



Proceedings of the Colloquium on Paradise and Hell in Islam

Keszthely, 7-14 July 2002

- Part One -

EDITED BY

K. DÉVÉNYI - A. FODOR



THE ARABIST

BUDAPEST STUDIES IN ARABIC 28-29

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EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY CHAIR FOR ARABIC STUDIES
&
CSOMA DE KŐRÖS SOCIETY SECTION OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

BUDAPEST, 2008

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PREFACE

The Tareq Rajab Museum in Kuwait acquired a magical textile of exceptional size a few years ago. Mr. Tareq Rajab, the internationally known collector of Islamic artefacts and Director of the Museum kindly offered me the possibility to study this interesting acquisition which looked like a large triangular banner. Upon closer examination it turned out that the textile contained the *Sūrat al-Faḥ* and magical squares of different size which were composed of an enormous quantity of magical numbers. The lay-out of the inscriptions presented a stepped construction of eight layers which seemingly symbolized the Islamic Paradise. This gave me the idea to organize a Colloquium on *Paradise and Hell in Islam*. Participants were expected to deal with the subject from the most different aspects (art and archaeology, religion, history, literature, ethnography, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, etc.). Professor Géza Fehérvári, presently Curator of the Tareq Rajab Museum enthusiastically supported the concept and helped in the organization of the Colloquium which took place in 2002 in the historic city of Keszthely, situated on Lake Balaton in Western Hungary. The venue of the Colloquium was the Helikon Castle Museum, a beautiful 18th-19th century baroque palace which housed an exhibition on *Islamic Arts in the 18th-20th centuries* (on loan from the Tareq Rajab Museum). The Director of the Castle Museum, Dr. László Czoma was our excellent host and offered a very kind hospitality to the participants in an amiable and inspiring environment. The number of those attending the Colloquium was about 50 and nearly 30 papers were read. Mr. Tareq Rajab and his wife were also present and took active part in the scholarly discussions.

The present volume contains the first part of the Proceedings, 11 papers which cover a wide variety of topics. Patricia Baker, Sheila Blair, Jonathan Bloom and Rachel Milstein approached the subject from the aspect of Islamic arts, while Tome Klobe dealt with it in the Christian context. Theological and philosophical considerations came to the fore in the contributions by Alan Jones, Miklós Maróth and István Hajnal. Giovanni Canova and Roberto Tottoli wrote about the folkloric elements in the descriptions of the Islamic Paradise and Hell, while Zoltán Szombathy turned his attention to the subject of afterlife as it was used in Arabic literature.

Finally, it is my sad duty to remember the untimely death of two good friends and colleagues, Patricia Baker and Duncan Haldane who passed away before the publication of their papers.

Alexander Fodor

FABRICS FIT FOR ANGELS

Patricia L. Baker

London

Within Islamic painting the depiction of angels generally occurs in the context of temporal power and authority, of religious narrative and of the garden, both heavenly and terrestrial. It is their wings which identify their inclusion within the pictorial composition rather than any distinguishing attire but, that said, it appears that while the Islamic artists employed the visual metaphor of luxurious contemporary court fabrics to evoke the image of heavenly splendour and magnificence, they were less inclined to dress these heavenly beneficent beings in types of garments too closely associated with the styling of court robes.

As is well recognised the Islamic painter was rarely overwhelmingly concerned with recording accurately, naturalistically and minutely every detail in his pictorial composition. Few depictions display such clarity of garment structure as certain early Qāḡār paintings, such as those formerly in the Amery collection (Falk 1972), which reveal the use of bias cutting, types of fastenings and braiding, seaming details as well as clearly portraying textile patterning and texture. Furthermore it is apparent that few Islamic artists perceived that it was a requirement in such depictions to reflect the accepted literary notions regarding angels. Arabic writers, such as aṭ-Tabarī (d. 923 AD) and al-Qazwīnī (d. 1283 AD), described their immense size and stature with numerous wings, anything from four as possessed by Isrāfīl who will sound the trumpet on the Day of Reckoning to four thousand as with Izrā'il, the angel of death. One such wing could easily, we are told, cover a quarter of the earth's surface when unfurled. Little concerted effort is made by the artist to represent the scale of these enormous wings nor of the angelic body covered with saffron hairs, nor the multiple faces of these divine beings positioned at various places on their body to watch humanity¹. However, as always, there are a few exceptions, one of the most important being the first-half of the 15th century Uighur manuscript of the *Mī'rāḡ-nāmāh* (Bibliothèque Nationale (BN), Paris, Suppl. turc 190). In this work the angels are frequently depicted on a larger scale than the Prophet Muḡammad and there appears to be a deliberate wish to convey a feeling of a distinct celestial world, peopled by such super-normal divine creatures, different from ordinary terrestrial beings.

¹ MacDonald 1960; *ERE* IV, 615ff, which notes that Ġibrīl (Angel of the Revelation) possessed six huge wings each formed of 100 smaller ones, or elsewhere as 1600 wings covered with saffron hair; the wings of Mikā'il were described as being made of green emerald, while Izrā'il had four faces, on his head, chest, back and at his feet.

There is also a matter of gender: the stories explaining the fall of the angels Hārūt and Mārūt suggest that these beings possessed some masculine sexual feelings; indeed it was yielding to such emotions that resulted in their fall from heavenly Grace. But although theologians and philosophers agreed that angels could weep, feel annoyance and required nourishment (albeit with spiritual food and drink), the matter of their gender does not appear to have been much discussed, let alone decided. Such ambiguity regarding gender is reflected in a number of Islamic manuscript depictions. However, it must be said that our knowledge of the differences in male and female dress, especially of the early and medieval periods, in the Islamic Middle East is imprecise², and identification of gender tends to be based on jewellery, hair-styling rather than specific costume details such as neckline, robe closures etc.. Those images showing angels confirming divine affirmation of temporal power, holding the royal baldachin or canopy over the head of the ruler, as in the frontispiece of *Kitāb al-Aḡānī*, Mosul c. 1218-9 (Millet Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, F. Efendi 1566 fol.1r.), appear to depict female angels judging by the ear ornaments, hair-styling and garment neckline. Such figures are derived from winged Victories from the Classical Mediterranean world and Sāsānid Iran, as at Taq-i Bustan where the female gender of the Victory angels is unambiguous. In the early 14th century *Ġāmī at-tawāriḥ* (Edinburgh University Library, and the Nasser D. Khalili Collection, London), the angel dressed in a shoulder-less tunic, closely attending the birth of the Prophet Muḥammad, should presumably be read as female (befitting in the role of mid-wife).. There are later similarly attired representations in certain Persian manuscripts, with their hair arranged in a top-knot loop; they are shown alongside other winged figures wearing sleeved robes, rather than the shoulder-less tunic, and crowns. Comparable dress differences are seen in, for instance, the 1539-43 *Ḥamsa* of Nizāmī (British Museum Or.2265) and the *Haft Awrang* of Ġāmī, 1556-65 (Freer Gallery of Art (FGA), inv. 46.12, fol.275a) and it is logical to suppose that the artist wished to show that the heavens were peopled by both male and female divine messengers. This inclusion of both 'angelic' genders is clearly suggested in a mid-16th century Persian album drawing 'Garden of Heavenly Creatures' (FGA, inv. 50.2).

Early Arabic literary descriptions of the dress, the colouring, their styling worn by angels are even less precise. The Qur'an (76:22) notes that the attendants in the gardens of Paradise will be attired in green *sundus*, a patterned-weave silk³. Mention

² To draw a contemporary parallel: a casual observer unused to Western mores would probably fail to note, unless shown, that gender was signified in the manner and direction of closure in Western men's and women's fashion since the late 19th century, as in trousers, shirts etc., as well as in small differences in the tailoring cut and styling.

³ *Sundus* is generally taken to be a form of *samit*, that is a draw-loom compound woven silk (generally twill weave). Presumably the colour green alludes to costly luxury, as it seems there was only one known single-bath vegetable dye giving a stable green colour, available in Iran and rarely found; see

has already been made of the early 13th century frontispiece of the *Kitāb al-aḡānī* manuscript in Istanbul with the two female winged victory angels wearing a style of clothing similar to those worn by the centrally-placed ruler and his attendants surrounding him. The depiction of the two recording angels in the 1280 *ʿAḡāʿib al-mahlūqāt* of al-Qazwīnī (Bayerische Staatsliche Bibliothek, Munich, Arab 464 fol. 36r.) also suggests a heavy reliance on courtly garments with both Munkat and Nakat wearing turbans with, among the folds, a small calligraphic ornamental square and dressed in voluminous robes with *ṭirāz* bands on the dropped shoulder line, in the fashion of the then-defunct ʿAbbāsīd court bureaucrat or member of the prosperous bourgeoisie⁴. The honorific connotations of the *ṭirāz* band are well-known and need no further clarification in this argument⁵. But the depiction of the garment folds has suggested to some that the artist was thinking particularly of a moiré silk; this effect of a 'watered' textile was produced not by a specialist weave but by passing the finished cloth through heated corrugated rollers, so causing expansion and contraction of the yarn or filament. Such mechanism was described in connection with goat-hair mohair processing in Ankara (Angora) by both the mid-16th century Habsburg ambassador, Busbecq, and his travelling companion, Dernschwam⁶, and similar equipment is still employed in at least one silk-workshop operating in Margilan, Ferghana Valley (Uzbekistan) as seen by this writer. One royal Ottoman garment, said to have been the property of Selim I (d. 1520), has survived⁷ and it is known that such mohair-silk mixture cloth was greatly admired and exported to Northern Europe, eventually giving its European name 'grosgrain' to the English navy's daily ration of rum (Andersen 1989:164). With this particular image, however, I agree with those scholars who argue that the artist drew his inspiration from established conventions of drapery representation as employed in contemporary Byzantine

Whitworth 1976:55. The most usual way of obtaining a green colour, before the introduction of synthetic dyes in the second half of the 19th century from Europe into the Middle East, was to double-dye the selected fabric, firstly in blue, usually indigo, and then in yellow. This meant production costs in terms of time, labour and ingredient were doubled and thus reflected in the final wholesale price.

⁴ Certainly their apparel shows no similarity to Mongol court dress as depicted in some manuscripts, metalwork and ceramics, and yet this manuscript was produced over twenty years after the Mongol capture of the Abbasid capital, Baghdad. The angels' dress is not modelled on that of an Abbasid theologian, but the closest parallel may be found in the apparel of male listeners to a theological oration as depicted in the 1237ms. *Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, Iraq (BN, Arabe 5847, fol.58v).

⁵ The most informative study on *ṭirāz* is Golombek & Gervers 1977. A number of calligraphic ornamental squares, generally embroidered with gold thread or painted, presumed to have once been part of turban cloths are within the Textile Museum collection, Washington DC. (inv. 73.389, 73.52; 73.612); see Kuhnel 1952:L1.

⁶ French 1972:242-243; see also Babinger 1923:196-197.

⁷ It is held in the Costume Section of the Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul, inv. no.13/39.

enamelled metalwork and paintings, rather than choosing to depict an actual contemporary fabric.

Contemporary Christian religious painting in the region or in neighbouring Byzantium may have influenced the Islamic artist in the projection of angelic wings and certain body postures but it appears that generally speaking the iconography employed especially in the Tīmūrid, Safawid and Ottoman manuscripts from the second quarter of the 15th century had its antecedents in the east rather than the west. If one looks at the positioning and posture of the angels in such works as the 1556-65 *Haft Awrang* of Ġāmī (FGA, inv. 66.12 fol.147a) (Fig. A⁸) and late 16th century Ottoman court manuscripts, angels descend from the heavens in the manner of Buddhist *apsaras* as represented in the numerous cave paintings of the Dunhuang complex (Fig. B) and other Buddhist cave shrines in today's Xinjiang province, China⁹. The swirling, flying ribbons of these *apsara* figures, themselves often shown half-naked and ambiguous in gender, are often echoed in the Islamic depictions, where they have been translated into long, floating, undulating sashes around the lower waist or falling from full arm-bows (e.g. Fig. C, G). As with the hair loop top-knot, these dress elements owe nothing to the Western world.

In the case of the 15th century Uighur *Mīrāg-nāmah* mentioned above, it takes no great leap of faith to accept that certain artistic conventions travelled from the eastern side of the Tarim Basin westwards into Central Asia and thence into the eastern provinces of Iran before and during the 15th century. However, the argument appears less tenable in case of 16th century Ottoman court painting, because of the vast geographical distances involved. Until that is, one considers the famous three albums (H. 2153, 2154, 2160) now in the Topkapi Saray Museum collection, Istanbul (hereinafter TSM)¹⁰. Elsewhere in this volume, Professor Sheila Blair discusses the influence of certain paintings within these albums on later work and I would argue that other images incorporated within the same bindings had similar impact on the work of court artists who adapted the 'foreign' imagery to demonstrate the 'other-world' of the Qur'anic heavens.

Among the pages of these albums there are several works derived from Chinese sources. It is unclear whether all or some are the work of Ottoman (or indeed Iranian) copyists or by Chinese hands although modern scholars are agreed these are

⁸ This and the other drawings accompanying this paper are the work of Andrew Smith, London. My grateful thanks to him.

⁹ These caves like those of Bezeklik and Khocho in the Tarim Basin region were frequented by the merchants and travellers undertaking the dangerous and lengthy trade routes (the so-called Silk Road) from the Chinese Empire into Central Asia or India and further west, from pre-Islamic times onwards.

¹⁰ These album paintings were the subject of intensive study by a number of scholars and their findings published in Grube & Sims 1985. Some articles from this colloquy were also printed in *Islamic Art*, I (1981).

not the products of the Imperial Yuan court ateliers¹¹. It is certain that one album (H.2154) was collated, presumably in court circles, for the enjoyment of Bahrām Mīrza (1517-49), youngest son of the Safawid shah, Ismā'īl (r. 1501-24) but it is very probable that a number of the pictures in this and especially in the other albums, H. 2153 and 2160, were produced many decades before and had exchanged hands through military conquest. It is argued that perhaps they were part of the spoils seized by the Safawid armies from the Qara Qoyunlu royal library, whose military forces had in turn looted the Tīmūrid palace library in Herat, Afghanistan, in 1458, but their turbulent history did not end there. The albums, however and whenever collated, were then entered into the Ottoman royal inventories during the reign of Sultan Selim I (r.1512-1520), perhaps as an indirect consequence of the victorious Battle of Chaldiran, Eastern Anatolia, in 1514¹², with the exception of the Bahrām Mīrza album (H.2154) which came into Ottoman hands later in that century, probably as a diplomatic gift. So a possible line of transmission and dissemination from the eastern provinces of Iran to the Ottoman capital of Istanbul may be argued.

Within these albums the three-quarter profile of the so-called 'moon'face, so fashionable in Tang art circles, appears again and again but of course this concept of facial beauty had already proved irresistible to Islamic artists for many centuries. Of more importance for this brief study, once again among these pages one sees the floating ribbons, the hair loop, and the multi-layered garment structure with various sleeve-lengths consisting of a light-weight loose tunic top caught at the waist and falling in a multiplicity of loose folds to the lower hips, and a fullish skirt. Both the tunic and skirt folds, and the long floating ribbons tied in large bows give an impression of graceful movement (Fig. D). In the depiction of angels in the Islamic Middle East this imagery proved to be remarkably influential, as seen in the frontispiece of 1437 *Hamsa* of Haḡu Kirmānī, Šīrāz (Arthur S Sackler Gallery, Washington D.C., Vever ms 586.0034), a early 16th century drawing 'Angel with a lute' attributed to Bihzād (TSM H. 2162, fol.7v), the 1534 *Hamsa* of Nizāmī, fol. 301b (H. 760), and the 1594-5 Ottoman manuscript *Siyar-i Nabī* (Fig. C).

That said, there was also a tendency among some Islamic court artists to associate their angelic depictions with contemporary court fashion, incorporating for instance the so-called Chinese 'cloud collar' and 'mandarin-square' as worn by the angels kneeling in adoration before Adam (Fig. E) in the 1417 Herat manuscript *Maḡma' at-*

¹¹ Watson 1985; Shatzman-Steinhardt (1985) argues that although there are strong elements of Tang dress, it is known that such imagery still had currency in late 13th/early 14th century China under Mongol/Yuan authority.

¹² Cagman 1981. Bahrām Mīrza was appointed governor of Hurāsān and Herat 1530-3, and thereafter was governor of the Western Caspian region, and of Hamadān; Soucek 1988.

tawārīḥ (TSM B. 282), and by Ġibrīl in the 1594-5 Ottoman manuscript, *Siyar-i Nabī* (TSM H. 1223, fol. 296a). Such dress decorations were introduced into the Islamic lands with the early 13th century Mongol conquering armies; one of the earliest textual references occurs in the dynastic history of the Chin Tatars (1115-1260) in a sumptuary edict restricting the use of the 'cloud collar' to members of the Imperial household in China¹³. Both collar and square were features of Īlhānid and Tīmūrid court dress in the Eastern Islamic regions, and a number of early 15th century *naqqāṣ* designs have survived (Berlin Staatsbibliothek, Diez album)¹⁴ as well as one applique collar (Kremlin Treasury, Moscow, inv.TK-3117) (Fig. F).

This important item has been published a number of times, but unfortunately with very little information, other than the dimensions, the green silk ground material¹⁵, embroidered in gold thread and coloured silks. And the published illustrations yield little more. No details are given as to the embroidery stitch/es employed; it is probable but not certain that the metal thread is held in place by couching, as may be seen in certain 16th century Ottoman royal 'honorific' kaftans (TSM 13/738, 13/739) where the 'basket-weave' technique gives the decoration a very textural appearance (Tezcan & Delibas 1986: pl. 87 and 86). It has not been possible to obtain details regarding the nature of the gold thread on the Kremlin piece: whether it is of actual gold or silver-gilt; foil-strip; or wrapped on a silk core, on animal substrate or on bark. As scholastic opinion is still divided as to whether this item is Tīmūrid produced in Central Asia or Ṣafawid emanating from Iran, such information could be vitally important in discussion. We know it was usual in the Islamic world to wrap metallic threads round silk core whereas in medieval Central Asia and China gold on animal substrate or mulberry bark was generally employed (Wardell 1987), and albeit a century or more later in date, the 1710 Ṣafawid court manual *Tadkīrat al-Mulūk* (Minorsky 1943:59) for instance carefully recorded the percentage of gold on silver (thread) permitted for honorific garments, according to various courtly ranks. It is probable that such cloud collars and indeed the 'squares' were not always embroidered separately from the garment construction, as with the Ottoman kaftan mentioned above and the Kremlin piece. Some manuscripts depictions, such as an illustration dated c. 1300 (TSM, album H.2152, fol.60b) of a Mongol

/Īlhānid ruler holding audience¹⁶, suggest that the panels were embroidered onto the fabric before tailoring, or perhaps the ornament was woven in at the time of actual fabric production; examples of both processes are known in the Imperial Chinese context (Vollmer 1981).

In both 16th century Ṣafawid and Ottoman depictions, the court artist employed another convention in dress detail to demonstrate the status of the heavenly messengers and attendants, that is by dressing the angels in the manner of high-ranking court officials with numerous horizontal rows of braiding down the front two garment panels (Fig. G). Such *çaprast*, made by tablet weaving, would have been immediately recognised by any court observer as an indication of rank and social status¹⁷.

Similarly the gold and silver decoration as featured sometimes on angelic dress, such as the robe of Ġibrīl bringing a sheep to save the sacrifice of Ismā'īl by Ibrāhīm in the 1583 *Zubdat at-tawārīḥ* (Turk ve Islam Museum, Istanbul, ms.1973), was probably inspired by contemporary Ottoman court robes. At least one royal robe, late 16th century, decorated with stamped silver dots survives (TSM 13/198¹⁸) but of course the artist could have been thinking of embroidered motifs. Perhaps the clearest evidence of a close relationship with contemporary court fabrics is found in an album painting dateable to the last quarter of the 16th century, presently in the Souvarar collection. The angel holding a rose (Fig. H) is depicted wearing a figured outer robe, perhaps of silk brocade or cut velvet pile, of similar patterning (but not tailoring) to the outer garment worn by Sir Robert Sherley in the 1622 Van Dyck portrait (Petworth House, UK), and an early 17th century fragment in the David Collection, Copenhagen (inv.13/1991) (Folsach & Keblow Bernsted 1993:115). The artist has given his angel undertrousers of diagonal-striped fabric but again the exact textile material and process are ambiguous. It is possible that the artist was depicting hand-blocked printed cotton, as briefly described by 17th century European travellers¹⁹, for the fabric ground is shown as (bleached) white. However, fragments of Ṣafawid silk brocade are known with similar broad diagonal stripes featuring floral motifs²⁰ as are, of course, numerous examples of Qāğar trouser ends of cotton

¹³ Cammann 1963:165-166; see also Wittfogel 1949:236, and Bretschneider 1910: II, 195.

¹⁴ Pages from the Diez album are illustrated in Lentz & Lowry 1989 (catalogue entries 90, 95-97) where they are assigned a dating from 1400-1450; Ipsiroglu (1964: pl XXX-XXXV) dated these drawings to the 14th century.

¹⁵ The detail that the ground fabric is green in colour is given in Pope 1938-39: pl.1017. The catalogue entry (no. 116) in Lentz & Lowry 1989 is even less informative.

¹⁶ The robe of the attendant, bottom left with his back to the viewer, appears to have a central seam going through the decorated 'square'; see Ipsiroglu 1971: pl. 23.

¹⁷ As in the 1610 *Fal-nāmah* (TSM, H.1703, fol.7r); see also the 1594-5 *Siyar-i Nabī* (TSM, H.1223, fol.98b) depicting 'Alī.

¹⁸ The garment is associated with Sultan Murad III, but the cut of the neckline strongly suggests it was a woman's robe.

¹⁹ For example, Tavernier 1682: I, 567, Chardin 1711: IV, 263-264.

²⁰ E.g. Victoria & Albert Museum, T.963-1889.

completely covered in small slanted stitch embroidery in similar pattern compositions²¹.

If the Şafawid artist depicted such heavenly beings in the styling and fabrics of a contemporary courtier, his Qāğar counterpart preferred to show angels more in the role of court servant, dressed accordingly literally with their sleeves rolled up ready to attend and wait upon the important characters in the pictorial composition. Only their wings identify them as heavenly beings, and their gender is no longer in question; male angels are attired in the manner of male servants, the female beings as female.

In more recent decades, the artist in the Islamic Republic of Iran has turned to Western art for an appropriate model. The works of early Renaissance and also Baroque artists have been avidly studied especially by those commissioned to execute public art and graphics, both in terms of composition and figural treatment. At the same time, the official endorsement of the religious paintings of Mahmoud Farshchian, who is clearly strongly influenced by certain 19th century European works, which display an emphasis on drapery and romanticist detail, while retaining the 'classic' Persian painting conventions regarding composition, is encouraging other younger artists to explore these ideas. It does indeed appear that instead of looking east for a way of signifying a sense of the heavenly splendour of an ex-terrestrial world, which had been the established courtly convention for centuries, today's Iranian artists' feels of this heavenly beneficence can be best conveyed by employing occidental iconography.

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²¹ E.g. Victoria & Albert Museum, T.509-1889.



Fig. A. after detail from 'The Gnostic has a vision of angels...' *Haft Awrang* of Ġāmī, Iran 1556-65, FGA, inv. 66.12, fol. 147a; M. Shreve Simpson, Sultan Ibrahim Mirza's *Haft Awrang*., FGA 1997, p.148.



Fig. B. after detail from Cave 321, early Tang period, Dunhuang; R. Whitfield & S. Otsuka, *Dunhuang, caves of the singing sands*, London 1995, pl.92



Fig. C. after detail from 'Muhammad & Ğibril' *Siyar-i Nabî*, Ottoman 1594-5, TSM, Istanbul, H.1223, fol. 296a; Zeren Tanındı, *Siyer-i Nebî*, Istanbul 1984



Fig. D. after TSM, Istanbul, H.2153 fol.170r; *Islamic Art* 1 (1981)

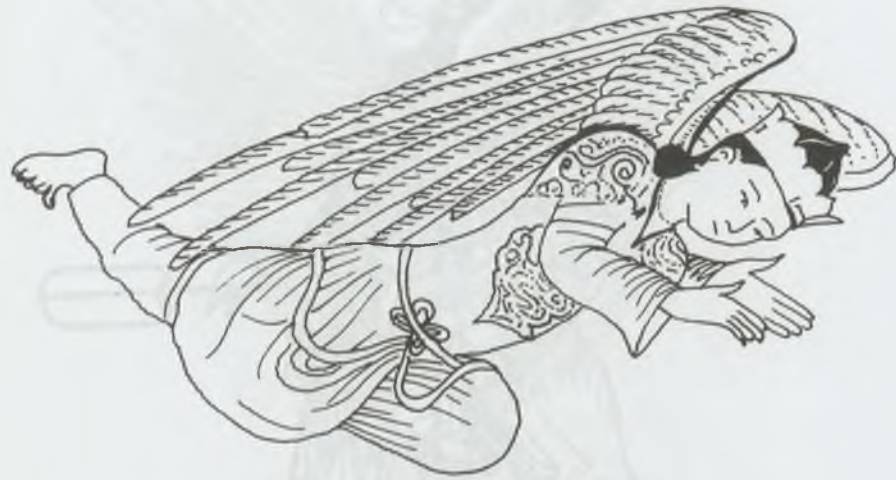


Fig. E. after detail from *Hafiz-i Abru Mağma' al-Tawāriḥ*, Herāt c. 1417, TSM B.282 fol.16a

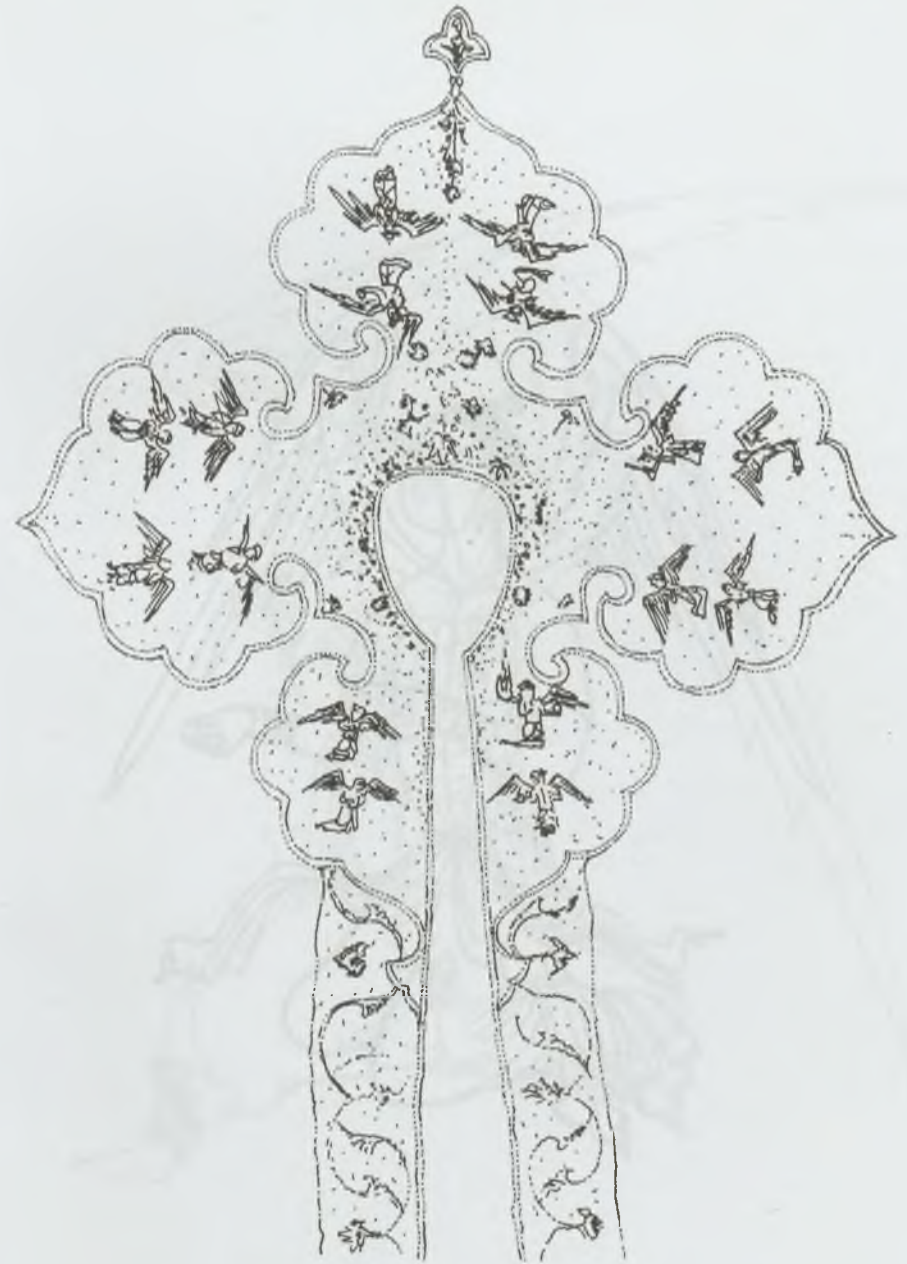


Fig. F. after Pope 1981, XI, pl.1017



Fig. G. after detail from ms. *Haft Awrang* of Ġāmī, Iran 1556-65, FGA 46.12 fol.188a; M Shreve Simpson *op.cit.*



Fig. H. after A. Souvadar *Art of the Persian Courts*, New York, 1992, item 101.

ASCENDING TO HEAVEN
FOURTEENTH-CENTURY ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE PROPHET'S *MĪRĀĠ*

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Scenes illustrating the *mīrāġ*, the Prophet's ascension to heaven, are some of the most glorious in Persian painting. Single scenes illustrating the subject are found in various types of literature, ranging from such Persian classics as Nizāmī's *Hamsa* to popular devotional works about the Prophet's life such as the *Qišaṣ al-anbiyā'* (Tales of the Prophet) and biographies of his life such as the *Siyar an-nabī*. In all these cases, the ascension is merely one of many illustrations, but in addition there were at least two illustrated manuscripts devoted entirely to the subject of the Prophet's ascension. Called *Mīrāġnāma* or Book of Ascension, these works have multiple paintings illustrating several incidents of the journey. The more famous of the two manuscripts, transcribed in Uighur script, was made in the Tīmūrid period¹. The other illustrated manuscript was made a century earlier under the Īlhānids, Mongol rulers of Iran from 1256 to 1353. This essay surveys the illustrations from the Īlhānid copy and shows how the topic of the Prophet's ascension to Heaven developed in the fourteenth century from a single incident in the Prophet's life to an independent hagiography with multiple, large illustrations that served as models for the next several centuries.

Individual scenes depicting the Prophet enthroned are already included in some of the first illustrated manuscripts known from the Īlhānid period, and the story of the Prophet's life was incorporated into several illustrated histories². The earliest was the *Gāmi' at-tawārīh*, the world history made for the Īlhānid vizier Raṣīd ad-Dīn. This magnum opus was divided into several volumes: the first covered the history of the Mongols, the second treated the non-Mongol peoples of Eurasia, and the third was a geographical treatise that has not survived³. The Prophet's life was part of the second part of the second volume. The text survives in one of the earliest manuscripts of the world history, an Arabic copy made under the auspices of the vizier himself in 714/1314-15 and now divided between Edinburgh University Library and

¹ The manuscript was published by Marie-Rose Séguy (1977).

² See Soucek 1988.

³ See Raṣīd ad-Dīn, *Gāmi'* vii-ix for a convenient overview of the organization of this complex work.

the Khalili collection in London⁴. The story of the Prophet's life originally comprised some 30 folios, with 15 illustrations. The section on the Prophet's ascension occupies just over two pages, including one illustration (fig. 1). It is the earliest known illustration of the subject to survive.

Like many illustrations in this section of the manuscript, the painting is a narrow strip (11 x 25 cms), which occupies the top third of the large page, the equivalent of 12 of the 35 lines of the text block that measures 37 by 25 cms. The paragraph of text on the page before the illustration summarizes the story of the Prophet's ascension. It ends by mentioning the angel who asks the Prophet to choose among three gold cups containing milk, water, and wine. The copyist, perhaps with the concordance of the author and patron who supervised transcription of this manuscript, clearly wanted this particular incident to be illustrated, for when transcribing the preceding text, he narrowed the number of words per line, tapering the text into a V-shape that ends with the very words describing the three cups. The painting then falls at the top of the facing page, with the line of text just below the painting describing how the Prophet eschews the last two choices, opting for milk.

The painter's simple composition adheres literally to the text. On the right an angel stands on a rainbow while emerging through a pair of doors representing the gates of Paradise. In the centre a second angel offers a gold bowl, evidently the one filled with milk. To the left is the Prophet, astride his miraculous steed Burāq. While the tripartite composition is relatively standard, the iconography is not. Burāq is here depicted with a spotted body, human arms, a human (and crowned) head holding a book, presumably the Qur'an, and a human-headed tail holding a shield and sword. The angels, who resemble those in another scene depicting the Birth of Muḥammad (Edinburgh 29), wear strapless gowns that drape from a tied bodice and sprout wings that, unusually, grow along the whole length of their arms.

The unusual iconography suggests that the painter borrowed these figures, without complete understanding, from other painterly traditions, both eastern and western. The unusual gowns, for example, may be derived from Bodhisattvas and other figures in the Buddhist tradition, though the immediate source of the imagery is not known. Contemporary Christian manuscripts offer another rich source of imagery, and many other compositions in Rašīd ad-Dīn's world history that illustrate Muḥammad's life were adapted from Christian iconography. Sir Thomas Arnold showed that the depiction of Muḥammad's birth was adapted from a Nativity, with the three magi transposed into three waiting women and Joseph transformed in the Prophet's uncle 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (Arnold 1928:99 and pl. XXIII).

⁴ See Blair (1995) for a reconstruction of the original manuscript. The Edinburgh section has also been published by David Talbot Rice (1976), and the illustrations from the Khalili portion, once in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society, have been published by Gray (1978).

Priscilla Soucek went one step further, showing how both the composition and iconography of two other scenes from the Prophet's life – his encounter with the monk Bahira (Edinburgh 30) and his conquest of the Banū n-Naḍīr (Khalili Collection) – were adapted from two scenes – The Baptism of Christ and the Entry into Jerusalem – in a manuscript of the Gospels made in 1294 and now in the Matenadaran Library in Erevan. Copied by Yakob and illustrated by Khach'er at the Argelan Monastery in Berkri for a couple, Khelok and Pokhan, and their two sons Prosh and T'uma, this manuscript is the earliest of a group produced in the Vaspurakan region of Greater Armenia (Soucek 1998). Unusual features of Burāq and the angels may also have been borrowed from Armenian Christian manuscripts locally available in Tabriz in the early fourteenth century, as religious difference was clearly no bar to iconographic pilfering. The unusual, and probably borrowed, iconography suggests furthermore that the ascension of Muḥammad in the 714/1314-15 copy of Rašīd ad-Dīn's *Gāmi' at-tawārīḥ* is not only the first version of the scene to survive, but one of the earliest made.

By the next generation, Ilhānid painters were called upon to illustrate many scenes of the Prophet's ascension within a whole manuscript devoted to the subject. Unfortunately this manuscript has been dismembered and the text lost, but some of the illustrations were mounted in an album (Istanbul, Topkapi Library H2154) that was put together in 951/1544 by the Ṣafawid chronicler and librarian Dust Muḥammad for Bahrām Mīrzā, brother of the Ṣafawid šāh Tahmasp. Dust Muḥammad included eleven illustrations (or parts of them), pasted on eight of the 149 folios in the album (31b, 42a-b, 61a-b, 62a, 107a, and 121a)⁵.

In addition to the full-page paintings, three pages contain scenes pasted together. For example, the upper parts of folios 61a and 121a depict scenes of Muḥammad ascending on the back of an angel, while the bottom parts can be reassembled to illustrate the scene of the Muḥammad at the tree of paradise. Likewise the top part of folio 121a can be joined to a strip of waves taken from another folio, 62a, and reversed. Clearly Dust Muḥammad was not above cutting up images to make them fill the pages of his album.

In four cases (fols. 31b, 42a, 61b, and 121a) Dust Muḥammad added labels to the illustrations, identifying them as the work of Aḥmad-i Mūsā. The Ṣafawid chronicler told us more about this artist in the preface written to accompany the illustrations in the album⁶. Although some authors have viewed this historical preface as apocry-

⁵ Ettinghausen (1957) identified the eleven scenes: fol. 31b: Muḥammad and Gabriel before a big angel; fol. 42a: Gabriel carrying Muḥammad; fol. 42b: Flight over the mountains; fol. 61a (top): Muḥammad at the Gates of Paradise and (bottom): Tree of Paradise; fol. 61b: cock; fol. 62a (top) waves and (bottom): bowls offered to Muḥammad; fol. 107a: Conquest of a city; fol. 121a (top): Flight over waves and (bottom): Tree of Paradise.

⁶ Edited and translated by Thackston 2001:12-13.

phal, close scrutiny of the albums shows that preface and illustrations form a unified whole, like a collection of threads or chains meant to illustrate a "realm of collectedness" (Roxburgh 1996). Preface and illustrations were meant to be examined together, and the preface helps to explain the pictures.

In the preface recounting the history of calligraphy and painting, Dust Muhammad added details about the artist Ahmad-i Mūsā that help to localize the paintings and their manuscript. Ahmad, according to Dust Muhammad, learned the art of painting from his father Mūsā and worked during the reign of the Īlhānid ruler Abū Sa'īd (r. 1317-35), illustrating four manuscripts that passed to the royal Tīmūrid library owned by Sultan Husayn Mirzā, ruler of Herāt from 1469 to 1506. The manuscripts must then have passed to the royal Safawid library where they were available for Dust Muhammad to peruse and even extract for his album. One of the four manuscripts was a *Mi'rāgnāma* copied by Mawlānā 'Abdallāh Sayrafī. One of the two most famous followers in the second generation after Yāqūt al-Musta'simī, this calligrapher worked in Baghdad and Tabrīz from 1310 to 1344 (Blair). Dust Muhammad's preface thus allows us to identify these paintings as coming from a royal copy of the *Mi'rāgnāma* made in one of the Īlhānid capitals between 1317 and 1335.

Dust Muhammad also praised the painter Ahmad-i Mūsā as a master who "lifted the veil from the face of depiction, and invented the [style of] depiction that is now current," that is, current in the early sixteenth century. Stylistic analysis confirms Dust Muhammad's identification of Ahmad-i Mūsā's seminal role. Like the paintings in the Arabic copy of Rašīd ad-dīn's *Ġāmi' at-tawārīḥ*, the paintings in the *Mi'rāgnāma* are very wide (they all measure some 23-24 cms wide, on the same order as those in the *Ġāmi' at-tawārīḥ*). In contrast to the earlier paintings, however, they are very much taller, virtually the same size as the entire text block in the earlier history. They may well have been full-page images. The enlarged space provided for much larger figures, with a far greater emotional impact. It also allowed Ahmad-i Mūsā to create far more exciting compositions. They move beyond the simple tripartite arrangements typical of the *Ġāmi' at-tawārīḥ* and develop three-dimensional landscape space using foreshortening and repoussoir figures.

We can see these innovations in the painting from fol. 62a of Bahrām Mīrzā's album (fig. 2). Pasted upside down at the top is the strip with waves that formed part of another painting with Muhammad's flight. The rest of the page, measuring 30 by 25 cms, shows Muhammad sitting in a richly decorated building with a *mibrāb* behind him. Just behind him to the right in the painting is another figure almost as large as the Prophet and dressed in green and orange. To the left, a pair of kneeling angels offer the Prophet golden cups. Below, Burāq – the only time he is shown in these album paintings – is depicted with pink face and gold crown, gray elephant ears, and a reddish body outfitted with a gold saddle. Ettinghausen identified the scene as depicting the account of the seventh heaven in which angels offer

Muhammad three cups. It is thus virtually the same scene shown in the *Ġāmi' at-tawārīḥ*.

The biggest difference between the two illustrations of the same subject is the setting and the sense of space. Ahmad-i Mūsā set the scene in a building supported on four columns of gray marble. The receding lines of the arches supporting the dome suggest that the building was octagonal, and it may well have been intended to represent the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. Muhammad is said to have ascended from Bayt al-Maqdis, and this city was often epitomized by the Dome of the Rock, as in a contemporary painting from a manuscript of al-Bīrūnī's *Ātār al-bāqiya* transcribed in 707/1307.

Ahmad-i Mūsā also elaborated the action in the foreground, setting the audience in a circle seen from the back. This convention brings the viewer into the painting, which becomes a window into space. Typical of Italian painting of the Quattrocento, it occurs already in Persian paintings made at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Indeed, it is quite possible that Ahmad-i Mūsā had in front of him in the royal Īlhānid library the Arabic copy of Rašīd ad-Dīn's *Ġāmi' at-tawārīḥ*, for the circular group appears there in another painting illustrating the Prophet's life, the consultation of the Qurayš (Edinburgh 35). This device was also incorporated into paintings in other royal Persian manuscripts made at this time, such as a scene of the mourning over the bier of Alexander from the Great Mongol *Šāhnāma* made in the 1330s (Grabar & Blair 1980: no. 39).

Earlier Persian manuscripts were not the only sources of inspiration for Ahmad-i Mūsā. He, like the painters of the *Ġāmi' at-tawārīḥ*, also looked to Christian manuscripts, finding in their illustrations models, for example, for his depiction of the angels. The angels in the *Mi'rāgnāma*, unlike those in Rašīd ad-Dīn's *Compendium of Chronicles*, wear long-sleeved robes and have large wings striped in red and blue (fig. 3). They are much closer to the angels in contemporary Armenian manuscripts, such as a scene of the Annunciation (fig. 4) from a relatively unknown copy of the Gospels dated 1330 and now in Isfahan (DerNersessian & Mekhitarian 1986: 196 and fig. 51). Copied by Kirakos, *vardapet* of Erzincan, at the monastery of Djghavna, it was illustrated by one Kirakos of Tabrīz, who signed his name under the feet of the Virgin. The dedication mentions the merchant prince Vegen, who became religious and built, along with his brother Prince Pitchar, churches devoted to the Virgin and the convent of Deghdzanavank. It is not necessary that this small (23 x 16 cm.) manuscript be the exact model that Ahmad-i Mūsā used; rather the 1330 Gospel now in Isfahan is typical of the school of Gladzor in the province of Siunik in Greater Armenia, best known from the splendid copy of the Gospels made there in the opening decade of the early fourteenth century and now in Los Angeles

⁷ Colour reproduction in Gray 1961:27.

(Mathews & Wieck 1994:no. 36; Mathews & Taylor 2001). The gilt ground and type of flying winged figures used by Aḥmad-i Mūsā also occur in pages from another large Gospel book made by T'oros the Deacon at Tabrīz in 1311 (Mathews & Taylor 2001:no. 31). This Gospel book remained intact in the Church of the Holy Mother of God in Tabrīz until 1906. Many Armenian manuscripts were therefore available in Tabrīz, and Muslim painters like Aḥmad-i Mūsā must have consulted them, continuing to find inspiration for their scenes of Muḥammad's life from contemporary Christian gospels.

In addition to style, one needs to consider the function of the Īlhānid manuscript of the *Mi'rāgnāma*. What sort of text did these paintings illustrate? We are certainly dealing not with illustrations to a history, as was the case with the ascension scene in Rašīd ad-Dīn's *Compendium of Chronicles*, but with a full devotional text. Ettinghausen, who studied the album paintings closely, showed that they did not fit either the Arabic version of the *Mi'rāgnāma*, now lost but known from early Western translations, or the Eastern Turkish text used in fifteenth century. This is clear, for example, from the scene of the celestial cock (fig. 5). It depicts Muḥammad, under the guidance of a crowned angel, probably the Archangel Gabriel, observing an angelic choir gigantic white cock standing on a golden dais. This angel was in charge of counting the hours of the day and night in order to announce the hours of prayer and pronounce the *tasbīḥ*, which was then repeated by roosters around the world. None of the written versions mentions a choir. Furthermore, the cock was usually positioned between the earth and the throne of God, but here apparently stands on a polygonal dias.

The scenario becomes more mysterious when we consider the final image from this manuscript that was included in the album H2154 (fig. 6). To judge from style, iconography, and composition, such as the winged angel and the audience in the foreground seen from the back, it belongs to the same manuscript of the *Mi'rāgnāma*, but what scene it illustrates is unclear. It shows an angel presenting a city to a figure seated on a rug, surely to be identified the Prophet Muḥammad as he is surrounded by a mandorla. But who are the two figures to his left, to whom he is gesturing? And who are the two further figures standing at the lower right? The composition and figures recall the scene of Muḥammad appointing ʿAlī his successor at Ġadīr Ḥumm, shown in the manuscript of al-Bīrūnī's *Ātār al-bāqiya* made in 1307, probably at Tabrīz⁸. This would suggest that the two seated figures represent ʿAlī and Ḥusayn. It might further imply that the mysterious figure wearing a green robe and sitting

⁸ Illustrated and analyzed in Soucek 1975:103-165 and Hillenbrand 2000: 129-146.

next to Muḥammad when he is offered the bowls (fig. 2) is also ʿAlī, who is sometimes said to have accompanied Muḥammad on his nocturnal journey⁹.

And what city is being depicted? It is polygonal, walled, bisected by three rivers, and dotted with three large buildings with minarets. Ettinghausen argued that the presence of a river excluded Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, the three cities most often associated with the Prophet. The riparian view, by contrast, makes possible an identification of Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, and Constantinople, and on the basis of the curved course of the river and the shape of the minarets, Ettinghausen, following a suggestion put forward by Helmut Ritter, opted for the Constantinople, arguing that the scene represented an apocalyptic vision of the forthcoming conquest of the mighty city long-coveted by Muslims.

This argument is not convincing. The conquest of Constantinople did not loom large in the Īlhānid mentality. To the contrary, the Īlhānids had diplomatic relations with the Byzantines, and the Īlhānid ruler Abaqa (r. 1265-80) even married an illegitimate Paleologue prince, Maria Despina. Abaqa's grandson, who reigned as Sultan Ulḡaytu, was baptized Nicholas and raised a Christian before he converted to various sects of Islam.

Furthermore, the action of offering the city does not necessarily imply conquest, but rather presentation, and an alternative explanation for the scene is the presentation of Sultāniyya, the new capital founded by Sultan Ulḡaytu¹⁰. The Īlhānids, like the Yuan dynasty in China, founded their own imperial cities: the one established by Ulḡaytu in the 1315s has mostly disappeared, but its layout can be reconstructed from texts: the inner city there was polygonal, walled, bisected by a river, and had at least three major building complexes (Blair 1986), as shown in the view by the sixteenth-century Ottoman chronicler Maṭrakçı Naṣūḥ¹¹. This illustration too uses an architectural shorthand in which conventional features are repeated and stylized, but many of the topographical elements are the same in both images. Incorporating a depiction of the newly-founded capital as a gift presented to Muḥammad would symbolize the Īlhānids' submission to Islam. Though Ġazan had officially declared his allegiance in 1295, the Mongol court was slower to do so and many amīrs did not convert until the time of Ulḡaytu's son Abū Saʿīd, the first of the Īlhānids to be raised a Muslim.

Contemporary Christian art, both from Byzantium and Armenia, can once again offer sources and parallels for the subject of a donor presenting a model of his foundation. Founders of churches and monasteries are often shown offering a model

⁹ Ettinghausen suggested the figure was Moses, whom the Prophet had met just before he was offered the cups in the European version of the story, but this suggestion does not seem likely to me.

¹⁰ I made this suggestion in Blair 1987:89.

¹¹ Colour reproduction in Blair & Bloom 1994:fig. 3.

of their work to an enthroned Christ or the Virgin and Child. Theodore Metochites, leading statesman at the Paleologue court who rebuilt the church of the Monastery of the Chora between 1315 and 1320, for example, is depicted this way in the mosaic set over the door leading from the inner narthex to the nave (fig. 7) (Underwood 1966: II, 26). Armenian churches often had the donor(s) sculpted in relief on the façade, and the Virgin and child are often depicted seated on a fringed rug, as the Prophet is shown here (Manuelian 1996). In the Īlhānid interpretation of the scene, the single building has been transposed into a city, and the Virgin and child transposed into Muḥammad and his family.

We do not have to imagine that Aḥmad-i Mūsā had been to Constantinople or Armenia to see such buildings. Portable objects provided better means for the transferal of iconography. These included not only books, but liturgical objects and even portable architecture. Maria Despina's dowry, for example, included a tent intended for use as a church. In 1301, during the reign of Ulḡaytu, a church was dedicated to St. John the Baptist in Marāḡa. We have no idea what sort of decoration it had, but we can imagine that, even if executed by Īlhānid craftsmen in the vernacular materials of brick and stucco, it must have had painted decoration derived from Christian iconography.

In sum, then, the scenes of Muḥammad's ascension from a copy of a *Mi'rāḡnāma* incorporated into Album H2154 in Istanbul open a window into the fascinating pot-pourri of religious life in Īlhānid times. The paintings attest to the increasingly fervent veneration of Muḥammad, and possibly his family, in the early fourteenth century. They also show the importance of Christian sources when Muslim artists were called upon to develop a new iconography to illustrate scenes that had apparently not been illustrated before in the Muslim tradition. As Ettinghausen pointed out, "Thus, just as Dante's *Divina Commedia* initiates modern Italian and even all Western literature, so do this Persian manuscript and the other work of the master called Aḥmad-i Mūsā stand at the beginning of matured Persian painting and through it also of Turkish and Mughal miniatures. The historical parallel goes even further, because just as Dante was quite possibly influenced by Muslim ideas, so was Aḥmad-i Mūsā in turn stimulated by foreign concepts, Chinese and Western ones"¹². Similarly, in the fifteenth century when artists at the court of Tīmūrid court of Šāh Ruḡ wanted to illustrate another copy of the *Mi'rāḡnāma*, they turned to outside sources, stimulated this time by models from Central Asia and beyond.

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¹² Ettinghausen 1957:378. The role of Chinese elements is a separate subject that needs to be pursued.

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Fig. 1. "The Prophet's Ascension" from a copy of Rašīd ad-Dīn's *Ġāmi' at-tawārīh*, made in 714/1314-15 probably at Tabriz. Edinburgh University Library, Arab ms. 20, no. 36



Fig. 2. "The bowls offered to Muhammad in heaven" from a copy of the *Mirāgnāma* copied by ʿAbdallāh Sayrafī, probably at Tabriz ca. 1330, and later mounted in an album compiled by the Safawid librarian Dust Muḥammad in 951/1544. Istanbul, Topkapı Library H2154, fol. 62a



Fig. 3. "Flight over the Mountains" from the same ms as Fig. 2, Istanbul, Topkapı Library H2154, fol. 42b



Fig. 4. "Annunciation" from an Armenian copy of the Gospels dated 1330. Isfahan, Holy Saviour's Cathedral, New Julfa, ms 47(43)



Fig. 5. "The Celestial Cock" from the same ms as Fig. 2, Istanbul, Topkapi Library H2154, fol. 61b



Fig. 6. "Presentation of a city" from the same ms as Fig. 2, Istanbul, Topkapi Library H2154, fol. 107a



Fig. 7. Theodore Metochites presenting his church to the Virgin, mosaic set over the door in the church of the Monastery of the Chora, Istanbul

PARADISE AS A GARDEN, THE GARDEN AS GARDEN

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The image of the earthly garden as a foretaste of paradise is one of the strongest and most enduring in the study of Islamic culture. Over the years countless authors have evoked the idea of the verdant garden, with its sensual pleasures of beautiful design, fragrant flowers, luscious fruits, playing fountains and cooling shade (fig. 1), as a counterpart to the delights the believer will encounter in the hereafter. In the last few decades several books have been written on the subject, including a volume of essays presented at a 1976 conference held at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC. (Ettinghausen 1976). This was soon followed by *Paradise as a Garden*, a volume on the history of the garden in Persia and Mughal India (Moynihan 1980), as well as a number of museum exhibitions, including one, *Arabesques et jardins du paradis*, at the Louvre in Paris in 1989 (Bernus Taylor 1989) and another, *Die Gärten des Islam*, at the Linden Museum, Stuttgart, in 1993, which included a little bit of everything, from Islamic gardens to courtly arts, to popular arts of Africa and Indonesia (Forkl *et al.* 1993). In the United States, a 1991-92 travelling exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue, which Sheila Blair and I edited, *Images of Paradise in Islamic Art* (Blair & Bloom 1991). This exhibition evolved from the premise that an Ottoman fountain-surround from Diyarbekir, now in the Hood Museum of Art, and decorated with floral sprays and blossoms "symbolized the heavenly garden and the promise of paradise as a reward for the donor who made this gift to the community." Walter Denny, the organizer of the exhibition, suggested that many of the common themes in Islamic art, not only vegetal and floral motifs but also arched panels, were actually metaphors for Paradise and the gates leading to it (Denny 1991). Perhaps the most recent example is the 1999-2000 exhibition of Islamic art in Amsterdam, *Earthly Beauty, Heavenly Art*, which displayed many Islamic textiles, metalwares, ceramics, manuscripts, woodcarvings, ivories, rock crystals, gold jewelry, enamels, and oil paintings from a wide variety of sources under the rubric "gardens and paradise" (Piotrovsky 1999).

There is no reason to believe that the flood of books and exhibitions on this popular theme will cease, but it is worthwhile reexamining the basis for this interpretation of the earthly garden as a metaphor for paradise in Islamic culture. Already it has also met with some scepticism, ranging from the mild to the sharp (Baer 1998:95; Allen 1993). According to Terry Allen, "when supplying a symbolic interpretation [of a work of art] one must either justify it for the particular monument at hand or argue that symbolic significance is common in some wider group of monuments to which it belongs, and thus to be expected"

(Allen 1993:3). Oddly enough, because this interpretation is so pervasive, few if any scholars have bothered to show by exactly what means garden and plant motifs have assumed specifically paradisaical meanings in Islamic civilization. Lacking such interpretations, the wholesale interpretation of the Islamic garden from Spain to India, from the Umayyads to the present, is therefore something of a methodological fallacy, for the image of the garden in the afterlife owes as much to much older Near Eastern, Jewish and Christian conceptions of Eden and Heaven as it does to the Qur'ān. Furthermore, despite conventional wisdom, the Qur'ān did not provide the layout of the typical Islamic garden, whose four-fold plan also derives from much older Near Eastern, classical and late antique garden traditions in the regions where Islam appeared and spread. In short, although the association of gardens and paradise is undeniable in some later Islamic art, not all Islamic gardens were meant to evoke paradise. Nor were all the plant and flower motifs in Islamic art meant to evoke the hereafter. Indeed they often had other important meanings to express, and it is worthwhile looking for them.

Images of Paradise

The notion of the afterlife as taking place in a verdant garden seems such a natural notion in Western culture that is difficult to imagine the hereafter somewhere else. In Babylonian creation literature, the Edenic "Dilmun" is a rich and fertile place, where rich fields and farms are fed by sweet waters, and frailty, illness and affliction are absent. In ancient Egypt, the beatified awaited an afterlife in a rich and scenic land, with pools of *kha*-birds and *ro*-fowl, where the god Re "sails with the breeze" and the barley grows immensely tall and fruitful (Garthwaite 1991: 15). Perhaps the most familiar of these garden settings is the Eden of the Hebrew Bible, where Adam and Eve begin life in a garden ... in the east [with] every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.... A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates (Genesis 2:9-14).

From early times this earthly garden of Eden, which seems to have been located somewhere in Mesopotamia – to judge from the reference to the Tigris and Euphrates, was often conflated with the heavenly paradise, which was understood as the abode of God and the blessed in the afterlife. This locality was initially imagined as a terrestrial or celestial mountain, as in I Kings 20: 23, 28 or Ezekiel 28: 12-19, respectively, but it eventually came to be thought of as a garden, probably because the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew

Bible, used the word *paradeisos* to translate the Hebrew word *pardes* (park, grove) to refer both to the earthly "garden" of Eden as well as to the heavenly abode of the afterlife (*EB* XX, 751–752, s.v. "Paradise"). The Christian Bible largely adopted Hebrew accounts of paradise, for God had placed Adam in the first Eden and would return his descendants in redemption to the heavenly paradise. Christian theologians such as St Augustine used materialistic terms to depict heaven in his *City of God* but said that man was incapable of comprehending its actual physical situation (Strayer IX, 395–398, s.v. "Paradise, Western concept of").

In the Qur'ān, the nature of the place of the afterlife is defined principally by what it is not, i.e. the Fire, and what it does not have, i.e. a mixture in time of life, death, sickness, labour, obedience, love, pleasure and pain. The Qur'ānic notion that the afterlife takes place in a garden is expressed more than 130 times in the Qur'ān (Reinhart 1991:15–17). In chapter 2:25, for example, we read of "gardens (*ganna*) under which rivers flow, and where, whensoever they are provided with fruits therefrom." In chapter 47:15 the semblance of Paradise promised to the pious and devout [is that of a garden] with streams of water that will not go rank, and rivers of milk whose taste will not undergo a change, and rivers of wine delectable to drinkers, and streams of purified honey, and fruits of every kind in them, and forgiveness of their lord. Chapter 51 states that the God-fearing shall be among gardens and fountains," an image more fully expressed in Chapter 76, verses 5-6 and 12-22:

"Surely the pious shall drink of a cup whose mixture is camphor,
a fountain whereat drink the servants of God,
making it to gush forth plenteously...
... and recompensed them for their patience with a garden, and silk;
therein they shall recline upon couches
therein they shall see neither sun nor bitter cold
near them shall be its shades, and its clusters hand meekly down
and there shall be passed around them vessels of silver, and goblets of crystal,
crystal of silver that they have measured very exactly.
And therein they shall be given to drink a cup whose mixture is ginger,
therein a fountain whose name is Salsabil..."

Putting all these images together, commentators generally imagine paradise as a garden with a central fountain from which issue rivers of water, milk, wine, and honey. This image was, not surprisingly conflated with the four-fold cross-axial plan popular for gardens in many Islamic lands, although the Qur'ānic text actually speaks of many rivers of each of the four liquids. Sometimes, as in a long passage (K55:35-78), paradise is described as two gardens with two fountains and two fruits of every kind. While some commentators have tried to envision these

twinned gardens, philologists believe that these duals were meant to provide the passage with a consistent rhyme.

Three different words – *ḡanna*, *firdaws*, and *rawḍa* – are used in the Qurʾān to refer to the heavenly garden. Although most commentators consider them to be synonymous, these words actually had distinct meanings. The first, *ḡanna*, is the word used in the Qurʾān for the regions of the beyond prepared for the elect. It is usually translated as “garden,” as in the phrase *ḡannat ʿadn* for “Garden of Eden.” According to the Arabic lexicographers, *ḡanna*, which derives from a root meaning “veiling” or “concealment,” meant an kind of walled orchard of trees, palms, etc. where the ground was concealed or shadowed (Lane 1863: s.v.). According to Ibn al-Faqīh, “the *bustān* [the Persian word for “orchard” not used in the Qurʾān] is more carefully watered than the *ḡanna*.” The great German scholar Ernst Herzfeld suggested that the terrestrial *ḡanna* was irrigated by a regular system of canals (Pinder-Wilson 1976:74 n.9).

The second term, *firdaws*, is used less frequently than *ḡanna* in the Qurʾān. The Arabic and modern Persian form of the Old Persian word *pairidaeza* (*pair* around + *diz* to mould, form, meaning “enclosure, park”), this word is etymologically related to the late Hebrew *pardez* (used in Nehemiah 2:8 to refer to the park of the Persian king, also Ecclesiastes 2:5), the Armenian word *pardez*, and the Greek *paradeisos*, which Xenophon (ca. 430-355 BCE) had used to describe the enclosed parks, orchards, or pleasure grounds of Anatolia and Persia (Meyers 1997: II, 383).

The third term, *rawḍa* (pl. *riyād*), refers to “a meadow, meaning a verdant tract of land, somewhat watery, not ploughed but covered with grass and flowers.” (Lane 1863: s.v.). It is used only twice in the Qurʾān, once (30:15) in the singular and once in the plural *rawḍāt* (42:22) in the construct *rawḍāt al-ḡannāt*, “luxuriant meads of the Gardens” (Penrice 1971). According to the Dutch scholar de Goeje, the word Arabic word *rawḍa* was applied particularly to vegetable gardens, while the Persian word *bustān* referred to orchards, particularly to the palm grove (de Goeje 1967:189). Muḥammad is related to have said, “Between my grave – or between my house – and my pulpit is a *rawḍa* of the *riyād* of Paradise (Wensinck 1992: I, 319-320), a statement that ultimately led to the word’s considerable funerary associations in later centuries. It came to be applied to the railed enclosure around the Prophet’s grave in Medina (Massignon 1960). By the fourteenth century in Iran it was a euphemism for almost any funerary monument, from tombstones to mausolea, with no particular sense of garden (Blair 1984:74). Particularly in India, its derivative *roza* (Hindi *rauza*) has come to signify a funerary garden, such as those built by the Mughal emperors Šāh Ḡahān (which was popularly known as the *Tāḡ-rauza*) and Aurangzib (Yule & Burnell 1996:772). *Bustān*, another common word for garden, is not used in the Qurʾān. Lexicographers recognize it as a Persian compound noun (*bu*, fragrance + *stān*,

place) taken into Arabic and referring to “a garden of sweet-scented flowers and trees” or more specifically to the Persian flower or formal garden with constantly flowing streams.

A Brief History of Gardens

Contemporary dictionaries define a garden as a either plot of land used for the cultivation of flowers, vegetables, herbs, or fruit, or a piece of land laid out with trees and ornamental shrubs for recreation or display. Modern gardens are primarily practical places for cultivation (e.g. “kitchen-gardens”) or pleasant places for aesthetic pleasure (e.g. “public garden”), but there exists as well an ancient and important tradition of gardening as the manipulation of landscape to demonstrate power. Not only did the gardener show his power by moving earth and water and creating a setting of his own design, but the successful cultivation of exotic plants and animals within the created landscape also expressed the gardener’s power over it. The vast swath of land in Afro-Eurasia that eventually came to embrace Islam encompassed enormous climatic, geographical, historical, and cultural variation, but two principal types of gardens predominated over the centuries. The first was a large walled enclosure or park (Gk. *paradeisos*) that might include one or more structures for viewing and enjoyment of the garden; the second was a garden (Lat. *hortus*) enclosed within a structure (e.g. a courtyard house) that might be enjoyed from within the structure itself (Turner 1996: XII, 60-144; Huxley 1992: s.v. “Islamic garden”).

Gardens are first mentioned in Mesopotamian texts from the third millennium BCE, in which the hero Gilgamesh enters the Amanus mountains to find “a bounded wood” where the fearsome Humbaba guards its straight paths and tends its cedars (Dalley 1986:368-370). The enclosure and straight paths are clearly the work of human activity; the trees are tended because they are valuable. Indeed, the Sumerian language makes no distinction between an orchard [of trees] and a garden. In inscriptions and texts kings boast of creating large parks or gardens fed by impressive irrigation works. Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883-859 BCE) diverted water from the Upper Zab River to create an irrigated garden or park at Nimrud in which he had an impressive collection of foreign plants and animals, and his successor Sennacherib (704-681 BCE) did the same at Nineveh. One of Sennacherib’s parks recreated the entire landscape of the marshes of southern Iraq, complete with its flora and fauna. The famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon built by Nebuchadrezzar II 605-562 BCE) were meant to imitate the alpine landscape of Media (Meyers 1997: II, 383, s.v. “Gardens”).

In Egypt, the annual flooding of the Nile Valley led gardens to evolve in a somewhat different manner than they had in Mesopotamia. The Greek historian Herodotus cited the need to annually re-mark the boundaries of fields and gardens as the origin of geometry, and the rectilinear organization of irrigation channels

characterized the overall design of Egyptian gardens and fields throughout antiquity (Meyers 1997: II, 384). Gardens were associated not only with palaces and houses but also with temples and tombs, where the plants and pools "represented the place of creation from which life sprang" (Wilkinson 1990). Texts describe the trees Rameses III (1182-1151 BCE) brought back from Punt (Ethiopia), Palestine, and Syria, and the painted reliefs from the funerary temple at Deir el-Bahari shows Queen Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt to collect plants for the god Amun. She created gardens between Karnak and Luxor for the Feast of Opet, thereby confirming her right to rule. Archaeologists discovered that the avenue of sycamore trees planted to adorn her funerary temple were purposefully cut down, perhaps by her son to damn her memory. That he did so shows how symbolically important such plantings were (Meyers 1997: II, 384).

The tradition of gardening in ancient Iran was closely dependent on Mesopotamian tradition. At Pasargadae, the palace of Cyrus the Great in 6th century BC, archaeologists found palace pavilions set into shady irrigated parks laid out orthogonally. Excavations revealed the first known examples of straight watercourses creating four-fold (*čahar-bag*) garden plans. This arrangement may have served to facilitate irrigation of the plots, but it may also have been meant to symbolize Cyrus' domain, for he was known in Babylonian texts as "king of the four quarters." One may imagine Cyrus enthroned at Pasargadae in the heat of the day, during festivals, recreation, and at other times, looking down the centre of his garden from the main pavilion along the axial "vista of power" towards his *paradeisos*, allowing a glimpse into the political role gardens played (Meyers 1997: II, 383).

Following the conquests of Alexander the Great in the east, the Persian tradition of the *paradeisos* was transmitted to large gardens of the Hellenistic, Roman and Sāsānian periods¹. Smaller gardens in the Mediterranean lands followed the Roman tradition of the *hortus*, particularly after the Hellenistic peristyle, or paved court, was merged with the Italic tradition of the atrium house, and the paved court gave way to plantings and pools or cisterns. As the Roman developed new aqueducts, cisterns of still water were supplemented and replaced by fountains, and running water became important features of garden design (Turner 1996: XII, 68, s.v. "Garden II, 4 Rome").

In the east, Sāsānian rulers adopted the Achaemenid *paradeisoi* for their hunting parks and palaces. Perhaps the most famous Sāsānian palace was at their capital Ctesiphon, which was famed not for its gardens as such but for the carpet known as *bahar-i kisrā*, or "the king's spring." According to the 'Abbāsīd historian at-Tabarī, the Muslim conquerors discovered the carpet, which measured

¹ For a summary, see Meyers 1997: II, 385-387.

sixty cubits square, in the palace when they took the city in 637-38. It had a gold-coloured background, "its brocade was inlaid," the fruits depicted on it were precious stones, its foliage was silk and its waters golden. "They had been keeping it ready for use in winter for the time when their provisions were all but exhausted. When they wanted a drinking party, they would sit and drink on this carpet. Then they would feel as if they were sitting in a garden." The conqueror of the city, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās, was so impressed with this stupendous carpet that instead of cutting it up and distributing it to his troops, he sent it whole to the caliph 'Umar, who was residing in Medina. Upon receiving it, however, 'Umar decided to cut it up into equal pieces and distribute it among the people (Juynboll 1989:33).

Although few carpets produced over the next eight or nine centuries in the Islamic lands survive, the analogy of the carpet to a flower-strewn garden remained popular, particularly in Iran, and flower and plant motifs were among the most common design elements on Iranian carpets². In some cases carpet designs refer generically to gardens simply through the representation of beautiful flowers and plants on the surface, but in other cases the reference is quite explicit, as in a celebrated series of so-called "garden" carpets, which depict the plan of a formal Persian garden divided into quadrants by streams and embellished with pavilions, birds, and different types of plants and trees. The earliest such carpet to survive is the most splendid, an enormous seventeenth-century Iranian example discovered in the palace of the Maharaja of Jaipur (Blair & Bloom 1994:177-178), but many later examples of varying quality are known (Bloom & Blair 1997:369; Blair & Bloom 1991: no. 34).

The advent of Islam in the seventh century led to the increasing development and homogenization of these different garden traditions, as an evolving Arab-Islamic culture was carried from Spain to Central Asia, and gardeners introduced and cultivated hitherto exotic plants for practical and aesthetic purposes (Watson 1983). The *paradeisos* seems to have evolved into the *hayr*, or game preserve, which is first encountered in a series of palaces constructed by the Umayyad caliphs (r. 661-750) in the Syrian desert (Sourdel-Thomine 1960-; Strika 1968). Ironically, neither of the Umayyad sites in Syria known as Qasr al-Hayr, or "Castle of the Paradisical Gardens," actually had such a game preserve, the present names being merely figments of the bedouin imagination (Grabar *et al.* 1978). Other Umayyad palaces, however, are known to have included vast walled enclosures of arable land that were irrigated by aqueducts and drained by means of

² A convenient introduction to Islamic carpets is Turner 1996: s.v. "Islamic art VI, 4. Carpets and flatweaves."

sluice-gates. One of the most elaborate was the palace known as *Hirbat al-Mafḡar*, “The Ruins of Mafḡar”, near Jericho (Hamilton 1959).

Although none of the verdant gardens that are known to have surrounded Damascus in the Umayyad period have survived, some scholars believe that the mosaic panels once decorating all the walls of the Great Mosque of Damascus, which depict buildings set amid trees and above rivers (fig. 2), were meant to evoke descriptions of paradise in the Qur’an. While this interpretation is commonly accepted today, other scholars have suggested, following medieval writers, somewhat more prosaic interpretations – that they represent all the towns of the world or the garden landscape once found outside Damascus along the Barada River – and the interpretation of these mosaics remains a matter of lively scholarly debate (Ettinghausen *et al.* 2001:26).

The initial plan for the Round City of Baghdad, founded by the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mansūr in 762, appears to have made no provision for gardens, but when the ‘Abbāsids left the Round City for either suburban palaces near Baghdad or for the vast expanses of Sāmarrā’, gardens became a major feature of palace design. It has been argued that, in contrast to Umayyad palaces, ‘Abbāsid palaces were designed around the idea of presenting views and framing the act of vision, and this was as true at Baghdad as it was at Sāmarrā’ (Ruggles 2000:94–100). The rural location and great size of such foundations as the Dār al-*Hilāfa* and the *Balkuwārā* at Sāmarrā’ allowed the incorporation of large and different types of gardens within their walls. Many of the palaces incorporated one or more quadripartite gardens within their walls; others, such as the Dār al-*Hilāfa*, incorporated a game-park or *hayr* beyond the racecourse and polo ground.

These gardens and parks were surely not unpleasant spaces, but the overriding concern in their design seems to have been the exercise of power and vision, not the creation of a sensuous paradise on earth. The caliph al-Qāhir (r. 929–34 with interruption), for example, had an orange-garden that was planted with trees from Basra and Oman, whence they had only recently been imported from India (Mez 1937:384). In 917 the Byzantine ambassadors to Baghdad were taken to a zoological garden, where there were herds of wild animals, which drew near to the people, sniffing them, and eating from their hands. They were then brought to a court where there were four elephants adorned with brocade and cloth marked by figure work. Mounted on each elephant were eight men from Sind and fire hurlers. The sight of this filled the Ambassadors with awe (Lassner 1970:89).

From there they were taken to a court with one hundred muzzled and chained lions, and then to the New Kiosk, a building situated amidst two gardens. In the centre was an artificial pond and stream made of white lead in which four luxuriously-appointed boats floated. The lake was surrounded by a lawn in which stood four hundred artificial palm-trees. “Dressed in a sculptured teakwood, each tree was covered from top to bottom with rings of gilt copper, and each branch

bore marvellous dates which were not quite ripe. On the sides of the garden were citrons...and other kinds of fruit” (Lassner 1970:89–90). Oddly enough, when the ambassadors were taken to the “Paradise Palace” (*Qasr al-Firdaws*), it was not decorated with gardens and plants but with copious displays of rugs and armour, including thousands of breastplates, shields, helmets, casques, cuirasses, coats of mail, quivers and bows (Lassner 1970:90). When a visiting Byzantine dignitary criticized Baghdad for its lack of gardens, he was told, according to the *Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī*, “We were not created for frivolity and play” (Lassner 1980:198).

Like their predecessors of centuries before, ‘Abbāsid gardens in Mesopotamia provided a model for gardens elsewhere in the Islamic lands in the ninth and tenth centuries. In Egypt, the Tūlūnid ruler *Ḥumārawayh* is said to have been among the greatest garden-builders:

On his father’s *maydān* he had all kinds of flowers and trees planted; rare grafts such as almonds on apricot stems, various kinds of roses, red and blue and yellow lotus. In laying out the garden patterns of pictures and letters were followed. The gardener had to see that no leaf overlapped the other. Ponds, fountains, artificial wells ... and pavilions enlivened the garden ... the paths [of which were] covered with Babylonian mats. The palm-trunks were covered with gilded metal plates (Mez 1937:384).

Perhaps the best evidence for gardens in the medieval period comes from Spain, where the caliph ‘Abd ar-Rahmān III created the palace-city of *Madīnat az-Zahrā’* outside Córdoba following ‘Abbāsid models. Court nobles founded smaller garden estates in Córdoba’s suburbs as sensual places of worldly pleasure and arenas for political ceremonial, not as earthly recreations of the Qur’ānic paradise believers expected in the hereafter (Ruggles 2000:215).

At Córdoba the courtyard of the mosque had been planted with trees since the ninth century, a fact that has led some scholars to interpret this insertion of vegetation into a religious context as a reference to paradise. More probably, the trees were a practical solution to keeping down the dust and providing shade, and many mosques, from Algeria to Iran, still have trees planted in their courtyards. Paradisical themes, however, did begin to appear in the eleventh century in funerary gardens, and eventually they were carried over to non-funerary gardens, but even there, paradise was invoked only as a standard of beauty, not as a model to be emulated (Ruggles 2000:216). Indeed, paradise was not always imagined as a garden. For example, the *Aljafarīa* palace in Zaragoza, the royal palace of the Banū *Hud* in the late eleventh century, was conceived as a setting for royal *soirées*; to judge from the contemporary poetry that was recited there, it was metaphorically compared to paradise, although gardens played little, if any, role in its design (Robinson 1997).

Surely the most famous gardens from Islamic Spain are those of the Alhambra and Generalife palaces in Granada (fig. 3), built by the Nasrids between the

thirteenth century and the fifteenth. While these beautiful gardens are popularly likened to paradise, there is little contemporary evidence for such an interpretation. Rather, "by the fourteenth century in Andalusia, the creation for a prince of a garden with a fountain surrounded by handsomely decorated buildings can be considered an automatic gesture without compelling meaning" (Grabar 1978:123). Instead of paradise, the inscriptions in the palaces of the Alhambra create a metaphor of garden, city and kingdom, where the ruler's eye surveys all, thereby expressing his power over all creation (Ruggles 2000:203).

We know comparatively little about contemporary gardens in the eastern Islamic lands. As in Spain, palaces were likened to paradise in the fulsome encomiums of court poets anxious to earn their patrons favour, but gardens were not a necessary element of the metaphor (Meisami 2001). The funerary associations of the garden already noted in Spain appear in the east at least from the early fourteenth century, where the word *rawda*, but not *ḡanna*, refers to a funerary complex, sometimes – but not necessarily – located in a garden. According to the ebullient Īlhānid chronicler, Abū l-Qāsim al-Kāšānī, the tomb complex of the Īlhānid sultan Ulḡaytū (d. 1316) was like the "garden of Iram" (*rawda-yi iram*), with a great variety of trees, including spruce, juniper, palm, and fruit-trees, and waterways including brooks, rivulets, and streams (Kāšānī, *Tārīḡ* 46; Blair 1986:145). In contrast, the endowment deed to the funerary complex of the contemporary Īlhānid vizier Rašīd ad-Dīn includes a description of the vizier's *rawda*, which included the tomb and surrounding buildings, a court with a pool, mosques for winter and summer, a library, a classroom, and other cells and chambers, but no mention of a garden as such (Blair 1984:74).

Gardens continued to play an important role under the Tīmūrids in fifteenth-century Iran and Central Asia, where enormous palaces of tents were erected in garden estates, known as *bāḡ*, and cities such as Samarqand and Herāt were surrounded by garden suburbs (Golombek & Wilber 1988:174–183; Golombek 1995; Subtelny 1997). At Samarqand, the city was surrounded by a "necklace" of garden settlements named after the renowned cities of the Muslim world – Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Sultāniyya, and Šīrāz, once again underscoring the association of gardens with power rather than paradise. The Tīmūrid tradition of garden design was taken to India by the Mughals, where the *roza*, or four-fold garden, became a standard feature of funerary architecture. It has even been argued that the Taj Mahal at Agra, set in a magnificent garden (fig. 4), is a representation on earth of God's throne in heaven (Begley 1979). In the eastern Mediterranean region, by contrast, Ottoman gardens do not fit comfortably into the traditional definition and seem to have evolved along quite different lines (Necipoglu 1997).

Conclusion

In conclusion, there can be no doubt that over the centuries many Muslims envisioned paradise as a garden and that beautiful gardens were often thought to represent a foretaste of the hereafter. Nevertheless, it would be foolish to equate all Islamic gardens and plant imagery with the notion of paradise as described in the Qur'an. As scholars are coming to realize, the notion of a single Islamic society beginning in seventh-century Arabia and continuing to twenty-first century Morocco and Indonesia is fallacious. No single theory, however attractive, can explain fourteen centuries of human culture over one-quarter of the globe's surface. Furthermore, the tradition of transforming the landscape, whether on a large or small scale, and the image of the heavenly garden are both much older than Islam, and as we have seen, gardens of pre-Islamic and Islamic times often had other meanings, particularly the creation of aesthetic delight and the representation of power, two perennially popular themes in the history of art. Conversely, the image of paradise could be realized in forms other than gardens. In short, without a specific indication that a particular garden or motif was meant to represent paradise, it seems best to tread cautiously. Indeed, knowing how tempting it is for poets to exercise their verbal prowess in the hope of gaining a purse from a patron, we should even be wary of such taking such remarks too literally.

As our knowledge of the history of art in Islamic societies has become more nuanced, scholars have come to realize that intentional ambiguity plays an important role in many forms of Islamic art (Blair & Bloom 2000). Nothing prevents us from interpreting a garden or a floral motif as an image of paradise, but at the same time nothing forces us to do so. The decision is left entirely to the viewer, who is invited to take out of it – or put into it – as much as he or she likes.

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Fig. 1. Kashan, Bagh-e Fin. Photo author.

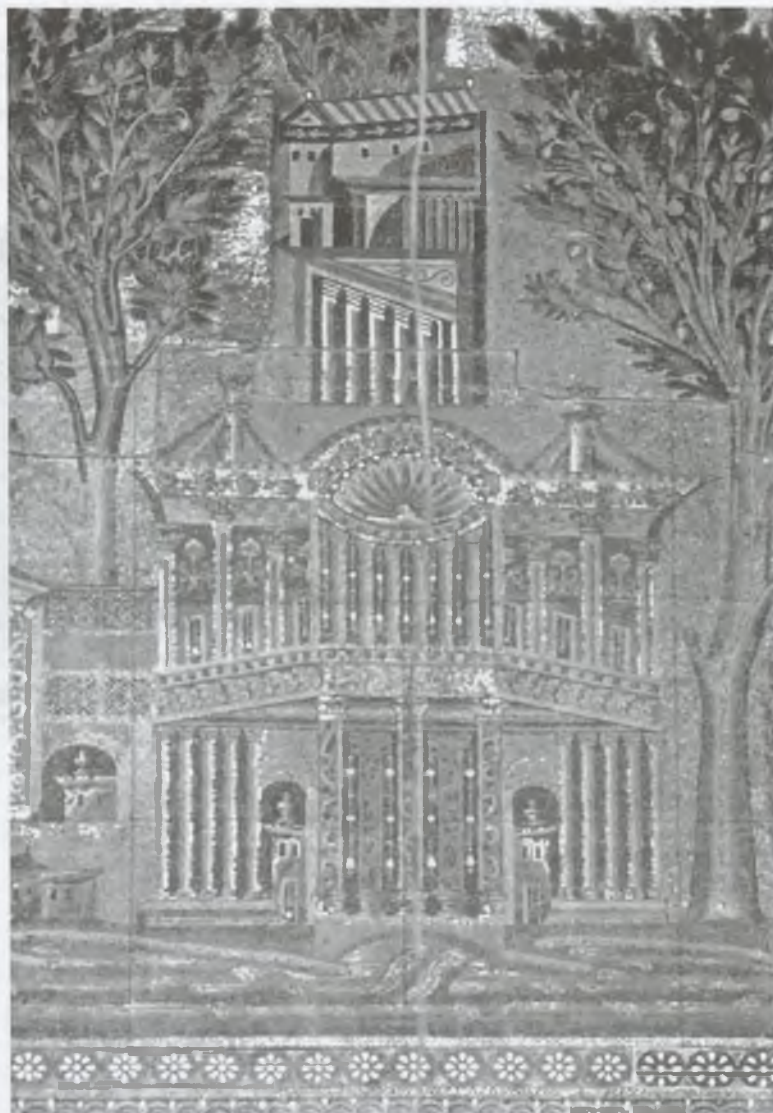


Fig. 2. Damascus, Umayyad Mosque, mosaic panel with landscape and fantastic buildings. Photo author.



Fig. 3. Granada, Gardens of the Generalife. Photo author.



Fig. 4. Agra, Gardens of the Taj Mahal. Photo author.

ANIMALS IN ISLAMIC PARADISE AND HELL*

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1. According to the Qur'ān, animals constitute a community comparable to that of mankind (Cattle, 6:38¹); they prostrate themselves before God, as well as angels (the Bee, 16:49²). The sacred text of Islam mentions animals on numerous occasions and as many as seven *sūras* take their names from those of animals: the *sūra* of the Cow (2), Cattle (6), the Bee (16), the Ant (27), the Spider (29), the Charging Horses (100), and the Elephant (105). The Prophet Muḥammad held animals – and some of them especially – in deep affection, and recommended kind behaviour towards them. Some animals played a significant role in his own life: for instance the doves that saved him during his emigration from Mecca to Medina (the *biḡra*), by disguising his presence in the cave, or the spider which sealed the cave's opening with its web; or further still, the gazelle and the camel which implored his intercession; not to speak of al-Burāq, which carried him by night to Jerusalem and, from there, bore him on his further journey to heaven (*mi'rāğ*).

Other prophets before him experienced episodes in which animals were the protagonists. Examples of these are: the serpent which enticed Adam and Eve to commit the original sin in the Garden of Eden (fig. 1); the animals rescued by Noah in his Ark (fig. 2); Sālih's she-camel killed by the unbelieving tribe of the Tamūd; the ram brought down to Abraham from heaven by the angel Gabriel to be sacrificed in place of his son Ishmael (fig. 3); the rod of Moses which was transformed into a serpent; the whale who swallowed Jonah; the hoopoe which, in the service of Solomon, the king of men, beasts and genies, carried his message to Bilqīs, the Queen of Sheba.

The Prophet Muḥammad condemned cruelty to animals. He taught that those who maltreated them would be condemned to Hell, whereas those who were caring to animals would receive heavenly recompense. There are a number of anecdotes on this subject. According to a *ḥadīṭ* cited by al-Buḥārī, on the authority of Abū Hurayra, the Prophet recounted that "while a man was walking along a road, he became extremely thirsty. He found a well and went down to drink from it. When he came up again, he found a dog eating wet ground due to its burning thirst. The man said to himself that the dog must have suffered as he had. He descended once

* I would like to thank Professor Robert Hillenbrand for his helpful comments on this paper.

¹ "No creature is there crawling on the earth, no bird flying with its wings, but they are nations like unto yourselves".

² "To God bows everything in the heavens, and every creature crawling on the earth, and the angels".

more into the well, filled his boot with water, carried it in his mouth and climbed back up. He let the dog drink and God the Highest recognized his benevolence and pardoned [his sins]³. According to another *ḥadīth*, on the authority of Abū Bakr, the Prophet was praying during an eclipse when he said: “[I saw] Hell close to me, so close that I shouted, ‘Oh my God! Am I among them [the damned]?’ [In the fire] there was a woman with a cat which was scratching her. I asked, ‘What has she done?’ They replied, ‘She imprisoned the cat until it died of hunger’⁴. The Prophet was used to drying off the sweat of his horse with his shirt and he was particularly fond of cats, which he allowed to go wherever they wanted. In his sayings, he insists that cats do not defile the food they touch, and do not invalidate prayer if they pass in front of those who pray. But it is true that a very different attitude was adopted by the Prophet regarding dogs, snakes, and scorpions.

Generally speaking, as A. Bousquet observed, Islam reserves a very different position for animals to that of Christianity, which views animals, having no soul, as existing merely in utilitarian terms for man’s benefit. This is not the case in Islam, or Judaism⁵.

2. Sources

What is the place of animals in Islamic Paradise and Hell? Some sparse references can be found in the commentaries on the Qur’ān⁶ and in collections of traditions, especially those by Muslim (d. 261/875)⁷, Ibn Mağā (d. 273/887)⁸, and at-Tirmidī (d. c. 279/893)⁹, who all dedicate specific chapters of their work to the *ḥadīths* relating to descriptions of Hell (*an-nār*, ‘the Fire’) and Paradise (*al-ġanna*, ‘the Garden’). The same can be said of the Stories of the Prophets (*Qisās al-anbiyā*) by

³ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb as-Šurb wa-l-musāqāh* (42), 9 (no. 2363); Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* II, 375 (no. 8849). In other versions it is a woman who gives the dog water (e.g. Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* II, 510, no. 10600).

⁴ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb as-Šurb wa-l-musāqāh* (42), 9 (nos. 2364-2365); Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* II, 507 (no. 10563): the woman was condemned to eternal Hellfire for having tied the cat up without leaving it anything to eat and drink, thus forcing it to feed itself from nothing but a few insects until it died.

⁵ Bousquet 1958: *passim*. According to the Bible and the Talmud animals have a soul, their own form of wisdom, good and bad instincts, their own prayers and, it would seem, their own guardian angel (*ibid.*, 33-34). On the benevolent behaviour of the Sufis toward animals, see Ritter 1955:325-328.

⁶ In this essay I have based my research, above all, on the commentaries of al-Ṭabarī, al-Ḥāzin, al-Bağawī, ar-Rāzī, as-Suyūṭī and al-Qurtubī.

⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb al-Ġanna* (51); *kitāb al-Fitan wa-asrāt as-sā’a* (52), on the Day of Judgement and the signs of its coming.

⁸ *Sunan, kitāb az-Zuhd* (37), *bāb 38, sifat an-Nār*; *bāb 39, sifat al-Ġanna*.

⁹ *Sunan, kitāb Sifat al-Ġanna* (39); *kitāb Sifat an-Nār* (40).

al-Kisā’ī (11th century) and at-Ta’labī (d. 427/1035)¹⁰, historical works by at-Ṭabarī (d. 314/923) and al-Mas’ūdī (d. 345/956), or those of a mystical or eschatological character such as *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* by Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), the *Nibāya* by Ibn Kaṭīr (d. 774/1373), the *Iḥyā’ ‘ulum ad-dīn* and *ad-Durra al-fāhira* by al-Ġazālī (d. 505/1111), the *Risālat al-ġufrān* by Abū l-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī (d. 449/1058), or specific works on the Prophet’s *mi‘rāğ* or on the Resurrection (*qiyām*). Later illuminated manuscripts (16th century), above all the Stories of the Prophets by the Persian writer an-Niṣābūrī (who probably lived during the 11th century), offer a lively visual representation of the most relevant episodes¹¹. Certain authors seem to know every corner of both Hell and Paradise, but the sources are not very explicit regarding the destiny of animals¹².

Commenting on Q 6:38, Muğāhid maintains that every species (*ğins*) known by an individual name constitutes an *umma*, whether they be domestic animals, wild animals, birds... or *genies*¹³. Even dogs are an *umma*, as the Prophet said (al-Ḥāzin,

¹⁰ See Tottoli 2002, and cited references.

¹¹ In particular, see the Brosh and Milstein catalogue (1991), and the recent work edited by Milstein, Rührdanz & Schmitz (1999) in which approximately twenty *Qisās al-anbiyā* in Persian by Ibrāhīm b. Ḥalaf an-Niṣābūrī, Muhammad Ġuwayrī, and Muhammad b. Hasan ad-Daydūzamī, dating back to the second half of the 16th century, in the Safavid style, are analysed. As the authors point out (5), the earliest known illustrations for the lives of the prophets were made for the historical work of at-Ṭabarī (as translated by Bal‘amī), *ar-Rusul* (or *al-Umam*) *wa-l-mulūk* (Washington, FGA, no. 57.16, copied and painted ca. 1300 in the Mongol style of Iran); two fragments of *Ġāmi‘ at-tawārīḥ* by Rašīd ad-Dīn, copied in Tabriz in 714/1314 (Edinburgh University Library, Ms Ar. 20, and London, Khalili Coll.); and al-Bīrūnī’s *al-Ātār al-bāqiya*, copied in 1307 (Edinburgh U. L., Ms Ar. 161).

¹² al-Kisā’ī relates the description of Paradise and Hell on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās and Wabb b. Munabbih. God created Paradise (al-Ġanna, ‘the Garden’) subdividing it into seven gardens and Eden: 1. *Dār al-Ġalāl*, ‘the home of the Majesty’, made of white pearl; 2. *Dār as-Salām*, ‘home of Peace’, made of red ruby; 3. *Ġannat al-Ma’wā*, ‘the garden of Refuge’, made of green emerald; 4. *Ġannat al-Huld*, ‘the garden of Eternity’, made of yellow coral; 5. *Ġannat an-Na‘īm*, ‘the garden of Delight’, made of white silver; 6. *Ġannat Firdaws*, made of red gold; 7. *Ġannat al-Qarār*, ‘the garden of Rest’, made of pungent musk; and the last, *Ġannat ‘Adan*, ‘the garden of Eden’, made of rosy pearl. Hell has seven doors, and behind each of them the damned are tortured in seventy thousand different ways. 1. *Ġahannam* (the door for believers alone, which will be destroyed when the last of them leaves to enter Paradise); 2. al-Lazā, ‘the flaming fire’ for the idolaters; 3. al-Ḥuṭama, ‘the devouring fire’ for Gog and Magog; 4. as-Sa‘īr, ‘the flame’ for Satan (cf. Q 67:5); 5. as-Saqar, ‘the infernal fire’ for those who neglect prayer and the *zakāt* (cf. Qur. 74:43-44); 6. al-Ġāḥīm, ‘the intense fire’ for Jews, Christians, and Magians; 7. al-Hāwiya, ‘the abyss’, for hypocrites (*Qisās* I, 17-19). Numerous traditions place Hell beneath the seven earths and Paradise above the seven heavens. A descriptive table of the seven heavens and seven earths, on the basis of the works by al-Kisā’ī and at-Ta’labī, is provided by Fahd (1959:251, 254-255).

¹³ Fish, however, are not explicitly mentioned. Some commentators have confronted the problem; giving extensive significance to the term *dābba* — from the verb *dabba*, ‘to move’ — they not only include animals which move on the earth or fly in the sky, but also those which live in water. See ar-Rāzī, *Mafatih* XII, 222; al-Ḥāzin, *Lubāb* II, 131-132.

Lubāb II, 132; al-Baḡawī *Maʿālim*, II, 132). All animals know the Lord, they bear witness to His unity, they give praise to Him and one day will meet Him. They are also creatures of God, they understand each other and are familiar with each other, they search for food and fear danger, they are male and female, they die, and on the day of the Resurrection they will be judged by God, just like human beings (*ibid.*). All of this is written in the Book, the 'Preserved Tablet' (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) on which was written all that has been and will be until the Day of Resurrection¹⁴. Sufyān b. ʿUyayna, in a rather malicious spirit towards his fellow men, affirms that the word *umma* should be understood as "every species of animal or bird, and also people who behave like them: whether they be as aggressive as lions, as voraciously hungry as pigs, whether they bark like dogs, or whether they be as proud as peacocks"¹⁵.

The Angel of Death takes the soul (*rūḥ*) of animals, just as with men¹⁶. God will judge domestic animals, and will punish those which use their horns to hurt other animals without horns, and then he will separate wild animals and birds. The Lord will say to them "Be as dust!", and the earth beneath them will become flat¹⁷. Fortunately, on the day of the Last Judgement, the angels will intercede. On that day, eight angels will hold up the Throne of God (Q 69:17). Each of them has four faces (*ṣuwar*): the first face, of human appearance, will intercede for the sustenance of human beings; the second, like that of a bull, will intercede for domestic animals; the third, like that of a lion, for wild beasts; and the fourth, like that of an eagle, for birds (fig. 4)¹⁸.

Islam absorbed both the Semitic and the Iranian influences which circulated in the ancient Near East. Monstrous animals, such as the winged Serpent, which wraps itself around God's Throne, or the Bull ar-Rayyān and the Whale al-Bahmūt, which hold up the seven earths, enter into Islamic cosmogonical myths, and find further development in Qur'ānic commentaries, in historical and cosmographical works, and in the Stories of the Prophets¹⁹. When the angel ad-Dīk, in the form of a cockerel, praises God in Paradise, all the cockerels on the Earth respond, calling the faithful

¹⁴ Cf. Q 85:22.

¹⁵ Cited by al-Qurtubī, *Ġāmiʿ* VI, 420.

¹⁶ as-Suyūtī, *Durr* III, 12, on the authority of Anas b. Mālik.

¹⁷ al-Ġazālī, *Durra*, Ar. text 70, French transl. 60; the passages is followed by Q 4:42. Cf. Ibn Kaṭīr, *Nihāya* II, 44-47; at-Tabarī, *Ġāmiʿ* VII, 188-189; az-Zamahṣari, *Kaṣṣaf* II, 17; al-Qurtubī, *Ġāmiʿ* VI, 420; as-Suyūtī, *Durr* III, 12, on the authority of Abū Hurayra.

¹⁸ al-Kisāʿī, *Qisās* I, 7; cf. Cerulli 1949: § 55. According to al-Qazwīnī (*Aġāʿib*, 42), the whole figure of each angel either takes the form of the eagle, the bull, the lion, or a human being. Before the Day of Judgement there were only four angels that held up the Throne, as in biblical tradition (cf. *Ezekiel* 1:10, 10:14).

¹⁹ See Fahd, 1959 and cited references; and also Tottoli, 1989.

to prayer (fig. 5)²⁰. "The Beast (*ad-dābba*) which came out from the Earth" will devour the damned with its thirty thousand mouths²¹.

3. Paradise

al-Ġāḥiz mentions the opinion of Abū Ishāq that animals also have feelings and suffer, and will enjoy the mercy of God. Just as there are no differences between Muslim or pagan children who go to Paradise, neither shall there be for domestic or wild animals, which will enter as 'pure spirits', in the form that God chooses for them. Others seem to maintain that, over and above any theological questions, the placement of animals in the hereafter will be based on aesthetic criteria: beautiful animals in Paradise, and ugly ones in Hell. "[The sight] of all the ugly ferocious beasts, domestic animals, reptiles, insects (*hamaġ*, 'mosquitoes') that God has created will make [the damned] suffer in Hell, whereas all [the animals] of pleasant appearance will delight [the elect]. In this way gazelles, horses, peacocks, and pheasants will gratify the friends (*awliyāʾ*) of God in Paradise with their beautiful presence" (al-Ġāḥiz, *Hayawān* III, 395). The Prophet himself said one day that in Paradise whatsoever the soul most yearns for and whatsoever the eyes most appreciate will be found. But it is not only for their beauty and graceful movement that these animals will find their place in Paradise, beside the seductive houris, the *ḥūrī l-ʿīn* with their big dark eyes, and the ever-virgin wives²², but also for their relationship to men and prophets.

Islamic Paradise is a large garden, in which the aspirations of people used to the restrictions of hard life in the Arabian deserts will find their realization. The following *ḥadīth* is significant. Abū Hurayra recounts that one day a horse-rider (*min ahl al-ḥayl*) asked the Prophet if there were horses in Paradise. "There are horses with golden saddles and reins" – Muḥammad replied – "and with golden wings; they take the rider wherever he wants". Another Bedouin, a camel-rider (*min ahl al-ibl*), got up and asked if there were any camels. "Certainly, like the stars" – the Prophet replied – "with hooves, wings and reins of gold". A third person, a palm-grower (*min ahl an-naḥl*), asked if there were palms. "The palms in Paradise" – said Muḥammad – "have golden trunks and roots; their leaves are like the most precious fabrics and their dates are sweeter than honey". Then, a fourth Bedouin (*min ahl al-bādiya*) got up and said:

²⁰ al-Kisāʿī, *Qisās* I, 66-67; ad-Damīrī, *Hayāt* I, 490-491; as-Suyūtī, *Ḥabāʾik*, 65-67; Cerulli 1949: § 69, 168. As the Prophet said, even the croaking of the frog is a song of praise to God, given that it recalls the verse of its progenitor which was in the water close to His Throne before the creation of the heavens (ad-Damīrī, *Hayāt* II, 648, s.v. *diḡdaʾ*).

²¹ Cerulli 1949: § 182 *sqq.* Cf. Q 27:82. The *dābba* recalls, in certain aspects, the Beast of John's Apocalypse.

²² On sexuality in Islamic Paradise refer to, in particular, Al-Azmeh 1995.

“Oh messenger of God! Are there Bedouins in Paradise?” The Prophet replied: “By He who sent me [to bring] the Truth! They will live wherever they wish above dunes of musk and ruby in Paradise!”²³

The notes that follow are intended to illustrate a few legends which grew up on the subject of some of these animals²⁴.

3.1 Horses

When the angels heard the description of the horse, they exclaimed, “Oh Lord, we are your angels, we exalt your name and praise you. What do you have in store for us?” God created speckled horses for them, with robust necks like those of the camels of Bactriana. One was sent down to the Earth, and when it put down its hooves, it neighed. The angels said “it is a blessed animal, and its neigh will fill the hearts of the unbelievers with terror!” When God showed Adam all his creatures and taught him their names, He asked him to take the animal of his choice. Adam chose the horse, which God created ‘Arab’²⁵. The horse was named Maymūn, and had a body of camphor, musk and saffron, and wings of pearl and precious stones²⁶. Even the angels of the sixth heaven, who made up God’s army, had their own horses (fig. 6)²⁷. Gabriel’s horse was called Ḥayzūm (fig. 7)²⁸. Ibn ‘Abbās recounts that during the battle of Badr, the blow of a whip was heard in heaven, together with the cry, “Come on Hayzūm!” An infidel fell, hit by the invisible blow, his face disfigured²⁹.

²³ Ibn Habīb, *Wasf*, 58-59, no. 167; *La descripción*, 108. According to some sources, sheep and goats will also have a place in Paradise; the Prophet, in fact, would have said that “sheep are among the animals of Paradise” and that “goats should not be maltreated as they too are among the animals of Paradise” (al-Qurtubī, *Tadkīra*, 566-567; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Nibāya* II, 328, from Ibn Maḡa and al-Bazzār).

²⁴ On Arab legends in general see Basset 1926: III, and the more recent Knappert 1985. For the comparison with Jewish traditions see Ginzberg’s groundbreaking work, *Legends of the Jews*, as well as the essays of Grünbaum, Speyer, Sidersky, and Heller.

²⁵ See ‘Alī b. Dāwūd, *Aqwāl*, 99-100. According to another tradition, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, the Lord asked Adam to choose between the horse and al-Burāq, the Prophets’ mount. Given that al-Burāq was barren, Adam chose the horse. See al-Baḥṣī, *Rasāḥāt*, 4-5.

²⁶ See al-Kisā’ī, *Qisās* I, 35; at-Ta’labī, *‘Arā’is*, 28-29. When Adam was banished from Eden, Maymūn reproached him for his sin and refused to obey him. ‘Alī b. Dāwūd, like other Yemeni Rasūlīd sovereigns, had a horse of the name Maymūn (*Aqwāl*, 349).

²⁷ See Cerulli 1949: § 41. In the fourth heaven even the angels themselves could be found in the form of a horse (cf. al-Qazwīnī, *‘Aḡā’ib*, 45; Fahd 1971:162).

²⁸ See *Furusīyya* I, fig. III.III, from *K. al-baytara*.

²⁹ Ibn Hišām, *Sīra* I, 633; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb al-Ġihād* (32), 18 (no. 1763); ‘Alī b. Dāwūd, *Aqwāl* 335-336.

It is believed that the martyrs who fall on God’s road during the Holy War (*ġihād*), will ride winged horses in Paradise³⁰.

The most beautiful riding animal remains, nonetheless, the mythical al-Burāq (fig. 8), upon which the Prophet performed his night journey (*isrā’*) to the Masġid al-Aqsā and rose to Heaven (*mi’rāġ*)³¹. The first exegetes describe it, based on the words of the Companions of Muḥammad, as a white beast (*dābba*), bigger than a donkey but smaller than a mule, reserved for the Prophets, which, thanks to its wings, reached the horizon with a single jump³². Storytellers and later exegetes enriched the description of al-Burāq with many fantastical details, which can also be found in late iconographical sources. al-Quṣayrī (d. 465/1072) writes, in his *Mi’rāġ*, that al-Burāq “had a human face and the cheek of a horse; the [drops] of its sweat were made of pearl and red coral; its forelock was made of luminous ruby; its ears were of green emerald; its burning eyes shone like Venus and Mars; its fetlocks were patched in white...”³³. In other versions, al-Burāq has a feminine face and the tail of a peacock³⁴. Just as Muḥammad excels over all other men, its beauty is greater than that of all the other animals in Paradise (al-Kisā’ī, *Qisās* I, 33-34). Thanks to its nobility (*karāma*), it will follow the Prophet in Heaven: in fact, on the day of the Last Judgement, Muḥammad will arrive on al-Burāq.

According to Muqātil b. Sulaymān, Moses asked al-Ḥidr which animal he liked the most. He replied “I like the horse, the donkey, and the camel, because they are the mounts of the Prophets”³⁵.

Heavenly horses are of noble race, they are slender and graceful. According to a tradition, on the authority of Abū Ayyūb, “they are, together with camels, the only

³⁰ See Ghali 1919:165.

³¹ Qur’ān, *The Night Journey*, 17:1: “Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque the precincts of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our signs. He is the All-hearing, the All-seeing”.

³² This is how it is described in the authoritative works of Ibn Hišām (*Sīra* I, 397), Ibn Sa’id (*Tabaqāt* I, 214), at-Tabarī (*Ġāmi’* XV, 3), as well as in the collections of *ḥadīth* by al-Buḥārī and Muslim. According to Ibn ‘Abbās and Abū Sa’id al-Ḥudrī it was a mount “similar to yours”, and according to Abū Hurayra it was a ‘horse’. A significant number of ancient traditions are related by as-Suyūṭī in the extensive chapter dedicated to the *isrā’* in his *Ḥasā’is* (II, 252-298).

³³ Quṣayrī continues: “it had wings of an eagle from which pearly drops would fall; a silvery cow’s tail; bones of jet (black amber); a saddle-cloth studded with ruby and coral; his breath (*nafas*) was like that of humans; it had wings as round as the moon; it was bigger than a donkey but smaller than a mule; it had emerald hooves cloven like those of a cow; a silver belly; a neck, breast, and back of dazzling gold; it [covered the distance] between the sky and the ground; with one jump it could reach the horizon” (*Mi’rāġ*, 44).

³⁴ A thorough analysis on al-Burāq can be found in Piemontese 1974 and 1980. For a synthesis of fictional elements in the late Islamic tradition see al-Halabī (d. 1044/1635), *Sīra* II, 78-79.

³⁵ But he hates the buffalo and the bull. Cited by al-Ġāhiz, *Ḥayawān* VII, 204.

animals (*bahā'im*) in Paradise" (Ibn Kaṭīr, *Nihāya* II, 327-328). The Prophet himself described them as winged horses, made of red ruby, which do not leave any excrement; they will welcome the elect when they enter Paradise, carrying them before God, and from then on will bear them on their visits to each other (*ibid.*, 330, 334).

3.2 Camels

Some camels have also been given a place of privilege in Islamic tradition. If Muhammad mounts al-Burāq on his journey towards Paradise, his daughter Fāṭima will mount his favourite she-camel, al-ʿAdbā', and the prophet Ṣāliḥ the "camel of God", slain by the unbelieving Tamūd (Q 11:61-68)³⁶. According to Ṣīʿī sources, ʿAlī will ride beside them on a camel of light, dressed in green cloth, whose reins are of ruby and gold (al-Kāṣanī, *Tafsīr* II, 119).

Muḥammad describes camels in Paradise as animals of red ruby with topaz reins. The popular story of the pious camel which asked help from the Prophet Muḥammad has contributed towards the rise in prestige of this animal. Tamīm ad-Dārī recounts that one day he was sitting close to the Prophet, when a camel arrived in haste; it stopped beside Muḥammad and neighed. The Prophet told it to express itself with sincerity, given that God had granted safety to all who took refuge near him. Understanding the camel's words, the Prophet explained to those present that the camel had fled because it feared that its owners wanted to kill it. The owners found them, and the Prophet spoke to them about its complaint: "after having been in their service for years, now they wanted to slaughter me". They confirmed it to be true. So Muḥammad paid them a hundred dirham and let the camel go. It neighed repeatedly. On the fourth neigh the Prophet began to cry, understanding that the camel had invoked God that evil should not spread among the Arabs — something that, as the angel Gabriel had revealed to him, was destined to occur³⁷.

3.3 Gazelles

As we have seen, al-Ġāḥiz places the gazelle in Paradise by virtue of its beauty. The grace of this animal has always inspired Arab poets and writers, who have seen it as a metaphor of the beloved. The gazelle is also a devout animal, known for its great affection towards its offspring. Here too the Prophet once interceded to save it (fig. 9). Some Bedouins had captured a gazelle and had tied it to the pole of their tent. Muḥammad passed by their encampment and the gazelle asked him to act as a

³⁶ See ad-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt* I, 165.

³⁷ An oral version of the story, in 36 quatrains, was published by Basset (1902). Popular printed versions also exist, including the story of Muḥammad and the gazelle, of the title *Qissat al-ḡamal wa-l-ḡazāla wa-mu'ḡizāt an-nabī*. These legends are referred to in the collections of *ḥadīṭ* and in the hagiographic works on the Prophet (e.g. as-Suyūṭī, *Ḥaṣā'is* II, 95 *sqq.*

mediator for its freedom, to give it enough time to feed its young. The Prophet did so, and gave his word that it would return. When the gazelle did return, Muḥammad asked for it to be freed, because it had been sincere. The Bedouins duly freed it and the gazelle skipped into the desert, professing the unity of God and the truthfulness of the mission of its Prophet (*ṣahāda*)³⁸. There is no doubt that such a pious animal should merit a place in Paradise.

3.4 Dogs

When Adam and Eve, thrown out of Eden, wandered on the earth, they were pursued by wild beasts and reptiles, on the instigation of Satan. Adam begged God to give him someone who would protect him, and the Lord asked him to choose an animal. Adam chose the dog; he stroked its head and the dog frightened off the wild beasts. Thus was the friendship and familiarity between men and dogs born (Sibṭ Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Mir'āt* I, 205). Nonetheless, only the dog Qitmir — according to some it was called Rayyān, Mašīr, Basīt, Raqīm or some other name — which accompanied the seven sleepers in their cave (Q, *The Cave*, 18:9 *sqq.*)³⁹ (fig. 10). will go to Paradise. Some young people (three, five, or seven) fled during pagan times in order not to abandon their faith in the only true God, and they took refuge in a cave. With them was a dog, which kept guard. Only God knows how long they slept in their cave. The Qur'an says: "Thou wouldst have thought them awake, as they lay sleeping, while We turned them now to the right, now to the left, and their dog stretching its paws on the threshold" (18:18). Commentators have added many details to this story, which is rather brief in its Qur'anic version, and have included historical and geographical information. The dog was either a hunting dog or a shepherd's dog, with a stone and sky-coloured coat. Ka'b al-Aḥbār tells that the young people chanced upon a dog, which started to bark. They sent it away, but it kept coming back to them. The dog raised its forepaws towards heaven, as if it were someone invoking [God], and said, "Do not fear! I love those that love God the Highest. Sleep and I shall keep guard." It stretched out its paws near the mouth of the cave, but it too, like the young people, was overcome by sleep⁴⁰.

³⁸ For an Egyptian oral version, see our essay "Muḥammad, l'ebreo e la gazzella" (1981), in which references to different versions are made. Also see note 44.

³⁹ The legend of the People of the Cave recalls the story of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. Massignon dedicated an extensive essay to this legend (1963).

⁴⁰ al-Qurtubī, *Ġāmi'* X, 370. Most Qur'anic commentators dedicated many pages to this story; see among others at-Tabarī, *Ġāmi'* XV, 197-223; ar-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ* XXI, 101-108; al-Ḥāzin, *Lubāb* IV, 191-198; as-Suyūṭī, *Durr* IV, 233-240. The nephew of Ġalāl ad-Dīn ar-Rūmī had a dog which was said to have descended from Qitmir, the dog that belonged to the People of the Cave. It also bore the name Qitmir and participated in the dances of the Mevlevi Dervishes (Boratav 1975:324).

The behaviour of the Prophet Muhammad was not benevolent towards dogs. Despite having spent his childhood with the Banū Sa'd, with his Bedouin wet-nurse Halīma, he was neither a Bedouin, nor a shepherd, nor a hunter, and therefore had no familiarity with dogs to be able to appreciate their qualities. Like his fellow-citizens from Mecca, the dogs he was used to were probably those in packs that ravaged inhabited areas. For this reason he ordered them to be killed. But he mitigated his order when considering that they also constituted a community (*umma*) created by God⁴¹, limiting the order to the killing of black dogs only. These are considered to be the worst of all dogs, and above all, according to popular opinion, in close relationship to Satan⁴². Dogs are a source of impurity, for they defile the food they touch and invalidate prayer⁴³. According to a frequently cited *ḥadīth*, on the authority of Abū Ḥalīfa, "Angels do not enter a house where there is either a dog or a representation (*sūra*)" (al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb Bad' al-ḥalq* (59), 17 (no. 3322)). Nonetheless, those that are useful to man, such as sheepdogs, hunting dogs or dogs that guard fields are tolerated⁴⁴.

3.5 Other animals

Notwithstanding what al-Ġāhiz has mentioned regarding the peacock and the pheasant, both of which delight the elect in Heaven, I have found no mention of this made by other authors. As far as the peacock is concerned, it is treated with ambivalence: people appreciate its beauty, but are diffident about it, given its role with Satan in the Garden of Eden. It is other birds of Paradise that the exegetes speak of. They refer to large birds, with necks as wide as that of a camel, with seventy thousand feathers of different colours, that live on the banks of the river al-Kawṭar, whose waters are "whiter than milk and sweeter than honey". The elect, when they see these birds, will long for them, and they will fall before them already roasted, to

⁴¹ According to a legend, the dog was in fact created from the part of the earth that Iblīs had spitted on, which was removed by the angels just before the creation of Adam. See Basset, 1926: III, 12, from al-Qalyūbī's *Nawādir*.

⁴² aš-Šiblī, *Ākām*, 41. On the transformism of Iblīs, see Calasso 1971:86-87.

⁴³ Five animals are considered to be 'impious' (*fāsiq*) by Muslims: the mouse, the scorpion, the snake, the rabid dog, the raven (Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* I, 257, no. 2329). Other *ḥadīths* provide different lists, e.g. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, kitāb al-Ḥaḡḡ* (15), 9 (no. 1198).

⁴⁴ Bedouins give great consideration to this animal. See al-Ġāhiz, *Ḥayawān* II, 192. The poet Ḥātim at-Tayy had trained his dog to wag its tail as a welcome to newcomers; the heroine āat al-Himma used to say that "dogs have become our companions, having eaten our food" (cited by Lyons 1995: I, 29). On the behaviour of Arabs towards dogs see the remarks of Rex Smith in Ibn al-Marzubān, *Faḍl*, ch. IV.

then return, with God's permission, alive and kicking(!)⁴⁵ According to certain traditions, other birds, which are white or green in colour, also exist in Paradise, feeding themselves on the fruits of its trees. In fact, these would be the souls of the martyrs (*shuhadā'*) who, having fallen in the Holy War (*ḡihād*), take on this form in Paradise⁴⁶.

The Prophet said that "All the flies (*dubāb*) are destined for Hell, except bees"⁴⁷. Bees are in fact inspired by God in so perfectly constructing their cells, and in the production of their honey, which provides "healing for all men"⁴⁸. According to Ibn 'Abbās, Muḥammad said that during his ascension to Heaven the angel showed him the four rivers of Paradise, respectively rivers of water, milk, wine, and "clarified honey" (*asal musaffa*) (Q 47:15). Commentators, however, explain that this honey is not bee's honey, with its all its impurities, but is directly created by God⁴⁹.

4. Hell

The bird dearest to Satan – relates Ibn 'Abbās – was the peacock; the most detested was the cockerel, which, with its crow, calls the believers to prayer (al-Kisā'ī, *Qiṣas* I, 66). The disgrace of the peacock was that of having been involved, together with the serpent, in the punishment which followed the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The peacock was lord of the birds, as the serpent was lord of the beasts. Originally, the serpent was in the shape of a camel, with four hooves, a tail of extraordinary colours and a crest of pearl. Satan, jealous of Adam, stayed at the door of Eden for seven hundred years, until the peacock left. He then played on its vanity, causing the peacock to be moved by his lament. The peacock asked for help from the serpent, which opened its mouth and Satan got in. Thus he was able to get past the guardian angel Ridwān through the door of Eden. Satan induced Eve to sin

⁴⁵ at-Tirmidī, *Sunan*, 39, 10, no. 2542; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Nihāya* II, 264; al-Qurtubī, *Tadkira*, 564; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Wasf*, 31, *Descripción*, 79. The Qur'ān limits itself to saying that the elect will eat "as much meat of delicate birds as they want" (The Terror, 56:21).

⁴⁶ See aš-Šan'ānī, *Musannaḥ* V, 263-265 (nos. 9553-9558).

⁴⁷ al-Ġāhiz, *Ḥayawān* III, 393; ad-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt* II, 339. Bees are also called *dubab al-ʿasal*, 'honey-flies'. It is one of the animals whose killing is forbidden by the Prophet, the others being the ant, the frog, the bird *surad*, and the hoopoe (ad-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt* I, 647; II, 349; cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Sunan* I, 347, no. 3241).

⁴⁸ Q, The Bee, 16:68-69: "And thy Lord revealed (*awḥā*) unto the bees, saying: 'Take unto yourselves, of the mountains, houses, and of the trees, and of what they are building. Then eat of all manner of fruit, and follow the ways of your Lord easy to go upon' Then comes there forth out of their bellies a drink of diverse hues wherein is healing for men. Surely in that is a sign for a people who reflect." On traditions related to bees, see our essay "Api e miele" (1999), with its extensive bibliography.

⁴⁹ See ar-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ* XXVIII, 54-55; al-Qurtubī, *Ġāmi'* XVI, 237; as-Suyūṭī, *Durr* VI, 54-55.

next to the Tree of Eternity, and God dismissed them all from the Garden (fig. 1).⁵⁰ The serpent was transformed into the reptile that we all know, and was forced to slither on its belly. The angels pulled off the feathers of the peacock and Gabriel cursed it and dismissed it from Eden for all eternity. Nonetheless, people have been inspired with love for the peacock, and they never kill it!⁵¹ A still crueller fate was reserved for the serpent, the worst enemy of man, and numerous *ḥadīths* of the Prophet recommend that it should be killed.

According to one legend, when they were all dismissed from Eden, they wept. The tears of the serpent that fell onto the earth gave birth to the scorpion, whereas those that fell onto the sea gave birth to the crab; on the earth, those of the peacock turned into bugs, whereas on the sea its tears became leeches. Iblīs also cried: his tears turned into thorns on the earth, and crocodiles in water.⁵² The serpent fell to Iṣfahān, and the peacock to Babel.

Given all of this, it is of no surprise that Hell is full of snakes and scorpions (fig. 11). It would seem that these animals already cause suffering to the damned in their tombs, where ninety-nine snakes continually bite infidels. They are as big as camels, whereas scorpions are as big as mules.⁵³ Some think, being so ugly, that they are created by Satan and not by God. al-Ġazālī mentions a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, according to which there are seventy thousand valleys in Hell with as many offshoots, and in each one of these there is an equal number of snakes and scorpions that torment infidels and hypocrites.⁵⁴

We can only hope not to be among their number...

⁵⁰ The piece above is a synthesis of the narrations by al-Kisā'ī and al-Taḥḥabī. We have dedicated an extensive essay to snakes and scorpions (1990-1991), to which further reference can be made for a more in-depth analysis.

⁵¹ al-Kisā'ī, *Qisās* I, 44, 50. But the peacock transmitted vanity to men. When Adam planted the vine, Satan killed a peacock, together with other animals, on its roots, so that it would absorb the blood. Drinking the wine, men become vain (ad-Damīrī, *Hayāt* II, 651). The figure of the peacock assumes greater importance in the traditions, whose elements recall Mesopotamian and Iranian myths, related by as-Suyūṭī: at the beginning of time God created the Tree Yaqīn (*yaqīn*, 'certitude'), then the Muhammadan Light, like pure pearl, in the form of a peacock. He placed it on the Tree and glorified it for seventy thousand years. Then He created the Mirror of Life, and put it in front of the peacock, which, when it saw the reflection of its splendid image, it became ashamed and prostrated itself before God. The Lord created the angels, the Throne, the Table, the Quill, the stars, the Prophets, and all the creatures, from the exudation of that Light (*Durayr*, 1). In certain Iranian traditions an ambiguous relationship between Iblīs and the peacock can be noted. The latter, in fact, was not only a mediator between Iblīs and the snake in entering Eden, but actually conducted Satan into the Garden (see Capezzone 1992:39 sqq.).

⁵² Related by Basset 1926: III, 13, from al-Qalyūbī's *Nawādir*.

⁵³ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* IV, 191, no. 17681; Ibn Kaṭīr, *Nihāyat* II, 159; al-Ġazālī, *Ihyā'* IV, 517; also see al-Ġāhiz, *Hayawān* IV, 300: "cats are hostile to all the creatures of Satan, such as snakes, scorpions..."

⁵⁴ *Ihyā'* IV, 515. According to Ibn Kaṭīr (*Nihāyat* II, 159), the *ḥadīth* is apocriphal.

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Fig. 1. Adam, Eve, the serpent, the peacock, and Satan in the Garden of Eden (Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, R. 1536: Naysābūrī, *Qisas al-anbiyā'*, copied by 'Alā' ad-Dīn Mansūr, 987/1579, f. 16b; ref. Milstein, Rührdanz & Schmitz 1999, fig. 40; Esin 1963, pl. 9).



Fig. 2. Noah and the animals in the Ark (Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, B. 250: ad-Daydüzamî, *Qışaş al-anbiyâ'*, 983/1575-76, f. 45b; ref. Milstein, Rührdanz & Schmitz 1999, pl. XXVI).



Fig. 3. The ram offered by the Angel Gabriel to Abraham (Istanbul, Museum for Turkish and Islamic Art; unknown painter, 991/1583; ref. Esin 1963, pl. 15, detail).



Fig. 4. One of the four-faced angels who will hold up the Throne of God (*Mirāj Nāmeḥ*, f. 32b, pl. 30).



Fig. 5. The angel ad-Dik and Muḥammad on al-Burāq (*Mirāj Nāmeḥ*, f. 11, pl. 9).



Fig. 6. An angel in the fourth heaven in the form of a winged horse (St. Petersburg, Institute for Oriental Studies, ar. E.7: al-Qazwīnī, *‘Aghā’ib al-mahlūqāt*, Baghdad 14th. cent., f. 39; ref. *Chevaux*, fig. 179, p. 217, detail).



Fig. 7. Hayzūn, the horse of Angel Gabriel (Istanbul, University Library, no. 4689, 9th/15th cent.; ref. Nasr 1976, pl. 10).



Fig. 8. al-Burāq, the mythical mount of Prophet Muhammad (Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi H. 2152, f. 98b; ref. Grube 1980, pl. 14B).



Fig. 9. The Prophet Muhammad hearing the complaint of the gazelle (Istanbul, Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, painted by Seyyid Süleyman Kasım Paşa, 18th cent.; ref. Esin 1963, pl. 34).



Fig. 10. The dog Qitmīr in the cave with the Seven Sleepers (Los Angeles, C. & R. Benkaim Collection; Sa'dī, *Kullīyyāt*, Shiraz 16th cent.; ref. Brosch & Milstein 1991, pl. 47).



Fig. 11. The Prophet Muḥammad looking at the snakes and scorpions which torture the arrogant and the presumptuous in Hell (*Mirāj Nāmah*, f. 67b, pl. 58).

THE EVENTS OF PARADISE
FACTS AND ESCHATOLOGICAL DOCTRINE
IN MEDIEVAL ISMĀ'ILĪ HISTORY

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The purpose of this article is no more than a brief analysis of two episodes of medieval Ismā'īlī history which, although taking place in quite different historical periods and geographical regions, display a number of shared features, in particular the occurrence of the notion of Paradise as a structuring principle. One of these episodes is the attempt by the Qarāmita of Bahrayn (273/886-470/1078), or dissident Ismā'īlīs, to restore the 'original religion of Paradise' in the opening decades of the 4th/10th century, while the other is the use of the concept of Paradise as manifested in the declaration of Resurrection (*qiyāma*) by the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs during the Alamūt period (483/1090-654/1256) in the second half of 6th/12th century.

A couple of preliminary observations about the Ismā'īlī movement will be in order. The earliest Ismā'īlīs were a branch of the Imāmī Šī'a, arising from a schism about the succession to the 6th *imām*, Ġa'far aṣ-Šādiq on his death in 148/765. These splinter groups, centered in southern 'Irāq, now acknowledged the claims of aṣ-Šādiq's eldest son Ismā'īl al-Mubārak (d. 136/754) or the latter's son Muḥammad al-Maktūm (d. after 179/795 or about 184/800) to the imāmate (Daftary 1900:93-96).

The early Ismā'īlīs had a very particular conception of their own about the nature of religious authority, the essence of which can be summarized as the continuous need of mankind for a divinely guided spiritual guide (*imām*), an authoritative master who possesses knowledge (*'ilm*) inaccessible to ordinary men. By virtue of that knowledge, he was regarded as the genuine source of religious guidance, the real interpreter of the true meaning of the Qur'ān and the Islamic sacred law (*šarī'a*)¹.

The Ismā'īlī movement itself appeared on the scene in the mid-3rd/9th century as a large-scale centralized underground movement, whose main purpose was to overthrow the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate in Baġdād. Several early sources agree that the earliest Ismā'īlī mission was related to the expectation of the immediate reappearance of Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl as al-Mahdī, who died about 184/800 and would after his return end the era of Islam and proclaim the hidden truth (*haqā'iq*)

¹ Esmail & Nanji 1977:238; Cf. Daftary 2000:88-89.

of former religions². Rather than calling themselves Ismā'īlīs, these adherents dubbed themselves ›People of the Truth‹ (*ahl al-ḥaqqā'iq*), their own religious persuasion ›the true religion‹ (*dīn al-ḥaqq*), and their mission ›call to truth‹ (*da'wat al-ḥaqq*), or ›the rightly guided mission‹ (*ad-da'wa al-ḥādīya*) (Halm 1988:162). Their revolutionary message, which basically consisted of preaching the imminent advent of the ›Truly Guided One‹ (al-Mahdī), or ›The One Who Appears‹ (al-Qā'im), was spread abroad in the strictest confidentiality throughout the Islamic world, from Central Asia to Iran, Iraq, Arabia, Yemen and North Africa.

Several treatises which have survived from the time of the underground propaganda prove that the doctrine embraced by the early Ismā'īlīs was composed of a cyclical history of revelation and a gnostic cosmology. This teaching held that divine revelation advanced through seven prophetic epochs, with each of these being initiated by a Spokesman-Prophet (*nātiq*) who proclaimed a religion of law (*ṣarī'a*) for their communities. They, however, only presented the outward (*zāhir*) aspect of religion with its rituals and legal prescriptions, but did not communicate its inner sense (*bāṭin*) to the believers. The secret meaning of all the rites and regulations was therefore only known to their deputies (*wasī*), who would in turn reveal it to a very limited number of individuals worthy of such initiation (Esmail & Nanji 1977:239). In every cycle (*dawr*), there succeeded seven *imāms*, and the last one among them would always be elevated to the status of Spokesman-Prophet (*nātiq*) for the next cycle, bringing a new scripture and law that invalidated the previous ones.

According to the early Ismā'īlī doctrine, the seventh *imām* of the sixth cycle was Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, which is to say he would then become the seventh and last Speaker (*nātiq*). He did not die, but went into hiding instead, and will appear once more as the Mahdī-Qā'im. The contemporary Imāmi Šī'i heresiographers, reporting on the abrogation of Muḥammad's law (*nash ṣarī'at Muḥammad*), narrate: "They [the early Ismā'īlīs] say that God is giving Ādam's Paradise to Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, which means, according to their doctrine, that all forbidden things and everything that God has created in the world are allowed"³. Nevertheless, instead of coming up with a new religion of law (*ṣarī'a*), he will declare all the old ones obsolete, including that of Islam.

The ›repeal of the laws‹ (*raf' as-ṣarā'ī'*) would clear the way for the ›original religion of Paradise‹ with no prescribed ceremonial or legal system. This was the religion thought to have been the one practised by Adam and the angels in Paradise before the Fall: ›the primaevial religion of Adam‹ (*dīn Ādam al-awwal*), confined to

² The notion of the *gayba* was clearly the original doctrine. On the details of the early *ismā'īlī* doctrine, see art. 'Carmathes', *EIR* I, 825-826; Cf. Daftary 1991:228-231, Halm 1988:168.

³ On the repeal of the religions of law (*raf' as-ṣarā'ī'*), see an-Nawbaḥtī, *Firaq* 62.8-10, 62.16-17, 63.2-4, al-Qummī, *Maqālat* 84.6-8, 84.13, 84.16-17, and the *ismā'īlī* author, as-Sigīstānī, *Iṭbāt* 177-180.

the praise of the Creator and the recognition of His oneness (*tawḥīd*). The seventh *imām*, whose function included the full revelation of all formerly esoteric truths (*ḥaqqā'iq*), would reign over and bring to perfection the world in his capacity as al-Qā'im and al-Mahdī⁴.

The early Ismā'īlī movement underwent a schism in the late 3th/9th century. Abdallāh/ʿUbaydallāh, who was later – after the foundation of the new caliphate (297/910) – to become the first Fāṭimid caliph al-Mahdī, now declared himself *imām* before the public, and was subsequently recognized as such by the bulk of the movement, that is the communities in North Africa, the Yemen, Egypt and Sind⁵. By doing so, he also rejected the idea of the return of Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl as the expected Mahdī. The dissident party of the movement, known as the Qarmatīs or al-Qaramīṭa, and composed of the communities in the East, broke with him and remained devoted to the original creed of the imminent advent of Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl as al-Qā'im and al-Mahdī. After the schism, ʿUbaydallāh and later his successors the Fāṭimid caliphs – claiming as they did the *imāmate* for themselves – were obliged to modify the original doctrine of the Ismā'īlīs about Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl being the final *imām*, al-Qā'im. The first caliph himself left no doubt in his ›Letter to the community in Yemen‹ that, far from being the saviour at the end of time, he was simply the first of a long series of future *imāms* who would succeed to one another in an infinite number of cycles of seven until the reign of the very last of the line⁶. As his actual words are quoted to have stated: "There will be as many *imāms* as God wills, until suddenly and unexpectedly, [the last] Speaker-Prophet appears, God willing"⁷. Consequently, the Fāṭimid doctrine counted with more than one heptade of *imāms* during the era of Islam, postponing the expectations connected with the coming of the al-Qā'im further and further into the future (Halm 1978:10-11).

The greatest insufficiency of this doctrinal modification was the inevitable loss of the eschatological role of the seventh *imām*, and the vital source of motivation that it had provided to the early Ismā'īliyya⁸. Thus, the days of the promised rule of the true religion (*dīn al-ḥaqq*) were indefinitely postponed to some uncertain date. This

⁴ See the details in the relevant sources: an-Nawbaḥtī, *Firaq* 62-63, al-Qummī, *Maqālat* 84, as-Sigīstānī, *Iṭbāt* 180, 190-193; Cf. Madelung 1959:76, Madelung 1988:94, Halm 1988:169, Halm 1991:21.

⁵ With this innovation the *ismā'īliyya* turned away from the notion of occultation (*gayba*) to recognise living *Imāms*.

⁶ ʿUbaydallāh's letter is preserved in the book *al-Farā'id wa-hudūd ad-dīn* of Ġa'far ibn Mansūr al-Yaman (d. 365/975), and was published by H. F. al-Hamdānī 1958:10-14; Cf. Hamdani & de Blois 1982:173-207, Halm 1991:194.

⁷ Arabic text: al-Hamdānī 1958:14; Cf. Halm 1978:9-10.

⁸ Daftary 1991:244; Cf. Halm 1978:11.

was bound to be a huge disappointment to a lot of the followers of the movement. The Fāṭimids, for their part, did not allow any antinomian experiments whatsoever; the *qiyāma*, the era of the Qā'im – whose identity otherwise remained hidden – was shifted into the distant future; a whole series of future Imāms was envisaged, although speculations about the date of the beginning of the *qiyāma* did not cease⁹. Until then, however, observance of Islamic law was to be obligatory even for the Ismā'īlīs.

Nevertheless, the latent antinomian tendencies within their ranks surfaced time and time again, leading to such extreme sets of events as those initiated by the Qarāmita in Baḥrayn, or the Druzes, or the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs of Alamūt (Halm 1991:249-250).

It is in the light of the previous observations that we wish to turn our attention to the events in Baḥrayn that attempted to restore the original religion of Paradise. After the break with the Fāṭimids, the headquarters of the radical dissidents of the Ismā'īlī movement, that is the Qarāmita, was transferred to Baḥrayn, in the Eastern coastal region of Arabia. Here they established their own state, whose power was rooted in the Bedouin tribes of the Northern part of the Arabian peninsula. Their leading ideological authorities, however, lived mostly in Iran. From their stronghold, the Qarmaṭīs led a messianic revolutionary movement with marked antinomian tendencies against the Sunnī Caliphate. They earned a particularly frightful reputation in the Eastern as well as the Western territories of the 'Abbāsīd Empire, shaking the Muslim world for almost two centuries. Their constant raids and marauding expeditions destroyed the caravan and pilgrim routes of South 'Irāq and the urban centres of the region. Their military presence posed a permanent threat to the whole area, and it was to become one of the principal factors contributing to the disintegration of the Caliphate.

As far as they were concerned, recognizing the Fāṭimid caliph 'Ubaydallāh as the Maḥdī was out of the question, as the 'Expected One' was still to arrive. Parallel to their military offensives, they also gave expression to their firm belief in the imminent appearance of the Maḥdī on several occasions. Abū Sa'īd al-Ġannābī (d. 300/913) one of the founding fathers of the *da'wa* in Baḥrayn claimed to be acting on behalf of the expected Maḥdī who was to appear in 300/912¹⁰. The unfulfilled expectations of the adherents quite probably caused internal frustrations within the *da'wa*, which may have contributed to the murder of Abū Sa'īd al-Ġannābī and of several leaders of the movement in the summer of 330/913¹¹.

⁹ Halm 1978:11; Cf. Halm 1975:97 ff.

¹⁰ Abū Sa'īd's prophecies on the awaited Maḥdī see 'Abd al-Ġabbār, *Taḥbīt* II, 379-381.

¹¹ On these events see 'Abd al-Ġabbār, *Taḥbīt* II, 379-381, al-Mas'ūdī, *at-Tanbih* 373, an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* XXV, 243, Ibn ad-Dawādārī, *Kanz* VI, 61, al-Maqrīzī, *Ittī'āz* I, 164.

Otherwise, political astrology played an important role in the history of the entire Ismā'īlī movement. This distinctive Muslim science for the astral determination of political changes was developed after the 'Abbāsīd takeover. It adopted the Sasanian astrological techniques for predictions of dynastic change on the basis of Ptolemaic astronomy, combined with Zoroastrian millennialism. It became the most respected science of the prediction of the predetermined future turnings in world domination, and thus instigated rebellions throughout Islamic history¹².

In the first half of the 4th/10th century, in a famous encyclopaedic work (*Rasā'il*) that is said to have been compiled in early Ismā'īlī circles, the *Iḥwān as-Safā'* (The Brethren of Purity) had developed political astrology in an astrally determined cyclical theory of history. According to it, the conjugation of the stars determined major changes in world history. The *Iḥwān as-Safā'* reconciled a duodecimal system of the Zodiac with the heptads of the Judeo-Christian hierohistory. With reference to one of the Prophet's statements that "[t]he life of this world is seven thousand years. I have been sent in the last of these millennia", in the conception of the *Iḥwān as-Safā'*, each millennium (960 solar years) is divided into two complete cycles, each consisting of four (120-year) quarters of ascension, apogee, decline and clandestinity. Each quarter cycle is inaugurated by a Qā'im, who is followed by six imams. The seventh imam, who completes the heptad, is the Qā'im of the next quartercycle. The Qā'im of the Resurrection (*qiyāma*) would be expected at the end of the millennium of the Prophet Muḥammad, which is the final millennium (Arjomand 2002:120-121). These ideas, like other teachings of the *Iḥwān as-Safā'* concerning human relations, probably retained great influence among later Ismā'īlīs.

Al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048) mentions a prediction, based on erroneous astronomical calculations, of the appearance of the Qā'im at the eighteenth conjunction after the birth of the Prophet Muḥammad, which is made to coincide with 'the tenth millennium, which is presided over by Saturn and Sagittarius'. At that time, the era of Islam and the rule of the Arabs will come to an end. The Qā'im 'will rise and will restore the rule of Magism'¹³.

The Iranian Ismā'īlī *da'ī* in Rayy, Abū Ḥātim ar-Rāzī (d. 322/934), had been spreading the same astrological prediction on the coming of the Qā'im¹⁴.

Then the second successor of Abū Sa'īd al-Ġannābī in the leadership of the Qarmaṭī community in Baḥrayn, his son Abū Tāhir (d. 322/944), prophesied the Maḥdī's imminent arrival after the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 316/928,

¹² See Arjomand 2002:119-120. "*Fī aḥammīyyat at-taḡīm wa-dawruhu fī l-'aṣr al-wasī'*" [The importance and role of astrology in the Middle Ages] in de Goeje, 1978:173-182. Cf. Arjomand 2002:119-120; Halm 1975:102-104.

¹³ al-Bīrūnī, *Āṭār* 213; Cf. *Chronology* 196-197.

¹⁴ Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāma* 285.1-14, *The Book of Government* 210; Cf. Madelung 1988:96.

marking the end of the Islamic period, and the beginning of the final religious era, as did other Qarmatī missionaries in Northern Iran¹⁵.

As the much-awaited date was drawing near, the Qarmatīs increased their offensive activity against the dominions of the Caliphate. They embarked on a series of raids against Southern 'Irāq, pillaging the pilgrims' caravans returning from Mecca, and, in 315/927, they even made an attempt, unsuccessful though it was, at seizing Baḡdād¹⁶.

As a result of the advances of the Maḥdī's messengers in Southern 'Irāq, the local partisans of the Maḥdī revealed their allegiance in the Sawād of Kūfa, attaching exaggerated expectations to the personality of Abū Ṭāhir. They said that the 'Truth' had appeared and the Maḥdī had resurrected: the 'Abbāsids had come to their end, as had all Sunnī dignitaries. "We have not come to establish another dynasty, but to abolish the *ṣarī'a*" (*mā ḡi'nā li-iqāmat dawla wa-lākin li-izālat ṣarī'a*) – they claimed; and they announced the realm of the Maḥdī and collected the poll-tax, but government troops very soon suppressed this uprising¹⁷.

Al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048) mentions in his report "on the eras of pseudo-prophets" that the Qarmatīs of Bahrayn 'promised each other the arrival of the 'Expected One' (*al-muntazar*) in the seventh conjunction of the Fiery Triplicity¹⁸. When that conjunction occurred in 317/928 a young man from Iṣfahān was ready to set off for Bahrayn to claim to be the expected Qa'im-Maḥdī.

Afterwards, the Qaramīta unexpectedly returned from their military expedition to Bahrayn, where construction works on a fortified refuge (*dār al-ḥiḡra*), the prospective residence of the awaited Maḥdī, had been completed. Later, in 319/930, they arrived without warning in Mecca during the pilgrimage season, subsequently committing a dreadful slaughter of the pilgrims and inhabitants, acting exactly like infidels. They finally tore out and carried off the Black Stone (*al-ḥaḡar al-aswad*) of the Ka'ba, presumably with the aim of symbolizing the end of Islam.

It is these disastrous events that lead us to the curious incidents in Ramadān 319/September-October 931, when Abū Ṭāhir presented a young Persian prisoner of war as the expected Maḥdī to his community, handing over authority to him and

¹⁵ On the prophecies of Abū Ṭāhir see 'Abdalḡabbār, *Ṭaḡbit* II, 381, al-Baḡdādī, *Farq* 287; The expectation of the Maḥdī is also reflected in a propagandistic poem by Abū Ṭāhir. In it he designates himself as the one who summons to obey the Maḥdī. For the fragments of the poem, see: al-Bīrūnī, *Āṭar* 214; al-Baḡdādī, *Farq* 287; Cf. de Goeje 1886:113-115, Madelung 1959:79ff, Naṣṣār 1977:II, 341-342, Halm 1991:229.

¹⁶ On the details of the military events see Miskawayhi, *Ṭaḡarīb* I, 172-177.

¹⁷ On this so-called *baḡliyya* revolt in the Sawād of Kūfa see 'Arīb, *Silat* 132ff, 137, 162; 'Abd al-ḡabbār, *Ṭaḡbit* 383-84. Cf. Madelung, 1959:82-84, Halm 1991:227-228.

¹⁸ al-Bīrūnī, *Āṭar* 313-314; Cf. *Chronology* 197.

declaring all previous religions to be invalid: the true religion – "the religion of our father Adam", that is "the religion of Paradise" without laws – had now been revealed and "the talk of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad had shown itself to be lies and deception"¹⁹. The latent antinomian tendencies which from the very beginning mark the Ismā'īlī *da'wa*, become evident here for the first time²⁰. According to their tenets, the religions of the Sacred Law which have been revealed before – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – are only changing outer shells for the 'True religion' (*dīn al-ḡaqq*), the original Religion of Paradise exempt from cultic duties, commandments and prohibitions: the pure worship of God which Adam and the Angels used to practice before the Fall. The Maḥdī – according to their expectations – will restore this original religion to mankind; what could be more obvious, now that he had come, than to declare the time fulfilled, and to abolish the outer shell of the law (*raf' aṣ-ṣarā'i'*). Nevertheless, let us have a look into the relevant reports.

All the sources agree that the youth was a young Persian from Iṣfahān or Ḥurāsān; some even asserted that he was a descendant of the Persian kings and described him as a 'Zoroastrian' or a 'Magian'²¹. Iṣfahān, his home town, had long been associated by the astrologers with the rise of a Persian dynasty which would overthrow the Arab Caliphate.

However, the reports surrounding the events connected to his appearance are contradictory, confused, and they differ radically from one another²². It is also reported that the young man was of a charismatic character, excelled in intelligence and learning, and soon was initiated into the affairs of the Qaramīta. His proud behaviour and noble mien catching the attention of those around him, he was taken before the chief *dā'i* Abū Ṭāhir. In a passage, ('Arīb, *Sila* 163.2-4) there is a mention of a sign (*alāma*) by which the Iṣfahānī was able to make Abū Ṭāhir and his brothers believe that he was the 'Expected One' (*al-muntazar*). According to al-Bīrūnī²³ the date of the Iṣfahānī's arrival was chosen to coincide with the passing of 1500 years from the death of the prophet Zoroaster, at the year 1242 of

¹⁹ The main source is ad-Dahabī, *Ṭarīḡ* XXXIV, [331/942-350/961], 15.10-12. For the interpretation of the events, see my article: Hajnal 1988:187-201; Cf. Madelung 1988:96-97, Halm, 1991:172.

²⁰ In fact, similar events had occurred in the *ismā'īlī* communities before in Yemen in 299/912 and in Ifriqiya 309/921. See the details in *Sirat al-Ḥādī* 262 and Ibn Idārī, *Bayān* I, 187; Cf. Halm 1991:223-224.

²¹ al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh* 361.15-16; 'Abd al-ḡabbār, *Ṭaḡbit* I, 107, II, 387; Cf. Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāma* 310.3, *The Book of Government* 230.

²² Ṭabīṭ ibn Sinān, *Qaramīta* 225-226, Miskawayhi, *Ṭaḡarīb* II, 55-56, *Eclipse* II, 62-64; Cf. Ibn al-Aḡīr, *Kamil* VIII, 351-352, 'Abd al-ḡabbār, *Ṭaḡbit* II, 386-388.

²³ al-Bīrūnī, *Āṭar* 313, Cf. *Chronology* 197.

Alexander's era for which prophecies attributed to Zoroaster and Ġāmāsp were predicting the restoration of the reign of the Magians.

Among the reports of the emergence of the young Iṣfahānī, there is a particularly valuable Sunnī eyewitness account from within the personal entourage of Abū Ṭāhir, by his personal physician²⁴.

This doctor (a certain Ibn Hamdān) tells us how the power was handed over. According to his report, when the chief *dā'ī* was presenting the youth to the community, "the people, including the Qarmaṭī Abū Ṭāhir and his brothers, were staying around him. Then Abū Ṭāhir called out as loudly as he could: 'You people! Know: We and you also were all donkeys! But now God has sent us this person', - and he pointed to the youth - 'this is my Lord (*hādā rabbī*) and your Lord (*rabbukum*), and my God (*ilāhī*) and your God (*ilāhukum*). We are all his slaves! The rule has now been transferred to him, and he will be king of us all (*wa-huwa yamlukunā kullanā*)'."

Then the eyewitness proceeds to narrate that Abū Ṭāhir and all the others took a handful of earth and strewed it over their heads. Thereupon Abū Ṭāhir declared: "Know, you people, that the [true] religion has now appeared. It is the religion of our father Adam (*huwa dīn abīnā Ādam*) and all religions we have belonged to until now are null and void, and everything that the *dā'īs* have been telling you is null and void and false, all the talk about Moses, Jesus, and Muḥammad! The true religion is the original religion of Adam, and those are all wily deceivers, so curse them! Then the people cursed them including Abraham, Muḥammad, even 'Alī and his descendants."

The doctor's report further states: "Abū Ṭāhir and the people used to circle around him [the incarnate God], completely naked, shouting: 'Our God, he is mighty and exalted!'"

Heinz Halm was the first to interpret these ritual ceremonies correctly as a Qarmaṭī attempt at restoring the religion of Adam, a way of ›returning to Paradise‹²⁵. The circling in the nudity of Paradise around the God who had become visible and walked among the men fits entirely into the early Ismā'īlī notion of the ›original religion of Paradise‹. A century later entirely similar ideas were to be found among the Druzes, who were also Ismā'īlī dissenters²⁶.

²⁴ ad-Dahabī, *Tārīḥ* XXXIV, 14-16; Cf. Miskawayhi, *Tagārib* II, 58.1-12.

²⁵ Halm also points out that nakedness was also characteristic of the participants in the rituals of the Adamite communities in late Antiquity and in medieval Europe. Sexual freedom was part of their attitude too, since they had entered into the condition of prelapsarian innocence, and thus their bodies were thought to be incapable of sinning. See Halm 1991:259-280.

²⁶ See Van Ess 1977:70-71; Cf. Vatikiotis 1957:149-158.

According to our sources the Iṣfahānī who evidently took the astral sign to indicate the end of the era of world dominion by the Arabs and the beginning of the domination of the Persians, had initiated a number of strange ceremonies. He prescribed pederasty and incest with their own sisters for them, and he ordered that all beardless youths who refused should be put to death. He also ordered them to worship the fire and to cut off the hand of everybody who put out the fire with his hand or the tongue of everybody who extinguished it by blowing and then began to execute the notables of Bahrayn²⁷.

Therefore after a while Abū Ṭāhir was obliged to acknowledge that the *Iṣfahānī* had been an impostor who had led him astray and had him killed²⁸.

Regarding the events Abū Ṭāhir could perhaps reckon with certain sentiments for some aspects of Persian religious tradition among the Qarmaṭī community in Bahrayn. And there were evidently some links with established Zoroastrianism, for the chief priest of the Magians, Isfandiyār ibn Ādarbād, was accused of complicity with Abū Ṭāhir and executed by order of the caliph ar-Rādī (322/934-329/940) (al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh* 104-105). But we think that the central incentives of the developments were implied in the traditional Ismā'īlī doctrine and the expectations concerning the advent of the seventh Speaker-Prophet (*nātiq*), the Qā'im-Mahdī. Ad-Dahabī relates that exaggerated expectations were attached to Abū Ṭāhir's personality by his followers, like those we mentioned in connection with the uprising in the *Sawād* of Kūfa. He completes his account by saying that, "given no more delay by God, [Abū Ṭāhir] felt that his downfall was near, so he handed his power over to Abū l-Faḍl al-Maḡūsī al-ʿAḡamī."

De Blois (1986:18) regards the Iṣfahānī as a puppet created by Abū Ṭāhir, who arranged the whole intermezzo in order to fulfil his plans of gaining more power. Halm's (1991:235ff) careful reconstruction of the occurrences even depicts this obscure episode as a well-designed scenario, which comprises the capture of the young Persian (316/928), the arrangement of the predicted catastrophe with the disgrace of the sanctuary in Mecca (317/930), and also the disclosure of the youth's divinity to the community (319/931).

After all this unfortunate experiment with the incarnate God had seriously demoralised the Qarāmīta in Bahrayn and weakened their influence over the Ismā'īlī communities in the East, the movement's ideologists in the Iranian territories tried to restore the doctrinal unity of Qarmaṭī Ismā'īlīs, with but little success. Abū

²⁷ See ad-Dahabī, *Tārīḥ* XXXIV, 15.14-16, Miskawayhi, *Tagārib* II, 58.12-14; Cf. al-Bīrūnī, *Āṭār* 313.2-5; Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāma* 309.12-15; 'Abd al-Ġabbār, *Ṭabīʿ* I, 30.7-8. Ṭābit, *Qarāmīta* 55-56.

²⁸ On the denouement of the events see ad-Dahabī, *Tārīḥ* XXXIV, 15.18-21; Miskawayhi, *Tagārib* II, 59.

Tāhir and his advisers were, nevertheless, able to maintain their power. The Muslim rites were restored to their rightful position, since the Mahdī still had not arrived.

A century later, Nāṣir-i Husrō (d. 481/1089), the *ismā'īlī dā'ī* and famous traveler and author, reported²⁹ that the Qarāmīta of Bahrayn still believed they were in the era of the Prophet Muhammad and of Islam, and they abstained from drinking wine. He also relates the interesting details, certified for the most part by Abū-l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (d. 449/1057) (*Gufṛān* III, 235) that the Qarmaṭī community had continued to await the Šarīf Abū Sa'īd's return from death [sic!], as he himself had promised.

It is worth mentioning that the expectation of the return of the Hidden Imām remained a popular eschatological belief. By 483/1092, the underground passage to a water well (*sardāb*) in Sāmarrā', where the Hidden Imām, Muḥammad al-Mahdī, was believed to have disappeared in 260/874, had become a place of pilgrimage. At about the same time, the *šī'ī* inhabitants of the city of Kāšān in central Iran are reported to have expected the return of the Mahdī and regularly organized processions on horseback, fully armed, determined to return with him only. Similar outward demonstrations of *šī'ī* eschatological expectation are reported by Ibn Bābūya (d. 381/991) and Ibn Haldūn (d. 809/1406) in the 8/14th century³⁰.

In the case of the Qarmaṭīs of Bahrayn the former idea of the Mahdī had, in about a century, crystallized as a myth, and some facets of the theocratic attributes of the Imām-Mahdī were inherited by the founder of the *dā'wa* in the region as was bound to happen in other areas and times too in a *Šī'ī* milieu.

Incidentally, the intermezzo of the Pseudo-Mahdī in Bahrayn gave rise to the persistent charges of Sunnī polemicists and other adversaries of the *Ismā'īlīs* that the core of their doctrine was a dualist atheism and that its founders were some non-'Alid heretics plotting to destroy Islam from within, and so they gradually created the 'black legend' of the *Ismā'īliyya*³¹.

The lack of a united leadership and the ideological disagreement among the Qarāmīta evidently aided the Fāṭimids' efforts to regain the allegiance of the dissident *Ismā'īlī* communities in the East. The *qarmaṭī dā'īs* could either remain loyal to their original eschatological ideas, or accept a secularization of the role of the Mahdī, whose manifestation would then be understood symbolically, as the dynastic revolution brought by the Fāṭimids. Some missionaries attempted to achieve a compromise

between loyalty to a secular power and the eschatological import of their original belief (Cortese 1993:68).

It is not difficult to appreciate that the expectation of the imminent return of the Mahdī-Qā'im and the concomitant advent of the primeval lawlessness and 'paradi-siacal religion' must have contributed significantly to the popular appeal of the *Ismā'īlī dā'wa*. But it was not long before the delay in the messianic arrival caused problems for the Qarmaṭīs; thus the Iranian *dā'ī* Abū Hātim ar-Rāzī from Rayy had been obliged to flee when the date predicted by him for the return of the Mahdī passed uneventfully, and in Bahrayn in 319/931 a pseudo-Mahdī had even been presented and the Islamic Sacred law declared to be annulled.

Likewise the Fāṭimids in the period following their ascent to power faced a problem similar to the movement which had preceded them. This problem was partly one of wrestling with the expectations of the people who had supported the movement when it was still seeking to gain power. By establishing a dynasty of imāms in the Fāṭimid *dā'wa* the return of the Mahdī-Qā'im was pushed into the distant future. By the 5/11th century, it was evident that the Fāṭimid imām-caliphs, despite having established a powerful empire, had not realised the promises which had given the dynasty its messianic character. Thus the overthrowing of the 'Abbasids and the uniting of the whole Muslim community under the guidance of the Imām had been unfulfilled. But the messianic expectations and the even then latent antinomian inclinations remained virulent and at the beginning of the century broke out in the full-scale antinomian movement of the Druzes. Their chief *dā'īs* maintained that 'the era of the Qā'im' (*qiyāma*) had begun, and the Caliph al-Ḥakim (386/996-411/1021) was God and that the Islamic revelation and its *Ismā'īlī* interpretation were superstitions. Followers of the worship of the Caliph al-Ḥakim seem to have been eager to precipitate events by proclaiming the abolition of all beliefs including the Sacred law of Islam (*šarī'a*) and its esoteric (*bāṭinī*) interpretation³².

Far less disastrous and more durable was the proclamation of the Great Resurrection (*qiyāmat*) or 'Resurrection of the Resurrection' (*qiyāmat-i qiyāmat*) by the Nizārī *Ismā'īlīs* two centuries later.

We shall now devote some reflections to the problem of the place of Paradise in the thought of the Nizārī *Ismā'īlīs*. We may start with some remarks about their historical background. At the end of 5th/11th century the unified *Ismā'īlī dā'wa* and community of Fāṭimid times were split into rival Musta'li and Nizārī branches. The schism resulted from the dispute over the succession to the Fāṭimid caliph-imām al-Mustansir (d. 487/1094). The Nizārīs had broken off the Fāṭimids in this schism, upholding the Imāmate of Nizār, the ousted older son of the caliph al-Mustansir.

²⁹ Nāṣir-i Husrō, *Safarnāma* 82.12-15, Cf. *Book of Travels* 87.

³⁰ Friedlaender 1911:496-497; Cf. Arjomand 1998: II, 269.

³¹ See the so-called Bagdad Manifesto of 403/1011 and of 444/1052 in Abū-l-Fidā', *Tārīḥ* II, 142-143, and Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* VIII, 73, 310-311, and about their 'heretics' see al-Baghdādī, *Farq* 282, *Moslem sects* 107, Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāma* 255.7-9, *The Book of Government* 188; Cf. Daftary, 1991:109, 111, 149, 194, 220.

³² See Van Ess 1977:35-37, 48-49, 54-55, 56-60, 80-81; Bryer 1975-76:55; 1976:10-11, 13-14, 21, 250; Cf. art. 'Durūz' *EF* II, 632.

Some Nizārīs believed later that their Imām was in occultation and would return as the Qā'im-Mahdī.

The Ismā'īlīs of Persia by this time were already under the leadership of Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ (d. 518/1124) who in the succession dispute upheld the right of Nizār, the original heir-designate, who had been deprived of his succession rights. Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ, as the representative (*ḥuḡḡa*) of the absent *imām*, founded an independent Nizārī Ismā'īlī state and mission centred at the mountain fortress of Alamūt in Northern Persia. In due course, the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs also established a subordinate state in Northern Syria.

In the political field, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ initiated a policy of armed revolt from a network of mountain fortresses against the Salḡūq sultanate backed by the Sunnī establishment³³. In confrontation with the overwhelming military power of the Salḡūq opponents, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ introduced the policy of spectacular murders of leading politicians and religious dignitaries by his fearless warriors or self-sacrificing devotees (*fidā'ī*) for the purpose of intimidation and deterrence. The conduct of the Nizārī emissaries seemed so irrational to the opponents that they called them 'hashish addicts' (*ḥašīšīyyūn*)³⁴.

At the same time the Nizārīs had been waiting impatiently since Nizār's death for the appearance of their Imām, who would personally take charge of their leadership and guide them in those troubled times³⁵.

In the doctrinal field, Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ underlined their doctrinal independence by elaborating a new missionary doctrine which became known as the 'new preaching' (*da'wa ḡadīda*) in the history of the Ismā'īliyya. In a theological treatise he restated the inadequacy of human reason in knowing God and understanding the religious truths, arguing for the necessity of an authoritative teacher (*mu'allim-i ṣādiq*) for the spiritual guidance of mankind, and he concluded that this trustworthy teacher is none other than the Ismā'īlī *imām* of the time³⁶. Thus Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ reaffirmed the central teaching of the old Šī'ī doctrine of the imāmate, which now became commonly known as the doctrine of *ta'līm* or of divinely inspired and authoritative teaching by the *imām*. But the doctrinal innovation of Ḥasan-i Šabbāḥ was hardly a radical challenge to Islam; yet by exalting the autonomous teaching authority of each *imām* in his time, in independence from his predecessors, he paved the way for

the great outburst of radical religious activity and the antinomian tendencies of the later Alamūt period, namely of *qiyāma* times.

As regards the notion of Paradise in the Nizārī community, it is worth mentioning that by the 6th/12th century Muslims had long been familiar with the Islamic traditions, rooted in the Qur'an, which held that pious believers, those who feared God and followed the right path, as well as martyrs of Islam, would be guaranteed an eternal place in Paradise as their deserved reward in the afterlife. For the Šī'ī Muslims, their imāms would also ensure through their intercessory role on the Day of Judgement that their followers should receive their just reward by being admitted into Paradise (Ayyoub 1978:198-199, 204-205, 207, 210, 217, 221-222, 229). The Nizārī Ismā'īlīs of the only rightful *imām* of the time, certainly expected to qualify as a saved community destined for salvation and the state of paradise in the afterlife.

There were, however, more specific reasons why the Nizārīs in general and their emissaries (*fidā'ī*) in particular expected to be deserving of Paradise. Ever since the martyrdom of the *imām* al-Husayn and his companions in 60/680, the theme of martyrology had occupied a particular place in the Šī'ī ethos, which accorded a unique status, comparable to that of pious believers, to those devotees who gave their lives in the service of their creed and of their *imām*. This was, indeed, the manner in which the *fidā'īs* were viewed by the rest of the Nizārī community during the Alamūt period. These Nizārī emissaries, whether they returned safely from their missions or lost their lives as martyrs, were held in high esteem, attested to by the rolls of honour kept at Alamūt and other major Nizārī fortresses. A rare instance of its kind is a poem by Ra'īs Ḥasan, a Persian Nizārī historian, poet and functionary of the early 7th/13th century, in which the three *fidā'īs* who had killed a Turkish *amīr* are praised for their self-sacrificing behaviour which had entitled them to the joys of the otherworldly Paradise (Daftary 1995:98). Similar ideas are echoed in the scattered and brief references to the *fidā'īs* in Muslim historical sources. They reveal, for instance, that the mothers of the *fidā'īs* would happily expect their sons to become martyrs and as such enter Paradise³⁷.

Nevertheless, the Paradise conception of the Nizārī community appears most definitely in the subsequent events. Their eschatological expectations and desires for Paradise culminated simultaneously when in 559/1164 on the astrologically determined date of 17th Ramaḡān/8th August³⁸ the fourth Lord of Alamūt, Ḥasan

³³ Halm 1988:185; Cf. Daftary 2000:101-102.

³⁴ Madelung 1988:103; Cf. Halm 1988:185.

³⁵ For the time being, the Nizārī *da'wa* once more reverted to the notion of occultation [*ḡayba*] and propagated the idea of a hidden anonymous imām. Cf. Halm 1988:186.

³⁶ See aš-Šahrastānī, *Milal* I, 150-151, *Muslim Sects* I, 167-170; Cf. Madelung 1988:102, 109; Daftary, 2000:102-103.

³⁷ Ivanow 1938:64-71; Cf. Hunzai 1997:83-84.

³⁸ The date was of significance to the Ismā'īlīs for two reasons: firstly, it marked the anniversary of the day that Imām 'Alī had been killed [40/661]. Secondly, it fell in the middle of Ramaḡān, a time when the Muslims generally were required to fast during the hours of daylight and eat only a very restricted range of foods during the hours of darkness.

'*alā dikrihi s-salām* declared in the third year of his reign that the *qiyāma*, the era of the Qā'im, had begun and that the Islamic Sacred law (*šari'a*), which had until then been rigorously observed, was abrogated on the orders of the Hidden *imām*.

The accounts of what happened are preserved in the later Ismā'īlī sources and also in the somewhat different reports in Persian Īlhānid chronicles written after the fall of Alamūt³⁹. They provide information on these curious events. On the 17th day of the month of Ramaḍān in the year 559 (8 August 1164) Hasan ordered the erection of a pulpit (*minbar*) in the courtyard of Alamūt, facing West, with four great banners of four colours – white, red, yellow, and green – at the four corners. The people from different regions, whom he had previously summoned to Alamūt, were assembled in the courtyard – those from the East on the right side, those from the West on the left side, and those from the North in front, facing the pulpit. As the pulpit faced West the congregants were all standing with their backs toward Mecca. "Then" – says an Ismā'īlī report – "towards noon, the Lord [*Hasan 'alā dikrihi s-salām*], wearing a white garment and a white turban, came down from the castle, approached the pulpit from the right side, and in the most perfect manner ascended it. Three times he uttered greetings, first to the Daylamīs, then to those on the right, then to those on the left. In a moment he sat down, and then rose up again and, holding his sword, spoke in a loud voice"⁴⁰. Addressing 'the inhabitants of the worlds, *ginn*s, men and angels', he announced that a message had come to him from the Hidden Imām, with new guidance. And then he said: "The Imām of our time has sent you His blessing and His compassion, and has called you His special chosen servants. He has freed you from the burden of the rules of the Sacred Law, and has brought you to the Resurrection"⁴¹.

And what is more the Hidden Imām required in His message that His *šī'a* must obey and follow Hasan '*alā dikrihi s-salām* as His deputy (*ḥalīfa*) in all religious and temporal matters, recognize His commands as binding, and regard his word as that of the imām. After completing his address, Hasan '*alā dikrihi s-salām* stepped down from the pulpit and performed the two prostrations (*rak'at*) of the festival prayer (*namāz-i 'īd*). Then He invited the people to join at a table which had been prepared for the breaking of their fast⁴². He declared that day the Festival of Resurrection

³⁹ The main sources are: Ġuwaynī, *Ġabān-ḡuṣāy* III, 222-243, *World-Conqueror* II, 686-699; Rašīd ad-Dīn, *Ġami'* 130-137; Kāšānī, *Zubdat* 199-208; Cf. Halm 1988:187; Mirza 1997:30-31, 81-84.

⁴⁰ Abū Ishāq Quhistānī, *Haft Bah* 41, *Kalām-i Pīr* 60-61, 115-117; Cf. Lewis 1985:72.

⁴¹ Ġuwaynī, *Ġabān-ḡuṣāy* III, 226-230, *World-Conqueror* II, 688-690; Rašīd ad-Dīn, *Ġami'* 132-133; Kāšānī, *Zubdat* 201-202; Cf. Daftary, 1991:386-387.

⁴² The idea of the messianic banquet is found in both the Jewish and Christian traditions where it is mentioned as the way in which the advent of the Millennium would be celebrated. Jesus said: 'And I appoint unto you a kingdom [...] that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom'. Luke, 22.30. Cf.

(*'īd-i qiyāmat*) and the people feasted and made merry. Messengers were sent to carry the glad tidings to East and West. The *Nizārī* communities in Quhistān followed suit. Islamic worship was forbidden on pain of punishment. The Īlhānid sources also relate: "And that day on which these ignominies were divulged and these evils proclaimed in that nest of heretics, Mu'minabad, that assembly played harp and rebeck and openly drank wine upon the very steps of the pulpit and within its precincts"⁴³. In Syria too the word was received, and the faithful celebrated the end of the law (*al-Bustān al-Ġāmi'* 136). Accounts of a different kind relating to the proclamation of the Resurrection are to be found in the work of the Mamlūk historian Ibn ad-Dawādārī (d. 713/1313). He states that "the Ismā'īlīs changed the Islamic religion and drank wine, had intercourse with daughters, mothers and sisters and did all the things forbidden in the month of Ramaḍān all day and night. They also burned all their mosques, shrines and pulpits" (Ibn ad-Dawādārī, *Kanz* VI, 562.5-8).

The solemn and ritual infringement of the law – the congregants with their backs towards Mecca, the afternoon banquet in the midst of the fast – mark the culmination of eschatological expectations and strong antinomian tendencies which is recurrent in the Ismā'īliyya and has unambiguous parallels in the milieu of the Qaramita and, later, of the Druzes⁴⁴.

One wonders, however, what the introduction of these doctrines might have actually meant to the *Nizārīs* in Persia and Syria. From the limited information which is available, it appears that the *qiyāma*, the awaited 'Last Day' – when mankind would be judged and committed for ever to either Paradise or Hell – was interpreted spiritually on the basis of the well-known Ismā'īlī method of esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*)⁴⁵. On this basis it was explained that the *qiyāma* meant the manifestation of the unveiled truth (*ḥaqīqa*) in the person of the *Nizārī* imām. This implied that the era (*dawr*) of the Sacred law (*šari'a*) and outer reality (*zāhir*) had come to an end and the era of inner reality (*bāṭin*) had begun. All members of the *Nizārī* community could know God and the cosmic mysteries through the Imām, and God would constantly be in their hearts. The essence of these ideas, in Ġuwaynī's words,

"[w]as that, following the Philosophers, they spoke of the World as being uncreated and Time as unlimited and the Resurrection as spiritual [...]. It was laid down in the Sacred law that men must worship God five times a day and be with Him. That charge was only formal but now in the Resurrection they must always

Cortese, 1993:159, n.35.

⁴³ Ġuwaynī, *Ġabān-ḡuṣāy* III, 230, 238, *World-Conqueror* II, 691, 696; Cf. Rašīd ad-dīn, *Ġami'* 133, 136, Kāšānī, *Zubdat* 200, 202, 204.

⁴⁴ Lewis 1985:73. Cf. Halm 1991:187.

⁴⁵ Daftary 1995:40-41, Cf. *idem*. 2000:103-104.

be with God in their hearts and keep the faces of their souls constantly turned in the direction of the Divine Presence, for such is true prayer”⁴⁶.

According to their beliefs only the Nizārī Ismā‘īlīs, – as the sole community of the true believers acknowledging the rightful imām of the time – were capable of understanding the spiritual reality and the true meaning of all religions and, as such, Paradise had been created for them in this world. The Nizārīs were henceforth collectively admitted into Paradise and their mission (*da‘wa*) implied an invitation into that paradisiacal state. By contrast, all other religious communities, who continued to adhere to the shell of the law, were condemning themselves to the Hell of spiritual non-being (Daftary 1995:41, 99).

The Ḫānīd historians relate that, in line with the expectations regarding the time of Resurrection, the Sacred law of Islam was abrogated in the Nizārī community⁴⁷. “The true believers”, as was fitting in Paradise, could thenceforth dispense with the obligations specified by the letter of law, since they had now found access to the meanings hidden behind those commandments. In another passage of his chronicle Ibn ad-Dawādārī relates that at the time when the Ḫwārazmšāh was proceeding towards the (Ismā‘īlī) territories Ḫasan ibn Muḥammad [*‘alā dīkrihi s-salām*] dreamed of the Imām ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib who told him to relinquish the Sacred law of Islam its obligations and the *sunna*. Ḫasan, supposedly addressing himself to the believers, stated that because he had the right to impose the *šarī‘a*, he also had the right to remove it⁴⁸. According to the Sunnī chroniclers, it was for their abolition of *šarī‘a* that the Nizārīs became designated as ›heretics‹ (*malāhida*)⁴⁹.

There are indications that among the Syrian Nizārīs, who lived far away from Alamūt in a different environment, the doctrine of *qiyāma*, or more specifically its local version, was not fully understood by all the factions of the community. The sources mentioning the so-called episode of the ›Pures‹ (*sufāt*) state that these Nizārīs in the Ġabal as-Summāq committed all sorts of forbidden actions and indulged in libertine practices in the belief that the exoteric rules of the sacred law (*šarī‘a*) were no longer to be observed after the proclamation of the *qiyāma* at Alamūt. Therefore

⁴⁶ Ġuwaynī, *Ġabān-gušāy* III, 237-239, *World-Conqueror* II, 695-696; Rašīd ad-Dīn, *Ġāmi‘* 135-136.

⁴⁷ There is a different opinion among some modern *ismā‘īlī* scholars regarding Ḫasan’s *‘alā dīkrihi s-salām* proclamation. Esmail and Nanji declare that ‘However, the current view among some historians that the proclamation [of *qiyāma*] involved an abrogation of *šarī‘a* has never been substantiated.’ Esmail & Nanji 1977:249.

⁴⁸ Ibn ad-Dawādārī, *Kanz* VIII, 146. These informations indicate that the author had access to sources different from those used by the Ḫānīd historians.

⁴⁹ Ġuwaynī, *Ġabān-gušāy* III, 238-241, *World-Conqueror* II, 696-698; Rašīd ad-Dīn, *Ġāmi‘* 133; Kašānī, *Zubdat* 209; Cf. Daftary, 1995:41.

those extremists, in order to celebrate this new freedom, held festivities alleged to have been accompanied by unlawful incidents⁵⁰.

Both the anonymous chronicle *al-Bustān al-Ġāmi‘* and Ibn Ġubayr (d. 614/1217) in his travels (*Rihla*) mention these events, and the *Bustān* gives the date as 561/1165. Ibn al-‘Adīm (d. 660/1262) puts the date for the episode of the *Ṣufāt* some years later, at 572/1176-7. But the sources, with the exception of Ibn al-‘Adīm, do not state that the contemporary head of the Syrian *da‘wa* Rāšīd ad-Dīn Sinān (d. 588/1193), was responsible for the alleged debauchery in Ġabal as-Summāq. Nor is there in the sources any mention of the role of Alamūt in these events.

Ibn al-‘Adīm relates that a certain *Ṣayḥ* from the district of al-Ġazr said that Rāšīd ad-Dīn Sinān had told the communities to live together in ›purity‹, to help one another, and co-operate in the full sense of the word. The people of al-Ġazr went to Ġabal as-Summāq and said that they had been ordered to live in ›purity‹, and so on. Ibn al-‘Adīm ends his account with the statement that Rāšīd ad-Dīn Sinān summoned these people to the fortresses where he punished them and put some of them to death⁵¹.

Certainly such episodes provided further suitable excuses for the Muslim opponents of the Nizārīs to accuse them of the outright abandonment of the law and of engaging in antinomian actions.

The declaration of the *qiyāma* was later elaborated in terms of a theological doctrine and effectively replaced the doctrine of *ta‘līm* as the pivot of Nizārī thought. In this capacity, it initiated a new spiritual and esoteric era in the life of the Nizārī community. Nevertheless, it represents the most controversial episode in the entire Nizārī history. Its impetus could not be permanently sustained. After the death of Ḫasan (II) *‘alā dīkrihi s-salām* (561/1166) his son Muḥammad (II) (561/1166 – 601/1210) claimed for the first time that he and his father were true descendants of the Fātimid Nizār and thus were themselves Imām-Qā‘im who bring in the *qiyāma* and repeal the law replacing an apocalyptic Mahdī-Qā‘im. But half a century later Ḫasan’s second successor, Ġalāl ad-Dīn Ḫasan (III) put an end to the episode of *qiyāma*, reintroduced the *šarī‘a* and made peace with an-Nāšir (575/1180 – 622/1225), the Sunnī ‘Abbāsīd caliph of Baġdād, whose political power and religious authority were considerably increasing at that time.

The proclamation of the *qiyāma* has been the object of different interpretation by modern scholarship. Hodgson understood the introduction of the *qiyāma* as “a declaration of independence of sovereign authority; they [the Nizārīs] refused to guide

⁵⁰ Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Zubdat* III, 22, 31-32, 38-39; *al-Bustān al-Ġāmi‘* 136; Ibn Ġubayr, *Rihla* 224, 229, *Travels*, 264-265; Cf. Mirza, 1997:81-82.

⁵¹ Ibn al-‘Adīm, *Zubdat* III, 31.12-32.3; Cf. Lewis 1966:261.

themselves by what Islamic society might think of them. But the same time it was an admission of defeat in the attempt to take over Islam at large" (Hodgson 1955:57).

According to Ivanow the revelation of the secret doctrine through the proclamation of *qiyāma* was a reward to the Nizārī community for the suffering which had accompanied its religious and military life for decades⁵². Stroeve saw the revelation as a means adopted by Hasan (II) to abolish class distinction between the Ismā'īlī élite and the masses (1960:24-25). Buckley has investigated the events from an anthropological point of view and argued that the ›festival‹ of the *qiyāma* represented a temporary shifting from a ›normal-profane‹ order of existence (the period characterized by the practice of the *šarī'a*) to an ›abnormal-sacred‹ order (the period introduced by the *qiyāma* abolishing the *šarī'a*). The ceremony organized to celebrate such a ›shift‹ was a technique for changing the status of the people involved in it from ›profane‹ to ›sacred‹⁵³.

Daftary (1991:389) is also of the opinion that the announcement of the *qiyāma* was in fact a declaration of independence from the larger Muslim society and, at the same time, an admission of the failure of the Nizārī struggle to take over that society, for the *qiyāma* declared the outside world irrelevant.

In recapitulation, we can make the following observations on the basis of our analysis of the above two historical events that took place in different periods and in rather dissimilar geographical and social settings. Both events may be regarded as historical responses to the challenges rooted in the peculiar messianistic doctrines of the Ismā'īlī movement. The element linking these two distinct reactions is their overall pattern, whereby the *qiyāma* episode in Alamūt had more or less the same function as the advent of the Mahdī among the Qarmatīs of Baḥrayn. The eschatological beliefs concerning Paradise had a key role in both events⁵⁴.

And yet, a careful examination of the historical events which have been discussed here show that different motives can be detected behind them. In the pseudo-Mahdī intermezzo of Baḥrayn, Abū Tāhir al-Gannābī, a succesful military leader, was caught up in a sort of legitimacy crisis caused by various factors, namely the failure of the Qarmatī invasion of Baḡdād (316/928), the tragic turn of the events in Mecca (319/930), the internal tensions between the two opposing factions of the Qarmatī leadership, and last but not least, the frustration felt by the Qarmatīs over their unfulfilled expectations of the Mahdī's arrival. As a consequence, the charisma of

Abū Tāhir was seriously impaired. He sought to solve this crisis by arranging a kind of theocratic *coup d'état*, that is, the intermezzo of the pseudo-Mahdī⁵⁵.

In the case of the Nizārīs' *qiyāma* episode, there also appears to have been an increasing level of frustration at the increasingly apparent unlikelihood of the imminent return of the Hidden Imām, long awaited since the death of Nizār, which had occurred nearly half a century before. An additional source of frustration and anguish was the stalemate they had reached in the course of their conflict with the Salḡūqs. There were malcontents in the community who looked back at the days of Hasan-i Sabbāh as a kind of heyday, when nothing was impossible for the rising movement. And it is a recurrent pattern in such conflicts, familiar to the historian, that deadlock against the external enemy will intensify internal discord.

On the other hand, the modification of the original Ismā'īlī doctrine of *ta'līm* by Hasan-i Sabbāh, exalting as it did the autonomous teaching authority of each Imām in his time, in independence from his predecessor, provided considerable free scope for action and ideological innovation by the Imām and even his authorized representatives. This gave a remarkably free hand to the Lord of Alamūt, Hasan (II) *alā dīkerihī s-salām*, the then head of the Nizārī community, a man excelling in intelligence and learning to a far greater extent than his predecessors, who were primarily military leaders; and he was ready to use his new powers to find a solution to the internal crisis of his community.

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⁵² See Ivanow's Introduction, lxxx, in Tūsī, *Rawdat*.

⁵³ Buckley 1984:161-164; Cf. Cortese 1993:149-150.

⁵⁴ Here I am basically in agreement with the findings of Madelung; Cf. his 1988:103.

⁵⁵ See Hajnal 1998:195-198.

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PARADISE AND HELL IN THE QUR'ĀN

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The vignettes of Paradise and Hell are amongst the most vivid that occur in the Qur'an, equalled and perhaps even surpassed only by the events that immediately precede peoples' entry into them, those of the Day of Judgement.

If we look for their literary background, there is of course nothing like them in pre-Islamic literature, though the vignette, an impressionistic sketch that stirs the listeners' imagination, is a favourite, and wonderfully effective, device in pre-Islamic poetry. The ability to conjure up such sketches was something required of every poet, and real masters could do so in a handful of words. Just part of the first hemistich of aš-Šanfarā's *Lāmiyyat al-ʿarab*¹

aqīmū ... sudūra maṭiyyi-kum

raise up the breasts of your riding camels

is enough to evoke all the activities connected with breaking camp and moving on.

More commonly a picture is fitted into a full line, no doubt due to the practice of treating the majority of lines as separate units, but larger pictures can then be built up by aggregating a number of such lines. This can be seen memorably in virtually all great early Arabic poems. To stay with the same poem, the great 'wolf simile' in the *Lāmiyyat al-ʿarab*² consists of a number of pictures put together, not all of them closely connected with the main theme. Thus, tucked inside the description of the wolves we find first a brief but hardly connected sketch³, though one that would have meant much to aš-Šanfarā's contemporaries:

arrow shafts being shaken in the palms of the *maysir* dealer.

This is followed in the very next line by another thematically remote description, this time giving a partial picture of the dangerous practice of gathering honey:

the disturbed bees whose swarm has been stirred up by the sticks

which a climbing honey-gatherer has poked down into the nest.

These are, typically, descriptions that invite the listener to add his own associations.

The range of topics covered in poetic descriptive sketches is very wide. Among them are some that show a relentlessness of drive that is also to be found in Qur'anic descriptive passages. Two examples will have to suffice here. The first again comes

¹ See the edition and translation in my *Early Arabic Poetry*, I, 139-184.

² Lines 26-35 of the poem.

³ Line 30.

from the *Lāmiyyat al-‘arab*⁴. It depicts the poet struggling with his ‘furies’ and with his anxieties. The first two lines are:

The quarry of the furies that have gambled over his flesh
 – the victim belonging to whichever of them comes across him first,
 Whilst he sleeps, they sleep but with their eyes open.
 They steal swiftly along to bring him to his doom.

A more cumulative, but equally driven, sketch can be seen the closing section of the *Mu‘allaqa* of ‘Abīd b. al-Abras, the final three lines of which depict an eagle killing a fox⁵:

Then she overtook him and flung him down,
 and her prey was in agony beneath her.
 She threw him up, then flung him down,
 and the stony ground scratched his face.
 He squeals as her talons bite into his flank.
 There is no escape – his breast is pierced.

Turning to religious comparisons, Judaism has never developed clear pictures of (or needs for) Paradise and Hell. The opposite is the case with Christianity, with the New Testament containing many brief, though vivid passages on both of them. Those about Hell are often quite similar to those in the Qur’ān, those about Paradise less so. See, for example:

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. (*Matthew*, 7:13)
 But for the cowardly, and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (*Revelation*, 20:8)
 The Lamb in the centre of the throne shall be their shepherd and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes. (*Revelation*, 21:4)

Some of the Qur’ānic vocabulary for Paradise and Hell is of foreign origin, the most important borrowing being *Gahannam*⁶, which appears to have arrived through Ethiopic from a phrase of Hebrew origin; but we should also note ‘*Adn*’ (in the phrase *ḡannāt ‘Adn*) has its distant origins in the Greek *hēdonē* ‘pleasure’ (shown in the fully Arabic phrase *ḡannāt al-na‘īm*). Paradise *firdaws* probably comes from a

⁴ Lines 45-48.

⁵ See my *Early Arabic Poetry*, II, 46-51.

⁶ See Jeffery 1938:105-106.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 212-213.

Syriac source, from Greek and originally from Old Persian⁸. Most of the other vocabulary is straightforward Arabic: *ḡanna* and *anhār* being the key words in descriptions of Paradise, and *an-nār* and *al-ḡahīm* taking their places alongside *Gahannam* in the descriptions of Hell.

Underlying all the descriptions of Paradise and Hell is the contrast between the garden/s that await the saved and the fire that awaits the damned. The gardens are to be aimed for; the fire is to be avoided. The descriptions are intended to illustrate these basic points. As they are illustrative, it is of very little importance if there are discrepancies in detail. Moving the believer in the right direction is what matters. There has been discussion and dispute from the earliest years of the Muslim era whether the descriptions are allegorical or not, with entrenched views being expressed on either side. These disputes are unlikely ever to be resolved, but their very existence bears witness to the success of the descriptions.

One can draw up a composite sketch of the heavenly gardens quite easily: they are places of peace and tranquillity (Q. 15:46; 51:34), containing fountains and rivers (Q. 2:25, etc.), some of water, some of wine and some of honey (Q. 47:15); beautiful women (Q. 38:52; 52:20, etc.); couches covered with brocade⁹; flowing cups served by immortal youths (Q. 56:17, etc.) and plentiful, luscious fruits (Q. 36:57; 37:42; 38:51, etc.) and other food¹⁰. To protect them they will have gates and guards (Q. 39:73). Further details can be elicited not only from the longer descriptions but also from the descriptions of the earthly Paradise¹¹ and of other earthly gardens.

The descriptions of Hell show more variation in detail, though the Fire is always the central theme. When it comes to other details, they stress one point and then another. Hell, for instance, has walls¹² and gates (Q. 15:44). On the other hand, it has a crumbling rim over which wrong-doers can fall (Q. 9:109). Hell can be spoken to and can answer (Q. 50:30). In one of the most graphic descriptions, ‘it almost bursts asunder with rage’ (Q. 67:8). It has a lowest layer (Q. 4:145), implying that there are other layers, with the tree of *az-Zaqqūm* (Q. 37:62; 44:43; 56:52) growing from its floor.

The torments of Hell are equally vividly described, the chief of them being the various kinds of fire that burn the skins (Q. 4:46; 22:20), heads (Q. 22:19; 44:48) and

⁸ *Ibid.*, 223-224.

⁹ Q. 55:54. Other coverings are mentioned.

¹⁰ E.g. meat (52:22), fowl (56:21).

¹¹ It is not really clear whether earthly Paradise (i.e. the garden of Adam and Eve – see Q. 2:35-39 and 7:19-25) is a separate entity. There are a good number of sketches of gardens on earth, e.g. 2:265-266, 18:32 ff, 68:17 ff.

¹² Or, rather, a wall. Q. 57:13.

faces (Q. 14:50; 18:29; 21:39; 33:66) of those who are cast into it. Other torments include scalding water to drink and pus (or other filth or thorn shrubs) to eat (Q. 37:57; 78:25), molten metal boiling in the belly (Q. 44:45), and hooked iron rods (Q. 22:21). It is normally stated that those who go to Hell will stay there for ever¹³, neither dying nor living (Q. 87:13). However, surprisingly, there are a couple of passages that are not quite so firm. First, we find in Q. 78:23 the vague:

In which they will linger for ages,
whilst in Q. 11:106-107 we find:

As for those who are wretched,
they will be in the Fire,
in which there will be sighing and sobbing for them,
Remaining there as long as the heavens and the earth last,
except as your Lord wishes;

Both of these are Meccan passages; Medinan references have no such exception as that found in 11:107 – see, for example, 33:64-65:

God has cursed the unbelievers and prepared a Blaze for them.
They will remain in it for ever;

One remarkable feature that occurs several times is the ability of those in Paradise to converse with those in Hell and to talk with others, including God (Q. 23:106-8; 25:65; 38:61; 40:49; 43:77-78). The most elaborate passage is in *Sūrat al-a'rāf*:

42. But those who believe and do righteous deeds
– We do not charge any soul beyond its capacity.
These are the companions of the Garden,
in which they will remain for ever.
43. We shall remove whatever rancour is in their breasts,
and the rivers will flow beneath them,
and they will say, 'Praise belongs to God,
who has guided us to this.
Had God not guided us,
we would [never] have been guided aright.
The messengers of our Lord did indeed bring the truth.'
And it will be proclaimed to them,
'This is the Garden for you.
You have been given it as inheritance
for what you used to do.'
44. And the companions of the Garden will call out to the companions of the Fire,
Fire,
'We have found what our Lord promised us to be true.

Have you found what your Lord promised you to be true?'
They will say, 'Yes'.

And a crier amongst them will proclaim,
'God's curse is on the wrong-doers,

45. Who bar [men] from God's path
and seek to make it crooked
and who do not believe in the next world.'
46. Between the two groups is a barrier;
and on the heights
are men who recognize each [of them] by their marks;
and they call out to the companions of the Garden,
'Peace be on you! They have not entered it,
though they yearn to do so.'
47. And when their eyes are turned towards the companions of the Fire,
they say, 'Our Lord, do not place us with the people who do wrong.'
48. And the companions of the heights
call out to men whom they recognize by their marks,
saying, 'Your gathering [of wealth] has not availed you,
nor the pride you have displayed.'
49. Are these the ones you swore God would not reach with mercy?'
[To those given mercy it will be said,]
'Enter the Garden.
There will be no fear on you, nor will you grieve.'
50. And the companions of the Fire call out to the companions of Paradise,
'Pour some water on us
or some of that God has provided for you.'
They reply, 'God has forbidden both of them
to those who do not believe,
51. Who took their religion as diversion and sport
and who were deluded by the life of this world.'

This is one of the few passages that indicate that Hell can be seen from Paradise and *vice versa* and that their denizens can speak to one another. Their relative siting is shown most clearly in *Sūrat al-sāffāt* (S. 37), where verses 54-55 run:

[Another] says, 'Will you look down?'

He looks down and sees him in the midst of Hell.

Otherwise the sites of Paradise and Hell are not clearly defined, and this is hardly surprising, in view of the notion in *Sūrat al-šū'arā'* that both can be brought near:

¹³ Q. 2:82 and frequently elsewhere.

And the garden will be brought near for those who are god-fearing;
And the fire will be brought forward for those who have gone astray¹⁴.

The passages about Paradise and Hell are spread throughout all four periods of the Qur'ān's revelation: in the 48 *sūras* traditionally ascribed to the early Meccan period there are no less than 25 significant passages on Hell, in the 21 *sūras* of the middle Meccan period no less than 22 such passages, in the 21 *sūras* of the late Meccan period no less 15 such passages, whilst in the 24 *sūras* of the Medinan period there are at least 30 – there are 9 in *Sūrat al-baqara* alone. This spread of passages is just as important as their number. These were topics to which the Qur'ān returned regularly through its revelation. The passages referring to Hell in *Sūrat al-tawba* (S. 9, very late) are no less urgent than the piece on Saqar¹⁵ in *Sūrat al-muddattir* (S. 74, thought to be very early, apart from verse 31). The passages on Paradise are somewhat fewer, but their number is still quite high: 14, 14, 12 and 22 for the four periods. Again we should note that the passages spread over all four periods and show no tailing off. However, some changes are to be noted in the Medinan period. It is not so much that the Houris become transmuted to pure spouses (Q. 2:25; 3:15; 4:57) – that seems to have started in late Meccan material (Q. 36:56; 43:70). However, it is Medinan material that specifically mentions righteous, believing women as entering Paradise (Q. 4:124; 9:72). One verse that is almost Mormonesque in opening up the ranks of the saved is either late Meccan or Medinan (Q. 13:23):

Gardens of Eden, which they will enter,
together with those of their forefathers and spouses and offspring who are righteous.

There are two final points to be made. The first is that Qur'ānic passages on Paradise and Hell are only the beginning. We need look only at *hadīth* for additional material – and grow continued from there. The second is that the descriptions have all the vividness that is bound to be lacking in any analysis, and it is to the descriptions that you should really pay attention. The following selections will tell you more than I ever could.

Select descriptions of Hell

Sūra 4:55-56

Ġahannam is a sufficient blaze.
Those who do not believe in Our signs

¹⁴ Q. 26:90-91; on Hell see also Q. 89:23.

¹⁵ Saqar, apparently a proper name for Hell, is mentioned in Q. 54:48 and in Q. 74: 26, 27 and 42.

– We shall roast them in a fire:
every time their skins are consumed
We shall give them [new] skins in exchange,
that they may taste the torment.

Sūra 9:34-35

Those who hoard gold and silver
and do not spend it in God's way
– give them the tidings of a painful torment,
On the day when [the gold and silver] will be heated up in the fire of Ġahannam
and their foreheads, sides and backs will be branded with them:
'This is what you hoarded for yourselves.
Taste what you have been hoarding.'

Sūra 18:29

We have prepared for the wrong-doers a fire,
whose pavilion encloses them.
If they ask for showers of rain,
they will receive showers of water like molten copper
which will roast their faces.
How evil a drink; how evil a resting-place.

Sūra 22:19-22

Those who disbelieve
– garments of fire are cut for them,
and boiling water will be poured over their heads,
By which their skins and what is in their bellies will be melted;
And for them are hooked iron rods.
Whenever, in their anguish, they want to come out of it,
they are returned to it:
'And taste the torment of the burning.'

Sūra 23:103-108

And those whose balances are light
– those are the ones who lose their souls,
remaining for ever in Ġahannam.
The Fire scorches their faces, and they are grim in it.
'Were not My revelations recited to you?
And did you not deny their truth?'
They will say, 'Our Lord, our wretchedness prevailed over us,
and we were a people who strayed.'

Our Lord, bring us out of it.
 If we [then] revert, we shall be wrong-doers.'
 He will say, 'Go away into it, and do not speak to me.'

Sūra 33:64-68

God has cursed the unbelievers and prepared a Blaze for them.
 They will remain in it for ever;
 and they will find no protector or helper.
 On the day when their faces are turned over in the Fire,
 they will say, 'Would that we had obeyed God
 and obeyed His messenger!
 And they will say, 'Our Lord,
 we obeyed chiefs and our great men,
 and they led us astray from the way.
 Our Lord, give them double torment and curse them with a great curse.'

Sūra 35:36-37

Those who are ungrateful will have the fire of *Gahannam*.
 They will not be done with and die,
 and there will be no alleviation for them of its punishment.
 Thus We recompense every ungrateful one.
 There they shout, 'Our Lord, take us out.
 We shall do right, not what we used to do.'
 'Did We not give you life long enough
 for those who would receive a reminder to be reminded,
 when a warner had come to you?
 So taste.
 The wrong-doers will have no helper.'

Sūra 37:62-63

Is this better as hospitality or the tree of *az-Zaqqūm*?
 We have appointed it as a trial for the wrong-doers.
 It is a tree that comes out of the root of Hell.
 Its spathes are like the heads of devils.
 They eat of it and fill their bellies from it.
 Then on top of it they will have a brew of scalding water.
 Then their return will be to Hell.

Sūra 38:55-64

But for the transgressors there will be an evil resort:
Gahannam, in which they will roast.

How evil a resting-place.
 This
 - so let them taste it -
 and scalding water and pus,
 And other things of the same kind, in pairs.
 'This is a troop rushing in with you.
 There is no welcome for them.
 They will roast in the Fire.'
 They say, 'No. It is you for whom there is no welcome.
 You prepared this for us.
 How evil is the abode.'
 They say, 'Our Lord, give a double torment in the Fire
 to those who prepared this for us.'
 And they say, 'How is it that we do not see
 men whom we counted amongst the wicked?
 Did we take them as a laughing-stock?
 Or have our eyes missed them?'
 That is true
 - the wrangling of the people of the Fire.

Sūra 50:30

- The day when We shall say to *Gahannam*,
 'Have you been filled?',
 and it will say, 'Are there still more?'

Sūra 56

(a) 41-44

And the companions of the left
 (what are the companions of the left?)
 Among searing wind and scalding water,
 And shadow of black smoke,
 Not cold nor kind.

(b) 49-56

Say, 'The ancients and the later ones
 Will be gathered together to the appointed time of a known day.
 Then, O you who go astray and deny,
 You will eat of trees of *Zaqqūm*,
 Filling your bellies from them,
 And drinking scalding water on top of that,
 Drinking as does a camel desperate with thirst.'
 That will be their hospitality on the Day of Judgement.

(c) 92-94

But if he is one of those who deny the truth and go astray,
[His] hospitality will be of scalding water
And the roasting of Hell.

Sūra 67:5-11

We have prepared for them the torment of the Blaze.
For those who do not believe in the Lord
there is the torment of Ġahannam,
and evil is the journeying.
When they are flung into it,
they hear a roaring from it as it boils,
It almost bursts asunder with rage.
Whenever a troop is cast into it,
its keepers ask them, 'Did no warner come to you?'
They say, 'Yes, a warner came to us,
but we thought him a liar and said,
'God has revealed nothing.
You are merely in great error'.
And they say, 'Had we listened or understood,
we would not have been among the companions of the Blaze.'
So they acknowledge their sin.
Away with the companions of the Blaze.

Sūra 69:25-37

But as for him who is given his record in his left hand,
he will say, 'Would that I had not been given my record,
And did not know my reckoning,
Would that it had been the end.
My wealth has been of no avail to me.
My authority has gone from me.'
'Take him, and fetter him.
Then roast him in Hell-fire
Then insert him into a chain whose length is seventy cubits.
He used not to believe in God, the Mighty,
Nor did he urge the feeding of the destitute.
To-day he has no friend here,
Nor any food except filth,
Which none but the sinners eat.'

Sūra 78:21-30

Hell is truly an ambush,
A resort for the insolent,
In which they will linger for ages,
In which they will taste neither cool nor drink,
Except scalding water and pus:
A recompense fit for them.
They were not expecting a reckoning
And they denied the truth of Our signs.
Everything we have numbered in a document.
So taste.
The only increase We shall give you will be in punishment.

Sūra 87:12-13

The one who will roast in the great fire,
In which he will neither die nor live.

Sūra 88:4-7

They will roast in a burning fire,
They will be given a drink from a scalding spring.
The only food they will have is of thorn shrub,
Which does not nourish and is of no avail against hunger.

Sūra 104:5-9

What can give you knowledge of what the insatiable is?
- The fire of God, kindled,
Which rises over the hearts [of men].
It is closed over them
In outstretched columns.

Select descriptions of Paradise

Sūra 3:15

Say, 'Shall I tell you of something better than that?'
For those who fear God,
there are gardens with their Lord,
through which rivers flow,
in which they will remain for ever;
and there are pure spouses and God's pleasure.

Sūra 4:

(a) 57

Those who believe and do righteous deeds
 – We shall admit them to the gardens,
 through which rivers flow,
 in which they will remain for ever
 and in which they will have pure spouses,
 and We shall admit them to dense shade.

(b) 124

Those who do good works, whether male or female,
 and are believers
 – they will enter the Garden
 and will not be wronged one speck.

Sūra 9:72

God has promised the believers, male and female,
 gardens through which rivers flow,
 in which they will remain for ever,
 and good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden;
 and God's approval is greater.

Sūra 10:9-10

Those who believe and do righteous works,
 their Lord guides them by their faith.
 Rivers will flow beneath them in the gardens of bliss.
 Their call there will be, 'Glory be to You, O God';
 and their greeting there, 'Peace';
 and the conclusion of their call will be,
 'Praise belongs to God, Lord of created beings.'

Sūra 13:20-24

– Those who fulfil God's covenant
 and do not violate the agreement,
 And who join what God has commanded to be joined
 and fear their Lord and are afraid of the evil reckoning,
 And who are patient in seeking the face of their Lord
 and perform prayer
 and spend from that which We have provided for them,
 secretly [or] in public,
 and avert evil with good,
 – those will have the sequel of the abode:

Gardens of Eden, which they will enter,
 together with those of their forefathers and spouses and offspring who are
 righteous.

The angels will go in through every gate to see them, [saying]:
 'Peace be upon you because you were patient.
 Excellent is the sequel of the abode.'

Sūra 18:31

Those will have the gardens of Eden,
 through which rivers flow.
 There they will be adorned with bracelets of gold,
 and will wear green garments made of silk and brocade,
 reclining there on couches.
 How good a reward; how fine a resting-place.

Sūra 29:58

Those who believe and do righteous deeds
 – We shall lodge them in lofty rooms in the garden,
 through which rivers flow.
 They will remain there for ever.
 Excellent is the reward of those who labour.

Sūra 37:40-61

This will not be the case with the sincere servants of God
 – They will have a known provision:
 Fruits; and they will be honoured
 In the gardens of bliss,
 On couches, facing one another.
 And a cup from a spring will be passed round among them,
 Clear and sparkling,
 a delight to those who drink,
 In which there is no headache,
 nor do they become intoxicated from it.
 And with them are women of modest glances,
 with lustrous eyes,
 As if they were hidden eggs.
 They will draw near to one another, asking each other questions.
 One of them says, 'I had a comrade,
 Who would say,
 "Are you one of those who believe [the message]?"
 When we are dead and become dust and bones,

shall we be judged?'

[Another] says, 'Will you look down?'

He looks down and sees him in the midst of Hell.

He says, 'By God, you almost destroyed me.

But for the blessing of my Lord

I would have been one of those brought [into Hell].

Do we really not die,

Except for our first death,

and shall we not be punished?

This is truly the mighty triumph.

For the like of this let the workers work.'

Sūra 43:68-73

'My servants, today there is no fear on you

nor will you grieve,

[You] who believed in Our signs

and were people who surrendered,

Enter the Garden, you and your wives.

You will be treated with honour.

Trays of gold and goblets will be brought round to them,

and in it there is what their souls desire

and their eyes find pleasant.

You will remain in it for ever.

This is the Garden which you have been given as an inheritance
in return for what you used to do.

In it there is abundant fruit, of which you may eat.

Sūra 47:15

The likeness of the Garden which the god-fearing have been promised:

in it there are rivers of water whose taste remains pure;

and rivers of milk whose taste does not go sour;

and rivers of wine, a pleasure for those who drink;

and rivers of purest honey;

in it they will have some of every kind of fruit

and forgiveness from their Lord.

Sūra 52:17-28

But the god-fearing will be in gardens and bliss,

Rejoicing in what their Lord has given them

- their Lord has protected them from the punishment of Hell.

'Eat and drink what is wholesome,

as a recompense for what you used to do;'

Reclining on couches placed in rows.

And We shall pair them with maidens with dark, lustrous eyes.

Those who believe and whose seed follows them in belief,

We shall join their seed with them,

and We shall not deprive them of any of their work.

Every man will be pledged for what he has earned.

We shall provide for them fruit and meat,

as much as they desire.

There they will pass to one another a cup.

There there is no idle chatter nor any imputation.

And youths circle them, waiting on them,

as if they were hidden pearls.

And they go round to one another,

asking each other questions,

They say, 'Before [this] we always used to be fearful concerning our family,

But God has been gracious to us

and protected us against the punishment of the burning heat.

Before [this] we used to pray to Him.

He is the Kind, the Compassionate.'

Sūra 56:11-40

They are those brought near,

In gardens of bliss,

A throng of the ancients

And a few from the later ones,

On woven couches,

Reclining on them, facing one another;

Immortal youths go round amongst them,

With goblets and ewers and a cup from a spring,

From which they do not suffer headaches nor are they intoxicated,

And with whatever fruit they choose,

And with whatever fowl they desire,

And maidens with dark, lustrous eyes,

Like hidden pearls,

A recompense for what they have done.

They hear neither idle chatter there nor imputations,

But only the saying, 'Peace, Peace.'

The companions of the right

(what are the companions of the right?)

Among the thornless *sidr*-trees,

And acacias set in rows,
 And extended shade,
 And outpoured water,
 And abundant fruit,
 Not cut off nor forbidden,
 And raised couches.
 We have produced them
 And made them virgins,
 Loving, well-matched,
 For the companions of the right,
 A throng of the ancients,
 And a throng of the later ones.

Sūra 76:12-22

He has recompensed them for their patience with a garden and silk;
 They recline there on couches
 and see neither sun nor cold.
 Close over them are its shades,
 and its fruit-clusters are lowered.
 Cups of silver are brought round to them in turn,
 vessels of glass,
 Glass [set in] silver, which they have measured;
 There they are given a drink in a cup,
 whose mixture is Zangabīl,
 A spring there, named Salsabīl.
 Immortal youths circle amongst them,
 – when you see them, you will consider them to be scattered pearls.
 When you see them, then you see bliss and a great kingdom.
 The clothes they wear will be of green silk and brocade,
 and they are adorned with bracelets of silver;
 and their Lord gives them a pure draught to drink.
 ‘This is a reward for you, and your striving is thanked.’

Sūra 78:31-36

For the god-fearing there will be a refuge:
 Gardens and vineyards,
 And maidens as companions,
 And an overflowing cup,
 Where they will not hear idle chatter nor claims of falsehood
 – A recompense from your Lord, a gift, a reckoning.

Sūra 88:10-16

In a high garden,
 Where they hear no idle chatter,
 Where there is a flowing spring,
 Where there are raised couches,
 And goblets set ready,
 And cushions placed in rows,
 And carpets spread out.

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ISLAMIC PARADISE IN A CHRISTIAN CONTEXT THE CEILING OF THE CAPPELLA PALATINA IN PALERMO, SICILY

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Aloha from paradise. It seems especially appropriate for someone who lives in Hawaii to speak on the subject of heavenly gardens. Supposedly I live in one. I, however, did not come to Hungary to talk about heavenly gardens in Hawaii. I came to talk about a garden of paradise on another island, the island of Sicily. But first, we might ask, what is there about islands? Especially those in a warm setting? Do islands by their very separation from landmasses imply an escape? Do they also become a surrogate for that virtual paradise in the sky?

This paper considers the ceiling of the 12th century Cappella Palatina in Palermo, Sicily. Since I began research on the Cappella Palatina two questions have interested me. First, what is the provenance of the artists who constructed and painted this spectacular ceiling? Second, what does this ceiling represent?

In the absence of written documentation regarding the first question, scholars have suggested that the artists were brought to Sicily from Fāṭimid Egypt. In fact, the paintings in the Cappella Palatina have come to define the Fāṭimid style. Other scholars, again based on style, have argued that the artists came from 'Abbasid Mesopotamia. Still others propose a North African origin.

Some scholars have suggested the consideration of an alternative origin, that the artists were indigenous to Sicily and that the ceiling represents a survival of a type of construction and ornamentation that adorned the palaces of the Muslim princes of Sicily. By establishing the background of Muslim and Norman rule in Sicily, it may be possible to understand why the artists could have been Sicilian and, likewise, we might understand the complex meanings of the ceiling paintings.

Sicily is strategically located almost centrally in the Mediterranean Sea. It is a stepping stone between Europe and Africa – between the Christian and Muslim worlds. The island of Sicily was celebrated for its lushness until the 19th century. No doubt this contributed to it being just the kind of escape spoken of earlier – an escape for the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Muslims, the Normans, and innumerable other European peoples.

For two and a half centuries, from the 9th through 11th centuries, the Muslims were in control of Sicily. By the early 8th century C.E., the Arabs had established rule all along the African coast facing Sicily. They began their first full-scale incursion into Sicily in 827. Palermo was conquered in 831 and soon the western region of the island called Val de Mazara became predominantly Muslim. By 902 the Muslims conquered all of Sicily.

Their rule was immensely constructive and they developed an intellectually alert cultural life. They introduced citrus trees, sugar cane, cotton, flax, and date-palms into Sicily and under them the island became the richest prize in the Mediterranean.

Tolerance marked Muslim rule and in the 9th century Palermo became one of the world's great centres of scholarship and art. When Ibn Hawqal visited Sicily in the 10th century he found 300 mosques in Palermo. He was amazed at the affluence and intellectual life of the city. Unfortunately, today, other than the written accounts of travellers of the time, almost no physical evidence of the Muslim period in Sicily survives.

In 1061, with a handful of knights, the Norman Count Roger de Hauteville seized Messina. By 1091 he had gained control of the entire island. Upon his death in 1101 Roger's widow served as regent for her eight-year old son who died two years later. She continued her regency until 1111 in the name of her second son, Roger II, who came to be the most illustrious of the Norman kings of Sicily. His reign was marked by order and prosperity. The Muslims, Greeks, and Latin Christians were allowed freedom of worship and each community was largely governed by its own code. A harmonious synthesis of three civilizations, Latin, Byzantine, and Muslim, permeated all aspects of life and produced a unique culture of exceptional brilliance.

Roger grew up in Palermo in an atmosphere that was decidedly not Norman but one that was primarily Greek and Muslim. His studies and the affairs of state were conducted in Greek and Arabic as well as Latin. The inscription on the palace sundial is in three languages, Latin, Greek and Arabic. However, it is Muslim in spirit for it invokes Allah's help for the ruler's long life and the support of his rule. The date is according to the Muslim era. With this cosmopolitan background it becomes easy to see why Roger's court took on the particular Eastern flavour it did and why he has been termed the "baptised sultan" (Norwich 1967:280-294). He was reputed to have a harem, and the luxuriousness of his palace and court could compare with those of the Byzantine emperors of Constantinople or the Muslim caliphs. As in the East, the pomp and splendour were calculated to impress, for Roger intended to be looked upon as a divine king whose authority came from God. The account of the historian Albert of Aix who witnessed the arrival of Roger's mother when she arrived in the Holy Land to marry King Baldwin of Jerusalem attests to the great wealth and craftsmanship of Sicily. She had sailed the Mediterranean amidst a splendour the world had not seen since the days of Cleopatra.

She had with her two triremes, each with five hundred warriors and seven ships carrying gold, silver, purple, and great quantities of precious stones and magnificent vestments, to say nothing of weapons, cuirasses, swords, helmets, shields blazing with gold and all other accoutrements of war such as are employed by mighty princes for the service and defence of their ships. The vessel on which the great lady had elected to travel was ornamented with a mast gilded with the purest gold, which glinted from afar in the sunlight, and the

prow and the poop of this vessel, similarly covered with gold and silver and worked by skilful craftsmen, were wonderful to behold. And on one of the seven ships were the Saracen archers, most stalwart men clothed in resplendent garments of great price, all destined as gifts to the King—such men as had no superiors in their art in the whole land of Jerusalem (Norwich 1967:287-288).

The Cappella Palatina at Palermo was built by the Norman king, Roger II, in 1140. It is a heterogeneous structure combining the traditions, talents and workmanship of the people who had inhabited the island of Sicily before conquest by the Normans. Structurally it combines a Latin basilica plan with a Byzantine central plan. The nave, in the form of a colonnaded basilica, connects with a three-apsed sanctuary with a domed central section. Despite the pronounced individuality of both sections, great care was taken to link them together both structurally and in the decoration to create a harmonious whole. The sanctuary and nave walls were decorated with mosaics of Byzantine origin, and wooden ceilings, constructed and painted by Islamic artisans, cover the nave and aisles.

The two side aisles have angled ceilings with descending ribs and are relatively flat by comparison to the main ceiling (Photo 1). The ceiling in the central nave consists of two rows of ten octagonal stars with interstitial hanging stalactite vaulting which forms a complex three dimensional ensemble of coffered niches. A description of the construction methods has not been found but a fragment of wooden stalactites of unknown Sicilian provenance and photographed in 1973 in San Giovanni degli Eremiti (later moved to the Palazzo Abitellis) may shed significant light on the construction of the ceiling (Photo 2). The fragment is a series of vertical beams carved into niches at the bottom that are wedged within a framework. On the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina the hundreds of small surfaces created by this architectural extravagance are painted with a marvellous harmony of colour. Inscriptions in Arabic, which are also Muslim in spirit, outline the octagonal star forms, while geometric designs and arabesques cover the ribbed interstices between niches. Within the niches is an abundance of animal motifs and figural representations.

It seems likely that the ceiling represents a heavenly garden—an architectural depiction of the gardens that were built by the Muslim rulers of Sicily and which were emulated and constructed, in turn, by the Normans. This is both a depiction of a real garden and an Islamic vision of paradise similar to those that probably ornamented the Muslim palaces of Sicily.

The garden and its connotation with paradise is an entirely reasonable image of heavenly bliss in lands where water and the shade of trees are a welcome relief amidst rocks, desiccated plains, and withered vegetation. The garden serves as a promise of paradise and shows the pathway to heaven. For the Muslims who had crossed the Mediterranean from the desert wastes of North Africa and the Middle East, the garden, and possibly the entire island of Sicily, with its valued supplies of water and vegetation was an expression of God's bounty.

The ceiling also serves to verify and authenticate the rule of Roger II. In an effort to enhance his political power, Roger had Muslim artists represent the Islamic image of paradise in the palace chapel in the same manner that Muslim rulers, as a means of political and religious validation, used lavish evocations of the world to come in their own material world.

Islamic art has the ability to be simultaneously worldly and religious. In the same way that the caliph and the Norman prince were both rulers of earth and the highest representatives of heaven on earth (Gelfer-Jorgensen 1986:178), the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina can logically be concerned both with life on earth and with the life to come.

Because in Islam there is a propensity toward symbolic thought, the ceiling of the Cappella Palatina may serve as a visual representation of the written word that describes the heavenly garden as found in Islamic literature and also in the Qur'an. The octagonal stars (Photo 3) so integral to the ceiling's construction, may serve as an allusion to the firmament and the inner medallion may be similar to the domes of mosques or the sunburst medallions (*šamsa*) that decorate the pages of illuminated manuscripts and symbolize the vault of heaven, but more importantly, the central unity of God.

The paintings on the Cappella Palatina ceiling, with their wealth of figurative and animal imagery set amidst a profusion of vegetal arabesques, not only portray the pleasures of this world, but also the next. The paintings are both literal and symbolic depictions of paradise. Here the concepts of the earthly court, with its pleasurable gardens, and heavenly paradise are combined. The paintings on the ceiling emphasize the fact that the pleasures of the next world are not unlike those of this world, for as A. Kevin Reinhart states, heavenly pleasures are only heightened and cleansed of imperfection (Blair and Bloom 1991:21).

In essence the ceiling is a visual representation of Islamic lyric poetry that unveils multiple levels of meaning (Photo 4). Thus, the ubiquitous cupbearer in royal iconography can be interpreted as a symbol of the power of the earthly sovereign and a desire for paradise. Mystical poetry of the Islamic world often likens union with the divine to the state of intoxication. This should not be construed as a state of drunkenness, but more a state of ecstasy with God. For the mystics "wine is the truth or their mystical experience. The lyrical terms of profane love are used symbolically to express exalted emotions of divine love and gnosticism. The beloved is God; the cupbearer is their spiritual leader" (Ullah 1963:xiii).

Musicians, *hūrīs*, and male attendants accompany the wine drinkers (Photo 5). Music, like wine, is part of the vision of paradise – a vision also inhabited by fantastic female companions and beautiful serving youths. The great 13th century historian Ibn Haldūn wrote that the sounds of music arouse pleasure and emotion in the soul (Ibn Haldūn, *Muqaddima* 330). The Šūfī Abū Ḥafṣ as-Suhrawardī, who lived in 12th century Persia, held that for gnostics listening to music brought

contemplation, but for the spiritually perfect, music allowed God to reveal Himself unveiled (Gelfer-Jorgensen 1986:109). Thus, we need to consider the fact that the inclusion of themes of music on the Cappella Palatina ceiling not only reflects physical reality but, at the same time, reinforces a more elevated and spiritual meaning.

The representations of the courtly banquet with their accompanying indulgences of music and pleasurable companions constitute both a concrete illustration and an abstract one. Closely related to this theme are numerous depictions of the hunt and the many attendant activities associated with it (Photo 6). The splendour of the royal hunt, a major theme of much Islamic literature, contains both literal and mystical meanings. As in literature, scenes of the hunt and animals, while conceptually connected to the courtly theme by representing the popular pastimes of the Islamic and Norman rulers, metaphorically represent the lover's pursuit of the beloved and the soul's search for paradise and the divine.

Animal combat scenes are a motif on the Cappella Palatina ceiling (Photo 7). Gelfer-Jorgensen proposes an interesting explanation of this theme, that the combat motif must be interpreted "positively", that the animal which is pursued and slain is also in possession of positive characteristics which are transferred to the stronger animal. Again a dual symbolism may be present on the Cappella ceiling. One is representative of royal power in which the forces of nature are transmitted to the prince; the other, a kind of magical power having a cosmic-divine nature (Gelfer-Jorgensen 1986:118-119).

The theme of animal combat along with the profusion of animal and bird motifs on the ceiling stems from a tradition of symbolism associated with animals in the pre-Islamic art of the Middle East. Their symbolic value was not lost with the advent of Islam. Instead their original significance was often absorbed into Islamic art. Confronted birds flanking trees, with their reference to the tree-of-life, have long been a symbol of paradise and eternity in the Middle East. The peacock came to be associated with the soul and eternal life and continued in Islamic art as a symbol of immortality often associated with the enthroned prince.

Trees, flowers, and vines complete the vision of the heavenly garden and the promise of paradise. The highly sought abundance of the earthly environment became a powerful image of heaven for Muslims who lived in the hostile extremes of the deserts. For the Muslims who inhabited Sicily for 250 years prior to the Norman conquest the island itself was an oasis, but the existence of the Cappella Palatina ceiling points to an Islamic architectural tradition in Sicily that unfortunately no longer survives. It seems likely that Roger II had Muslim artists fabricate a ceiling in his palace chapel that constitutes a type of construction and painted iconography with its symbolic and Islamic meaning of representing heaven, that existed in the palatial residences of the Muslim rulers of Sicily before the Norman takeover (Photo 8). It is entirely appropriate that Roger II would have the ceiling of his royal chapel

crowned with a similar depiction of heaven. Certainly the power of its significance coincided with his own religious and political agenda and served to reinforce his personal dominion over his people who embraced three distinct cultures: Latin Christian, Byzantine, and Muslim.

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Photo 1. Ceiling, Cappella Palatina



Photo 2. Wooden squinches, provenance unknown



Photo 3. Octagonal star, ceiling, Cappella Palatina



Photo 4. Cupbearer, musicians and dancer



Photo 5. Musician



Photo 6. Royal hunt



Photo 7. Animal combat



Photo 8. Palace fountain

PARADISE AND HELL IN MUSLIM PHILOSOPHY

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To discuss concepts of paradise and hell, or, on a more general plane, of reward and punishment in Muslim philosophy, especially in that of Ibn Sīnā, one will have to examine the question of whether it was possible to integrate the religious idea of reward and punishment into the system of philosophy, and if so, how reward and punishment were understood and explained from the point of view of philosophy.

1. In Greek philosophy psychology was part of physics; consequently, their views on the soul were set forth within their general theory on nature. In this context I will refer only to three of them here.

A. Epicurus writes in his letter to Herodotus that “the next thing to see – referring it to the sensations and feelings, since that will provide the strongest confirmation – is that soul is a fine structured body diffused through the whole aggregate, most strongly resembling wind with a certain blending of heat, and resembling wind in some respects but heat in others”¹.

Epicurus propounds the theory that the soul is corporeal, and consists of fine atoms. It is the corporeal nature of the soul that results in “its ability to interact with body and to be affected jointly with it”². At death the atoms of both body and soul will be dispersed. This means that the soul does not outlive the body; consequently, in the Epicurean school there is no speaking of the eternal happiness or suffering of the soul in the world to come.

B. Plato describes the soul as the “oldest of all created things” and “older than all created things” (Plato, *Laws* 969 A and 967 D). In another passage he says that the soul was created before the body (Plato, *Laws* 896 B). All these passages suggest that the soul is an independent entity different from the body. This independent entity is prior to the body, eternal and self-moving (Plato, *Phaedrus* 245 C-E; Guthrie 1979: 366-367; Maróth 2002:332-333). The body is only an instrument of the soul (Plato, *Alcibiades* I, 130 C).

These words suggest that the soul is responsible for all deeds committed by a living being. To put it briefly: if it is always the soul that bears responsibility for the

¹ Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus* in: Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* X, 63; Long & Sedley 1989-90: I, 64, II, 65.

² Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus*, in: Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* X, 71; Lucretius, *De rerum natura* III. 136-176.

actions of the body, then it must be the subject of reward and punishment. In Plato's dualistic philosophy, if the soul is eternal, it must get both reward and punishment in the next world. This idea explains why Plato (*Menon* 81 C-D) came to the idea of the transmigration of souls: the human soul affected by sins in this earthly life should be purified after its separation from the body. The purification process lasts for a long period of time, during which the sinful soul transmigrates into the bodies of beings of lower and lower ranks. The sufferings endured in these changing forms contribute to the purification of the soul from the sins committed in human life.

C. Aristotle says that all beings in the sublunar world consist of two basic elements: matter and form. The form of living beings is their soul. This hylomorphic theory of psychology presupposes that, in human beings, both form and matter, soul and body come to be together at the same time, and in the same way the disintegration of a human being means the corruption of his soul and body at the same time. In Aristotle's theory, form and matter cannot exist independently from each other. The only exception is the human intellect (*nous*), which remains eternal (Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 736 b 16-29).

Aristotle's vague remarks on the immortality of *nous* do not permit us to draw any conclusion about its fate in the other world. Perhaps it is not a mistaken interpretation of Aristotle's psychology to come to the view that he denied all kinds of reward and punishment in the world to come. Good moral conduct resulted in a happy life in this earthly life.

This short survey of three different views is enough to suggest that on the basis of either an atomistic and materialistic or a hylomorphic theory one will not be led to any speculation about the ultimate happiness of human beings. Its necessary presupposition is the Platonic notion of the eternity of soul.

2. After these preliminary remarks, let us turn to Ibn Sīnā. In the light of what has been said so far, one will have to examine the definition of soul given by Ibn Sīnā.

Writing on the soul, Ibn Sīnā says that "it is not a body, but it is a part of an animal and a plant, it is a form or like a form, it is like perfection"³. In the following passages Ibn Sīnā explains the meaning of these concepts and the nature of their connections in terms of Aristotelian philosophy. As a result of this terminological investigation he comes to the conclusion that "soul is a substance, because it is a form"⁴. Pointing out that according to Aristotelian philosophy this statement is a tautology, he calls attention to the way the soul exists in the body. In his comment-

ary on the Categories, he tries to distinguish between various meanings of *ṣifa*. The third meaning is the following: the characterized thing is taken as something the essence of which was established, but its characteristic feature is not attached to it like an external accident, but belongs to its normal condition. The example of this kind of *ṣifa* is form as connected with matter (Ibn Sīnā, *Maqūlāt* 18-19). Form does not belong to the concept or essence of matter, but matter never exists without form.

Returning to psychology and its functionalistic explanation, one can see how Ibn Sīnā applies this logical doctrine to the examination of the essence of the soul. If soul as form can never exist without body, it is only a property (*ṣifa*) of matter. To put it in other words: the soul has an existence independent from matter. Soul as form does not exist in matter as in substratum. This means that form and soul have separate existences; and consequently they should be considered as separate (*mufāriq*) substances⁵. In this sense, soul and body are two separate substances in Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, as was taught by Plato as well.

In addition to these considerations, there are some souls existing as separate souls in the intelligible world, not as forms in bodies. This fact is a further evidence for the conclusion that has just been drawn above⁶.

Some elements of this reasoning are not alien to Aristotelian philosophy, although the classification of attributes (*ṣifāt*) as propounded by Ibn Sīnā is not known to me from Aristotle's books. However, the result of Ibn Sīnā's analysis of the status of soul as form in body is a Platonic dualism tantamount to the view that a living being is the connection of two substances (a material and a formal one) existing separately from each other.

In a living body, the functionalist explanation of Aristotelian psychology ascribes growth, nutrition, procreation and other capacities to the soul, although the soul cannot produce these and similar actions without the body. These functions of the soul are carried out by the body. In this respect the body is an instrument of the soul, as Ibn Sīnā puts it⁷. Body as an instrument of soul is a well-known Platonic view, as mentioned in the introduction (Taylor 1949:Ch. 3; Plato, *Alcibiades* I, 130 C). This view implies that the soul has to take responsibility for all the actions of human beings.

To put it in other words: soul as an immaterial, simple substance must have eternal existence; consequently, it can be the subject of reward and punishment in the other world, provided every individual human being has an individual soul.

³ Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs* 6.12-13:

ذات النفس ليس بجسم، بل هي جزء للحیوان والنبات، هي صورة أو كالصورة أو كالكمال

⁴ Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs* 8.11: فيكون معنی قوله: إن النفس جوهر لأنها صورة

⁵ Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs* 9.13-18: فإن كان كل نفس موجودة لا في موضوع، فكل نفس جوهر

⁶ Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs* 9.13-18:

وإن كانت نفس ما قائمة بذاتها والبواقي كل واحد منها في هيولي وليست في موضوع فكل نفس جوهر

⁷ Ibn Sīnā, *Nafs* 10.16-19: فكمال أول الجسم طبيعي ألي له أن يفعل أفعال الحياة

This philosophical teaching is in harmony with the requirements of the Muslim faith so far. The next problem is that of tracing the source of Ibn Sīnā's psychological doctrine. The system of psychology set forth by Ibn Sīnā is similar to that of Plotinus in many respects. Plotinus, too, accepted Aristotle's functionalist view of soul, but at the same time he restored the Platonic dualism, as one can see in the case of Ibn Sīnā as well. Plotinus said that our human soul comes from the world-soul and after our death returns to it⁸. In this monopsychic theory, followed later by Averroës too, one cannot speak of reward and punishment.

The possible problem emerging from the doctrine of the world-soul was addressed by Ibn Sīnā by reliance on the theory of *principium individuationis* developed by Aristotle and set forth later by Plotinus.

Ibn Sīnā says in his *al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād* that the human intellect comes to be together with the human body at the same time. Soul is an immaterial substance; consequently, it is one species, i. e. all souls are identical in their specific nature. In the *Metaphysics* he says that the intelligible natures existing without matter cannot be many in number⁹, as opposed to the human souls. The latter cannot exist without matter, and this explains why they differ in number. Their multitude is either a consequence of different accidents existing on the same essence, or of different material they are embodied in. The first option is impossible; and consequently the difference of human souls is due to bodies. If souls different in number come to be together with different bodies, then each one of the souls will have a separate essence. The different material forms they assume result in the various individual characters of the human souls¹⁰. In the *Metaphysics* Ibn Sīnā repeats the same view: the natures not standing in need of matter for their subsistence cannot be many in number. They form a unity in species as well as in number. A nature of this kind can become many neither due to its differences appearing on its essence, nor due to its material or to the accidents pertaining to the material. If dissimilarity is due to accidents inherent in the essence, then the multitude will not be different in respect of the species. If

dissimilarity is due to accidents not inherent in essence, then it occurs because the essence is embodied in matter¹¹.

The souls of Zaid and 'Amr are different in number in consequence of the difference of their bodies. In this way monopsychism was refuted.

Taking these teachings as a starting point, Ibn Sīnā easily refutes the Platonic doctrine of the transmigration of souls. If one takes into consideration what has just been said above about the simultaneous genesis of body and soul, one can immediately realise the impossibility of the transmigration of souls: it would mean that a body has two souls, one of which came to be with the body, while the other came from another body through the process of transmigration.

Two souls in one body is an evidently false assumption; consequently, the doctrine of transmigration should be rejected (Ibn Sīnā, *Mabda'* 108-109).

The denial of this Platonic doctrine implies the establishment of the new doctrine of a unique, eternal and responsible soul.

The responsibility of the one soul is underlined by the adaptation of another Platonic doctrine. According to Plato, soul and body are in continuous conflict. For Ibn Sīnā this view is the starting-point of further speculations. In some conflicts – as he says in *Al-mabda' wa-l-ma'ād* – the soul can overcome the resistance of the body, in some other ones the soul has to surrender. If the soul is victorious in the majority of cases, it assumes a victorious character, if not, it assumes a submissive, obedient one. A victorious soul can always overcome the material temptations, whereas a submissive soul is defenceless in the face of bodily temptations.

Happiness of soul – as far as the soul is considered in itself – consists in becoming part of the intelligible world, but as far as it is united with the body, its happiness consists in being submissive (Ibn Sīnā, *Mabda'* 110).

In the following passages, Ibn Sīnā explains that pleasure does not consist in having a perfection (*kamāl*), but in the action of that perfection. Every sensation of the sensitive soul is a perfection, but only the attainment of the proper object of sensation is pleasure.

Intellect (*an-nafs an-nātiqa*) is the perfection of the human soul, and analogically, its pleasure consists in the intellection of the Absolute Good (the first and supreme being) and the beings emanating from him (Ibn Sīnā, *Mabda'* 111).

This is essentially a doctrine set forth by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There one can read the following lines:

“And life is defined, in the case of animals, by the capacity for sensation; in the case of man, by the capacity for sensation and thought. But a capacity is

⁸ Plotinus, *Enneades* IV, 9, 2; cf. Blumenthal 1976, Armstrong 1971 and 1976.

⁹ Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhiyyāt* I, 207:

هذه الطبائع ما كان منها غير محتاج إلى مادة في أن يبقى، ولا في أن يبدئ لها وجود فيكون من المستحيل أن يتكرر، بل لأنها يكون النوع منه قائما واحدا بالعدد.

¹⁰ Ibn Sīnā, *Mabda'* 107-108:

فإن كانت كثرتها واختلافها بالعدد لا اختلاف ذواتها فالفرق بين الأنفس الإنسانية بالفصول، ويظهر أن هذا محال. بل الأنفس الإنسانية نوع واحد. فينتهي أن يكون اختلافها بسبب الأبدان التي لها، ولأنها تكثرت. ثم إذا تكثرت في الحدوث معها صار لكل واحد منها ذات على حدة، وأيضا اكتسبت سمات مادية بها تتغير.

¹¹ Ibn Sīnā, *Ilāhiyyāt* 208:

الأعراض إما أن تكون لازمة للطبيعة فلا تختلف فيها الكثرة بحسب النوع وإما أن تكون عارضة غير لازمة للطبيعة فيكون عروضا بسبب يتعلق بالمادة.

referred to its activity, and in this its full reality consists. It appears therefore that life in the full sense is sensation or thought. But life is a thing good and pleasant in itself, for it is definite, and definiteness is a part of the essence of goodness, and what is essentially good is good for the good man, and hence appears to be pleasant to all men. ... and to be conscious that we are perceiving and thinking is to be conscious that we exist .. ; and if to be conscious one is alive is a pleasant thing in itself (for life is a thing essentially good, and to be conscious that one possesses a good thing is pleasant),- and if life is desirable, and especially so for good men, because existence is good for them, and so pleasant (because they are pleased by the perception of what is intrinsically good) ... etc.” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics* 1170 a 20-1170 b 5).

What Ibn Sīnā said about happiness was derived from this view. Aristotle, as well as Ibn Sīnā, identifies sensation and thought with life. Life is a value in itself, and every living being enjoys its own life. The continuous contemplation of the highest being – contemplation being a thought – means eternal life for our intellect. Life being a pleasure, the intellect enjoys the pleasure of eternal life. Perception and cognition being a pleasure, the perception and cognition of the supreme being is the supreme pleasure.

The continuation of the theory was inspired by Galen. Ibn Sīnā added that as long as the sensation of the proper object of sensation is happiness, the pleasure one feels at the sensation of the not proper object of sensation is a sign of sickness. The same is valid in the case of a desire for an improper object of sensation (Ibn Sīnā, *Mabda'* 111). A soul not longing for the knowledge of the supreme being is sick. A sick soul is deprived from all these real pleasures, and that is punishment.

Aristotelian psychology maintains that getting acquainted with any object of knowledge means that the human intellect is receptive of any form. As Aristotle puts it: “Soul is all existing things”¹². The reception of form means the identification of the intellect with the form received.

This Aristotelian doctrine of intellection is the basis of Ibn Sīnā's words when he states that the intellectual perception of the intelligible forms means that they become the essence of the intellect. To put it in other words: the surviving part of our soul, i.e. our intellect – if it has a victorious character, becoming free from the obstacles of our material part, getting acquainted with the purest and highest being, i.e. with the Absolute Good – becomes a divine being itself, and the Absolute Good becomes the essence of our surviving intellect. The divine beauty will belong to our intellect. The Absolute Good is pleasing to the intellect, and in the procedure of intellection the human intellect is taking pleasure at the Absolute Good. The reception of the supreme being into our intellect means that our intellect will feel the same divine

¹² Aristotle, *De anima* 431^b 20 sqq: ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ ὄντα πῶς ἐστὶ πάντα.

pleasure that is felt by the supreme being in the procedure of the intellection of his own essence¹³. This divine happiness, which we experience in the other world, is the reward we get for our good conduct in our earthly life (Ibn Sīnā, *Mabda'* 112-113).

If the *forma mentis* was submissive, the soul would not be able to attain this level of intellection of the Absolute Good; consequently, it would be excluded from the divine happiness described above, and this would mean pains for him. This is the punishment in the other world that we receive for the bad deeds we committed in our earthly lives (Ibn Sīnā, *Mabda'* 112-113).

3. This is the meaning of the happiness of paradise and the suffering of hell in Ibn Sīnā's philosophy. What Ibn Sīnā writes is similar to Thomas Aquinas' opinion. In his *Summa theologiae*, the latter writes as follows: *ultima et perfecta beatitudo non potest esse nisi in visione divinae essentiae*. This is precisely what Ibn Sīnā said. The explanation of this thesis also coincides with that of Ibn Sīnā: *uniuscuiusque potentiae perfectio attenditur secundum rationem sui objecti. Objectum autem intellectus est quod quid est, id est essentia rei ad perfectam igitur beatitudinem requiritur, quod intellectus pertingat ad ipsam essentiam primae causae. Et sic perfectionem suam habebit per unionem ad Deum, sicut ad obiectum, in quo solo beatitudo hominis consistit*¹⁴.

What Ibn Sīnā has to say about paradise and hell is different from the colourful description one can find in the Qur'an, thus it is beyond the limits of the orthodox religion. It is an abstract philosophical concept of reward and punishment. The Bible does not contain any description of Paradise or Hell. Thomas Aquinas adopted Ibn Sīnā's teaching, and for lack of a Biblical description, this philosophical speculation about the other world – the abstract concept of happiness, pleasures and pains – became the official teaching of Christendom regarding Paradise and Hell.

¹³ Ibn Sīnā, *Mabda'* 112:

الصورة المعقولة التي يعقلها العقل تصير ذاته، فيرى ذلك الجمال لذاته والمدرک أيضا ذاته. فالمدرک والمدرک راجع كل واحد منهما على الآخر، فوصول سبب اللذات إلى المستلذ أشد وأوغل في ذاته، وهذه اللذة شبيهة باللذة للمبدأ الأول بذاته ويأدرک ذاته، وللروحانيين.

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, secunda pars, quaestio III. articulus VIII.

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¹⁵ When no edition is mentioned standard references are given.

PARADISE AS A PARABLE

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History, according to the three monotheistic religions, began with Adam's expulsion from paradise. It will end when the believers among the sons of Adam return to paradise. Between these two extremes, one mythical and the other eschatological, life upon earth is considered an interim, in which humanity strives to find the way back to paradise. In the miserable and chaotic terrestrial world, which is the inversion of paradise, political and spiritual leaders are necessary in order to establish a shadow of paradise upon earth and to guide the believers in the right way. The institutions of historical civilization, therefore, were ideally modeled on the image of paradise, while the image of paradise dialectically reflects human experiences, institutions, and yearnings. This dialectical relationship between two seemingly opposite worlds is a leading line in the Islamic arts, both literary and visual. When Muslim painters started to depict mythological subjects, in the early fourteenth century, they were certainly acquainted with Christian illustrations of the original sin. But surprisingly enough, not even one Islamic illustration of the episode is known to us. The only painting which reflects the Christian iconography, in al-Bīrūnī's *al-Ātār al-bāqiya*, is in fact an illustration of the Iranian myth of Meša, Mešana and Ahriman¹.

This mixture of cultural traditions fits well into a pattern of syncretism in medieval Islamic literature. Depictions of the original sin are lacking in Islamic painting most probably because Muslim theologians underestimated its importance. Instead, they stressed Adam's regret and God's forgiveness (Kister 1993:149-155).

Most early illustrations of paradise, in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, are connected with the apocalyptic journey of Muḥammad to heaven, the *mi'rāğ*. Illustrated accounts, called *Mi'rāğ-nāme*, contain detailed depictions of the Prophet's prayer in *al-masğid al-aqṣā*, his ascent through the seven heavens to the presence of God, and finally his visits to paradise and hell, before his return to Mecca. In the famous fifteenth century *Mi'rāğ-nāme* from Herāt, paradise is represented by a cosmic tree, a series of screens or veils, a group of domed pavilions, and black-eyed virgins collecting flowers in paradisiacal meadows². In a few later and more popular versions of the Muslim eschatology, the believers in paradise are seen embracing young

¹ Reproduced in Arnold 1932: pl. V; Soucek 1975: fig. 4.

² Paris, BNF, Ms. supp. turc 190, fols. 42a, 45b, 49b, 51a. Reproduced in Séguy 1977: pls. 36, 39, 42, 43.

beauties of both sexes³. But generally speaking, this erotic aspect of paradise is rarely depicted.

The most recurrent and interesting symbol of heaven and of the heavenly garden is a gate. In the earliest known depiction of the *mi'rāğ*, in Rašīd ad-Dīn's *Ġāmi' at-tawārīh*, Muḥammad is seen mounted on his fabulous steed Burāq at the gate of heaven. An angel offers him bowls of wine, water and sour milk to choose from. The Prophet wisely chooses the sour milk, thus assuring that his community will follow the right way to paradise⁴. The ancient Near Eastern motif of consuming food during the passage from one world to another here has a new interpretation. The choice of milk may symbolize the idea that earthly social groupings, which are based on blood relations, will be replaced in paradise by "milk" relations, that are bound on common education or ideology, and characterize religious associations⁵. When Muḥammad established his religious community, the *umma*, he intended it to supplant the pre-Islamic tribal system, thus bringing it closer to the heavenly paradigm. The iconography of this episode, especially the open gate of heaven, may reflect a Christian model of Christ descending to limbo to bring out Adam⁶. The eight gates of paradise – *abwāb al-ğinān* – are shown and identified, together with the heavenly pen and the book of acts, in the upper part of a typical eschatological map (Fig. 1), similar to the one discussed by Alexander Fodor in the second part of the Proceedings⁷. In this map, which first appeared in Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Futūḥāt al-ḥaramayn*, all the eight gardens are shielded by branches of the cosmic tree – *sidrat al-muntabā* or *sağarat at-tuba'*. The body of the Tuba' tree invades the eight gardens of paradise, the leafy summit or, sometimes, the inverted roots reach the abode of God. In some texts it is described as a tree of divine light, in others as the tree of knowledge or intelligence⁸. The drawing represents the topography of the events of the Day of Judgement, taking place simultaneously in *al-ḥaram aš-šarīf* of Jerusalem and in a higher space, on the road between hell and paradise. A Crusaders' map of Jerusalem may have served as a model for an eighteenth century Ottoman drawing in which the gardens of paradise, summarized as a wall with eight gates, circumscribe

³ For example, in a manuscript of *Aḥwāl al-qiyaḥa*, Philadelphia, The Free Library, Rare Book Department, Lewis Ms. O. T7, reproduced in Milstein 1990: fig. 2.

⁴ On this miniature, see Blair's paper in this volume.

⁵ This subject was treated by Kurin (1984: esp. 210-214).

⁶ This iconography often depicts Christ stepping over two open door flops. E.g., a thirteenth century mosaic in Torcello.

⁷ An Ottoman manuscript of *Kitāb al-ma'rifa*, London, The British Library, Or. 12964, fol. 23b.

⁸ On the tree of paradise and its artistic expressions, see Milstein 1999:35-39.

the domain of the Divine (Fig. 2)⁹. There are eight gates because paradise in Islam is often said to be divided into eight gardens, one above the other. In architectural terms the number eight makes an octagon, a form common in Byzantine memorial monuments. This form was already adopted by Islam for its earliest monumental shrine, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. A typical drawing of the Dome of the Rock in Ottoman pilgrims' guides always includes symbols of the Last Judgement, of paradise, and of hell. In the sixteenth century drawing reproduced here, (Fig. 3), a beautiful domed pavilion in the lower left corner is identified by a Persian inscription as *dār-i bibišt* – the door of paradise. A well on the lower right is labelled *dār-i dauzah* – the door of hell, and the inverted triple-arch above the octagonal plan of the Dome of the Rock is said to be *dār-i taḥt-i rabb al-ʿālam īn* – the door of God's throne. The gate to paradise, then, is said to be in Jerusalem, and is linked with the Day of Judgement¹⁰.

However, in the refined and cultivated courtly circles of Iran, the strong influence of Ṣūfī ideology transformed paradise into a quest for mystical love, and placed its gate within the heart. In the metaphorical language of Ṣūfī poetry a locked gate separates the Ṣūfī lover from his divine beloved, whose abode is a palace within a paradisiacal garden. The mounted lover in a late fourteenth century *dīwān* is obliged to remain in the uncultivated land, outside the carefully tended garden, as long as the gate remains closed to him¹¹. According to the Ṣūfīs no one, not even the most prodigious lover, can open the door by himself. Therefore in many illustrations to Ṣūfī poetry an inscription above the door reads: *Yā mufattiḥ al-abwāb, iftaḥ lanā al-bāb* – Oh you who open doors, open the door for us¹².

An open gate leading into a garden became a recurrent symbol in both Iranian and Ottoman miniature painting, especially in illustrations of Ṣūfī themes, or tales of the prophets. In a few frontispieces or endpieces for *Qisaṣ al-anbiyā'*, a company of scholars or Ṣūfīs is seen studying or meditating in a paved open court, in front of a garden gate (Fig. 4)¹³. When a similar gathering takes place inside a mosque, a *madrasa*, or a *zāwiya*, the open gate is replaced by a *miḥrāb*. In real architecture the *miḥrāb* is a niche without a window in the innermost wall of the prayer hall, but in the miniatures an opening in the *miḥrāb* offers a view of a blossoming garden, thus

⁹ Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. Or. quart 1837, fol. 10b. Medieval maps of Jerusalem often depict a round wall with several gates. See, for example, Vilnay 1963:52, 58.

¹⁰ Haifa, The National Maritime Museum, Inv. No. 4576, fol. 49a. The manuscript is discussed in Milstein 2001.

¹¹ *Dīwān* of Hwāğā Kirmānī. London, The British Library, Add. 18113, fol. 26b, reproduced in Gray 1977:46.

¹² See Milstein 1977:365-367.

¹³ A frontispiece to *Qisaṣ al-anbiyā'*, Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, H. 1226.

representing paradise¹⁴. In fact, the *mibrāb* as a directional mark for the prayer symbolizes the direction of the right way, that is paradise. The paved open court and the garden of the previous miniature are repeated in another context – the expulsion from paradise. The same gate, which in the *Ṣūfī* assembly suggests a direction from the court into the garden, here leads in the opposite direction – out of the garden (Fig. 5)¹⁵. Adam, Eve, Satan and his accomplices are seen going out of the garden to the paved court, and out again through the pavilion gate. We see, then, that the gate of paradise, being a symbol of passage between the two worlds, can open in two directions. Adam and Eve went out, but being pardoned by God, they were shown the way back. In spite of his sin Adam received as a gift the black stone of the Kaʿba, and Gabriel taught him the rites of the *ḥaḡḡ* (Milstein *et al.* 1999:109; Kister 1993:159).

In the biblical myth Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness after eating from the forbidden fruit. In a common Muslim version, on the contrary, Adam was endowed with royal robes, a crown and a throne as soon as he was brought into paradise. The angels in paradise were ordered to prostrate themselves before him, because he was a deputy of God – a *ḥalīfa*. Iblīs/Satan, who refused to bow before Adam, was punished by banishment from the presence of God in paradise, and he swore to revenge himself by leading the human race astray¹⁶. Persian miniatures which depict Iblīs's refusal to prostrate himself vary in their interpretations of this act according to the artists' religious affinities. Besides the common iconography which depicts Iblīs as a sinner, a few paintings by extremist *Ṣūfī* circles reveal another point of view. Mainly in manuscripts of *Maḡālis al-ʿuṣṣāq*, Satan in Muslim garb is seen kneeling on a prayer rug, worshipping God. These *Ṣūfīs*, following the celebrated al-Hallāḡ, claimed that Iblīs was a true monotheist, who refused to prostrate himself before anyone but God. They even argued that the true lover of God, Iblīs, was gladly prepared to be banished from paradise, if this was the will of his beloved God¹⁷. This iconography, however, is limited to the manuscripts of certain *Ṣūfī* circles; other manuscripts depict the adoration of the angels, with or without the presence of Iblīs. In an illustration for a *Fal-nāme* from *Ṣafawid* Iran, Satan and his company are pushed to the back, outside paradise¹⁸. In some Ottoman miniatures Satan is not even present. There the real subject of the painting is

¹⁴ E.g. Milstein 1990: figs. 6, 21.

¹⁵ *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Diez A Fol. 3, fol. 13b.

¹⁶ On the origins of the legends, see Sidersky 1933:15; Nagel 1960; Pedersen 1960; Altman 1944-45; Milstein *et al.* 1999:106-17. Some illustrations of this episode are discussed and reproduced in Milstein 1986.

¹⁷ Milstein 1986:551. For illustration, see BNP, SP. 1559, fol. 10b; Schimmel 1975:194.

¹⁸ A royal *Ṣafawid Fal-nāme*, Sacklar Gallery, D. C., S 86.0251, reproduced in Milstein 1995: fig. 2.

apparently Adam in court, as a deputy of God, a model of a ruling prophet¹⁹. This Ottoman insistence on the absence of Iblīs echoes an early Islamic interpretation of Adam's status as a substitute (*ḥalīfa*) of God upon earth, based on Qur'ān 2:30. In this verse God says to the angels "I am setting in the earth a deputy". The term *ḥalīfa* was a pivotal point of disagreement in the Sunnite-*Ṣīʿite* dispute about Ali's right to be the successor of the prophet Muḥammad (Kister 1993:116-128; Rubin 1975:79).

Having eaten from the forbidden fruit, Adam lost his kingly status. The crown, the throne and the royal robes flew away from him, declaring that they refused to adorn a sinner. In al-Kisā'ī's words, "As soon as Adam ate of the wheat, the crown flew away from his head, his signet rings were scattered, and all the clothes and jewelry that were on him and on his wife left them, saying that they could be used only by faithful servants of God. The throne, too, flew in the air and cried 'Adam has sinned'. Everything in paradise and all the angels from all directions reproached him, until he was obliged to flee" (al-Kisā'ī, *Qīṣaṣ* 40). The inhabitants of paradise wanted to kill him, and several illustrations depict one of them raising a stick against Adam (pls. 5-6)²⁰. The authors of the later Persian *qīṣaṣ* literature, who wish to stress Adam's spiritual attributes rather than the fall, tell that all those who were in paradise intended to attack Adam, but when they saw the prophetic light radiating from his forehead, they said: "This light has not disappeared, and therefore no one is allowed to raise his hand against him." The presence of other people in paradise, and the introduction of this rather strange legend suggests that the image may be a metaphor dealing with the ever present question in Islamic political history – when does a ruler lose his right to lead the community. According to this myth, the right to rule is in the hand of God. The origins of the composition may be in the *Ṣīʿite* regime of *Ṣafawid* Iran. In the context of a heated conflict between the Ottomans and the *Ṣafawids*, the position of the community with regard to a disgraced ruler may reflect dynastic propaganda or debates among partisans of this or that dynasty. Beside Adam, Eve, and Iblīs, the other sinners were the serpent, who introduced Satan into paradise, and the peacock, who introduced Satan to the serpent. The peacock's sins were pride and vanity, linking him with some ancient Near Eastern myths of descent into Hades. In all the Islamic illustrations of the episode, Satan and the other two accomplices follow Adam and Eve on their way out, but in several paintings the first

¹⁹ Illustration in Christie's catalogue 1976:24. Here Adam is represented standing on a typical Ottoman *minbar*, instead of a throne. The illustration may be based on an early tradition, according to which Adam was given a *minbar*, as in al-Kisā'ī, *Qīṣaṣ* 29. A *minbar* instead of a throne suits the notion of the Ottoman sultans as caliphs.

²⁰ Another example, Istanbul, TSMK H. 1225, fol. 14b, illustration in Milstein *et al.* 1999: fig. 2.

couple is seen riding the serpent, before it lost its legs, and the peacock (Fig. 6)²¹. We cannot engage here in a detailed interpretation of the symbolism of these two animals, which are prominent in Salḡuq architecture and in all media of Islamic art. I can only suggest that the serpent and the peacock symbolise desires, and that riding them may mean that Adam and Eve were carried along by their desires or, conversely, had to learn to control them²². Satan in this painting is seen as young and handsome, with wings like an angel, apparently due to the heterodox Şūfī views of the artist. When they left paradise, the first man and woman took with them a few gifts or remembrances, each of which is an aspect of the future civilization. The ears of corn, which Eve is seen holding, are a symbol of food production and material culture; a rod from paradise, which later passed to Moses, is a symbol of the true religion, and in some circles a magical sign; a seal-ring, one of Adam's royal insignia, and later given by heaven to King Solomon, represents the power of kingship. The ears of corn occupy a central place in an illustration by an Ottoman court painter, thus presenting the expulsion from paradise not as the catastrophic end of a golden age, but as the beginning of a new civilization²³. In this later historical age kings play a crucial role, and the Ottoman sultans based their claims of legitimacy on Adam and his kingly progeny. The Ottoman sultans, who appropriated the title *halifa* after the conquest of the holy cities in Arabia, supported their claim by attributing their lineage to Adam. Thus we find in a royal Ottoman manuscript of *Zubdat at-tawārīḥ* an illustration of Adam and Eve and their progeny²⁴. This image refers to an early tradition, according to which God showed Adam his famous ascendants, among whom the two most frequently illustrated were King David and the Prophet Muhammad. The sultans, in their writings and their arts, constantly referred to the two lines of their spiritual ancestors, the prophetic and the royal, both originating in the figure of Adam. In this light the image of the angels' adoration of Adam, without the presence of Iblīs, can be explained as a portrayal of Adam in the role of a ruler. In this frame of reference several illustrations depict Šīt (Seth) and Idrīs, the children of Adam who received *maṣāḥif* – copies of the Holy Book – from heaven, and who taught humanity the skills of reading and tailoring. Idrīs, the Muslim name for the biblical Hanoah or the Christian Enoch, entered paradise while still alive, and managed to remain there for eternity (Huart 1960; Vajda 1960). Some illustrations depict him in a garden, surrounded by angels, and tailoring a coat (Fig.

²¹ *Qisaṣ al-anbiyā'*, Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, H. 1225, fol. 14b.

²² Rūmī, *Maṭnawī* III, no. 4035.

²³ Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, H. 1703, reproduced in Milstein 1995: fig. 2.

²⁴ Istanbul, Museum for Turkish and Islamic Art, Inv. 1973, fol. 18b. Discussion and illustration in Renda 1977: fig. 3; and Renda 1976:195, fig. 26.

7)²⁵. In the Near Eastern civilizations clothes have always been regarded as the first and foremost symbol of culture, status and initiation. In the Iranian myth, the invention of garments was attributed to the first king, Gayumarth, who in a complex syncretism was integrated by Muslim writers with Adam, Seth, and Idrīs (Hartman 1966:266-273).

An example of this confused identity can be seen in a fourteenth century isolated miniature, most probably from a Book of Kings²⁶. It depicts King Gayumarth and his court in the mountains, in a period which according to Iranian mythology represents the golden age of harmonious relationships between nature, human beings, and animals, in other words a lost paradise. In this semi-paradisiacal age Gayumarth founded civilization by establishing the institution of kingship and by introducing the robe. He and his people wore animal skins, but his son and heir to the throne invented weaving. King Gayumarth, then, has some points in common with the Muslim Adam and his sons. An owner of this painting identified the hero erroneously, and wrote the name Adam next to the image of Gayumarth. A later owner disagreed and added the name of Seth. We have seen that the concepts of paradise and of earthly kingdom interchange and enrich each other in Islamic painting. But painting in Islam was a limited medium, reserved to courtly circles. The public medium being architecture, Muslim rulers invested their monumental buildings with religious and political messages. For example, following the tradition of the Dome of the Rock they further developed the symbolic octagonal ground plan in palaces and especially in funerary architecture. Topped by a dome, which symbolizes heaven, a mausoleum represents paradise and is often called *rawḡa* or *rawza* – that is to say "a garden". Royal palaces in Iran were called *bešt bibišt* – eight paradises, and were planned as a complex of eight radial units. This royal and funerary architecture, often combined with a large quadrangled garden around a central pool, probably influenced the painters who depicted paradise, and therefore in the fifteenth century *Mi'rāḡ-name* illustration, the black-eyed beauties of paradise are depicted within an octagonal pavilion²⁷.

To sum up, the image of paradise is based upon terrestrial forms and institutions. Like a mirrored image, it is an inverted form, the contradiction of this world, and yet it reflects a certain material reality. While at the same time gardens and royal tombs were invested with the ideal image of paradise as a means of conferring political legitimacy²⁸, Abū l-^cAlā' al-Ma'arrī used the image of a heavenly voyage

²⁵ *Qisaṣ al-anbiyā'*, Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, H. 1227, fol. 21b.

²⁶ Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Museum, H. 1253, fol. 55b, reproduced in Ipsiroglu 1966: pl. 12.

²⁷ Fol. 51, reproduced in Séguy 1977: pl. 43.

²⁸ This phenomenon is discussed by Jonathan Bloom in this volume.

as a poetic pretext for his literary ideas and criticism. In this paper I have tried to show that like al-Ma'arrī, some painters may have invested their illustrations of paradise with concrete historical references or modeled them on terrestrial realities. Thus a material object, the gate, heavily loaded both with political, moral and spiritual symbolism, became a necessary part of the artist's image of paradise.

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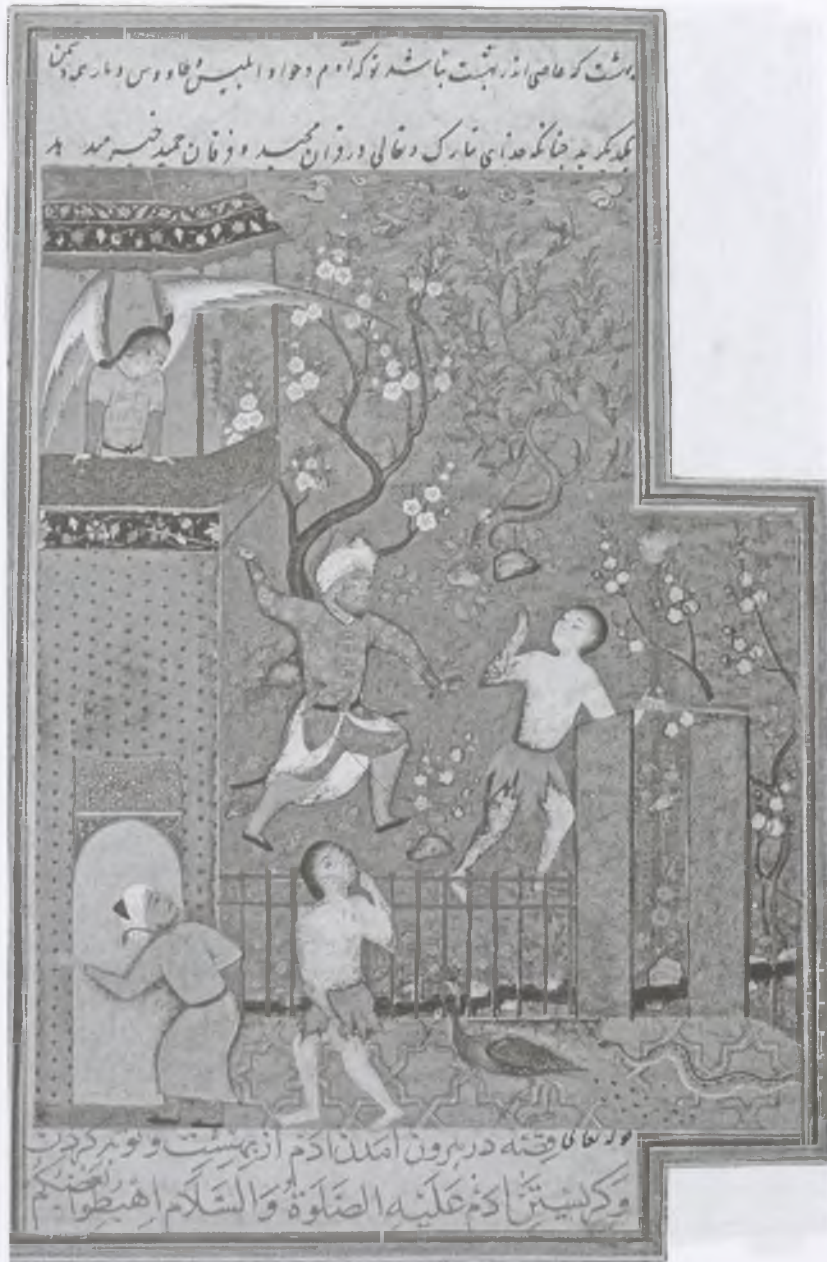
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COME HELL OR HIGH WATER AFTERLIFE AS A POETIC CONVENTION IN MEDIAEVAL ARABIC LITERATURE

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The Qur'ān, as is well known, confers an outstanding role to detailed descriptions of Heaven and Hell, and it is equally obvious that the Islamic religious sciences and the popular culture of the Muslim Arabs were not a jot less preoccupied with this subject. It was quite natural that the theme, so conspicuous in the Islamic scripture, should captivate the minds of the common people and the educated classes alike, regardless of their social standing or level of literacy. Being thus a firm part of the cultural heritage of the Muslim Arabs, afterlife naturally occupied a prominent position in the imagery of their poetry and prose works as well, in addition to constant references to it in the everyday speech and joke repertoire of the common people, two strata of language use that we shall see interacted with each other frequently, lending and borrowing witty phrases or thematic conceits. What I want to discuss briefly in the following is to what lengths poets and prose writers could go in utilizing images and phrases borrowed from the religious tradition, and the actual ways in which the eschatological material was handled in non-religious literature.

The various terms and elements appearing in the Qur'ānic description of Paradise and Hell, not surprisingly, proved to be a constant inspiration to most people's imagination. The Qur'ān commentaries offer obvious instances of how every single name, phrase etc. referring to the afterlife was surrounded with ever more meticulous details and explanations, and apparently popular culture did not lag behind in embellishing these well-known Qur'ānic passages with like details, as attested by stories about the *quṣṣās* and other bearers of the new, urban, Islamic folklore. Even a cursory look into *muhḍat* poetry will not fail to persuade us that *littérateurs* were extremely fond of incorporating religious imagery, including concepts of Heaven and Hell, into their poetry and prose, often in very profane contexts indeed, this being regarded as one of the finest tools of *zarf*, that is (in one of the term's manifold senses) wittiness and urbane elegance in the use of language.

To begin with, the very words denoting Paradise (*ġanna*, *ġinān*, *firdaws*, *'adn*, etc.) and Hell (*ġahannam*, *an-nār*, *saqar*, *al-ġahīm*, etc.) were turned into hackneyed literary metaphors that expressed little more than something very pleasant and very unpleasant respectively. Examples of this are so plentiful and well-known to every

scholar of Arabic as to make any mention of them really superfluous here. Hell is also often used in poetry as a simile of, or metaphor for, extreme heat¹.

The houris, lovely maidens of Paradise who are reserved for pious Muslims as part of the charms and joys of Heaven, are, understandably enough, a conspicuous presence in Arabic literature. Likening one's beloved girl to a houri is a real commonplace if ever there was one². Occasionally, however, we do encounter examples of more original variations on the evergreen theme. A famous intellectual of the Buwayhid era, Abū Ishāq aṣ-Ṣābi' offers his beloved, in a charming poem of his, the compliment of possessing so supernatural a beauty as to serve as evidence of their religious doctrines for the followers of all religions. Beginning the list with the Muslims, the poet says that the beloved person, by virtue of his or her beauty, will prove to them the existence of the houris (at-Ta'ālibī, *Yatīma* II, 259). The Egyptian poet Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Wakī' at-Tinnīsī, displaying the characteristic *muhḍat* preoccupation with witty paradoxes, likens his non-Muslim beloved to a *hūrīyya*, then proceeds to add that this beloved person cannot be regarded an infidel since the houris' dwelling-place, as is clear from the Qur'ānic text, is Paradise and certainly not Hell³. Finally, the poet Abū l-ʿAtāhiya is said to have been occasionally criticized and suspected of heresy, but was apparently unharmed, on account of his line suggesting that the model for the creation of the houris had to be

¹ To list just the harvest of a very cursory survey: Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ṭabaqāt* 6 ("yā rahmata 'llāhi hullī fi manāzilīnā, ḥashī bi-rā'ihati l-firdawsī min fiki"); at-Ta'ālibī, *Yatīma* IV, 210 ("adīrī min dahkīn gadā sababa l-bukā wa-min ḡannatin qad awqa'at fī ḡabannamī"); at-Ta'ālibī, *Tatīmā* I, 139 ("in takun ḡannata n-na'īmi fa-fihā min adā l-ḡabli wa-l-ḡumārī ḡahīmū"); op. cit. II, 38 ("ḡammāmuhu ka-ḡahīmin min ḡarāratihī lākin mata ta'tihī yaḡdumuka Ridwānu"); al-Bāḡharzī, *Dumya* I, 114 ("kilā rāḡatayka nadan radan ka-annaka li-n-nāsi nārūn wa-ḡanna"); Ibn Sa'īd, *Rāyāt* 61 ("madat ḡannatu l-ma'wā wa-ḡā'at ḡabannamū, fa-hā anā aṣḡā ḡā'da mā kuntu an'amū"); Ibn Sa'īd, *Muqtaraf* 107 ("idā adḡaltahu n-nāra ḡakā rā'ihata l-ḡanna"); al-Ḡurḡānī, *Wasāta* 303 ("fī mahallin ḡayna l-ḡināni wa-ḡayna n-nāri arḡū tawran wa-tawran aḡāfu"); Pseudo-Tawḡhīdī, *Risāla baḡdādiyya* 113 (falsely attributed in this edition to at-Tawḡhīdī, it is in fact a work by Abū l-Muḡahhar al-Azdī) and at-Ta'ālibī, *Fḡāz* 246 ("ilā arḡin ḡanāḡa min ḡanā ḡannati Ridwāni"); Ibn Dihya, *Mutrib* 3 ("futḡihati l-ḡannatu min ḡaybihī fa-bitḡu fī da'wati Ridwāni"); Ibn al-Ḥatīb, *Ḡays* 14 ("[...] fa-a'āda n-nāra ḡanna", in a *muwāṣṣah* [by Ibn Baḡī]). To this list of poetic examples, I might add an idiomatic usage cited in a late mediaeval source: a stupid plus obnoxious individual would be referred to as *baḡar saḡar* ('hell's cattle'), while a stupid but harmless one would be called *baḡar al-ḡanna* ('heaven's cattle'); see al-Ibṡīhi, *Mustatraf* 22.

² E.g. Ibn Sa'īd, *Rāyāt* 71; Pseudo-Tawḡhīdī, *Risāla baḡdādiyya* 358; al-Hillī, *ʿĀtil* 31, 174 (in a *zaḡal* and a *qūmā* respectively); Ibn al-Ḥatīb, *Ḡays* 161 (in a *muwāṣṣah* by 'Īsā ibn Labūn); al-Marzūqī 1967:110 (in a Tunisian vernacular poem of the *mahzūz* genre).

³ at-Ta'ālibī, *Yatīma* I, 371: "li-annahu ka-l-hūrī fi taṣwīrihi wa-l-hūru lā yuskinuhā 'llāhu s-saḡar".

the girl he loved and not vice versa ("fa-ḡadā bi-ḡudrati naṣsihi ḡūra l-ḡināni 'alā miṡālik")⁴.

As widespread as images of the houris is the recurrent thematic fixture of *al-wildān al-muḡhalladūn*, or the handsome young lads waiting on the inhabitants of Paradise, whose conspicuity in the Qur'ānic passages describing the eternal bliss of Paradise has led to numerous fixed expressions and conceits in literature as well as, apparently, in daily chat. A usual turn of speech in poems in describing some uncommonly beautiful boy is that he used to belong among these heavenly creatures but escaped from Paradise for some sin committed there and came to live among humans. Quite common in poems, this expression is also found in prose works like, for example, the *al-Asadiyya maḡāma* of al-Ḥamadānī, where a young Turkish warrior is described thus: „we had no doubt that he must have started a row with the [rest of the paradisiacal] lads and had [consequently] left Paradise, fleeing from Ridwān” (*fa-mā ṣakaknā annahu ḡasama l-wildān, fa-fāraḡa l-ḡinān, wa-ḡaraba min Ridwān*) (al-Ḥamadānī, *Maḡāmāt* 42). This is very similar to a passage in the *Yatīma* of at-Ta'ālibī where an exceptionally comely young servant called Naṣṡūs of the Ḥamdānid court is characterized as looking “as though, in a moment of Ridwān's inattention, he ran away from Paradise” (*ka-anna Ridwān ḡafala 'anhu fa-abiḡa min al-ḡanna*)⁵. Yet another poem puts a little twist on the theme, the sort of slight change that appealed so much to the mediaeval Arab audience, by saying that a lovely-looking boy was banished from Paradise by Ridwān himself lest he should prove a temptation to the houris⁶! A *muwāṣṣah* of the Andalusī poet Ibn Sahl al-Iṣrā'īlī modifies the theme again; here it is a houri sent to mankind by Ridwān that the beloved is likened to (aṣ-Ṣafādī, *Tawṣī'ī* 159). We will return to the topic of *al-wildān al-muḡhalladūn* further on, when speaking of more risqué thematic conventions.

The various named rivers of Paradise, like *Kawṡar*, *Salsabil* and *Tasnīm*, have always been a staple of Muslim popular imagination, and were readily utilized by men of letters as metaphors for pleasant sensations, gustatory or otherwise, such as

⁴ Ibn Qutayba, *Ṣīr* 411. In fact, this appears to be either a poetic convention or an instance of plagiarism, cf. an expression of the same idea in Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān* B 403 ("fa-lammā ḡattahu baṣaran saṣwiyyan ḡadā ḡūra l-ḡināni 'alā ḡidāḡu").

⁵ at-Ta'ālibī, *Yatīma* I, 89. Cf. also Ibn al-Kattānī, *Taṣḡihāt* 162; Pseudo-Tawḡhīdī, *Risāla baḡdādiyya* 362.

⁶ at-Ta'ālibī, *Yatīma* II, 205: "aḡraḡahu Ridwānu min dārihi mahāfata tuṡtatana l-hūru" (by a poet of Mosul called Sa'īd b. Ḥāṣim al-Ḥalīdī). That the paradisiacal virgins might be susceptible to the charms of mere mortals already appears in a verse by Abū Nuwās, cf. Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān* A 433 ("wa-taṣawwaḡat ḡūra l-ḡināni mina l-ḡulūdi ilā miṡālik").

the saliva of the beloved person. Again, examples of this convention are so conspicuous that I omit to make an inventory here⁷.

Of the constituents of the Muslim conception of Hell, Mālik the gate-keeper of the Inferno is often mentioned in witty contexts, as are the horrible workforce of Hell, the *zabāniya*⁸. One of the striking characteristics of the uses of 'hellish' images in poetry is the fact that they are subject to apparently no constrictions when a sense of humour palpably permeates them, a general observation to which I wish to return at the end of this paper. The secretary Abū l-Faḥḥ 'Alī al-Bustī complains to a vizier of the latter's gate-keeper by stating that while the vizierial palace is a heavenly abode for all visitors, its doorman rather reminds one of Mālik ("*dārūka lī ḡannatun walākinna bawwābahā Māliku l-ḡahīmi*")⁹. In a poem, the famous Buwayhid vizier as-Ṣaḥīb b. 'Abbād ridicules a man of parasitic habits with the hyperbole that he would probably try even to prey on the hospitality of Mālik, if only by asking for some free *zaqqūm* fruit, which of course is normally regarded as a disgusting trial awaiting sinners, one of the punishments of Hell¹⁰. A pleasantry popular in *muhḍat* lampoons is the suggestion that someone's presence would be regarded an added form of torture even in Hell and a cause for complaint for its inmates (Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Ṭabaqāt* 168). A light-hearted, easy-going attitude is also evident in a verse referring to a roast chicken as a crucified sinner who has been punished by hell-fire¹¹. Loaded as it is with eschatological imagery, the following line describing a bath was no doubt relished by the educated mediaeval audience as a particularly witty accomplishment: "Its pleasantness recalls Eden, its heat does the Inferno; its servants are [like] houris working next to the *zabāniya*" (*hakā l-'adna tiban wal-ḡahīma harāratan wal-huddāmuhu hūrun talihim zabāniya*) (al-Bāḥarzī, *Dumya* II, 856).

⁷ Cf. for instance al-Bāḥarzī, *Dumya* III, 1492 (here the cliché is juxtaposed to another popular conceit of mediaeval Arab poets, the *iqtibās* or incorporation of Qur'anic phrases [this one from 55: 54], about which later); Ibn Sa'īd, *Rāyāt* 88; Ibn Dihya, *Mutrib* 170; Ibn al-Kattānī, *Tasbihāt* 92; al-Ibšīhī, *Mustatraf* 277; Pseudo-Tawhīdī, *Risāla baḡdādiyya* 358, 376; Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, *Ġayṣ* 185 [Abū 'Amir ibn Yanaq].

⁸ See for example al-Ma'arrī, *Ġufrān* 44; at-Ta'ālībī, *Fḡāz* 204; Ibn Dihya, *Mutrib* 96; al-Ġaḥīz, *Hayawān* I, 133; al-Ibšīhī, *Mustatraf* 306.

⁹ at-Ta'ālībī, *Yatīma* IV, 326; and cf. the same conceit by other poets in al-Ibšīhī, *Mustatraf* 105 (in one of the verses, the figure of Mālik is substituted by the two terrible interrogators of the deceased, Munkar and Nakīr).

¹⁰ at-Ta'ālībī, *Yatīma* III, 270. Cf. a flippant joke about *zaqqūm* and other dreadful things awaiting sinners in Hell in at-Tawhīdī, *Baṣā'ir* V, 9: 119. For more literary uses of *zaqqūm*, cf. Pseudo-Tawhīdī, *Risāla baḡdādiyya* 180, 296, 379.

¹¹ al-Bāḥarzī, *Dumya* I, 446. However, the word 'fire' in this line might also be understood as referring to the stake rather than to Hell. (The poem, as is proudly remarked by the author of the anthology, is by his own father.)

Images of the Muslim conception of the Day of Resurrection (*yawm al-qiyāma*) are also something of a commonplace in the poetic language of the *muhḍatūn* as well as in prose and in the educated conversational style of the age. So much so that the very word resurrection, *qiyāma*, and the expression *qāmat al-qiyāma* (the day of resurrection has arrived) have become perfect commonplaces to designate a scene of excited confusion, and indeed the latter expression continues to be much used even in contemporary Arabic dialects¹². This linguistic usage is the point of an apparently popular joke in which a man, when hearing the above expression on a terribly windy day, remarks that this looks a *qiyāma* of a sparing sort, lacking as it does such common attributes of the last day as the arrival of the Antichrist, the Mahdī, or the Beast (*dābbat al-ard*) (at-Tawhīdī, *Baṣā'ir* II, 3: 85). As the Day of Judgement is conceptualized by the Islamic tradition as a preternaturally long one, spanning over years and years if measured by earthly chronology, it is little wonder that the phrase was also popular as a metaphor for excessively long and unpleasant periods of time, like in a line complaining of the irritating and lengthy presence of a boring acquaintance: "an hour spent together with him [feels] as long as the Day of Resurrection" (*fa-sā'atun minhu 'indī fī ṭūli yawmi l-qiyāma*)¹³. Such elements of the description of Resurrection in the Qur'ān as the scales that weigh every man's good and bad deeds (*al-mīzān*), or the trumpet (*as-sūr*) sounded by the archangel Isrāfīl to signal the arrival of the last day, or the extremely thin bridge over which the saved souls make their last walk to Paradise (*as-sirāt al-mustaqīm*), all get their highly conventional treatment in mediaeval Arabic literature and folklore, often in a less than serious manner. A line by an anonymous poet says: "I have come to like the Day of Resurrection solely because I may see you then on the *sirāt*" (*ahbabbtu l-qiyāmata lā li-ṣay'in walākin kay arāka 'alā ṣ-sirāt*)¹⁴. The Syrian poet Abū 'Umāra as-Sūfī says

¹² Examples include the following: at-Ta'ālībī, *Yatīma* I, 299 ("*wa-zabyin aqāma qiyāmatī min qabli an ta'tiya l-qiyāma*"); al-Bāḥarzī, *Dumya* I, 101 ("*qamarun aqāma qiyāmatī bi-qawāmihi lammā ta'awwad*"); Pseudo-Tawhīdī, *Risāla baḡdādiyya* 363 ("*wayha l-qulūbi mina l-yūni la-qad qāmat qiyāmatuhunna fī d-dunya*"); al-Ibšīhī, *Mustatraf* 284 ("*lā ta'ḡabū in qāmat fihī qiyāmatī inna l-qiyāmata yawma kaṣfi s-sāqī*"); note also the masterful reference in this line by Dū r-Rumma to Q 68:42; Ben Cheneb 1922:141 ("*hafi ilāhaki fī nafsīn qadi 'htadarat qāmat qiyāmatuhā bayna l-musallīnā*"); cf. also the same idea (without the use of the term *qiyāma*) moulded in the form of a simile in Ibn al-Kattānī, *Tasbihāt* 291; and the use of Qur'anic phrases depicting *yawm al-qiyāma* to describe extreme turmoil in al-Hamadānī, *Maqāmāt* 67 ("*fa-ṣāha binā ṣayḥatan kādat labā l-ard tanfaṭir, wa-n-nuḡūm tankadir*").

¹³ al-Bāḥarzī, *Dumya* II, 732. Cf. Bilāl b. Ḡarīr's lampoon on Ḥammād al-Minqarī in Ibn Qutayba, *Ṣir* 231.

¹⁴ az-Zawzanī, *Hamāsa* II, 116. See also Ibn Dihya, *Mutrib* 59; and a *muwaṣṣah* by Ibn Baqī in Ibn al-Ḥaṭīb, *Ġayṣ* 15 ("*in ḡuzta sirāta ṣaddī, tamatta'ta min qurbi 'adnī*"). The *sirāt* is also mentioned in a sweeping quasi-vernacular diatribe transferred into the famous Baghdadian Epistle: "I'll drink you, then only piss you out on *as-sirāt al-mustaqīm*!" See Pseudo-Tawhīdī, *Risāla baḡdādiyya* 378. In a funny anecdote, an uncouth Bedouin, the usual butt of many jokes, praises the luxurious sweetmeat called

of an irritating bore, a real pain in the neck (the proverbial *taqīl*, 'heavy' of mediaeval Arabic literature) that his weight would not only counterbalance all mankind if put on the Judgement Day's scales, but also break the device¹⁵. An almost deaf man is described mockingly as someone who will not take note even of the Trumpet of the Last Day¹⁶. A seemingly very popular cliché was to praise a generous person by saying that, were it possible, he would be willing to share his good deeds with those in need of them on the Day of Judgement¹⁷. Arguably the most sarcastic imaginary account of the scenes of the Day of Judgement, which will move us on to the next point, is a well-known passage to be found in the *Risālat al-ḡufrān*, replete with a highly ironic evocation of all the details of the Islamic conception of this day, including the idea of intercession (*ṣafā'a*)¹⁸.

It must be remarked that some of the literary uses of the theme of Paradise and Hell strike the modern reader as positively daring or risqué if viewed through the lense of Islamic piety. Nevertheless, the fact remains that such uses were not unknown and seem to have been tolerated, indeed enjoyed, by the educated classes

falūdaḡ by declaring that it cannot be anything else but *aṣ-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* (literally, 'the straight path'); see al-Ibšīhī, *Mustatraf* 189. For the concept of the *ṣirāt* in mediaeval popular culture, see also Shoshan 1991:84-85.

¹⁵ at-Ta'ālibī, *Yatīma* I, 289. For another example of making fun of the concept of the 'scales' in various manners, cf. at-Ta'ālibī, *Tatīmma* I, 27 ("*wa-suriqat labu durayhimātun fa-ḡila lā tahtamma fa-innahā fī mizānuka fa-ḡala mina l-mizāni suriqat*").

¹⁶ See al-Bāharzī, *Dumya* II, 1068 (the poem is by the anthologist himself). On the subject of the Trumpet, see further examples in at-Ta'ālibī, *Tatīmma* II, 32 ("*aḡāmū 'alā n-nāsi l-ḡiyāmata ḡabratan wa-ḡā'ū bi-Isrāfīla fī s-sūri yanfuhū*"); al-Ma'arrī, *Ḡufrān* 126 ("*hattā idā 'nfaddati d-dunya wa-nudīya Isrāfīlu wayhaka hallā tanfuhū s-sūrā*"); Ibn al-Kattānī, *Taṣbiḥāt* 213 ("*ka-anna s-sūra dammat nashatuhu ilayhi kulla man sakana t-turābā*"); op. cit. 257 ("*tabdū bi-waḡhin mā ra'āhu 'mru'un illā tamannā n-nafḡa fī s-sūri*"); Pseudo-Tawhīdī, *Risāla baḡdādīyya* 332 ("*kullu muḡannin bi-kulli tunburin dūnaka hattā n-nafḡi fī s-sūri*"); and a lovely anecdote attributed to 'Amīr aṣ-Ṣa'bī in Ibn al-Ḡawzī, *Qussās* 302. A poem by Abū Ḡa'far Muḡammad al-Baḡḡāt ridicules an untalented singer by likening his voice to the screams of Doomsday (*ṣayḡat al-ḡiyāma*), see az-Zawzanī, *Hamāsa* II, 137.

¹⁷ See three examples of it in al-Ḡurḡānī, *Wasāta* 196.

¹⁸ al-Ma'arrī, *Ḡufrān* 90-99. Popular beliefs similar to the notion of intercession (concerning practices that might help a believer save himself on the Day of Judgement) are the butt of a joke about a *qāss*, or popular preacher, who says that by swallowing, rather than just chewing, the blessed liver of Hamza (one of the Prophet's uncles), the abominable Hind bint 'Utba could have saved herself from Hell despite her heinous sin, to which someone present piously responds: "Oh my God, allow us to eat of the liver of Hamza!" See at-Tawhīdī, *Basā'ir* II, 3: 157. As the scenes of the Day of Judgement are so familiar to any ordinary Muslim, it is little wonder that jokes set in these contexts seem still to be popular among contemporary Arabs. For some examples, see al-Qiṣṭaynī 1992:179-180, 191-192. (The latter joke features the two dreadful interrogating angels, Munkar and Nakīr, another well-known element of Islamic eschatology).

as long as they were clearly kept within the confines of jesting (*ḡazl*) and did not evolve into statements of unbelief¹⁹.

To start with, one sporadically runs into highly inappropriate comparisons between Paradise and worldly subjects, in which a standard method of creating a humorous effect can be easily observed. I am referring to the deliberate juxtaposition of stylistically distant, discrepant things, especially the most sacred and the most profane. The famous licentious poet Muṭī' b. Iyās once said (apparently in casual conversation): "There is an attribute date-wine shares with Paradise, because God says [Q 35:34] that the inhabitants of Paradise will say: 'Thanks to God, who has driven sadness away from us!' Now, date-wine drives away sadness." (*Inna fī n-nabīd la-ma'nā fī l-ḡanna li-anna 'llah ta'ālā dakara 'an aḡlibā annahum yaḡūlūna al-ḡamdu li-llāhi lladī adḡaba 'annā l-ḡazan, wa-n-nabīd yudḡhibu l-ḡazan*)²⁰. Similarly flippant comparisons of Paradise with pronouncedly profane and unbecoming subjects (especially the private parts of certain people) were by all appearances much relished by men of letters²¹.

Wine, as favourite a topic with the *muḡdat* poets as ever before, was the subject of much light-hearted jesting among literary figures when it came to discussing the religious condemnation attached to it. It gave rise to a very popular poetic convention, that of openly challenging if not provoking the religious establishment by declaring one's willingness to continue drinking in spite of one's knowledge of the consequences of such a behaviour in the afterlife²². The most famous and probably one of the earliest manifestations of that poetic convention are some celebrated lines by the Iraqi poet known as as-Sarī ar-Raffā', full as usual of word-play: "Hand over to me that which will be [considered] multiplied sin on the Day of Resurrection; [its colour] as beautiful as [that of] fire, the consequence of drinking it being also fire" (*Hāti 'llatī hiya yawma l-ḡaṣri awzārū; ka-n-nāri fī l-ḡusni 'uḡbā ṣurbihā n-nārū*)²³. The tone of this poem surely pales in comparison with one composed by Ibn al-

¹⁹ That jesting, exercised within reasonable and recognizable limits, has a wholesome effect on a civilized person's character was a fundamental notion in mediaeval Arabic thinking, cf. for instance van Gelder 1992:91.

²⁰ at-Ta'ālibī, *Ḥaṣṣ* 61; also at-Ta'ālibī, *Iḡāz* 131. On the subject of Paradise and wine-drinking, cf. also the ironic proposition of Abū l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī that those who would not abandon wine-drinking during their earthly career will be denied that part of the pleasures of Paradise, an idea nowhere to be found in 'orthodox' religious doctrine; see al-Ma'arrī, *Ḡufrān* 45, 47.

²¹ See, e.g. al-Ḡāḡiz, *Rasā'il* II, 128; at-Tawhīdī, *Basā'ir* II, 4: 156; ar-Rāḡib, *Muḡadarāt* II, 118; Yāqut, *Irsād* IV, 1685.

²² A slight shift of emphasis from the traditional theme of rejecting the interference of someone else in one's own affairs (the '*ādil*' or '*ādila*').

²³ at-Ta'ālibī, *Yatīma* II, 137. There are several other variations on the theme by as-Sarī ar-Raffā'. Cf. also the finishing lines of a poem attributed to Abū Nuwās in az-Zaḡḡāḡī, *Amālī* 98.

Haḡḡāḡ, the poet of the Buwayhid era made famous and successful by his obscene language and imagery, the following line of which is sufficient hint of the rest: "Give me to drink, unmixed, that which the God-inspired Qur'ān clearly forbade" (*fa-sqiyānī mahda llatī nataqa l-wahyu bi-tabrīmihā minā l-Qurānī*)²⁴.

A possibly even more daring and brazen, but still not uncommon, theme in Arabic literature is probably due to the somewhat ill-defined role that the paradisiacal boys (*al-wildān al-muhalladūn*) are supposed to perform. It has given rise to the sarcastic inquiry about the exact nature of their mission, or even a more or less explicit suggestion that this role might be of a sexual character, like that of the ubiquitous *gilmān* of the age, a phenomenon so widespread in that period as almost to invite the supposition²⁵. For instance, such is the purport of a passage in the *Risālat al-ḡufrān*, where the author puts in the mouth of Iblīs the inquiry whether, just like wine, intercourse with the heavenly lads has not become permitted to the inhabitants of Paradise after having been strictly prohibited in life²⁶. Given the unequivocal condemnation of homosexuality in Islamic jurisprudence, this supposition remained a rude sort of jesting with sanctity, yet nonetheless enjoyed by contemporary *littérateurs* as a very witty joke.

Light-hearted joking with deliberately misunderstood or misinterpreted verses from the Qur'ān was a favourite kind of witticism among Muslim intellectuals in the Middle Ages, and it was certainly not taken seriously by anyone if no harm was intended. What is worth noting in this context, as indeed elsewhere too, is the fact that playing with the Qur'ānic text appears to have been as common in normal, everyday conversation as it was in 'high' literature, as testified by a large number of jokes or quasi-jokes in the anecdotal material of *adab* collections. So much so that a work on political humour even regards this source of fun a typical manifestation of the Arabs' sense of wit (al-Qiṣṭaynī 1992:27). As far as literature proper is concerned, allusions to the Qur'ān's verses as a source of humour are especially common in *adab* collections, that is to say in anecdotes, but they are by no means absent from poetry

²⁴ at-Ta'ālībī, *Yatima* III, 66. See also another extremely provocative Bacchic poem by Ibn al-Haḡḡāḡ in op. cit. III, 91, where the poet says that the wine which he consumed during his earthly life he will urinate only later, when in Hell.

²⁵ Cf. the implicit argumentation of *ṣāhib al-gilmān* ('the lover of boys') in al-Ġāhiz's *Mufaḥḥarāt al-ḡawārī wa-l-gilmān* in al-Ġāhiz, *Rasā'il* II, 96 ("wa-sawwāqa ilayhim awliyā'ahu"). In a later work, Abū Nuwās is quoted to have remarked to the statement that God had made a firm promise to marry believers to the lovely houris of Paradise: "I am not a man with a taste for women. The paradisiacal lads, much sooner." See ar-Rāḡib, *Muhādārāt* II, 109. See also the words of the *qāḍī* Yahyā b. Akṭam, a famous homosexual, in Ibn Sa'īd, *Muqtataf* 208.

²⁶ al-Ma'arrī, *Ḡufrān* 138. That joking about supposed sexual activities in the afterlife was probably not an unknown topic in educated conversation is indicated by an anecdote about a passive homosexual (*muhannat*) called Qaranful and certain sexual enjoyments he has found in Hell, see at-Tawhīdī, *Baṣā'ir* II, 4: 44.

either²⁷. For instance, one such anecdote tells of an effeminate man, a frequent star of witty stories, climbing to the summit of a mountain in Syria, then, angry with exhaustion, addressing the mountain: "Oh what a joy it is going to be for me to see you become like carded wool" (*wā ṣamātatī bika yawm arāka ka-l-'ihn al-manfūs*), wherein, of course, the last two words are a Qur'ānic phrase (101:5) depicting a scene of doomsday²⁸. The horrors of doomsday are also made fun of in a story about a host who would postpone again and again the date of an invitation to a party for his friends. The latter, exasperated with the repeated postponement, chided the host with the Qur'ānic verse "when is your promise going to come true?" (Q 67:25), which originally are the words of unbelievers mocking the Prophet. The host, finally coming round to organizing the party, invites his friends with the phrase "go ahead towards what you have been denying" (*intaliqū ilā mā kuntum bihi tukaddibūn*), which in the Qur'ān (77:29) refers to the unbelievers being driven towards Hell (Ibn al-Ġawzī, *Zirāf* 90). A scrutiny of anecdotal literature will yield a multitude of further examples to illustrate this penchant for jesting based on religious concepts, not least those concerning the afterlife²⁹. In the field of poetry, an allusion of not infrequent occurrence is to the verse "when the earth begins to tremble" (*idā zulzilati*

²⁷ The Arabic term for literary quotations from the Qur'ān is *iqtibās*, which was thought to have two subcategories, one of these being the conscious and deliberate alteration of the real sense of the cited Qur'ānic passage; see von Grunebaum 1944:245.

²⁸ For the anecdote, see at-Tawhīdī, *Baṣā'ir* I, 1: 98.

²⁹ E. g. the misinterpretation of the Qur'ānic phrase "*wa-ḡannatin alfāfan*" (78:16) as "one million (*alf alf*) paradises", see at-Tawhīdī, *Baṣā'ir* I, 2: 231. A similarly absurd misapprehension (of the word *salsabil* in Qur'ān 76:18) is mentioned in al-Ġāhiz, *Ḥayawān* I, 188-89. According to another joke, the ignorant popular preacher Sayfawayhi added the following commentary to the Qur'ānic verse that describes the houris as being "like rubies and corals" (55:58): "Now surely they aren't like your sluts of a wife!" See at-Tawhīdī, *Baṣā'ir* II, 4: 49. In a source, an unnamed Baghdadian woman is quoted to have sarcastically remarked, with the words of a *ḥadīth*, on seeing a religious dignitary give away his old sandals as alms: "The believer will find shade under his alms on the Day of Resurrection" (*al-mu'min tahta zill sadaqatibi yawm al-qiyāma*); see Ibn Sa'īd, *Muqtataf* 178. Cf. also Hammād 'Aḡrad's joking with the verses 104:6-8 of the Qur'ān ("*innahā 'alayhim mu'sada*") in Ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Tabaqāt* 26; Baṣṣār b. Burd's sarcastic remark on a depiction of Paradise by a popular preacher in az-Zaḡḡāḡī, *Amālī* 137; and Abū Ishāq an-Nasībī on the boredom of life in Heaven (although whether he meant this as a joke, which I would guess he did, is open to interpretation) in at-Tawhīdī, *Muqābasāt* 194. For further examples of playing with the Qur'ān's text or meaning, cf. al-Ibšīhī, *Mustatraf* 477 (a splendid pun on the expression "*fibā 'aynun ḡariya*", Q 88:12), 539 (on a description of Heaven: "*udhulūhā bi-salāmin āminin*", Q 15:46; "*wa-mā hum minhā bi-muhraḡin*", Q 15:48); at-Ta'ālībī, *Yatima* III, 197 ("*fa-talā'a fa-ra'āhu fī sawā'i l-ḡahīm*", Q 37:55), IV, 435; and at-Ta'ālībī, *Tatimma* II, 101 (a poem describing the appearance of a beautiful boy's beard with the phrase "*idā s-samsu kuwwirat*", Q 81:1); al-Bāharzī, *Dumya* II, 854 ("*awlā bihā šiliyyan*", Q 19:70), II, 1387 (an anecdote based on an extremely funny misconstruction of the purport of Q 9:63 and 4:114); Pseudo-Tawhīdī, *Risāla baḡdādīyya* 230 (a joke on a well-known element of the Qur'ānic description of the final judgement, "*hattā yaliḡa l-ḡamalu fī sammi l-hiyāt*", Q 7:40), 307 (the jestful use of various Qur'ānic phrases describing the pleasures of Paradise).

l-ardu zilzalahā; Q 99:1), a sign of the arrival of doomsday, which we find incorporated in various poems to create a funny effect, sometimes in a quite frivolous manner³⁰. Even these pale, however, beside a poem by the famous vizier and patron aṣ-Ṣāhib b. ‘Abbād, in which God’s words as cited in the Qur’ān (14:7) are put in a sexual context, and a disgustingly obscene one at that³¹. Less offensive yet still distinctly mischievous is a poem on an unreformable drunkard whose preferred Qur’anic verse is one narrating a terrifying scene of doomsday: “And you will see the people [as though] being drunk” (*wa-tarā n-nāsa sukārā*; Q 22:2) (at-Ta‘alibī, *Yatīma* IV, 352). Smiling allusions to the Qur’ān’s text can even be found in such a vernacular genre as the Andalusian *zaḡal*³². The above examples perhaps suffice to show that the ubiquity of eschatological conceits and conventions in written literature is but a reflection of the popularity of this source of humour among the people in general, aristocrats and commoners alike. It is indicative of the general acceptance of this sort of humour that an often cited *ḥadīth* makes the Prophet himself misinterpret deliberately the Qur’anic passage (56:36-37) that those entering Paradise will do so in a rejuvenated body when saying jokingly to an old woman: “No old woman will ever enter Paradise”³³.

To summarize my argument, the following observations can be made. In all the above examples, wittiness and *esprit* (*zarf*) were apparently an excuse for jokes, thematic conceits and metaphors that would otherwise have been regarded outrageous by pious Muslims. That this should have been so at least in the high Abbasid period is not too much of a surprise. It can generally be observed that the stiffness of the old Bedouin code of behaviour, which used to weigh heavily upon ancient poets, underwent a more than palpable relaxation in the cultural milieu of the Abbasid, and especially the Buwayhid, periods, a phenomenon no doubt connected with the rapid urbanization of the age. Lots of anecdotes attest that jokes, remarks, and ways of behaviour which formerly would have been cause for murder or the capital punishment had by then come to be not only tolerated but even relished by most people,

³⁰ See at-Ta‘alibī, *Yatīma* III, 272 (here the humorous effect is further enhanced by the incorporation of the subsequent Qur’anic verse too in the second line); at-Ta‘alibī, *Fḡāz* 162; Ibn al-Mu‘tazz, *Tabaqāt* 141 (here the Qur’anic phrase is juxtaposed to a breathtakingly obscene expression).

³¹ at-Ta‘alibī, *Yatīma* III, 267. There is an insignificant variation of the wording of the original passage.

³² For instance, al-Hillī, ‘*Ātil* 193: “*waslun musafir wa-sudūdun muqīm, mata nufiq min dā l: adāh al-alīm*”, a slight allusion to a phrase of extremely frequent occurrence in the Qur’ān.

³³ E.g. Ibn Sa‘īd, *Muqtataf* 173. This story is frequently met with in Arabic sources, cf. Sadan 1983:64.

not least among the intelligentsia³⁴. The spectacular proliferation of eschatological jokes, witticisms and poetic conventions is easy to fit into that general trend. It will also have been noted by the reader that a lot of the poetic conceits current in the East found their way to the Muslim West, especially *al-Andalus*, which is beyond doubt due to the immense prestige that Eastern literary traditions and cultural patterns enjoyed in the West³⁵.

There seems to have been no limit to the uses of such humour, *zarf* being a sufficient justification for it, sometimes all but calling for such allusions to religious topics to give a frivolous, mischievous flavour to a poem or a prose passage. Even otherwise deeply pious people appear to have had no reservations about enjoying the poetic merits of patently irreverent works. As Franz Rosenthal put it in his work on anecdotes about Aṣ‘ab: “The otherworldliness of Islam did little to stop the actual enjoyment and literary appreciation of humor”; and in another passage: “[...] there existed a pronounced predilection for humor and gaiety which knew few restrictions”³⁶. And few they were indeed, as I hope to have shown above. The celebrated literary critic al-Qādī al-Ġurgānī certainly expresses the view of many of his contemporaries when writing thus: “If [a poet’s unsound] religious beliefs were a shortcoming in his poems, and wrong convictions were a cause for discarding a poet, it would be necessary to delete the very name of Abū Nuwās from poetic anthologies and to forgo even mentioning him when enumerating the generations of poets, and even more so the poets of the *Ġāhiliyya* and all those who are notorious among the Muslims for their disbelief. [...] However, these are two very distinct fields, and religion has nothing to do with poetry”³⁷. Significantly, a modern Arab author has

³⁴ It must, however, be remarked in this context that there were some periods and special circumstances in which this general observation might not be valid, and joking with religious concepts could, and did, on some occasions lead to the death penalty. Cf. Fierro 1990, esp. p. 117. I am indebted to Maribel Fierro for calling my attention to the fact that some genuine external or internal threat felt by the Muslim religious establishment (like the advance of the Christians or the ‘fashion’ of seeking martyrdom through insulting Islam by the Mozarab Christians in mediaeval Andalusia) might at times increase orthodox sensitivities and lower the level of tolerance.

³⁵ Cf. Blachère 1930:15-16; Rubiera Mata 1992:16, 22. The latter author first speaks about what he terms the ‘*bagdadización*’ of the Cordoba court, then later remarks that the Oriental literary influence did not stop at the gates of the Spanish Omayyad capital. As the author puts it, “Si Córdoba se había convertido en una pequeña Bagdad, las capitales de los reinos de taifas se convertirán en pequeñas Córdoba [...]”.

³⁶ Rosenthal 1956:3, 4. In the introductory part of Ewald Wagner’s edition of the *diwān* of Abū Nuwās, the frivolous poet *par excellence* among the Arabs, Hamza al-Isbahānī is cited to the effect that Abū Nuwās’s poetry never ceased to be recited among the religious dignitaries and the noblemen (*al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-aṣṛāf*); see Abū Nuwās, *Dīwān* A, 9.

³⁷ al-Ġurgānī, *Wasāta* 66. It should be added that for mediaeval Arab authors, jesting had little if anything to do with ethics, and, as a general rule, “poetry and the criticism of poetry lie outside the domain

made the somewhat impressionistic yet perhaps not altogether inaccurate observation that the freedom of modern Arab *literati* to engage in all sorts of wit and humour compares quite unfavourably with that enjoyed by their predecessors in the Middle Ages (al-Qiṣṭaynī 1992:38).

And finally, not only was such jesting apparently tolerated and accepted, but some, although not all, daring conceits even evolved, as we have seen, into veritable conventions, the typical fate of successful expressions, thematic novelties, and the like in mediaeval Arabic literature. I believe it is nothing short of ironic that something meant to be a bold or even audacious posture should finally end up being a mere convention, but that is precisely what happened to quite a few products of the literary attitude known as *muḡūn*, that is frivolity and debauchery, in Abbasid times and onwards³⁸. Poking fun at the concepts of the religious tradition, as long as it remained a literary practice, was in this sense a mere fashion and, in the hands of many poets, was bound to grow into no more than mannerism.

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of ethics, in the view of Ḥāzīm [al-Qartaḡannī] and of the majority of Arab critics." See van Gelder 1992:188.

³⁸ Cf. Hamori 1969:10 on the "self-conscious rejection" of an old poetic convention (the melancholy stopping over a deserted encampment) ending up being a convention itself. As von Grunebaum states as a general observation, after the stir caused by the literary revolution brought about by the *muhdatūn*, conventionalism finally re-claimed its rights in Arabic poetry around 1000 AD; see von Grunebaum 1944:250. On *muḡūn* and related concepts, cf. Pellat 1960ff (and Montgomery 1960ff); also Kraemer 1986:15. Ismail El-Outmani, making use of Bakhtin's 'carnival theory', labels the assemblage of such literary products as 'carnivalised' literature, see El-Outmani 1995:165-166. On pp. 169-173, he argues that many poets, such as Ibn al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, would deliberately masquerade as 'fools' in order to escape the possibility of religious charges being levelled against their behaviour and literary activity.

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WHAT WILL BE THE FATE OF THE SINNERS IN HELL?
THE CATEGORIES OF THE DAMNED
IN SOME MUSLIM POPULAR LITERATURE

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1. Eschatology, the End of the World and the fate of man after death have always been central questions in almost every culture and religion. Islam is no exception to this, as is demonstrated in the Qur'ān, where the question of the final Hour, i.e. of the Day of Doom, constitutes the major topic of the early revelations. No other theme involved such profound speculation, prompting the circulation of numerous traditions on themes such as the nature of the destination of the man and his soul, the consistency of the rewards and punishments to be meted out, the reality of the contact with and vision of God, etc. In this regard, for earth-rooted men, it has always been a source of fascination to learn something concrete of their destiny, i.e. that rewards and punishments are real in accordance with their earthly meanings. But even this does not suffice. In every period and age people have felt the need to describe not only what will happen but also to identify to whom it will happen, thereby giving voice to an attitude that prompts the use of descriptions of heaven or hell for discussions on earth.

Because there are so many Muslim traditions on this topic, the scope of this treatment shall be limited to a restricted number of examples. We shall try to follow the path of traditions through works and ages, starting with the most recent, the literary elaboration of a presumed author of the late Medieval period, his description of the punishment of the damned, the relationship of his description with the numerous others included in the same body of literature and the sources on the topic in classical literature starting from the Qur'ān. In doing so, we not only aim to deal with the topic itself but will also attempt to discuss the question of the author in late medieval popular literature and, to a certain extent, to show how this literature is not a mere reworking of old themes, but a dynamic reshaping of the classical heritage including literary elaboration and original elements.

2. Manuscript no. 95 preserved in the Forschung- und Landesbibliothek of Gotha (Germany) is a miscellaneous collection of short stories, written in the 17th-18th centuries, consisting of 110 folios. This manuscript has no peculiar originality in itself, nor are the stories that it contains rare. It is simply a collection of stories, with no author indicated, put together somewhere in the Arab world. The calligraphy is a common *nashī* including ca. 21 lines in each page. The most notable feature of this manuscript is that the first story which it contains is one of the various anonymous

versions of the “story of Jesus and the skull” attested in numerous manuscripts. I dedicated to this story a study in which about thirty of these versions are analyzed¹. A long passage in this story describes the damned and their punishment and here we shall restrict our discussion to this part of the story, first of all in the version given by Ms Gotha 95 in relation to all the other versions of the story attested.

If we should characterize the manuscripts preserving the story of Jesus and the skull as a whole, we cannot but note that they are of differing quality. There are books or booklets or small folios written down to record one or more texts. The story is sometimes assembled in a longer miscellaneous collection of stories (see for ex. Gotha: Ms 2757 dated 1166; Mss 95, 1740, 2760; Rome, Bibl. Vat.: Mss 1191, 1362, Borg. 161; Paris, Bibl. Nat.: Ms 1363 dated 1204/1790; Ms 2738 dated 1176/1762-3), Mss 2761, 3652; 3655, 5616; Berlin, Staatsbibl.: Ms We. 1785 dated 1097/1686; Ms Spr. 2005 dated 1120/1708, Ms Pet. 110; Milan, Ambrosiana: Ms 614 dated 1074/1663; Ms 1161) or in single collections of quite a few folios (see for ex. proper Gotha 2737, cf. 2736). The date of writing is usually between 16th and 19th centuries. What is more relevant, as discussed in my article referred to above, is the feature of all these versions: they are all individual versions – i.e. each is different from the other with the exception of one case only – which share the structure of the story and the use of the same motifs and elements, but without textual relationship. Ms. Gotha 95 is the only exception in this situation: it is almost identical to Ms. Gotha 2737, that is the two manuscripts are clearly testimonies of the same text, while all the other manuscripts attesting the story are unique. So, our starting point is an anonymous “author” of a version of our story the only distinctive character of which is that we have two copies of that version instead of only one.

The core of the story of Jesus and the skull is that Jesus encountered a skull, brought it back to life and that it recounted to Jesus its life as a king and what happened after its death when it went to hell, including its description of hell. The skull, according to Ms Gotha no. 95, thus mentions the damned people, and tells how after being called back to life by Jesus it became a true believer:

“(f. 1b) In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, thus said Ka‘b al-Ahbār: (...) (3b) (...) “The Ġahannam has seven layers, one upon the other and it is of a huge black, blended with the rage of the Omnipotent King. The name of the first layer is Ġahannam and it is for those who committed great sins of the community of Muhammad, God bless him and grant him salvation; the second layer is called Saqar and it is for the Jews; the third layer is named al-Ġaḥīm and it is for the Christians; the fourth layer is called (4a) Lazā and it is for Rāfidites, i.e. those who detest Abū Bakr and ‘Umar, may god be pleased with them; the

name of the fifth is al-Ḥutama and it is for idolaters; the sixth layer is called as-Sa‘īr and it is for jinn and demons; the seventh layer is called al-Hāwiya and it is for those who utter lies and for sinners. So said the skull and then Jesus, peace be upon him, wept and said: “Tell me of the people of Hell, of their conditions in Hell”. The skull answered: “O Prophet of God! How many young people cried ‘What a shame!’ How many women cried and your people will see that! And I have seen, O prophet of God, people in Hell with the worst punishments. When I entered into it, my skin burned but I wore forty skins one upon the other and among them there were snakes and scorpions. After that, prophet of God, I was hungry, I was taken to the tree az-Zaqqūm and I ate from it, but the food became stuck in my throat. I became thirsty and I was brought a copper basin in which there was melted lead and when I drank of it, my bowels fell down, but then they returned to where they were. In Hell, O prophet of God, I saw plenty of people who had in their hands (4b) good food and bad food: they were eating the bad one and leaving the good one. I asked who they were and I was told: they are those who used to eat forbidden food instead of eating the permitted food. I saw, O prophet of God, in Hell a multitude of people wearing upon their heads enormous turbans and eating fire. I asked who they were, O prophet of God, and I was told: these are those who used to devour the property of orphans. O prophet of God, I saw in Hell people drinking pus. I asked who they were, O prophet of God, and I was told that they were the usurers. O prophet of God, I saw in Hell people hanging by their hands and the Zabāniyya beating them with fire cudgels. I asked who they were, O prophet of God, and I was told that they were the ones who used to refuse to pay the *zakāt*. O prophet of God, I saw in Hell people who were slaughtered upon the fire of Ġahannam and then returned to their initial state. I asked who they were, O prophet of God, and I was told that they were the ones who murdered others and that they were not permitted to kill and without right. O prophet of God, I saw in Hell a multitude of women hanging down by their breast while the Zabāniyya were beating them with fire whips. I asked who these women were, O prophet of God, and I was told that they were disloyal to their husbands. (5a) O prophet of God, I saw in Hell a multitude of women howling like dogs. I asked who they were, O prophet of God, and I was told: they are those who used to mourn the dead. Then I saw, O prophet of God, in Hell people crucified upon fire axles. I asked who they were, O prophet of God, and I was told: they are those who forgot their prayer”².

The description of the damned given here is, as in all the versions of the story of Jesus and the skull, divided into two distinct parts: the former dealing with the layers

¹ For a comprehensive study of this story in Arabic literature and a study of all the manuscript versions (about 30), see Tottoli 2003.

² Ms Gotha 95 is reproduced and translated in Italian in the dissertation of Torta 1993-94, see in Particular 44-57.

and broad categories of the damned according mainly to various religious faiths and the latter describing vividly the punishments assigned to specific categories of sinners. As regards the first part as described here and in relation to the other versions, it must be said that the broad categories of the various faiths cited are not original and are instead very common: Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians (*'ubbād an-nār*) and idolaters (*'ubbād al-aṣnām*). Each has a specific layer (whatever it is) in all the versions, and it is notable that all the sources state that the first layer is that of the community of Muḥammad³. A peculiar though once again not original detail is the mention of the Rāfidites, defined as those who offended Abū Bakr and 'Umar. The reference is clearly to the Ši'ites – reference which can also be found in other versions⁴ – and this clearly indicates the Sunnite affiliation of our author. One could at this point expect, as in other versions of the same story, to find mention of the name of 'Uṭmān but the writer of this version refrained from making such reference to the controversial name of the third Caliph⁵.

Further, we note that the damned of the Muslim *umma* are sent to the first layer and that in the seventh layer there is another category of sinners who are surely from the Muslim *umma*, i.e. the *mukaddibūn* and the *muḡrimūn*. This brings into focus the question of the position of Muslim sinners and the debate about temporary punishment to which they will be subjected, but our author's principal interest is not the theological issue, as in the other versions of the story which also indicate a layer for the generic sinners: *muḡrimūn*⁶, *mukaddibūn*⁷, rebels and sinners of the Muslim community⁸, *muḡrimūn* and *mukaddibūn*⁹. Some of the other versions, however, ex-

³ Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3652, 93a; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek We. 1785, 50b; Ms Manchester, John Rylands Library nr. 648, 27a; Ms Strasbourg, Bibl. Nat. et Un. nr. 137, f. 132b; Ms Damascus, Mak. al-Asad nr. 12685, 47a; Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 2761, 74a; Ms Milan, Ambrosiana 1161, 106a; Ms Milan, Ambrosiana 614, 201a; *Munāḡāt* 65; Ms Gotha 2757, 106b; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 48b; Ms Gotha 2736, 6a; Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 1363, 157b. Cf. Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3655, 114a.

⁴ As to their punishment see: "those who insult Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uṭmān, their tongues are cut with fire scissors: Ms Damascus, Mak. al-Asad nr. 12685, 47a; cf. also Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 49a; Ms Strasbourg, Bibl. Nat. et Un. nr. 137, f. 135b: without 'Uṭmān like our author.

⁵ On the question see Zaman 1997:50: "Any criticism of Abū Bakr and 'Umar was, for all *abl al-sunna*, tantamount to heresy", and 51f about the position of 'Uṭmān.

⁶ Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 2761, 74a; Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3652, 93a; Ms Princeton N.S. Mansell 2160, f. 74a; Ms Milan, Ambrosiana 614, 201a Ms Paris Bibl. Nat. 5616, 68a; Ms Bibl. Vaticano ar. 1362, 208b; cf. Ms Paris Bibl. Nat. 5616, 68a; Ms Princeton N.S. Mansell 2160, f. 74b.

⁷ Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3652, 93a; Ms Gotha 2760, 13b; Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3655, 114a.

⁸ Ms Bibl. Vaticano ar. 1362, 208b; Ms London, British Lib. 1254, 14b; Ms Princeton N.S. Mansell 2160, f. 74b; Ms Paris Bibl. Nat. 5616, 68a: those committing great sins (*kabā'ir*); Weil 1846:224.

plore in more detail the question of the sinners in relation to the layers and indicate more specific categories, though not mentioning the kind of punishment: hypocrites¹⁰, usurpers of orphans' money¹¹, those committing *zinā*¹², usurers¹³, those drinking and eating forbidden food¹⁴, misbelievers or idolaters¹⁵, Iblīs and his followers¹⁶, those slandering honest women¹⁷, those not believing in the Day of Doom¹⁸, the '*ulamā*' not applying the precepts of religious law¹⁹, women killing their children and betraying their husbands²⁰, women neglecting prayer²¹, worshippers of the sun²², tyrants and their helpers²³, those doubting the truth of the prophets²⁴,

⁹ Both the categories, such as in Ms Gotha 95: Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 48b; Ms Damascus, Mak. al-Asad nr. 12685, 47a. Cf. also Ms Strasbourg, Bibl. Nat. et Un. nr. 137, f. 133a: *mukaddibūn* and *mulhidūn*.

¹⁰ They are in the first layer: Ms Princeton N.S. Mansell 2160, f. 74a; Ms Paris Bibl. Nat. 5616, 68a; Ms Bibl. Vaticano ar. 1362, 208a-208b; Ms London, British Lib. 1254, 14b; Ms Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibl. nr. 234, 34a; Weil 1846:224.

¹¹ First layer: as-Saqṣīnī, *Zabrah* Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Pet. II 556, 36; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sprenger 2005, 22a. Some sources refer to the first door and not to the first floor: Asín Palacios 1917:427; Vespertino Rodríguez 1983:346-7. Second layer: Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek We. 1785, 50b. Third layer: Ms Gotha 2757, 107a; Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3652, 93a; Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3655, 114a: third door. Fifth layer: Ms Bibl. Vaticana ar. 1191, 48b-49a; cf. Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya* 11.

¹² Second layer: as-Saqṣīnī, *Zabrah*, Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Pet. II 556, 36; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sprenger 2005:22a.

¹³ Second layer: Ms Gotha 2757, 107a; Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3652, 93a; Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3655, 114a; Fourth layer: as-Saqṣīnī, *Zabrah* Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Pet. II 556, 36; cf. Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sprenger 2005:22a.

¹⁴ Second layer: Asín Palacios 1917:427.

¹⁵ Third layer: Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek We. 1785, 50b; Ms London, British Lib. 1254, 14b.

¹⁶ Third layer: Ms Milan, Ambrosiana 614, 201a. Fourth layer: *Munāḡāt* 65.

¹⁷ Third layer: Asín Palacios 1917:427.

¹⁸ Fourth layer: Ms Bibl. Vaticano ar. 1362, 208b. Fifth layer: Ms Gotha 2736, 6a; *Munāḡāt* 65; cf. Ms Milan, Ambrosiana 614, 201a.

¹⁹ Fourth layer: Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3655, 114a; Ms Gotha 2757, 107. Sixth layer: Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sprenger 2005:22a.

²⁰ Fourth layer: Ms Bibl. Vaticana ar. 1191, 48b.

²¹ Fourth layer: Asín Palacios 1917:427; cf. instead Ms Vaticana Borg. Ar. 161, 61a: they are men.

²² Fifth layer: Ms London, British Lib. 1254, 14b.

²³ Fifth layer: Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek We. 1785, 50b; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 48b; Ms Gotha 2757, 107a: for the arrogant.

²⁴ Fifth layer: Weil 1846:224.

those forbidding *zakāt*²⁵, adulteresses or adulterers²⁶, apostates²⁷, Pharaohs²⁸, and a lot of recognisable groups²⁹.

If we were to judge the choices and peculiarities of our author at this point only some provisional hypotheses on his attitude towards all these categories and definitions are possible. It seems clear that our author includes broad categories about which there was no controversy, with a direct attack upon Šī'ites as the most specific peculiarity. We could define this as a more sober position when compared to some of the other versions, probably due to the desire and aim not to include vivid descriptions of sinners.

3. At this point we will deal with the passage relating to the damned and their punishments, that is the second part of the tradition describing the specific types of sinners. Our author mentions in general young and women, then more specifically 1) those eating forbidden food 2) usurpers of the rights of orphans 3) usurers 4) those not paying the *zakāt* 5) murderers 6) adulteresses 7) women mourning the dead 8) and those forgetting to pray, and refers to their punishment. This list delineates common categories of sinners such as murderers and adulteresses as well as more specifically Muslim categories such as those connected to ritual and religious duties (prayer, *zakāt*), major religious prohibitions (eaters of forbidden food, usurers) or categories already dealt with by the Qur'an or *hadīths*, such as eaters of forbidden food, usurpers of the goods of orphans and women mourning the dead. Once again, to understand more about this version and its author, we have to examine a number of other versions.

So, if we come to the treatment of the categories and punishment of the damned in all the other versions it is notable that some of the categories employed in our version are among the most common. These are the adulterers and adulteresses³⁰,

²⁵ Fifth layer: Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sprenger 2005:22a.

²⁶ Fifth layer, adulteresses: Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sprenger 2005, 22a. Sixth layer, adulterers: Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya* 12.

²⁷ Sixth layer: Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 2761, 74a.

²⁸ Sixth layer: *Munāğāt* 65.

²⁹ Sixth layer: Ms Bibl. Vaticana ar. 1191, 49a.

³⁰ Ms Gotha 2757, 106b; Ms Gotha 95, 4b. Cf. Ms Damascus, Mak. al-Asad nr. 12685, 47a: hanging by their nails; cf. also Ms Strasbourg, Bibl. Nat. et Un. nr. 137, f. 135b; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 49a; cf. Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3655, 113a; Ms Milan, Ambrosiana 1161, 105b; *Munāğāt* 66; Ms Gotha 2760, 14a-14b; Ms Manchester, John Rylands Library nr. 648, 27b. Other versions also mention those thinking of forbidden acts or those committing *zinā'*, see Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek We. 1785, 50b.

those eating forbidden food³¹, usurers³², and the murderers³³. The usurpers of the rights of orphans is another very common category but it needs to be underlined here that, along with their punishment and the description of their sin, our version contains a further qualification: those wearing big turbans. Who are these men bearing big turbans? In some of the other sources, where the same reference is made, it is more explicitly stated: they are the powerful judges³⁴. No less relevant are the categories quoted only by our author and not by the numerous other authors: those not paying the *zakāt*, those forgetting to pray, and those mourning the dead. This point is not only significant but even astonishing if we consider the importance of these points in the Muslim faith, especially with regard to the first two: no other version of the story of Jesus and the skull identifies these categories of sinners.

The next step is to list the categories found in the other sources and not considered by our author. They include the following: suicides³⁵, slanderers³⁶, people who mistreat their parents³⁷, and the wetnurses, described as women hanging down by their nipples³⁸. A further peculiar category occasionally mentioned is that implicating a sort of critical social position: in Hell there are people bearing fire stones around their necks: these are those who used to exploit people in this world³⁹, who used to be bullies and unjust in this world⁴⁰, or who accumulated gold

³¹ Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 48b; *Munāğāt* 66; cf. Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3655, 113a; Ms Strasbourg, Bibl. Nat. et Un. nr. 137, f. 134b; Ms Manchester, John Rylands Library nr. 648, 27b.

³² Ms Paris Bibl. Nat. 5616, 68b; Ms Gotha 2760, 14a; Ms Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibl. nr. 234, 34a; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek We. 1785, 50b; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 49a.

³³ Ms Paris Bibl. Nat. 5616, 68b; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 49a; Ms Gotha 95, 4b; Ms Milan, Ambrosiana 1161, 105b: their heads were cut off and then reattached only to be removed again; Ms Manchester, John Rylands Library nr. 648, 27b.

³⁴ See in particular Ms Strasbourg, Bibl. Nat. et Un. nr. 137, f. 135b: they are the judges (*qudat*); cf. the more generic Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 48b-49a; Ms Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibl. nr. 234, 34a; Ms Milan, Ambrosiana 1161, 105b-106a; *Munāğāt* 66; Ms Gotha 2760, 14a-14b; another punishment is quoted in Ms Leiden or. 14027, f. 131a.

³⁵ Ms Gotha 2760, 14a.

³⁶ Ms Strasbourg, Bibl. Nat. et Un. nr. 137, f. 135a. For other punishments and categories of damned see Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 49a; Ms Damascus, Mak. al-Asad nr. 12685, 47a; Ms Leiden or. 14027, f. 131a: people hung by their tongues.

³⁷ Ms Damascus, Mak. al-Asad nr. 12685, 47a.

³⁸ Ms Damascus, Mak. al-Asad nr. 12685, 47a. Regarding Muslim conceptions and controversies on this point see Giladi 1999, in particular 13-40.

³⁹ Ms Leiden or. 14027, f. 131a; Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek We. 1785, 50b; Ms Gotha 2757, 106b; Ms Paris, Bibl. Nat. 3655, 113a.

⁴⁰ Ms Milan, Ambrosiana 1161, 105b.

and silver without using them *fī sabīl Allāh*⁴¹. If we compare these categories to those mentioned by our author it can be noted that these are rather more “specific” groupings of sins and sinners. The mention of the wetnurses touches upon a controversial point. Less controversial is the case of suicides, while those slandering people and mistreating their parents fall into the broad category of generic ethic prescriptions. The allusion to tyrants or rulers in general is far more significant here. It harks back to the environment in which these versions, which include this category, originated and it is a critical statement or attack upon a specific group of people. The difference with our author is clear. The problem once again is the definition of the damned in connection with identifiable groups of living people. Apart from the mention of usurper judges – that it is a regular feature in this type of literature as we shall see below – it is difficult to account for the reason that no other category seems to emerge as a direct reference to a “real” category of people or to a controversial category of sinners in our version. It should not be forgotten that our author is not alone in this regard: not all of the sources share this feature, and we must not forget that we lack information regarding the place and time, as well as the identity of our author and that all of these considerations suggest a need for caution on our part: the mention of formal and generic categories such as those forgetting prayer and *zakāt* could be far more specific than we suppose and could be allusions to a peculiar local situation of laxity in the fulfilment of these two of the *arkān*, or may well be related to a peculiar group of people who were guilty in this regard.

4. It is time now to take a step back, to the presumed additional sources of our author. Up to this point our author’s version has been considered in connection to all the other versions of the story of Jesus and the skull. It is of no less importance to examine the body of Muslim literature in its entirety, since we can presume that Muslim literature on eschatological themes must have constituted a source of reference. In this regard, the undisputable starting point is the Qur’ān itself in which Hell – referred to with many names – is mentioned almost in every *sūra* as being the frightening destiny awaiting those who do not believe the message of Muhammad. In particular, there are passages of great interest to this study in which vivid descriptions of the damned and their punishment are given.

The Qur’ān states, for example, that Hell has seven doors (Q 15:44), has angels as guardians (nineteen of them, *aṣḥāb an-nār*, Q 74:30-31; cf. also 76:6, *hazana*, Q 39:71; 40:49; 67:8), whose presumed leader is called Mālik (Q 43:77). More details are given as we come to the punishments awaiting the damned in Hell: they will be

⁴¹ Ms Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Pet. I 110, 49a. Cf. Ms Gotha 2760, 14b: they had a different punishment.

“watered at a boiling fountain, no food for them but cactus (*darī*, Q 88:5-6), “tasting therein neither coolness nor any drink save boiling water and pus⁴² (*gassāq*)” (Q 78:24-25), “the Fire smiting their faces the while they glower there” (Q 23:104), and “for them garments of fire will be cut, and there shall be poured over their heads boiling water whereby whatsoever is in their bellies and their skins shall be melted; for them await hooked iron rods” (Q 22:19-21), to the point that “as their skins are wholly burned, We shall give them in exchange other skins” (Q 4:56). In fact God has prepared “for the unbelievers chains, fetters (*aḡlāl*), and a Blaze” (Q 76:4; cf. also 40:71-72; 73:11-13), “a chain of seventy cubits’ length (...) neither any food saving foul pus, that none excepting sinners eat” (Q 69:32-37), and they will be “mid burning winds and boiling waters and the shadow of smoking blaze neither cool, neither goodly” (Q 56: 42-44); “seized by their forelocks and their feet” (Q 55:41), “dragged on their faces into the Fire” (Q 54:48, cf. 25:34), and “their faces are turned about” (Q 33:66), “coupled in fetters, of pitch their shirts, their faces enveloped by the Fire” (Q 14:49-50). When describing the prodigious tree *Zaqqūm* from which the damned will eat, it is also added that it “is the food of the guilty, like molten copper (*muhl*), bubbling in the belly as boiling water bubbles” (Q 44:43-46), “a tree that comes forth in the root of Hell; its spathes are as the heads of Satans, and they will eat of it” (Q 37:64-66), and “you (i.e. the damned) shall fill therewith your bellies and drink on top of that boiling water (*al-ḥamīm*) lapping it down like thirsty camels” (Q 56:52-55).

In these passages the Qur’ān does not list categories of sinners along with their punishments, but speaks of generic enemies of God (*a’dā’ Allāh*, Q 41:28) disbelievers (*kāfirūn*, Q 76:4; cf. 22:19; 33:64; 35:36; 39:71; 41:28; 67:6), those who utter lies (*mukaddibīn*, Q 73:11), those who do not believe in the Hereafter (Q 27:4), sinners (*muḡrimūn*, Q 14:49; 55:41, 43), idolaters (*muṣṛikūn*, Q 48:6), the insolent (*tāḡīn*, Q 38:55), and hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*, Q 48:6) – hypocrites which, another verse states, “will be in then lowest reach (*dark*) of the Fire” (Q 4:145). However, more specific statements can be found elsewhere in the holy text, as in the case of the one who “never believed in God the Almighty, and he never urged the feeding of the needy” (Q 69:33-34), or of “those who think evil thoughts of God” (Q 48:6), and when it is said that “surely those who cast it upon women in wedlock that are heedless (*al-muḥṣanāt al-ḡāfilāt*) but believing shall be accursed in the present world and the world to come; and there awaits them a mighty chastisement” (Q 24:23). But the most interesting passage in this regard is that in which the Qur’ān states that “those who devour the property of orphans (*al-yatāmā*) unjustly, devour Fire in their bellies, and

⁴² Boiling water (*ḥamīm*) is a frequent reference: see Q 56:93, 55:44, 47:15: “boiling water that tears their bowels asunder”; 44:45-46: “then pour over his head the chastisement of boiling water”; 38:57-58: “boiling water and pus, and other torments of the like kind coupled together”; 37:67: “brew of boiling water”; cf. also Q 14:16: “oozing pus (*mā’ sadīd*)”.

shall assuredly roast in a Blaze" (Q 4:10)⁴³. From the evidence discussed above it can be concluded that the Qur'ān mentions a range of punishments, mostly repeating the same motifs in various passages, and in only a few cases going beyond a generic definition of the sinners destined to hell. There is certainly no indication of specific categories and corresponding punishments as those included in our story.

We now move to Muslim literature as a whole. As regards our subject and the contents of our story the entire body of religious literature potentially offers useful data⁴⁴. In fact, if works such as the Qur'ānic commentaries, *ḥadīṭ* collections and specific works on the subject are of primary interest, the role of eschatological beliefs and even the relevance of the question of the categories of sinners suggest that we could expect to find material of relevance in almost all religious literature. In fact, apart from the Qur'ān, the most significant description of the damned and their punishments is to be found in one of the most authoritative early works, the *Sīra* of Ibn Hišām. In the chapter dealing with Muḥammad's night journey and ascent to heaven, a report included under the authority of Abū Sa'īd al-Hudrī, states that the Prophet recounted, when he was in the lowest heaven:

"Then I saw men with lips like camels; in their hands were pieces of fire like stones which they used to thrust into their mouths and they would come out of their posteriors. I was told that these were those who sinfully devoured the wealth of orphans. Then I saw men resembling the family of Pharaoh, with such bellies as I have never seen; there were passing over them as it were camels maddened by thirst when they were cast into hell, treading them down, they being unable to move out of the way. These were usurers. Then I saw men with good fat meat before them side by side with lean stinking meat, they were eating of the latter and leaving the former. These are those who forsake the women which God has permitted and go after those he has forbidden. Then I saw women hanging by their breast. These were those who had fathered bastards on their husbands"⁴⁵.

With this passage we are on the same ground as the description of our author. The first category – i.e., those devouring orphans' wealth – is inspired by the Qur'ān. The other three categories – usurers, male adulterers and female adulteresses who gave birth to bastards – are not Qur'ānic and neither are the punishments.

A number of other particulars can be traced to *ḥadīṭ* works. The only report similar to the tradition quoted in the *Sīra* is this: the Prophet states that during his ascent to heaven he saw people with wide bellies from which snakes could be seen

⁴³ On orphans see also Q 17:34.

⁴⁴ Various reports on this subject are discussed by Asín Palacios 1919:8-30, 46-52, 357-368.

⁴⁵ Ibn Hišām, *Sīra* 405-406; the translation here is from Guillaume 1955:185-186; cf. also at-Tabarī, *Tafsīr* XV, 7, 13.

coming out: these were the usurers⁴⁶. Some other statements are quoted in connection with some recurring formulas. For instance in al-Buḥārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* there are reports which contain references to discussions by the Prophet mentioning the ones who will suffer less severe punishments in Hell (*inna ahwan ahl an-nār 'idāban*): the man who will have live coals placed in the hollows of his feet which will drive him mad⁴⁷. The other major collections contain similar references. Muslim, for instance, adds a pair of *ḥadīṭs* in which the Prophet states that the least onerous punishment would consist of a man under whose sandals were placed two burning embers⁴⁸. Other traditions introduce statements from the opposite point of view: who will be subjected to the most exacting punishment (*asaddu n-nās 'idāban*) in hell. According to a widespread report these will be those making images (*al-muṣawwirūn*)⁴⁹, while there are a great number of other differing versions to be found amongst the various sources⁵⁰. Another particular that emerges in later reports is in the case of the *munāfiqūn* who will be confined in iron boxes⁵¹. Mention of punishment in Hell is used in another *ḥadīṭ* in which it is said that women who display golden necklaces and earrings will wear similar jewellery, but made of fire, on the day of Resurrection⁵².

We also expect to find useful statements regarding generic punishments in Hell in the numerous *ḥadīṭs* listing sins, such as drinking from vessels of gold and silver, those who vilify the prophets, companions and Muslims⁵³, the tyrannical *imāms* or

⁴⁶ See Ibn Abī Šayba, *Musannaf* VII, 335 no. 36574; Ibn Mağa, *Sunan* II, 763 no. 2273; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad* III, 269-70 no. 8648, 289 no. 8765.

⁴⁷ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* VII, 258 no. 6561; cf. also no. 6562; the text says, instead of becoming insane, that the live coal will make his brain boil; see also Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* I, 196 no. 213.

⁴⁸ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* I, 195-6 no. 211-12 see also Ibn Abī 'Āsim, *Zuhd* 399, and above all Ibn as-Sarī, *Zuhd*, who includes a chapter with the sentence as its title. For an abundance of other references, see the occurrences of the sentence *ahwan ahl an-nār 'idāban* in *al-Maktaba al-alfiyya*.

⁴⁹ al-Buḥārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* no. 5606, cf. 5610. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* III, 1670 no. 2109 (three versions) and cf. also the similar ones *ibid.* III, 1667-68.

⁵⁰ See all the occurrences of the expression *asaddu n-nās 'idāban* (259) in *al-Maktaba al-alfiyya*. Cf. Also the occurrences (more than a hundred) in Šī'ite literature, in *Noor* 2. Frequent quotations of *ḥadīṭs* of this kind in *tafsīr* can be found in for ex. al-Qurtubī, comm. to Q 2:44, at-Tabarī to 3:22 etc. Another quite common expression in all of the literature is that defining some sin or condemnable position saying that the one who maintains this will have his seat in Hell (*mağaduhu min an-nār*).

⁵¹ as-Suyūtī, *Budūr* 367 from Ibn Kaṭīr, *Nihāya*.

⁵² an-Nasā'ī, *Sunan* V, 434 no. 9439; cf. similar statements, prompting the use of silver instead of gold also for women, see Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan* IV, 90-91 nos. 4236, 4238.

⁵³ See for ex. as-Suyūtī, *al-Budūr* 362, from the *Hilya* of Abū Nu'aym.

evil people who commit acts against men on earth⁵⁴, suicides, those giving false testimony, liars, those who claim objects that do not belong to them, those who lie about the Prophet⁵⁵, etc. We shall stop here, since to reproduce all of the statements found in *ḥadīṭ* literature would require an extended discussion and this is not necessary. It is clear that this literature undoubtedly mentions something related to the damned and their punishments with a precise intent: the reports on the lighter punishment serve the aim of demonstrating how cruel they are and they do not serve an eschatological purpose. The lesson is thus moral beyond the description itself and for this reason the only significant *ḥadīṭ*, as far as we have seen, seems that connected to usurers, which is quite similar to the report in the *Sīra*, where a category of sinners and a specific punishment are joined together.

5. It is also necessary to examine the eschatological *ḥadīṭ*-oriented literature where we usually find the reports belonging to the major *ḥadīṭ* collections as well as a range of other material. The most famous work on eschatology is the *Tadkīra* of al-Qurtubī (d. 1272), which resembles an encyclopaedia of traditions dealing with the range of eschatological themes. While he does mention sinners and the punishments they suffered, this only occurs in a chapter in which two traditions are dedicated to the categories of the most severely punished sinners and their punishments. In the first report there are three categories: great sinners who carry boxes of fire, usurpers of the rights of people whose bellies are ruptured and trail on the ground, their intestines on fire and people wearing amulets whose fate was to run without stopping. In the second report the punishments and categories are the same though there are four of them⁵⁶. A further chapter is dedicated to a common theme which is also attested in the sayings of Muḥammad: a definite category of the damned is made up of those who do not practice what they preach or those forbidding evil and prescribing good but not acting according to this precept. Their punishment is described as follows: their lips are severed with scissors of fire⁵⁷. Apart from this, many other reports describe degrees of punishment, listed for example by the names of the seven doors of hell, or the chains and fire of Hell with an abundance of particulars, but nothing else is included which is similar to or recalls the damned of the story of Jesus and the skull.

If we take the position of our author, it can be stated that he was not interested in the kind of material collected by such an *ʿālim* as al-Qurtubī who proceeds by quoting what he can from Qurʾānic verses and the sayings of the Prophet. It was of no interest to him, it did not accord with the literary tone of the story nor, in all probability, did it appeal to his audience. This is made clear in a quite interesting statement of the same al-Qurtubī. Referring to the layers of Hell, the list of their names is given adding that the names and the categories of damned people (belonging to other religions) who are destined to inhabit these layers are usually mentioned in the books of *Zuhd*, but that these particulars do not appear in sound traditions (al-Qurtubī, *Tadkīra* 444-445). We can thus safely suggest that our author could not find what he sought in the books of the learned authors such as al-Qurtubī because that was precisely what these authors did not intend to include in their works. Taking into account the extent to which Muslim literature originated against a polemical background it can be further suggested that books like this were written to counter the diffusion and spread of eschatological traditions such as those included in the story of Jesus and the skull. But our author and the authors of the numerous versions of the story of Jesus and the skull simply did not care about the religious purposes of these learned men.

The other works on eschatological themes do not alter this picture. In *ad-Durra al-fāhira* attributed to al-Ġazālī we find little on the topic⁵⁸, al-Bayhaqī, in his *al-Baʿt wa-n-nuṣūr*, reviews Qurʾānic verses and *ḥadīṭs* on the major questions such as the temperature of Hell or what the damned eat⁵⁹. Nothing relevant to our story is to be found. The same attitude is clear in a later work of the same kind, the *Budūr as-sāfira fī umūr al-āhira*, by as-Suyūṭī. For example, when dealing with the seven doors of Hell he does not mention the categories of damned destined to inhabit them⁶⁰, and whereas some other passages mention a few particulars of interest in connection with the long chapters dealing with punishments of disbelievers and sinners (such as in al-Qurtubī's work)⁶¹, he does not mention the kind of tradition which is encompassed in the story of Jesus and the skull.

The same happens if we examine excerpts from popular literature, loosely defined as literature deemed more popular than *ḥadīṭ* collections. The major example of this

⁵⁸ al-Ġazālī, *Durra*; on the same arguments, see al-Ġazālī, *Ihyāʾ* IV, 486-488, 514-519.

⁵⁹ al-Bayhaqī, *Baʿt* 278-330, and in part. 268 on the seven names of the doors of Hell, and 269-312, for other particulars about Hell: the heat, the keepers, the snakes, etc.

⁶⁰ as-Suyūṭī, *Budūr* 310-312: it is only said that the first one is for the sinners of Muslim community.

⁶¹ as-Suyūṭī, *Budūr* 354: those prescribing right and forbidding evil but acting differently; those whose knowledge was not useful to themselves; women wearing golden necklaces and earrings; those having two tongues will have two tongues of fire in hell; those who drink in vessels of gold and silver; suicides; wine drinkers.

⁵⁴ as-Suyūṭī, *al-Budūr* 362, from the *Hilya* of Abū Nuʿaym.

⁵⁵ as-Suyūṭī, *Budūr* 363-364. Cf. also the *ḥadīṭs* describing teeth and other particulars upon the *kāfir* in Hell, as-Suyūṭī, *Budūr* 340-342.

⁵⁶ al-Qurtubī, *Tadkīra* 466-467.

⁵⁷ al-Qurtubī, *Tadkīra* 483: this occurs in two versions traced back to Abū Nuʿaym and Ibn al-Mubārak, and the Prophet witnessed this during his ascension to heaven.

genre is the Medieval *Liber Scalae Machometi*, where, in accordance with what is stated in the first biography of the Prophet, the ascent to heaven of Muḥammad is described and Hell and its doors are mentioned, along with names and even categories of damned people. According to the Italian translation of the text to which I had access, the many pages listing the structure of Hell regularly mention punishments while repeating the prodigious action of snakes and scorpions against generic groups of sinners, without providing a description of the type translated at the beginning of this article⁶².

6. We have now assembled all of the relevant elements in order to consider the report translated at the beginning and to draw some conclusions about our author. The structure and elements of our story are perfectly Muslim and consonant in general with what is stated in all traditions, but if we take a closer look at the contents in relation to a specific point like the categories of the damned, we notice that the eschatological elements included in the versions of the story of Jesus and the skull do not correspond with those mentioned in classical Muslim literature on the topic. Some references or implicit hints from the Qurʾān and traditions are no doubt included – such as in the case of the usurpers of the orphans' money – but these constitute an “obligatory” category included along with the new elements. The point of these figures is both theological and stylistic: to deal with what, from a doctrinal point of view, cannot be avoided, and to include elements to make the story recognizable to the audience. In the treatment of the description of the damned, therefore, the numerous versions of the story of Jesus and the skull constitute a *corpus* or a body of literature which is, as a whole, not based upon reports taken from traditional *hadīth*-oriented literature.

One of the most interesting peculiarities of this body of literature is undoubtedly the prominence given to the fate of (Muslim) sinners as compared to that of believers of other faiths. The most vivid descriptions are displayed in connection with the various sins committed by the Muslim damned, thus indicating that the main concern of this literature is not that of inter-religious rivalries, but the Muslim community itself. In these cases, as a rule, sins and punishments are evoked to prompt people to avoid acting in certain ways and the more frequent mention of a particular sin tends to indicate that it was a point at issue at the time that the version was composed and circulated. But the range of sinners and punishments was not endless: within a body of religious literature the originality of the various versions is restricted to a limited number of particulars, following the dynamics of oral/written variations on a fixed theme whose diffusion and importance are testified by the numerous versions in evidence. As regards our subject, references to the seven layers, a number of broad

categories of unbelievers such as those belonging to other religions are obligatory points touched on by all the versions. Among the categories of sinners, the choices were larger and so we find various differing versions portraying categories and punishments in various ways. Here every author displays his authorial licence, preferences, interests and aims, that is, given all the limits, his originality.

We are now ready to consider our author. Firstly, it must be remembered that his elaboration was the only one copied into another version, thus attesting that somewhere at a particular time it was considered useful by at least one copyist. That is to say, our author had a certain, though limited, success. He showed no particular interest in including descriptions of specific sinners in the layers of Hell, in this way simply reflecting a clear Sunnite and anti-Šīʿite tendency, while in the description of punishments in relation to the various categories of the damned he displays a quite widespread critical assessment against the judges, the usurpers of orphans' rights, while not highlighting any other specific concern. The indication of those forgetting prayer and *zakāt*, not attested in any other version, is probably a generic critical statement against the laxity of people in these precepts and does not indicate a specific category. No social polemics against rulers are expressed, and no other peculiar categories – such as in those other versions which are more explicit in this regard – are enunciated. Our author probably aimed to produce a “sober”, non-polemical version in contrast to the other versions in circulation, avoiding as far as possible making polemical points in relation to the categories of the damned. However, while producing his work, he remained completely within this body of literature and did not introduce other traditions, for instance from *hadīth* literature. This is a significant point as it clearly indicates that this late popular literature constitutes a genre which shares something with “high” literature and yet is completely autonomous and in a certain way antagonistic towards it.

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⁶² *Scala* 87-96 and above all 108-111, on the doors of Hell.

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REVIEWS

Wörterbuch zu den griechisch-arabischen Übersetzungen des 9. Jahrhunderts, Supplement, Band I: Á-Ī. By MANFRED ULLMANN. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006. 826 pp. ISBN 3 447 05390 9 / 978 3 447 05390 7. — *Wörterbuch zu den griechisch-arabischen Übersetzungen des 9. Jahrhunderts, Supplement, Band II: Ð-Û.* By MANFRED ULLMANN. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007. 972 pp. ISBN 978 3 447 05609 0.

Ullmann's *Wörterbuch zu den griechisch-arabischen Übersetzungen des 9. Jahrhunderts (WGAÜ)* appeared in 2002¹. It is not a comprehensive dictionary, nor is it possible to compile one at the present state of our art. However, it contains a rich collection of Greek words and their Arabic equivalents, both in their respective contexts, mainly from the Greek original and the Arabic version of Galen's *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus*, but the author also drew important material from a considerable number of related works. The Arabic version of Galen's aforementioned work has not been published yet thus the author primarily relies on various manuscripts. As a corollary to the results of his work in the field of lexicography, in the extensive foreword (pp. 15-63) Ullmann publishes the significant insights he won concerning the history and relationship of the Arabic translations of this important work of Galen's. Having finished work on the basic volume of the dictionary he gradually got access to works, both printed and in manuscript form, in medicine and pharmacology as well as in other areas of secular learning such as agriculture and science, but he also extended the sphere of his investigations to include works from the fields of religion and humanities too, e.g. the *Septuagint (Jesus Sirach)*, the *New Testament*, speeches by Gregory of Nazianzus, works by Nemesius of Emesa, etc. Thus the author managed to collect a considerable amount of vocabulary of primary importance which is not contained in the works of Arabic national lexicographers, whose vocabulary more or less covers the habitat of the Bedouins while they basically disregard the diverse and important fields of urban life. With his magisterial opus the author has set the course for future research too: he himself admits that "notwithstanding the richness of the material contained in these volumes one has to admit that it was not possible to offer more than bare sketches and sidelights" (*Suppl. I*, p. 47). On the basis of the rich material amassed in the present work the author stresses once again how important it is to include the

¹ See our review on the pages of the present journal in *Proceedings of the 20th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, Budapest 2000. Ed. by ALEXANDER FODOR. Part Two. *The Arabist, Budapest Studies in Arabic* 2003, 26-27.317-318.

vocabulary of all these fields in a comprehensive dictionary of Arabic, like the *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache (WKAS)*, a view with which one cannot but wholly agree: it is absolutely unacceptable to reserve the vocabulary of these fields for specialized dictionaries, one might even say “banish” it to them, as has been suggested repeatedly. Of course, this means also that this dictionary is meant not only for the specialist in translations from the Greek and in the history of sciences in Islam but that the average Arabist can also derive great benefit from its perusal and that henceforth it will become a basic reference work in the field of lexicography along with Lane, Dozy, *WKAS*, the *Greek and Arabic Lexicon (GALex)* by Endress and Gutas, and Joshua Blau’s recent *Dictionary of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic Texts*. As a corollary to the rich yields of his efforts in the field of lexicography, Ullmann’s work abounds in significant new insights into the various aspects of the history of the translation movement: in addition to new insights into the development of the vocabulary of Hellenistic sciences, many interesting and important details concerning the history of some translations, such as Dioscorides, can be found in the pages of the present work under review. The elucidation of the history of the translated texts will enable us to identify the translators with more precision and important contributions in this field can already be found in the forewords to this work. The two volumes are beautifully produced and the present reviewer has to admit that in the meantime he has also accustomed himself to the circumstance that instead of having been set in type the work has been reproduced from a holograph manuscript in the author’s own handwriting, which after all, is very clear, pleasant and easy to read. Everybody working in the field of Arabic and Islamic studies is greatly in the author’s debt for the magisterial *WKAS* alone; with the present work Ullmann has considerably increased our debt to him. We can only wish that his stunning industry and energy will not abate and that he will surprise us with similar works – perhaps further *Supplementa* to the present work?

István Ormos

Alltagsleben und materielle Kultur in der arabischen Sprache und Literatur. Festschrift für Heinz Grotzfeld. Hrsg. von THOMAS BAUER und ULRIKE STEHLI-WERBECK u. Mitarb. von THORSTEN GERALD SCHNEIDERS. (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, hrsg. von Florian C. Reiter, LV, 1.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005. 457 pp. ISBN 3-447-05009-8.

The present volume dedicated to Heinz Grotzfeld on his 70th birthday, besides properly honouring a great German scholar, provides the scholarly public with an immensely useful and very special collection of papers in a field which interests many nowadays but was neglected in the past: the everyday life and material culture of the Arab world (mainly, but not exclusively) in the Middle Ages. Most of the contribut-

ors took the burden on themselves of remaining within the framework of the topic indicated by the title. This resulted in an uncommonly homogeneous volume which is the merit of the editors.

This topic was one that perhaps interested most the celebrated scholar. In the Congress of the U.E.A.I., Salamanca 1992, he read a paper on a biographical work which, unlike the other pieces of the well known *tabaqāt* literature and the annals of different townships, concentrates not on the middle and upper classes of the society but on the lower strata of artisans and craftsmen. It was an engaging and noteworthy lecture which has aroused my interest towards this theme and I feel sorry for the lack of the edition of this invaluable MS until now.

There are 24 papers in the volume under review, published in alphabetic order, which is far the least appropriate way of ordering from the point of view of the future readers. These articles could be ordered in two ways: (i) from the point of view of the materials used in them or their subject matters, (ii) or considering their topics.

(i) There are 9 papers based on Arabic language and linguistics (grammar, lexicography, Arabic script and dialects). (a) Grammar (1): Ramzi Baalbaki’s paper “Theoretical Coherency Versus Pedagogical Attainability. The Conscious Bias of Arab Grammarians”. The author points to the specific position of Arabic grammar between science and educational purposes. (b) Lexicography (2): Werner Diem “Das Bāb aš-Šarī’a der Alhambra und seine Inschrift”, and Stefan Reichmuth “Nachricht von den Inseln der Seligen. Mythos und Wissenschaft im *Tağ al-‘arūs* von Murtaḍā az-Zabīdī (gest. 1205/1791)” Reichmuth investigates in this article how the commentators worked. (c) Script: Ewald Wagner “Schrift, Schreiben und Schreiber bei Abū Nuwās”. (d) Dialects: Heikki Palva “A Traditional Narrative from al-Balqā’, Jordan”. Manfred Woidich “Kindersprache in ilBašandi. Ein Text aus der Oase Dakhla”; Mohand Tilmatine “Das Lautarchiv von Berlin. Bemerkungen zu einer unbekanntenen Quelle für arabische und masirische (berberische) Sprachen”. (e) Jewish-Arabic: Otto Jastrow “Linsen mit Reis – und doch keine *mẓaddara!* Jüdisch arabische Kochrezepte aus Mossul”. (f) One paper deals with languages other than Arabic: Kerstin Eksell’s “The Verb *wǧm* in Safaitic Inscription”.

(ii) There are 9 papers dealing with Arabic literature: (a) In the field of classical literature there are seven papers: Thomas Bauer “Das Nilzağal des Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār. Ein Lied zur Feier des Nilschwellenfestes”; Sabine Dorpmüller “‘Und Er goß aus das Wasser in Strömen ...’ Eine Nilpredigt von Ibn Nubāta al-Ḥatīb?” (d. 984-5); Wolfdietrich Fischer “Der Schleier der Frau in der altarabischen Stammesgesellschaft”; Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila “Ibn Wahšiyya on Substitute Foods”; Anke Osigus “‘Ich schade nur und nütze nicht.’ Zum Bild des Skorpions in arabischen Quellen”; Otfried Weintritt “an-Našīr al-Ḥammāmī (gest. 712/1312): Dichter und Bademeister in Kairo”; Hinrich Biesterfeldt “Ein Philosoph trinkt Wein”. (On Sahl al-Balḥī d. 934). (b) Modern literary themes stand in the centre of two articles: Abdallah Abu Hasha

“Monologisches Dasein im kollektiven Geschwätz. Kritik von Ideologie und Tradition in Christoph Heins *Der fremde Freund*, *Drachenblut* und Yūsuf Idrīs’ *al-Baydā*” and Wiebke Walther “Komik als Kontrast. Schwänke, Ränke und Rollenspiele in der schiitisch-irakischen Stadtkultur zwischen 1890 und 1950”. (c) One article deals not with Arabic but Sumatran literature: Edwin Wieringa “Punning in Hamzah Pansuri’s Poetry”.

(iii) Popular religious beliefs are treated in 2 articles: Alexander Flores “Unter dem Grabstein schaut niemand nach. Gelebte Religion im Palästina-Konflikt” and Stefan Wild “Alle Tage ist kein Freitag. Bemerkungen zu Freitag, Feiertag und Alltag in der islamischen Welt”.

(iv) Cultural history, not based on a text, is the subject of three papers: (a) There are two articles on the Middle Ages: Barbara Freyer Stowasser “Time Sticks” and Stefan Leder “Damaskus: Entwicklung einer islamischen Metropole (12-14. Jh.) und ihre Grundlagen”. (b) Finally, there is an article on a sociological topic in our age: Thorsten Gerald Schneiders “Die *zabbālīn* in ‘Izbat an-Nahl, Ägypten. Modernes Alltagsleben am Rande der Gesellschaft”.

Now, if we want to arrange the material of the volume according to the topics dealt with in them we receive the following picture:

(1) Two papers relate to architecture: Werner Diem’s on the Alhambra and Stefan Leder’s on Damascus.

(2) Geography is dealt with in Stefan Reichmuth’s paper on the commentary of the 18th century lexicographical work *Tāg al-‘arūs*.

(3) The description of an animal, the scorpion, which plays an important but dangerous role in the everyday life of the rural parts of the Arab world is investigated by Anke Osigus.

(4) Arabic script is the theme (but not the material) of Ewald Wagner’s literary research.

(5) Heikki Palva examines how to tell a tale in popular narratives.

(6) Children’s talk is what Manfred Woidich’s paper is about.

(7) Food, cooking and drinking stand in the centre of the articles written by Otto Jastrow, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila and Hinrich Biesterfeldt.

(8) Kerstin Eksell tries to disentangle the cultural context of a text.

(9) Social life in a narrower sense is the theme of 11 papers. (a) Sociographical questions interest Abdallah Abu Hasha, Wiebke Walther and Thorsten Gerald Schneiders. (b) Ramzi Baalbaki’s paper concentrates on education. (c) Wolfdietrich Fischer’s article is on Arab women. (d) The following authors are interested in different festivities: Thomas Bauer and Sabine Dorpmüller write on the Nile festivals, Stefan Wild speaks about the relationship between festivities and everyday life, while Alexander Flores’ interest lies in the cult of saints. (e) Otfried Weintritt writes about the public bath. (f) Last but not least folk astronomy is the theme of Barbara Freyer Stowasser’s paper.

Grammar as a Window onto Arabic Humanism. A Collection of Articles in Honour of Michael G. Carter. Ed. by LUTZ EDZARD & JANET WATSON. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006. 264 p. ISBN 978-3-447-05444-7

Michael G. Carter is one of the most significant Western scholars in the field of the historiography of Arabic linguistics whose two outstanding works, the translation and commentary of Širbīnī’s commentary of the *Āğurrūmiyya* grammar and his article on Sībawayhi in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (one of the few really ‘precious pearls’ of the second edition of), can be considered landmarks in this very important, and earlier much neglected, field of Arabic studies. On the occasion of his retirement from his chair at Oslo University some of his colleagues from the regular colloquia of Arabic grammar and some other academics of the new generation offered their papers in his honour.

The editors successfully avoided the usual clumsiness of similar laudatory volumes by arranging the articles thematically instead of the alphabetical order. The first two articles, Ramzi Baalbaki’s “Unfamiliar morphological terminology from the early fourth century A.H. Mu’addib’s *Daqā’iq al-Taṣrīf*” and Kees Versteegh’s “A new treatise about the *‘ilal an-nahw*: Ibn al-Warrāq on *‘inna wa-‘axawātuhā*” treat an important question of the traditional Arabic grammar, that of interpreting the ancient grammatical terms in their ever changing context. Arabic grammatical description, and especially the terms used in it, does not possess such a unified theory as it seemed to even half a century ago. Ramzi Baalbaki and Kees Versteegh helped us with their essays in the past in many ways to understand this and they do the same now in the present volume.

Adrian Gully steps in the trace of Ramzi Baalbaki in investigating similarities between the two main branches of Mediaeval language studies, grammar and rhetoric in his article “Two of a kind? Ibn Hišām al-Anṣārī on *nahw* and Ibn al-Aṭīr on *balāga*”. It is only to be hoped that he will continue his fruitful research in this direction.

The other excellent studies published in this volume are: Yasir Suleiman “Arabic language reforms, language ideology and the criminalization of Sībawayhi”; Pierre Larcher “Un texte d’al-Fārābī sur la ‘langue arabe’ réécrit?”; Georges Bohas & Abderrahim Saguer “Sur un point de vue heuristique concernant l’homonymie dans le lexique de l’arabe”; James Dickins “The verb base in Central Urban Sudanese Arabic”; Werner Diem “*lahiqa bi-* ‘to join s.o.’ and *alḥaqahu bi-* ‘to join s.o. with s.o.’ as euphemisms paraphrasing death”.

The volume closes with the papers of the editors: Ronak Husni & Janet Watson “Arabic as L2: Linguistic and intercultural issues in composition” and Lutz Edzard & Adolf Köhnken “A new look at the Greek, Syriac, and Arabic versions of Aristotle’s *Poetics*”.

Authority, Privacy and Public Order in Islam. Proceedings of the 22nd Congress of L'Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants. Ed. by B. MICHALAK-PIKULSKA & A. PIKULSKI. (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 148.) Leuven, etc.: Peters, 2006. 484 p. ISBN 9789042917361; 90-429-1736-9

This conference volume contains 37 papers in four sections. Interestingly enough the main theme of the Congress suggested by the organizers, which is the title of this volume as well, was accepted by the authors in a more than usual number. The first section on theology and philosophy comprises ten articles. Carmela Baffioni deals in her paper ("History, Language and Ideology in the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' View of the Imāmate") with the political visions of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' who attributed great importance to the evolution of Arabic language (or rather lexicon which was the exact meaning of the word *luḡa* in the Middle Ages). Baffioni examines some important terms such as *mulk* and *dīn* in the Ikhwān's encyclopaedia and states that they may have been the disguised adversaries of the Imāmate Shī'ite Būyids and may have had ties with the Fāṭimids.

Paolo Branca undertakes the task of clarifying issues which have become in our time even more important than they were in the classical period: the relationship between the representatives of the *ṣarī'a* and the *ashāb al-sultān* ("Pouvoir de iure et pouvoir de facto dans le pensée politique islamique classique"). Wilferd Madelung dedicated his excellent paper, "Abd Allāh ibn Ibād and the origins of the Ibādiyya", to the living memory of the great Polish scholar, T. Lewicki, a devoted researcher of Ibādite studies. The paper seeks answers to some important questions in connection with the person and role of the supposed founder of the Ibādite sect: When did he live? What did he teach concerning *kufr*? and so on.

Christopher Melchert's paper, "Whether to keep Women out of the Mosque: A Survey of Medieval Islamic Law" deals with a theme which has great relevance in our days, while Zoltán Szombathy sheds light on the cultural *milieu* of the high Abbasid age ("On Wit and Elegance: The Arabic Concept of *zarf*"). One of his most interesting assertions is that the famous *adab* work, *al-Muwāṣṣā*, written by al-Waṣṣā', is far from being a true mirror of the urbanised culture of his age, since he gives a highly idealistic picture of witticism and elegant behaviour and tries to find its source, contrary to all other writers, in the Bedouin culture of the pre-Islamic age. All in all, however, it is not easy to understand why this paper was put into this section instead of that of the literature.

In the literary section there are 11 papers. Krystyna Skarżyńska-Bocheńska examines an old theme from a new angle in her paper entitled "Qays et Lubnā. Victoire de l'amour sur l'autorité du Père et de la tribu". Giuseppe Scattolin, who published the first critical edition of the anthology of the most important Sūfī poet of the Arabic language, Ibn al-Fārid, writes about the difficulties encountered by him during his work ("A Critical Edition of Ibn al-Fārid's Dīwān. Reading a Sufi Text").

Mirella Cassarino's paper ("Le *tarassul* selon aṣ-Ṣābī: aux origines de la prose arabe") introduces some new ideas into an old topic: Where does Classical Arabic prose literature originate from?

In the section on 'History of State and Society' 14 papers have been published. Maria Arcas Campoy in her paper, "Sur l'autorité (Sultān) dans l'administration de la justice: le juge, le gouvernant et le juriste", deals with the same theme, but from a different aspect, as Paolo Branca. The two put together give evidence of the contemporary relevance of this topic (cf., for example, Christian Lange's interesting book: *Justice, Punishment and the Medieval Muslim Imagination*, published in 2007, on roughly the same theme). Even Svetlana Kirillina's "Muhammad Ali vs. Wahhabis: religion and Power in the Holy Lands of Islam in the First Two Decades of the Nineteenth Century" tackles the same opposition of the two possible sources of authority in Islam.

Although all the other papers in this chapter are very attractive for the possible reader, I personally enjoyed the following two the most: Richard Van Leeuwen's "Social Functions of the waqf Institution" and Paulina B. Lewicka's "When a Shared Meal is Formalized. Observations on Arabic 'Table Manners' Manuals of the Middle Ages".

In the chapter on Arabic philology and linguistics only two papers were published. Michael G. Carter, whose research in the last forty years helped us to a better understanding of the first and greatest Arab linguist, Sībawayhi, now tells us his views concerning Arabic linguistic terms ("Approaches to the Technical Terms of Arabic Grammar"). Pierre Larcher also deals with an important question: the language of the Koran ("Neuf traditions sur la langue coranique rapportées par al-Farrā' et alii").

The editors must be thanked for this uniquely excellent bunch of papers, among which there is not one uninteresting and unworthy, including those left unmentioned by the present reviewer.

Abu l-Husayn al-Baṣrī, Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla. The extant parts introduced and edited by WILFERD MADELUNG and SABINE SCHMIDTKE. (*Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, hrsg. von Florian C. Reiter, LVII, 4.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006. xxiii, 145 pp. ISBN 3-447-05392-5.

The book under review is the edition of extensive fragments of a theological work hitherto considered lost. The author, Abū l-Husayn al-Baṣrī (died in 1044), a Mu'tazilī scholar of *kalām* theology, is considered the founder of the Bahṣamiyya school of the Mu'tazilīs. According to the editors' introduction, the *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla* critically reviewed the proofs and arguments (*adilla*) used in theology. The fragments have been discovered in the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg in three MSS. The first six fragments deal with the divine attribute of knowledge, while the

remaining five fragments are about such questions as God's omnipotence, His living and knowing from eternity, His power over the jinns, His power to do evil (*qabīḥ*), and similar important theological problems. The edition of this fragmentary work signifies an important step towards a better understanding of the theological debates of the 11th century.

Tamás Iványi

