Ibn Sīnā, who was born near Bukhārā. The influence of Persian instruments, such as the *sitār*, *tunbūra*, *surnāy*, *naggāra* and *duff*, was seen in Turcoman lands and as far as China. The Turcoman rulers in Arab countries were partial to this music, which resembled their indigenous type.

At the end of the Middle Ages, following their conquests, the Ottoman Turks extended their rule over large areas of Europe, Asia and North Africa. The Ottoman Empire, the longest-lasting in history, embraced countless nations and peoples, resulting in a continual cross-influence of cultures throughout the Ottoman territories, as well as cultural exchanges between the Ottoman Empire and Christian Europe.

At the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century, the Turks had become the masters and brought their own music and musicians to Algiers, Constantine, Tripoli, Tunis and other cities of Mediterranean Africa. Turkish music soon showed its influence on the music of the Maghrib and other countries. Music in a number of countries became thoroughly Ottomanized and the Turks established a cultural aristocracy in countries such as Syria, Iraq and Egypt. In the thirteenth/nineteenth century especially, Turkish music predominated in Syria and Iraq and was much favoured at the Khedive's Court in Egypt. Its influence on the instrumental music of the Near East and the Balkans was considerable.

Turkish military music was the first to influence the West. The *jaghāna*, the crescent-pointed standard hung with horsetails and bells that was carried in front of the Janissaries, was copied in a modified form. Being mispronounced as 'johanna', it eventually was called the 'jingling Johnny' in English. Several classical composers, notably Mozart, were influenced by their knowledge of Turkish military music.

As for the theatre, regardless of whether the introduction of shadow-theatre is credited to the Egyptians or not, Qaragöz has developed in its maturity as a purely Turkish phenomenon.

Many Ottoman Turks helped and encouraged the spread of Western-style theatre in the lands under their rule. Moreover, in the last years of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, Turkish theatre companies frequently performed in Egypt. When the great statesman Midhat Pasha became governor of Syria (comprising present-day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan), he supported Qabbānī in his struggle to establish an Arab theatre there.

Another Ottoman statesman who encouraged efforts for the establishment of the theatre was ‘Alī Bey. He introduced Molière to Bulgarian audiences while he was the governor of Varna. As Grand Vizier, ‘Alī Pasha granted a monopoly to the Ottoman Theatre Company, which presented plays in Turkish, Armenian and Bulgarian.

### Islam’s attitude to music, dance and the performing arts

Music, dance and all other performing arts were always regarded somewhat paradoxically in the Islamic countries. The paradox arose from the discrepancy between the unfavourable attitude of Muslim purists towards performing arts and the existence of abundant music, dance and dramatic forms as an almost indispensable part of Islamic social life in practice.

Alongside the presence of very rich and varied folk-music in Islamic lands, there is also a distinctive ‘art-music’ that developed in the Golden Age of Islam from the fusion of Arab music with that of other cultures, especially Iranian, North African and Turkish, together with elements from places as diverse as Syria, Greece and Spain. Whereas folk-music generally clung closely to local roots, art-music was enjoyed by cultured listeners throughout the Islamic world, despite some religious opposition. However, in the Qur’ān there is no verse where music is specifically condemned. It is known that music was played at the wedding of the Prophet to Khadija and also at his daughter Fāṭima’s wedding.

The argument whether music is permissible or not dates from the time when religious legists began collecting the sayings (*ḥadīth*) of the Prophet Muḥammad. Some legists argued that certain forms of music were approved by the Prophet but that singing was generally considered improper because of its association with drinking and erotic dancing. As the rhythmic prose of the Qur’ān inevitably led its readers to cantillation, the legists justified this by the term ‘raising the voice’ (*takbīr*), also found in the infinite variations and haunting cadences of the ‘call to prayer’ that was so distinct from ‘singing’ (*ghimā*). The debate continued for centuries. On the whole, the great legal schools of Islam opposed music while the mystics venerated it as an essential aid to religious sublimation. Among the different views expounded by philo-

sophers and theologians, the Ṣūfī al-Ghazālī (d. 504/1111) divided the people who were influenced by music into two groups: those who heard only the material sounds and those in tune with its spiritual meaning.

Extensive literature exists in Arabic and Turkish on the lawfulness and unlawfulness of music and dancing in the people's exercises. Although dance was considered altogether reprehensible by conservative Muslims, the Ṣūfīs, who sought a more direct contact with God, looked upon it in a more tolerant way and cited occasions where dancing was allowed.

Among the many celebrated Ṣūfī disciples, al-Ghazālī, a remarkable theologian and lawyer, makes an apology for dancing under certain conditions in his book *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences). He very ably explains that melodies which stir up feelings of gladness, joy and emotion and their manifestation through poetry, airs, dancing and movement are praiseworthy. He emphasizes that in the case of certain laws laid down by the Qur'ān, the time, place, social usage, one's ability and the circumstances should be taken into consideration when dancing takes place. He tells about the sanctions regarding singing and dancing, what constitutes dancing, the dance of the Abyssinians and the Prophet's permission for listening to music and song on festival days. He tells of one instance when the Prophet allowed dancing and two others when he found it praiseworthy, adding the comment that, in the opinion of the Prophet, dancing was never befitting to a notable person. Al-Ghazālī also discusses the dancer's attitude of mind towards the dance, noting that only genuine ecstasy will make his movements light and brisk.

Similarly, commenting on the odes of Ibn al-Farīd, one scholar makes the following remark: 'Many Ṣūfīs looked with disfavour on the ecstatic dance, which is a well-known feature of the *samā'* (cf. the saying *al-raḡṣ naḡṣ* 'dancing is a fault'). Ibn al-Farīd justifies this on the grounds that it is an anodyne to the fever of the soul; its violent movements calm the agitating reminiscences awakened by music and rock the soul to rest.' Early Ṣūfī writers such as al-Sarrāj, al-Qushayrī and al-Ḥujwīrī do not agree with him in thinking that the practice of *samā'* is beneficial. The Syrian jurist Ibn Taymiyya was especially prominent in voicing his opposition by issuing many pamphlets and *fatwās* condemning eminent Ṣūfīs and their practice in seeking ecstasy through music and dancing as contrary to the law. The dancing practised by these orders was condemned by the orthodox Muslims and '*ulamā'*' (learned men) on the grounds of its being sinful, or sometimes as not being praiseworthy. In some cases, the '*ulamā'*' tried to suppress the dances on political grounds.

Some countries, such as India, Malaysia and Indonesia, retained their rich theatrical heritage when they embraced Islam, but the lack of great Islamic drama in their culture has often been remarked upon. Firstly, this is because, among all the great religions, Islam has the least mythology. The second reason can be found in the attitude of orthodox Muslims to the *ta'zīya* dramas of



the Persian Shī'īs, who have perpetuated the ancient myth of ritual murder and the sacred dramas that accompanied it in their dramatic representations of the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn. These performances have always been disapproved of, even condemned, as having no basis in the *Ḥadīth*.

When trying to explain the absence of Islamic drama, some scholars have accepted the false premise that figural representations as well as imitation of other creatures are condemned in Islam. But the Qur'ān does not contain a single word against them.

Another viewpoint was that Islam in medieval times was too preoccupied with metaphysics and was never interested in the emotions, the inner psychology of the individual. The artistic pleasure which Western audiences feel in the beauty of the awe-inspiring, the magnificent decline, the grandeur of the desperate battle of life without hope and success, is foreign to their traditional way thinking.

Some scholars thought that the character of their language, which pleased only the élite, prevented the Arabs from finding their way to dramatic art. Another controversial conjecture is the lack of tension in the Arab mind, a tendency also found in Arab music. Another reason yet might be that there was no example of the drama from the West to be followed during the earlier years of Islam. Though Arabs had a deep knowledge of ancient Greek culture, instead of translating literature they preferred to translate works about philosophy, logic, medicine and science. The Arabs translated or summarized Aristotle's *Poetics* (al-Fārābī's *Canons of Poetry* and the interpretations of the *Poetics* by Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) and Averroes (Ibn Rushd)). These translations not only showed misunderstandings of their Greek model but, because of the terminology and other particulars, failed in their efforts and were not influential in the creation of a drama by the Arabs.

Shadow-theatre is widespread in Islamic countries. In order to compromise with the teachings of Islam, shadow-play figures were stripped of the proportions of the human anatomy and became stylized bird-like figures, whereas in non-Muslim Bali, the figures look more like human beings.

Turkey was the only country where dramatic representations were allowed under some religious pretext throughout all the regions inhabited by Muslim peoples. The very fact that there was a *fatwā* designed to limit the nature of the performance is ample proof that the representation and imitation of living figures were allowed. Plays and puppet-shows were favourite popular entertainments and the sultan occasionally attended such public performances. In the thirteenth/nineteenth century, a theatre was established in the Yıldız Sarayı (Yıldız Palace) by the sultan, who aided and supported the public theatres and the artists.

Nevertheless, Islam, whether Arab or non-Arab, could not create a purely Islamic form. Yet two forms do approach an indigenous Islamic drama. One is the *ta'ziya*, which acquired various dramatic and non-dramatic ele-

ments predating the existence of Islam. The other is *bābāt*, which is reflected in three shadow-plays written by the eighth/fourteenth-century Egyptian optometrist Muḥammad b. Dāniyāl. There are evidences of a rich tradition of theatrical and paratheatrical manifestations.

## Occasions for music

In Islam, every anniversary and important event is an occasion for music. Besides the daily calls to prayer, the birthday of the Prophet and the nights of Ramaḍān are marked by special chants and various musical genres have evolved for the veneration of particular saints, such as the music associated with the Passion-plays performed in Muḥarram to commemorate the martyrdom of Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.

Some musical forms are performed at certain religious festivals. On the nights of Ramaḍān, special tunes for this occasion are chanted to neutralize, to some extent, the tension of the fasting period. On the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muḥammad (*mawlid*, *mevlid*), celebrated on the twelfth of Rabīʿ I (the third month of the Muslim lunar year), hymns and narratives of the Prophet's birth and life are chanted by the people assembled for this occasion. Among the large number of *mawlid* poems in Arabic and Turkish, that of the Turkish poet Sulaymān Chelebī (d. 811/1409) entitled *Mawlid-i Nebi* (a hymn about the birth of the Prophet) has attained such popularity that it is recited on other occasions, such as weddings and various anniversaries and following funerals. Subsequently, similar hymns were written by other poets.

Those who recite the *mawlid*, on private or public occasions, are selected for the sweetness of their voice, often deeply affecting their audience, who are moved to tears. Sulaymān Chelebī's poem is in four distinct sections and each is chanted in a different *maqām* (mode), namely *dugāh*, *Ḥusaynī*, *rāst* and *ʿIrāq*.

Music played an important rôle in the ceremonies (*dhikr*) of nearly all the mystic brotherhoods or Dervish orders. The combination of dance and music achieved its highest form in the mystic dance (*samāʿ*), of the Mawlawī, or Whirling Dervishes, whose founder Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī described music as 'the soul's adornment, which aids to discover love and enter the Divine Presence'. The *samāʿ* is performed to the accompaniment of a song and an orchestral group, composed of flutes, drums and stringed instruments. There are centuries-old written compositions for this purpose. The significance of music in the ceremonies of the mystic orders greatly helped the development of a secular music and encouraged composers.

Ottoman festivals were public celebrations marking every event in the life of the sultan and his household: the sultan's ascent to the throne, his victories, births, marriages, circumcision celebrations and the like. The latter provided great opportunities for song, dance and music. In domestic life women cele-

brated the birth of a baby with a song, marking the rhythm with tambourines and hand-clapping. Caliphs, sultans and wealthy noblemen had in their households skilled musicians trained in special schools. To this day, distinguished musicians continue to teach the highly complex rules and conventions of the Islamic art of music.

## Conventions, modes and forms of Islamic music

In ancient times many Islamic sages accepted music as part of the macro-cosmic system, so the melodic notes and rhythmic modes (*īqā'āt*) were closely linked with the universe. It was based on the ancient doctrine of the harmony of the spheres, and music, or rather sound, was a cosmic principle as far as primary elements were concerned, namely the humours, the seasons, the ages of men and so on, all being related to the planetary system. Among some early rulers, the cosmic influence of music was even part of the governmental procedure. Certain modes were used at appropriate hours of the day and the month, especially for their astrological significance. For instance, a certain *maqām* might be connected with the hours of the day, like *nāst* (sunrise), *rāḥawī* (morning), *‘Irāq* (nine o'clock), *būsalik* (afternoon), *Ḥusaymī* (end of the night), *nawā* (before night prayer).

The idea of music embraced not only cosmological doctrine but moral and medical belief. Music had been part of therapeutic practice in Arab medicine since the second-third/ninth century. Listening to certain kinds of music at particular times and in a particular *maqām* was believed to be therapeutic, both for homoeopathic and allopathic treatment. For instance, the *maqām ‘Irāq* has a healing effect on palpitation and dementia, *rāḥawī* on headache, *nāst* on the eyes, *buzurq* colic, *zengüle* on heart diseases, *Isfahān* on colds, and so on.

Mamlūk sultans, who ruled Egypt between the years 647–922/1250 – 1517, were of Turcoman stock. One of them, Qalāwūn, established a hospital (*māristān*) where music was provided for patients, healing them through purification. Another example is the hospital established in Edirne by the Turkish Sultan Bāyazīd II (941–968/1535–1561) as part of his endowment. Concerts were given to the patients three times a week for psychiatric treatment. The expenses and fees of the musicians were covered by the income from the endowment.

One small text of the ninth/fifteenth century may be considered as the first complete treatise on music and dancing in Turkey. There are two manuscripts extant, one of which is preserved at the Fatih Library (No. 5335) in Istanbul and the other in the Halk (public) Library (No. 320) in Ankara. This work provides a symbolic explanation of ancient Turkish dancing and, in fact, has reinforced with literary proof views and explanations which we had already formed from a study of the dances.

The unknown author of the old manuscript traces the development of dance from its spiritual birth at the creation of the world. He states that when God created the universe, divine energy resounded and from that sound arose the twelve modes of music, giving birth to four different types of dancing namely *çarb*, *raqs*, *mu‘allaq* and *partaw*. From this creation emerged a Şūfi dressed in blue (*Sofî-i ezrak pûs*), who started whirling. The author goes on to link the physical movement of the body in dance with the spiritual experience of the dance itself. It is here that he mentions the word *sema*. The connotations of this word are interesting, for its meaning is twofold. In the first place, the word means ‘listening to music’ (Arabic *samā’*), but it has another meaning with a different spelling in Arabic, *samā’* namely ‘the heavens’.

The room where this dance was performed symbolized the year, while the leader himself represented the sun, the life-giver of the earth, and the dancers revolved around him like the stars and the moon in the *çarb*, *raqs*, *mu‘allaq* and *partaw* styles. These symbolized the four seasons born of the twelve months, which in turn represented the twelve modes of music from which the four dances were born. These four dances were not only linked to the four seasons but also to the four elements, and the four elements comprising the human body, all related to the four ages of man.

In Islam there is no religious music in the same sense as Christian church music. Yet vocal music, in praise of God, has always found a place both in and outside the mosque. Firstly, there is the proper chanting of the Qur‘ān, which is constructed in rhymed prose. Then we have the *adhān*, the call to prayer, which is chanted five times a day from the top of the minaret by the *mu‘adhdhin* (the person who calls people to prayer) and within the mosque there is chanting in chorus known as *iqāma*.

Religious music finds expression even in the social activities of the people of Islam. There are a great number of hymns (*nashā‘id*), known by the generic name *ilabi* in Turkish. Chanting of the *takbīr* (Confession of Faith) is a constant feature of most religious occasions. The Turkish *takbīr* is always in the *‘Irāq* mode. Other religious forms are *munājāt* (secret conversation), *marthīya* (dirge), *na‘t* (quality) and *madhīyya* (like the ode, *qaşīda*, which in this case is in praise of the Prophet). The Turkish *durak* is chanted by the dervish orders and based on the poems of the mystics.

In the Islamic lands, all music is homophonic, that is, unisonal. It is quite devoid of what the Occident calls harmony. This exists, however, in the three forms of heterophony, drone and consonance that are used for the occasional adornment in which two consonant notes, like the octave and the fourth, mingle in the same stroke. Nevertheless, it is only a simultaneous adornment.

Islamic rhythm stems from the metres of poetry. Rhythmic patterns appear in all melodies, whether vocal or instrumental. Accents are given in timbre rather than force.

Owing to the high esteem in which poetry was held by the Arabs, Turks and Persians, vocal music was preferred. For instance, the Afghan and Persian ballad *taşnîf* was composed on well-known poems by Sa'dî and Hâfîz. Prevalent Arabic vocal forms are the *qaşîda* (ode), *ghazal* (denoting love-song), the Andalusian ballad form *muwashshah* and the *zajal*. Important Turkish vocal forms are *kaside*, *ğazel*, *arki*, *beste*, *murabba*, *kâr* and *semâi*.

The *nawba* (literally, 'change, turn') is the oldest and the largest cyclic form of the Maghrib, a composition originally a suite in four sections, to which a fifth was later added. Each of the vocal sections was introduced by an instrumental prelude. Similar cyclic forms have been known in other parts of the Islamic world. In Persian music, the *nawba* developed into *nawbat-i marâtib*, which is in several movements. The first one is a kind of prelude, and the others are *tarâna*, *furûdasht*, *amal*, *naqsh*, *şawt hawâ* and *murassa*. Similar to *nawba* is the Turkish *fasıl* with several movements, both instrumental and vocal, arranged in a certain order and all performed in the same *maqâm*.

The Turkish *peşrev* (like Persian *pîşraw*) is preceded by a *taqsîm*, a kind of cadenza. *Peşrev*, which prepares the listener for the melodic mode, comprises four sections called *hane*, each followed by the *teslim* kind of ritornello of the same structure. The other instrumental form, the *fasıl*, is *saz-semâi*. Its sections are shorter thematically and are placed at the end of the *fasıl*. In between the first and last movements, which are purely instrumental, there are the following vocal movements: *kar*, *beste*, *ağır-semâi*, *şarki* and *yörük semâi*.

In other Islamic countries we find similar cyclic forms. For instance, in Turkistani music, they are called *maqâms*, a term denoting musical modes in Turkish and Arabic music, and are classified according to local characteristics as Bukhâran or Khwârizmian. Each *maqâm* is divided into three main divisions: *mushkîla*, the instrumental section, *nasr*, which is both instrumental and vocal, and *ufar*, the finale. Each of these, comprising several parts, constitutes a cycle. In Azerbaijani music we find a similar mode of vocal (*taşnîf*) and instrumental (*reng*) sections. Each movement is based on one of the following modes: *râst*, *shûr*, *segâh*, *shuster*, *chârgâh*, *bayâtî-Shîrâz* and *humâyûn*. Each movement in the cycle bears the name of the corresponding mode.

The general name for a mode is *maqâm* in both Arabic and Turkish, or *dastgâh* and *âvâz* in Fârsî. The former refers to primary modes and the latter to auxiliary ones. *Maqâm* is the exact counterpart of the Indian *râga*, a pattern of melody based on one of the modal scales and characterized by stereotyped turns, by its mood, and even by its pitch.

The most popular Persian modes are *humâyûn*, *shûr* and *mâhûr*. Similarly, the prevalent modes in Azerbaijani music are *râst*, *shûr* and *segâh*. Every song is based on one of the following modes: *râst*, *shûr*, *segâh*, *shuster*, *çârgâh bayâtî-Shîrâz* and *humâyûn*.

Folk- and art-music are never completely separate and there are some musical characteristics and instruments that are common to both, notably the

pre-eminence of the singer and the importance given to rhythm. Moreover, the desire is not to create something new but to improve on an existing model by skilful use of ornamentation and variation. In Islamic art-music, while fixed compositions and improvisation are both governed by strict rules and conventions, singers and instrumentalists are free to display their creative powers with variations of rhythm and melody, especially in the phrases linking the sections of a piece. Rhythm is seen as the way whereby the melody is divided by rests of variable duration. Just as every verse in classical Arabic poetry expresses a complete thought and each verse is formed of two distinct halves, the rhythmical period also falls into two equal parts, each made up of a variable number of smaller elements. The singer displays his (or her) artistry by the ability to produce an infinite number of variations on the short melody, with the accompanying music emphasizing the phrases of the song.

Because the emphasis is on the melodic line, Islamic music uses a far wider and more subtle range of intervals than its Western counterpart. The modes, which govern the basic scales as major or minor keys do in Western practice, have an expressive function and many special conventions with no Western equivalents.

In the time of Ibn Sīnā (d. 422/1037) there were already twelve modes in use in Iran. At the courts of the Moghuls and the Muslim rulers of Spain, by the addition of secondary notes this number was increased to forty-eight. In the Iranian system, each of the twelve modes is traditionally associated with twenty to forty melodic sequences which follow each other in a prescribed order. Thus, these sequences both provide the basic material which the performer develops and limit his freedom.

Despite the widespread introduction of all forms of Western music, Islamic music is still enjoyed by select audiences. In many communities, folk-music retains its popularity, especially the songs and dances traditionally associated with festivals, processions and Passion-plays. Some forms have moved from folk-art to art-music, developing into sophisticated theatrical forms as accompaniments to the shadow-theatre, or *orta oyunu*. An increasing number of scholars and musicians are exploring their native music, both art and folk, and reworking it in contemporary forms which will make it accessible to a wider public.

In spite of the hostile attitude displayed by the Islamic *‘ulamā’* to music and dancing, secular and traditional folk dancing survived. And the Şūfī conception of the use of music and dancing, accepting both as part of the litany, gained acceptance. From this latter attitude sprang various monastic dervish orders called *ṭarīqas*. Dervishes were the practitioners of mysticism (*taṣawwuf* or *Şūfīyya*). A very large number of dervish orders and sub-orders have flourished in different parts of the Muslim world. Their cloister was called *tekke*, their novices *murīd* and the head of the cloister *shaykh*, *pīr* or *bābā*.

## The major traditional theatrical forms

Traditional performances in Islamic countries were presented to the public by three different classes of performers:

1. live actors, jesters, dancer-mimers
2. story-tellers who told their stories as a performance
3. puppeteers (both shadow-play and marionettes).

Imitation and mimicry of dialectal peculiarities, grimacing and imitation of people and animals, called *taqlid*, are the essential characteristic traits of various kinds of performances. These revolve around certain stock characters, easily recognized by the audience from their standard costumes and signatures, tunes and dances.

There are in fact no true plays, but only scenarios giving a bare outline of plot and action. The actor, puppeteer or story-teller memorized certain stock phrases, some in rhymed couplets. All had a special interest as an expression of the colourful, everyday life and language of their time. They relied to a very small extent on properties and hardly at all on scenery, men playing women's part. Performances were given, not in special buildings, but anywhere: in public squares, at national and religious festivals, weddings, fairs, in the courtyards of inns, coffee- or tea-houses. Everything was done to the accompaniment of music. The play had little or no action, depending for its laughter on lively slapstick, monologue and dialogue, involving puns, ready wit, quick response, crude and practical jokes, double meanings, misunderstandings and interpolated quips. Performances were often interspersed with songs or dance, or both.

Dancing-girls and boys who also sing are a recognized institution throughout the Near East. The dancing-girls and boys are very much like the actors and actresses of their times. The Turkish term for both boys and girls is *çengi*. Although this word is used for both male and female dancers, there are two other names for dancing-boys: one is *köçek* and the accompaniment is called *köçekçe*; the other name is *tavşan* (rabbit), with the accompaniment *tavşanca*. This last name was given to the boys because they made grimaces and facial contortions, took light steps and jumps and generally moved the muscles and skin on their faces like a rabbit in the dance called *tavşan raksı*. The difference between *tavşan* and *köçek* lay rather in the manner of their dressing.

*Ta'ziya* (literally meaning 'mourning, bewailing') was developed by the Shī'īs into a tragedy and a miracle play and required a minimum of ten days for its presentation. It was performed annually in the month of Muḥarram. The home of *ta'ziya* is Persia, yet it also exists in Lebanon, Iraq, Azerbaijan and Eastern Turkey, especially in the Kars region, where it is named *shabi* and performed very simply. Although it is mainly a Persian tradition, it is found in a ritualistic form in other areas where Shī'īs reside, such as India, Indonesia and even Jamaica. Like other folk-plays and epics, this production in its pre-

sent from is the result of growth and evolution. The purpose of *taʿziya* in the Shiʿi world has been to induce personal communication, an immediate experience, an experience both religious and political. Its central character is Imām Ḥusayn, and for the Shiʿis he occupies the same position that Jesus Christ does for the devout Christian. *Taʿziya* awakens intense emotion and impassioned grief whenever it is performed. Although officially discouraged at certain times, it is still powerful in popular culture and the dominant form of theatrical experience. [Fig.1]



VI-3.1 *Taʿziyah* performance in Shusta, Azerbaijan, in the 1880s

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Instrumental music for the *taʿziya* is provided by two different orchestras, whose functions differ. We may easily call them the outer and inner orchestra. The former consists of fifes, double-sided drums and peculiar six-foot-long copper trumpets called *karnās*, which produce the privileged music of royalty and religion. The function of the orchestra is to herald the play. The inner orchestra consists of trumpets, drums and cymbals. The musicians are sometimes placed on the stage in full view of the audience. The music serves multiple dramatic functions: it marks the intervals, breaks up the scenes, provides music for the entrances and exits of the players, informs the audience of the particular conditions of the situation, provides background music to the



action and enriches and deepens the mood of the situation. It also helps to accentuate the actor's gestures and movements, especially in the battle scenes.

Anatolian Turks do not have *ta'ziya* plays but have a great number of literary texts, both *marthiya* (elegies) for recitation and *maqtals* (deaths, battles) for dramatic narration in the Muḥarram assemblies. A great many of them are written by established poets; some are collective, anonymous folk-poetry transmitted either by written texts or by oral tradition.

Turkey developed a fully-fledged, distinct and original improvisatory comedy called *orta oyunu*, very much like the Italian *commedia dell'arte*. In the Ottoman Empire we can assume the *orta oyunu* in its final form to be quite recent, dating only from the beginning of the thirteenth/nineteenth century.

Among the popular genres that contributed to the flowering of *orta oyunu* were professional story-telling, the shadow-theatre, puppetry, masked grotesque dancers, jesters, clowns and others from a great variety of traditional forms of Turkish theatrical entertainment.

Prior to the *orta oyunu*, traces of Turkish dramatic art are to be found in farces, *impromptu* productions based on the humorous possibilities of rudimentary situations, characters and costumes. Animal mimicry played an important part and the deer was a principal character in these farces.

In time, all these coarse and crude farces, whether they were called *kol oyunu* (troupe play) or *meydan oyunu* (public play), or even *taklid oyunu* (mimicry play), were associated with *orta oyunu*. Before European influence was felt, a raised platform was never used as a stage by the performers.

In Azerbaijan, there is a mask-theatre called *kosa gelin*. Another type of Azerbaijani play is *keçel*, meaning 'bald'. This is an independent type of play corresponding to the Turkish *Qaragöz*. *Pahlawān keçel* is also found in Iranian plays, but the only thing common to them is the name. The Iranian *keçel* lacks the integrity of character of its Azerbaijani namesake. There were three types of *keçel*: *yarı* (semi-bald) *keçel*, *sarı* (yellow) *keçel* and *nobudi* (buff-coloured) *keçel*.

*Karavelli*, a type of popular performance, is full of witticism and artful play on words, as well as several ingredients such as music, dance, song, lyrical passages, allusions, exaggeration and critical comments. It may also include gay, colourful farces and conjuring.

*Mezheke* (*mudḥika*), farces, are another type of Azerbaijani improvisatory popular comedy. Although on the surface they may seem similar to *karavelli*, the latter is more serious, based more on situations, satire, witty dialogue and humour. Though *mezheke* performances also tend to be satirical, the dialogue may be crude and vulgar and the lively gay comedy is sometimes obscene. These plays poke fun at feudal rulers and all representatives of the ruling class, the mullahs and imams, and at ignorance and illiteracy and the state of underdevelopment.

Azerbaijan has many words denoting comedy players. The performers in *mezheke* are called *maskarabaç*. The words *mezhekeci*, *hokkabaz* and *mas-*

*karaci* are also used for them. A clown is called *talbak* and clowning is *talbakçilik*.

Islamic Central Asia is divided into two regions: Western Turkistan, including Kazakhstan, and Eastern Turkistan (Sinkiang), which covers the area of the present-day Uyghur Autonomous Province in China. In Turkistan, in former times, when there were important guests or an occasion for celebration, it was the custom to hold a *tamashan*, an entertainment which usually consisted of singing, instrumental music, dancing and acting.

The folk-theatre of Uzbekistan was known by the name of *kizikçilik*. The improvisatory players were so popular that people considered their presence essential at every social gathering. Plays known as *askiya* were performed in tea-houses in the evening. The subjects were love, death, burial, speculation and the like. Another form of farce called *sapsata* derived its humour from wit and play on words and its dialogue was in the style of clowns. These farces fell into two groups: *mukallid* (imitation) and *tenkid* (criticism or censure). There are a number of stock characters in these plays.

In Iran, the improvisatory folk-comedy was prominent until recently. It had several names: *rū-havādi*, *takht-i havādi*, and *siyāb-bāzī*. The first two both indicate playing over the pool with wooden planks, which then served as the stage. There were also called *siyāb-bāzī* in honour of the black-faced central clown. In this form there is music, dance and mime, as well as the spoken word. There is always a black-faced servant who represents the common man. Also present is his master, the *hājji*, the archetypal bazaar merchant, his wife and son, and the king.

Plays about everyday life are all comic exaggerations of the problems of the less fortunate. In each play a simple person overcomes the difficulties caused by the wealthy and corrupt.

In Afghanistan, an old traditional form of extravagant entertainment which has lost favour in the city of Harāt, a western province, is the *mogoladi* outdoor play. *Mogoladi* comes from the Arabic word *muqallid*, meaning 'imitator'. The term *magadi* is also used in place of *mogoladi*. Each troupe has four kinds of player, performing different types of rôle. First, there is the buffoon or clown, called *muqallid* or *maskhara* or *lūfi* (buffoon or clown), who is the leader and director of the troupe. The second player, *hamdast*, acts as the helpmate and foil of the principal clown, assisting him to use his wits in developing his dialogue. The third character is a young man in women's clothes, who dances between the scenes and plays the rôle of the second wife in polygamous marriages. The fourth character is *fahla*, who appears as a soldier, thief, servant, animal, supernatural being, or even sometimes as a farm or household object.

The performances in another Persian-speaking country, Tajikistan, show certain resemblances to those in Iran. The buffoons (*maskhara-bāz*) in Tajikistan were versatile artists who, as well as dancing, singing and playing musical instruments, also acted in realistic parodies and imitations.

Usually a performance consisted of three or four comic or satirical sketches, each play improvised on a single central theme, with music and singing or, occasionally, acrobatic displays between the intervals. There were female as well as male *maskhara-bāzūs* and they were skilful in parodying the contemporary social scene, with all the events of everyday life and the little tell-tale actions by which simple folk as well as those in authority betray their true characters.

Contrary to the general assumption that there was no secular live Arabic theatre in Islamic countries in the Middle Ages, modern scholars have shown that there were unquestionably entertainments where live actors used action as dialogue to represent an event or situation before an audience and that this form of entertainment existed side by side with the puppet-theatre, shadow-theatre, story-telling and the religious *taʿziya*. Study of the old texts clearly shows that, while *khayāl al-ẓill* denoted a shadow-play, *khayāl* was a live play acted by strolling players (*mukhayyilūn*) performing mime, that is buffoonery, in costume. *Ḥikāya* was a form of mime imitating the facial expressions and gestures of individual characters. Sometimes the terms *khayāl*, *ḥikāya* and *laʿba* (scene or play) were used as if synonymous and the texts suggest that mime developed into a short dramatic act imitating everyday life, with monologue or dialogue. In the ʿAbbāsīd period, there are references to masquerades (*mutawajjih* or *samāja*), where the actors wore masks or painted their faces for miming performances.

In Egypt, there were also Syrian companies, with women playing the female rôles, who presented *faṣl mudḥik* of a slightly higher standard. And again, according to Lane, Egyptians were often amused by players of ridiculous and low farces who were called ‘*muhabbazeen*’. [Fig. 2]

In Arabic-, Persian- and Turkish-speaking countries, story-telling has been a form of entertainment for centuries. In the old days the professional story-teller drew his audience from all classes of listeners. These story-tellers usually represented different types of people by imitating the peculiarities of their dialects, which called for considerable skill. Sometimes they could be so realistic in their rendering that the audience would be influenced by the tale. For example, when the audience was listening to the episode involving a battle between Abū Zayd al-Hilālī and Durayb, recounted by an Arab *rāwī*, or the tale of the battle between Qāsim and Badr (the two sons of Ḥamza) from the *Ḥamza-nāme*, recounted by a Turkish *meddab*, the audience would also divide into two rival factions, sometimes fighting among themselves.

Story-tellers in Islam are divided into many categories according to their style and repertoire. They may relate popular romances, national legends, pseudo-historical romances, purely fictional ones, epic tales of individual exploits, or religious narratives. In Iran, they are specialized in these forms. For example, those reciting the *Shāhnāma* (Book of Kings) are more commonly called *naqqāl* and they usually relate the romances while the *rawḍa-khāna* nar-



VI-3.2 Masked performer at a local festival in Morocco

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rators tell of the martyrdom of the Muslim saint al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā. In Uzbekistan, dramatic narration is called *bulki hikaya*.

In Tunisia, the story-teller is called *fdaoui*, or *meddab* as in Turkey. Story-tellers are sometimes accompanied by a musical instrument. In Turkestan men called *bakhsbi* narrate epics to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument called *dūtār* or *qijak*. In Arab countries, in the coffee-houses, the *shu‘arā’* or *muḥaddithūn*, accompanied by a *rabāb* (a stringed instrument), recite the epic exploits of Abū Zayd, Ḥāhir Baybars and other national heroes, mixing narration with dramatic elocution. The reciter, called *shā‘ir*, is also an actor. In Samarqand, there were two types of story-teller: the *meddab*, who told amusing didactic tales while standing, and the

*risalaçi*, who remained seated while reciting his stories and legends in verse, playing on a two-stringed lute.

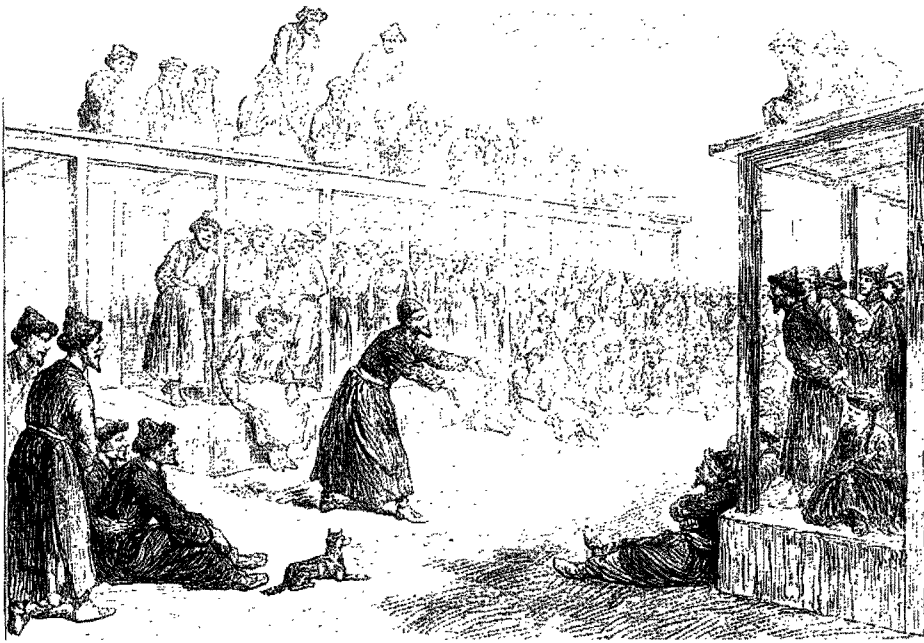
In Egypt, there were three kinds of story-teller. The *shu‘arā*, a word signifying ‘poets’, were greater in number and accompanied themselves on a viol. They were also called *Abū Zaydiyya* since they recited a romance entitled *The Life of Abū Zayd* from memory. The second group was known only by the name *muhaddithūn*, signifying ‘story-tellers’, and the sole subject of their narration was a work called *The Life of al-Zābir*. The third and smallest group was known as ‘*Anātira* because the chief source of their narration was the life of ‘Antar.

While discussing story-telling, one should also mention the *samīr*, a popular story-teller among the Arabs. His performance combined poetry, music and dance.

The Central Asian contribution to Turkish performances is the sung recitation of long epic cycles to the accompaniment of a musical instrument, *dombra* or *kobuz*, *dūtār* or *sāz*, as a rule. This tradition still lives in Anatolia with the tale-singers called *aşık*. These folk-performers, though called by different names, are part of the same tradition and assume the same rôle. For example, among the Kirghiz they are called either *Manaschi* (singers of the epic poem of *Manas*) or *jomokçbu* (singer of epic tales), and the common type is called *yırçby*. In Kazakhstan, they are called *akyn*, while among the Qaraqalpāq the name is *zhyraws* and among the Uzbeks *shair* (more an honorary title) or the common *bakhsbī*. In this context the word *bakhsbī* (Sanskrit *bhikshu*) is interesting. [Fig. 3]

*Bakhsbī* was originally applied not only to Buddhist hermits but also to people who had shaman-like functions. The word assumed the meaning ‘writer-officials’ in the Mongol state, since the first teachers of the Mongols and the first state officials in the Mongol empire were Uyghur Turks. From this we may infer that the representatives of the cultured Uyghur classes in the service of the Mongols belonged, for the most part, to the Buddhist priesthood. Among the Uzbeks, the *bakhsbī* is narrator, poet and magician and *bikayeci* is a story-teller, while *ashulaçi* or *qoshuqçi* are folk-singers.

Puppetry in Near Eastern countries has hitherto been little explored since Islam discouraged representational and imitative arts. Figural representations, especially those three-dimensional ones which cast a shadow, were condemned. However, the Qur’ān does not contain a single word against such representations. Objections arose as a result of Islamic purists collecting oral traditions which were supposed to support the condemnation of figural representation. This is connected not only with the fear of idolatrous worship, but with the more universal fear of rivaling creation itself, the prerogative of God. Yet the Turkish people of Central Asia had a long tradition of representational art from pre-Islamic times and among them the instinct and gift for these arts were so deeply implanted that they indulged in them in spite of clerical disapproval.



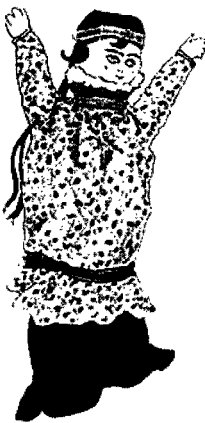
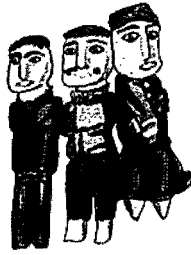
VI-3.3 A public story-teller in Kāshghar, Turkistan

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There is a long-standing tradition of puppetry among all the various Turkish nations that inhabit Central Asia today. There are three main types of folk puppet-theatre where a number of string-puppets or marionettes can be manipulated simultaneously: the hand-puppet in a 'tent', where only two puppets can be used simultaneously; and the hand-puppet 'without a tent'. Performances where puppets are pulled by strings are called *çadır hayal*. The term *kol-kugirçak* designates performances with hand-puppets (which are worn like gloves), but with a wider application. Another term for a performance with hand-puppets is *çadır jamal*, *çadır* here designating the stage and *jamal* a pretty and fair face. [Fig. 4]

*Çadır kbayal* is the name of the traditional Uzbek puppet-theatre, where the puppets are activated by strings. *Çadır*, the primary meaning of which is 'tent', signifies the stage or theatre, as explained above. The word *kbayal* is rich in its associations. Here it may mean fantasy or illusion, and the term *çadır kbayal* may be translated as the 'theatre of fantasy or illusion'.

The second type of hand-puppet, *zochai dasti* 'without a tent', was common in the city of Bukhārā. The puppeteer lay on his back on one of the



VI-3.4 Central Asian puppets  
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long seating-benches in a courtyard and covered himself with a cloak. Then, from under the cover, he stuck out his hands with the puppets on them.

The puppet-theatre was introduced to Afghanistan at the end of the thirteenth/nineteenth century by story-tellers from Bukhārā and Samarqand and was called *butley bawz*, which meant 'puppet-play'. In Afghanistan, especially in Harāt, the dolls moved and danced freely along a string that passed through their chests, held at each end by a clown, while the *hamdast* jerked it to the rhythm of a drum or a small pipe. In a second form of *magadi* puppet-play, the doll stands in a wooden cup which has a hole in its base. A string passes through this hole, concealing the puppeteer's thumb from the eyes of the spectators.

The Magads of Harāt also stage plays with glove-puppets. Among the very few reports about puppet or marionette shows in Afghanistan in recent years have been descriptions of a performance known as *butbāzī*. Another goat-marionette is reported from Kirghizstan and Turkmenistan where there is a game called *tak-teke*, or jumping goat.

We find exactly the same kind of puppetry in Iran as in Central Asia, which has been described above. The marionette show called *kbayal-shab bāzī* (night puppet-play) is similar to the *çadır hayal* of Central Asia, with the platform at ground level, but with as many as sixty or eighty puppets. The other type, glove-puppet theatre, is called *kaçal pahlawān* and takes its name from the main character, *kaçal*, meaning 'bald-headed' or 'a scabrous or scruffy-headed person', and *pahlawān*, a hero athlete or wrestler. In Iran, the general term for a puppeteer is *lu'bat-bāz*. Both kinds of puppet are operated by two people. One stands outside the booth and takes part in the dialogue or directly in the action of the puppets, while the other manipulates the puppets from inside and speaks each puppet's part. The puppets, which are called *şūrāt*, are made by the puppeteer.

In addition to these two major types of puppet-show in Persia, there are other lesser puppet-forms known as *hum-bāzī* and *arusek*, and some giant-sized effigies, some of which were used in *lazīveh* (Persian, Passion-play) performances.

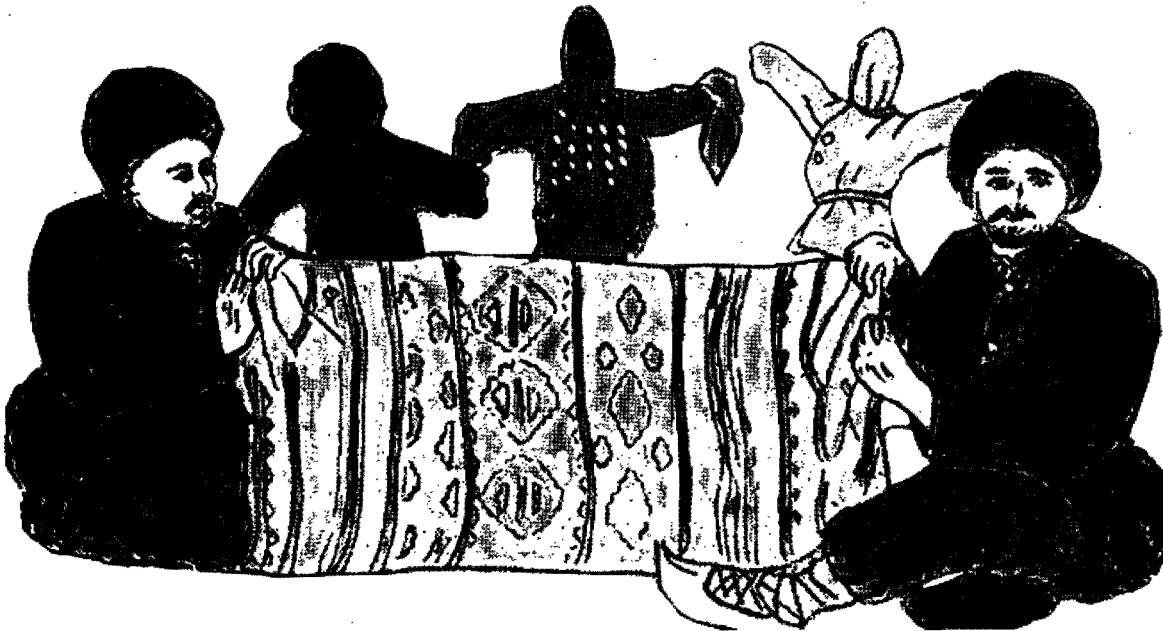
An interesting traditional puppet-show called *kilim arası* [Fig.5] comes from Azerbaijan, where puppets are manipulated behind a curtain (or *kilim*) which is held up at both ends by two men.

In twelfth/eighteenth-century Egypt, puppet-shows were very popular in Cairo and could be seen on the streets all over the city. There was a puppet-show whose chief character was called *aragöz*. This was the local pronunciation of the Turkish shadow-play's chief protagonist, *Qaragöz* in the Cairene dialect. According to a description from the early years of this century, the puppeteer sat inside a small folding booth made of cloth and manipulated the puppets on his fingers, so that they were only visible from the hips up.



In Tunisia, there is a kind of puppet show with marionettes that are manipulated by a principal rod and strings. Evidence suggests that most probably it was borrowed from Sicily.

While the *Qaragöz*, which has long been identified with Turkey, had a world-wide reputation for centuries, little is known about the origins of Turkish puppetry, which had been a long-standing tradition with the Turks before they came to know the shadow-theatre in the tenth/sixteenth century. Ottoman popular theatre tradition included a great variety of puppet forms, yet we have no idea about their repertoire or characters, unlike Persian and Central Asian puppetry and the Turkish shadow-theatre *Qaragöz*. However, we can assume that various theatrical forms exercised a powerful influence on one another in characters and themes. In early texts, there is a wealth of references



VI-3.5 Azerbaijani hand-puppet, called *kilim arası*

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indicating that puppetry, in one form or another, had flourished and remained an important part of folk-culture until the Western impact of the late twelfth/eighteenth century. [Fig. 6]

Shadow-theatre, which involves two-dimensional figures casting their shadows on a screen, had an important place in Turkey as well as throughout the larger areas of the Ottoman Empire. The Turks, before they came to know the shadow-theatre in the tenth/sixteenth century, had enjoyed a long-standing established puppet tradition. There is virtually no kind of puppet-show that has not been tried in Turkey.

Turkish shadow-theatre (*Qaragöz*) was borrowed from Egypt in the tenth/sixteenth century during the reign of Sultan Salim I, who annexed Egypt to the Ottoman realm in 937/1517. After watching a shadow-play in



VI-3.6 Threesome shadow figures from Turkish Karagöz

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the palace on Roda Island on the River Nile, the Sultan rewarded the performer and invited his troupe of players to Istanbul so that the Crown Prince, later known as Sulaymān the Magnificent, could also watch it.

There are three extant medieval Arabic shadow-play texts by Muḥammad b. Dāniyāl (d. 710/1311), an Egyptian physician. Between the years 658/1260 and 675/1277, he composed three shadow-plays in prose dialogue, versified only occasionally and interspersed with songs and rhymed prose.

The first play is *Tayf al-khayāl* (The Spirit of Imagination). In the second, *al-ʿAjīb wa-gharīb* (The Fantastic and the Bizarre), a wide range of characters and a long procession of animal trainers appears in the manner of *Qaragöz* shows. The third play, *al-mutayyam* (The Love-Stricken) presents a dwarf who asks an endless string of strange and humorous questions, reminiscent of the Turkish dwarf (Beberuhi), one of the most important characters in the Turkish shadow-play. This play, like the second, parades various characters, while the central character, al-Mutayyam, struggles to win the girl he loves.

Thus, Ibn Dāniyāl's plays afford additional ground to accept the opinion that initially the Turkish shadow-play was borrowed from an Egyptian prototype, not only because of the shared characteristics in structure and presentation and the similarity of the motifs between the Egyptian and Turkish forms, but because of further evidence provided in Ibn Dāniyāl's plays. One of the manuscripts of this playwright is in the Manuscript Library in Istanbul, Turkey.

However, one leading question is the origin of the Egyptian shadow-play. There seems to be little doubt that it was borrowed from Java by the Arabs, who were in continuous contact with that region during their trading and raiding expeditions. They formed small colonies in the coastal cities of South East Asia and had been acquainted with Java even before the island was visited by the famous traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭa of Tangier in 745/1345. Arabic, Persian and Egyptian stories were introduced to the region and some were adopted by the puppeteers of the Javanese shadow-play.

In essence, *Qaragöz* represents a rich cross-section of Turkish culture, comprising poetry, miniature-painting, music, customs and oral tradition. In the early years of the tenth/sixteenth century, all these elements merged and fused, resulting in what is now known as *Qaragöz*, and had been wholly identified by the eleventh/seventeenth century. The term itself, as well as *kukla* (meaning 'puppet' in Turkish), is attested for the first time in that century.

## The adoption of Western arts

Western influence on music was felt more slowly. Apparently time was needed for the appreciation of an alien culture, just as in the West there is an increasing interest in the arts of Asia and Africa today.

The European influence played its part in Turkey, Persia and Egypt in the mid-thirteenth/nineteenth century. In 1272/1856 the Persian army was

equipped with military bands formed on the French model under the guidance of French musicians. In Turkey the first move towards Western music was made by Sultan Maḥmūd II in 1241/1826, after he had disbanded the Janissary corps the same year. In the place of the Janissary *mehter* band, consisting of reed-pipes, trumpets, cymbals and kettledrums, he decided to have a military band in the European style. The Sardinian Minister in Istanbul was approached and his help was enlisted in obtaining suitable musical instruments and a bandmaster to train the army musicians. As a result, Giuseppe Donizetti, brother of the composer Gaetano, came to Istanbul, where he organized and conducted the newly formed military band. He later became Director of the Imperial School of Music, founded to train the musicians for the Sultan's new army, and was given the rank of Pasha. It is related that later his successor trained and conducted an orchestra composed of ladies of the royal harem, who played for the entertainment of Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd II. [Fig. 7]

After the creation of the Turkish Republic, there was renewed interest in music. Atatürk, founder of the Republic, in a speech to the National Assembly on 1 November 1934, stated that the measure of a changing country was the extent to which it grasped the change in music.



VI-3.7 Wind instruments used in Turkish military music: two oboes (*zurna*), two trumpets (*boru*), kettledrums (*kös davulu*) and drums (*davul*)

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In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the opening of the Islamic countries to the pressure of conflicting civilizations, foreign influences were felt almost immediately and the Oriental theatre started abandoning its traditional forms.

Countries such as Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt looked to France or Great Britain for models, whereas Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan copied Russian theatrical forms. This process of Westernization was carried on in two different ways. In some cases the playwrights appeared first with producer organizations which developed in response to their challenge; in others, local theatrical companies, visiting troupes and newly built theatres stimulated the development of new authors. In Pakistan, though new playwrights emerged, there never was a corresponding development in staging their works. Many fine playwrights, both in Bengali and Urdu, depended on amateur groups and radio outlets for their work. Lately, an interest in these arts has been observed in Islamic countries such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates and the Yemen. In some Islamic nations which were to be under Soviet domination, religious taboos and the nomadic way of life prevented the emergence of theatres before 1917, a situation which changed after the Soviet Revolution.

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## Chapter 4

# MUSIC IN ISLAMIC CULTURE

*Salah Mahdi*

Islamic music is distinct from that of other cultures throughout human history because it is the quintessence of the music of all the people and countries which espoused Islam, a religion which has always been receptive to other cultures and arts, provided that they are not linked in any way to paganism and that they are not contrary to any of the Pillars of Islam, especially the belief in the Unity of God.

As we are told in the Qurʾān, Islam approves good taste and beauty of voice and condemns ugly voices. This is also confirmed by the Imām al-Bukhārī, who cites ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb as saying that one night, he was in the company of the Prophet Muḥammad and Abū Bakr al-Siddīq when they came upon ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd, a man renowned for his voice, praying in a mosque. Listening to his beautiful recitation of the Qurʾān, the Prophet commented: ‘If anyone wishes to recite the Qurʾān just as it was revealed, then let him recite after the fashion of Ibn Umm ʿAbd.’ Having said his prayers, the man then sat making his supplications to God, at which point the Prophet said: ‘Ask and it will be given!’ ʿUmar then vowed to be the first to give the man news of what the Prophet had said. However, when he went there the following day, he found that Abū Bakr had preceded him. Complimenting Abū Bakr, ʿUmar had this to say: ‘Every time I vied with this man in performing a good deed, he would be ahead of me.’

ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd relates that, on another occasion, the Prophet Muḥammad asked him to recite the Qurʾān. Surprised, Ibn Masʿūd inquired: ‘Am I to recite for the one to whom the Qurʾān itself was revealed?’ The Prophet answered: ‘Yes.’ Ibn Masʿūd then recited from the Sūra of the Women (Qurʾān IV) and when he reached the verse: ‘How then if We brought from each nation a witness, and We brought thee as a witness against these people,’ the Prophet said: ‘That is enough.’ Ibn Masʿūd turned his head, only to find the Prophet with tears in his eyes.

Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī was another of the Companions of the Prophet who was famous for the beauty of his recitation of the Qur‘ān. According to Imām al-Bukhārī, the Prophet once praised his voice, saying that he had been ‘gifted with the pipes of David’, an allusion to the pipes whose music would miraculously awaken the Prophet David for the dawn prayers.

We know that the Prophet Muḥammad approved of singing and music on festive occasions. His wife, ‘Ā’isha, relates that her father Abū Bakr once came to visit them on a feast-day. At that moment, two slave girls were drumming and playing the tambourine and the Prophet hid his head in his clothes so as not to see or hear. When Abū Bakr scolded the girls, the Prophet revealed his face and said: ‘Leave them be, Abū Bakr. This is a feast-day.’

From this review, we can see that music and singing enjoyed a prominent place in Islam from the very beginning. The one condition, of course, was that engaging in such activity did not divert anyone from worship, from earning a living, or from fighting in the cause of God.

Islam emerged on the Arabian Peninsula, an area steeped in ancient traditions of song, the home of al-Khansa’, the elegiac poetess, and of al-A‘shā Maymūn b. Qays, whose poems celebrated his love of Hurayra, a woman singer from al-Ḥira in the days of al-Nu‘mān. In the Sūra of Quraysh, the Qur‘ān also refers to rhythmic chanting on the winter and summer caravans, which made the camels forget their heavy burden.

Prominent Islamic figures took special care of singers. For example, Arwā, mother of the Caliph ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, was the patron of the singer Abū ‘Abd al-Mun‘im b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Dhā‘ib, known as ‘Ṭuways’. The first singer to emerge in Islamic times, he was also the first to marry Arab singing with the Persian tunes he had heard from the migrant labourers who took part in the reconstruction of the Ka‘ba.

Sakīna bt. al-Ḥusayn held a reception in Medina to honour the venerable singer Ḥanīn al-Ḥīrī, despite the fact that he remained a Christian. The throng of artists, men-of-letters and dignitaries attending the occasion was so great that the roof from which they were watching collapsed, killing the celebrated singer, who was then aged more than one hundred years.

Upon listening to the singing of Abū Ja‘far Sā‘ib b. Yasīr, known as ‘Ṣā‘ib Khāthir’, ‘Abd Allāh b. Ja‘far b. Abī Ṭālib was so moved that he engaged the singer in his service. The compendium *Kitāb al-Aghāni* by Abu-l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī cites him as the first singer to perform to the accompaniment of the lute, the first to introduce Persian rhythm in Arabic poetry and the first to use the rhythm known as *al-thaqīl al-awwal*, thus starting the tradition of artistic musical composition. As singers were held in low esteem in this age, ‘Abd Allāh b. Ja‘far introduced Sā‘ib Khāthir to the Caliph Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān as a talented poet and the Caliph rewarded him generously for his performance.

Ibn Ja‘far extended his patronage to ‘Azza al-Maylā’, a woman who is regarded as having carried on the tradition started by the great female singers

Rā'īqa, Khawla and Sirīn. Al-Muqawqis, the governor of Egypt, presented her to the Prophet Muḥammad who in turn betrothed her to Ḥassān b. Thābit. 'Azza al-Maylā' was famous for the weekly concerts held at her house, in which the taste for listening to good music was truly cultivated. Ṭuways described the audiences on these occasions as being so attentive that they were literally on their toes. As with the assemblies which listened to Plato, there was an usher armed with a stick to silence anyone creating a disturbance. Ḥassān b. Thābit vouched for the excellence of 'Azza's singing, saying that it reminded him of the Ghassānids in the days before Islam. A similar tribute came from Ṭuways, who described 'Azza as the greatest of female singers.

When prudish opponents sought to bring 'Azza into disrepute with Sa'īd b. al-Āṣ, the governor of Medina, 'Abd Allāh b. Ja'far defended her staunchly. He convinced the governor that she was a paragon of virtue who, through her innocent art, was doing no more than nurturing a refined taste among the generations who came to listen to her.

Among those who helped to bring about the marriage between Persian and Arab music was Abū 'Uthmān Sa'īd b. Misjah. The story goes that Ibn Misjah's master heard him one day singing a poem by Ibn al-Riqā' which ends with the verse: 'But for shame of the grey which has invaded my hair, / I would surely have gone to visit Umm al-Qāsim.' As the song sounded unfamiliar, Ibn Misjah's master asked him where it came from. He explained that he had first heard it from the Persian labourers constructing the Mosque of the Prophet in Mecca and had then reworked the song to make it compatible with Arabic poetry. As a reward for this artistic endeavour, his master set him free.

In the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* it is related that, when information came to the ears of the Umayyad caliph that the young men of Quraysh were infatuated with the singing of Ibn Misjah and were giving him their money, the caliph ordered his governor Dahmān al-Ashqar to confiscate the singer's money and send him into exile. Ibn Misjah then moved to Syria, where he managed to gain access to the caliph by impressing one of the Syrian dignitaries with his voice. The caliph asked him whether he could sing *al-Rukbān* (the Escort), and he did so. The caliph then asked if he could sing *al-Mutqin* (the Perfect), and this too he did. When the caliph in amazement asked who he was, Ibn Misjah pleaded that he was a man who had been wronged, who had had his money confiscated and who had been exiled from his homeland: he was Sa'īd b. Misjah. The caliph smiled and said to him: 'Now I know why the young men of Quraysh would spend their money on you.' Ibn Misjah was then pardoned, his money was returned and he was showered with gifts. He went on to live in luxury until his death in 96/715 during the caliphate of al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik.

Another famous singer was Muslim b. Muḥriz. A student of both 'Azza al-Maylā' and Ibn Misjah, he travelled to Persia and then to Syria to study singing. Combining the Persian and Byzantine modes with that of his own



original school, he invented the *al-ramal* style of singing. The Persian singer Salmak would later put these songs to Fārsī words and perform them in his own country.

Ibn Muḥriz argued that 'the single line cannot carry the melody to its end' and so became the first to sing couplets, a practice that would be emulated throughout the Muslim world by all the singers who came after him. The new form gave rise variously to the *dūbayt* of the Arab East, to the *baytān* of Morocco and to the *nawba* (alternate lines) of Tunisia.

The second year of the Hijrī calendar saw the birth of Yaḥyā 'Ubayd Allāh b. Surayj, an excellent Turkish singer who learned music in Medina at the feet of Ṭuways and Ibn Miṣjaḥ. He attended the concerts of 'Azza al-Maylā' and rose to fame by the age of forty. He specialized in a kind of singing known as *nawāḥ* (bemoaning) and was privileged to be part of the circle of Sakīna, the daughter of al-Ḥusayn. He eventually became one of the greatest of musicians and would be remembered in the proverb: 'Of proper singers, there are but two from Mecca, Ibn Surayj and Ibn Muhriz, and two from Medina, Ma'bad and Malik.'

In the Umayyad period, the lives of the singers, their methods of singing and their poetry were all chronicled by Yūnus b. Sulaymān b. Kurd b. Shahriyār, known as Yūnus al-Kātib. Though not an Arab, he was renowned for his beautiful voice, acute memory and excellent poetry. His *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Book of Songs) was the first of its kind and has remained an authority ever since. Al-Kātib was a wealthy merchant by profession and singing was only a pastime. When he was in Syria on business with a number of his colleagues, the news of his arrival reached the heir-apparent, al-Walīd b. Yazīd, who invited him to stay, kept him for three days and, at the end, made him a gift of 3,000 *dīnārs*. When al-Walīd became caliph, he again invited al-Kātib to stay with him, and this time the latter remained until his death.

When power passed to the 'Abbāsids, music and singing began to occupy an increasingly prominent position, receiving the patronage of caliphs and princes. Scholarly research into these artistic activities developed and new inventions were made. Great singers, composers and scholars of music now appeared, including the Caliph Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, brother of Hārūn al-Rashīd. The Caliph broke away from traditional restrictions and allowed himself the liberty of using forms and *maqāmāt* which he himself had invented, building on what he had learnt from his mother, Shakla, daughter of the king of Ṭabaristān. Defending his new music, he would say: 'I am a king and the son of a king. I sing as I please and as the fancy takes me.' Thus, a school of innovators was to emerge.

The musician 'Alī b. Nāfi', known as Ziriyāb, contributed a great deal to Islamic culture. As well as laying down the basic principles of musical composition and arrangement, Ziriyāb developed the lute as an instrument, adding its fifth string and introducing the use of an eagle-feather plectrum. Westerners adopted this method to make the harpsichord, an instrument

which remains in use to this day. Ziryāb was also the first to introduce methods of testing singers and training them in proper enunciation. As if this were not enough, he was also accomplished in blending perfumes and inventing new recipes for food and sweetmeats, not to mention the development of seasonal variations in young people's fashions. A complete artist, he left behind a rich heritage, which is still with us.

It is a well-known historical fact that Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī exploited the differences between the followers of his nephews, the sons of Hārūn al-Rashīd, al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, to claim the Caliphate, which he managed to hold for only two years (202–204/817–819). During this period, he was the butt of virulent attacks by satirical poets such as Di'bil, who wrote about him thus: 'If, by Ibrāhīm, the Caliphate should be won, / Then why not, after him, by any mother's son.'

## The place of the science of music in Islamic culture

Like mathematics, medicine, veterinary science, philosophy and astronomy, the science of music occupied a prominent place in Islamic culture and attracted the attention of many scholars. Among those who contributed most to the study of music were the following:

1. The Arab philosopher Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī (185–252/801–866), the author of a number of works. Some of these have recently been edited by scholars from Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo, including Zakariyyā' Yūsuf, Majdī al-'Aqīlī, Maḥmūd Aḥmad al-Hafnī and Yūsuf Shawqī. The works of al-Kindī which have been edited include the following: (a) *al-Risāla al-kubrā fi-l-ta'rif*; (b) *Risāla fi tartīb al-naghm al-dālla 'alā ṭabā'i' al-ashkbāš al-'āliya wa-tashābuh al-ta'rif*; (c) *Risāla fi madkhal ilā šinā'at al-mūsīqā*; (d) *Risāla fi-l-iqā'*; (e) *Risāla fi khabar šinā'at al-ta'rif*; (f) *Risāla fi šinā'at al-shi'r*; (g) *Risāla fi akhbār 'alā šinā'at al-mūsīqā*; (h) *Kitāb tartīb al-naghm*; (i) *Mukhtaṣar al-mūsīqā fi ta'rif al-naghm wa-šinā'at al-'ūd*; (j) *Risāla fi ajzā' khabariyya fi-l-mūsīqā*. The contents of these works are documented in a book by the present author, *al-Mūsīqā al-'Arabiyya: tārikhubā wa-adabuhā*, published by al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya.
2. Abū Aḥmad Yaḥyā b. 'Alī b. Maṣṣūr, known as Ibn al-Munajjim (241–300/855–912), whose most famous work is his *Kitāb al-Naghm*.
3. Abū Naṣr b. Tarkhān, known as al-Fārābī (257–339/870–950), born in the town of Fārāb in Uzbekistan. His most famous works include: (a) *al-Mūsīqā al-kabīr*, edited by Ghaṭṭās Khashba, Cairo; (b) *Iḥsā' al-iqā'*; (c) *Kitāb al-naqra*; (d) *al-Kalām fi-l-mūsīqā*. As well as being a reputed scholar, al-Fārābī was an accomplished lutenist and several of his books provide an introduction to the playing of the instrument.
4. Abū 'Alī al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh b. Sīnā (370–438/980–1037), who was born in the town of Afshana near Bukhārā in Uzbekistan. His books on

- the science of music include: (a) *Kitāb al-Shifā'*. The present author has seen the manuscript, annotated by Ibn Sīnā himself, in the Süleymaniyya Library, Istanbul; (b) *Kitāb al-naġāt*, with a chapter on music; (c) *Dānīsh-nāma*, which was written in Fārsī while the writer was resident in Işfahān; (d) *Risāla fī taqāsīm al-hikma*, with a chapter on music.
5. Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Zayla al-Işfahānī, the best-known of his works being *al-Kāfī fi-l-mūsīqā*, edited and published by Zakariyyā Yūsuf, Baghdad, 1964.
  6. 'Abd al-Mu'min b. Yūsuf b. Fākhir, known as Şafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī (213–293/1216–1284), who sang for the last of the 'Abbāsīd caliph, al-Musta'şim bi-llāh and witnessed the fall of Baghdad in 606/1258. He then sang for the new ruler, Hülāgū. Al-Urmawī's best-known books include: (a) *Kitāb al-Adwār*, translated into Turkish, Fārsī, French and English and drawn upon by most subsequent works (the book has recently been edited and published by al-Ḥājj Hāşim al-Rajab, Baghdad, 1980); (b) *al-Risāla al-Sharafīyya*, written for his pupil, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Juwaynī, and his brother Bahā' al-Dīn.
  7. Abū Ja'far Naşr al-Dīn b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī (597–672/1201–1273). The surviving remnants of this author's treatise on the science of music has been published by Zakariyyā Yūsuf.
  8. Abu-l-Faḍā'il Kamāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Marāghī (754–838/1353–1434), who was born in Azerbaijan. His most famous works include: (a) *Jāmi' al-alḥān* (in Fārsī); (b) *Kitāb al-Mūsīqā*; (c) *Zubdat al-adwār*; (d) *Sharḥ li-Kitāb al-Adwār li-l-Armāwī*; (e) *Kanẓ al-alḥān fī 'ilm al-adwār*.

The melody of a famous *muwashshah* still to be heard in most Arab countries is attributed to al-Marāghī. It begins: '*Abissu shawqan ilā diyārin / ra'aytu fihā jamāla Salmā*' (I yearn for these places in which once I saw fair Salmā).

'Abd al-'Azīz al-Marāghī, a grandchild of the author, was also a skilful musician and the author of a treatise on music entitled *Naqāwat al-adwār*, written for the Ottoman Sultan Sulaymān the Magnificent (926–974/1520–1566).

Apart from the authors referred to above, many scholars, poets and men of letters wrote on the subject of music. For example, Şafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (677–750/1278–1349) wrote a treatise entitled *Fā'ida fī tawallud al-anġām ba'ḍuhā 'an ba'ḍ wa-tartībihā 'ala-l-burūj*. The manuscript of this treatise is kept in the Fine Arts Section at the Dār al-Kutub al-Mişriyya (Egyptian Library, no. 50).

As far as artistic practice was concerned, Islamic culture established ties between the various countries whose people wholly or partially adopted Islam, or which, like the Balkan states and Central Europe, came under the Caliphate at some period in their history. These ties are evident in the words of songs, in tones, rhythms and forms, and even in the instruments which are used to play the music or accompany the singing.



VI-4.1 Sulaymān and his orchestra with two dancers,  
 from al-Marāghī's *Naqāwat al-adwār*

© Topkapi Palace Museum Library, Istanbul

The Ṣufi orders also played a rôle in preserving the heritage of song as a part of an Islamic culture capable of unifying peoples despite differing languages.

Thus, in the lyrics of various *muwashshahāt* and *azjāl* we find a mixture of Arabic, Turkish and Persian words. For example, in the last line of a *muwashshah* famous in Egypt, Syria and Tunisia, we find: *Ghamazak yijrahñi / khabbi ħunjarak // ‘Aẓatlu sulṭānim / Allāh yinṣirak.*

Another *muwashshah* famous in Tunisia and Libya has: *yā ghaẓalan bi-lisānin ‘Arabī / wa-lisān al-Furs aya dostamin.*

To keep in harmony with the music, lyrics are punctuated by Arabic words such as *yā layl*, with all its derived forms, *yalli*, *bāli* (from *bāla*, or ‘verily, yes’); Turkish, such as *afandim*, *janım*, *aman*; or Persian, such as *yadust*, *firyadamın*.

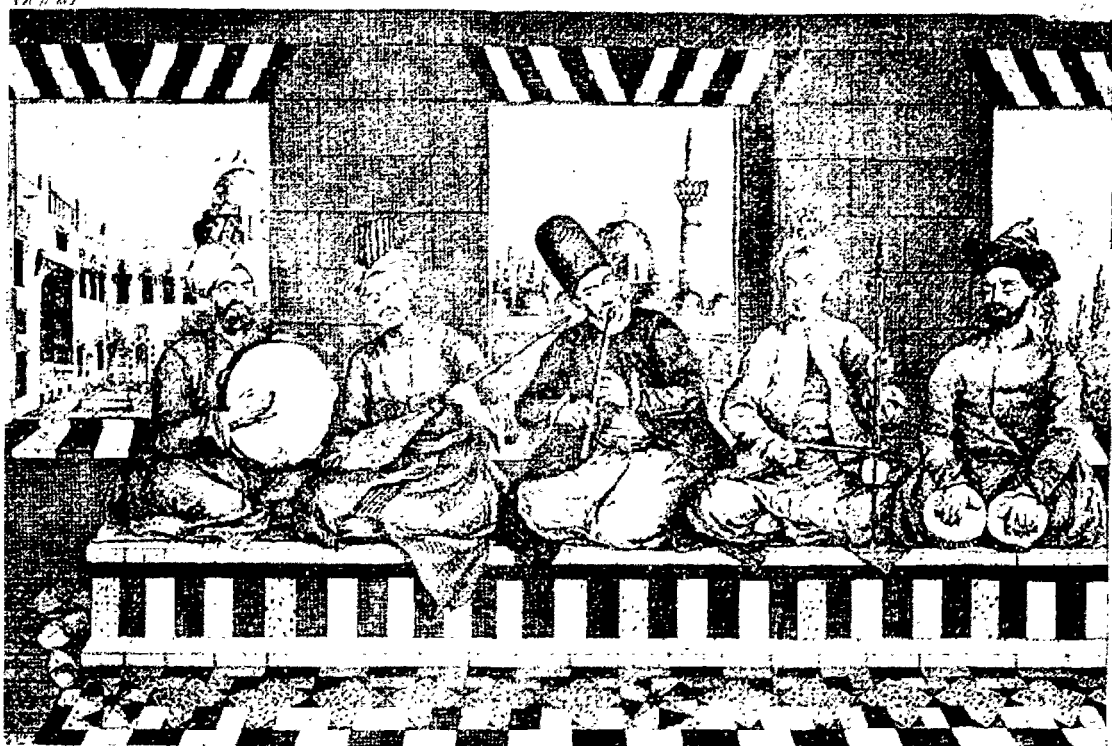
The *maqāmāt*, or modes, meanwhile, are distinguished by full, half, quarter and even smaller intervals on the musical scale, showing the precise acoustic discrimination of the practitioners. Tones were studied by a number of Muslim scholars, some of them noted above, who gave them the Arabic, Persian or Turkish names which are still preserved in the countries privileged to have had links with Islamic civilization (Greece, which has moved out of the orbit of the Islamic world, is an exception). The *maqāmāt* include: (a) Arabic *‘Irāq*, *Ḥijāz*, *Ḥusayn*, *ramal* and *dhayl*; (b) Persian *Isfahān*, *bastanigāt*, *jahārkāb*, *sīkah* and *Shāhnāz*; (c) Turkish *būsalīk*, *kardan* and *kārĥigār*.

In all these countries, including the Arab states, the points on the scale still bear Persian names: *yakah*, *dukah*, *sakah*, *jaharkah*, *banjakah*, *shashkah* and *haftakah*.

Rhythm was another topic which attracted scholarly interest, beginning with al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhidī, who linked musical rhythm with the metre of Arabic poetry. This was also the subject of Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī in his treatise *Ajzā’ khabariyya fī-l-mūsīqā* (manuscript 5503 in the Berlin Public Library). Details of the rhythms covered in al-Kindī’s treatise are presented in the chapter ‘*Uṣūl al-īqā‘āt wa-l-maqāmāt al-‘Arabiyya*’ in the present author’s study entitled *al-Mūsīqā al-‘Arabiyya: tārikḥuhā wa-adabuhā*.

In his *al-Mūsīqā al-kabīr*, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī deals with the subject of rhythm, defining it as the transition from note to note in intervals of determined quantity and ratio. In his work entitled *al-Najāt*, Ibn Sina also considers the subject of rhythm, describing it as ‘any pluck from which a move is made to another pluck, such a move being either in a duration in which the second pluck does not erase the memory of the first one, so that both remain symbiotically intact, or otherwise’. Rhythm emanates from plucks whose intervals are of the first kind.

A later scholar, Ṣaḥfī al-Dīn al-Urmawī (seventh/thirteenth century) defined rhythm thus: ‘Rhythm is a succession of plucks separated by intervals that are qualitatively measured, producing musical structures that are quantitatively equal, to suit specific situations.’



VI-4.2 Musicians in Aleppo in the 18th century. From the  
*Natural History of Aleppo* by Alex Russell, London, 1794

© D. R.

In musical forms current today we find a connection with the feet of Arabic poetry, such as the foot *mufā'alatun* from *al-wāfir*, which corresponds to the seven-unit *nukbt* practised in Turkey and the Arab countries. Moreover, *fā'ilatun* (from *al-ramal*), corresponding to *al-dawr al-Hindī*, is employed in Turkey and the Arab countries. Both metres have also been adopted in the Balkans. A major contribution to our present knowledge of classical metres is the result of practice, research and experimentation, mostly carried out in Turkey during the reign of the Ottoman Sultan Sālīm (1174–1222/1761–1808). The sultan was a musician who composed several works which are known to this today. He played a vital rôle in developing music in Turkey and the countries of the Ottoman Empire by encouraging the production of new *maqāmāt* and *īqā'āt*. [Fig. 2].

Interest in the field continued to expand and 1932 saw the holding in Cairo of the first Conference on Arabic Music, which was attended by dis-

tinguished scholars from Muslim and other countries. This resulted in the presentation of various rhythms: the *ḍarb fath*, presented by Baron Rodolphe d'Erlanger; a scale of 176 temporal units presented by Shaykh 'Alī al-Darwīsh from Syria; and the *shanbar* scale of 84 temporal units presented by the Egyptian delegation.

By way of an anecdote, I may add that at one time, I was engaged on research into the source of every kind of rhythm and that included the 'Turkish' rhythm of seven minor units used throughout the Islamic world under the name of *aqsās*. In 1964 I took part in a Mediterranean Music Conference held in Istanbul, organized by our friend, Adnan Saygun. On this occasion, while visiting the town of Izmir, I woke up one morning to hear a bird happily chirping away in this same *aqsās* rhythm!

### Expressing the vowels and consonants in rhythm

Al-Kindī characterized the various rhythms in terms of the number of beats and measures. For example, he describes al-Mākhūrī's rhythm as follows: two consecutive beats and one single beat. While Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī followed al-Kindī, Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī was at variance. He identified the heavy beat as *tana* with two vowels, and the light as *tann* with one vowel and a *sukūn*. The *awtād* (pegs) are expressed as *tanana* with each consonant followed by a vowel. The Tunisian scholar Maḥmūd Sayyāla used *l* instead of *t* to give *lana* and the *awtād*, *lanana*.

Since the last century the following terms have been used to describe types of beats: *dumm* for strong, *takk* for light and *kāh* for lighter. With the development of music and the instruments used, we have added the terms *daff*, *ṭāqq* and *ṭarq* for the large drum, *ḍajj* for the tightly drawn drum, *tish* for the ordinary tambourine and *ṣunnīj* for the cymbals.

Arabic music and song went through a number of stages: the chant of the camel-drivers on the summer and winter caravans referred to in the Qur'ān in the Sūra of Quraysh; the songs classified by Abu-l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī in his *Kitāb al-Aghānī*; the popular songs which are wide-spread throughout the Muslim world; improvised songs and musical instruments. The earliest work of reference for the rules of traditional composition was produced by Ziriyāb of Cordova (third/ninth century), who devised a method of his own. This opened with an account of *nashīd* (singing), followed by the *basīṭ* metre and finally with vowels, in accordance with the *Nafḥ al-tīb* of al-Maqqarī. This method was the basis for all musical arrangements in the various Muslim countries: *nawba* in the Maghrib and Andalusia; *waṣla* in the Arab East; *fāṣil* in Turkey; *shish maqām* in the republics of Central Asia as far as Sinkiang, the Turkic area of China. They included the *muwashshahāt*, *azjāl* and other compositions, whether *bashārīf*, *samā'īyyāt* or *lanaqāt* from Turkey, or *tawshiyāt* and *muṣaddarāt* from Andalusia and the Maghrib. The Ziriyāb method was also

introduced to the West by the troubadours from Provence and was incorporated in various forms of classical music.

Šūfī orders played an important rôle in the preservation of the musical heritage of Islamic civilization, much of which would have disappeared in the face of blinkered opposition during a number of puritanical periods in its history. The Šūfīs succeeded in keeping alive the heritage of the *muwashshahāt*, for example, by giving them new lyrics which extolled the Unity of God, praised the Prophet and hailed the deeds of their masters among the saints and the righteous. They include Bābā Ṭāhīr in Iran, who had a *maqām* named after him, which was famous elsewhere as *al-Muhayyir*. Another example was Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, a driving force behind the development of Turkish music, which would spread to many other Muslim countries. Next to his burial-place, there is now gathered the most important collection of wind instruments in the Muslim world. Among other such Šūfīs we can list, from Baghdad, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī (al-Kaylānī); in the Maghrib and Egypt, Abu-l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī; in Libya and Tunisia, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Salām al-Asmār, whose order combined with the ‘Arūsiyya order of Shaykh Aḥmad b. ‘Arūs; in Algeria, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tha‘ālibī; and in Morocco, Shaykh Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā. With all of them, chanting was used as a means to attract young Muslims to join groups for the study of the Qur’ān and Islamic law.

The Šūfī orders of the Maghrib were particularly influential in bringing Islam to Black Africa. Followers of these orders used to travel deep into the African interior to buy children and bring them back to Šūfī schools, where they were taught the Qur’ān and the basic principles of Islam, together with reading and writing in Arabic. They would then be freed and returned to their families.

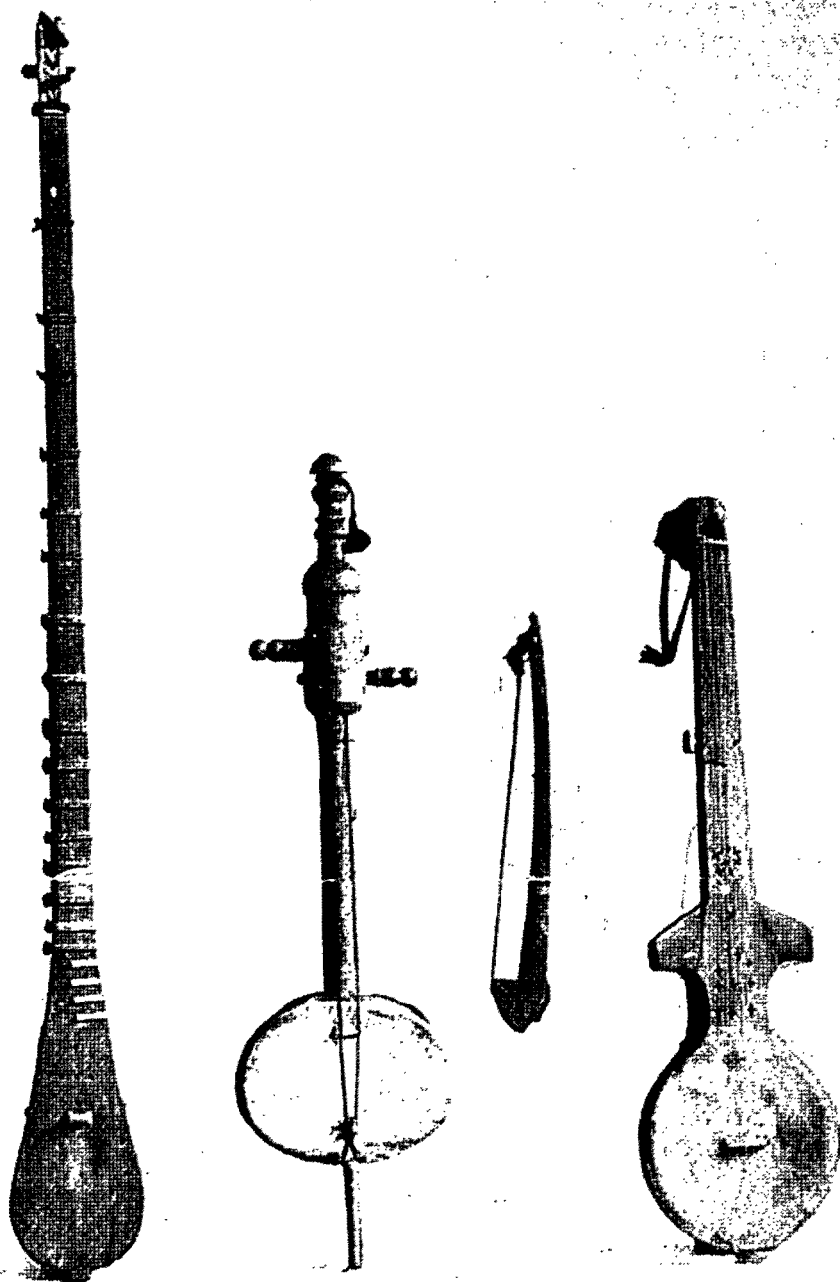
Modern history bears witness to the fact that most Šūfī orders took part in the struggle against colonialism. If a few were made use of by the colonial powers, this was inevitable, since there is good and bad in every community.

## Musical notation

The earliest musical notation is to be found in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* of Abu-l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī. This took the form of a number of symbols to indicate the position of the fingers of the left hand on the four strings of the lute (low, third, second, highest). These are as follows:

1. *muṭlaq* on the course of the middle finger;
2. *muṭlaq* on the course of the ring-finger;
3. index finger on the course of the middle finger;
4. index finger on the course of the ring-finger;
5. the middle finger on its own course;
6. the ring-finger on its own course;
7. the little finger on the course of the middle finger;
8. the little finger on the course of the ring-finger.





VI-4.3 Stringed instruments used in Bukhārā  
© Natural Museum, Copenhagen, Olufsen Collection

Following in the footsteps of Hāshim al-Rajab from Baghdad and Yūsuf Shawqī from Cairo, the author has deciphered these symbols, which turn out to represent no more than a statement of the *maqām* scale. [Fig 3]

Musical notation evolved with Ṣafi al-Dīn al-Urmawī, who introduced the subject in his book *Kitāb al-Adwār*. A manuscript copy of this work, in the hand of ‘Alī Faṭḥ Allāh al-Ma‘ādinī al-Iṣfahānī, known as ‘Sā‘ir’, was obtained by the author from the library of Bākū, the capital of Azerbaijan.

In al-Urmawī’s method, the first ten letters of the old Semitic alphabet (*a, b, j, d, h, w, z, ḥ, ṭ, y*) are assigned to the positions of the fingers on the strings. For higher notes, the tenth letter is placed before the others in sequence, e.g. *ya, yb, yj, yd, yh, yz, yḥ, yṭ*. Even higher on the scale, the eleventh letter (*k*) replaces the *y*, thus: *ka, kb, kj, kd, kh, kz, kḥ, kṭ*. Higher still, the twelfth letter (*l*) would be added, and so on.

Though more complete than that of Abu-l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, this method was still unsatisfactory and the Ottoman sultans exhorted musicians to devise better notations. In the eleventh/seventeenth century, a Byzantine prince, Demetrius Cantemir, appeared to fulfil this role, but was to desert his Ottoman benefactors and join the Russian army. In the twelfth/eighteenth century, Hambarsom, an Ottoman musician, devised a new notation which was used in Turkey until the end of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, when present-day Western conventions were adopted. To this system, musicians from Turkey, Iran and the Arab countries have made additions, enabling them to express the music of the Islamic civilization in the finest detail.

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Chapter 5(a)

ISLAMIC CARPETS

*Serare Yetkin*

Carpet-making has a distinctive place in the Islamic decorative arts. The art of weaving attained a superiority through the use of the knotting technique, and this development gave colour and variety to the art. Described as the luxury of the Orient, this skill is a gift of the Turkish people to the Islamic world. It originated in those parts of Central Asia where Turkish tribes lived. They introduced the art of carpet-weaving to the Islamic world during their expansion to the West. That the earliest dated examples were found in the first homeland of the Turkish people is sufficient evidence for this fact. Later on, the art of carpet-weaving developed considerably and attained a richness worthy of its name in various Muslim countries. Since it had an uninterrupted development, any examination of Islamic carpets should properly start with Turkish carpets.

A few of the fragments which were found at al-Fuṣṭāṭ, Old Cairo, in Egypt, were 'Abbāsid carpets resembling these found in Central Asia. Both types were tied with single-warp knots, a technique later to become a characteristic feature of Spanish carpets.

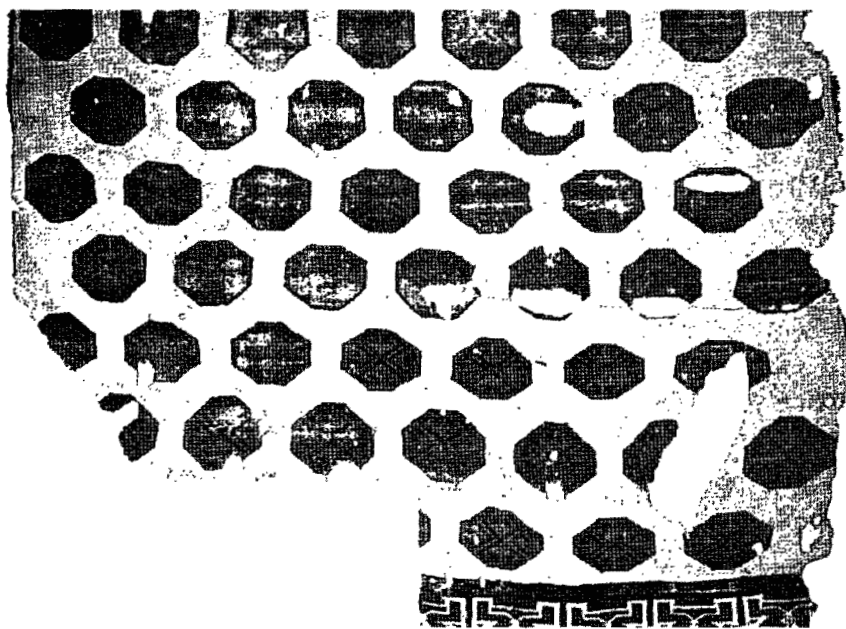
The carpets found at the Pazyryk burial-ground (*kurgan*) in the Altai mountains use the Turkish type of knot (symmetrical) and are roughly assigned to the period shortly before Christ. The exact dating of them is still a matter of conjecture. Other than these, the uninterrupted development of the Turkish carpet-making art commences with the carpets found at Qonya and Beyshehir in the seventh/thirteenth century, dating from the reign of the Anatolian Saljūqs. Similar pieces found later at al-Fuṣṭāṭ testify that those carpets had been widely exported. They are characterized by geometrical designs and by their Kufic borders in bold style. Pictorial representations of Turkish carpets of the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries, with animal designs, were made by European painters. These carpets were soon outshone by those with geometrical designs and stylized floral motifs which

were called 'Holbein' and 'Lotto' after the names of the painters who depicted them. The development of Turkish carpets in the tenth/sixteenth century was enriched by a great variety. Carpets named after the 'Ushāq region were also known by their medallions. Star-medallion carpets influenced the British carpet-making art as well. There are many other examples of tenth/sixteenth-century carpets with flowers, birds (*kuşlu*) and with a motif called Tschintemani. The Ottoman examples from the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries, which are called court carpets and tied with the Persian knot (asymmetric), have a magnificence that reflects the court style of the era. The similarities between them and the Mamlūk carpets, which are also tied with the Persian knot, led scholars to assume that Cairo was their place of origin. The floral patterns, such as tulips, hyacinths, carnations, roses and very elegant scrolled leaves, were drawn by artists called *naqqāsh*. The carpets were made either of wool as fine as silk, or of silk. They became coarser in time and were called Smyrna carpets. Other examples of Islamic carpets with traditional geometrical designs and characteristic regional features have been produced continually up to this day.

## Turkish carpets

The uninterrupted development of the historical Turkish carpet from the seventh/thirteenth to the thirteenth/nineteenth centuries resembles the links of a chain. The first link is represented by Saljūq carpets. All the of the eighteen known Saljūq specimens have survived either complete or in fragments. Eight of them were first discovered in 1905 by F. R. Martin in the 'Alā' al-Dīn Mosque, Qonya. These precious pieces add an extra value to the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul [Fig. 1]. R. M. Riefstahl found three more in 1930 in the Eshrefoğlu Mosque at Beyshehir, Qonya. Two of them are still in Qonya mosques, while the third is now in the Keir Collection at Richmond, England. In 1930, C. J. Lamm identified seven of the various fragments found at al-Fuṣṭāṭ, Old Cairo, as Saljūq carpets. Today, they are in the National Museum, Stockholm.

These eighteen carpets, which share common technical and decorative characteristics, show differences in detail. A small carpet, in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, with stylized floral motifs, and a fragment from the Keir Collection have distinctive floral motifs resembling those of Chinese silk cloths and are both dated to the fourteenth century. Another carpet in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art is similar to a fragment of a carpet in the Qonya Museum, with the exception of its colour. The wool used in the al-Fuṣṭāṭ carpets is thinner. Alongside these, the Saljūq group of carpets that are decorated with geometrical and stylized floral motifs display variations suggesting great creativity. The variations observed in the characteristic Kufic borders are reflections of this creative power. Saljūq carpets had an immense



VI-5(a).1 Turkish carpet, Saljūq (Konya), seventh/thirteenth century.  
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul

© D. R.

impact on the later examples of Turkish, Caucasian and Spanish carpets. The repeat pattern of the motifs of Saljūq carpets is kept alive in many modern Anatolian carpets and kilims.

#### ANIMAL-FIGURED CARPETS

Carpets with animal figures, which are represented in the drawings of European painters, are dated to the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth and the end of the ninth/fifteenth centuries. Although original examples of this style are very few, a general grouping is possible through these paintings. The fields of these carpets are divided into large or small squares. Squares have octagons, and octagons have four types of animal figures in them. The first of figures shows heraldic, single- or double-headed eagles; the second group consists of two birds on each side of a tree; the third, of a single bird or stylized quadrupeds in geometrical frames; and the fourth, of animals in pairs or in combat. The two most famous carpets, which bear a resemblance to

those depicted in the paintings of European artists, are the Marby carpet in the Statens Historiske Museum, Stockholm, and the Ming carpet in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin. Among the original examples of this type, various other compositions, such as animal figures within or outside geometrical frames, large star motifs, or animal figures in rows, also are attested. In some examples the geometrical frames are completely abandoned. The carpet in the Vakıflar Carpet Museum, Istanbul, combines the characteristic motifs of this group in a new compositional arrangement. This piece is especially valuable as the only example of a different composition.

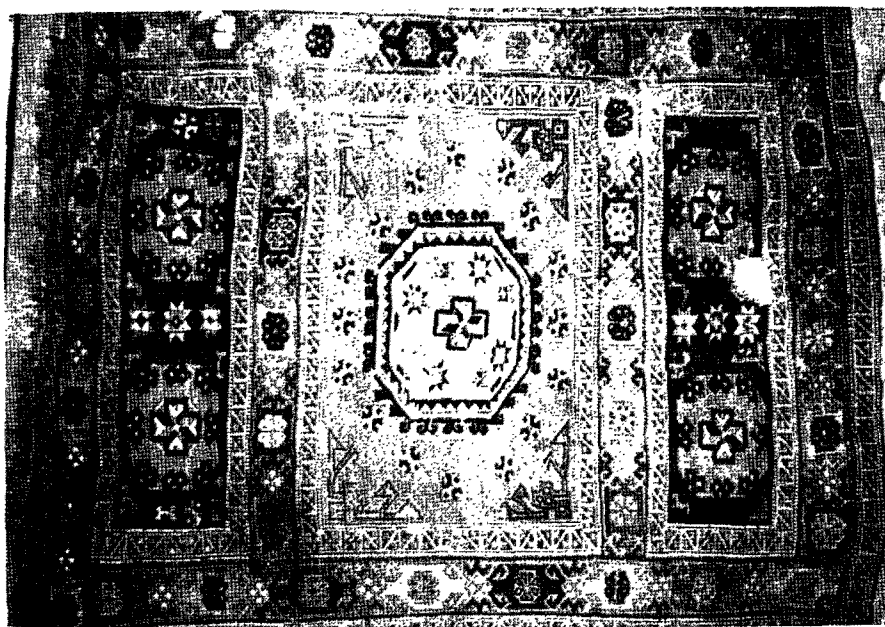
Animal figures disappear at the end of the ninth/fifteenth century and are replaced by knotted octagons, lozenges and stars within geometrical frames. Because the young German painter Holbein used to represent these, they have long been named after him. But in fact, Holbein had only depicted two types of these carpets and these had appeared in the paintings of Italian artists before this time.

The first type is known as small-patterned Holbein, with knotted octagons and stylized palmettes and *rūmīs* arranged alternately in staggered rows. According to this scheme, the octagon is in the centre and the lozenges are in the corners. The earliest example of this type is the large carpet found in the Eshrefoğlu Mosque at Beyshehir. It is in the Qonya Museum today.

The second type, which has never been depicted by Holbein, is called the 'Lotto' type because it frequently appears in the works of the Venetian painter Lorenzo Lotto. The scheme is the same, but the geometrical motifs are replaced by completely stylized floral motifs. The octagons of the first type disappear in favour of *rūmīs* and palmettes, and thus floral motifs are exclusively applied in a more developed manner to the same composition. The majority of the examples of this type are in yellow on a red ground. Later examples with blue and brown grounds are in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art and in the Vakıflar Carpet Museum. This type was imitated by British carpet-weavers as well.

The third type is called large-patterned Holbein. On the fields of these carpets are large compartments of rectangles with octagons in them. Generally there are two rows of rectangles, but occasionally there are four. The octagons are filled with knotted eight-pointed stars and geometrical motifs. A typical example of this type, a carpet with a Kufic border, is in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art. The important characteristic of this group is their compositional similarity to animal-figured carpets. Here, animal figures are replaced by geometrical motifs.

The fourth group is a variation of the third one. A large octagon is surrounded by smaller ones. The repeat pattern of other carpets is replaced by grouping the secondary motifs around a central one [Fig. 2], so that they resemble Mamlūk carpets. A group of carpets, which are called para-Mamlūk and tied with the Persian knot, is considered part of this group. There are two



VI-5(a).2 Turkish carpet, 'Holbein IV' type (Bergama region),  
end of the seventeenth century. Museum of Turkish  
and Islamic Art, Istanbul

© D. R.

carpets in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art that draw attention with their Kufic borders, reflecting the link between the third and the fourth groups. Twelfth/eighteenth- and thirteenth/nineteenth-century Bergama carpets, some carpets produced today and Caucasian carpets share the characteristics of this type.

#### OTTOMAN CARPETS OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

The tenth/sixteenth century marks a great change in the design and technique of the Turkish carpet-weaving art. Carpets with geometric designs began to emerge by the end of the ninth/fifteenth century and continued to be produced during the tenth/sixteenth century. Parallel to the similar development in all spheres of Ottoman art, the tenth/sixteenth century brought an immense richness and variety in the art of carpet-weaving as well. The brightest period in the trend filled in the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries when two groups of carpets, which were the same in

essence but different in design and technique, emerged. The first group is a large one called Ushaq and the second contains Ottoman court carpets, which are considered a part of Ottoman court art.

Ushāq carpets are woven with pure wool and tied with the Turkish, or symmetric, knot. There are two types with medallion schemes. They are called cusped medallion and star medallion according to their forms. These medallions are repeated endlessly, in contrast to the tenth/sixteenth-century Persian style. The Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art contains magnificent examples of various types of these carpets. Medallions follow a repeat pattern in staggered rows. Borders cut the side axes and floral motifs are used as fillings for the field. Some are filled with Tschintemani motifs.

Two carpets which have star medallions and bear the dates 991/1584 and 992/1585, help in dating similar ones and prove that they were copied in Europe. There are three copies of them in a private British collection. No examples of Ushāq medallion carpets are known for the ninth/fifteenth century, but similar motifs on book covers and illuminations of the ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries indicate the influence of the art of illumination on such carpets. They were exported to Europe and generally represented in the works of Dutch and Spanish painters. The Ushāq group shows a wide variety. A rare carpet with a design derived from the star medallion draws attention in the Vakıflar Carpet Museum, Istanbul. There are various other examples in American and European museums.

Some carpets, which have no medallions but display flowers, are also considered as Ushāq. Among those with white grounds, the so-called bird carpet (Kuşlu) is a different type. In fact, the illusion of a bird is created by bringing two leaves together and giving the ground between them a different colour. This type had also been depicted by European painters. Some carpets with white grounds have a motif that has a symbolic meaning. The most exquisite example of this type, which is called Tschintemani, has two yellow bands and three blue balls on a red ground and is in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul. Later examples of this type, with their characteristic motifs on yellow and deep-blue grounds, are in the Vakıflar Carpet Museum.

Ottoman court carpets are the one group that remained outside the continuous development of the Turkish carpet-weaving art. They do not have beginnings in the ninth/fifteenth century. The naturalistic floral motifs of tulips, hyacinths, roses, carnations, buds and scrolled branches were drawn by the court artist, called *naqqāsh*. Medallions seem as if they were attached to the field of carpets that have repeat patterns. The endless repetition of these motifs is felt under the medallions. Since these elegant motifs with scrolled leaves could only be tied with the Persian, or asymmetric, knot, they are technically different from other Turkish carpets, which are tied with the Turkish knot. They were woven with very fine and brilliantly coloured wool in red, yellow, blue and green, and their first examples are thought to have been



produced in Cairo. The early specimens bear the characteristic motifs of Mamlūk carpets, so that some scholars believed that the court artists were drawing the motifs on cartons and sending them to Cairo to be woven. But after a short while, elegant floral motifs peculiar to the art of Ottoman carpet-weaving began to dominate.

An important event in the development of the art of carpet-weaving was an imperial edict of Sultan Murād III in 992/1585, ordering eleven carpet-weavers with the necessary equipment to be sent from Cairo to Istanbul. The technical changes observed in some of the carpets woven towards the end of the tenth/sixteenth century may be attributed to the work of these masters.

In some court carpets, the warp and weft are silk, while the white and blue parts are woven with cotton threads. These are believed to have been produced in Istanbul and in Bursa, which is another weaving-centre famous for its silk cloths.

One of the most popular and frequently used motifs of court carpets is a lozenge made of four large, feathery, scrolled leaves. In some examples, the medallions, which seem as if attached to this motif, are either in the centre or in the corners, that are cut with borders. In these examples, the medallions are filled with naturalistic floral motifs. In another type there is a composition with eight palmettes around a central rosette. The field of the carpet is decorated with rosettes and palmettes on scrolled branches and scrolled leaves in a repeat pattern. In some examples these motifs are framed with thin contours to produce a false medallion scheme. In some eleventh/seventeenth-century specimens there are blossoming branches on the field and sometimes cartouches with naturalistic floral fillings are added to the pattern. Ottoman court carpets were copied by Polish and Spanish weavers. Such carpets were highly regarded for their elegant motifs and fine techniques and the Ottoman sultans used to send them as gifts to European courts.

## Persian carpets

The technical superiority of carpets tied with the Persian knot developed considerably from the tenth/sixteenth century on in Persia. As no dated examples of the originals have been found, we have to rely on the only source of information, that is, the carpet depictions in the miniatures of the Aq Qoyunlū, Qarā Qoyunlū and Tīmūrid periods. These carpets, which are decorated with geometrically stylized floral scrolls and Kufic borders, are considered to represent the beginning of the development of the art of Persian carpet-making. From the tenth/sixteenth century on, the medallion became the principal motif of Persian carpets, which had shown a considerable development under the influence of the art of illumination. The medallion carpets of Tabrīz are good examples for their distinction. Besides the medallion, there are many examples of scrollwork with human and animal

figures dispersed in them. Hunting-parties, entertainments and sultans on thrones are frequently depicted scenes that reflect the daily life of the courtiers. But the most exquisite ones are the silk carpets of Kāshān and those of the reign of Shāh ʿAbbās. The latter have a baroque appearance and their silk and silver or gold threads are knotted as well. Vase carpets are another type that give variety to the products of this period. A special group called garden carpets reflects the taste of the epoch in the arrangement of gardens. Their technical superiority, fineness and mature colour schemes, and the elegance of their motifs have always been admired.

The most distinguished examples of Persian carpets were produced during the Şafawid dynasty during the tenth/sixteenth and the eleventh/seventeenth centuries. Various floral decorations on the scrolled branches of Persian carpets were enriched by fantastic animals, such as the dragon, phoenix and *chʿi-lin*, and Chinese clouds, all of which were derived from Chinese art. For that reason, Persian carpets are generally classified according to their designs. A classification according to the places where they were produced is also possible, yet not decisive.

#### TABRĪZ CARPETS

The main motif of Persian carpets is a large central medallion in various forms. There are quarter-medallions in the four corners. The central medallion is sometimes decorated with cartouches and pendants. Scenes of hunting and entertainment with various figures of men and flying or combatting animals, drawn by miniature artists, are shown either within the medallions or on the field of the carpets. These are believed to have been woven in Tabrīz, the great centre of art of the time. The existence of carpets with dates on them helps in dating the Şafawid examples. The most important of them are a pair of carpets, one of which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Because it was brought from the shrine of Shaykh Şafi in Ardabīl, this famous piece is called the Ardabīl carpet. The central star medallion is surrounded by sixteen small medallions, from the lower and upper two of which hang mosque lamps. The inscription, which is near the border, reads the date 946/1539–1540 and the name Maqsūd of Kāshān. It is not certain whether this carpet was woven or ordered by this person. Another important example of Persian carpets is in the Poldi-Pezzoli Museum, Milan. In a cartouche in the middle of the central cusped star medallion one reads the date of its manufacture, 949/1542–1543 and the name of the weaver, Ghiyāth al-Dīn Jāmī. The medallion is filled with floral scrolls and various figures of birds. Figures of running animals among floral scrolls and hunters shooting arrows on horseback are symmetrically arranged in the field of the carpet.

## KĀSHĀN CARPETS

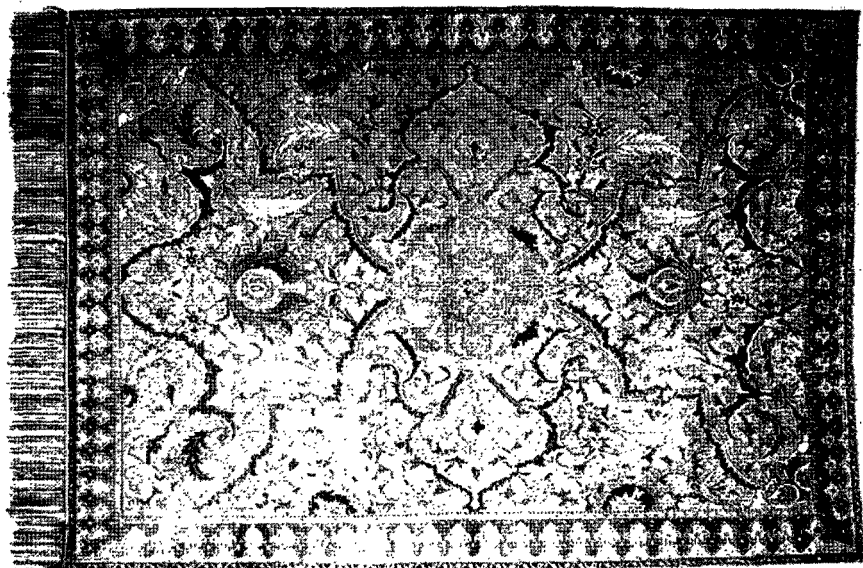
Kāshān is considered the major centre for silk carpets. Some Kāshān carpets are brocaded with silver and gold threads. The most exquisite example of this group is a carpet with a hunting scene on it. The carpet belongs to the Habsburg Dynasty and is now in the Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna. In the border of the carpet, there are *houris* (angels). There are also smaller examples of Kāshān carpets. A small silk specimen, which shows six rows of animals, either singly or in combat, in a mountainous landscape, is in the Altman Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

A group of carpets of silk tapestry technique is also believed to have been woven in Kāshān. They are dated to the end of the tenth/sixteenth or eleventh/seventeenth century and some are brocaded with gold and silver threads. Legendary animals, either single or in combat, lions, lion-masks and birds are sometimes placed in or outside the rows of the cartouches. A representative example of this technique, with scenes taken from the miniatures in the central and corner medallions, is now in the Louvre Museum.

## KIRMĀN CARPETS

The vase carpets of the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries are believed to have been woven in Kirmān. This group takes its name from the vases in their designs, but they do not necessarily have this motif. A technical characteristic of these carpets is that they were woven on double warps. Their composition is very different from that of other types. They can be divided into three main groups. The first group has a lozenge diaper of lanceolate leaves. Four lotus palmettes and a vase are the characteristic fillings of these lozenges. The grounds of the lozenges differ in colour. A splendid example of this group, which may be assigned to the tenth/sixteenth century, is in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul.

Two new groups, which indicate fresh developments, emerge towards the end the tenth/sixteenth century. Vertical lozenge diapers intersect in three rows and various lotus palmettes on slender scrolled branches are combined in the direction of the scrolling. Lozenges are filled with vases full of flowers and elegant palmettes and rosettes. The advanced third group of the eleventh/seventeenth century discards the vases, but preserves the lozenges with rich variations of flowers. Later on, the circular movement of the scrolled lanceolate leaves destroys the lozenge scheme and flower motifs become coarser. Some scholars suggest that vase carpets were produced at Jushagan, near Işfahān, but this is not certain.



VI-5(a).3 Persian carpet, so-called 'Polish' (Iṣfahān) type, eleventh/seventeenth century. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin

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#### HARĀT CARPETS

Harāt district is known for its carpets with symmetrical floral designs, which are made by combining the scrolled floral branches with large palmettes, occasionally with Chinese clouds among them. Tenth/sixteenth-century Harāt carpets have large fan-shaped palmettes and various animals in combat or pursuing each other, on a lively red ground. The palmettes of the eleventh/seventeenth-century Harāt carpets become larger and coarser and elongated scrolled leaves appear.

#### IṢFAHĀN CARPETS

During the eleventh/seventeenth century, Iṣfahān became the centre for a very different type of carpet, some examples of which are known as Polish carpets because of the Polish coats of arms on them [Fig. 3]. Some parts of these silk carpets are brocaded with cotton and, especially, with silver and gold threads. Their warps and wefts are cotton, the piles are silk. The

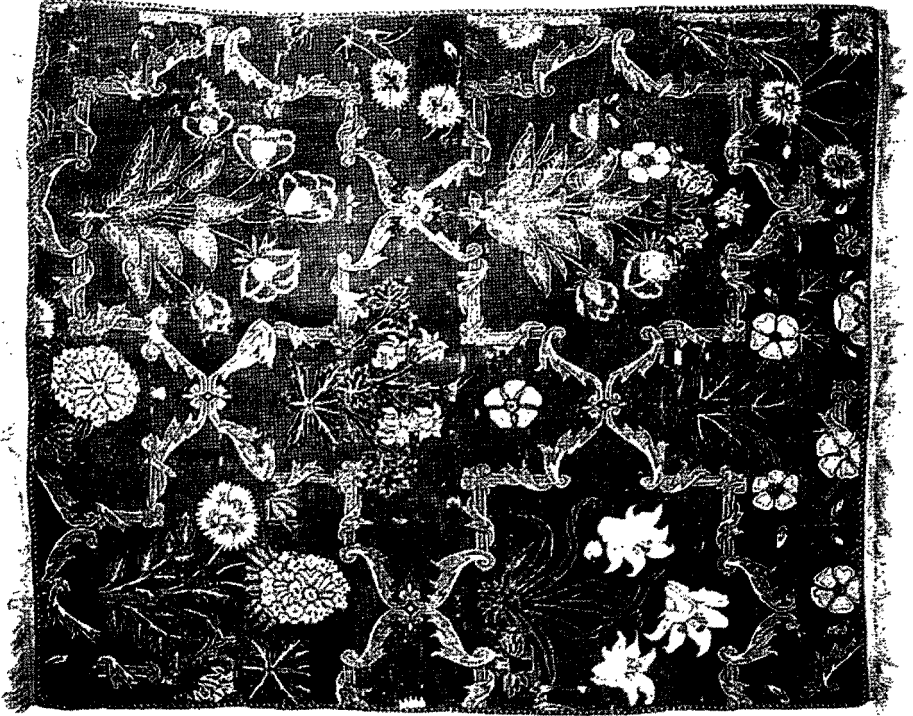
design looks like a relief on the field. These carpets, which began to be woven at the beginning of the eleventh/seventeenth century, are generally in pastel tones. They were woven on court looms with expensive material and sent to European courts as gifts. Although the designs are adapted from other Persian carpets, especially from the Kāshān type, they are more baroque in character. The medallion scheme acquires a deceptive appearance with the use of different colours. Different examples of Iṣfahān carpets are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

Tree and garden designs form another characteristic group of Persian carpets. They are in the shape of a schematic garden and divided into compartments by water-canals full of fish. The compartments are filled with blossoming trees and bunches of flowers. One magnificent example of these carpets is in the Figder Collection in Vienna and dated to the reign of Shāh ʿAbbās. Others, in the Museum of Jaipur, have various realistically represented flowers, fruit-trees, birds and animals. The twelfth/eighteenth-century garden carpets, which are more schematic and coarser, are thought to have been produced in north-west Persia.

## Indian carpets

During the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries, Indian artists (despite the warmth of the climate) made carpets tied with the Persian knot under the influence of the Persian technique. These carpets had peculiar designs consisting of fantastic creatures and a variety of animals. Indian weavers created a fairy-tale world by bringing unrelated figures together in their free compositions [Fig. 4]. The floral motifs are rendered in such a lively manner that they seem to be bursting out of the soil, while they almost acquire a plastic quality through the use of various tones of colour.

Indian carpets reflect a strong Persian influence (especially from Harāt and Kirmān). But browns, reds and deep oranges, which are not found on Persian examples, are characteristic colours of Indian carpets. One in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, reflects the Persian influence but differs from Persian carpets in its freedom of composition and realistic depiction of trees and animal figures. Other Indian carpets, which are woven in a pictorial style, share the same characteristics. On an Indian example in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, various unrelated mythological scenes are freely arranged. The lower part shows a mythological animal like a winged elephant in combat with a phoenix. In the centre of the field is the representation of a hunting-party returning from the chase, with figures of men and animals. On the top are scenes of entertainment during a garden party and a house with groups of people. The scenes resemble those of seventeenth-century Indian miniatures.



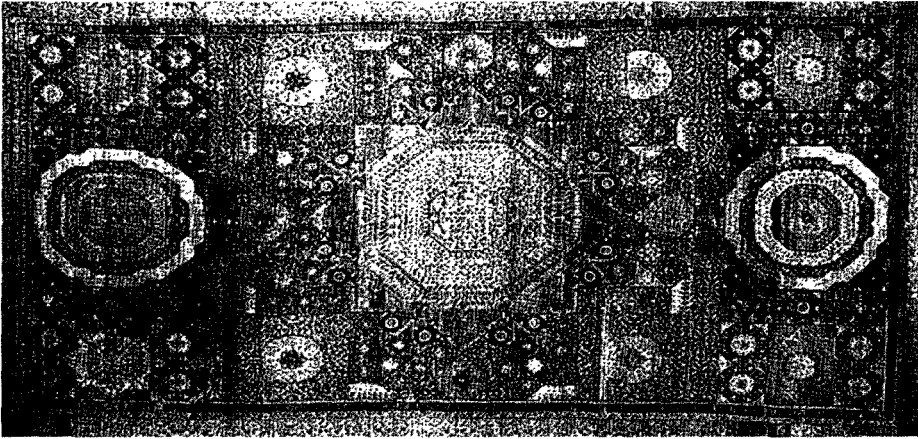
VI-5(a).4 Indian carpet with naturalistic rendering of flowers, middle of the eleventh/seventeenth century. Richmond E. de Unger's collection

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The wool used in Indian carpets is brilliant and soft as silk. Indeed, although few, there are silk carpets that look like velvet. The technical perfection of Indian carpets, especially of those woven during the reign of Shāh Jahān, far exceeds that of Persian carpets.

### Mamlūk carpets

Mamlūk carpets tied with the Persian knot appear at the end of the ninth/fifteenth century. They are included in the art of Turkish carpet-making through the use of Ottoman motifs during the first half of the tenth/sixteenth century. The first examples of Mamlūk carpets are decorated with stylized floral motifs enclosed in geometrical areas [Fig 5]. Leaves of papyrus, palm-trees and cypress-trees are frequently used. In the middle of these carpets is a large star or medallion with smaller stars or geometrical designs grouped around it.

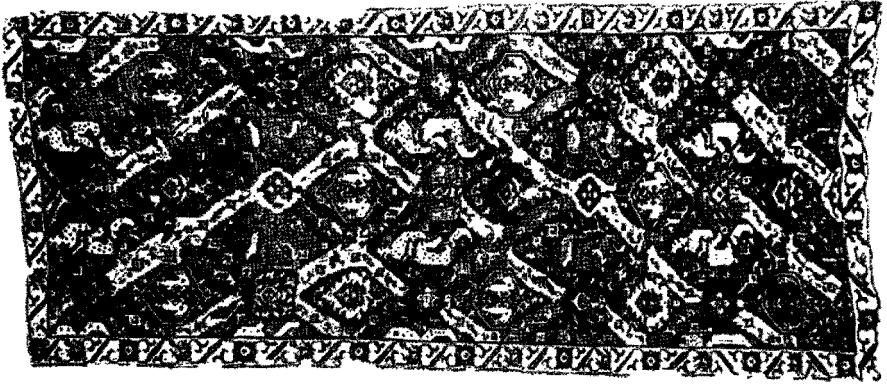


VI-5(a).5 Mamlūk carpet (Cairo), beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century.  
 Österreichisches Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna  
 © D.R.

Coats of arms also help in dating Mamlūk carpets. A carpet in the Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, draws attention with its square-like shape and silk warps. The most magnificent example of the Mamlūk carpet is one recently found at the Palazzo Pitti, Florence. It measures 1,088 cm. in length by 409 cm. in width.

### Caucasian carpets

Caucasian carpets form the group closest to Turkish carpets. They are tied with the Turkish knot. A characteristic type, the so-called dragon carpets, was produced between the tenth/sixteenth and the end of the twelfth/eighteenth centuries. Their pattern usually consists of a lozenge diaper of serrate leaves, large rosettes and composite flowers enclosing Chinese dragons [Fig. 6], legendary creatures and animals such as deer and birds. The patterns are generally arranged in rows on a vertical axis. During the twelfth/eighteenth century, Persian influence enriched the designs with the addition of floral decorations. Caucasian carpets are extremely abstract in their designs, with contrasting outlines and bright and lively colours that amplify their impact. During the thirteenth/nineteenth century, they acquired a new richness of variety by adapting various geometrical designs from Turkish carpets and small animal figures. Caucasian carpets are known by the names of the regions in which they were produced. The main centres are Shirwān, Bākū and Ganja.



VI-5a.6 Caucasian carpet, so-called 'Dragon carpet',  
eleventh/seventeenth century. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin  
© D. R.

Caucasian carpets are characterized by their unique power of moulding Turkish and Persian influences. They are made of vividly and brilliantly coloured wool and woven with the Turkish knot. With their various types, which derive from each other, their level of uniformity is higher than that of other eastern carpets. The most characteristic group consists of dragon carpets. The animal figures on them are derived from eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth century Anatolian carpets. Fire-radiating dragons, figures of *ch'i-lins* and the cloud knots (*teschi*) on the leaves are indications of Chinese influence.

Such carpets are generally woven on a red ground, occasionally on blue, brown and green grounds. The different colours of the serrate leaves of the lozenge diaper create the scheme of two intersecting lozenges, as on the vase carpets of Persia. Inside the lozenges are vertically arranged dragons, a dragon and phoenix in combat (for some, they are *ch'i-lin* and lion) and birds and running animals, their heads turned back. All the animals disappear during the eleventh/seventeenth century, to be replaced by stylized dragons. During the twelfth/eighteenth century, even dragons disappear, or they become flower motifs. The leaves of the lozenge scheme are broken into pieces to create a scheme of encircling large flowers.

During the twelfth/eighteenth century, which is a period of strong Persian influence, many floral designs were introduced into Caucasian carpet-making. But the geometrical pattern, which is a unique characteristic of Caucasian carpets, pervades the designs. The Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art and the Vakıflar Museum in Istanbul have a rich collection of carpets that reflects all the stages of their isolated development.

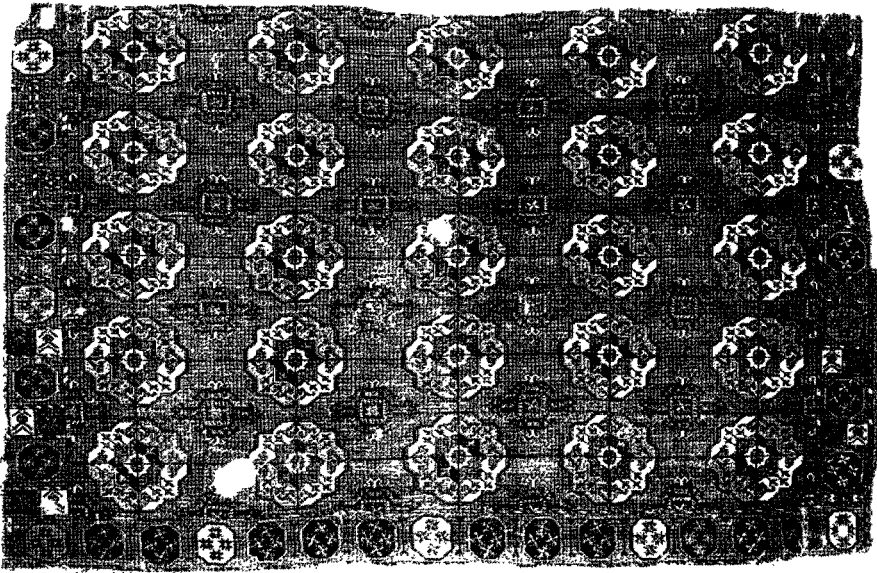


## Turkoman carpets

Turkoman carpets were woven by such Turkoman tribes as the Tekke, Salur and Yomut and named after them. No original examples of the period of the thirteenth/nineteenth century have survived, but as they kept using traditional patterns, they will have changed only slightly. Geometrical designs are the principal decorative pattern of the Turkoman carpet, but there are examples with small animal figures as well. They are generally woven with the Persian and, sometimes, with the Turkish knot. The use of characteristic patterns that belonged to seventh/thirteenth-century Saljūq and the ninth/fifteenth-century (early) Ottoman carpets can still be seen in the carpets produced today.

The most characteristic motif of the Turkoman carpet is a geometrical motif called *gül* (rose). The shape of the rose varies according to each weaving tribe. They are almost the symbols of the tribes.

The most famous Turkoman carpets are woven by the Tekke tribe and they are called Bukhārā in trade [Fig. 7]. They have octagonal roses divided into quarters and filled with small leaves. A row of octagonal roses and an-



VI-5(a).7 Turkoman carpet with 'Tekke Gül' (rose, woven by the Tekke tribe), end of the thirteenth/nineteenth century. Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin

© D. R.

other of lozenge-shaped roses, which are arranged in staggered axes, extend all through the carpet.

The roses of Salur carpets are flattened and have turreted outlines. These carpets have deeper and lustrous colours. Saryks carpets have a cross motif in the centre of their roses. Door carpets of the same tribe, which are woven to be used as door-coverings for tents, have various geometrical motifs, some of which are in the shape of stylized bird heads.

The Yomut rose is lozenge-shaped, its colour varying according to the diagonal rows of different colours. The Chādūr carpets are woven in three shades of red. Some examples of the Ersari tribe are known as Beshirs. They are woven in a lustrous yellow and they have both geometrical and stylized floral motifs of Persian derivation. Within octagonal roses are small figures of animals, which are borrowed from Caucasian carpets.

Afghan carpets have large octagonal roses with small leaves and stars in them.

Balūch carpets have palmette designs derived from the Harāt patterns of Persia.

The carpets of eastern Turkestan differ from those of western Turkestan. The influence of China and of the Harāt carpets of Persia is visible. Kāshghar and Yārkanḍ carpets have a pomegranate motif. Khotan carpets have a medallion like that on Chinese carpets. Chinese clouds contribute to strengthen this influence, while the characteristic roses of Central Asia maintain their domination.

The carpets woven in North Africa, especially in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, reflect both the influence of Anatolian carpets and that of the region.

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Chapter 5(b)

CERAMICS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

*Oliver Watson*

The art of ceramics was one of the major achievements of the artisans and craftsmen of the Islamic world. From lowly cooking- and storage-pots, which formed the entire output of potters in the pre-Islamic period, there developed wares which in technical inventiveness and artistic creativity are fit to be judged alongside the finest ceramics in the world.

This achievement is little known. Connoisseurs of fine ceramics have tended to overlook Islamic pottery in their admiration for the fine porcelains and stonewares of the Far East, which have set the standards by which ceramics are to be assessed. This is partly because Chinese wares are much better known - they have, after all, been exported round the globe from early times, reaching the Middle East in the ninth century AD and arriving in Europe in truly enormous quantities from the seventeenth century onwards. Islamic pottery, on the other hand, though widely traded within the Middle East, has never formed an international trading commodity of any importance. The history of Islamic pottery has generally only become known to a wider audience through the interest in antiques of collectors and museums during this last century.

Furthermore, Islamic pots are often in poor condition, being made from soft earthenware bodies and mostly having been restored from fragments dug up on archaeological sites. Superficially, they suffer in comparison with the brilliant and hard Chinese porcelains, which often survive in perfect condition. This unfair comparison hides the real value of Islamic pottery and detracts from its true achievement.

The truth is that within the area of low-fired clay bodies and their decoration, the potentials offered for decorative effect have nowhere been as greatly and magnificently exploited as in the Islamic world. Nowhere else in ceramic history has colour or painted design been used to greater effect. By 1200 the Islamic potters had invented a range of decorative techniques which

were unsurpassed in the world until the development of industrial production by Josiah Wedgwood and his colleagues in eighteenth-century England. This later European development played its part in undermining and eventually destroying the local industries of the Middle East.

Islamic pottery is not only important as a major craft within the Islamic world, it had a major impact on the development of the history of ceramics world-wide, being the origin of some of the most important and characteristic wares in Europe and China. The technique of painting in colours into an opaque-white glaze was developed in the second-third/ninth century in Iraq. This technique spread westwards into Egypt and North Africa, arriving eventually in Spain and Italy and spreading northwards into France, Holland, Germany and England. These wares, known variously as Hispano-moresque, majolica, faience and delft, provided Europe with its luxury pottery from the ninth/fifteenth century until the discovery of porcelain and the rise of industrial pottery in the twelfth/eighteenth century. Similarly, it was in the Islamic world that painting in cobalt blue was first used. In the eighth/fourteenth century, the cobalt pigment, together possibly with the very idea of underglaze painting, was first exported from the Middle East to China to enable the Chinese potters to make what became their most famous and distinctive ceramic: blue-and-white porcelain.

The sole deficiency of Islamic pottery, if deficiency it is, is that the potters only had the material and means to make earthenwares – soft, fragile pottery fired at about 1,000 degrees centigrade as compared with the 1,200 degrees of stoneware or the 1,300 to 1,400 degrees of the porcelain kiln. This places a restriction on the potter – earthenwares can never have the hardness, strength, or purity and whiteness of porcelains, and they rarely develop the richness or subtlety of colour and texture found in the best stonewares. The Islamic potter, however, worked with those qualities that earthenware could provide and through ingenious invention made possible effects hitherto unknown. The potters exploited soft textures and brilliant colours, but most impressively developed painted ornament to a high degree. The Islamic genius for design shows itself as much in pottery as in architecture, textiles or the art of the book.

Notwithstanding the great achievements of the Islamic potter, we must guard against rating Islamic pottery too highly within the hierarchy of Islamic arts. Pottery, surprisingly, is virtually indestructible. Though it breaks without much difficulty, the broken pieces are resistant to the decay that destroys cloth, wood, bone or other organic materials. It does not corrode or rust away as do most metals, nor can it usefully be collected for melting down or re-use as are discarded or unwanted objects of silver and gold, bronze and copper, or even of glass. From the vast number of objects in a wide variety of materials that were produced in Islamic societies, pottery, thanks to its resistance to both decay and recycling, survives as one of the most numerous and visible

artifacts of past periods - and the further back in time one wishes to explore, the more prolific it appears to become. The danger here is that pottery seems to have an importance that outshines the other arts. Yet it is clear from contemporary writers that pottery was a minor industry compared, for example, to textiles. Writers such as Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Yāqūt or Ibn Baṭṭūṭa will lovingly recount the myriad of textiles from all parts of the Islamic world seen in the bazaars of the towns they visit. Pottery gets barely a mention.

The best-quality ceramics, almost without exception, lack dedications to rulers or high-ranking officials, in striking contrast to fine metalwork or to the arts of the book. We are driven to the conclusion that pottery is essentially a 'middle-class' art, not meant for the most important and wealthy ranks of society, whose members would commission individual articles, but for those middle-ranking people who were well-off enough to have some surplus money to spend on non-essential goods: not on the luxuries that satisfied the wealthiest levels of society - vessels in gold and silver, carved rock-crystal, or even Chinese porcelain - but on modest articles of skilfully-made non-precious material. Fine pottery was essentially a luxury product for those burgeoning urban classes involved in manufacture and trade in the new vast cities that characterize Islamic society.

Pottery is by its very nature a mass-produced product. Even the most expensive pots are not worth making in small numbers. The organization required for the production of any pottery is extensive: clay, fuel and water are needed in large quantities and may have to be gathered over large distances, requiring much manpower. The clays and the materials for making the glazes and the decorative pigments will mostly need prolonged preparation before they can be used. Kilns, often sophisticated in design, have to be built to special designs of special bricks and they need much maintenance. The production cycle, from raw materials to finished goods, is long and labour-intensive. The making process brings its own uncertainties and a spoilage rate of ten per cent of pieces in a glaze-firing kiln would not be unusual. It is only the economies of scale that make pottery production economically feasible.

When we talk of a history of Islamic pottery, we are essentially talking of the history of its finest wares, that is, those ceramics whose quality of manufacture and skill in design set them apart as luxuries and as 'works of art'. It must be remembered that these fine ceramics, as interesting and enthralling as they are, are but the very tip of an enormous pyramid of pottery production. We shall not be concerned here with layers further down: the plain, functional pieces of kitchen-ware, the cooking-pots and storage vessels, the humble unglazed water-vases, the chamber-pots or the drainage-pipes. These, however, form the foundation for some of the greatest ceramic art that the world has seen.

## The basic technology

There are three distinct processes in the making of ceramics, each of which demands its own resources and its particular skills. In the first place, the raw materials must be gathered together and prepared. The pottery must then be fashioned and decorated. Finally it must be fired.

The essential raw materials are the clay or other materials from which the ceramic body is made, the glaze ingredients and pigments needed for the decoration. Some clays can be used with very little preparation, almost in the state in which they are dug from the ground. Most clays, however, will need some preparation: two or three clays from different sources may be blended together. The mixture will doubtless need to be sieved to remove unwanted stones and wedged (or kneaded) in order to produce a smooth mixture. Many clays will need tempering in order to improve the texture by the addition of some coarse material (fine grit or chopped straw are common tempers). Most common clays suitable for pottery-making are naturally of a red or yellow colour, and many fine wares will need a coating of a fine, white, liquid clay (a white slip) to give a suitable background for decoration. In the sixth/twelfth century, the Islamic potter developed a new form of ceramic body. Fritware is composed largely of finely ground quartz with small admixtures of white clay and glaze-mixture. The white clay acts to bind the body together during manufacture before firing and during the firing combines with the glaze to produce a glassy mass which binds the material together permanently. Though the frit body requires much work in its preparation, particularly in the grinding of the quartz, its advantages at its best are that it produces a fine, white body resembling porcelain in all but hardness; it was used for all fine ceramics in the Islamic world from the sixth/twelfth century onwards.

Glaze is essentially a thin coat of glass which gives the pottery a smooth, bright and water-proof finish. The glaze mixture may be prepared in a variety of ways, nearly all of which require the making of a glass by melting silica (quartz) with a flux of lead oxides or of alkaline salts from plant ash. The glass is then ground to a fine powder and is applied to the pot as a suspension in water. The firing melts the powder again to a glassy coating. If the ingredients are pure, the glaze may be transparent and colourless, though a greenish or yellowish tinge is more common. Metallic oxides may be added deliberately as colourants. The commonest in use are copper, which gives greens and turquoise tones, iron, which gives yellows and browns, manganese, which gives purples and blacks, and cobalt, which gives a deep blue. The pigments will need some form of preparation: grinding to a fine powder at the simplest; some may require roasting with other materials before grinding. The glaze may be rendered an opaque-white in a number of ways, of which the best (and most expensive) is by the addition of tin-oxide. The same oxides which are used to stain a glaze may be used as the colours for underglaze-painting, when

they are painted on to the surface of the pot before it is glazed and the pattern shows through the colourless or coloured glaze after firing.

Wheel-throwing is the most common method of forming the pot. The potter guides a mass of clay on a rotating horizontal wheel-head into the shapes he desires. The shapes thus formed are all circular in horizontal section. Pieces thus formed separately may be joined together, so that a vase may be made in two or three sections. Moulds of clay or plaster into which slabs of clay are pressed have been used from an early date for the mass production of complicated designs. If the potter intends a slip-coating to give a smoother or whiter finish, it would be applied at this point. The pot may then receive carved or incised decoration. It will be left to dry before the application of underglaze-painting, if it is to receive any, followed by the glaze-coating. This, too, is left to dry to a powdery state before the pot is ready to be fired.

The firing is perhaps the most complicated and most hazardous process in the potter's manufacturing cycle. All the pots, still fragile and with their delicate coatings of decoration and glaze, must be loaded and tightly packed into the kiln. The kiln is a brick structure designed to give the potter uniform and controlled rates of heating of a large body of work; its design and construction are the work of specialists, and special materials are needed to withstand the prolonged heating to high temperatures. In some techniques, the temperature needs to be controlled to within  $\pm 10$  degrees centigrade at a temperature of several hundred degrees; and the potter must be able to control and judge this by experience alone. The kiln will consume a prodigious amount of fuel – one of the principle costs of the potter – and variations in the fuel's heating-quality or its dampness will give the potter unwanted problems. Too slow or too quick a rate of heating may cause the pots to spoil, dampness in the kiln atmosphere may cause glazes to behave erratically, too quick a cooling may cause the pots to crack.

In the firing of glazed pottery, there is the added danger that any pots which may be touching one another, however slightly, will be stuck together by the glaze as it melts and then cools; even if it is possible to separate the pots without breaking them, they will have an ugly scar. The dramatic collapsing of piles of glazed pots in the kiln, which are then irretrievably stuck together, was the all-too-common fate of the medieval potter.

Once the kiln has been fired, it must be unloaded again and the ware can be sorted, graded and packed for the market. The potter may feel lucky if only one in ten pots is spoilt during the manufacturing process. Some decorative techniques require yet another firing. Enamel and lustre painting are carried out on the hard-glaze surface of the fired pot. Enamels are finely-ground coloured pigments which are then fused to the surface of the pot in a second low-temperature firing. Lustre firing follows the same principle, except that the special pigment is subject to a reduction firing in which the supply of air to the kiln is restricted. This causes the metallic oxide in the pigment to reduce

and form a microscopically thin layer of metal bonded to the surface of the glaze. It is this layer that gives lustre its metallic flashings and mother-of-pearl reflections for which it was greatly valued.

## Islamic pottery: a brief history

We may for convenience divide the history of Islamic pottery into three distinct phases. Each phase can be seen to have received a major impetus from Chinese wares, then being imported. These wares were highly valued and prized and the Islamic potters wished to compete. They started by copying as best they could the Chinese import, using all their ingenuity to substitute for a lack of the materials which would allow them to make the high-fired stonewares and porcelains. But they did not long remain mere copyists and the great achievements of Islamic pottery are seen, as the potters developed their own skills, in the adding of colour and painted design.

### THE EARLY CENTURIES

The first arrival of Chinese white porcelains in the Middle East at some point in the late second/eighth or early third/ninth century showed that pottery was capable of being more than just a utilitarian craft. Shipped probably as ballast in boats carrying even more precious cargoes of silks and spices, these simple bowls of a hitherto unseen heavy, hard and white material, were greatly sought after. The local potters determined to help supply demand by making copies. To counterfeit the white body of the original, they developed opaque-white glazes to cover their yellow or red clay bodies, which in all other ways copied the Chinese – low, wide dishes and bowls with flaring or rolled rims and broad foot-rings [Fig. 1]. Such pieces were being made, within a few decades it seems, at many sites across the Islamic world, in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Soon the potters were not content to leave such pieces plain, and pattern and colour were added. The potters in third/ninth-century Iraq began to paint with cobalt into the white glaze before it was fired. Painting into the raw, powdery surface meant that fine detail was not possible – the potter was able only to draw with a few sure brush strokes and often limited the design to a single line of calligraphy (usually the potter's signature!) or a simple geometric motif. For all their simplicity, these can be some of the most beautiful of all Islamic pottery.

A more spectacular technique was developed by the same potters, however, that allowed for more colouristic and detailed pattern. The lustre technique had been invented in Egypt or Syria, probably in the second/eighth century, for the decoration of glass. It was taken up by the Iraqi potters for the decoration of their new-found white-glaze wares. This complicated and expensive technique produced some of the most dramatic finishes ever seen in





VI-5(b).1 Earthenware bowl with painting in blue in an opaque white glaze,  
Iraq, second/ninth century

© Victoria & Albert Museum, London (Circ. 175–1926)

Islamic pottery. In the third/ninth century, the potters used several colours of lustre together in kaleidoscopic patterns of startling effect. During the course of the century and into the next, the potters limited themselves to just two, and then a single colour of lustre, while the patterns became more formal. In the fourth/tenth century, figurative designs of animals and humans were not uncommon, usually painted in a stylized manner on a stippled ground as if copied from a woven textile. Both the blue-on-white ware and the lustre wares

are painted on bowl shapes that still hark back to the Chinese, though the painting styles are purely Islamic.

At some point in the tenth century, it appears that conditions for the production of luxury ceramics declined in Iraq, for the lustre potters seem to have left the troubled 'Abbāsid lands and set up workshops in Fāṭimid Egypt, where they worked for the next 200 years. In Egypt their styles of painting were open to the influence of pre-Islamic Roman and Byzantine traditions and a Mediterranean naturalism is seen at work in a proliferation of animal and figural designs [Fig. 2].

In eastern Iran at the same time, there developed a production of luxury ceramics which, exceptionally, did not derive from the Chinese and indeed shows no trace of foreign influence in vessel-shape, technology or design. Using the most basic materials and techniques, the potters produced wares which some claim as the most beautiful, the most sophisticated and the most Islamic of any ever made [Fig. 3]. A bowl of red clay is covered with a thin layer of a white (or sometimes black) clay slip. The design is then painted in other coloured slips and a thin transparent glaze applied over the top. The designs at their best consist of inscriptions encircling the dish – their calligraphy of the highest order, their content consisting of Arabic proverbs: 'Planning before work prevents regret', or 'Knowledge – at first bitter to the taste, at the end sweeter than honey'.

The wares described here – the white-glazed and lustre painted wares of Iraq, Syria and Egypt and the slip-decorated wares of Iran – represent the very highest quality of luxury ceramics. There existed at the same time a much larger production of fine glazed wares of simpler type. In the East a proliferation of more simply decorated slip-wares occurred and throughout the Islamic world splashed wares were common – where the decoration consisted of colours allowed to run freely in the glaze. A development of the slip technique was incised wares, where the design was scratched or cut through a slip layer to reveal a contrasting darker clay underneath. In this way precise patterns could be achieved without fear of the colours running in the glaze.

## The medieval period

A dramatic change took place in the manufacture of luxury pottery in the Middle East during the sixth/twelfth century, a change that once again was given impetus by Chinese imported wares. The new imports were no longer the heavy, solid bowls of the third/ninth to fourth/tenth centuries, but were very finely thrown, translucent and decorated with subtle incised, carved or moulded decoration, often only just visible through the thin transparent or bluish glaze. These could not be well imitated in the old method, for the earthenware bodies were not capable of being thrown as finely and could never be translucent, while the thick opaque-white glazes would obscure any detailed carving on the body

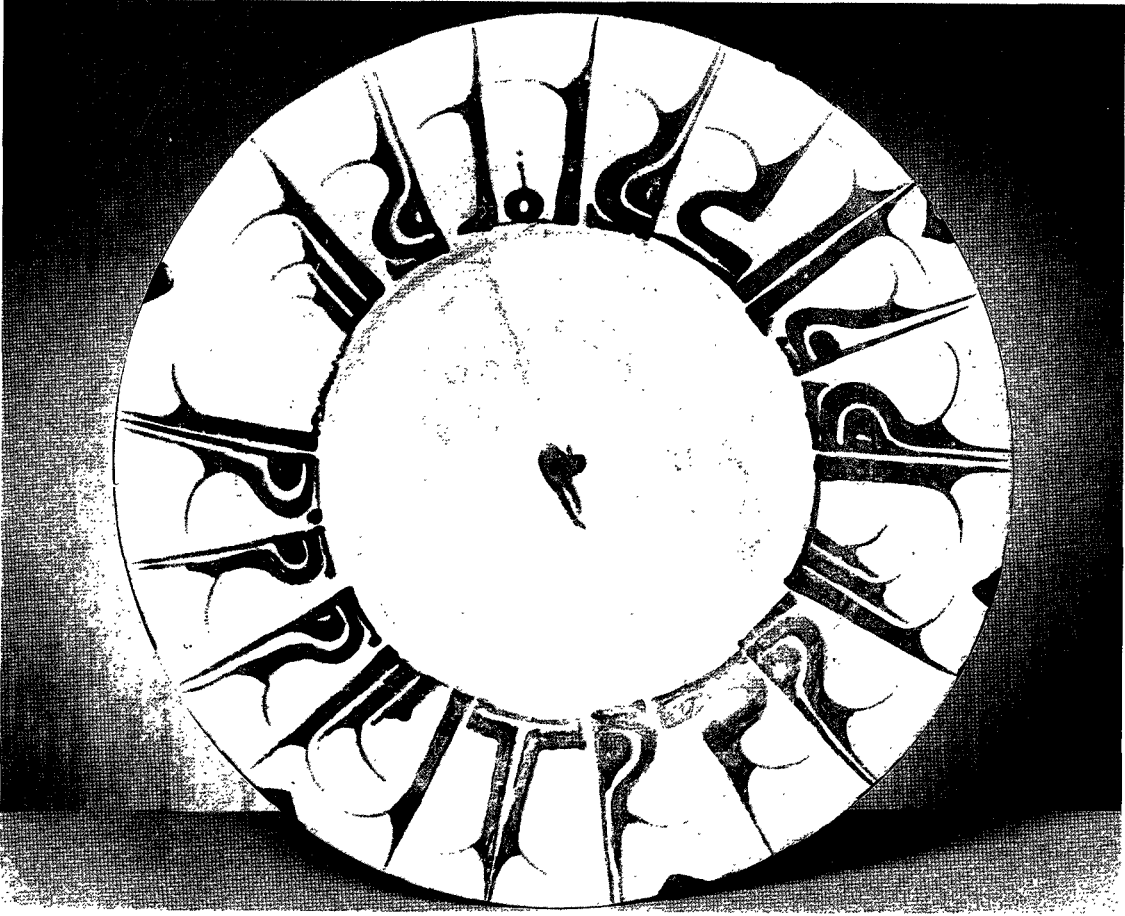


VI-5(b).2 Earthenware bowl with an opaque white glaze and decoration in lustre, Egypt, early sixth/twelfth century. It depicts a Coptic priest, a design which underlines the close contact between communities of different faiths in the Islamic world

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underneath. In order to copy these new Chinese types, the Islamic potters revived an ancient technique that had enjoyed a long history in the Middle East: fritware. This artificially composed body of powdered quartz, white clay and glaze mixture had been used extensively in ancient Egypt but since the advent of Islam had been relegated to the manufacture of beads. Its advantages were that it provided a pure white body, was translucent when thrown thinly and was capable of a wide range of forming and decorative techniques.

The new material appears to have been first developed in Egypt at some point during the sixth/twelfth century, but by the end of the century was in use



VI-5(b).3 Dish, earthenware with slip decoration, Iran  
(probably Nīshāpūr), fourth/tenth century  
© National Museum, Copenhagen, Olufsen Collection



VI 5(b).4 Ewer, fritware with cut-out decoration and painting in blue and black under a transparent glaze, Iran (Khāshān), about 596-616/1200-1220. This extraordinary ewer has an openwork design of arabesques cut through the wall of the vessel. The liquid is contained in an inner vessel  
© Victoria & Albert Museum, London (C. 170-1977 gift of Clement Ades)

throughout Syria and Iran. Indeed, it was the potters of Iran, and especially at the great potting-centre of Kāshān, that the technique was most fully exploited. In less than fifty years from its first appearance, the Iranian potters (perhaps including migrants who came from Egypt with the lustre technique) had managed to match the new imports, had introduced an entirely new range of vessel shapes, had developed moulded, carved and pierced decoration, had pushed lustre-painting to new heights and had invented the entirely new techniques of enamel- and underglaze-painting.

Their first products, as three centuries before, were close copies after the Chinese, resembling them in all but hardness of material. However, as before, it was not long before the potters began to generate their own variations in a creative wave that very soon took them far from the Chinese prototype. They first added carved decorations of purely Islamic design and began to colour the glazes intense blue, singing turquoise and deep purple. In addition to carved decoration, they invented a style where the pierced background to the motif is filled with little 'windows' of transparent glaze. The lustre technique, no doubt introduced by potters looking for better markets than were available in Egypt at that time, was taken up with enthusiasm in a variety of styles. Enamel painting, known as *mināʿī*, was invented at this period. Colours with glassy pigments were fused to the surface of the glaze in a second firing at low temperature. The invention of underglaze painting was the most important technical advance of the period, for it became the standard method of decoration of all luxury ceramics from this period onwards. It consisted of painting the designs directly on the body of the pot (or on an added smooth slip) and covering it with a colourless or tinted transparent glaze. The difficulty was in preventing the pigments from running, but when this problem was solved, it meant that detail patterns could be fixed in one firing under a protective coat of glaze.

This extraordinary period of creative energy was brought to an abrupt halt by the Mongol invasions, which caused a hiatus in Iran in the production of luxury ceramics of some forty years between the first incursions in 616/1220 and the setting-up of the Mongol state proper in mid-century. When pottery production resumed, a rather more dense style of painting was employed, together with a somewhat sombre colour-scheme [Fig. 4].

Syria had enjoyed a parallel burst of ceramic industry, with potteries in the Euphrates valley, most notably at al-Raqqā, making high-class wares. Their early frit wares were of extremely fine technical quality; after about 596/1200, this declined a little, but a wonderfully fluid style of painting gives the pottery a special status. The north Syrian kilns were destroyed in their turn by the Mongol armies in the mid-thirteenth century, leaving a more restricted production to carry on at Damascus and in Egypt. A number of large jars of Damascus manufacture have been found in Europe and were evidently treasured luxury imports from the Middle East.

Just as potters appear to have left Egypt for Syria and Iran in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, it seems that Islamic Spain benefited from an immigration of craftsmen at the same period. Though its origins are obscure, by the seventh/thirteenth century a flourishing centre of lustre-decorated pottery was established in the Naṣrid kingdom of Granada, from where the wares were exported in quantity throughout Europe and to the Middle East.

#### LATER POTTERY

The third phase of Islamic pottery production can in broad terms be said to date from the eighth/fourteenth century, when yet a new type of Chinese porcelain began to be imported. Using cobalt pigment imported from central Iran, the Chinese potters had towards the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth century started on what may be seen as their most characteristic product, 'blue-and-white' porcelain. Some scholars think that the production was originally intended for export to the Middle East and it is certain that much was exported, and it was valued very highly when it arrived. It is a fact that two of the greatest collections of early Chinese blue-and-white porcelain are still in the Middle East. Both are Imperial collections – that of the Ṣafawids donated by Shāh 'Abbās the Great to the shrine at Ardabīl and now in the Museum in Tehran, and that of the Ottoman Sultans, still in the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. Chinese porcelain, much of it blue-and-white, continues to be exported to the Middle East to this very day and it is not surprising that it has made a considerable impact on the wares made by Islamic potters.

It appears, partly judged by evidence of their occurrence in paintings from manuscripts, that copies of Chinese blue-and-white porcelains started to be made in earnest in the early ninth/fifteenth century. A lively production was carried out in Egypt by a large number of potters whose names – Ghaybū, 'Ajāmī, Ghazal and others – are known from their signed pieces; these, however, survive only as broken fragments, with hardly a complete piece known.

In Iran, a somewhat disparate group of wares, dating through the later ninth/fifteenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries, is known generically as *Qubachi* after the small Caucasian village where many specimens were found intact as decoration in the houses; many of these show close acquaintance with recent Chinese imports. It is only in the eleventh/seventeenth century that the Iranian industry gets into full production, with two centres identified as major producers: Kirmān and Mashhad. Unlike the case in earlier times, it appears that the Iranian potter was, for the greater part of his output, content simply to produce close copies of the imported Chinese wares. The copies are done, not just of the latest imports, but also of Chinese styles already several hundred years old – eighth/fourteenth-century designs copied in the eleventh/seventeenth century. The Ṣafawid Iranian blue-and-white wares have their own naive charm but tend to be rather repetitive. Of more interest are those wares which show more local

invention: slip-painting in colours is added to the Chinese style in one class of wares and lustre painting enjoys a brief revival.

It is in Turkey under the Ottomans that we encounter the last real flowering of an indigenous ceramic tradition. The wares of the western Anatolian town of Iznîq reach, in the tenth/sixteenth century, a level of technical and artistic skill never as seen before in the Islamic world, and they form one of the great glories of ceramic production from anywhere in the world. The development of this ware begins with startling rapidity. Within a few years, at the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, the potters transformed their production from one of robust, ordinary earthenwares into fritwares of the highest quality, skilfully painted with designs of the highest sophistication.

The earliest wares were painted in blue alone and the shapes of the dishes and some designs show the potters' acquaintance with Chinese porcelains. However, most of the designs are purely Ottoman and the potters are less obsessed by the Chinese model than were their Persian colleagues a century later. The lack of dependence on Chinese prototypes may have been a result of their scarcity at the moment the Iznîq pottery industry began. By the time substantial numbers of Chinese porcelains are known to have been available to the Ottomans, the Iznîq potters had developed their own styles. Parallel to the way Islamic potters had reacted to Chinese models in the past, the Iznîq potters developed their original blue-and-white palette by the addition of colour and a wild profusion of styles and motifs. They began by adding just turquoise, then a soft purple and a sage-green, to produce one of the most luscious of all ceramic palettes (known as 'Damascus' after an early confusion as to the place of manufacture). The 'Damascus' colours were used for a variety of designs, of which the floral are the most successful. Here the colours sing against a ground of pure milky white.

After the mid-tenth/sixteenth century, the Iznîq potters changed their palette yet again, abandoning the subtle turquoise, purple and sage-green for a brilliant raised red slip, cobalt blue and an emerald green, all outlined in a sharp black. These provided the basis for the widely known 'Rhodian' palette (again named after an earlier mistaken attribution) and a greatly increased production. Technical quality slipped a little and did not again reach the heights of the 'Damascus' period, but this decline was counterbalanced by the lively floral designs which predominate [Fig. 5].

#### CERAMICS FROM 1700

During the twelfth/eighteenth and thirteenth/nineteenth centuries, the ceramic industries of the Islamic world entered a period of decline, from which they have yet to emerge. As the Middle East lost economic and political power, its industries came under increasing threat from foreign imports, and luxury wares were the first to suffer. The Iznîq potteries were already in





VI-5(b).5 Dish, fritware with polychrome underglaze painting, Turkey (Iznik, so-called 'Rhodian' period), about 982/1575.

Some of the most beautiful of all Islamic pottery, the 'Damascus' – period Iznik wares reach a peak of technical and artistic skill

© Victoria & Albert Museum, London (C. 1982–1910)

irreversible decline by the mid-eleventh/seventeenth century and had all but disappeared by 1111/1700. During the twelfth/eighteenth century, production started at Kutāhiya, which made charmingly decorated tea- and coffee-wares, often in a folksy imitation of later Chinese porcelains. By the mid-thirteenth/nineteenth century the Kutāhiya potteries were reduced to making copies, of variable quality, of earlier Iznīq wares, which were by now attracting the attention of European and American collectors. A thriving production of such wares, mainly for the gift- and tourist-trades, survives to this day.

In Iran, the great potteries of the eleventh/seventeenth century at Mashhad and Kirmān saw a distinct decline in quality and quantity in the early years of the twelfth/eighteenth century and may have come almost to a complete halt after the Afghan invasions of the 1720s. The small production that continued into the thirteenth/nineteenth century reflects the increasing dominance of imported wares, not just Chinese now, but also English. At about the same time, a conscious effort was made to revive earlier fortunes, but, as in Turkey, these have resulted in the making of historical pastiches which largely cater for the gift- and tourist-ware markets.

## Tiles

Tiles, strictly speaking, form part of the history of architecture, where, particularly in Iran and Turkey, they play a major decorative role. Tile-making is often a specialized skill and the purely 'ceramic' element is often a minor part. In the great Iranian tradition of tile-mosaic, for instance, which gave Iranian architecture its particular colouristic character from the eighth/fourteenth century onwards, the potter's only involvement is to make the plain coloured tiles. The real skill is that of the separate trade of tile-cutter, whose job is to shape and set together the jig saws of thousands of pieces that make up every panel. Other tile traditions rely on the skill of the potter, of which we may here mention two of the most important.

In the seventh/thirteenth and early eighth/fourteenth centuries, the Iranian potters of Kāshān made tiles decorated with lustre painting, particularly for the decoration of tombs. The potters made star-and-cross tiles for the decoration of the dadoes, and also the *mībrābs* and tombstones, often over two metres in height, which are some of the most spectacular products of the period.

The Iznīq potters of Turkey made a few very high-quality tiles in the first half of the century. The mid-century, however, saw a dramatic shift in their production and after they had adopted the 'Rhodian' palette, the manufacture of tiles became a major part of their business. No important building, religious or secular, in the second half of the tenth/sixteenth century was without its Iznīq tiles, used in panels over doors and windows, for monumental inscriptions and to clad whole areas of the interior walls.

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Chapter 5(c)

ISLAMIC METALWORK

*Esin Atil*

The tradition of metalwork\* is possibly the most representative of all the Islamic arts in that it reflects the tastes and demands of diverse social and economic classes, ranging from royal courts to humble households. Imperial pieces were made of expensive materials and decorated with themes specified by the clients; the wealthy middle classes competed with the court and ordered equally sumptuous objects; and the public purchased items made from lesser metals and decorated with generalized subjects. Each piece, whether imperial or prosaic, was designed and executed with care, revealing the expertise and pride of the maker.

A vast amount of metalwork has survived from the Islamic world in spite of the continuous political turbulence during which cities were sacked and treasuries confiscated, and objects were melted down to be recycled into currency or fashioned into new pieces. Many items made of copper alloys, including inlaid brasses, appear to have escaped destruction and were preserved throughout the centuries, although those made of silver and gold seem to have been less fortunate.

The production of Islamic metalwork reveals a fusion between art and craft. Some pieces are simple and traditional whereas others display an incredible technical virtuosity and originality. Their decorative repertoire employs both derivative and common themes and innovative unique compositions; the designs can be either boldly executed or so highly refined that they can rival the art of manuscript illumination. The artists generally concentrated on surface decoration and applied different materials to produce varied contrasts and colouristic effects, which at times tend to overpower the

\* This article has been partially adapted from the author's 'Introduction' in *Islamic Metalwork in the Freer Gallery of Art* (see Bibliography) and incorporates additional material based on current research.

basic metal. They relied on the techniques and materials employed in the past to create an extraordinary range of decorative themes. By combining geometric, floral and figural compositions with different styles of writing, the artists invested their pieces with mystical and symbolic meanings that required a highly sophisticated clientele.

The development of the decorative vocabulary of Islamic metalwork has not yet been clearly established. The structure of the workshops, the relationship between masters and apprentice and the division of labour among the artists also are not properly known. In addition, literary sources or archival documents do not provide sufficient information on the location of major centres and the types of wares produced at different periods.

The most valuable information is found on the objects themselves. Although there are only a handful of signed and dated pieces, and even fewer examples which state where they were made, the inscriptions help to identify certain ateliers and centres, in addition to the types of patronage.

For instance, the inscriptions on the famous bucket in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, a key piece in the study of Islamic art, state that it was made by Maṣʿūd b. Aḥmad and inlaid by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid, who is called ‘the designer of Harāt’. A division of labour obviously existed between the artist who conceived the shape of the piece and the one who executed the decoration. The inscriptions on the Hermitage bucket also state that it was made in Muḥarram 559/December 1163 at the request of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Rashīdī for Khwāja (a title meaning religious teacher or leader) Rukn al-Dīn Rashīd al-Dīn ʿAzīzī (or Ḥarīrī), the son-in-law of Abu-l-Ḥusayn al-Zanjānī. Although the personages mentioned are not known historically, one can surmise that the patron was wealthy enough to have commissioned such a valuable gift. Moreover, he intended to impress the beneficiary, a man of influence and, more significantly, one who would appreciate the technical and aesthetic qualities of an object as mundane as a bucket. The inscriptions also provide the date and the name of a city, Harāt, with which one of the artists was associated. This type of specific and detailed information is extremely rare in the history of Islamic metalwork. Most of the objects that bear the name of an artist are thought to have been constructed and decorated by the same person.

The location and production of metalworking centres are not easily determined, possibly owing to the political fluctuations in the Islamic world and the migration of artists seeking better employment in different capitals.

Nevertheless, certain ateliers can be identified through a series of inlaid brasses that are inscribed by artists who use the same *nisba* (a word denoting the place of origin) attached to their names. The largest group of objects is signed by metalworkers with the *nisba* al-Mawṣilī, literally meaning ‘of Mosul.’ According to these inscribed works, the Mosul artists were active in Iraq, Syria and Egypt between the 1220s and 1320s and produced more than thirty ex-

amples which are among the masterpieces of Islamic art. It is doubtful whether all the members of this élite group of metalworkers could trace their origin to Mosul or were even associated with that city; they wished to be identified, however, with the Mosul corps and maintained a consistent level of high-quality production and refined workmanship for more than a century.

In spite of the lack of comprehensive documentation, the development of certain stylistic and decorative features can be reconstructed from the dated pieces. Metalwork produced in the formative period of Islamic art reveals the continuation of past traditions and the beginning of an interest in surface decoration. Preoccupation with surface embellishment reached its peak during the classical age of Islamic metalwork, when an extensive decorative repertoire was developed and the technique of inlaying diverse materials was perfected. These themes and techniques persisted throughout the post-classical period, with vestiges observed until the present.

## The formative period

Within a short time after the dawn of the Islamic era the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad spread over an area from the Indus River to the Atlantic Ocean and Islam evolved as a major political and social power in the eastern hemisphere.

Despite the political fragmentation that took place after the fourth/tenth century, the world of Islam retained a remarkable unity through its singular faith and language and administrative and legal system. The arts and sciences flourished, commercial activities increased and the economy thrived. Through its rapid expansion Islam had been exposed to diverse cultures and began to assimilate their traditions to formulate its own artistic vocabulary. It is not surprising, therefore, that metalwork produced in the formative period of Islamic art re-employed the techniques and themes found in Roman, Byzantine and Coptic art of the eastern Mediterranean, as well as those of the Sāsānid objects made in Iraq and Iran.

The earliest datable objects that can be identified as Islamic are a series of ewers having various shapes. One type is represented by the so-called Marwān ewer, found near the tomb of the Caliph Marwān II (126–132/744–750) in the Fayyūm, Egypt, and shows a rounded body with a zoomorphic rooster-shaped spout. Assigned to Egypt, Syria or Iraq and dated to the second/eighth to third/ninth centuries, it belongs to a group of some half-dozen cast and engraved brass or bronze pieces with similarly shaped spouts.

A second type of ewer lacks the independent spout but is embellished with a large palmette-shaped thumb-rest on the handle. This group, also dated to the second/eighth to third/ninth centuries, is attributed to Iraq or Iran. The most famous and controversial example is a ewer in Tiflis, which has inscriptions stating that it was made in Basra in 67/686–687 or 69/688–689, a

dating that has been contested and the piece is now thought to have been made in the third/ninth century. At least six related pieces, some of which contain copper inlays, are known to have the same shape.

A third type of ewer has no surface decoration; its handle terminates in stylized gazelle heads and attaches to the lip. Its pear-shaped body and extended lip forming a spout clearly reflect Sāsānid or Roman prototypes. This type is thought to have been produced in Iran during the third/ninth to fourth/tenth centuries.

Also dating from the early Islamic period are a few bird-shaped vessels used as aquamaniles, the most important of which is the silver-inlaid example in the Hermitage bearing the date 180/796–797. This piece, together with the Marwān- and Tiflis-type ewers, indicates that by the second/eighth century different tools were employed to engrave and chase the designs, which included inscriptions; and silver and copper were applied as inlays, pointing to the beginning of an interest in surface decoration that was to dominate the future production of metalwork.

Even though relying on the techniques of production (casting and hammering) and those of decoration (chasing, engraving and inlaying) established in the past, early Islamic metalworkers formulated several new trends that became widely used in the classical age. One of these was the production of zoomorphic vessels or appendages, such as the Hermitage aquamanile and the spout of the Marwān ewer; a second is the employment of epigraphy, which not only provides pertinent information about the piece but also decorates it; and a third is the attempt to create colouristic effects by applying different materials to the surfaces.

## The classical age

The beginning of the classical age coincides with the arrival of the Saljūq Turks from Central Asia in the middle of the fifth/eleventh century, at which time the central Islamic lands were reunited under one rule. The Saljūq sultanate did not survive long; by the 1150s the empire was divided among the members of the ruling house, who established independent states in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Their autonomy was rivaled by their regents, the Atābaks, some of whom founded short-lived emirates. Other independent dynasties rose to power in Spain and North Africa, as well as in eastern Iran, Afghanistan and the Muslim regions of Central Asia and India. The political history of the age was further complicated by the arrival of the Crusaders, who were fighting against the Muslims as well as feuding among themselves.

In spite of the political turmoil resulting from the rise and fall of dynasties and the endless alliances and battles among the local regimes and the newcomers, the arts flourished and reached a true classical age. There occurred an unprecedented prosperity that affected both the patrons and the

artists. Imperial and courtly patronage increased with the establishment of new states or principalities, each of which required possessions worthy of its status. The competition for power among the administrative and military ranks resulted in an equally strong demand for princely items. The affluent middle classes also desired ostentatious objects with which they could display their wealth and importance. The artists rose to the occasion and created extraordinarily refined pieces for their patrons, who may have been sultans, aspiring bureaucrats or wealthy merchants.

The production of metalwork, like that of the other Islamic arts, became the epitome of technical and aesthetic perfection. Artists produced a vast amount of wares throughout the Islamic world and employed a variety of techniques and materials both to shape and embellish the pieces. The majority of the objects were decorated with inscriptions, which became the most prominent characteristic of Islamic metalwork. Although the inscriptions generally repeat a series of good wishes or formulaic phrases, the contents of select examples provide important information that helps to determine the development of regional styles and themes.

Dating from the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries are personal ornaments made of gold and decorated with filigree, granulation and twisted wire, and at times inlaid with niello, black organic compounds and gems. Fashioned into belts, rings, pendants, hair ornaments, earrings or matching pairs of bracelets, these items reflect a flourishing, wealthy society. The key pieces in dating a series of similar objects are a pair of identical bracelets (one is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the other by the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D. C.), their clasps backed with discs struck from coins produced in Iran in the first three decades of the fifth/eleventh century. Their refined workmanship is also found in contemporary examples made in Egypt and Syria.

Other luxurious items, including vessels, plates and ornaments, were made of silver and embellished with gilding and niello. The wares, however, are among the last examples made in silver. Numismatic evidence indicates that the central Islamic lands were faced with a shortage of silver after the fifth/eleventh century. The 'silver famine' also affected the metalworker, who was forced to use less-costly metals and reserve the precious silver for thinly applied inlays.

The predominant material used in the classical age was brass. It was shaped by diverse methods, such as casting, hammering, turning and spinning, and decorated with thin inlays of silver, gold and copper, in addition to black organic compounds. Artists created a variety of forms by combining two or more techniques to construct the pieces. They made different types of zoomorphic vessels, incense burners, candlesticks, ewers and basins, and even unusual objects such as the oversized canteen in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art.

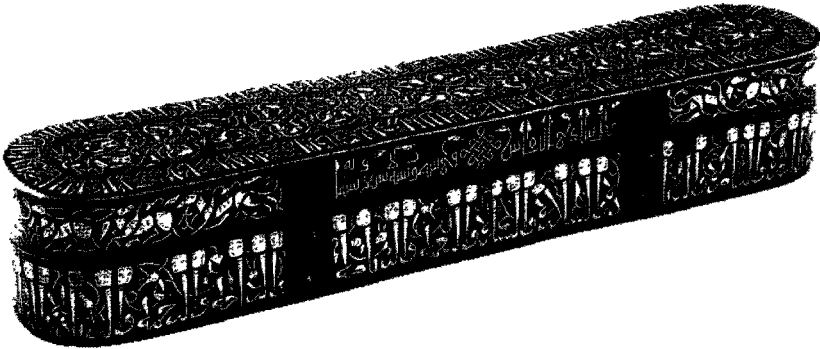
Certain shapes and decorative features can be assigned to specific regions, and even centres. A distinct group of candlesticks was produced during the second half of the sixth/twelfth century in an area identified as Khurāsān, now divided between Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. This group reveals the artists' remarkable technical virtuosity in creating a large hollow shape from a single sheet of brass, with certain elements standing in high relief. The inscriptions on some seven pieces associated with this group are conventional and do not indicate when and where they were produced. Their provenance can be deduced from another ewer in Tiflis, decorated with similar elements. Its inscriptions state that it was made in 577/1181–1182 by Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Harawī (of Harāt). Even though there is no concrete proof that the candlesticks also were made in Harāt, the city is recognized as a centre in which the production of such inlaid brasses flourished during the second half of the sixth/twelfth century. References to Harāt are also found on other contemporary metalwork, the most renowned of which are the Hermitage bucket of 558/1163, mentioned previously, which was signed by an artist from that city, and the pen-box of 607/1210–1211 [Fig. 1] in the Freer Gallery of Art, made by Shazī (or Ghazī), who has appended al-Harawī to his name on another piece, a small bird-shaped flask.

The inscription on the Freer pen-box states that it was made for Majd al-Mulk al-Muzaffar, who was the grand vizier of the last Khwārizmshāhs and founded a library in Marw, where he died in 617/1221 during the Mongol invasion of the city. This personage appears to have been a statesman of scholarly interests, as indicated by his endowment of the library and commission of the pen-box. The pen-box was a symbol of the learned class in the Islamic administrative system and became the blazon, or coat of arms, of such dignitaries in the Mamlūk period.

The Hermitage bucket and the Freer pen-box are among the most important pieces of Islamic metalwork because they contain extensive and informative inscriptions that help to determine when and where certain themes originated. They also provide insight into the types of patrons who desired such valuable objects: A wealthy but unknown bureaucrat or merchant ordered the bucket and an intellectual and famous statesman commissioned the pen-box. Both objects are decorated with animated inscriptions in which the vertical shafts of both cursive (*naskhī*) and angular (*Kūfī*) scripts terminate in human heads or torsos. The first appearance of the anthropomorphic inscription is on the Hermitage bucket; the same feature was employed some fifty years later on the Freer pen-box and on several other contemporary objects attributed to eastern Iran and Afghanistan.

During the second quarter of the seventh/thirteenth century, the human-headed inscription moved westwards and became fully animated, with the arms and legs of animals and humans making up the letters, as seen in both the famous Wade Cup in Cleveland, attributed to western Iran and to the





VI-5(c).1 Brass pen-box inlaid with copper and silver, made by Shāzī,  
607/1210–11, Afghanistan or Iran

© Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (3607)

1230s, and the Blacas ewer in the British Museum, London, made in 629/1232 in Mosul by Shujāf b. Manā al-Mawṣilī. The latter firmly establishes Mosul as a major metalwork centre and is one of those rare objects with an inscription that states where it was produced. The fully animated inscription, which flourished in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century, was also applied to several inlaid brasses made in Syria and Egypt, including the Fano Cup in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and on the neck of a candlestick in Cairo, made around the 1290s for Kitbughā, a Mamlūk emir who later became a sultan.

The decorative repertoire of Islamic metalwork perfected in the classical age shows a countless variety of themes, some of which were shared by the other contemporary arts, including manuscript illustration and illumination, and ceramics. The objects were carefully designed, with the surfaces divided in units of threes and fours and linked either by formal devices (such as continuous and looping bands or repeated patterns) or by the sequential development of the chosen themes or narrative cycles. There was a definite progression in 'reading' the decoration, which was in the same direction as the inscriptions, that is, right to left or, in the case of objects in the round, clockwise.

Inscriptions were by and large the most significant components of surface decoration. Many objects combined *Kūfī* and *naskhī* scripts, including plaited, knotted, foliated, animated and human-headed types, as well as *thuluth*, a hierarchic version of the cursive style. The inscriptions on some pieces were either simulated or used for magical or talismanic purposes and thus are not comprehensible today. The contents of the inscriptions on the courtly pieces are frequently informative, stating when, by whom and for whom they were made; at times they even provide the name of the city in which the object was produced.

Metalwork made for non-courtly clientele contains, as can be expected, formulaic and generalized statements, bestowing a series of good wishes and blessings on unidentified owners. Also inscribed on some pieces are statements that glorify the object and its qualities or refer to its function, such as a wine-jar or a candlestick. Qur'ānic verses and pious invocations were generally reserved for objects made as furnishings for religious monuments, including mosque lamps and Qur'ān-boxes.

Geometric patterns, used either to fill in the background of the main themes or to serve as independent motifs, utilize a variety of shapes, some of which can be associated with solar symbols. Among the most popular were designs radiating from central stars or rosettes, representing the celestial light, and geometric roundels symbolizing the sun.

Floral themes were similarly used as background decoration and as individual motifs with symbolic meanings. Lancet leaves were associated with sun-rays, whereas the rosette represented the sun itself. Often combined with related geometric motifs, these symbols of divine light were frequently applied to lighting devices, such as candlesticks and incense burners. Floral scrolls filling the background developed into several different types, which were used alternatively in adjacent units or were superimposed, with one scroll placed above the other. One of these was a tightly wound scroll with hooked leaves; another contained curving branches bearing stylized blossoms and buds. Both types appear on objects made in Syria or Egypt in the second quarter of the seventh/thirteenth century as well as on pieces made several decades later in Turkey, indicating the diffusion of this decorative feature.

The most sophisticated floral scroll is the animated type in which tendrils or branches terminate in animal or human heads. It first appears on objects made in Afghanistan and eastern Iran, as represented by the Freer pen-box. The same type is found on mid-seventh/thirteenth-century brasses produced in Syria and Egypt, its westward movement coinciding with that of the animated inscription. In contrast to the animated inscription, which is unique to metalwork, the animated floral scroll was employed in the other arts and became popular in later manuscript illumination. Frequently associated with the *Wāq-wāq* legend, in which al-Iskandar (Alexander the Great) seeks the tree that tells the future, the scroll has anthropomorphic or zoo-

morphic attributes and becomes a living entity. Like the animated inscription, this type of scroll survived well into the Mamlūk period and was employed on eighth/fourteenth-century inlaid brasses made in Egypt and Syria. The animated floral scroll appears to have been used originally as the main theme; it later became a part of the background decoration and often was placed under the inscriptions.

Animals and birds played an important rôle in the decorative repertoire and were used both as the main theme and as a part of the background. Certain motifs, particularly the lion and the eagle or hawk, were associated with royalty, while others had talismanic and protective attributes. Both real and fantastic animals were represented, including a variety of birds, four-legged predators with their prey and such mythical creatures as unicorns, griffins, harpies and sphinxes. On many objects dating from the fifth/eleventh and sixth/twelfth centuries attributed to Iran and Afghanistan, animals were used as the main decorative theme. Winged sphinxes and griffins and pairs of birds flanking a tree contained auspicious messages. Animals depicted in combat, with ferocious birds of prey or lions attacking weaker creatures, symbolized imperial power. Dating from the same period and region are zoomorphic vessels shaped like lions or birds, frequently used as incense-burners or aquamaniles. Similar animals were fashioned into ornaments and jewellery, used as finials or rendered in high relief to decorate the pieces.

Friezes composed of real and imaginary quadrupeds, generally paired as predators and prey, appear to have originated in the eastern Islamic lands and moved westwards. Among the most characteristic imperial themes was a hawk attacking a bird, enclosed within a roundel, popularly used in Egypt and Syria in the seventh/thirteenth century.

Imperial themes were represented by figural compositions, as well as by banquets and hunts symbolizing both earthly and paradisiacal pleasures. Scenes depicting enthroned princes and courtly figures feasting and drinking while being entertained by musicians and dancers were fully developed by the seventh/thirteenth century. The decorative vocabulary included revellers holding beakers, surrounded by tall-necked wine-bottles and bowls of fruit; musicians playing a variety of string, wind and percussion instruments, such as lutes, harps, zithers, flutes, drums, tambourines and cymbals; and hunters on horseback pursuing wild creatures, assisted by trained falcons and cheetahs. Princely cycles depicted on metalwork are also encountered on contemporary ceramics and other arts, reflecting the preoccupation with these themes during the classical period.

Figural compositions were fully exploited by the artists, who were technically competent to transfer any given subject to the surfaces of their metal objects, thus rivalling the painters who worked with brushes on paper or on pottery. Astrological themes were second in popularity to imperial subjects and many pieces were decorated with the personifications of the seven planets

and the twelve constellations of the zodiac, depicted independently or in combination. There also existed cycles with the labours of the months or the heavenly bodies associated with the months, a theme unique to the metalworkers of Turkey, who represented them on a series of candlesticks. Incorporated into the decoration were select astrological symbols, such as the symbol of the moon, represented either by a crescent or a figure holding a crescent or by the pseudo-planet al-Jawzahar, personified by a dragon.

In addition to the conventional repertoire, the metalworkers created original cycles and compositions for specially commissioned objects, although the individual themes employed were by no means unique to these pieces. A representative example is the Freer basin [Fig. 2], its exterior decorated with large panels depicting polo players, and medallions with scenes from the life of Christ, interspersed with plaited *Kufī* inscriptions, animated scrolls, friezes of real and fantastic animals, and roundels with musicians. The interior walls contain similar scrolls and animals, together with *thuluth* inscriptions and a series of Christian saints standing under arches. The inner base, badly worn, depicts a banquet with musicians and revellers amidst animated scrolls, while the outside has the coat of arms of an eighteenth-century French family. The inscriptions state that the basin was made for al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, the ruler of Diyār Bakr (1232–1239), Damascus (1239 and 1245–1249) and Egypt (1240–1249), who lost his life while fighting against the Crusade of Saint Louis in 1249. The patron of the basin must have requested both the polo game, his favourite sport, and the scenes from the life of Christ together with the group of saints to be represented on his metalwork. The Freer basin belongs to a rare group of some sixteen Egyptian or Syrian objects produced in the 1240s and decorated with Christian themes. Two of these are signed by Mawṣilī artists and two others bear the name of Sultan Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb. This particular piece may have been made as a gift for a Christian ally or confiscated as booty by the Crusaders, later passing on to the French family that engraved its coat of arms on the base.

The metalworkers of this period formulated a decorative vocabulary that became the most prominent characteristic of Islamic metalwork and was used with minor modifications up to the twentieth century. The decoration included inscriptions written in angular and cursive scripts, geometric and floral motifs reflecting solar symbols, animals denoting imperial themes, and princely and astrological cycles with paradisiacal and cosmic interpretations. The diversity and wealth of innovative motifs and themes were never equalled, although certain elements would be refined in years to come.

## The post-classical period

The classical age of Islamic art was brought to an end by the Mongol invasions from Central Asia which took place in the middle of the seventh/



VI-5(c).2 Brass basin inlaid with silver, executed for al-Malik al-Şāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, Egypt or Syria, 1240s

© Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. (55.10)

thirteenth century and annihilated a number of states and cultural centres, forcing a substantial percentage of the population to migrate westwards to seek refuge in safer regions. The most valiant defenders of Islam against the foreign invaders were the Mamlūks, who not only stopped the Mongols but terminated the Crusades. A branch of the Mongols called the Īlkhānids settled in Iran, converted to Islam and eventually adopted the local traditions. Economic stability was resumed, commercial activities restored and the arts of Islam flourished once again. By the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century, Īlkhānid power disintegrated and the empire was divided among local dynasties, including those who claimed the province of Fārs in southern Iran.

At the turn of the century there occurred yet another invasion from Central Asia, this time led by Tīmūr, who moved swiftly into the central Islamic lands and Anatolia. The Tīmūrids held court, first in Samarqand, then in Harāt, which became the most renowned cultural centre after the 1470s.

The production of Islamic metalwork during this period reveals a continuation of classical techniques and themes. The same repertoire of inscrip-

tions, geometric and floral decorations, figural compositions and imperial and solar symbols appears on brasses inlaid with silver and gold. The inscriptions show a change in style and were generally written in *thuluth*, which in time replaced figural compositions and became the major decorative element on metalwork.

Dated and inscribed examples indicate that the most prolific production of metalwork was sponsored by the Mamlūks and the rulers of Fārs. Mamlūk artists re-employed the features perfected by their predecessors and created some of the most spectacular examples of Islamic metalwork. They excelled in rendering *thuluth* inscriptions and developed a circular composition in which the vertical shafts of the letters radiated from a central unit. The patrons were the ruling classes – the sultans and the emirs – who frequently employed their blazons on their objects.

Metalwork produced in Fārs, also made for the court and the wealthy élite, reflects the classical themes, together with a preference for *thuluth* inscriptions and generalized princely subjects, including enthroned personages and hunters.

Certain new solar motifs became widely used on eighth/fourteenth-century objects. The radiating inscriptions in Mamlūk metalwork, which contain praises to sultans and to emirs identified by their masters, can be interpreted as both an imperial and a cosmic symbol that associates the earthly king with the heavenly ruler. Other solar symbols include rosettes, often with swirling petals, and lotus-blossoms and ducks placed in circular compositions or in addorsed and confronted pairs, which tend to carry esoteric and mystical interpretations. Another widely used decorative detail was the fish-pond theme, depicting fishes and other marine creatures swimming in concentric patterns inside basins and bowls. The earliest dated use of this theme, which represents the manifestation of the sun in the water, is found on a bowl in the Galleria Estense in Modena, Italy, made in 704/1305 by ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Aḥmad al-Khāliq al-Shirāzī, an artist from Shirāz, the capital of Fārs. It was also used on contemporary and possibly earlier examples commissioned by the Mamlūks, such as the late-seventh/thirteenth- or early-ninth/fourteenth-century bowl and basin made by Muḥammad b. al-Zayn, both in the Louvre, Paris. These two objects, thought to have been made in Cairo, contain exceptionally detailed figural compositions that recreate the activities of the Mamlūk court. Their refined execution indicates that the Mamlūk metalworkers not only inherited the technical facilities of the masters of the classical age but also superseded them.

Inlaid brasses made for the Mamlūks and those assigned to Iran share a number of features, including alternate use of geometric and floral designs in the background, friezes of running predators and prey, and such cosmic themes as sun-rays, geometric roundels, lotus-blossoms, ducks and compositions radiating from central stars, which survived well into the eleventh/

seventeenth century. In contrast to these iconographic and decorative similarities, the contents of their inscriptions show a variation. Objects from Iran often include the phrase 'inheritor of the kingdom of Solomon', a title used by the rulers of Fārs, who controlled Persepolis and Pasargadae, ancient sites associated with the Biblical patriarch Solomon.

By the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century, the impact of the classical decorative repertoire began to wane and certain themes gradually disappeared. The most notable among these were figural compositions and animated inscriptions and scrolls. The main decorative element came to be bold *thuluth* inscriptions, as mentioned earlier, although on some objects a derivative version of *Kufi* was still employed. Comparatively more naturalistic floral scrolls, their thin undulating branches bearing split-leaves and forming occasional knots and cartouches, were fashionable in the following century and influenced the group of Italian metalwork identified with the school of Venice.

Metalwork produced in the ninth/fifteenth century reflects the lack of high-quality workmanship and harmonious use of silver, copper and gold inlays that characterized the earlier pieces. Many objects were simply engraved with hatching, ring-matting or black organic compounds applied to the background in an attempt to create texture or colour. A number of brass and copper pieces were also tinned, which produced a silvery effect. The few inlaid examples indicate that silver wire was preferred over the earlier practice of using pre-cut thin sheets. This deterioration in Islamic metalwork may have been the result of dire economic conditions or merely a change in consumer taste; patrons no longer seem to have been interested in possessing metal objects and chose, instead, to commission manuscripts or purchase imported Chinese porcelains.

An exceptional series of jugs and vases, carefully executed and inlaid with silver and at times with gold, was produced in the Tīmūrid capital of Harāt in the last quarter of the ninth/fifteenth century. The series represents the new aesthetics in surface decoration that would continue to be influential for centuries to come. The design was minutely rendered and consists of floral scrolls and Arabic and Persian inscriptions written in *naskhī* or *nasta'liq*, an elegant cursive style reserved for royal manuscripts. The Arabic inscriptions generally contain routine benedictory phrases, whereas the Persian inscriptions either repeat those given in Arabic or include verses composed by such great Iranian poets as Ḥāfiz, Sa'ādī and Firdawsī. The repertoire of these pieces shows a close relationship with the contemporary arts of the book and reflects the same styles of writing and refined floral elements, including superimposed naturalistic and stylized scrolls. The surface decoration of Tīmūrid metalwork had a long-lasting impact on both Ottoman and Ṣafawid examples.

## Later islamic metalwork

The political history of the Islamic world after the 900s/1500s is dominated by powerful empires. The Ottomans, who had emerged from a small principality at the north-western corner of Turkey and spread to eastern Europe, western Asia and northern Africa, were by far the strongest, with the longest survival record. The Şafawids inherited the Tīmūrid lands, ruling over Iran and Afghanistan, while the Mughals succeeded in controlling India. These great empires established large and complex court ateliers that employed the most talented artists of the age.

Early Ottoman metalwork reflects influences of Tīmūrid and Mamlūk arts as well as eastern European traditions. By the mid-tenth/sixteenth century an indigenous style evolved, incorporating both naturalistic and stylized florals. The designs were engraved on brass and copper wares, some of which were also tinned. A specialty of Ottoman metalworkers was *tombak*, or gilded copper, which continues to be popular today. While brass and copper objects were basically utilitarian and served diverse levels of the society, the court commissioned pieces fashioned in silver and gold, lavishly decorated with rock-crystal or jade plaques and encrusted with various precious gems.

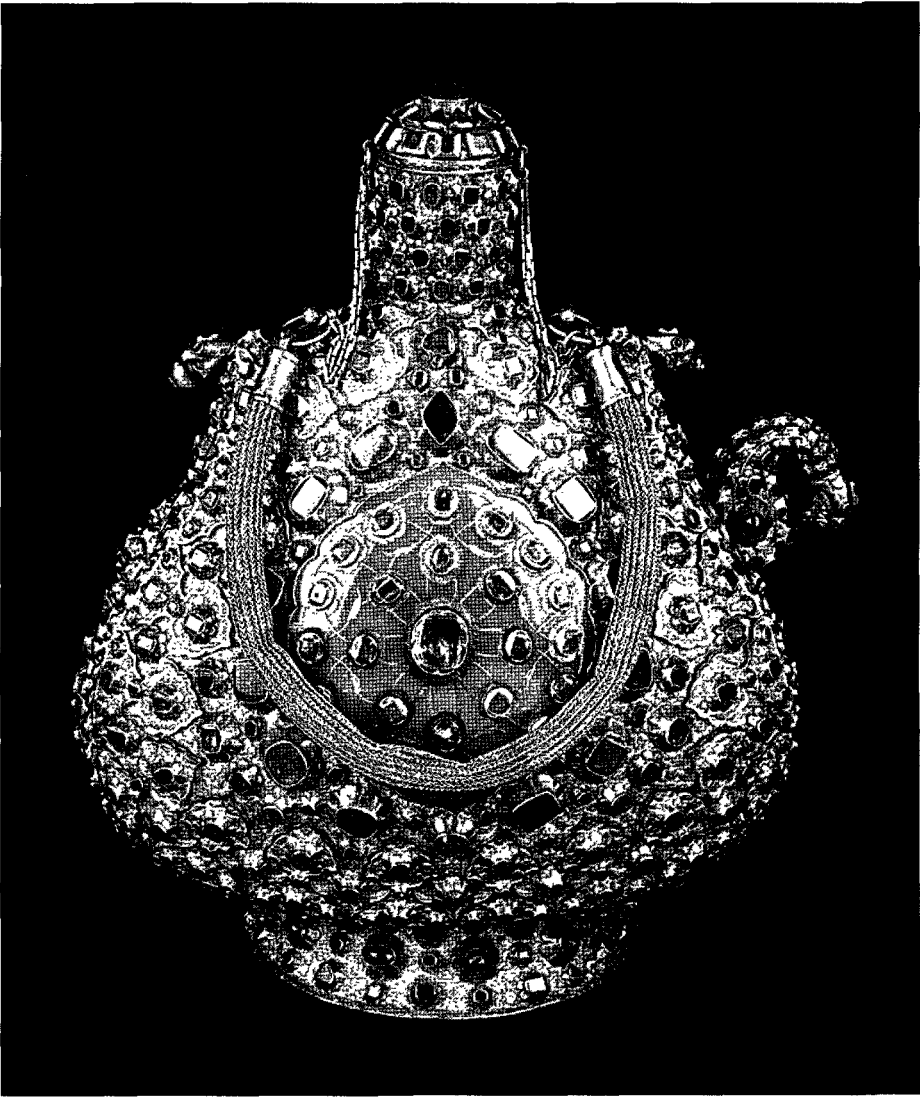
Among the more dazzling pieces made for the Ottoman sultans is a gold canteen, its surface totally covered with articulated gold plaques and lobed jade medallions bearing floral scrolls with emeralds and rubies set into the cores of the blossoms [Fig. 3]. The gold plaques are further embellished with chased and incised floral scrolls with ring-matting applied to the background. The spout of the canteen is shaped as a dragon, while two similar creatures jut from its shoulders, one bearing a pearl in its mouth, the other an emerald. Such vessels were used for the sultan's drinking water and became symbols of sovereignty together with the imperial sword, both of which were carried by high court officials during ceremonial events.

Another metal exclusively used for imperial wares was *tūtīyā*, or zinc, fashioned into various shapes, including jugs, bottles and bowls, and often encrusted with gems. This material, used in the Ottoman and Şafawid courts during the early tenth/sixteenth century, appears to have originated in the Tīmūrid period; it had a limited popularity and disappeared after the eleventh/seventeenth century.

Among the most lavishly decorated zinc wares is a long-necked bottle made in the Şafawid court during the early tenth/sixteenth century [Fig. 4]. Embellished with gold filigree components and encrusted with such gems as turquoises and rubies, it contains a pair of cartouches with *nasta'liq* inscriptions which refer to the vessel and the wine-steward, emphasizing its function.

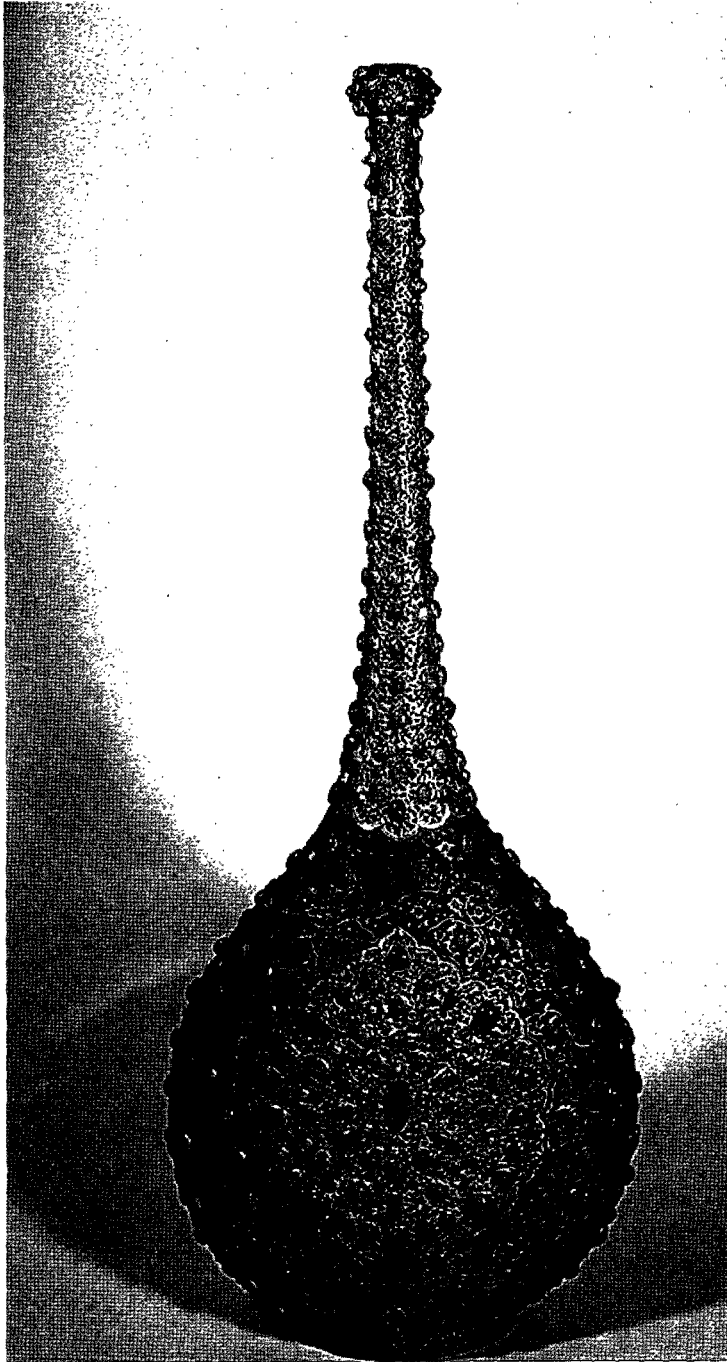
Early Şafawid metalwork maintained the decorative features found on late Tīmūrid pieces, but silver and gold inlays were used more and more sparingly. The influence of the art of the book is also visible on courtly ob-





VI-5(c).3 Gold canteen encrusted with jade plaques and gems,  
Turkey, second half of the tenth/sixteenth century

© Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul (2/3825)



VI-5(c).4 Compressed globular long-necked flask,  
zinc with a tracery of gold inlay encrusted with turquoises  
and rubies in clawmounts, Iran, *c.* 905/1500  
© Topkapi Palace Museum Library, Istanbul (2/2877)

jects, the most interesting of which is a high-tin bronze bowl in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. It was made in 916/1510–1511 by Maḥmūd ʿAlī and decorated with a poem composed by Hilālī and rendered in *nastaʿlīq* by Sultan Muḥammad, who was most likely the esteemed calligrapher, Sultan Muḥammad Nūr of Harāt.

The majority of Ṣafawid objects were made of brass and copper, at times tinned, and decorated with *naskhī* or *nastaʿlīq* inscriptions and floral scrolls which were often superimposed, the one bearing naturalistic blossoms and buds, the other split-leaves. These decorations were also applied to iron and steel, frequently inlaid or overlaid with gold and fashioned into arms and armour, objects for personal use, and architectural decoration and furnishings.

During the tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries figural compositions were revived in Iranian metalwork, with animals and humans generally placed within a landscape. Their repertoire included courtly figures feasting, drinking or riding, and mystics discoursing or contemplating. These themes continued to be depicted on Iranian metalwork for centuries thereafter.

Early Mughal metalwork relied heavily on Iranian techniques and themes, as observed on copper or tinned-copper examples as well as on brasses, which are at times inlaid with silver or simply engraved with black organic compounds applied to the background. Floral motifs predominate, although animals and human figures within a landscape were occasionally depicted. A few of the pieces were embellished with inscriptions based on Iranian prototypes.

A speciality of Indian metalworkers was *Bīdarī* ware [Fig. 5], named after the city of Bīdar where this technique was thought to have originated. This type of ware, which became widely produced after the eleventh/seventeenth century, was composed of an alloy of zinc. The pieces were cast and inlaid with silver, at times also with brass and gold, and coated with sal ammoniac, which created a matte black surface when removed and provided a contrast to the bright inlays.

The Mughal court, renowned for its wealth and passion for precious objects, commissioned large quantities of silver and gold items as well as those employing jade and rock-crystal, frequently encrusted with gems and enamels. Also made for the court were steel and iron arms and armour, together with ceremonial swords and daggers, some of which have jewelled handles and sheaths.

Islamic metalworkers relied upon the technology of their predecessors and created an extraordinary range of decorative themes and styles that became indigenous to their world. Surface embellishment was of primary concern and the objects were invested with epigraphic and pictorial messages that forced the beholder to search for their meaning. These messages, at times intentionally obscured, offered an intellectual challenge and enhanced the value and appreciation of the pieces.



VI-5(c).5 *Huqqa* base, water-pipe bowl, inlaid with brass and silver,  
'*bīdarī*' ware, Bidar, India, seventeenth century

© Victoria & Albert Museum, London (IS 27-1980)

Needless to say, the study of Islamic metalwork relies heavily on inscriptions, which not only decorate the pieces but also provide the most important documentation for the identification of artists, patrons, dates and provenance, thus enabling scholars to trace the stylistic and technical developments in diverse regions. As more of the inscriptions are studied and

published, information on regional workshops will increase and the individual styles of the artists who created some of the most spectacular objects in the history of Islamic art will be identified.

Studies of technique, iconography and provenance are essential for the understanding of the evolution of Islamic metalwork, but its primary purpose, that is, its function, should not be overlooked. Each piece was designed for personal use and served a specific purpose: some held candles, liquids, incense or writing-implements, whereas others were used as ornaments or weapons. *These functional objects were transformed into works of art through the technical virtuosity and refined aesthetics of their makers.*

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Chapter 5(d)

ISLAMIC HANDICRAFTS

*Jean-Louis Michon*

INTRODUCTION

Any discussion of the handicrafts in an Islamic context will inevitably be drawn into the realm of art. If we take the word ‘artist’ in the sense of someone noted for aesthetic creativity, there is no Muslim artist who is not first and foremost a craftworker (*ṣāmiʿ*) with the requisite expertise in one more manual discipline. Moreover, even though there are some handicrafts with no obvious creative dimension – as in the work of the tanner or, lower down the handicraft-‘chain’, the fellmonger – it is not uncommon to see craftworkers whose rôle is considered purely ‘utilitarian’, incorporating decorative features, into their work and thereby lending a genuine aesthetic quality to the finished product.

This being so, a comprehensive study of Islamic handicrafts with their diversity of specialized skills could conceivably encompass the entire range of artistic trades. In order not to reiterate what has been said of these specialized skills in other chapters of this book, nor simply to provide a tedious list of handicrafts and artefacts which have always existed in the Muslim world, this article, which is necessarily brief, has endeavoured to research and bring together those elements which have given a remarkable originality and permanence to Islamic handicrafts.

These elements are primarily of an ideological nature stemming from the Islamic faith, the law of the Qurʾān and the custom (*sunna*) of the Prophet, and preserve at the same time ideas and symbols from ancient cultures. Various technical, ethnic and sociological features from a number of different sources, vestiges of which are still clearly visible today, were then grafted on to, and completely assimilated by, these elements. The commonly heard maxim, ‘unity in diversity’, amply sums up the nature of Islamic handicrafts.

## The origin and the status of the handicrafts in the Muslim community (*umma*)

### SPIRITUAL SOURCES

As moulder of the Muslim soul, the Qur'an teaches that it is 'God Who created you and what you make' (XXXVII.96). The assumption therefore is that no artefact will ever be more than a product of the ability invested in man to act in accordance with an eternal decree.

The similarity between the creative act of humankind and that of God is implied in the Qur'an when God says of Himself that 'He created man of clay like the potter' (LV.14). Proceeding in the same order from the human level to the divine, al-Ghazālī writes: 'Just as the architect first draws (*yuṣawwir*) all aspects of a house on a blank piece of paper in order to build it subsequently according to the copy (*nuskha*), so too the Creator of the Heavens and Earth inscribed the 'well-preserved tablet' (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) with a blueprint of the Word from its beginning to its end before bringing it into existence in accordance with His copy.'<sup>1</sup>

The craftworker, like the Creator, starts with a blank surface that is devoid of any representation, be it the architect's blank page or the carver's bed of plaster or of any other prepared, naturally occurring material such as earth, wood, metal, textile or leather, in order to recreate on it one of the innumerable images that have formed in his imagination. He then works in three stages, namely, conception (*taqdīr*), creation or production (*ījād*) and shaping (*taṣwīr*), which give the object its pre-designed form.

The three stages constitute the process of both divine and human creation, since God, according to a series of names attributed to Him in the Qur'an (LIX.24), is called Creator (*khāliq*), Maker (*Bārī*) and Shaper (*Muṣawwir*), the first attribute implying a sense of predestination as in the verse: 'And he created everything, then he ordained it' (XXV.2), the second suggesting the power to originate and bring to life, while the third describes how He bestows on all that He makes the most perfect and and beautiful form.

The actual process of artistic creation has perhaps nowhere been analysed and explained with such clarity as in the 'Epistles' (*Rasā'il*) of the Brethren of Purity (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*), a group of Muslim philosophers of the fourth/tenth century who compiled an extremely detailed encyclopaedia of contemporary sciences and their spiritual and metaphysical foundations. Distinguishing between practical arts (*al-ṣanā'i' al-'amaliyya*) and theoretical arts (*al-ṣanā'i' al-'ilmīyya*), that is to say, the creation of an object and its pre-existent form in the human intellect, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' showed that 'the created object (*al-*

1. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 5 vols., Beirut, Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1983, III, p. 20.

*maṣnūʿ*) is a homogeneous entity composed of substance and form, a synthesis that comes about under the influence of the Universal Soul, which, in turn, draws its power from the Universal Intellect in accordance with the Divine Order.<sup>2</sup>

This is the sacred basis of all art as practised by the craftworker who seeks to conform to God's Will and create only by a power delegated to him and through an association with Heaven which spans the various degrees of divine manifestation. In this respect, Sayyid Husayn Nasr has pointed out that the word *ṣanāʿa* used by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ should be translated as 'art' (from the Latin term *ars* in the sense of 'production') rather than as 'handicraft', because it encompasses all human creativity and, according to Nasr, characterizes 'the proper way of making anything during the normal period of the human history'. As used in Persian, the word *ṣanāʿa*, therefore, 'confirms ... through the very breadth of its meaning the unity of art and life which has characterized Persian culture, like every other traditional culture, throughout history'.<sup>3</sup>

Human participation in the divine quality of *muṣawwir* is also self-limiting because the artist could not give life to the creatures he has reproduced; His creativity then would be tainted with a manifest imperfection and could neither be completed nor be made good and beautiful. The greatest master Ibn al-ʿArabī, in his commentary on the famous *ḥadīth* about the condemnation that awaits the 'fashioners of images' (*muṣawwirīn*), explains that 'God has condemned and threatened the shaper (*muṣawwir*) because he does not complete the form that he has created'.<sup>4</sup>

#### ETHICAL SOURCES

The craftworker's feeling of being no more than an instrument in the hands of an All-Wise and Guiding Will infinitely greater than his own is reflected in the care he takes to conform to traditional rules and practices and particularly in the importance attached to certain sayings and attitudes attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, which form the basis of the craft-worker's ethical code. This can be seen, for instance, in the *ḥadīth* recorded by al-Tirmidhī and al-Ṭabarānī which says that 'God loves the faithful servant who carries on a

2. Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ wa-khibillān al-wafāʾ*, 12 parts. in 4 vols., Beirut, Dār Ṣādir 1376/1957, I, p. 277.
3. S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, Cambridge, The Islamic Texts Society, 1988.
4. Cited by S. Akkach, *The Sacred Pattern of Traditional Islamic Architecture according to Sufi Doctrine*, Thesis, Sydney, University of Sydney, Faculty of Architecture, 1990, pp. 89f., a thesis in which the author came to an interesting conclusion in respect of 'The Divine Names and the artistic standard' by showing that a man who creates a convincing form in accordance with the 'grammar' of symbolic language is imitating the process of Divine Creation and that, therefore, 'one's artefact becomes an embodiment of the qualities of God's artefact'.



trade', where faith and professional practice are inextricably linked. Another *ḥadīth* has it that 'God shows mercy towards the person who makes something and then perfects it (*atqanahu*).'

*Iṭqān*, the pursuit of perfection, goes hand in hand with *ihsān*, good behaviour, even if every craftworker is well aware that true perfection belongs only to God. This is why one can see many craftworkers in the Muslim world exhibiting the virtues of patience (*ṣabr*) and submission (*taslīm*), virtues which dignify the status of each human as a Deputy of God on Earth (*khalīfat Allāh 'alā l-ard*). Precisely because of the nature of the craft-worker's trade, which demands concentration of the hand while allowing the heart and the spirit to remain free, there are countless craft-workers who have come very close to God and have through the centuries achieved fame as a result of their extensive knowledge of the religious sciences and the depth of their mystical experience. One such person is Shaykh Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī of Mustaghanim, who died in 1934. A shoemaker by trade, his saintliness drew thousand of followers to his *ḥawḍiyya* (shrine) from all over the Muslim world and even induced a certain sympathy and openness towards Islam in a large number of European intellectuals.<sup>5</sup>

Muḥammad al-Hāshimī al-Tilimsānī, whose teaching I was privileged to hear in Damascus, whither he had emigrated from Algeria prior to the World War I and where he died in 1961, was of the same spiritual lineage. He was trained as a tailor and had carried on his trade until a time when his duties as an *ʿālim* teaching canonical law and theology at the great Umayyad Mosque occupied all of his time. He, too, was a man of great modesty and generosity and was intensely passionate about fulfilling his duty towards God and humanity.

The direct links between practising handicrafts and following the Straight Path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) also stem from the fact that most trades were, according to ancient tradition, originally taught by prophets. The carpenter's art therefore goes back to Noah (*Sayyid Nūḥ*), who received instructions from God in how to build the Ark. Likewise, the origin of the weaver's trade is attributed to Shīth Seth, one of Noah's three sons. The memory of these saintly teachers was kept alive in initiation ceremonies and various other rituals observed by craft-associations, particularly in Cairo and Damascus, until as recently as the beginning of this century. Very close links also exist between the trade-associations and the Ṣūfī orders (*ṭuruq*, sing. *ṭarīqa*), many members of which are recruited from amongst craft-workers. In Turkey, the powerful Corporation of Tanners was headed by Akhī Ewrān, a Ṣūfī with legendary qualities, whose grave at Eskishehir in Anatolia was a popular place of pilgrimage. In Fez, as in the rest of Morocco, where most craftworkers are

5. Cf. M. Lings *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century: Shaikh Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī, his Spiritual Heritage and Legacy*, (Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West, 23), London, George Allen and Unwin, 1973.

affiliated to a Šūfī order, all the corporations participate in the annual celebration (*mawsim*) of Mawlāy Idrīs, the venerated founder of the city, whose tomb is draped with a new covering (*keiswa*) of green velvet with gold embroidery made by the local craftworkers.

#### TECHNICAL AND AESTHETIC SOURCES

As the Muslims moved out of Arabia, they came across new techniques and materials, together with a more formal code of practice, which allowed them to build, expand and embellish the great cities of Basra, Kufa, Damascus, Cairo, Qairouan and Cordova, where rapid expansion and organization in many admirable respects have greatly astonished and intrigued modern historians. Due as much to their own urban background, which had been established within the first Muslim community at Medina, as to their ability to integrate into the Unitarian creed of *tawhīd* metaphysical and moral elements to go together with the demands of the material life, the Muslims managed to assimilate both the methods of the craftworkers and the aesthetic values and symbolic overtones that they considered in keeping with their own ideals and to use them to fashion their surroundings.

The following features were borrowed by the Muslims:

- building methods, such the Byzantine dome and the Sāsānid arch;
- urban planning concepts, for example, that of the Round City used in the construction of Baghdad (although it was abandoned quite soon after), the Roman *castrum*, the Romano-Byzantine villa and the Persian garden;
- decorative features and motifs, such as the Roman niche, later transformed into the *mihrāb*, the Persian *muqarnas* and Coptic intertwined patterns;
- a large number of local techniques used in metallurgy, weaving and the like, which could be applied in all fields of the handicrafts.

Despite the diversity of these ‘borrowings’, Muslim handicrafts are everywhere recognizable as such, while their artifacts show a great deal of homogeneity which can be explained only by reference to the spirit in which they were created. Whether objects of everyday use for the middle classes or the poor with no decorative features whatsoever, or whether the same ordinary objects, but embellished or made with more costly materials or used to beautify men and women and to adorn places of worship, thereby taking on an additional aesthetic dimension, both varieties reflect at different levels the same adherence to the rules of a trade and both fulfil specific functional needs.

Two examples from each of the above categories of objects will perhaps suffice to illustrate the relationship that binds them together. The first example is a gripping account included in a book by Titus Burckhardt on the quality of life in a traditional Muslim town less than fifty years ago. When the author visited an old comb-maker in the historic city of Fez and watched him de-

taching the horns from the skulls of oxen, splitting them, opening them out over a flame and filing each tooth of the comb with the greatest of care, the craftworker said to him:

My work may seem crude to you but it needs a sixth sense which I cannot describe in words. I only realized it myself after many years and, even if I wanted to, I could not teach it directly to my own son if he was not already capable of seeing it for himself... It is a trade which goes back from apprentice to master as far as to our lord Seth who was the first to teach it to men. What comes from a prophet – for Seth was a prophet – is always remarkably profitable, both outwardly and inwardly. What I gradually came to realize is that nothing is done randomly in this trade. In every movement or gesture of the hand, there is a modicum of wisdom. Not everybody understands this. But, even so, it is stupid and indefensible to deprive people of the heritage of the prophets by sitting them in front of machines where, day after day, they are required to carry out meaningless tasks.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of decorative motifs, the craftworker may have a much more precise awareness of the spiritual significance of his work. Thus, when a researcher inquired about how Muslim craftworkers in Malaysia were inspired by the local flora, he was given the following response from a painter who had decorated two wall-panels in a local house:

In the oval at the centre of the first panel is the name of the Prophet's father-in-law and the first Muslim Caliph, Abū Bakr. The second oval is blank because it represents the existence of the one and only God, whose essence cannot be observed with the human eye. The endless cable-pattern of intertwined lines around the ovals expresses the infinite existence of the Omnipotent, who is without beginning or end. All creation emanates from Him, its beginning represented by a bulb or seed and its end by a shoot, a flower or a bud. The occupant of the house is therefore constantly reminded of the omnipresence of God and of the inevitable destiny of humankind.<sup>7</sup>

The author then showed the craftworker select particular plants like bamboo or caladium, having edible shoots and which, by their nature, extolled the bounty of the All-Sustaining Creator or evoked exotic scents and flowers. He also explained how the craft-worker takes the essential characteristics of a plant and combines them, often by having them grow from the same creeping branch, in order to conjure up an exquisite garland, as in a Japanese flower-arrangement.

6. T. Burckhardt, *Fès: Stadt des Islam*, Olten, Urs Graf Verlag; 1960, p. 66; appeared in English transl.: W Stoddart, *Fès, City of Islam*, Cambridge, Islamic Texts Society, 1992, pp. 76–79.

7. N. M. N. Zainal Abidin, 'Malaysia's Flora and its Inspiration to Traditional Artisans', in *Arts and the Islamic World*, 18, Supplement 1990, pp. 79ff.

With regard to the origin of this aesthetic language used by Muslim craftworkers, it is surprising to see the extent to which there are still two distinct sources of inspiration to be found throughout the Muslim world. The first goes back to the most ancient of times and is preserved in rural and semi-desert regions, while the second is more typically 'Islamic' and has arisen from the synthesis that occurred in the workshops of urban craft-workers. The whole of Islamic civilization is characterized by these two trends, corresponding to the nomadic and sedentary ways of life, both of which featured in the life of the Prophet Muḥammad himself, who was not only a member of the Meccan ruling class, and therefore a town-dweller, but had also been a shepherd in his youth and a caravaner in later life. This symbiotic relationship between the two lifestyles was subsequently perpetuated in Muslim society in the very heart of the classical cities, which, for all their elegant architecture, retained something of the appearance of small desert towns. So too, inside the homes of city-dwellers, could be found a particular style of easily portable and multi-purpose furniture, such as chests, benches, trays and low tables. However, a clear distinction, to which we will return later, is everywhere preserved between those arts that can be termed 'nomadic', despite being practised by settled country-dwellers, and the urban arts. The nomadic type employs old methods and motifs while the urban form makes use of more refined processes and every kind of Islamic decoration, notably calligraphy, regular geometric shapes and intertwining vegetation.

Furthermore, in an interesting overlap of the two trends, town-dwelling craftworkers can be seen incorporating elements of bedouin vocabulary into their own repertoire, while their village counterparts, fascinated by the urban setting, assimilate it into their more primitive language.

## The organization of handicrafts

### THE CORPORATE SYSTEM

The rules and regulations of professional ethics, which were referred to earlier, were enforced in Muslim cities through corporate bodies, which developed along with the great cities and often included already-existing groups of craftworkers, particularly in the Near East, which had formerly been under Romano-Byzantine influence. Elements of ancient ritual marking, for example, the progression from apprentice to journeyman or from craftworker to master, were in this way passed on and preserved within the corporations and guilds of Muslim cities.

According to the very many accounts which have come down to us from the classical age to modern times, the corporate system in Muslim cities eventually encompassed all professional occupations of an economic nature, involving production, distribution and the provision of services and excluding

only the religious, administrative and military functions.<sup>8</sup>

The craftworker's trade is acquired by serving an apprenticeship. Over the many years spent inside the workshop, the apprentice learns from the master, often his own father, not just the rules and practices of the trades but also standards of behaviour based on religious and moral principles that are supposed to regulate his relationship with other craft-workers and with his customers.

When the apprentice has grown to adulthood, he is, at the appropriate time, admitted to membership of the corporation by undergoing an initiation ceremony conducted by the master of the guild in the presence of senior members and in accordance with a ritual that varies from one corporation or region to another. In all cases, it involves a solemn agreement sanctified by the recitation of the first Sūra of the Qur'ān (*al-Fātiḥa*), by a meal, often referred to as *tamliḥa* because the presence of salt (*milḥ*) symbolizes the bond between the members of the fraternity, and by a prayer said by all those in attendance.

The progression from craftworker (*ṣāniʿ*) to master (*muʿallim*) merely requires the consensus of the other members of the corporation, who may ask for a masterpiece to be produced.

The masters of each corporation elect from amongst themselves a reliable and trustworthy man (*amīn* or *shaykh*) to represent them or act as an arbiter in the event of any professional or other dispute. It is the *shaykh* alone who has the authority to confer the title of journeyman on an apprentice and it is he who convenes meetings of the guild, at which he presides over the discussion of matters professional. It is the *shaykh* also who disciplines those who have contravened the rules of the profession. Thus, the *shaykh* of an offending weaver's guild could be summoned to a workshop to cut into pieces a length of cloth that did not conform to standard measurements and to hang up the remnants outside the offending premises. He could pronounce the temporary or permanent closure of the shop of a dishonest craftworker or trader and, in the case of a goldsmith known to have debased his gold, he might turn his block upside down in order to prevent him working until such a time when he received the *shaykh's* permission to resume his trade. The *shaykh* also negotiated with government authorities in matters of taxation and even intervened in municipal and town-planning affairs by virtue of his authority over the

8. See the comprehensive article on this subject by Y. Ibish, in R. B. Serjeant (ed.), *The Islamic City: Selected Papers from the Colloquium Held at the Middle East Centre, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge, United Kingdom, from 19 to 23 July 1976*, Paris, UNESCO, 1980, pp. 114–25, and also A. Raymond *et al.*, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols., Damascus, Institut Français de Damas, 1974. Information about the vast body of literature dealing with professional ethics and trade corporations can be found in the *E*<sup>2</sup> articles 'Futuwwa', 'Ḥisba', and 'Ṣinf'.

craftworkers congregated not only in a particular commercial area but often in residential areas too.

Craftworkers are grouped into quarters, with those who make a lot of noise, such as blacksmiths and brass-workers, or those who use hazardous materials, like tanners, potters and glass-blowers, being banished to the outskirts of the city. Finished goods are sold either directly from the craftworker's workshop through a broker (*dallāl*), or from the shops of the souk or stalls of the *qayṣariyya*, the covered market where the most valuable items like fabrics and jewellery are on sale and which is usually situated near the Great Mosque. There are also the caravanserais, the *khāns* and *funduqs* where goods are stored before being offered on the market but from where sales are also made.

The corporations have historically played a very important rôle in urban society, extending as far as maintaining order in the face of subversive elements. Many of them held lists of their members which, *inter alia*, most notably allowed them to enlist the support of craftworkers, who would take part in various communal tasks or duties on behalf of the sultan, the *qā'id* or pious foundations, or even for the community, in order to relieve damage (and suffering) caused by natural disasters. In a detailed study of Muslim corporations in Morocco, Louis Massignon pointed out that 'in Marrakesh, after torrential rain causing landslides and damage to property, masons, adobe-makers and lime- and brick-sellers are first obliged to work for the benefit of the less fortunate before attending to their more established clients'.<sup>9</sup>

By virtue of the number and social standing of their members, some of the corporations wielded at various times a great deal of influence over the political and administrative authorities. Such was the case in Tunis where the corporation of chéchia-makers (*shawnāshbiyya*) was almost exclusively composed of Andalusians and where the *amin* was both the leading merchant and President of the Trade Tribunal and therefore held sway over all the corporations of the city. Equally, in Turkey, the tanners, who had a well-established, centralized organization, managed to gain considerable influence over all the Anatolian corporations to the extent of controlling how they were administered and presiding over the initiation ceremonies of their apprentices.

#### AN ASSORTMENT OF PEOPLE AND ARTEFACTS

The dissemination and assimilation of the sources of inspiration and techniques mentioned above were assisted not only by the unifying nature of Islam but also by the high degree of mobility which has characterized over the centuries those peoples that embraced the Muslim religion. This is exemplified by tribal migrations, by the displacement of entire populations after the arrival

9. L. Massignon, 'Enquête sur les corporations d'artisans et de commerçants au Maroc', *Revue du Monde Musulman*, 56, 1924, p. 102.

of the Saljūqs in Iran and Anatolia in the fifth/eleventh century, by the emergence from the desert of the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties, by the relentless wave of invasions by the Mongol tribes, and by the movement of traders, either temporarily for the purpose of their business or permanently during times of profound economic upheaval, as was the case when, according to archival documents from the Cairo Geniza,<sup>10</sup> a large bourgeois population moved from Iran, Iraq and Syria towards Egypt and North Africa just before the year 391/1000.

Architects and craftworkers were also displaced in large numbers, either voluntarily or at the invitation of some ruler who patronized the arts. The important part played by such patronage in the development of handicrafts cannot be emphasized enough. This is illustrated by the way in which handicrafts were at the mercy of changes in local dynasties and sultans, flourishing where political power was well established and falling into decline when it waned or disappeared altogether. In Persia, for example, whose artistic traditions became fused with those of Byzantium in Baghdad from the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries to give Muslim art its original character, the techniques and forms of this type of art, both in architecture and in the applied arts, were propagated by the various dynasties, first towards the east to Bukhārā, Samarqand and Ghazna, then to the north to Rayy and Tabriz, finally reaching Tehran via Qazwīn, Iṣfahān and Shīrāz. A further eloquent example of the importance of patronage can be seen in tenth/sixteenth-century Turkey, where handicrafts, at the instigation of Sulaymān the Magnificent, achieved the exceptional quality that was revealed recently in the exhibition that the world visited at the end of the 1980s.<sup>11</sup>

Artistic ideas and techniques were also disseminated by involuntary movements, particularly when craftworkers were forced into exile. Under the Umayyads, for instance, Greek and Coptic craftworkers were dispatched to Medina and Damascus to help in the construction of mosques. The ‘Abbāsīd capital of Sāmarrā’ was built in a similar way in a very short period of time. Several centuries later, in a contemporary account by the Spanish Ambassador Clavijo, Timūr Lang was quick to transport the best weavers, glass- and porcelain-workers, goldsmiths, weapons-makers and others, whose lives had been spared following the capture of Shīrāz, Baghdad and the cities of Syria and Anatolia, to his capital Samarqand to beautify and embellish it.<sup>12</sup>

10. Cf. S. D. Goitein, ‘A Turning Point in the History of the Muslim State’, in his *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1966, pp. 168–197; see also the *ET*<sup>2</sup> article ‘Geniza’, by the same author.

11. See E. Atil, *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent*, Washington, D. C., National Gallery of Art, 1987.

12. On the complex personality of Timūr Lang, merciless destroyer but enlightened builder, see L. Kehren, *Tamerlan, l'empire du Seigneur de Fer*, Neuchâtel, à la Baconnière, 1978.

However, it is particularly through commercial exchanges, which occur to some extent during the pilgrimage to Mecca, that artefacts circulate throughout the Muslim world, spreading their influences from one country to another. As R. Ettinghausen pointed out:

Trade in those days consisted of taking goods abroad and exchanging them, not for money but for other goods which the merchant then brought back to his own country... The practice of copying imported objects, which were expensive but fashionable, accelerated further the cross-fertilization of indigenous and foreign trends. The copying applied principally to fabrics, which could be transported easily over great distances and were especially sought after on the international market. People of Kairouan in Tunisia wear materials made in Iran; Iraqi silk factories sell their wares in Alexandria; Sicily exports, among other items, clothes made out of Tustari cloth, named after the town of Tustar in south-west Iran... Exports, and the local copies which then ensue, eventually reduce the price and the merchants are afforded a much wider market. Many other artefacts are traded on the international market. Ready-made leather bookbindings are dispatched from Morocco to Egypt, ceramics from Tinnis are shipped to Ramla in Palestine; India exports bronze and copper containers, silk and cotton fabrics and leatherwork and imports fabrics, clothes, silverware, leather, glass, carpets and mats.<sup>13</sup>

#### CLASSIFICATION OF HANDICRAFTS

Drawing up even a basic list of handicrafts still practised in the Muslim world today would largely lie outside the scope of the present chapter, particularly in view of the fact that a list of manual crafts drawn up in 1924, just for the city of Fez, contained 120 items.<sup>14</sup> Even if those trades specifically involved in the provision of food-stuffs, like those of millers, bakers, oven-workers, pastry-cooks, confectioners, butchers and friers, were left out, there are still at least a hundred categories of handicraft, most of them affiliated to corporations, engaged in responding to the needs of the urban population: housing, clothing, socializing, leisure, culture and religion.

Nevertheless, in order to attempt to introduce some kind of classification, in accordance with the natural order of things, into the diversity of trades reflecting a typically Muslim form of creativity, we need to remember that the craftworker always starts with naturally occurring raw materials. A classification of handicrafts or artefacts can therefore be derived from the base material that is moulded and transformed by the craftworker, but it is one which is always identifiable in the finished product. In this way, we can distinguish

13. R. Ettinghausen, 'La création artistique', in B. Lewis, *L'Islam d'hier à aujourd'hui*, Paris, Bordas/Brussels, Elsevier, 1981.

14. See P. Ricard, 'Les métiers manuels à Fès', *Hespéris*, 4, 1924, pp. 205-224.



between trades that work with earth, wood, metal, leather and textiles, still leaving room for particular materials like horn, amber, meerschaum or certain types of shell. Within each of the main categories will be sub-headings relating, for example, to the nature of the base material. Clay, plaster or stone would be included in the 'earth' category, wool, cotton or silk in the 'textiles' category and so forth. Further subdivisions would reflect the various techniques applied to the materials, such as engraving, painting, inlay on wood, embroidery or leather-gilding, knotted carpets and kilims and the like.

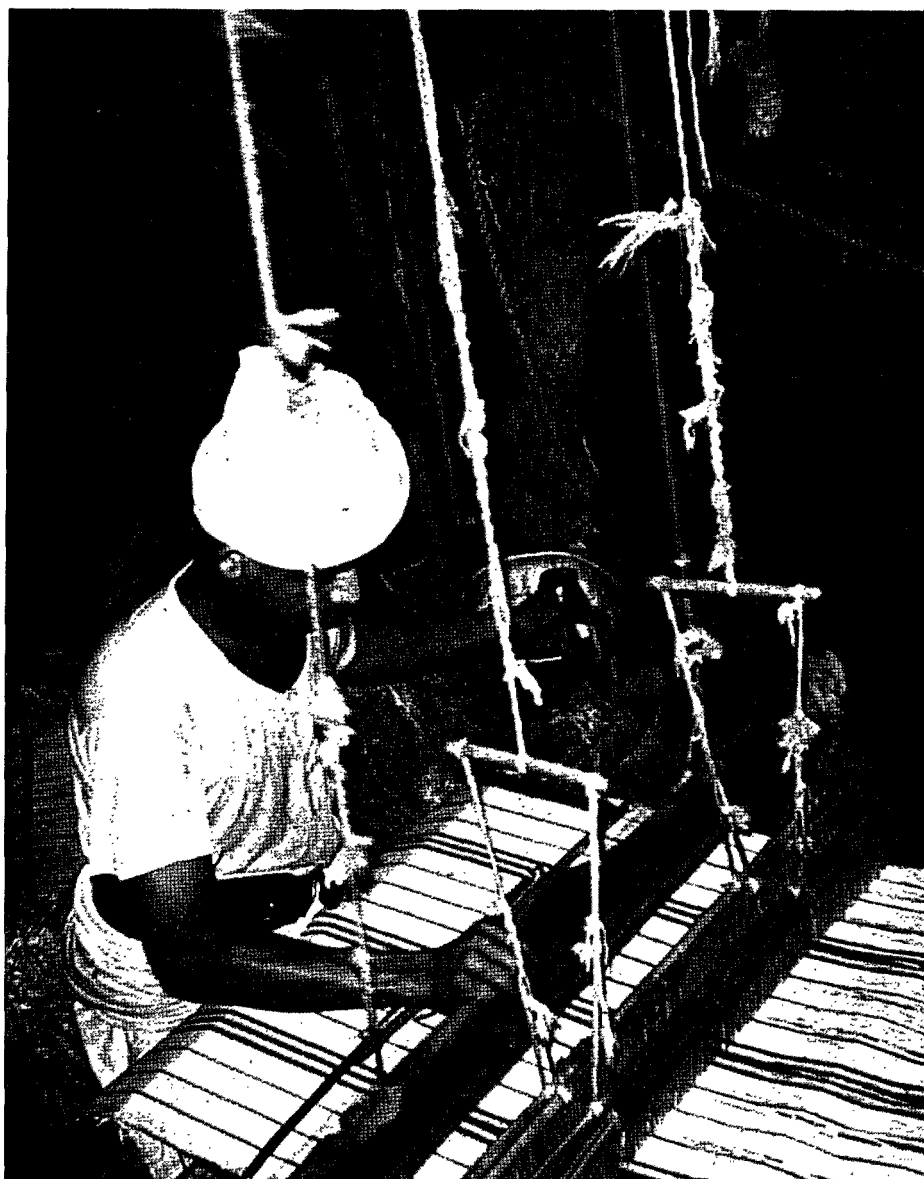
The drawing-up of a systematic inventory of artefacts, both old and modern, is considered today as a necessary means of safeguarding and encouraging the artistic trades increasingly in danger of disappearing. In addition to a great many treatises devoted to particular aspects of handicrafts in a country or region, a number of comprehensive studies have been made of traditional arts in specific countries, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, to name but a few steps along a route that remains largely unexplored.<sup>15</sup>

## Visual languages

### URBAN AND RURAL ARTS

In each of the countries mentioned above, as in all the other regions which make up the Muslim Orient - Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, the Gulf States, Oman, the Yemen, Libya, Algeria and Mauritania - we can see that handicrafts of quality are still carried on by craftworkers who have remained loyal to the techniques and spirit of their ancestors and are still capable of creating objects which, although not endowed with the same technical refinement or perfection as their older prototypes, continue to reflect in no less a manner the traditional aesthetic ideals [Fig. 1]. Whether living in rural areas, oases, agricultural, mountainous or semi-desert regions, or whether integrated into urban society, craftworkers draw the essence of their visual expression, and occasionally also of their technical methods, from two distinct sources. Firstly, there is the very ancient source of indigenous tradition which, according to the region, can be classified

15. See H. E. Wulff, *The Traditional Crafts of Persia: their Development, Technology and Influence on Eastern and Western Civilizations*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1966; J. Topham, *Traditional Crafts of Saudi Arabia*, London, Stacey International, 1982; D. Ammoun, *L'Égypte des mains magiques: artisanat traditionnel et contemporain*, Cairo, The American University Press, 1985 (English ed., 1987); N. Baklouti et al., *Chefs d'œuvre de l'artisanat tunisien: Masterpieces of Tunisian Handicrafts*, Tunis, National Office of Handicrafts, 1982; M. Masmoudi, *Tunisie: l'artisanat créateur*, Tunis, Cerès Productions, 1983; J.-L. Michon, *Répertoire de l'artisanat marocain*, Rabat, Ministry of Handicrafts and Social Affairs/International Fund of UNESCO for the Promotion of Culture, 1985; M. Sijelmassi, *Les arts traditionnels au Maroc*, Paris, L'Avenir Graphique, 1974.



VI-5(d).1 Weaving of a man's loincloth in Yemen  
© UNESCO/Aline Morin

as 'Libyan-Berber', 'Sumerian' and so forth, and, secondly, the urban (*badari*) heritage, the main elements of which originated in the great urban centres during the first centuries of Islam and have given rise through the ages and in the various countries to the many forms and styles of genuinely 'Islamic' art.

#### THE RURAL TRADITION

Examples of the stability and permanence of artistic traditions which can be termed 'archaeological' abound. In rural Berber or Arabo-Berber society, over an area extending from the Mediterranean to the southern Sahara, where almost every woman is engaged in handicrafts, a vast array of signs and symbols can be seen in the decoration of locally produced objects, mostly on those that are made for domestic use. One scholar who has studied pottery decoration in Grande Kabylie has remarked that most of the shapes and signs in the form of oblongs, hooks, squares, circles and dots and the like occur in the Touareg script, Tifinagh, and that 'elements of the same shapes, which now form letters, are present in recent Libyan paintings from the Tassili to the Kabylie, as they were in the early Arabic, Phoenician, Iberian, Greek and Latin scripts'<sup>16</sup> [Fig. 1]. Similar conclusions have been drawn from a detailed study of sculpted pottery from rural Tunisia, where a decorative repertoire composed predominantly of fringed diamond-shapes and chevrons allows for a very subtle and balanced design process.<sup>17</sup>

Besides the more abstract signs which remain a source of mystery to the uninitiated, the so-called 'Berber' decoration comprises representations which, despite always being very stylized, are in keeping with more generally identifiable objects. In the Rif and the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, for example, one can see, as much on the pottery as on the carpets and kilim-type *hanbal* weaving, the equivalent of the Anatolian kilim, the *handirāft*, striped cloaks worn by women, female tattoos and silver jewellery, motifs representing cosmic elements such as the sun, the moon, clouds and mountains, plant-life in the form of flowers, edible corn-seeds and palm-trees and animals, often symbolized by a part of the body, like the skeleton of a fish or snake or the paw of a lion. Other domestic objects and utensils, such as mirrors, combs, jugs, hammers, saws, jewellery boxes and various anthropomorphic symbols to ward off evil, are also found.<sup>18</sup>

16. J. B. Moreau, 'Aux sources de la Méditerranée: les Maatkas des potières', *El Djezir* (Algiers), 1960, pp. 55–66.

17. Cf. E. G. Gobert, 'Les poteries modelées du paysan tunisien', *Revue Tunisienne*, 1940, pp. 119–193.

18. See J.-L. Michon, 'Perennial Features of Islamic Arts as Reflected in Contemporary Moroccan Pottery and Carpet Weaving', in International Symposium, April 1983, Istanbul, *Islamic Art: Common Principles, Forms and Themes*, 1989, pp. 60–72.

On a technical level, one finds great consistency in the production of rural pottery, always made by women, throughout the coastal regions of the Mediterranean and as far as the northern and southern reaches of the Sahara: clay-modelling, coil-pots built on bases moulded on existing pieces of pottery, baking without the use of a kiln in the open air on a specially prepared surface, and decoration drawn generally on an earth-based glaze, using a variety of plant extracts, coloured clays or soot.

Perhaps the most learned and perceptive tribute paid to the handicrafts of the Saharan nomads, including the Moors in the west, the Touaregs in the middle and to the east and the Peuls of the Sahel, was made by the Swiss ethnologist Jean Gabus, whose masterly trilogy<sup>19</sup> contains details not only of the complete collection made on behalf of the Museum of Ethnography in Neuchâtel but also of the context in which each object was used. It is through the objects and techniques themselves that the minds, the ideas and the material and psychological needs of these peoples have been faithfully brought down to us, at a time that is relatively recent (1942 to 1978). However, given the current political and economic changes, this period could soon be regarded as well and truly over. Although we can do no more at this stage than refer the reader to the author's own first-hand accounts, photographs and sketches and to the drawings made by his assistants, all of which represent a unique anthology of nomadic art, it is interesting to see how writing, which fulfils the rôle in Muslim civilization and art of conveying the Divine Message, has entered Saharan art without that art ever having made widespread use of calligraphy. Despite being devoid of any inscriptions, an entire category of handicrafts in the Sahara is nevertheless referred to as *ktâb* or 'book'. The category comprises amulets or charms, which means, in effect, most of the silver jewellery made and worn by the inhabitants of the Sahara from the Atlantic coast to the Tassilin-Ajjer (Algeria) and the Aïr or Azbine (Niger). For example, the main plate of an anklet (*kbalkbâl*) or the head-dress amulet worn by both men and women are referred to as *ktâb*. This suggests that the property of averting the evil eye attributed to geometric motifs engraved on metal is the same as that of the formulas, letters or numbers (in the case of 'magic squares') inscribed on paper and inserted into amulets in the shape of small boxes or tubes worn round the neck as pendants, either singly or as part of a necklace of lucky charms. It should be noted that these lucky charms include the famous glass beads, particularly from Mauritania, the manufacture of which represents a very fine art.

In the Near and Middle East, as in the west of the Muslim world to which we have just referred, the existence of symbolic language long before

19. J. Gabus, *Au Sahara, I: les hommes et leurs outils*, Neuchâtel, à la Baconnière; *idem*, *Au Sahara, II: arts et symboles*, Neuchâtel, à la Baconnière, 1958; *idem*, *Sahara: bijoux et techniques*, Neuchâtel, à la Baconnière, 1982.

the advent of Islam but still used by Muslim craftworkers is particularly apparent in the nomadic or village art of carpet-making. As this subject is dealt with elsewhere in the present volume, it will suffice to mention here the very fine exhibition of a collection of Anatolian kilims from the Museum of Fine Arts in San Francisco (McCoy Jones Collection), which was presented to the Arab World Institute in Paris at the end of 1991, and for which the catalogue<sup>20</sup> contains, among other items, a remarkable analysis of the geometric motifs used by the weavers. The antiquity and durability of these motifs, particularly that of the 'sigma configuration', described as a 'song in praise of the marriage between triangle and colour' and as 'a perfect illustration of the intrinsic balance of positive and negative forms in the weave of tapestry-woven rugs with slits', is demonstrated by their similarity to motifs found on Neolithic basket-weaving and pottery.

In order to compensate in some measure for what will inevitably be left out of such a brief foray into the 'popular' crafts of the Muslim world, a quick glimpse at a number of surviving handicrafts will not go amiss.

In the earthen arts, pisé, adobe and fired bricks are still important traditional building materials in all rural areas where architectural embellishment techniques such as hewn stone columns and arches, brick reliefs and façade painting also struggle to survive. The ubiquitous village pottery, for which the raw material costs nothing, still fulfils certain utilitarian needs, particularly by providing plates [Fig. 2] and pots for cooking, like the glazed earthenware dishes of Morocco or porous earthenware jugs and jars for storing water and food. In Upper Egypt, huge hand-turned water-jars covered by a board with a cup on top are found at intervals along the roads near isolated farms in order to quench the thirst of passers-by. Many folklore traditions are associated with magical properties attributed to items of pottery. In Egypt, a 'seventh-day jug' with seven holes cut into it holds seven candles that are lit one week after the birth of a child in order to celebrate its survival. Clay dolls are also made for various occasions, whether for the seventh day as described above or to mark the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet (*'arūsāt al-mawlid*). In Morocco, brightly coloured ceramic drums are played at all festivals.

As in the case of pottery, basket-weaving relies on an abundant and easily accessible base material, namely, stems, leaves and fibres from date- and dwarf palms, and alfa-grass, from which baskets, bags, cradles, mats, headgear and other items are made. This handicraft from time to time gives rise to ever greater ingenuity and creativity, especially in the African Sahel or in Zufār in the south of Oman, where a former slave population preserves the tradition of African basket-making and esparto-weaving.

20. C. M. Cootner and G. Muse, 1990, *Anatolian Kilims. The Caroline and H. McCoy Collection*, London, Sotheby.



VI-5(d).2 Dish handmade by Kabyle woman with a symbolic pattern, Algeria

Woodworking is found almost everywhere, although, due to a shortage of raw material, it is becoming necessary to reuse materials salvaged from demolition sites for the production of items of furniture such as benches, chests and shelves, which are then engraved or painted. Coopers are for the same reason reduced to making dishes, boxes and domestic utensils. In areas where wood is still in abundant supply, it is used in the building trade, retaining here and there its former level of ornateness, as in a remote valley in western

Pakistan where the techniques employed by craft-workers have recently been documented by a German ethnologist.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the Orient, many varieties of ore had been exploited from the very earliest times in those countries that were later to be occupied by the Muslims. According to archaeological evidence, the earliest metallurgy would have begun in northern and central Persia, where rich deposits of various metals, together with the fuel necessary to extract them, were found in the Taurus Mountains and on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. This first metallurgy would have gone back to the end of the Neolithic Age during the fifth millennium before the Christian Era and would have begun with beaten copper-work, the casting technique not appearing until later. The use of other metals such as gold, silver, copper, lead and zinc was to follow, while techniques would constantly improve and spread to neighbouring regions, to Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley and Sumer. Given that this distribution corresponds to the extent of the Muslim conquests once they had spread as far as Sāsānid Persia, one can see why the techniques employed in the art of metalwork were essentially the same throughout the Muslim world. Yet, here again, the urban-rural distinction is to be made, for, while the village and itinerant blacksmiths, in Persia as in the Sahara, have always made tools and agricultural equipment in addition to weapons, jewellery and many an implement for day-to-day use, such as door-fittings, locks or sugar-hammers, the great tradition of bronze, iron and brasswork and of Islamic weaponry is essentially urban, dependent on princes, their armies and a rich and civilized clientèle.

#### ISLAMIC DECORATION

As we are unable to look at the products of urban handicrafts in any detail, it may be useful to consider the Qur'ānic origin of some of the great themes that Muslim craftworkers are continually striving to illustrate. Without returning to the significance of calligraphy, which has a separate chapter devoted to it in the present volume, it will suffice to emphasize the place that Muslim art, by reference to the Qur'ān, has given to light, symbol of the Divine Radiance (XXIV.35), to water, source of all life (XXI.10; XXIV.45), to the hierarchical structure of the universe, 'Heaven, Earth and what is between them', and to the descriptions of Paradise with its four rivers, fine perfumes, trees laden with fruit, cups of nectar poured over the blessed ones reclining on silk cushions and brocade.

When deflected by physical surfaces, light, like God, who radiates throughout his creation, reveals the diversity of colour in the natural world without itself undergoing change. From this item the continual quest for

21. J. Kalter, 1991, *The Arts and Crafts of the Swat Valley: Living Traditions in the Hindu Kush*, London, Thames and Hudson.

contrasting effects achieved instance through the harmonious arrangement of the facets of a *muqarnas*, a set of honeycomb cells made of wood, stone or stucco suspended inside an arch from a vaulted ceiling or below a dome. It is likewise with the profusion of fretted screens with geometric patterns made of wood, marble or glazed brick that are fitted in windows as a shield against the intensity of the sun or placed inside rooms as partitions or to create private areas. Light is also symbolized by a recess containing a hanging lamp, a motif that is present in infinite variety in the *mihrābs* of mosques, on rugs and prayer-mats and on glazed tiled walls.

Water, an essential element of life on earth and a God-given blessing from above, is granted, through the hands of the craftworkers, the respect that it deserves by being distributed to a city's inhabitants through elegant fountains, channeled through gardens into marble basins, drawn by bathers in the *ḥammām* in large copper cups, or poured on the hands of guests before and after a meal from finely engraved copper or silver jugs.

Drinking coffee as a social pastime provides an example of how a single activity can involve the use of several products of handicrafts. Since the fifteenth century, when the practice of drinking coffee, originally confined to Ṣūfī circles, began to be promulgated throughout the Muslim world in large measure by members of craft-associations, all kinds of objects were produced for its preparation and consumption. These artefacts, from the outset, demonstrated characteristics peculiar to traditional handicrafts in general and to Islamic handicrafts in particular, namely, a great simplicity of technique combined with meticulous care taken in the production process, ending in an object that was either totally plain or with some kind of decoration, such as a coffee-roaster with or without a spatula, a mortar and pestle, a coffee-mill, a coffee- or sugar-box, a pot for boiling water, a coffee-pot for brewing and serving the drink and a cup with its holder. As demonstrated in a recent study,<sup>22</sup> even the coffee-pots alone show a great diversity of shape.

As a counterpart to the rural artefacts mentioned above, we could mention, in the context of contemporary pottery and ceramics, the faience belonging to the Hispano-Mauresque tradition, particularly in Fez, Safi and Tetouan,<sup>23</sup> where the decoration makes use of Kufic calligraphy, arabesque and interwoven patterns, or the ceramics that conjure up the Golden Ages of Oriental history in places like Shīrāz in Iran, where elegantly curved flowers and fish stand out in black against a turquoise background, or in Turkey, where the exquisite bouquets of tulips and carnations which have made Iznīq's earthenware famous, are still seen on the dishes of Kutāhiya

22. H. Desmet – Gregoire, *Les objets du café: dans les sociétés du Proche Orient et de la Méditerranée*, Paris, Presses du CNRS, 1989.

23. Cf. P. Ricard, *Corpus des tapis marocains. Vol. I: Tapis de Rabat*, Paris, P. Geuthner, 1923.



and Bursa [Fig. 3], and in Nabeul in Tunisia, where potters have resumed working Ottoman motifs.<sup>24</sup>

The art of wall-decoration using painted tiles or glazed brick in the Persian, Turkish or Central Asian style, or by constructing mosaics from small ready-made pieces, as on the walls of Granada's Alhambra or on those of the Marinid *madrasas* of Morocco, has been handed down to the present day and is used in panels and plaques found in contemporary interiors.



VI-5(d).3 Modern Kutahya plate with combined floral, geometric and epigraphic design

© Collection J. L. Michon,

24. Cf. J. Revault, *Arts traditionnels en Tunisie*, Tunis, Office National de l'Artisanat de Tunisie, 1967, p. 30.

Amongst the woodworking trades, those of wood-turning and the production of moucharaby work had, although inextricably linked with urban development, declined recently to such an extent that their disappearance seemed inevitable, particularly in Egypt, where the skill had been remarkably well developed and had given to the city of Cairo the spectacular beauty that has fascinated many a painter of the Orient. Over the last two decades, however, this art has made a real recovery, largely as a result of the example set by the architect Ḥasan Fathī, a devoted champion of traditional architecture, who was able to convince an enlightened audience not only of the aesthetic but also the functional advantages of traceried wooden windows, which provide an optimum solution to problems posed by heat and the climate. At his instigation, numerous workshops were set up, especially in Cairo and Alexandria, which supplied architects and builders with the turned wooden components to make balconies, partitions, cupboards, chests, couches, arm-chairs, consoles, shelves, tables and tray-stands.

In contrast to the purely geometric and linear motifs of the flat weaves and the rural and nomadic rugs of Asia and North Africa, the garden-carpet woven in the Persian workshops of Tabrīz, Nā'īn, Kāshān, Iṣfahān and Tehran, or in Hereke, near Istanbul, Qonya and Kayseri in Asia Minor, are covered in a dense thicket of trees and flowers, amongst which, just as in the miniatures, gazelles frolic, birds flutter and, on occasion, horsemen hunt for game. It is often said that these carpets, transported by travellers and merchants, have influenced weavers in distant countries. According to legend, a fragment of Anatolian carpet, carried off by a stork in the seventeenth century, reached Morocco and gave rise to the carpets of Rabat. So too, fragments from the Orient conveyed the shape of the *mīhrāb* to the carpets of Qairouan and the medallion-shaped motifs to the weavers, who, exceptionally, are men of Guergour in Algeria.<sup>25</sup>

How the typical decorative repertoire of Islamic art entered the handicrafts of the most remote regions, where the assimilation process initially occurred, can be seen in the textile industries of Bangladesh and Indonesia. When the Muslim conquest reached Bengal at the beginning of the thirteenth century, both the conquerors and the vanquished possessed a long tradition of weaving and embroidering fabrics. Bengal was already renowned for its muslin made in Dacca, which, in ancient times, had dressed Pharaohs and Roman Emperors. From the first days of the sultanate, the arts were saturated with Islamic designs and motifs. Royal workshops, *karakhānas*, were established in which many masterpieces were created by craftworkers from a variety of different places: brocade robes, embroidered silk, saddle-rugs, hangings, curtains, gauze, muslin and tent-screens (*kinnāt*). Woollen and silk carpets used by sultans and their

25. See L. Gordon and A. Walter, 'Contribution à l'étude des tapis du Guergour', *Cahiers des Arts et Techniques d'Afrique du Nord*, 1951–1952, pp. 15–23.



VI-5(d).4 Using wax for floral design in the Muslim manner, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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courtiers influenced, among other things, the decoration of quilts and embroidered coverings, the *nakhi kantah*, which, even now, are amongst the most beautiful Islamic textiles. In the same way, architectural motifs, such as calligraphy or pseudo-calligraphy in the *tughrā*-style found on the inside of arches, were printed on *jamdānīs*, muslins embroidered with gold and silver thread or braided cotton that provided women with their magnificent saris.<sup>26</sup>

A similar process of assimilation of Islamic decoration occurred in batik art, a thousand-year-old procedure carried out on Indian cotton fabrics in Java, using wax like a stencil in order to create shimmering materials. Particularly from the eighteenth century onwards, Muslim craft-workers, when making the lengths of batik materials worn round the waist (*sarong*), substituted the floral motifs and intertwining vegetation inspired by carpets and fabrics from Persia and Moghul India for those that drew on the imagery of the Hindu religion, such as great birds (*garuda*) or serpents (*naga*). In the twentieth century, batiks have been limited to and produced in Malaysia. Notably in Singapore, after Independence (1957), a new style of 'Malaysian batik' emerged as a symbol of the new nation [Fig. 4].<sup>27</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Compared with the heritage of the past, the state of modern handicrafts in the Muslim world is depressing. In all disciplines, if they have not already completely disappeared, there has been both a qualitative and a quantitative degeneration. This can be explained by several factors, mainly competition from industry, which destroyed many small businesses dedicated to producing everyday objects, changes in attitude and behaviour, like the abandonment of traditional costumes, the adoption of Western tastes and fashions by the more affluent clientele, a growing disaffection with manual trades and, finally, a policy of secularization, often vigorously pursued by the public authorities.

In the cities, therefore, the corporate system has been particularly snuffed out, either abolished by government decree, as in Turkey in 1924, or disrupted by pressure from an aggressive trades-union movement, as in Syria and Tunisia under French rule. L. Gardet said in a penetrating analysis of the Muslim city: 'Wherever Islam has come into contact with large-scale modern industry, the traditional corporate framework has broken up, with the result that the craft-

26. See P. Ahmad, 'Fabrics of Bangladesh: Islamic Influences on Design and Motif', *Arts and the Islamic World*, 18 (supplement), 1990, pp.96–99 (with illustrations taken from the collection of the Bangladesh Handicrafts Cooperative Federation).

27. See S. Arney, 'Symbolism in the batik of Indonesia and Malaysia', in P. Ahmad, 'Fabrics...', *op. cit.*

workers, who owned their own businesses and enjoyed a high degree of job-security, have too often given way to an anonymous proletariat.<sup>28</sup>

Rural craftworkers, due to their relative isolation, have frequently retained their integrity, particularly in pottery- and basket-making, although less so in clothing and ornaments. As for urban handicrafts, even though they have lost the ability to produce such great works of art as the enamelled glassware, gold- and silver-inlaid bronze and lustreware from Persia and Andalusia and the silk from Egypt and Anatolia that may be admired as part of the Islamic art collections of the world's museums, they still retain remarkable exceptional potentialities. In many cities, genuine masterpieces are still being made to order. An example can be seen in the recent adornment of the great Shif'i holy places Karbalā' and Najaf with gilt and enamelled doors in floral decoration that bring to mind the fine quality of the Şafawid and Moghul miniatures. The royal palaces, mosques and aristocratic family homes of Morocco are still bedecked with 'traditional Islamic artifacts', recently the subject of a lavish publication,<sup>29</sup> where the workshops of joiners and carpenters are now fashioning the inlaid cedar-wood ribs that are to be incorporated into the domes of the recently extended mosque of the Prophet in Medina. In a great many countries, renewed interest is being generated in Islamic art, particularly in calligraphy and the 'abstract' expression of geometric decoration. Competitions are being held by the various Ministries for Culture and Handicrafts in order to identify and reward the best traditional artists and craftworkers.

More encouraging still is the determination, earnestly and vigorously articulated over the past decade, to develop a strategy at international level to tackle the problems posed by the survival and regeneration of Islamic handicrafts and to pool the influence and resources of those countries attempting to preserve a heritage that is considered so much a part of the civilization of Islam. At a seminar held in Rabat in October 1991, therefore, more than a hundred delegates from all over the world, representing not just government bodies, but also non-governmental organizations and both semi-public and private institutions, surveyed the problems facing traditional craftworkers and resolved to take steps to remedy the situation.<sup>30</sup> Such efforts, bolstered by the tenacity of handicraft-workers who are already prepared to make great sacrifices in order to keep their ancestral traditions alive, should bear fruit in the not too distant future.

28. L. Gardet, *La cité musulmane: vie sociale et politique*, (Etudes Musulmanes, 1), Paris, J. Vrin, 1961, p. 262.

29. A. Paccard, *Le Maroc et l'artisanat traditionnel dans l'architecture*, 2 vols., St.-Jorioz, Atelier 74, 1980.

30. See the *Proceedings of the International Seminar on Craft: Prospects for Development, Rabat, 23-25 October 1991*, Istanbul, Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1993.

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## EPILOGUE

*Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu*

From a relatively stable, slow-moving world linked by secure variegations between ‘nations and tribes’ (Qur’ān XLIX.13), we have been carried off into a whirlpool of endless mutations and fluctuations in which the technical progress and spread of a media-propagated mass culture alarmingly standardizes rather than diversifies. The modern world’s cultural uniformity seems to engender indifference and passivity where variety once triggered inquisitiveness and movement. Indeed, ‘the nature of culture is diversity; cultural monolithism is but a figment of the imagination – otherwise, a culture can be considered dead and its doors forever locked.’<sup>1</sup>

Islamic history is the result of a dialogue between different cultures, between ‘nations and tribes’, between past, present and future. However, today, the roots that bind to the past are sometimes neglected and the doors that open on to the future can appear to be locked. While striving to belong to a culture that is the product of industrial uniformization, that advocates modernity and technical progress, Muslims tend to forget, and even sometimes to repudiate, their distinctive cultural heritage, their authentic genuine selves. But roots and souls rebel and reject blind acculturation that leads to ambivalence and to the loss of identity for individuals and communities. A culture cannot survive without roots or a soul; and ‘development divorced from its human or cultural context is growth without a soul.’<sup>2</sup>

The Orient, birthplace of the three monotheistic religions and cradle of spirituality, has often been contrasted to the worldly Occident, the former in need of a modern technology and the latter thirsty for an inner life. Some Easterners have longed for Western material progress, only to reject it for the ethics that seem to be inseparable from it. But the East-West dichotomy is

1. A. Bouhdiba, *Culture et société*, Tunis, Université de Tunis, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1978, p. 235.
2. J. Péres de Cuéllar, *Our Creative Diversity*, Paris, UNESCO, 1996, p. 15.

perhaps arbitrarily exaggerated at times and each culture could perhaps draw from its neighbour's without necessarily betraying its own. The world of Islam has in the past selectively learned from the Other and reconciled foreign cultures to its own ethics and, while wisely respecting the fact - and admiring the beauty - of the existence of variety, brought the many particularities into a single entity. Harmonious cultural pluralism drew individuals and nations close together. Philosophers had learned from Greeks, artists from Sāsānids, physicians from Indians, all progressing on the way to knowledge, participating in the cultural development of their day without cutting their ties with the quintessential Islamic values. The knowledge they acquired was applied for the benefit of their contemporaries. The traditional Muslim did not appear as a dichotomized person torn by any tension between an abstract principle and its positive application, between contemplation and action. Contemplation was the beginning of action and action its desirable outcome. Today, also, 'Science is first and foremost a style of thinking, of living; and technology is its efficient and active concretization.'<sup>3</sup> In the past the Muslim's individual and collective needs for learning and progress were not contested by his ideals and aspirations: a balanced equilibrium in life was accepted as a normal human need. The complementarity between the relative and the Absolute, the material and the spiritual, the theoretical and the practical is recognized in Islam by their final common end, since ultimately everything belongs and returns to God: 'And God created you and what you make' (Qur'ān XXXVII. 94).

Yet today, the Muslim feels challenged by the modern world. He holds on to the reassuring values of the past, but knows that he cannot turn his back on the reality of time and history. He is challenged to rediscover his individual, collective and global identity through self-evaluation and knowledge of the actual, not through retreat into the past, through synthetic integration rather than simple transfer of knowledge, through active selective learning and sharing rather than nostalgic passivity and proud alienation.

The identity of the nations, which is the basis for their sovereignty and a precondition for dialogue, draws its strength from the intensity and authenticity of their cultural life ... Neither world economic expansion, which has removed all possibility of autarky, nor the power of technology, nor the ubiquity of the media has seriously affected the cultural specificity and creativity of the different peoples. In fact, in the developing countries there has been a new awareness of identity, coupled with a new respect for their own cultures and a desire to join in the dialogue between the different cultures as full partners.<sup>4</sup>

The Muslim has never forgotten his splendid past and has not lost the taste for beauty, knowledge and unity. History and destiny may have shaken

3. A. Bouhdiba, *Culture...*, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

4. UNESCO, *Thinking Ahead*, Paris, 1977, p. 38.

his roots, but today, the past is still alive, the roots are still solidly anchored and the tree can be nurtured into new and fruitful life. The Muslim needs to dig a little to rediscover these well-rooted invariables, the traditional ethical values that made his past, a past that believed in knowledge, in culture and in beauty.

“The assertion of cultural identity cannot, therefore, be regarded as a form of introspection or even chauvinism. On the contrary, it betokens a desire to join in and to share, giving substance and, at last, a truly universal dimension to international cultural co-operation.”<sup>5</sup> The Muslim is nowhere enjoined to practise rigid reaction and close the door to Western technical knowledge. Yet, ‘in between a past steeped in the divine and a future imbued with dreams, the fact of Europe interposed itself as well as this historical “time”, the laws of which one has to follow if one wishes to speak its language.’<sup>6</sup> The Muslim should not be imprisoned in a passive nostalgia for an irretrievable past, nor in foolish illusions of an imponderable future. Perhaps, on the contrary, he should be the ‘son of the moment’ (*ibn al-waqt*), as the Muslim mystics call the seeker who has freed himself from the fetters of time and who can live authentically in the present. The past is neither a relic nor a handicap for a people in search of its cultural identity, but a presence, a source of essential values.

The past for the craftsman – for example - has an exemplary value because it means perfection. That which gives a particular object its value is the fact that it belongs to the world of perfection; it is not because it is old, but because it carries through the medium of history several characteristics that gave it its beauty ... Past and present meet in an eternity of perfection...<sup>7</sup>

Some basic rules that ease the transition between past and present are provided by the following concept: *ijtihād* is an effort towards present personal elaboration and creativity and *taqlīd* is the safe emulation of past tradition, both being organic foundations not only of theology, but of all sciences and disciplines. *Taqīd* binds to the past and its cultural values, while *ijtihād*, for the good of the public, *istiṣlāḥ*, propels the Muslim communities into dynamic renewal through learning and creativity.

This volume marks a step towards the realization of UNESCO’s mission in the world: it sheds light on the truth of Islam, highlights the importance of learning and culture for the Muslims and builds new channels of communication between the world of Islam and other nations. But as it defines the fundamentals of knowledge and describes past and contemporary Islamic culture, this volume fulfils another function too: it helps the Muslims ap-

5. Unesco, *Thinking...*, *op. cit.*

6. J. Berque, *Les Arabes d’hier à demain*, (Collection Esprit ‘Frontière Ouverte’), Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1960, p. 233.

7. A. Bouhdiba, *Culture...*, *op. cit.*, p. 210.



preciate that no contradiction exists between the search for learning wherever it may be, in past wisdom or in contemporary art and sciences, and 'as far away as China', on the one hand, and the true spirit of Islam, on the other. This comprehended, bridges will then be built between East and West and between past and present.

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*EI*<sup>2</sup> = *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., ed. H.A.R. Gibb *et al.*, Leiden/London, 1960–.

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